

Devolution of health and care in Greater Manchester

What do people want from future services?

We spoke to the people of Greater Manchester to find out how future services can meet their health and social care needs.

Local Healthwatch helped run three workshops in Stockport, Oldham and Bolton, which were attended by 60 people. With the power to make decisions about health and social care services now devolved to Greater Manchester, we brought people from across the region together to discuss what they want from the changes.

1. What does devolution mean in practice?

Devolution is the transfer of powers and responsibilities from national government to a particular region. It allows decisions to be made locally in order to better serve the needs of people living and working in the area.

Greater Manchester is the first part of England to see the devolution of health and care services, as well as transport, housing and policing.

2. What did people tell us?

The discussions focused on three topics: service integration, primary care services, and preventive health. Below is a summary of the main points people spoke about.

SERVICE INTEGRATION

People talked about how they would like health and social care services to work more effectively together, and with other parts of the community:



- People said that there needs to be a better process for sharing people's records between health and social care services. They suggested that perhaps somebody, such as a GP, could co-ordinate this.
- However, some people were concerned about data protection, highlighting the importance of enabling people to opt out of having their records shared.
- People would like to see stronger links between health and social care services, transport bodies, the police, the voluntary sector and community organisations.
- People want greater consistency. They said that some GPs have started to integrate additional services, such as carrying out scans in GP practices, but this is not offered consistently across Greater Manchester.
- People find the health and care system to be archaic and old-fashioned in its use of technology when compared with other sectors.
- However, where new technologies, such as Patient Access, are being used, there should be clear advertising to ensure patients are aware.
- People said they want to be referred to specialists more quickly, as they find the current system to be slow, inefficient and unreliable. Speed of referral is currently inconsistent across Greater Manchester.
- People suggested either being able self-refer, or a system where people can be diagnosed, referred and treated near to their home.

"Services are inconsistent because some of us have surgeries that offer services, whereas other people have to travel quite far to have routine things done because it's not offered in that local service."

Stockport

"[There should be] better technologies so you could have a Facetime with the doctor, or a Skype, and take up a lot less time."

Bolton

PRIMARY CARE

People spoke about their views on services such as GP surgeries and other primary care premises, including pharmacies and opticians:

- People spoke about the importance of being able to access the prescriptions they need quickly, as delays can put people at risk.
- People suggested a number of tweaks to the current prescriptions process that would make a difference, such as:



- A 24 hour service
- Surgeries open at times that better suit people
- Dedicated surgery staff to ensure a quick turnaround for prescriptions.
- People want to know how to get treatment for more complex issues, such as mental health concerns, and to receive clear communication about the full process for addressing them - not just the immediate next steps.
- People expressed concern that GPs will not always tell them about all the treatment options available to them, perhaps because they are more expensive.
- People said they think consideration should be given to the transition between childhood to adulthood and how people can be supported to manage their health.

"We want quick referrals really, especially for any kind of mental health problem. I think a few of us have had experiences with mental health, so referrals can take quite a long time once you go to your GP."

Stockport

"I'm scared to go to the doctor all the time. When you're younger you go with your mum or dad and whatever and the doctor tells them. The gap from going with an older person and then you've got to do it all off your own back...you've got to decide all these things."

Bolton

PREVENTIVE HEALTH

People felt strongly that everyone should be able to take charge of their own health and spoke about how this could be made possible:

- People said that individuals need to be better educated about the benefits of having a healthy lifestyle. They felt that this preventive health messaging should be engrained in the community.
- Some felt that this be a positive message rather than preaching what could happen if you continue to eat poorly, smoke or drink too much (termed the 'red button' effect).
- People said this should extend to schools and that they felt there is inconsistency in the quality of education and school meals.



- People said that communities want to hear about healthy living from people they can relate to. They said such messages should be tailored for the community, and not just shared nationally.
- People said there should be better links with and information about organisations offering activities such as sports, fitness and cooking classes.

"Drill it into kids at an earlier age. I never had a class in school which taught me the dangers of sugar and cholesterol."

Oldham

"A useful thing...is to have regional people telling you this message. The last thing I would have wanted to hear as a kid growing up is somebody from London preaching at me in their London accent, saying 'you must do this and this and this.'"

"Say for example, Amir Khan, he's from Bolton. If he was speaking to a group of young Asians about health, they're more likely to listen to him than some white professor in his sixties."

Bolton

3. How we conducted this research

These three workshops (taking the form of extended focus groups) were attended by 60 people, representing the diversity of the Greater Manchester community. Participants were talked through the changes taking place in Greater Manchester, and shown [a film](#) about why people should be involved in decisions about changes to services.

We worked with local Healthwatch in Greater Manchester to design and develop topics for discussion, identify locations and produce research materials.

Participants took part in group discussions, and then came back together to share and compare their views.

This paper provides a summary of findings from these events. You can read the full findings on the Healthwatch England website.

