

**DISABILITY ADVISORY & ACCESS FORUM
16 JUNE 2021
7.00 - 7.54 PM**



Present:

Councillors Mrs Mattick (Chairman), Brossard (Vice-Chairman), Mrs L Gibson and Mrs Ingham

Apologies for absence were received from:

Jane Figg

Also Present:

Mark Sanders, The Ark
Megan Horwood, Healthwatch
Karen Scott, Breakthrough
Aimee Sykes, Breakthrough
Phil Bell, Involve
Harjit Hunjan, Bracknell Forest Council

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 3 March 2021 were approved as a correct record.

2. Healthwatch survey

Megan Horwood presented the Healthwatch survey outcomes.

Healthwatch aimed to be the independent champion for local voice on health services, by gathering residents' experience of local health providers. Help and Care had won the contract for East Berkshire Healthwatch services in January 2021.

Residents had been surveyed on the health and care services they had accessed in Bracknell Forest, and were asked to rate them from Excellent to Poor. 206 positive responses had been received, and 133 negative responses, and there was work to be done to understand the reasons behind these responses. Feedback would be shared with healthcare providers.

Highest rated services included vaccination services, ambulance services and opticians, and lower rated services were mental health (both adult and child), and sexual health.

44% had fed back that it was difficult to access services, 14% had said it was easy to access services, and 42% said it was normal access however from the feedback, it was suggested that 'normal' was also often negative.

Themes around positive experiences included well-organised services, professional and friendly staff, easy to book, variation of appointment times, short waiting times and clear communication. Negative experience themes were that it was difficult to

make appointments, negative staff, lack of follow up care, poor communications with patients, overuse of technology and expensive parking.

Respondents fed back that the Healthwatch priorities should be GP surgeries, MH, elderly care, dentistry. The themes for workstreams should be access to services, provision of services, and post-COVID.

The next steps following the survey would be to highlight common themes, findings and opinions to understand the responses more. The survey report would be circulated as far as possible.

In response to questions, the following points were noted:

- It was recognised that GPs were often multi-disciplinary doctors who had a broad knowledge of conditions rather than specialising in a particular condition. It was suggested that this may have impacted on some of the negative responses.
- Some GP surgeries had been closed during COVID, which had led to an inevitable backlog and pressure on appointment slots.
- The survey had focussed on the GPs which residents attend, even if the practices were outside of the Bracknell Forest boundary. Feedback about non-Bracknell Forest GP practices would be shared with the relevant Healthwatch organisation.
- The report would be shared with healthcare providers and a resultant action plan would be created. It was noted that some of the challenges arising in the report may already have been addressed by providers, and this needed to be captured.
- In future, Healthwatch hoped to gain in-person insights by meeting with residents and patients however this was not yet possible during COVID.
- Healthwatch would use the survey responses to set their priorities.

3. **Breakthrough Supported Employment**

Karen Scott and Aimee Sykes presented on Breakthrough Supported Employment.

COVID had impacted the Breakthrough service as some clients had been made redundant, and others had were feeling isolated. The Breakthrough team had done virtual meetings and online interest sessions to offer support to service users, and to encourage them to stay connected to the Breakthrough work. As restrictions had eased, some in-person meetings had restarted including employability, life skills and independence sessions. Interest groups such as gardening, catering, retail, arts and crafts and social media groups had all restarted, with a focus on employability.

Businesses were still not fully open after COVID, and Breakthrough had struggled to find placements for their clients.

It was noted that for some of the Breakthrough clients with autism, it was more comfortable to stay at home and be isolated, and that these people needed additional encouragement to reintegrate into society after lockdown.

In response to questions, the following points were noted:

- It was noted that school graduates this year with additional needs may find it even more difficult to find a job than usual, as they missed a significant time of school this year.
- Breakthrough were doing a lot of work around employer engagement.

- One Breakthrough client had started working for the Council during COVID, and had settled into the role quicker as a result of working from home.
- Employers' approach to employing people with autism and learning difficulties varied throughout the borough. Breakthrough were working to build relationships with the Local Enterprise Partnership and the Bracknell Industrial District to encourage employers to offer work placements.
- Members were encouraged to follow the Breakthrough Supported Employment Facebook page for updates on what Breakthroughers were doing.

4. **Equalities Scheme - feedback from engagement workshops**

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5. **Items for Future Meetings**

- Blue Badge Overview & Scrutiny activity

CHAIRMAN