

12th June 2018

Re: Mental Health Day Opportunities in Westminster

Dear Shazia Ghani

As a local Healthwatch our role is to ensure that local people are actively involved in shaping the health and care services that they use, and that they have a say on decisions about what health and care services are available for them. We also ensure that people have access to information about health and care services in clear, easy to understand, and correct formats so that they are aware of what services are available for them in their local areas.

We are writing to request an update on the changes made to mental health day opportunities in Westminster following the closure of the Recovery and Support Services (RSS) in April 2017.

Please include information on:

- any follow up communication or engagement with former RSS clients on what support or activities are available for them
- monitoring of availability of, and access to, community activities in Westminster
- evaluation of outcomes for mental wellbeing undertaken with former RSS clients in Westminster.

In addition, Healthwatch Central West London has recently been contacted by previous users of the RSS in Westminster. They outlined a number of concerns that they had about the current support available to them. We set out their concerns below, with further requests for information and comment from the Council.

Safe Spaces

Following the closure of the RSS in April 2017, Westminster Council committed to ensure that everyone from RSS would have access to at least one drop in, in the form of Safe Spaces - one in the north at the Beethoven Centre, and one in the south at the Abbey Community Centre. These have been run by SHP. Service users report that the Safe Spaces were supportive and useful; SHP staff were able and

efficient and service users felt comfortable discussing their personal issues with them. The Safe Spaces were a valuable resource for previous clients of the RSS.

However, some service users have reported to Healthwatch that since November 2017 they have no longer got the support they need through the Safe Spaces. They never know which SHP staff will be there and so have not built up strong relationships. They do not feel that the staff have the skills necessary to provide support when needed.

In addition to this change, they are concerned and upset that even the use of the Safe Spaces will be withdrawn from them at the end of June 2018. They were informed about this by letter from SHP - dated 29th May 2018.

This new development is affecting people's mental wellbeing. People have been getting progressively anxious. They now feel that everything is being taken away from them. People have reported having sleepless nights; resorting to self-medication with alcohol; and anxiety. People are angry, upset and fearful for the future.

SHP have informed us that the Safe Spaces were only intended to be a temporary offer and were offered in addition to the transition service set up to support people to find suitable day provision to maintain their mental wellbeing. If this was the case, then it was not communicated clearly to service users.

All previous RSS clients were allocated a Transition Support Worker from SHP for three months. This was a navigator model and this worked well for the three months it was available for. Service users were informed that they would have reviews at six months and 12 months. These follow up reviews have not happened, and some previous RSS clients still do not have regular day opportunities in place. Once the Safe Spaces are no longer available to them they will have no provision.

Healthwatch therefore requests:

- Clarification on the purpose of the Safe Spaces and length of time they were commissioned for
- An assessment of the impact on the mental wellbeing of former RSS clients resulting from the withdrawal of Safe Spaces
- A plan for ensuring that no one is left without any day provision or support

We have written separately to SHP, stating that the length of notice given to former RSS clients about the withdrawal of Safe Spaces from them does not provide enough time for alternatives to be put in place and asking that they consider how they can ease the withdrawal of the service.

Support when experiencing mental ill health

Westminster Commissioners explained to service users in co-design workshops in February and March 2017, that there was an expectation that RSS clients would be allocated a CNWL Care Coordinator or would have a lead mental health

professional whilst they had an ongoing secondary care need within the new model for mental health day provision. The service users we spoke to have informed us that this has not been the case. They believe that CNWL are having difficulty recruiting to this role and retaining staff in post. This means that not everyone has a mental health lead professional.

The only route to access mental health support for previous RSS clients without a lead mental health professional is through the duty mental health system within Community Mental Health Teams (CMHTs). We heard about difficulties in getting an appointment with CMHTs, or of having to go to the offices wait for hours. In addition, they are often seen by someone who does not know their history and they then have to explain their situation again - not easy when experiencing worsening mental health conditions.

