1. Maternity project - The experience of new mums and their birthing partners

In the summer of 2015, the maternity services at Ipswich Hospital NHS Trust approached Healthwatch Suffolk to check whether the experiences for women’s birthing partners could be improved and an innovative engagement project was undertaken.

An immediate outcome from the project was a change in policy that will see the partners of women who are having their babies at Ipswich Hospital NHS Trust having the option to stay overnight. While partners have always been welcome to stay during labour and birth Ipswich Hospital have now extended this offer so partners can stay overnight before labour and after their baby has been born and will be offered a reclining chair, blanket and pillow to make them comfortable. Previously, they needed to leave at 9pm, which meant that anyone whose baby was born in the evening could only spend a short time with mother and baby before having to go home.

One of our recommendations was that the hospital should review its information offer to mums and birthing partners because people told us that they thought it could be improved, particularly with regard to the emotional changes and new challenges that having a baby can bring to people’s lives. That is why the hospital has recently asked for views about what could be better on its website. It wants its website to be easier to access and to use. A pop-up event to inform this process was organised by the hospital to take place in the Maternity Reception at Ipswich Hospital on Friday 23rd September. We will share the views expressed to us by the public and those who responded to our original survey.

A number of other outcomes have been reported since the publication of our report with regard to the following broad themes:

- Increased patient involvement in birth planning
- Effective communication about who to call and when
- The content of antenatal classes
- Keeping people informed of their babies progress
- Information about potential emotional changes post birth

Full details about each of the above are available via the following link: [http://www.healthwatchsuffolk.co.uk/news/continued-improvements-to-maternity-services-at-ipswich-hospital-nhs-trust-following-our-joint-report/](http://www.healthwatchsuffolk.co.uk/news/continued-improvements-to-maternity-services-at-ipswich-hospital-nhs-trust-following-our-joint-report/)

A final report will be published by Healthwatch Suffolk soon, which will combine data from mums and birthing partners who visited other hospitals in Suffolk including West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust and James Paget University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. Initial meetings with all providers about the recommendations made have been very positive, leading to a number of excellent outcomes that will improve patient experience in the county.
2. **Diabetic foot care in Suffolk**

We have been working with Dr. Gerry Rayman (Consultant Physician of Diabetes and Endocrinology at the Ipswich Hospital NHS Trust Diabetic Centre) on a project exploring local experiences of using diabetic foot care services in Suffolk. The project has looked at whether people at high risk of developing complications in Suffolk are receiving appropriate care in line with national guidelines. The ultimate aim is to ensure that these vital services are informed by the experiences of the people using them.

We received an excellent response to the survey. The final report has been produced and will be published as soon as possible with recommendations for service improvement.

3. **My Health, Our Future - A new Healthwatch Suffolk project as part of the Children and Young People’s Emotional Wellbeing Plan**

Healthwatch Suffolk will soon begin a new project called “My Health, Our Future” with schools across east and west Suffolk. The aim will be to obtain the views of young people and their teachers about mental health and wellbeing support in school and at home. This work will inform plans to develop services for children and young people in the future as part of the Children and Young People’s Emotional Wellbeing Transformation Plan 2020.

The project will help schools to identify the needs of pupils in respect of mental health and wellbeing so that steps can be taken to increase support and promote healthy psychological development. Pupils will have the opportunity to talk about their views on mental health and wellbeing and about how their school could improve its approach to maintaining the wellbeing of pupils.

Suffolk County Council has identified eight schools for the pilot studies but it has been more challenging than originally expected to engage with the schools listed. Several schools said that they do not have the capacity, while others have not responded to requests for participation. Pauline Henry, Head of the Engagement Hub at Suffolk County Council, will be attending the Education and Learning Management Meeting (week beginning 26th September) on behalf of Healthwatch Suffolk with the intention of recruiting additional schools.

The following schools have confirmed their willingness to take part:

- Thurston Community College
- Samuel Ward Academy
- Holbrook Academy

A Steering Group has been established to inform and guide the engagement process. The group is tasked with ensuring that all processes and measures being used are evidence based. The first meeting was held in September 2016 and will occur on a six weekly basis.
Sustainability and Transformation Plans

NHS England has published national advice for local health and social care leaders preparing Sustainability and Transformation Plans (STPs). The advice sets out how to put the communities they serve at the heart of their work.

As a Local Healthwatch, we are invited to contribute to the formation of the STP for Suffolk and North East Essex. Our role is to challenge and to help system leaders with their understanding of how to engage our local communities for views. Such engagement is essential to forming a high quality and viable plan for the future of health and care service provision in Suffolk. Within this context, public engagement must not merely be seen as a duty or “tick box exercise”.

Andy Yacoub (Chief Executive of Healthwatch Suffolk) said:

“It is only right that an independent Health and Care watchdog is engaged in such a major programme of transforming our local health and care system. We welcomed our being invited to advise and challenge where necessary the planning process to date. That said, we remain an independent body and will at the designated times seek the public’s views on the developments of the sustainability and transformation plan for Suffolk and North East Essex.

