



news healthwatch Islington

Firdowski Omar from Somali Speakers Women's Group, Maria Gonzalez from Healthwatch Islington, and Mana Abbas from Al-Ashraf Women and Children's Group demonstrate how to use our new card to request interpreting support.

Over the past few years Healthwatch has learnt of many instances when interpreters have not been offered to patients who need support to communicate in English for doctors appointments and hospital visits.

We've worked with Islington Clinical Commissioning Group to raise awareness within local GP practices of the value of using professional interpreting services rather than relying on the friends and family of patients. We've also raised the issue with local hospitals.

In many cases interpreting is not offered because patients don't know they can ask for it, or because individual healthcare staff don't realise that it is a service that their organisation provides. Healthwatch has produced a card that aims to solve both these issues. Patients can use the card to more easily request an interpreter in the



language that they need. The reverse of the card makes it clear to healthcare staff that interpreting services are something that their organisation does indeed offer. Get in touch with us to request cards for friends or family members, or for clients your organisation represents. We can send you as many as you need.

ADHD services for adults



‘As it is right now, I am still unsure who to contact should I have a concern with my medication. It would be really useful if we were informed of how and who to contact if we had to discuss any concerns relating to ADHD medication.’

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a group of behavioural symptoms that include inattentiveness, hyperactivity and impulsiveness. People with ADHD may also have additional problems, such as sleep and anxiety disorders. The ADHD service for Islington residents is provided by the Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust. The service, which is for residents aged 18 and over, provides specialist assessment, as well as medical and psychological interventions where necessary.

‘In the end there was a bulk email saying stop contacting us, we don’t have the resources, we’re overstretched. It was frustrating. I was told it was an 8 month list, I waited one and a half years. I looked into a private assessment but I couldn’t afford it.’

The demand for the service is far outstripping its capacity. Waiting times to access the service are very long, currently up to three years. Islington Clinical Commissioning Group asked Healthwatch to help them review the ADHD service by talking to existing service users. We hosted a focus group and carried out phone and email interviews.

- ▶ We found that the patients we spoke to were very willing to consider alternative models of provision if this would help people to be seen more quickly.

‘It would be fine for nurses to lead follow up appointments. So many of the nurses are so good. It needn’t be the consultant, just someone who knows what you want.’

Once you receive an ADHD diagnosis you can access support and advice. Patients suggested that it would be helpful to access support and advice whilst waiting for assessment. This seems like a good idea as most people who are sent for assessment do end up with a diagnosis, but even if they do not, they could benefit from the learning around issues such as sleep hygiene.

‘I really benefitted from attending these courses, they were very well planned, [the tutor] led amazing sessions. The highlight of attending these ADHD management group sessions was hearing from others who were also ADHD. Hearing about their struggles, hopes, and problems and how they found creative solutions to cope and manage the condition was extremely therapeutic and useful for me.’

A full report on what people told us is available to [read on the Healthwatch Islington website.](#)

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- ▶ If you are an Islington resident using ADHD services and would like to share your views, please get in touch with us at Healthwatch Islington.
 - ▶ For more information on ADHD you can read [the guidelines on the NICE website.](#)

If you are an adult and would like to be assessed for ADHD, you need to make an appointment with your doctor and ask them to refer you for an assessment.

Personal Health Budgets

'If I had a Personal Health Budget I could have used the money for much better, more effective treatments instead of being sent to the physiotherapy which was a waste of time and money.'



A Personal Health Budget (or PHB for short) allows patients with long term health conditions to take greater control of their healthcare and support. It gives them more say on how the money is spent, and on the services they receive.

In Islington, Personal Health Budgets have only been available for Multiple Sclerosis patients and for patients with complex needs who receive NHS Continuing Healthcare. However this year they are being trialled with patients with long term health conditions who also have a mental health diagnosis and a social care need. If it goes well, Personal Health Budgets will be made available for other people with complex health and care needs.

We interviewed 63 residents with long term conditions who did not have English as a first language. PHBs could have even more benefit for some of these individuals, as recipients would have the freedom to employ care staff who speak their first language. Most of the people we spoke to had never heard of Personal Health Budgets. We asked them whether they thought they were a good idea. Although not everybody was comfortable with it, feedback was mainly positive.

- ▶ 38 people said they would organise their care differently if they had a Personal Health Budget.
- ▶ They said it would give them greater choice and flexibility, the convenience of receiving the budget direct into their bank account, and the possibility of employing family members who know their needs and preferences.

▶ The activity mentioned most often when people talked about how they might use a Personal Health Budget, was going to gym classes, or hiring a personal trainer.

▶ About one third of the respondents expressed reservations about managing the budget.

'Some of the disadvantages could be cost, waste, bureaucracy, fear of choosing the wrong therapy, responsibility for making the right choices, and being unable to return [to the previous arrangement] if I change my mind about having a budget.'

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▶ **If you have a Personal Health Budget you can have someone else manage the budget for you, a friend, family member, or carer.**

▶ **You can also get support to help you make decisions about how to spend the money.**

▶ **If you are eligible for a PHB you don't have to have one. If you do choose to have one, you can change your mind at any time.**

If you would like to find out more about Personal Health Budgets and see if you might be eligible for one, talk to your health or social care professional. This might be your doctor, nurse or your social worker.

Share your views

Islington Patient Group meets 22nd November

Come and give your views about health services in your area. The Islington Patient Group gives residents the chance to ask questions and comment on the planning and delivery of healthcare services. Local GPs and practice staff also attend.

- ▶ The venue is the Lift Centre, 45 White Lion Street, N1 9PW. The meeting is from 3 to 5pm
- ▶ If you can't make it but have a question you'd like us to ask on your behalf, put it in an email or give us a call.

The Islington Patient Group was set up by Islington Clinical Commissioning Group. The meetings are hosted by Healthwatch.

Helping Healthwatch understand the needs of residents with learning disabilities

Nabeel Akram sits on our steering group, representing the Elfrida Society, whose aim is to make it possible for people with learning difficulties to manage as much of their lives as they want and feel able to do. We have nominated Nabeel for Islington's Volunteer of the Year Awards in recognition of his work to involve those with a learning disability in conversations about health and social care.

- ▶ Nabeel speaks to other service users with learning disabilities, collects their views and opinions and brings that information back to Healthwatch.
- ▶ Nabeel has raised awareness of how few people with a learning disability are being offered annual health checks or a health passport. We're now pursuing the issue with NHS England.
- ▶ His work has made us more representative of the local community, and more accessible to those with a learning disability.



Nabeel Akram shares feedback on health and care services

Shelagh Prosser is our new chair

We're pleased to announce that Shelagh, a member of our board of directors since our launch, is the new chair of Healthwatch Islington. In her 'day job' Shelagh helps organisations eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity in their employment practices and service delivery.

Thanks again to Olav Ernstzen, who stepped down as chair over the summer, and to fellow director Phillip Watson, who filled the role on a temporary basis. Phillip is retiring to Wales so special thanks to him for his fantastic contribution over the years.

Get in touch with Healthwatch Islington

You can visit our website to give feedback on any health and social care services you use, and get information about other services that are available. If computers aren't for you, you can call us, or write a letter. You won't need a stamp.

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