## Contents

1. Introduction ................................................................. 3
2. Feedback Healthwatch Oxfordshire received .......................... 4
3. What next? ................................................................. 10

Appendix 1: List of attending organisations ............................. 11
1 Introduction

Healthwatch Oxfordshire held a voluntary sector forum in Wantage on 17th May 2018. The aim of the meeting was to enable local voluntary and community groups in Wantage to come together and share their feedback on local health and social care services with Healthwatch Oxfordshire. The event was part of our focus on Wantage in May 2018.

The meeting was attended by 24 people. Ten different community groups and voluntary sector organisations were represented, as well as town, district and county councillors and health providers and commissioners. Some people attended who did not represent any group but were keen to give us their views on pressing health and social care issues in Wantage.

How feedback was gathered from attendees:

Attendees were invited to sit in small groups at tables. Each table was given a flipchart sheet with a theme that Healthwatch Oxfordshire was seeking feedback on. These themes emerged from feedback we have gathered from people across the county. These were:

- Transport
- Community support services run by Oxfordshire County Council
- Young people’s mental health and wellbeing
- Social care including care homes and care at home.

We wanted to understand how, if at all, these issues were affecting people in Wantage.

Attendees were also invited to draw on their local expertise and raise issues that were relevant to Wantage and the surrounding areas. The issues raised were:

- The closure of the Wantage community hospital
- Other health services in the area including GP services, dental services and community physiotherapy
- Isolation and loneliness

Each group was given 15 minutes to discuss the theme at their table and share their thoughts on the flipchart. After 15 minutes, each flipchart sheet was moved to a different table. This enabled every table to see what comments other attendees had made in relation to a theme and then they were invited to add their own comments to the flipchart sheet and respond to the ones already made by the other attendees.

1 You can view a full list of attending organisations in Appendix 1.
2 Feedback Healthwatch Oxfordshire received

Transport

We wanted to understand what impact local transport facilities had on people’s wellbeing and ability to access health and social care services.

The most common issue raised on transport was the lack of local bus services for Wantage and Grove and the associated impact on people’s sense of isolation and loneliness.

Comments included:

“Lack of local bus service. People are isolated and vulnerable - loneliness leads to anxiety and mental health problems”

“Buses needed for social integration”

“OCC cuts to transport is restricting social integration.”

“Social housing in villages - no transport links so isolated and unable to access support.”

Attendees pointed out:

“No GP in Grove² - people have to travel”

“Local hospital would reduce transport, ambulance and stress.”

In relation to accessing medical appointments on public transport, people said

“Free bus passes for over 65s positive”

“Bus passes only start at 9am. Most appointments for the elderly are early.”

“Limited eligibility for hospital transport”

“Difficult to apply for a Freedom Pass.”

“Reimbursement scheme for low incomes doesn’t work.”

They also said that it was

“So difficult to park at hospitals and very expensive”

² Grove Health Centre was closed in February 2016 and its patients were moved to Newbury Street Practice in Wantage
What would make things better?

Attendees called for:

1. “Integrated services and transport - Bus services and NHS services need to be coordinated.”
2. “More support to voluntary transport services - Raise the profile for voluntary transport schemes to both potential clients and volunteers.”
3. “More cycle ways and foot paths - connected.”

Community support services run by Oxfordshire County Council

We asked people to give us feedback on the Oxfordshire County Council run community support services because they have recently undergone a change into a mixed service for both elderly people and people with learning disabilities. Wantage has one of the eight Council run community support service hubs in the county.

The main thing people told us about community support services was the cost of accessing the service and the changes to the service. People described the service as “very expensive now” and there was a “real problem accessing services if poor/on benefits.”

They said, “transport is a problem” and that “there is NO financial support from OCC [Oxfordshire County Council] for transport to/from them.”

What would make things better?

Attendees called for:

1. “A social space for older people with support services, access to education and craft skills.”
2. A list of “open access” services for disabled people and their carers
3. Someone to “point you in the direction of services that are available not that there are many” to help people access services that are available.

Young people’s mental health and wellbeing

We wanted to understand what issues young people in the area face as part of our focus on young people’s mental health and wellbeing.

People told us they were concerned about the pressures facing young people including social media, bullying, drug abuse, child sexual exploitation.
“3 local suicides - loneliness and isolation [of young people]”

“Increasing mental health issues”

“Need for emotional support”

“More young people caring for family members regularly”

In terms of access to health and social care services they said that

“School pastoral services [are] often under-funded and resourced.”

“Waiting lists for CAMHS too long”

“6 month waiting time for statutory young carers assessment by OCC - and assessment criteria needs revising.”

What would make things better?

Attendees called for:

1. More “school nurses on site”.
2. Affordable activities and job opportunities for young people.
3. “Joined up services- smoother transitioning to adult services and support.”
4. More training on how to offer support and early intervention for anyone who has contact with young people including GPs.

Care homes and care at home

We wanted to hear feedback on any aspect of care homes and care at home in the local area. We got fewer comments on this than on the other themes discussed. On care homes, attendees told us that the quality of care homes vary, and they queried if there was enough funding for care homes.