Healthwatch therefore requests:

- Information on the number of former RSS clients who do not have an allocated Care Co-ordinator or lead mental health professional
- An indication of how Westminster Council intend to work with CNWL to both fill the gaps and provide support for former RSS clients in the interim

Personal budgets

The model for mental health day provision in Westminster relies on clients having access to Personal Budgets and being able to purchase their own activities to support their mental wellbeing outcomes agreed at assessment. However, the previous RSS clients we spoke to raised a number of issues with this system that means that people are not always able to access the support they need. The issues raised are about the administration of Personal Budgets:

The case of not being able to change activities

Lucinda (not her real name) had a Fair Access to Services (FACS) assessment arranged by her transition worker from SHP. A Personal Budget was allocated to her and she chose to spend it on an activity offered by SMART. In June 2017 her three month transition period with SHP came to an end.

A few months later Lucinda decided that she no longer wanted to do the activity offered by SMART and chose to do a craft workshop elsewhere. She contacted SMART to let them know that she would be stopping with them. She arranged the new craft activity at the new centre and waited to hear about her Personal Budget. Two months later someone rang her to say that she will need a new financial assessment. In November 2017 she had the new assessment and then heard nothing.

In January 2018, someone from CNWL rang to say they would chase the admin department to get this sorted. Numerous communications with the CNWL worker

followed either by phone or in person and each time she was told that the admin team were still on the case. In April 2018 she was informed that admin have still been paying SMART even though she has not been attending their activity for about nine months and she had informed them of this via an email to the administrator. Two months later she was then told she would need to undergo a new FACS and financial assessment as so much time had now elapsed. To date she is now waiting for the outcome of these assessments.

As a consequence of all this, Lucinda who suffers from severe anxiety disorder has very much struggled with her mental health wellbeing. The way that Personal Budgets are currently set up did not give her the flexibility to seamlessly move from one activity to another. Westminster Council have been paying for a service that has not been used and in doing so, has not supported Lucinda to access the activity of her choice.

The case of non-payment through the Personal Budget system to activity providers

Small businesses and community centres were encouraged by Westminster Council during market shaping activities to develop activities that could support people's mental wellbeing, in particular for former clients of RSS.

One example of this is Art4Space. They offered a mosaic group in Stockwell and six former RSS clients attend this. In the first six months there were long delays to pay the company the activity fees through the Personal Budget system. Clients became worried that workshop would be cancelled. The lead mental health worker of one of the clients followed up on this and payment went through for all six clients.

However, a new contract with Art4Space was arranged in January 2018. The same six people from the RSS signed up. This time three of their Personal Budgets were paid to the company, the other three are still waiting for their payments to go through six months later. Invoices have been sent by Art4Space 11 times in six months.

The model of mental health day opportunities in Westminster relies on the Personal Budget system working for both clients and providers. This example demonstrates that currently this is not the case. The delays in the system causes unnecessary anxiety for service users and risks the stability of the companies or providers offering the activities.

The case of the lost Direct Payment card

An SHP client who has both mental health and physical health conditions had a pre-payment card, which he lost. There was no easy way for him to report the situation. His card was subsequently used by someone else to pay for things that he did not use. Meanwhile, the health providers who provide his personal care

were asking for payment for support for help with washing and dressing etc but he had no access to money.

The lack of information about how to report a lost direct payment card and then a lack of ease in reporting this situation has caused distress and anxiety for the service user

In the light of these examples about Personal Budgets, Healthwatch requests:

- A response to each example that sets out what Westminster Council intends to do to rectify and simplify the Personal Budget system

Community activities and support when mental health is deteriorating

The former RSS clients also raised concerns about whether the staff working in community providers and small businesses had the knowledge and skills to support people whose mental health was deteriorating. We add to this, a concern about whether community providers and small businesses have access to support and assistance when needed.

Therefore, Healthwatch requests:

- Information on the type of support currently available to community providers or small businesses to ensure that they are able to offer safe and supportive activities for people with ongoing mental health conditions.
- Westminster Council considers providing Mental Health First Aid training free to community level providers and small businesses offering activities for mental health service users
- Westminster Council considers offering regular supervision groups and access to telephone support for community level providers or small businesses offering services for mental health service users

We look forward to receiving your responses to our concerns and questions.

Yours Sincerely,

Carena Rogers

Programme Manager