

## **Spotlight On**

# **Stoke Heath Prisoner Engagement**

### **Who is Healthwatch Shropshire?**

Healthwatch Shropshire is the independent consumer champion for health and social care in Shropshire. We aim to ensure that people from across the county have an opportunity to voice their opinion on the health and social care services affecting them. We are one of many local Healthwatch across England.

### **What we do**

We listen to peoples' experiences, look for trends and influence commissioning, provision and scrutiny of local health and social care services. We also provide an information and signposting service. We are not individual case workers, but where people need that we signpost them to the right service.

### **Background**

We were approached by NHS England's Health and Justice Team to go into Stoke Heath prison in Shropshire to talk to the prisoners about their experience of health care within the prison setting. HMP & YOI Stoke Heath is a Closed Category C Adult male and Young Adult site, with a small Cat D unit which opened in November 2012. It has an operational capacity of 766.

### **What we wanted to do**

As a seldom heard group of residents in Shropshire, Healthwatch wanted to make sure that the prisoner's voice was able to be heard by the people who provide and commission services.

### **What we did**

We went into the prison and conducted 2 focus groups one in 2016 and one in 2017. The prisoners were asked what was good about the services provided and how they could be improved. After each visit Healthwatch Shropshire wrote a report detailing

what they were told and gave this to NHS England's Health and Justice Team. The team then visited the prison to do their annual quality visit. They used the experiences of the prisoners to inform their visit schedule and inspect the services on offer in the prison. After our engagement work Healthwatch Shropshire also shared anonymised feedback with the organisations providing the prison's healthcare services so that they could use this patient experience to ensure their provision was meeting the needs of the prisoners.

## **healthwatch** Shropshire

**We are the independent  
Consumer champion for health  
and social care in Shropshire**

**Making your voice heard**

We will be holding a focus group to  
Listen to your experiences of **health  
care within the prison.**

**We want to hear from you**

**Please tell your wing health rep  
what you would like to share with  
us.**

**19th May 2017**

### **Independent Engagement**

- It was important to the prisoners to know that as Healthwatch we were independent and outside of both Healthcare and the Justice system. There was a great mistrust of engagement from people seen to be in charge of their services and that their voice would not be fully represented in an open and objective way. It was understood and appreciated that Healthwatch had no

'hidden agenda' and that prisoners were free to express themselves with absolutely candour.

- On the initial visit the focus group had been advertised and several men had come along to have their say. This meant the group was representative and consisted of around 20 men. The second focus group did receive the same level of publicity within the prison and so the group was smaller.

## What we found out

### ● What we were told, key themes.

There were several key themes from both visits:

- Waiting times for appointments were an issue especially for dental and optician appointments
- The appointment system was not working very well and could be improved.
- Many of the prisoners were critical about the GP service and policy towards medication management
- The complaints procedure was not believed to be effective
- Mental health services were highly praised
- The Nursing and the Physio staff were singled out for their good work
- The equalities work completed at induction was considered very good
- Treatment for long term conditions was not as good as it could be
- The support for vulnerable prisoners and the self-harm clinic was excellent
- The steroid clinic was also singled out as very good
- no continuity of care from the transfer from other prisons , previous diagnosis or prescriptions disregarded
- induction and wing reps are invaluable support

### ● Things we were told could be improved

- The waiting area in healthcare
- Better information at induction in an easily accessible form
- Self-care to be encouraged. People should be able to use their own money ( not restricted to one account)to buy things for healthcare to look after themselves- from nutrition, pharmacy and skin care.
- More help with smoking cessation- the prison was about to become a smoke free prison.
- Complaints system where the complaints do not go directly to healthcare but through another source
- Using a holistic approach to reducing medication for people where appropriate
- Better management of long term conditions including specialist cancer care, diabetes support and pain management.

## Sharing feedback

We had a meeting with the Patient Experience Lead from Shropshire Community Health trust to share the feedback we had received from the prisoners. We also shared this information with NHS England who commission health services at Stoke Heath.

### 📌 Future monitoring plans?

Whilst in the prison we were able to talk to the wing health reps about what we do as an organisation and gave out key contact details. Since this visit Healthwatch Shropshire has had several letters from prisoners about their experiences of healthcare. We have collated this information and added it to our national database. These comments will be shared on an ongoing basis so that issues can be identified and addressed. Further visits will be arranged and more focus groups held for prisoners to share with us.

### 📌 Probation services

- 📌 Following our visit to the prison we also met with the probation service to talk about support for offenders on their release. We discussed the support that Healthwatch Shropshire could give in terms of information and signposting. We also gave a talk to the probation team at their team meeting.

### 📌 Health and Justice Conference

- 📌 As part of our work at Stoke Heath we had a stand at the NHS England North Midlands Health and Justice Team's Health and Justice Conference. The conference was held in partnership with Staffordshire University to showcase their portfolio of health and justice commissioning and delivery as well as further developing partnerships with key justice and custody stakeholders. We had the opportunity to discuss our work with Ros Roughton Director of NHS Commissioning for NHS England. Where we were able to highlight the value and need for an independent organisation to champion the voice of prisoners.





**healthwatch**  
Shropshire

Give prisoners a voice

Gain prisoner feedback on prison health and social care services

Promote Prisoner Engagement

Independent Health Complaints Advocacy Service

Inform NHSE quality visits

**inform**  
**influence**  
**improve**

Thank you