

## Suffolk Coastal Disability Forum

Minutes of the Meeting held via Zoom on Tuesday, 6<sup>th</sup> October, 2020, at  
2 pm.

### Present:

Linda Hoggarth	Disability Forum for Suffolk (Chair)
Peter Coleman	Resident & Governor, Norfolk & Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust
Simon Daws	Resident
Jane Drummond	Resident & Martlesham Parish Council
Bryan Frost	Resident & Trimley St Mary
Steve Hodgkiss	Resident & Suffolk Sight
Paul Kelly	Resident
Chloe Lee	Communities Officer for Felixstowe, East Suffolk Council
Gill Manning	Resident
Margaret Morris	Resident (Secretary)
Kerry Overton	Community Development Officer, Healthwatch Suffolk
Andrew Simpson	Community Action Suffolk

### Guest:

David Brown	Deputy Chief Operating Officer, Ipswich & East Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group
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### Apologies:

Jo Bowen	Disability Advice Service (DAS)
Jane Drummond	Resident & Martlesham Parish Council
Trevor Garrod	East Suffolk Travellers Association (ESTA)
Becki Gaunt	Housing Manager, Flagship Homes
Linda Layton	Resident
Alan Neville	Community and Customer Engagement Manager, Greater Anglia
Yvonne Smart	Trimley St Martin Parish Council
Graham Walker	Kirton Parish Council

## 1. Welcome & Introductions

Linda welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made. Chloe explained how a Zoom meeting works, and how members can show when they want to speak, and how to mute a microphone.

## 2. Apologies

The above apologies were received and noted.

## 3. Discussion about accessing health services during the Covid-19 lockdown and following the lifting of some restrictions

3.1 David Brown, Deputy Chief Operating Officer, Ipswich & East Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group was welcomed to the meeting and invited to respond to members' comments.

3.2 Members commented as follows:

- I am diabetic and at the beginning of the lockdown, I received a letter from Suffolk Podiatry to say that all my appointments had been cancelled. I have had to pay for private treatment. My annual diabetic review was cancelled. It feels as if services at GP surgeries have been turned off and I feel abandoned by my GP.

**Response:** David said that a lot of people have made the same comment about feeling abandoned. When the Covid-19 pandemic started, the NHS had to empty hospitals as quickly as possible to make space for patients with coronavirus as that had been the experience in other parts of the world. This meant that doctors had to stop what they were doing. GPs were instructed to triage patients by telephone in order to stop infected patients coming into surgeries. People do say that their GP surgery was closed but this was not actually the case. People now have to telephone and then a decision is made as to whether it is necessary to actually go into the surgery. If necessary, a home visit can be made. The transmission of the virus initially was from NHS staff to patients. GPs were dealing with a lot of people who were very sick. The aim was to keep patients safe as the system tried to cope. In terms of Podiatry, David said that he would feed that comment back.

- I have seen a newspaper article with a reference to all appointments being reviewed. Most patients being seen through hospitals had their appointments delayed or cancelled. Waiting lists were reviewed to prioritise patients at higher risk.

**Response:** The size of the backlog is going to depend on the second wave which is the reason there are Nightingale hospitals. It will be reviewed if it has been turned down too far.

- On the one occasion I needed to see my GP, the system of video calling was very useful.

- I need regular appointments for diabetes, but the regular appointment was not suitable as there were too many people around. I had a video appointment with Addenbrookes Hospital who could watch me walking and made suggestions – I found it all a very good experience. I cancelled my eye appointments at the hospital as I felt there were too many people around in that area.

**Response:** The NHS has spent a lot of time making the service as safe as possible. There is a balance of risk versus care, for example, some patients with cancer are unsure about going into a hospital.

- Many people feel that hospitals are not safe places. There needs to be more targeted contact with patients with specific conditions that are currently staying away. In addition, a great many people do not have computers and cannot access on line services or information. People who were shielding were told not to go out but when they were told they no longer had to shield they did not feel safe going out.

**Response:** The backbone of the NHS service is to contact patients by telephone.

- There should be something formal in place for people who cannot wear a mask for specific reasons. It has been difficult for people to access community transport journeys as volunteer drivers stopped driving.

**Response:** The risk is that if the virus is picked from one person by a driver, then it could be passed on to a lot of others who are making journeys. Taxi drivers have the highest risk, as do volunteer drivers.

- My podiatry appointments were also cancelled. However, the system for appointments at the Grove Medical Centre was good.

- I have had no problems at all with telephone consultations.

**Response:** It was a question of whether video appointments would add value.

- I had an appointment to talk through my concerns at The Grove. I was not offered a video appointment, though for a later problem I actually saw a doctor. It is difficult to show a doctor what is wrong via a video call.

