Multicultural Event Report

August 2024

Contents

Introduction

Healthwatch South Tees, the operating name for Healthwatch Redcar and Cleveland and Healthwatch Middlesbrough, is the independent champion for local people who use health and care services. We take your experiences of these services, good and bad, to those who fund or deliver them and highlight good practice, tell them what doesn't work and suggest how it can be improved.

Background

We are committed to recognising the needs of every community across South Tees and helping them get the care that they need. Our intelligence does not always reflect the diversity of our local population, particularly from ethnic minority residents. To address this, we employed an Engagement and Events officer in September 2023 with a specific focus to raise awareness of Healthwatch South Tees to ethnic minority communities and capture their views and experiences of health and care services.

Through engagement with local ethnic minority communities, we became aware of a reluctance to give feedback and realised the need to adopt a different approach. After considering the feedback we had received from the community we decided to hold a Multicultural Event with the aim to:

- Increase awareness about Healthwatch South Tees.
- Identify health and care services that ethnic minority communities currently use.
- Identify barriers and solutions for ethnic minority communities to access health and care services.
- Identify Ethnic Community Champions to support our Information & Signposting function and;
- Increase our reach into these diverse communities

Multicultural Event

We wanted to hold the event in a venue that was accessible to our local communities, known to them and could accommodate the expected number of attendees. In collaboration with our local partners, we decided to hold the event at the Methodist Asylum Project on Thursday 4 July.

As the event was all about bringing people together to understand their health and care needs, we devised an informal programme where attendees would feel welcomed and receptive to our work. We started the event with a buffet lunch and afterwards held workshops to discuss the topics below. Healthwatch South Tees staff, along with colleagues from other organisations helped to facilitate table discussions and collate information.

We also arranged for an artist to visually represent the information that was being shared. Images of the canvases produced can be seen throughout the report.

Key Findings – Summary

Barriers to accessing health and care services

- Language barriers are exacerbated by poor translation services and a lack of understanding of terminology used in communications
- Financial barriers including costs of telephone usage (many people have pay as you go mobile phones and credit can be quickly used up if you are on hold waiting to get through to services), internet costs and costs associated with travelling to services
- A lack of knowledge of what services are available, difficulties in finding information and poor signposting and support in communities.
- A lack of digital skills restricts access through platforms such as eConsult and the NHS App.
- Long waiting times for some services.
- Discriminatory treatment, staff being condescending and rude.

How to remove barriers

- More community services so there's less travel needed.
- Transport from community hubs to services or bring services to community hubs.
- Improved translation services.
- Choice of languages for information.
- Use clear language for ease of understanding.
- Different types of communication e.g. letters, texts, websites, posters, leaflets.
- More awareness of travel schemes.
- More people who can signpost/ support in the community who members of all ethnic groups can build relationships with.
- Upskilling frontline staff to understand the communities they serve.

Key recommendations

The following recommendations should be considered by all organisations who wish to improve access to services for our ethnic minority communities.

Communication

- Help to reduce language barriers by providing information in a variety of formats and languages.
- Ensure information is communicated in an easy to understand and culturally sensitive way.
- Have an understanding of people's communication needs. A person with good conversational fluency in spoken English may not be able to understand, discuss or read health-related information proficiently in written English.

Cultural considerations
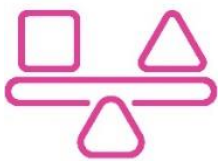
- Improve people's interactions of health and care services by providing cultural awareness training.
- Health care services need to be aware of the specific health care needs, risk factors and treatment requirements in different communities and ensure services are culturally tailored to promote uptake.
- Provide these services in the community to increase uptake.

Community Support/Signposting
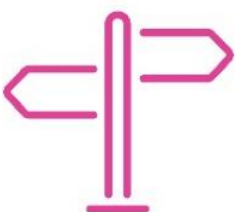
- Due to cultural barriers, language barriers, stigma and a lack of understanding from professionals regarding a person's experiences and background it is important to have trusted people in the community that people can turn to in order to get information, reassurance, advice and direction to services that can support them.

Digital Access

- Provision of training to improve knowledge and skills for digital access.
- Availability of digital access within the community.
- Digital platforms to be inclusive to ethnic minorities.
- Ensure that there is always an alternative for those who are unable to access.

Financial

There are many financial barriers that affect access. Ways to improve include:

- More awareness of travel reimbursement schemes.
- More awareness of help with health costs.
- Services delivered in community where possible or reducing the need for multiple visits to a provider.

What health and care services do you use?

Knowledge of services was good amongst participants, however representatives from partner organisations were also in attendance and supported the completion of this task.

The word cloud below has been compiled with all the responses that were given. The services in the larger text were the most commonly mentioned, ie GP, dentists, physiotherapy, mental health services.

What are the barriers for you when accessing health and care services?

