



“Perseverance”

Improving patient transportation

healthwatch
in Sussex

Services reviewed and aims of this work

Service reviewed: Non-emergency patient transport (NEPTS).

Aims: To improve the Sussex NEPTS service by embedding patient voice into commissioning.

Why we did this work

- Work on a new 10yr, £23m NEPTS contract started in 2020 with a scheduled start date for 2023 (delayed to 2025).
- Healthwatch in Sussex (HWiSx) wanted to be included in developing the new contract to ensure that patients' needs and our recommendations were included in the service specification. We also wanted to ensure that past failures which had affected this service were not repeated.

Why change was needed

- 2016 saw a total collapse of NEPTS service. Contract was terminated at cost. An external review identified many failings: “*insufficiently tested infrastructure*” “*more evidence of preparedness*”. Patients suffered and many were left stranded for hours/no transport.
- HWiSx reviews over 4 years showed satisfaction levels starting at just 8%, rising to 78%.
- Our last review revealed that patients wanted improved reliability & communications, clearer eligibility criteria, improved tracking of vehicles, and consistent performance.
- HWiSx wanted commissioners to embed residents’ views when designing the service specification for the new contract.
- HWiSx wanted providers to work more closely with HWiSx.



Residents told us:

2016 *"Frequently waited three and half hours to get home, one day a car arrived to take me to hospital 30 minutes after I arrived home from my treatment. Another day, three cars arrived for me all at once."*

2020 *"A lot of the time the transport is late and you have no idea what's happening and how long you are going to wait. It can't be that hard to keep people informed, can it?"*

"This report offers important learning for future commissioning and delivery of the service."

- HW report



What we did

- Three HW teams collaborated to ensure Sussex voices were collated.
- Built ongoing relationship with commissioners & current provider.
- Delivered 4 patient-led reviews (2017-2020), collating 600 experiences. 3 reviews were commissioned.
- Targeted urban and rural communities. Surveys (hard copy/online), Volunteers conducted interviews in-person (renal) and with others including carers by phone & by visiting outpatients departments. Collaborated with trusts to identify patients. Also spoke to staff.
- Shared our insight with the commissioners, the current NEPTS provider, at place scrutiny committees and with Healthwatch England to support a national review of NEPTS.
- Worked with local MP to have questions asked in Parliament.
- Issued press releases.

Impacts

- HW findings included in market engagement event for potential bidders.
- Influenced service specification, with HW's work referenced five times.
- HW recommendations written into service requirements, based on what patient's said they wanted from NEPTS:
 - Mobile tracking and clearer eligibility guidance
 - SPOA – to signpost ineligible people to alternatives
 - Patient forums to be established with HW representation
- HW was invited to help choose the new provider (procurement).
- We worked with the existing provider to deliver patient forums.
- Ongoing engagement with commissioners to secure a further review of new provider 6 months after 'go live' to highlight any teething troubles.




Commissioners

*“The contract currently being tendered reflects the learning taken from the previous procurement, **feedback from system partners including Healthwatch, with Healthwatch playing a significant role in service design, development and evaluation of the bids received.**”*

*“**Commissioners for NEPTS have welcomed Healthwatch representation into their work when developing the new contract specification.** This has taken the form of regular attendance by Healthwatch at NEPTS Task and Finish groups, inviting comment on draft Service Specifications and involving patient representation in the assessment of bids to deliver the new service.”*

“We have developed a vision for a new patient transport offer that includes all components and that will better meet the requirements of patients and the healthcare system in 2025 and beyond.”



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For more information

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