“The nature of this NHS England led programme of change means that the Waveney area of Suffolk is covered by a separate strategic group and we are relying on our colleagues from Healthwatch Norfolk to represent views on this ‘Norfolk and Waveney STP area’. Healthwatch Suffolk is liaising with Healthwatch England and other Local Healthwatch from across the county in order to be as effective as possible locally.”

5. The deadline for Director recruitment has been extended

There remains an opportunity to make a difference for communities in Suffolk by joining our Board of Directors. We have extended the deadline for the submission of applications to the 14th October 2016.

Ideally we would like applicants with a background in business of all types, with the necessary drive and enthusiasm to ensure that the organisation is successful in representing the diverse views of our local communities about their use of health and social care services. We welcome applications from representatives of all communities in Suffolk.

Anybody interested in this role should contact us by email to info@healthwatchsuffolk.co.uk or call 01449 703949.

6. Accessible information: What should people expect from local services?

From 31 July 2016, all organisations providing NHS or adult social care should comply with the NHS Accessible Information Standard.

The aim of the standard is to make sure that people who have a disability, impairment or sensory loss get information that they can access and understand, and any communication support that they need. All organisations that provide NHS or adult social care are required to follow the new
standard, including NHS Trusts and Foundation Trusts, and GP practices.

We are committed to making sure all of our information is clear and accessible for everyone. It is vital that anybody who wants to find out about our work is able to do so. That is why we are also incorporating elements of the Accessible Information Standard into our own Suffolk Information Standard (a local accreditation scheme coordinated by us and owned by the Suffolk Information Partnership).

You can watch a video about the Suffolk Information Standard via the following link: https://youtu.be/KZ9PYfaV4Lw

We supported Healthwatch Surrey to produce a toolkit for our national network of Local Healthwatch. It explains what the NHS Accessible Information Standard is and how they can hold others to account. The toolkit has been produced with support from NHS England, Healthwatch England, The Alzheimer’s Society, Surrey Coalition of Disabled People, Sight for Surrey, NHS Coastal West Sussex CCGs, Barchester Healthcare and Cranleigh Medical Practice.

To inform the toolkit, we ran a pilot with Healthwatch Surrey and NHS England, using our powers to Enter and View local services. We directed a small team to visit one of our local services in Suffolk to assess their readiness for the Accessible Information Standard.

We will also be promoting the standard with local providers to ensure that people receive the information they need to make informed choices about their care within our counties services.

7. Enter and View

Reports made following our visits to local health and social care services are available to download via the link below. A number of reports will be due for publication in the near future.

http://www.healthwatchsuffolk.co.uk/our-reports-2/

8. Annual Report 2015/16

The Healthwatch Suffolk Annual Report 2015/16 shows the difference that has been made throughout the year for people using health and social care services in Suffolk, how it has involved local people in its work and how it has put people in touch with information and support.

- The report is available in a range of formats via the following link: http://www.healthwatchsuffolk.co.uk/news/healthwatch-suffolk-strengthens-its-influence-in-201516-to-make-a-difference-for-suffolk-residents
- A short video highlights reel has also been created and is available to view now on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ox5eZkzDec8

9. Mental Health in Suffolk - The Healthwatch Suffolk AGM

The third Healthwatch Suffolk Annual General Meeting is due to take place on 27th October 2016 at Blackbourne Hall, Elmswell. It will include opportunities to hear about our work to improve health
and social care services in Suffolk. This year’s AGM will have a mental health theme. There are two notable guest speakers booked as follows:

- Norman Lamb MP
- Natasha Devon MBE

Attendance is free. Due to popular demand, we have switched to a larger hall space and are now pleased to re-open booking. People can register now by visiting the following link (limited places): [http://healthwatchsuffolkagm2016.eventbrite.co.uk](http://healthwatchsuffolkagm2016.eventbrite.co.uk)

10. Suffolk Information Standard video

There are many organisations producing information about health, social care and wellbeing in Suffolk. This information can vary greatly in quality and the extent to which it is up-to-date, which means that it can be confusing and time consuming for the public.

To help to improve this, we work closely with the Suffolk Information Partnership (facilitated by Suffolk County Council) to deliver a local standard that will improve the quality of information provided in Suffolk.

We asked organisations for their thoughts about how the Suffolk Information Standard has helped them to improve the way they manage and produce information for the people they support. The video is available to view now via the following link: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KZ9PYfaV4Lw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KZ9PYfaV4Lw)

11. For more information and updates

- The latest Healthwatch Suffolk email news update is available to view now: [http://us3.campaign-archive2.com/?u=34efd5b359c14955e07a06a20&aaid=90ffe94a04](http://us3.campaign-archive2.com/?u=34efd5b359c14955e07a06a20&aaid=90ffe94a04)
- Previous newsletters are available to view or download from the following page: [http://www.healthwatchsuffolk.co.uk/about-us/newsletters/](http://www.healthwatchsuffolk.co.uk/about-us/newsletters/)

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For further information on any of the content featured in this update, please contact the Information Team at Healthwatch Suffolk on 01449 703949 or by email to [info@healthwatchsuffolk.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchsuffolk.co.uk).