

Enhancing the conversation about 'Epsom & St Helier 2020-2030'

Increasing the number and diversity of people involved in the conversation

1. Background

This report summarises the activity undertaken by Healthwatch Surrey¹, on behalf of Epsom & St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust (the Trust), as part of a broad programme of engagement with local people on its 'Epsom & St Helier 2020-2030' involvement document (the 'involvement opportunity').

Healthwatch Surrey was seeking **to increase the number and diversity of people involved in the conversation**. It submitted a proposal to the Trust on the 11th August, which led to the scope and terms of a collaboration being agreed on the 17th August.

2. Executive Summary

Healthwatch Surrey designed a communications and engagement programme which enabled it to speak to over 2,000 people on high streets, outside supermarkets and at community events about the Trust's 'involvement opportunity'.

Through a direct email and postal campaign, PR and social media it generated over 5,000 views of a dedicated web page explaining the proposals, press coverage through BBC Surrey radio and over 25,000 Twitter impressions.

For the majority of people participating in the opportunity online, this was the first time they had engaged in an NHS consultation or involvement opportunity.

A series of 'showcase events' were held in order to seek out those with a high interest in the conversation and provide access to those people who would otherwise not be able to view the online video. These events were supported by the Trust's executives who were on hand to take part in Q&A sessions.

The majority of people we spoke to were supportive of the Trust's aim, although there was less clear support for the Trust's case for change. This report provides an insight into the questions, comments and objections people raised. It is hoped this will support the Trust's decision making and its approach to future conversations.

¹ Healthwatch Surrey is an independent – apolitical – social enterprise which exists to amplify the voice of local people in the planning and delivery of local services (www.healthwatchesurrey.co.uk)

3. Communications Campaign

A Healthwatch Surrey led communications campaign was undertaken within the agreed catchment area.

Direct email campaign

Personalised emails were sent to a list of 83 targeted stakeholders identified by Healthwatch Surrey who were likely to be interested in the proposals. This included Elected Members and voluntary sector organisations e.g. local National Childbirth Trust groups and Sure Start Centres.

Many of these groups were previously known to Healthwatch Surrey, including through the Community Cash Fund², but others were identified specifically for this project.

A full list can be found in Appendix 1.

Poster campaign

Posters advertising the proposals and opportunities to get involved were sent with a cover letter to 155 places including day centres, post offices, HUBS, care homes, GP Practices, Outline LGBTQ and other VCFS organisations in the catchment area.

Social Media

Content and paid-for advertising on social media generated 130 likes/comments/shares.

This led to over 25,000 impressions on Twitter, 8,948 people being reached through Facebook and 636 interactions/‘clicks through’ to a dedicated Healthwatch Surrey web page.

Dedicated web page

There were 5,144 views of a dedicated Healthwatch Surrey web page ‘Epsom 2020’.

Local media

A press release was issued on the 5th September promoting the ‘involvement opportunity’. Subsequent coverage included an interview on the BBC Surrey radio Drive programme on the 7th September.

² <https://www.healthwatchesurrey.co.uk/our-work/community-cash-fund/>

4. Listening Events

A series of highly accessible Listening Events were held at high streets, supermarkets and community events.

Location	Date	Start	Finish
Epsom Hospital (main entrance)	Wednesday, 6 th September	8am	8pm
Banstead High Street	Friday, 8 th September	8am	8pm
Cobham High Street	Friday, 15 th September	8am	8pm
Epsom & Ewell Family Fun Day	Sunday, 17 th September	11:30am	4:30pm
Leatherhead Market	Thursday, 21 st September	9am	3pm
Dorking High Street	Wednesday, 27 th September	8am	8pm
Sainsbury's, Fetcham	Tuesday 10 th October	10am	3pm
St Nicolas Church, Bookham	Wednesday 11 th October	10am	3pm

During these events Healthwatch Surrey staff proactively sought to engage local people in a conversation about the changes.



- **2,058 people were asked** - *“Are you aware of the proposed changes to Epsom & St Helier Hospitals?”*
- Of those people engaging with staff at Listening Events, **64% reported that they were not aware of the proposals;**
- **30% reported that they were already aware, 6% were ‘not sure**
- **1,455 took away the Trust’s leaflets advertising ‘the involvement opportunity’**

5. Showcase Events

In order to seek out and meet those with a high interest in the conversation - and for people who would otherwise not have access to the online video - a series of four showcase events were held on Thursday 28th September at 8am, 11am, 4pm and 7pm at Epsom Racecourse³.