Most comments from respondents were in relation to access, however not all comments were specific to ethnic communities but can also be faced by all communities, for example difficulties in finding an NHS dentist, long waiting lists to access services and a general lack of resources within services.

General comments were made about the lack of availability of appointments and the difficulties in making appointments. This, however, is compounded in ethnic communities by language barriers and a lack of skills and resources in using digital methods for making appointments and the costs of using a phone. Other factors impeding access include a lack of knowledge of service provision and the treatment process and poor translation services.

Attendees expressed that it was sometimes difficult to meet appointment times due to lack of travel options to services, poor geographical knowledge of the area and the costs associated with travel. There is little awareness of travel reimbursement schemes within the area.

Regarding appointments, respondents commented they felt rushed, had to repeat their story to different professionals within one service and that there was a lack of cultural awareness in a variety of services.

Attendees expressed that they often feel uncomfortable about speaking out or asking for help due to stigma and embarrassment. Some attendees commented that they had experienced condescending attitudes and discriminatory behavior from staff which had led to a lack of confidence and reluctance to engage with services.

Attendees commented that they had a lack of knowledge of what services are out there and had difficulties in finding information. They said that leaflets were difficult to understand, and the terminology used was confusing. In addition to a lack of knowledge of who or where to signpost them to for further help/support.

Some environmental factors were raised such as poor housing conditions making students and their families ill.

Representatives from local colleges commented that there was a lack of networking opportunities with local health organisations and charities, and they found it difficult to fulfill the pastoral work needed to help students.

What do we need to do to remove these barriers?
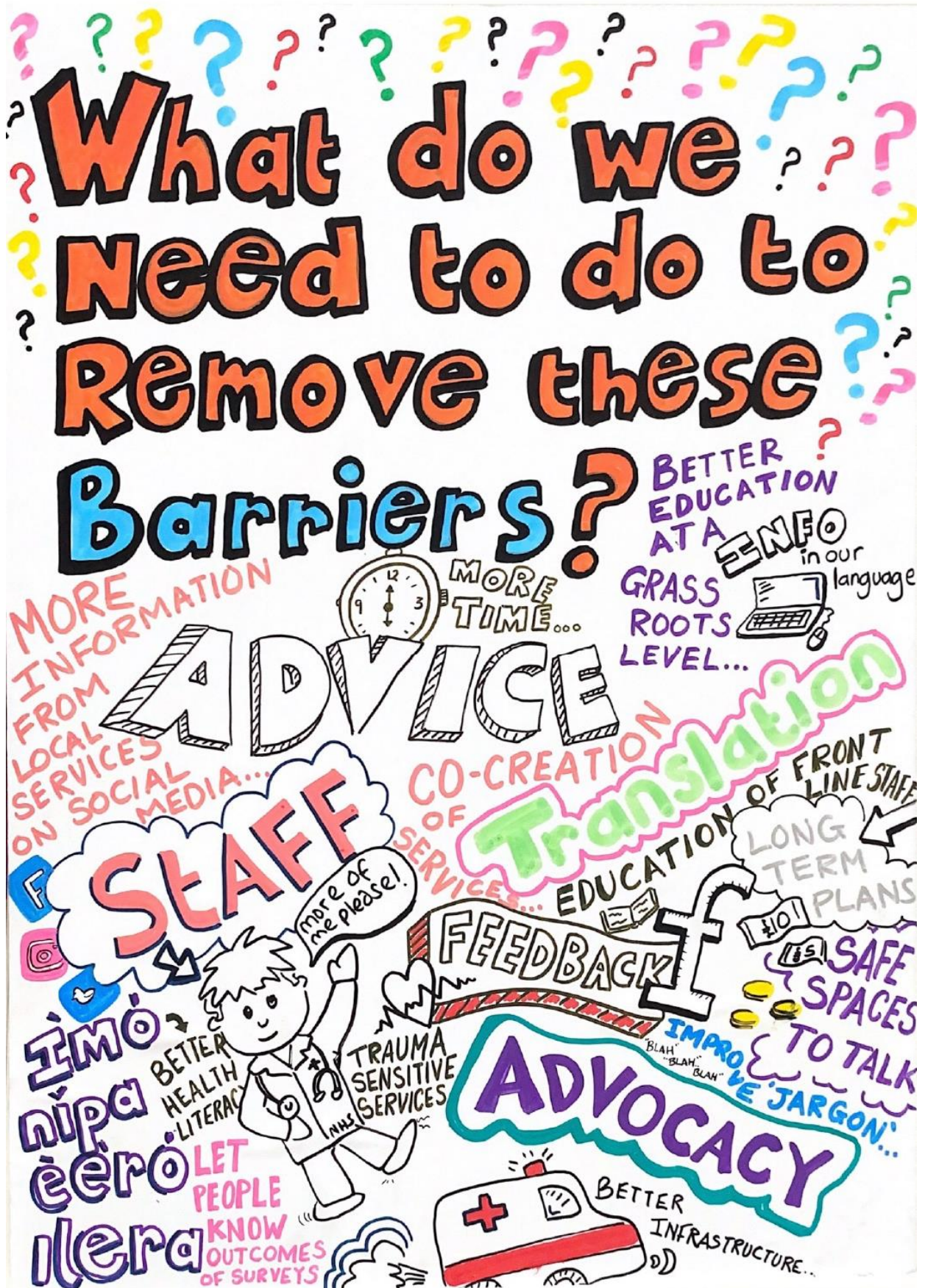
Communication was highlighted as a key factor in removing barriers to health and care with services using clear, jargon free language. Raising awareness of services through a variety of methods and language options will improve people's knowledge of what services do and where they are. Increased awareness of travel reimbursement schemes and increased availability of translators would also help to improve access.

