

Enter and View

The Recovery Centre Isledon Road



Healthwatch Islington

Healthwatch Islington is an independent organisation led by volunteers from the local community. It is part of a national network of Healthwatch organisations that involve people of all ages and all sections of the community.

Healthwatch Islington gathers local people's views on the health and social care services that they use. We make sure those views are taken into account when decisions are taken on how services will look in the future, and how they can be improved.

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Introduction

Healthwatch Islington has the right to 'Enter and View' publicly funded health and adult social care services as they are being delivered. Trained and DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checked Healthwatch representatives carry out these visits to find out how services are being run, and to make recommendations where there are areas for improvement.

In 2015-16 we are particularly interested in using our Enter and View work to consider how services are personalised to give service members choice and control. We are visiting mental health and supported housing services as well as care homes for older people as part of this work.

Details of visit	
Service address	The Recovery Centre Isledon Road, 76-80 Isledon Road, London N7 7LB
Service provider	Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust
Date and Time	26 November 2015, 11am until 3pm
Authorised representatives	Jenni Chan, Vivian Duckett, Jane Plimmer, Jeni Kent
Contact details	Healthwatch Islington 020 7832 5821
Community meeting	Frank Jacobs, 16 November 2015

This report relates to findings observed on the specific date and time set out above. Our report is not a representative portrayal of the experiences of all the service users and staff, only an account of what was observed and contributed at the time.

Healthwatch Islington would like to thank the service provider, service users and staff for their contribution to our Enter and View work.

The purpose of the visit

Our work plan for this year included Enter and View visits to mental health facilities with particular focus on access and the personalisation of services.

We spoke to local voluntary and statutory organisations who suggested we focus on day services as more 'preventative' community based social services are under threat and currently seem very vulnerable to funding cuts and system re-haul.

The Enter and View team therefore planned a visit to the Recovery Centre Isledon Road, a mental health day care service jointly funded by Islington Council and Islington Clinical Commissioning Group. The Recovery Centre is provided by Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust and takes referrals from secondary mental healthcare services in Islington. The centre used to take referrals from primary care (such as GPs) and from voluntary sector organisations, as well as self-referrals, but due to changes in commissioning, its remit has changed.

Although new referrals come from secondary mental healthcare services, Isledon Road continues to support service users who were referred under the previous referral system. Therefore some existing service users may have been referred from primary care services.

The Enter and View team were interested in the personalisation of services for members during a period of service restrictions.

There are three other mental health day services that operate in the borough all of which are run by MIND Islington.

Methodology

This was an announced Enter and View visit. The management, staff and service users (members) knew we were coming to the centre. One of our Enter and View volunteers went along to a community meeting at the centre just over a week before our visit to explain who we were and why we were interested in visiting the centre, in the hope that our presence would not cause any anxiety.

We had sent the manager questions we wanted to ask her before the visit, so when we arrived we had a meeting in which she went through her answers going into a little more depth. During this meeting she explained that the centre has approximately 150 service users. We were hoping to speak to 10 service users and five members of staff.

We had scheduled a four hour visit from 11am to 3pm during which the team of four Enter and View volunteers would observe the service and surroundings and at the same time speak to service users and staff.

The Recovery Centre Isledon Road

The centre has a membership of 150 service users. Between 80 and 90 different members visit the service each week. These service users are from a range of ages and backgrounds, and have varying levels of need.

The Recovery Centre offers a full timetable of activities including everyday maths & budgeting, basic literacy, ceramics, IT sessions, mindfulness, singing, wellbeing, knit & natter, music and media, still life, and print making. The centre also runs a programme of activities to improve people's physical health including massage, breathing and relaxation, acupuncture and physical exercise. The centre houses a part-time counsellor. Other therapeutic professionals and sessions are offered to members when appropriate.

The Recovery Centre is open Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 10am until 4pm and on Wednesdays from 1pm to 4pm (the centre is closed on Wednesday mornings to allow time for staff meetings and training).

Tuesday is a women only day which provides a safe space for women who can be at risk when around men and for those who prefer a women only environment (an alternative service is offered to men off site on this day).