- Some people find it very difficult to communicate over the phone or by video call, for example, those who are deaf, have speech problems, or dementia or those for whom English is not their first

language - and for them telephone appointments simply do not work. On average, consultations take less time, but patients in my surgery are not being asked if they can hear or understand what is being said – it could be the line, or the patient may have hearing difficulties or the clinician may not speak clearly. My own GP practice does not appear to ever offer face-to-face or video consultations.

**Response:** Initially with telephone calls to surgeries, it was 80% telephone/20% face to face; now it is 50/50.

- It has been necessary at times to be very assertive in order to be seen face-to-face and to receive treatment.

**Response:** Overall, there have been a range of experiences.

- When I went to my surgery, I knew there were receptionists near the counter though I could not see them – but the receptionist did not respond to my obvious need. The receptionists walked away and no one responded to me.

**Response:** I am very sorry to hear this.

**Comment:** David reminded members that it is very important that people who qualify should get their flu vaccinations. Currently this is going well and the criteria has been expanded. A vaccine for coronavirus is under development, this has to be kept at -60 to -70 degrees centigrade which would be difficult to achieve in GP surgeries. It is therefore likely to be organised as a more central operation, possibly by December. It would be best delivered to patients by local GP surgeries.

3.3 Linda thanked David for joining our meeting and for his responses to members concerns and experiences. David thanked members for their helpful contributions.

#### **4. Follow up on Transport Issues following the responses to questions from Cllr Andrew Reid, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Rural Affairs, Suffolk County Council**

4.1 Linda explained that the transport issues were originally raised at the January Meeting and as a result Cllr Reid agreed to attend the planned July meeting. As this meeting had to be cancelled, members were given the opportunity to raise their questions and concerns which were forwarded to Cllr Reid in July.

4.2 His detailed responses were received in September and circulated to members ahead of this meeting.

4.3 Comments were invited from members as follows:

- It would have been helpful if Cllr Reid had included reasons for what happens, as opposed to simply saying what happens.
- It was felt that there was insufficient engagement with customers. Bryan has offered to represent the Forum on Greater Anglia's Stakeholder Equality Forum and any Customer Panel set up by First Group. Linda will contact Rebecca Richardson at Greater Anglia to progress this.
- With regard to First Group buses going to the Ipswich Hospital from places such as Felixstowe, Martlesham and Woodbridge, it was felt that many people would use and benefit from bus services that actually went into the hospital and parked close to South Wards. The problem here is the monopoly of Ipswich Buses in accessing the hospital site though this may all change when A & E is relocated and the Urgent Treatment Centre built.
- The No 64 Bus Service does not go through Martlesham village and actually takes longer to go round the by-pass.
- The response to Question 1 about cyclists was helpful.
- With respect to Question 2, there are concerns about cyclists and scooter users using the Shared Space in Felixstowe, particularly on Fridays and Saturdays, and the impact of their use on people with mobility or visual impairments. There are serious concerns about e-scooters: Norwich has signed up to e-scooter trials, but Guide Dogs for the Blind have asked for the trials to be halted on safety concerns as e-scooters are almost silent. A trial in Coventry of e-scooters on pavements was abandoned.

4.4 In order to be able to go back to Cllr Reid, ask additional questions, make further comments and raise concerns, it was agreed to give members a little more time to respond. Additional questions and comments would be required in time for the meeting of the Planning Group on the 20<sup>th</sup> October.

4.5 Margaret would re-circulate the responses made by Cllr Reid and send a reminder to members to comment by the 19<sup>th</sup> October.

**Action: Margaret Morris / All**

## **5. Minutes from the Forum meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2020.**

The Minutes were agreed as a correct record.

## **6. Matters Arising**

There were no Matters Arising as the Planning Group have been dealing with ongoing issues whilst meetings have been in abeyance.

## **7. Views on Health and Social Care with Healthwatch Suffolk**

7.1 Kerry, Community Development Officer, Healthwatch Suffolk provided the following update.

7.2 A number of projects are currently being undertaken and Healthwatch Suffolk is trying to reach the community through all avenues. Kerry reminded members that anyone is welcome to call them in order to talk about any of these projects and give their feedback. They are happy to fill out the information for them, as they understand that not everyone has access to a laptop or may prefer to talk about things further. Healthwatch Suffolk can be reached from Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm on 01449 703949 or 0800 448 8234, or <https://healthwatchesuffolk.co.uk/>

### **7.3 Digital Transformation:**

7.3.1 NHS and Social Care services have been working very differently to make sure that people can access care throughout the coronavirus pandemic. Many of the ways people receive treatment or advice have changed and may have been replaced by digital or remote services (e.g. online appointment systems, virtual consultations with a doctor or remote triage). This has happened quickly, and there has been little time to check whether these new digital services are working for everyone who needs to use them.

7.3.2 Healthwatch Suffolk is working together with Healthwatch Essex and the Suffolk and North East Essex NHS and Social Care 'system' to understand how the sudden increase in use of digital services has impacted on people's access to care and support.

