

## SNAPSHOT REPORT

What mental health support is available to local people who have received a cancer diagnosis; and what would help professionals to support their patients, carers and families in the community?

Public event held 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2019

*Note: The purpose of engagement work by Healthwatch Wigan and Leigh to get a better understanding of how local people experience local health and social care services. Our approach is to be constructive in sharing what we find and we will always strive to identify good practice as well as areas for improvement. This report is based on observations made by our representatives at the point they visited the service.*

<b>Purpose</b>	To inform local people and Primary Care professionals about what is available within the community to support cancer patients, their families and carers.
<b>Where</b>	Leigh Cricket Club, Beech Walk, Leigh WN7 3LH
<b>When</b>	Wednesday 23 <sup>rd</sup> October 2019
<b>Who</b>	46 people attended the event, took part in table discussions and had the opportunity to speak with 15 organisations who attended to offer information on their services
<b>Why</b>	Working in partnership with Macmillan Information and Support Services at Wrightington, Wigan & Leigh NHS Trust, we held a Cancer Information Event to engage with patients, carers and families about their experiences of the impact of a cancer diagnosis on their mental health and what support they had received; and to share information to public and professionals on what support is available within the community to cancer patients, their carers and loved ones.

## 1. Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Wigan and Leigh would like to thank the Macmillan Information and Support Services Team at Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Trust and all the organisations who supported the event by bringing their information along and to everyone who took part for sharing their views and experiences

## 2. Disclaimer

This report relates to verbatim comments gathered during table discussions and is not a portrayal of the experiences of all patients, carers and family members, only an account of what was contributed on the day.

## 3. Background

Any serious illness can impact on mental health. For patients, carers and their loved ones, going through cancer can be a devastating experience. Receiving a potentially fatal diagnosis, going through treatment protocols and learning to live with limitations can have an effect on emotional and mental health and wellbeing.

Healthwatch Wigan and Leigh wanted to explore what mental and emotional wellbeing support is currently available, what are the barriers to good mental wellbeing during the cancer journey and what opportunities are available for the prevention of poor mental health.

In partnership with WWL and MacMillan Cancer Support we held an information event on the 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2019 at Leigh Cricket Club where organisations shared

information on what is available within the community for cancer patients, survivors and their carers and loved ones.

#### 4. Project anticipated outcomes

- Better informed communities
- Better informed GP practice and primary care staff
- Feedback to services on what works well and what could be improved
- Identify gaps

#### 5. Methodology

Healthwatch Wigan and Leigh worked in partnership with Macmillan Information and Support Services at Wrightington, Wigan & Leigh NHS Trust to host an information event. The MacMillan Allied Health Professionals were invited to explain their role within the community and the services they offer and Cancer Research UK were invited to give an update on the Faecal Immunochemical Test (FIT) bowel screening programme. A number of organisations were invited to bring along their information to share with local people.

Information was circulated across the Borough inviting cancer patients their families and loved ones to attend an information event and to take part in table discussions, to hear about their experiences and give their views on what support would help within the community.

46 people attended and 33 comments were gathered.

Four questions were asked during the table discussions:

1. Share your experience of the impact of a cancer diagnosis on your mental health and what support you have received from services;
2. As a professional, what would help you to support cancer patients, their families and carers, in your community?
3. How do you think primary and secondary care can integrate more regarding the cancer pathway?
4. How do you think primary and secondary care can integrate more regarding the cancer pathway?

#### 6. Comments

1. **Share your experience of the impact of a cancer diagnosis on your mental health and what support you have received from services**



- It wasn't a shock as I had predisposing symptoms and was being monitored;
- Family didn't seem to have difficulties;
- Felling of men don't talk about it and try to avoid talking about cancer initially. Felt more comfortable as time went on. Being involved in MacMillan Cancer Garden team volunteers and if I had a problem there was always someone to talk to if I had difficulties;
- Sometimes patients want to accept support at different times;

- We have all experienced the loss of a loved one to cancer. It impacted on our mental health immensely and we noted a long wait for counselling. The main thing is having someone to listen to you;
- A friend has been diagnosed with cancer - has a very positive outlook and involved in lots of different things;
- Breast screening were more concerned with the way I would deal with the diagnosis rather than how they spoke to me;
- Issues with disability awareness within cancer services;
- WWL doing engagement work around access to screening services;
- More impact on daughter's mental health than me;
- Everybody is different and needs dealing with differently and as an individual;

**2. As a professional, what would help you to support cancer patients, their families and carers, in your community?**

- Information of who GP practice staff can link into. Community link workers in community and MacMillan Support team in secondary care;
- Plenty of information on all the services on offer. Lots of information for patients but not as much for family and carers;
- Welcoming services;
- Make it easy for people to get in touch - information in the community;
- Help to navigate the benefits system;
- Signposting;
- Co-ordinating services to work around a person;
- More awareness of services available and referral routes - especially for GPs;
- We had not heard of the MacMillan Allied Health professional team and we work within the NHS;
- More GP training on cancer services and identification;

**3. As a patient, carer or family member what support do you want in the community?**

- Better signposting to services available;
- Close working between MacMillan Link Support workers and Community Link workers to support patients across the system;
- Financial advice and benefits;
- Bespoke support for family members/carers;
- Peer support;
- Face to face support and not always digital!!;

**4. How do you think primary and secondary care can integrate more regarding the cancer pathway?**

- Close working between MacMillan Link Support workers and Community Link workers to support patients across the system;

- Mental health letters are sometimes slow before they arrive. Changes in medication are often slow to reach GP practices which causes a delay. Care plans from secondary care are not reaching GP practices;
- Good communication;
- Meetings between GP practice and MacMillan team about our patients;
- Sharing information (GDPR compliant);
- Improve communication between primary, secondary care and the patient;



## 6. CONCLUSION

Following the assessment of responses, we have identified a number of recommendations that we urge the Healthwatch Board of Directors to consider sharing at the appropriate forums:

- Patients emphasised that everybody is different and need dealing with in different ways as individuals
- Patients, their families and loved ones want better signposting to the services available, face to face support and not always digital
- Primary Care staff are keen to have information on who they can link into eg Community Link workers and MacMillan Support team
- Primary Care staff would also like more awareness of services available to their patients and the referral routes. They had not heard of the MacMillan Allied Health professionals team before today
- Everyone agreed that there needs to be improved communication between primary and secondary care, and the patient
- Primary Care staff felt that regular meetings between the GP practice and Macmillan team in respect of their own patients would be helpful

We request that the Healthwatch Board of Directors use this report to discuss and debate the points raised by the findings and suggestions from both Healthwatch and the public.

## 7. NEXT STEPS

- 7.1 Feedback to Providers - November 2019
- 7.2 Draft report submitted to Advisory Committee for logging and action - November 2019
- 7.3 Full report submitted to Healthwatch Wigan and Leigh Board of Directors for noting and action - November 2019
- 7.4 Confirm appropriate forums to share this to discuss recommendations set out below and arrange for report to be added to agenda - November/December 2019
- 7.5 Develop action plan that will be used to monitor impact - November 2019. This should ascertain what the intelligence tells us about access to Primary Care, communications, discharge from hospital and overall patient journey within health and social care.

7.6 Identify how Healthwatch Wigan and Leigh can help promote services, good stories from visit we want to capture and share as good practice -November 2019.

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**Date approved by Healthwatch Wigan and Leigh Board of Directors**

**Date shared with provider for comment**

**Date for review of progress against recommendations:**