The service also opens on Sunday from 11am until 3pm. The centre used to be open for evening drop ins and on Saturday and Sunday as a drop in service.

Lunch is served at the centre between 1pm and 2pm and costs £2.20 for a hot meal. Hot and cold drinks and small snacks are available from the café during the day. The kitchen is staffed by a cook employed by the Trust who works Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday. Another cook (an agency staff member) runs the kitchen on Thursday and Sunday.

There are areas in the centre where members can sit and relax, or play games or pool. The IT room is often open and members are able to use the internet, and receive support for their IT skills. There is also a printer in this room.

The manager told us that members are able to assist in the kitchen, on the reception desk or in the IT room for a small income. This gives them some experience if they have been out of work for a while. Service users are also given the opportunity to run sessions if they have a particular interest they would like to share. One of the members was scheduled to run a session listening to classical music.

- ▶ **We spoke to 13 service users, eight were female and five male.**
- ▶ **Eight described themselves as having a disability with four choosing not to answer this question and one saying they did not have a disability.**
- ▶ **All the service users we spoke to were over 25 years old, with the most common classification being between 45 and 64 years old (six service users).**
- ▶ **Five service users described themselves as white (British, European or undefined) one identified as mixed (White/Asian) and one as Black British. Six service users chose to identify themselves more broadly, were uncertain or did not answer.**
- ▶ **We also spoke to 3 members of staff and the service manager.**

Summary of Findings



Accessible and open environment. A bright and airy space with artwork displays on the walls.



Changes to the centre's opening hours was an issue raised by a number of service users.



Service users are encouraged to be engaged through working at the centre (kitchen, front desk, IT room).



The prominence of art and creativity in the centre is clear, and it appears to be enjoyed and celebrated.



The topic of food and nutrition was mentioned by a number of service users and staff.



Benefits, housing advice and extra welfare support were topics brought up by service users and staff.

Findings

1. Atmosphere and Space

Enter and View volunteers found the centre to be easily accessible from the road. Signage was not very clear. Centre members had told the management that they did not want a sign describing the centre as a mental health service. This was because they found the stigma which communities can express towards people with mental health issues difficult.

The centre is spacious and airy and was made more welcoming through the presence of service users' artwork which was displayed on the walls, especially in the café/ canteen area which gave a sense of ownership to the space.

2. Service Opening Times

11 of the 13 respondents mentioned the opening times and days. Although one respondent said that for them the opening hours are 'very good - convenient', nine others said they would like the service open more often; 'I would prefer 11am to 5pm', 'I would prefer the centre to open later and have an evening drop in', 'I'd like it to be open a bit earlier', 'Could open a bit earlier or later'.

Several mentioned that the service used to be open on Wednesday morning and one service user stated 'being closed for the whole of Wednesday morning makes Wednesdays very short - too short for some people.' Another said, 'I don't like the late start on Wednesday... Saturday it's closed - not good.' Three other members mentioned that closing on Saturdays is not good for them.

However, only one respondent felt that these changes to the service weren't well communicated. We are aware that with all the restrictions on service budgets, longer opening hours are less and less realistic, but the conversations we had point towards the importance of ongoing conversations with service users regarding opening days and hours.

Most respondents felt they were given good notice of service closure if the centre was understaffed or closed, during public holidays for example.

3. Service user Engagement

The Enter and View team observed that service users were actively encouraged to participate and engage in the running of the centre, for example a service user volunteered on reception on the day of the visit. The manager explained that there are certain roles within the centre (working on reception, supervising and assisting in the IT room and supporting the kitchen staff when serving lunch) that members carry out for a small income. We spoke to two service users who were working/ had worked in the canteen and IT room.

The team were also made aware that service users were encouraged to take a role in running or co-facilitating projects and sessions. While the team were at the centre they met a service user preparing to run a session focused on listening to Classical Music.

One staff member we spoke to explained that the centre operates a 'buddy' system, pairing new referrals with more established clients to facilitate engagement.

'I enjoy art so I feel I can attend activities here to help me. I do feel I've got options and I'm involved with plans.'

