



**Healthwatch Medway** - September 2019

Experiences of people using community mental  
health services at Canada House

# Foreword

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**At the end of last year, our volunteers visited Canada House in Gillingham to talk to people who were using the community mental health services.**

We wanted to hear their feedback about the service and understand what, in their view, could be improved. In January 2019 we published a report which detailed everything we heard as well as making a number of recommendations.

We shared all our recommendations with the Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership (KMPT) and encouraged them to make the necessary improvements.

We returned to Canada House this year on two occasions, one in August and one in September. We wanted to talk to the patients who were currently using the service to hear their experiences and to see whether the service had improved.

This report details our findings from these new visits. Once again, we will be sharing what we heard with the Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership (KMPT) as well as the organisations that commission them. We will also be sharing our findings with the Care Quality Commission.

If you have a story to tell, get in touch and share it with us on [enquiries@healthwatchmedway.com](mailto:enquiries@healthwatchmedway.com) or call anytime on 0800 136 656.

**Maggie Cane**  
Manager, Healthwatch Medway

## What were we trying to achieve?

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We wanted to talk to people who were currently using mental health services at Canada House. Through their feedback we wanted to find out whether the service had improved since our previous visit in 2018 and to see whether our recommendations had been put in place.

## How did we go about it?

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Our trained Healthwatch staff and volunteers visited Canada House twice during August & September. These visits are known as Enter & View visits.

We spoke to **35 people** including patients, families, friends and carers.

During our visits, we spoke to patients using the service and listened to their thoughts and experiences.



## What did we find?

## What did people tell us?

\* Please note some patients did not answer all questions

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### In Summary

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- The majority of patients, 14 out of 20, said they felt involved in their care whilst 6 said they did not.
- Patients said it was difficult to get through and speak to someone on the telephone.
- Over half the patients we spoke to had received a call back when they had rang and left a message.
- 20 out of 27 patients said they had not been offered support to access other health services. 10 patients said that they would like to be offered this support.
- Over half the patients we spoke to said that they had not been offered information about other organisations or agencies that could support them however, 13 said that they had, these services included Imago, local youth groups, mindfulness awareness.
- Only 50% of patients said they had a copy of their Care Plan.
- All the patients apart from one, knew who they should contact in a crisis and over half of the patients we spoke to said they had used the crisis service. Their experience of the crisis service was overwhelmingly negative with patients reporting that the service is “unhelpful” and “slow to react”.

## What have we recommended?

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**It is clear from our recent visits that our recommended improvements have not been put in place and the service has not improved. The stories that patients told us suggest that their experience has got worse rather than better.**

It is important that the service takes note of our findings and the experiences of their patients and works to ensure people have a better experience. Healthwatch Medway and other local organisations can support the service to make the necessary changes.

Therefore, we are reiterating the same recommendations from January 2019 which are;

- **Ensure that patients who miss an appointment receive a phone call to check they are ok**
- **Continue to signpost people to additional health and support services**
- **Ensure all patients are involved in planning their care**
- **All patients should have a care plan**
- **Review the mental health crisis centre**



### In detail

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The reception area was always staffed during our visit and we saw staff welcoming and engaging with patients and their families.

The waiting areas were clean and tidy with fresh drinking water available.

The reception is easily accessible for people with a disability and there are posters and leaflets on display in the waiting area.

Privacy and dignity for patients can be maintained with various waiting rooms available.

## What did we find?

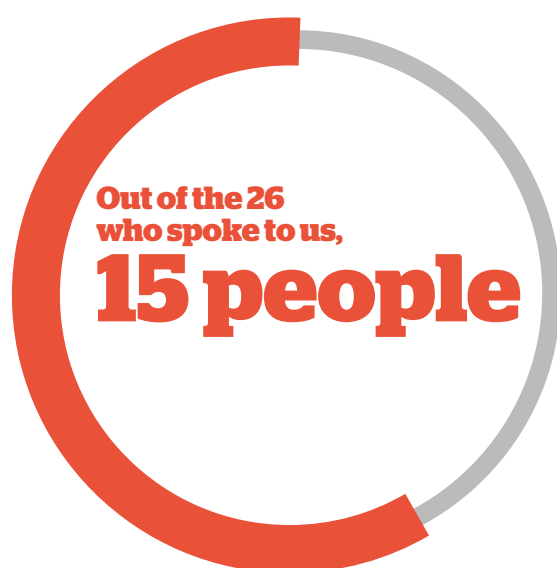
## What did people tell us?