7.3.3 At the end of the on line survey, people can sign-up to help plan the next stage of this research. If people do that, Healthwatch Suffolk will be in touch with them to help them to think about what they should focus on next (related to digital health and care access) and how they should gather people's views.

7.3.4 Members of the public can use this link:  
<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/SuffolkDigitalCare>

7.3.5 Professionals can use this link:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/SuffolkDigitalProfessionals>

7.3.6 Or people can just sign up to the second phase on this following link if they so wish:

<https://healthwatchesuffolk.co.uk/digitalhealthandcareform/>

#### **7.4 End of life Care:**

7.4.1 The “End of Life Survey 2020” is an opportunity to tell local NHS, Social Care and other support services about how well people that other people know have been supported with end of life care. Finding out that someone is at the end of their life is difficult and distressing. It is already a highly emotive time but, for many people, the additional worry about coronavirus has made things much harder. To understand more about this, and also how people feel support could have been improved for them, or someone they know, Healthwatch Suffolk needs people’s help.

7.4.2 The survey can be accessed at

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/W9F5GKX>

7.4.3 Healthwatch Suffolk understands this is a highly sensitive subject as people are living in difficult circumstances at the moment where they may not be able to visit those they love who may be coming to the end of their lives.

#### **7.5 Dental Services:**

7.5.1 Kerry said that dental services had been closed during the lockdown and, as a result, there was a backlog of people requiring treatment. It is proving difficult to register with an NHS dentist. There is a shortage of qualified dentists. There is information about this on the Healthwatch Suffolk website.

7.5.2 The current access issues relate to the set-up of NHS dentists who only need to have 20% NHS patients. Dentists can opt to just take private patients but even NHS dentistry is not free unless the patient is on specific benefits. The situation is often very frustrating. If someone does not contact their dentist for 2 years s/he can be removed from their list.

7.6 Concerns have been raised as to whether wheelchair users are able to access eye tests at the opticians when they are unable to

transfer to the examination chair. Healthwatch would welcome any further examples of this.

7.7 With regard to podiatry services, people are currently not able to access care for their feet under the NHS. This is important as it enables people to be out of their homes and meeting other people and the services they need.

## **8. Information Round / Any Other Business**

**8.1 Disability Advice Service:** Jo Bowen, Manager, was unable to join the meeting. However, she advised that the service is currently working with a significant number of crisis cases and are in a position to help people in need with small cash grants. People must be resident in East Suffolk, and be disabled or have a health condition that impacts on their lives. Forum members were reminded that people with mental health problems can go to the service for support and advice.

**8.2 Parking Charges in East Suffolk:** A member had read that East Suffolk Council had introduced new car parking charges in August. There is now no mention of the arrangement whereby a blue badge holder was able to have double time. The article mentioned consultation with Disability Forums but there has been no consultation with this Forum. Margaret will seek clarification from Cllr Steve Gallant.

**Action: Margaret Morris**

**8.3 Guide Dogs and Public Swimming Pools:** A member had raised concerns as to the arrangements for guide dogs when their owner is using a public swimming pool. Guidance received is that guide dogs could be left in a locked room whilst the owner is swimming or at reception. The option of locking a guide dog in an unused room was not felt to be a satisfactory solution. Guide dogs should be left in a safe environment and not in a room on their own. It would be preferable if the Guide dog could be at the poolside to help when their owner is getting out of the pool area. However, being left at Reception is acceptable. The issue has been raised with Guide Dogs for the Blind and East Suffolk Council.

**8.4 Pedestrian Crossing in Martlesham:** Following an accident to a member on Main Road, Martlesham, there are renewed demands for a pedestrian crossing to be installed at this location. This initiative has the support of Cllr Ros Jones, Martlesham Parish Council. The Forum also gave its support for the installation of a crossing.



**8.5 Suffolk Sight:** It was reported that Suffolk Sight continues to respond to requests for support.

**8.6 Survey on Websites:** Healthwatch Suffolk would welcome comments on how user-friendly websites are for people with disabilities. This includes hospital websites.

**8.7 Planning Applications:** Members of the Planning Group continue to comment on planning applications. A member noted that a developer had omitted a handrail from a specific development.

**8.8 Swimming Sessions for Disabled People:** These have not yet resumed in East Suffolk. The Forum has made representations to East Suffolk Council and will continue to monitor the situation.

## **9. Meetings in 2021**

9.1 Given that there is little likelihood of face to face meetings for the foreseeable future, the next meeting will take place via Zoom on Tuesday, 12<sup>th</sup> January, 2021, at 2pm.

9.2 Members were asked to reserve the date of Tuesday, 13<sup>th</sup> April, 2021 via Zoom for a further meeting of the Forum.

9.3 Chloe will arrange for a presentation on the Grandpads Project for the January meeting.

**Action: All to note**