

healthwatch

Redbridge



Healthwatch Redbridge's response to Spending NHS money wisely consultation in Barking, Havering & Redbridge.

May 2017

Introduction

Healthwatch Redbridge held a consultation event on Tuesday 9 May 2017 to inform and gather people's views on the consultation regarding spending NHS money wisely across Barking, Havering and Redbridge (BHR).

The purpose of the event was to:

- Inform residents about the financial challenge
- Inform local people about several ways that BHR CCG is planning to make savings
- Gather local resident's views on the proposals
- Give the residents a chance to question the CCG about the proposals

The meeting was widely publicised prior to the event. It was publicised on social media, Healthwatch Redbridge's website and the newspaper. Local residents were also encouraged to complete the survey online if they were unable to attend the event.

The event promoted lively discussion and was attended by eighteen local residents from Redbridge. The meeting started with a presentation by Dr Anita Bhatia & Dr Sarah Heyes. Attendees were then given an opportunity to ask any questions. After this, table discussions took place and each table had the chance to feedback their opinions. At the end of the event, people were given a paper based survey thus allowing them to include any additional information with regards to the proposals discussed. This report provides resident's feedback from the meeting.



Response

This is a summary of the discussions which took place and any other surveys that were returned to Healthwatch Redbridge. Responses have been provided for each of the service proposals:

- IVF services
- Male and female sterilisation
- Prescribing
- Cosmetic procedures
- Weight loss

Proposal: Should local NHS continue to fund IVF, and, if so, how many embryo transfers should the NHS fund?

Comments:

- ‘It is a moral argument and this is what the NHS is for. What would be the impact on mental health if someone is unable to access this service due to lack of funding?’
- ‘The costs should be supplemented for people because it can be very expensive.’
- ‘This is postcode lottery for those who need IVF treatment. People would miss out on services due to where they live.’ [The CCG representative said that different CCGs are in different financial situations.](#)
- ‘What would happen to those who have already started their first cycle of NHS funded IVF?’
- ‘IVF can be very costly so people from lower economic backgrounds will be deprived of the opportunity to have children.’
- ‘Would reducing the number of cycles provide a big enough saving or does it have to be completely stopped?’
- ‘It was recommended that women have three IVF cycles because it is the most effective so changing this can affect the likelihood of women becoming pregnant.’
- ‘It can be useful for the NHS to provide one IVF treatment for couples then if this isn’t successful they can fund it privately.’
- ‘We are transferring the burden of payment to those who can least afford it.’

Proposal: Should local NHS continue to fund male and female sterilisation?

Comments:

- Most respondents were in favour of this proposal.
- ‘Would stopping sterilisation cause an increase in birth rate?’ The CCG representative said that there aren’t many sterilisations conducted across the three boroughs.
- ‘There are many other forms of contraception available so people should use these e.g. COIL which lasts for 5 years.’
- ‘If sterilisation services are cut then preventative measures wouldn’t see the results for a few years.’
- ‘People should use other low risk forms of contraception.’
- ‘Patients can have these procedures privately as they are somewhat affordable.’

Proposal: Should local NHS continue to prescribe soya based formula milk for babies and small children, gluten free food prescriptions, dental prescribing, over the counter prescribing and travel vaccinations?

Comments for gluten free food prescriptions:

- Most respondents were in favour of this proposal.
- ‘These foods are readily available in many supermarkets. People with other conditions do not get foods on prescription.’
- ‘Gluten free foods are more expensive than ‘gluten filled’ foods so is there anyway of supporting those on low income?’
- ‘Those who cannot afford gluten free foods should consider eating more foods that are naturally gluten free.’
- ‘The cost of gluten free foods in shops is an issue and this needs to be tackled so that more people can afford it.’
- ‘Would people on low income be exempt from paying for gluten free food?’

Comments for over the counter prescriptions:

- There was a mixed response for this proposal.
- ‘Perception around medications needs to be changed.’
- ‘There is a possibility that people who receive free prescription over the counter are being over prescribed.’
- ‘It is a good way to save money that can be spent on other more important things.’
- ‘People need to be educated on the costs to the NHS.’
- Attendees raised their concerns about the cost for people who have chronic conditions. [The CCG representative clarified that these groups of people will still be given over the counter prescriptions.](#)
- ‘For people who need more than the amount that they can buy over the counter, is there a way to allow them to collect more even if they are paying for it? It can be a hassle especially for elderly people or young mums.’
- An attendee asked about whether prescriptions would be means tested. [The CCG representative said that it would be a national decision.](#)
- ‘Are prescriptions free for over 60s? It shouldn’t be if they are working.’
- ‘People should not be given prescription for vitamins. They should be educated about healthy eating.’
- ‘Patient’s medicines should be reviewed. Doctors need to assess whether patients need to be on all the medicines that they are on.’
- ‘If the only reason for a prescription is so the doctor can prescribe a large number, there should be a way for the patient to show proof, some sort of card to prove that they need that amount of pain killers.’
- ‘What medicines can people buy cheaper over the counter? This should be promoted. Sometimes pharmacists will tell you.’

Comments on travel vaccinations:

- A majority of attendees were in favour of this proposal.
- ‘It is a false economy because if people are not given the vaccinations when needed, there is a possibility that they could come back with an illness and the NHS would have to foot the bill.’
- ‘It takes a very long time for some people to be able to save for a holiday and they cannot afford to pay for any additional costs.’
- ‘It can be very expensive for large families. Would it be possible to get reduced fees in this case?’

- ‘It should be free for children so that it doesn’t increase the costs for the parents.’
- ‘This is a good way to save money because those who can afford to go on holiday should be able to pay for vaccinations.’
- ‘When people are planning to go on holiday, they should be including the cost of vaccinations. People have to pay for travel insurance so they should pay for this too.’

Proposal: Should local NHS stop funding cosmetic procedures?

Comments:

- There was mixed response for this proposal based on the cosmetic procedure.
- ‘Conditions such as trigger finger, varicose veins and scrotum swellings should still be allowed to have surgery.’
- ‘Cosmetic surgery such as breast reduction is important because these people often have back pain and it can affect the quality of their life.’
- ‘Majority of the surgeries are not necessary and if people want them then it should be funded privately.’
- The CCG representative mentioned that for those in exceptional cases can apply for individual funding request (IFR). One attendee said that the cost of GP time spent on panels should be weighed up against the costs saved.
- ‘Several attendees raised concerns of the impact that this could have on mental health.’
- ‘Moles should not be included on this list as they can be life threatening.’ The CCG representative assured the attendees that the features of the mole will be assessed to determine whether the patient needs to have surgery.
- ‘People who have lost a lot of weight might need tummy tuck surgery and if they are not allowed to have this procedure it can have an effect on their mental health.’

Proposal: Should the local NHS tighten up who can have NHS-funded weight loss surgery?

Comments:

- ‘Weight loss surgery can prevent illness. How much would it end up costing the NHS if they save on this but have to provide treatment for other conditions that develops due to the person’s weight?’
- ‘Other cheaper interventions need to be provided to support people with losing weight. If this support is not provided then more people will end up in this group thus costing more money.’

Suggestions for future savings

- ‘Medicines management should be revisited. Some people living overseas come to get their prescriptions for 12 months then leave the country again. People should only get prescriptions for three months.’
- ‘People staying in hospital should be required to pay for their meals.’



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