A member of the Trust Executive Team was available at each event to answer questions from members of the public. People were given an opportunity to participate in the Trust's questionnaire during each event.



14 people attended the showcase events.

A member of the Executive Team commented that **“it was great to see new faces”** in relation to the people attending with an interest in the proposals

Of the 11 people providing feedback on the event:

- All agreed that it was **‘a good opportunity to ask questions’**
- 10 agreed that it was **‘well facilitated’** and was **‘a good use of my time’**
- 8 agreed that it was informative
- One attendee commented that - **“... we needed to hear from people who have concerns about the proposals”**

³ An alternative location, with a high passing footfall, was sought but not found

6. What we heard

A summary of the 44 responses shared directly with Healthwatch Surrey is provided below, in order that the Trust can triangulate with its own findings. The original questionnaires have also been shared with the Trust to conduct its own analysis.

N.b. This work did not seek to accurately understand and make conclusions on the views of local people on these proposals. Healthwatch Surrey did not have any involvement in the scope, content and structure of the conversation.

Who we spoke to

44 questionnaire responses (23 online / 21 written) were received directly by Healthwatch Surrey, although others will have been sent directly to the Trust as directed within the leaflet.

Responses received directly by Healthwatch Surrey came from people:

- Whose ages cover these ranges; 0-24 / 25-34 / 35-44 / 44-55 / 55-64 / 65+
- Of different genders
- Who consider themselves patients, Carers, visitors and local residents

The online questionnaire included supplementary questions in order to measure the diversification of participation achieved by Healthwatch Surrey.

The majority (18 of 23) of people completing the questionnaire online reported that this was the first 'NHS consultation or involvement opportunity' that they had participated in.

Participation was also secured from people who consider themselves to have a disability and people from the BME community

Support for the Trust's stated aim

“Do you agree with our aim to provide as much care as possible from our existing hospital sites at St Helier and Epsom and do this by working more closely with the other local health and care providers?”

A majority (27 of 44) of respondents agreed with this statement. Of those that objected, some associated commentary included:

“It sometimes seems as if decision makers put geography too far down their list of considerations... makes them look very out of touch”

“Yes but they all need new buildings”

“The sites are too far apart to provide meaningful A&E for the whole area”

“Lives could easily be lost”

“Yes as long as [Epsom Hospital] keeps its A&E”

“This is a loaded questions”

Case for change

“Do you think we have made the case that we will improve patient care by bringing together our services for our sickest or most at-risk patients on a new specialist acute facility on one site?”

There was an evenly split amount of support and opposition to this statement. A number of people supported this statement if a particular site was chosen.

Of those that objected, some associated commentary included:

“This is a thinly veiled cost saving exercise”

“Should have specialist acute facilities on both sites”

“It doesn’t make sense if the journey time [between hospitals] by public transport takes one hour and 40 minutes”

“I still think we need two Hospitals in place”

“Many people in [the Epsom area] will not be able to get to Sutton or St Helier without a car”

“Time to travel to St Helier, could potentially, mean the difference between life and death”

“I think the idea of improving patient care is far too vague”

Alternative scenario’s to consider

Four alternative scenarios were expressed as follows:

1. Look at the merits of maintaining Cottage Hospitals on the outer edges of the catchment area
2. Leave both A&E departments in place [invest in both]
3. Separate Epsom Hospital from St Helier [it managed OK financially before]
4. Close St Helier’s, enhance facilities at Epsom and build a new Hospital in Sutton

Continuing the conversation

Thirty three people registered an interest in taking part in future conversations about these proposals (34 email addresses / two postal addresses).

The majority of people wanted to be part of future conversations online or by email (including a majority of the people attending events), however interest in events and postal communication was also expressed.

The majority of people responding to the Trust's written questionnaire (12 of 21) also became 'signed up supporters' of the proposals.

7. Observations

As an independent organisation that is trusted to be impartial and to take an interest in what people say, Healthwatch Surrey believes that it is able to gather a unique insight into the views and concerns of local people.

With this in mind, some further observations follow which are made in order to support the Trust should it decide to continue this conversation with local people.

