

Leaving Hospital: Healthwatch Devon update report

For Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee Tuesday, 8 March 2016

1. Background

In July 2015, Healthwatch Devon published "[Then What? A report of people's experiences of leaving hospital](#)".

The report was based on feedback to Healthwatch Devon from 300 people with recent experience of hospital discharge. Most had had excellent treatment in hospital, but many reported that a generally good experience had been spoiled by problems with the discharge process.

The top issues were:

- Timeliness: Particularly delays with medication, transport home, care assessments and setting up care at home.
- Aftercare: 1 in 3 respondents spoke negatively about the quality of care after leaving hospital.
- Communication: Over a quarter of respondents were concerned that health and care professionals did not communicate well with one another.

When asked what could improve the experience of leaving hospital, the biggest single suggestion was "co-ordination of care between hospital and home".

2. Implications

Healthwatch Devon was concerned about the findings. The health service knows from long experience that "transfer of care" means risk. The experiences cited above - delays, poor communication and inadequate co-ordination - can mean confusion over medication, longer recovery times, and unnecessary readmission to hospital.

At a time when health and care strategies are focused on integration of health and care services, issues such as timeliness, communication and co-ordination are fundamental to the success or otherwise of service delivery plans.

3. Responses

We were pleased to have responses to our report from commissioners and providers - particularly those that offered point by point responses to our recommendations.

We are also aware that some of the promised actions are being followed through. For example, the RD&E mentioned trialling a Discharge to Assess initiative, designed to cut delays in getting people home from hospital. D2A is now up and running and will be evaluated as it goes.

Similarly, the South Devon and Torbay CCG mentioned the creation of Local Multi Agency Teams, to achieve better wrap around care for people leaving hospital. We have heard that the Torbay and South Devon Trust is working on the practical implementation of this initiative.

4. Next Steps

We understand that the Scrutiny Committee is considering a Task Group to take a more in-depth view of hospital discharge within the context of the Integration agenda.

We would recommend that any such group takes as its starting point the range of pledges and commitments made by commissioners and providers in their responses to the Healthwatch Devon "Then What?" report. While some of these (as noted above) are clearly being acted on, it may be that others are subject to slippage, or to changes of priority as other strategies and short term pressures crowd in.

The Healthwatch Devon report was published in July 2015, so a target date of July 2016 (one year on) might be appropriate for assessing what progress commissioners and providers have made.