\* Please note some patients did not answer all questions

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### Telephone system

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... told us that they had been able to get through on the telephone when they needed to speak to someone with 10 people confirming they had had trouble getting to speak to someone.

23 people talked to us about getting a call back. Of those, 12 said they had received a call back with 8 saying they had not.

- "It's hard to get through"
- "I find it hard to get an appointment around work"
- "It's not easy to find the telephone number using the internet"
- "Staff are difficult to get hold of. I've tried multiple attempts and got nothing"
- "Recently I left 4 messages over 2 weeks and got no response"
- "It can take several attempts to get through as they are constantly busy"
- "My support worker does ring me back if I ring the direct line"

# What did we find?

## What did people tell us?

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### Appointments

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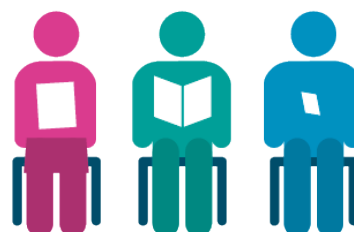
**Half the people we spoke to about this told us they did not receive a call from staff to check they were ok and to ask the reason why they didn't attend their appointment**

- "Nothing, you just wait until next appointment"

**We asked people what happened when their appointment was cancelled by the Trust. Half of patients told us they hadn't been informed about a cancelled appointment. The other half of patients had been offered an alternative date.**

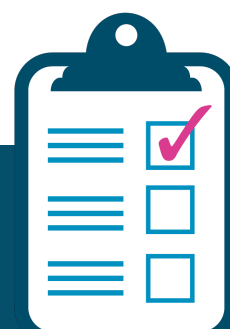
- "One appointment was cancelled but I didn't get a call so we didn't know. There was no automatic call back to offer me a new appointment"
- "It depends. The doctors and nurses do get back to you, but the reception staff don't. doctors/nurses do get back to you, but reception/office staff don't"

#### WAITING ROOM



### Our recommendation:

To ensure all patients who miss an appointment receive a phone call to check they are ok



# What did we find?

## What did people tell us?

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### Support and Information

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#### Support to access other agencies:

- **29 people** talked to us about support. Of these, 13 people said that they had been given information about other organisations such as Imago, local youth group and mindfulness awareness sessions with the remaining 16 people telling us they had not been offered any information.

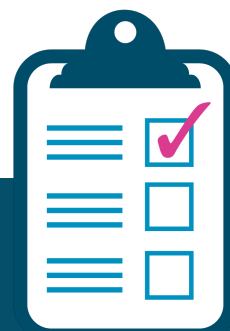


#### Support to access additional health services:

- **Out of the 27 patients** we spoke to about this, 20 said they had not been offered support by staff to access other health services.
- **10 patients** said that they would like to receive support to access additional health services.

#### Our Recommendation:

Continue to signpost people to additional health and support services





# What did we find?

## What did people tell us?

### Patient Involvement/Care

20 patients spoke to us about being involved in their care.

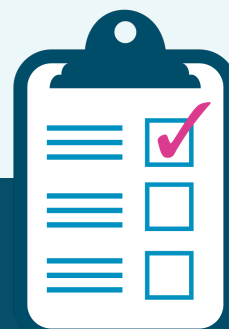
14 patients said they did feel involved in their care with 6 saying they did not, or they only did sometimes.

2 patients said they were unsure as they saw a different Doctor on each visit and so felt their care started from the beginning each time.