7 questions to answer

The follow questions are a selection of questions asked after playing the Trust's video about the 'involvement opportunity' at the showcase events:

1. "Where does **St George's** fit into all this?"
2. "What help do you need from us?"
3. "How long will it take a Blue Light ambulance to reach site from the **remotest part of the catchment area?**" / "If I had a head injury in Epsom and the acute site was in Sutton or St Helier, what would happen to me?"
4. "Where would **funding** come from? (hope it's not from private sector)"
5. "How will it happen? **How will the Hospitals operate** while this is going on?"
6. "I've driven to St Helier before and the roads aren't good enough to accommodate **the extra traffic** from Epsom and surrounding areas to get to that acute facility. What will be done about that?"
7. "During the video Daniel makes a case that works in his favour, but **where is the other argument?** The people who are against the changes and the reason why they're against the changes? / What are the main reasons why some health professionals are against these plans? / What are the protagonists saying?"

Other comments to consider

"Need a direct bus route between the Hospitals"

"The travel probably won't affect me... it's more important to older people"

"If they build more houses on the space they don't need, we'll have more problems with increased population and roads... traffic"

"Every time I hear any of these words about "consolidation" or "new & improvement" all I hear is 'cuts'"

Observations by Healthwatch Surrey staff

Healthwatch Surrey staff engaging in these conversations reported the following:

- Some people reported being aware of the proposals, although on further discussion this **awareness was not always specifically about the new proposals** and document issued by the Trust, on occasion the awareness was about historical proposals.
- Of those reporting that they were aware of the proposals, **people often reported having received and recognised the leaflet distributed by the Trust.**
- **Cynicism was frequently expressed** amongst people engaged with (including about the proposals being implementable), summarised by the statements “here we go again” and “it’ll never happen”.
- Healthwatch Surrey staff reported that there was often **an apathy to taking part in the questionnaire** amongst those who showed interest in the proposals (i.e. those engaging in conversation and those taking literature). This is supported by the fact that just 0.4% of people visiting the dedicated Healthwatch Surrey website actually went on to complete the questionnaire and just 1.4% of printed questionnaires picked up at events were returned in freepost envelopes.

Appendix 1: Stakeholder List

Action for Carers
Age Concern Epsom & Ewell
Angela Goodwin, Carers Support Mole Valley
British Red Cross
Cancer Research Cobham
Cancer Research Dorking
Cancer Research Epsom
Cancer Research Leatherhead
Carers of Epsom
Central Surrey Health
Children's Trust
Chime Carlin- Alzheimer's Society
College Ward Residents Association
Combat Stress, Leatherhead
Conquest Art
Cuddington Residents Association
Dorking Christian Centre-Janette Masters
Dorking NCT
Dyscover
Elected Members (in catchment)
Epsom and Ewell Food Bank
Epsom Town Residents Association
Erica Lockhart
Ewell Court Resident's Association
Ewell Downs Residents Association
Ewell Residents Association
Forces Children's Trust
Friends of Pound House Dorking
GP Practices (in catchment)
Giulia Mauri (Community Chest)
HomeStart Epsom, Ewell and Banstead
Interaktive
Jenny Pearman Carer Support
Elmbridge
Joanna Sherring, The Meeting Room
Josie Standbrook
Kerry Ann Kitson, Leatherhead Theatre Group
Kids for Kids
Leatherhead NCT
Local Mums Online
Maca
Martin Jeremiah Carers Support Mole Valley
Medical Engineering Resweces Unit
Meru
MERU
Outline Surrey
Phab
Queen Elizabeth foundation
Rainbow Trust, Leatherhead
Rosebery Housing Association Ltd
Samaritans Leatherhead and Mid Surrey
Sarah Malone
SeeAbility
Sense Epsom
Shooting Star Chase
Stamford Ward Residents Association
Stoneleigh and Auriol Residents Association
Surrey Downs Diabetes Group
Sutton and Epsom NCT
The Brigette Trust
The Mary Frances Trust
The Sunnybank Trust
Through the Roof
Transform Housing and Support
Turn2Us
Urban Parents
Viv Colvill, Free Wheelers Theatre Company
Volunteer Action- Epsom Volunteer Centre
West Ewell and Ruxley Residents Association
What's on in Epsom
Woodcote (Epsom) Residents Society
Work Stress Solutions
Young Carers Mid Surrey