With regards to care services at home, attendees said that GP home visits were “scarce”, the “use of private agencies causes incoherent service” and raised the concern that with “pay so bad” there were “not enough carers.”

What would make things better?

Attendees called for:

1. The Wantage Community hospital to be opened to “facilitate respite, recovery, physiotherapy and enablement.”
2. “More district nurses and equipment.”
3. “Consistency of carers, not a different one on every visit” and “scheduling of suitable visit times”
4. Carers to “be paid a daily rate and allotted to work in a certain area to cut out extensive travel between patients.” And “fluency in English is important.”
Attendees also told us about family carers and said they “need knowledge of what’s available”, “lack local help” and that “more young people are being drawn into caring for family.”

To improve things for family carers, attendees emphasised the importance of “respite for carers”.

**Wantage Community Hospital**

It was clear that many people felt the loss of the local community hospital and the loss of services that were accessed there.

“Hospital closed for spurious reasons. Services previously provided are needed even more with the area expanding.”

“Desperate need for reopening of hospital for respite care and the physio, clinics.”

“Due to phase 2 consultation not taking place, hospital has now been closed for nearly 2 years, only maternity open at the moment.”

“Physiotherapy - gone, re-enablement - gone, end of life - gone, recovery from JR major surgery - gone, x ray - gone, minor injuries - gone.”

**Other Health services in the area**

**GP services and waiting times for appointments**

People were concerned about the length of time to wait for an appointment. The comments people made were:

“Waiting times ridiculously long for routine appointments. 3-5 weeks for 10 minutes of GP time. Unacceptable. “

“Urgent appointments - triage system - no middle ground.”

“Emergency appointments in 2 weeks is unacceptable.”

They also said they were concerned that the “development of GP service obstructed by inability of local practices to expand because of space.”

**Dental services**

Several people said they had decided to go to a private dentist instead of an NHS dentist because of “bad service” “Poor quality of NHS dentists have made me go private!” “Opted out of NHS dentistry 10 years ago due to inadequacy of service.”
Though others said that private dentistry is “very expensive so few people use it or can afford to.”

Of NHS dentists in the area they said:

“Very little choice”

“Long wait for appointments and cancelled appointments”

“NHS practices in Wantage are full.”

“Interpreter issues - not all dentists know about how to access interpreters or refuse to access them”

They also that that “due to cost of private dentists and failures of NHS dentists (or availability), many people do not go to dentists.”

Community physiotherapy

“Waiting times for community physiotherapy service in Abingdon hospital excessive for a long time - normally 14 weeks.”

“Physiotherapy now in places where transport not easy.”

Isolation and loneliness

People said they were concerned about increasing isolation and loneliness in the area. They said they were worried about the increased cost of the day centre and that there was “no place to go after closure of children’s centre”

They were concerned about the “isolation of young people”, “modern slavery and domestic abuse” “carers, in particular young carers” and about people who may struggle to access support because a lot of the forms and job applications must be filled in online.

What would make things better?

Attendees said:

1. People need help with understanding what support and services are available to them. More needs to be done to raise awareness of services available. To do this, they suggested an “Oxfordshire County Council one stop shop - understanding what services are relevant and available to individual needs.” And/or a “One stop shop in the Beacon with coffee shop available would fulfil lots of needs.”

2. They also said that this information on services and support people can access should be “available in Health Centres permanently”.

Other comments

“Cancellation of appointments”

“Few reviews of long-term medication or side effects.”

“Interpreters - no knowledge of how to book them or not willing to. Need to speak a certain level of English to be able to book one in the first place. Using children as interpreters instead of booking one.”

“Ambulance response times - Too slow, poor road networks and often congested and failure obscured by statistics that mix rural and urban areas.”
3 What next?

The feedback gathered at this meeting will be included in the full report on the Wantage project and will be shared with those who commission (pay for) and provide health and social care services in Wantage.

From what attendees told us people feel concerned about the loss of local services including bus services and the Community hospital. They also feel concerned about access to current services like GPs, NHS dentists and social care services. They are worried about increasing loneliness and isolation and for the wellbeing of the young people who live locally.

Attendees made suggestions on what could improve things including:

1. Take an integrated view of health and social care services and transport services in their plans.
2. Raise the profile of voluntary transport schemes.
3. Offer support to people to understand what services, including open access services, are available locally.
4. Offer support to family carers.
5. Communicate with local people in the Wantage area about plans for the Health Centre.
6. Communicate with people about the plans for the Wantage community hospital.
7. Ensure that young people, and young carers, have adequate support in place including a smoother transition to adult services and more pastoral care on offer.
Appendix 1: List of attending organisations

- Be Free Young Carers
- Grove Town Council
- Grove WI
- Headway Oxfordshire
- Little People
- MS Society
- October Club
- Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group
- Oxfordshire County Council (Councillor)
- Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust
- Red Cross
- Rethink Mental Illness
- Save Wantage hospital campaign
- Wantage Independent Advice Centre
- Wantage Town Council