- "What care?!"
- "Every time I visit there is a different Doctor so they don't know me, or what I need"
- "I was discharged after being told that I was having a severe episode. No real care given to me"
- "I feel that I have just been left to 'get on with it' by myself with no support from Canada House. It is probably due to the lack of funding, but I need more help than my GP can offer me"
- "I do not feel I am moving forward with my care"
- "I had an emergency appointment so the Doctor told me I did not need to return for my standard appointment which was in a few days time. But because I didn't turn up for that, they closed my file and the support worker took a long time to re-open it"

### Our Recommendation:

Ensure all patients are involved in planning their care



# What did we find?

# What did people tell us?

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## Patients Care Plan

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- **Only half** of the patients we spoke to told us that they do have a copy of their care plan but the rest either didn't have one, or didn't know about it.



**Our recommendation:**  
All Patients should have a care plan

# What did we find?

## What did people tell us?

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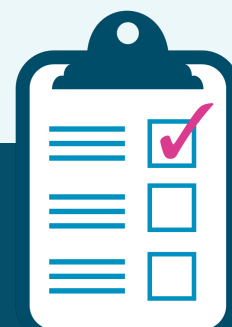
### Crisis Support

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- **25 patients** spoke about the crisis service.
- **All people we spoke to** apart from one, knew who to contact in a crisis.
- **25 people** said they had used the mental health crisis service but only 5 people had a positive experience.

- "I contacted the Crisis centre and it took 5 days for someone to ring me back"
- "They are not very quick to react; you feel you have to be at your lowest point to get immediate help"
- "I could not get through to them"
- "In the end, I phoned for an ambulance as I couldn't get hold of anyone"
- "Not very helpful, sometimes they didn't turn up"
- "I got laughed at by someone in the office background"
- "On the telephone they are very robotic just filling out the questions. They left me feeling a bit frustrated. Waiting for a response takes ages, often over the stated 72 hours"
- "I felt I got poor support from the crisis team" - "I was discharged back to GP, but I was forgotten. It was very hit and miss, depending on what day it was. Sometimes it was good, other times appalling"
- "I felt like it was very 'tick the box'"
- "they were cold and unresponsive"

**Our recommendation:**  
Review the Mental Health Crisis Service



## What did we find?

## What did people tell us?

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We asked patients whether they thought the service had improved since our last visit.



**Out of 30** patients who had been using the service for over 6 months, 8 people said they thought the service had improved and that staff were more friendly and helpful.



**Over half of patients** we spoke to who have been using the service for over 6 months felt the service had not improved.



**6 people** told us they thought the service had got worse

- **16 people** said they thought the service was about the same
- "It has not improved since I was here 8 years ago"
- "I have had 6 appointments in 2 years, but no real work has been done"
- "It's hard to get to talk to someone. we get dismissed too quickly - maybe it's a lack of funding"
- "there is less staff than before and the criteria for help has changed"

# What did we find?

## What did people tell us?

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**We asked patients and their carers what worried them the most. This is what they told us:**

- **The service isn't flexible.** If a patient misses an appointment because they are too ill to attend, their file is automatically closed and the whole referral process must start again.
- **Continuity.** They told us they never see the same Doctor, so they keep having to explain everything every time they go. They told us they're not moving forward or being helped.
- **Referral process.** People told us they found it hard to get a referral to Canada House - one patient had to wait a year from referral from their GP to receiving an appointment at Canada House.

**We asked patients whether they could think of any improvements that would make the service a better experience for them. They said:**

- Better appointment system
- Better communication with other agencies and organisations
- Ensure that each patient is allocated a Doctor that you see each time you visit instead of a different Doctor each time.
- Address the gap between leaving the young person's mental health service and starting with the adult service at Canada House.
- Quicker referral from assessment to appointment.
- Texting system so that patients could text to confirm/alter or cancel appointments.



# Acknowledgement

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**Healthwatch Medway would like to thank the patients, family, friends and carers along with our volunteers for taking the time to contribute to this piece of work.**

## Disclaimer

Please note this report relates to the findings on the days stated at the beginning of this report. Our report is not a representative portrayal of the experiences of all patients, family, friends and carers, only an account of what was contributed and observed during our visit on those days noted.

**We will be speaking with the Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership (KMPT) to inform them of our findings, find out why our recommendations have not been put in place and to ask what are their plans to improve the service for their patients.**

We will also be speaking with the organisations that commission the service and our findings will be sent to the Care Quality Commission.