Community support was thought to be vital to increase knowledge in communities by having more people who can signpost people to those they can build relationships with.

As travel and location was deemed as a barrier to access some services, it was suggested that more services could be delivered in the community. Alternatively, services could be delivered alongside existing services so access to a variety of support can be in one place.

Some consideration to reasonable adjustments was mentioned, for example to send a text before a phone call is made and a freephone number for services.

More general comments were made around the health and care landscape, such as:

- Recruiting a more diverse workforce.
- More investment in preventative care such as healthy eating and weight management.
- Funding for VCS organisations to offer more social prescribing support.
- Communication and cooperation between services to improve safe referrals between them.
- Training/continuous upskilling of staff in cultural awareness.
- More advocates

How can we encourage more community members to engage with Healthwatch South Tees?

One of our main aims for the event was to increase our local communities' awareness of Healthwatch South Tees and to increase feedback we receive in relation to health and care experiences.

One of the main ways that attendees suggested that we do this was to be approachable, listen and build up relationships with communities.

Attendees would like to attend more events like this one and see outreach into community venues and places of worship. Pop-up events were suggested to increase our presence in the community and to use translators if possible.

To strengthen our engagement, it was suggested we build a volunteer community and utilise existing members as community champions to build trust and have a consistent presence. Another suggestion was, of course, that food is a great way to improve relationships in the community!

We had the following suggestions to improve our communications with local communities:

- Produce literature in multiple languages.
- More posters, publicity, visibility – at GP's, Hospitals, etc.
- Translation signs on postcards, etc. to show we can translate into other languages
- Leaflets available in communities
- Podcasts – audio information for people that have difficulty reading
- Using social media – TikTok/ Instagram/Facebook – find community groups to post into and post in different languages.
- Magazines, articles

It was suggested we get feedback through physical questionnaires not just digital and ensure we give feedback on what we have done with the information that has been given.

Healthwatch South Tees Next Steps

With the recruitment of our Events and Engagement Officer and with a focus on engaging with minority ethnic communities we have improved our contacts and relationships within local communities. However, we do realise that there is still more to be done and propose the following next steps.

- Develop an information and signposting role within ethnic communities.
- Extend our Community Champions network.
- Recruit volunteers from diverse backgrounds – we were lucky to have several interested following the event.
- Share these findings with local commissioners to inform future service specifications.
- Highlight recommendations and solutions with health and care service deliverers for consideration and improvement.
- Consider translation links on our promotional material.
- Share and promote resources in different lanaguages.
- Continue to increase our presence and further develop relationships within these communities.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following for their help and support in arranging this event.

- Methodist Asylum Project for providing the venue.
- Bob and Belle for catering.
- Chris Layfield, MVDA, for providing the artwork.
- HWST Staff and volunteers.
- All those who attended and shared their experiences and contributed to a successful event.

healthwatch
Middlesbrough

www.healthwatchmiddlesbrough.co.uk
Freephone: 0800 118 1691
Text only: 07451288789
Email:

healthwatchsouthtees@pcp.uk.net

🐦 @HwMiddlesbrough

f facebook.com/HWMiddlesbrough

healthwatch
Redcar and Cleveland

www.healthwatchredcarandcleveland.co.uk
Freephone: 0800 118 1691
Text only: 07451288789
Email: healthwatchsouthtees@pcp.uk.net

🐦 @HwRedcarClevela

f facebook.com/HWRedcarCleveland

Sign up to our e-bulletin!

**Working for you,
across South Tees**

Healthwatch South Tees is the operating name for Healthwatch Middlesbrough and Healthwatch Redcar and Cleveland.

@2020 Healthwatch South Tees is managed by Pioneering Care Partnership:

Pioneering Care Partnership
Registered Charity No 1067888
Company Limited by
Guarantee No. 3491237

The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service
PCP
Health, wellbeing and learning for all