

1st September 2020

New Healthwatch in Sussex survey on Patient Transport Services

Healthwatch in Sussex today launches a new patient survey. We want to hear from people about their experiences of using Non-Emergency Patient Transport Services. Their ideas will help inform the commissioning of a future service.

Sussex NHS Commissioners, representing Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) in Sussex, approached Healthwatch to conduct this important piece of work. This service is currently provided by South Central Ambulance Service.

Once we have gathered patients' views, we will be sharing the findings and recommended improvements with the commissioners. Patient's views will help shape the future of the service which is due to be re-commissioned in 2021.

The survey will be open from 1st to 20th September and we are encouraging people to take part by offering a prize draw to win one of five £25 gift vouchers. People are also encouraged to share their individual stories with their local Healthwatch:

Brighton and Hove - office@healthwatchbrightonandhove.co.uk

East Sussex - enquiries@healthwatcheastsussex.co.uk

West Sussex - helpdesk@healthwatchwestsussex.co.uk

Patient Transport in Sussex

Non-Emergency Patient Transport Services (PTS) cover all of Sussex, with a population in excess of 1.6 million. Patients are transported via pre-booked journeys to and from health appointments seven days a week, including Bank Holidays. PTS is free at the point of use for all eligible patients and currently provides around 25,000 journeys per month.

In the past the service has failed some patients, the issues were so serious that they were raised in Parliament. This is why it is so important the commissioners understand what is working well and what needs to improve - and the only way they can fully understand this, is to hear from people who use the service.

Healthwatch in Sussex said today:

“One of the most basic issues people face is travelling to and from health appointments. These services are a lifeline and help those most in need. Evidence suggests that services do not always work well, making this a distressing experience for patients. A much-needed national review of PTS has been announced by NHS England and a key aspect of this is how to improve commissioning of services.

Locally, from 2022 a new provider will be awarded a minimum five-year contract worth around £20 million to run this service for Sussex and Surrey eligible residents. This time around, the commissioning process and transition arrangements between the existing provider and the provider who is awarded the new contract must deliver real and immediate improvements.

Healthwatch in Sussex welcome the CCG's engagement with us on this important work and we will work closely with them to deliver a successful new contract.”

Press release ends

Further Information

In the past, patients across Sussex have suffered a poor service, notably in 2016, when Coperforma were awarded the contract but after just one year of poor performance walked away from the contract at an undisclosed cost to the taxpayer. In 2017, South Central Ambulance Service took over the contract and after a difficult start has worked hard to deliver improvements and greater patient satisfaction levels.

In 2019, Healthwatch England carried out a nationwide conversation on the NHS Long Term Plan, engaging with over 30,000 people across the country. They found that travel was a key issue, with nine out of 10 people saying that convenient ways of getting to and from health services is important to them. Indeed, people put transport above other things, such as choice over where to be treated and improving digital access to services

For further help and advice and to escalate issues of concern contact:

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Previous reports on Patient Transport Services in Sussex:

Healthwatch reports

Healthwatch Brighton and Hove	Users' perspectives on the Patient Transport Service April - September 2016 Perspectives of Renal Outpatient Department patients at the Royal Sussex County Hospital, Brighton	2016
Healthwatch in Sussex Partnership working across the Healthwatch teams operating in East and West Sussex and Brighton and Hove	Sussex wide Non-Emergency Patient Transport Service (PTS) provided by: South Central Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust: What patients and carers and some staff told us about how the service has changed.	April 2018
	The New Sussex- wide Patient Transport Service	September 2017
Healthwatch England	What people have been telling us about health and social care A review of our evidence Jan-March 2019	2019
	There and back What people tell us about their experiences of travelling to and from NHS services	October 2019

NHS Report

NHS England national review	In autumn 2019 NHS England and NHS Improvement announced it would review non-emergency patient transport services (NEPTS). The review closed in March. No outcomes have been published at the time of writing	Autumn 2019
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Independent review

TIAA	Adequacy of the mobilisation arrangements for the new Patient Transport Service contract	June 2016
TIAA	Patient Transport Services Mobilisation - incorporation of lessons learned	April 2017