A number of service users we spoke to felt that they were listened to and encouraged by staff in the centre. One commented 'I can talk to staff and make suggestions and feel listened to and appreciated.' Another stated that 'staff encourage me and others to participate in activities.'

While another service user suggested that the new Recovery Plans were not adequate they went on to state 'it gives more freedom... by taking on responsibilities and getting more independence.'

4. Creativity and the Arts

Several respondents mentioned the involvement they had in art projects. One of these expressed disappointment at having been unenrolled from their art programme during a period in hospital.*

Art and creativity in general was a prominent feature in the service. There was a designated room for art where Enter and View volunteers saw members making ceramics. Some were doing personal projects while others were making Christmas decorations. There was talk about selling the things this group had made in the centre to raise some funds around Christmas.

There was artwork all round the centre which one of the centre members explained was for sale. It was mentioned that some members wanted to sell their work in the centre but this hadn't been allowed.

Four of the centre members we spoke to also mentioned their involvement in the music groups that take place on Sunday - from the singing group, to song and poetry writing to taking part in the band. The centre members enjoyed these activities with one commenting it 'is very important to me'.

While the Enter and View volunteers were at the Recovery Centre they noticed Christmas cards made by centre members were for sale to raise money for new art materials.

5. Food and Nutrition

Food and nutrition was mentioned by 11 of those interviewed (staff members and service users). The centre manager explained that people depend on the service for food. This was supported by one service user's comment 'If I wasn't here I might not eat.'

Feedback on the food was varied. Four gave positive accounts, 'Lunch - excellent food, especially Sunday Roast', 'Food not bad - good value for price', 'Food is essential (for others too)', 'Café is very good, great value and great food.' Two respondents said that they 'don't always have lunch', with one saying that they were concerned that the service 'used to have an Occupational Therapist in one room and now people just come to have food.' Two respondents said that they didn't eat the food at all, one adding 'the food is very variable - lots of different cooks, some are better than others. Overall, food poor and I have written to the trust about it - got acknowledgement, don't know what is happening.'

Some said they would appreciate 'more varied meals, more choice of food'. Nutrition and education was mentioned by 3 service users.

'the food should be healthier to prevent obesity [with] more emphasis on physical exercise and physical health.'

They said they would welcome 'advice on nutrition and diet' and 'nutrition education and cooking and food buying.' The centre manager mentioned that she would like to offer cooking courses but that the kitchen is not fit for that purpose.

During the community meeting the Healthwatch Islington representative observed that members were encouraged to discuss the food and suggest new dishes they would like to have on the menu.

6. Support and Advice

When speaking to the manager it became clear that the recent changes in benefits had caused anxiety amongst service members.

One member of staff commented that it could be useful to have specialist help for those with benefit problems including debt management, financial problems and housing issues. They added that occasionally the centre arranges for the Department of Work and Pensions to provide a one off session, but a more regular welfare rights surgery could be more beneficial.

One service user felt that there was a need for staff to know more around housing and benefits, with another suggesting that the centre should offer more help with career/ job support and advice.

‘There have been more worries about welfare over recent years. This causes anxieties for the clients, and definite impact on mental health.’

Staff member

‘The increase in deprivation associated with changes in benefits can lead to service members disengaging from services and therefore not seeking help or support.’

Centre manager

Additional Findings

Other comments from service users:

‘Staff are all good/ listen a lot.’

‘The staff are all kind and I get on with them very well’

‘Women’s day is exclusive’

‘Outings would be nice’

- ▶ The Enter and View team noticed that the centre has really great facilities and wondered whether the centre could rent out therapy rooms and/ or the art room to increase income.
- ▶ Enter and View volunteers were told about some money lending and borrowing between service users that has taken place in the centre. There seemed to be some concern about this among members but it appeared that staff had been made aware of this.

Recommendations



The members' artwork on the walls made the space welcoming and promoted a sense of ownership of the space amongst the service users. This is an example of good practice which could be shared with providers of similar services.



Centre staff to continue clear communication and consultations around the most suitable opening hours, especially concerning Wednesday mornings.



