

Being a homeless woman in Medway



A Healthwatch Medway Update

July 2021

The story so far

In April we published a report detailing the feedback we heard from five women and two men who had experience of living on the streets of Medway.

They told us about the challenges they faced to get access to healthcare.

We heard that homeless people find it difficult to travel to access services and that they often sleep in the day and are active at night because it's safer that way.

A snapshot

The feedback we heard offered a snapshot of what it is like to be homeless in Medway. There were some encouraging accounts of people being supported to access substance misuse treatment, vaccinations, and support from charitable organisations but there were also some things that needed further attention:

- "I had a miscarriage a short time ago. I couldn't get an appointment with a GP. When I tried to, they just offered me a phone consultation but I don't have a phone so that was no use, I ended up visiting A&E for support."
- "I have just come out of Prison; I was registered at XX Surgery but can't get public transport to get there and need my medication."



What did we do?

We made a number of recommendations which we shared with Medway Council and the Kent & Medway Clinical Commissioning Group. They were:

- We heard that homeless people found it difficult to travel to services. We would encourage outreach provision to be available across Medway.
- People told us they find it hard to access services which operate 9am -5pm. We would encourage services to seek flexible ways for the homeless community to access services. For example, could a 'one stop shop' be piloted to offer a range of support & health services in the evenings?

We also presented our findings to the Health & Adult Social Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee (also known as HASC).

What's happened since?

We met with Medway Council on **June 7th** to talk through our findings and hear about the services already available.

Outreach : There is an outreach team which responds to any reports of people sleeping rough (they need an exact location to be able to do that). They can visit people both in and outside normal working hours that encourages people to access services.

Accessing services :there is a dedicated nurse who provides immediate healthcare assistance and specialises in supporting the homeless community. Their role is to liaise with the Outreach team and local homeless charities to help people who are homeless to register with a GP. There is also a dedicated part time mental health nurse who works with people who are homeless.

Support : health and social care workers come together with GPs to review and discuss how best to support particular patients who may have particular needs, including those who may be homeless. These are called Integrated Locality Reviews.

The Council told us that they are working hard, alongside many Medway voluntary groups and organisations to support our homeless community. For a full list of support available click [here](#)

The council also host the Medway Homelessness Forum that promotes partnership working between groups working with people who are homeless.

What happens next?

We will continue to listen closely to feedback from people who are homeless, as well as the organisations that support them, to ensure decision makers hear their experiences. We will attend, contribute and disseminate information through the Medway Homelessness Forum.

We will also work with Medway Council and the many voluntary organisations that are working hard to support people to help make it easier for people to access care and support.

A bit about us!

Healthwatch Medway is the independent voice for local people in Medway.

We gather and represent people's views about any health and social care service in Medway.

Our role is to understand what matters most to people and to use that information to influence providers and commissioners to change the way services are designed and developed.

Our FREE Information and Signposting service can help you navigate Medway's complicated health and social care system to ensure you can find and access the services that are available for you. Call us on **0800 136 656** or email enquiries@healthwatchmedway.com

Tell us your story and we can make sure your voice is heard by the right people.

Get in touch [HERE](#)

Or call us for free on **0808 136 656 or email enquiries@healthwatchmedway.com**

Thank you