

Commentary on South West London Mental Health Trust Quality Accounts 2018 - 2019

Healthwatch Richmond greatly welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Trust's Quality Account and be consulted on its quality priorities.

It is good to see that patient and carer involvement has been set as a 2019 - 2020 priority. We therefore encourage the Trust to ensure that opportunities for engagement are spread across the Trust's boroughs and are at accessible times for patients and carers so that this programme of work can reach its full potential. We also ask that the Trust are mindful of how these will be advertised and to look beyond internal announcements and publicise through local charity networks so that more patients and carers can participate.

We'd like to congratulate the Trust on being ranked 1st in London by the CQC for overall patient experience in their 2018 community mental health survey. This clearly demonstrates the progress the Trust has made in recent years, in particular their responsiveness to feedback provided by patients, carers and staff and their plans to keep them actively engaged with service development. However, areas of improvement remain and this is also reflected in our recent engagement work with patients and carers with the Richmond Recovery & Support Team. Almost all of the patients and carers we spoke to had been affected by high staff turnover which in turn significantly compromised their consistency of care and the rapport they were able to build with the team. Recruitment and retention of staff has been a prevalent issue for some time now for the Trust, with over 50% of nursing posts in local recovery & support teams currently vacant. While the Trust has reduced the number of complaints this year by improving how patients transition during staff changes; we nevertheless urge the Trust to be creative and expand their recruitment strategy beyond the use of rolling adverts. For example, we note the recent success the Trust has had in converting agency staff to permanent in the Richmond & Kingston Early Intervention Service.

Notably, the CQC also highlighted that parts of crisis care need to be improved; this is an area that frequently comes up in our wider outreach work with many people struggling to access psychological therapies that could help with prevention and finding appropriate forms of support, particularly around where to go out of hours and intervention that is specialised enough to help with the containment and resolution of a mental health crisis. Consequently, we are very glad to hear that the Trust has recognised this and that there are internal action plans underway to improve their service offer. We particularly welcome the Trust's plans to raise the provision of therapeutic intervention for crisis management with commissioners this year. We also note plans for a crisis café in Richmond for 2019/20, which is pleasing to hear given their popularity in Wimbledon and Merton and we would appreciate more clarity from the Trust on potential service providers and how it is being funded.

Some of the findings from the CQC's unannounced inspections this year are concerning where some patients were not consistently read their legal rights or involved in their care planning. It is not currently clear on how the Trust resolved the issues highlighted and we would welcome greater candour from the Trust going forward.

Overall, changes to the Trust's service line management structure has brought marked improvements to governance and the way information is shared. However, residents and the voluntary sector have still found it difficult to find out the developments happening in their area in a timely way. Healthwatch Richmond therefore welcomes the revival of the Borough stakeholder groups and looks forward to future active participation. The recruitment of a new Chief Operating Officer and Director of Nursing & Quality should also enable significant progress in quality and engagement work in 2019-20.