Centre staff to continue to involve members in the running of the service, and to encourage members to co-run and facilitate sessions. Good reasons and explanations to be given when a service user's idea is not suitable or feasible.



Continue the art and creative sessions offered by the centre. Staff and management could look into selling artwork and crafts in the community (studying examples such as Project One Zero, currently based on the Bemerton Estate on the Caledonian Road).



The centre should explore putting on some nutrition classes and cooking workshops. It might be possible to do this in partnership with local voluntary sector projects such as the Manor Gardens Community Kitchens Project.



Discuss with service users what support is needed around housing, benefits and finances, then improve signposting. The Recovery Centre could house a CAP (Christians Against Poverty) Money Course or link with the Citizen's Advice Bureau/ Income Maximisation Team at Islington Council.

Conclusions

From observations, and interviews with service users, staff, and centre management, some clear themes began to appear. In terms of the personalisation of the service, many service users we spoke to felt that staff were friendly, approachable and willing to listen. This made it likely that the service could reflect service users' needs and interests. There was also a lot of choice in terms of what sessions and activities members could take part in (although some courses required sign ups). Members were also individually allocated key workers. Some of the members we spoke to seemed more familiar with this concept than others.

The centre was clean and bright and there was a real sense of ownership as members moved freely about the building and their artwork was displayed on the walls. Members working on the reception, in the kitchen and the IT room also helped to develop a feeling of ownership.

Since the closure of the centre at Hanley Road the demand for education and employability sessions at the Recovery Centre Isledon Road has increased. Through the many sessions that run we could see that this has been taken into consideration. However, after listening to feedback from both members and staff, the Enter and View team felt that there is a need for more to be done around employability. There was also concern from members and staff around housing and changes to benefits and some more knowledgeable support in this area could be valuable.

It was clearly important for some of the service users that the centre offers the option of having a hot meal during the day. The menu is directed by the service users at the regular community meetings which means that there is a level of preference and agency involved in the food selection offered. The team know the centre manager has already explored some options around food and nutrition training. This could be of benefit, especially for some of the service users who suggested that without the centre they may not eat a hot meal.

Some comments on the report

We shared the final draft of this report with the centre manager of the Recovery Centre Isledon Road in January 2016. As well as correcting one or two errors of fact in our description of the service (pages 4 and 5), she also responded to some of the comments made by the service users who we spoke to on our visit, and commented on one of our recommendations. The content of that response is shared here, in order to provide a more complete picture of the service we visited.

- 1.** Page 8, paragraph 2
The member who was unenrolled from an art class was in hospital for some months. The class was provided by Islington Adult and Community Learning who have strict rules about enrolment and attendance due to their funding criteria. This member was offered a later course once they had returned to the centre.
- 2.** Page 8, paragraph 4
There were stalls at Christmas specifically for people to sell their work. There are also cards for sale in a stand behind reception. All art and cards are made by service users. The centre management does not encourage service users to sell their work without the centre's involvement as they do not want other service users to be put under pressure to buy things from people.
- 3.** Page 8, paragraph 8
The centre has never employed an Occupational Therapist. The centre has had Islington Adult and Community Learning providing employment advice and guidance. This service is about to resume.
- 4.** Page 9, paragraph 3
Housing and welfare rights are complex areas requiring a lot of training and constant updating. The centre staff are not experts in housing and benefit legislation. They refer service users to appropriate agencies and support them to get the advice they need.
- 5.** Page 9, Additional findings
Money lending and borrowing - staff have taken action on this matter. All centre members have been made aware of issues around financial abuse. The individuals concerned have been spoken to, and safeguarding procedures have been followed.
- 6.** Page 10, Recommendations
Final recommendation around information about benefits, housing and finances - the centre has links with the Income Maximisation Team at Islington Council and with Islington People's Rights. The centre has worked closely with them on a number of cases and they have provided information sessions at the centre.
- 7.** Page 11, paragraph 3 (employability)
The centre has links with Mental Health Working and Islington Adult and Community Learning as well as with Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust's volunteering service. The centre has referred to these services, specifically set up to provide employment support. The centre would be happy to develop these links further. They also offer 30 supported placements (café, reception, IT, creativity centre).

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