

## APPENDIX 3

# Healthwatch England complaints survey 13/03/2014

Healthwatch England is conducting a complaints survey to better understand people's experiences of health and care complaints and to make sure the Government uses them to improve the way complaints are handled and the support that people are offered.

They are hoping to learn what it is like to raise a concern or complaint with a GP, hospital, care home, dentist, optician, home-based carer, or any other provider of health or care services.

The results of this survey will be used to help Healthwatch England write a report on the 'State of Complaints' in health and care in England.

## HWE say health and care complaints system is 'utterly bewildering' 20/03/2014

Healthwatch England (HWE) has been working to map the complaints landscape and their research has shown that a staggering 75 types of organisations in England have a role in complaints handling and support, from councils and CCGs locally to national regulators.

The concerns of users and worried family members looking to complain about the service they have received from their local hospital, GP or care home, are going unheard because the current system is simply too complex.

According to HWE's research, 1 in 3 people report having experienced or knowing someone who has experienced poor care. Yet a YouGov survey of 2076 UK adults showed that less than half of those who had a bad experience between 2010 and 2013 actually did anything to report it.

43% said this was because they didn't know how to complain or provide feedback and 49% said it was because they lacked confidence that their complaint would be dealt with effectively or thought that it wouldn't make any real difference.

Of those who did pursue their complaint just over 1 in 10 entered a formal complaints process, meaning the system is failing to take any formal learning from almost 9 out of 10 experiences of poor care.

The failure of the complaints system is being compounded by the lack of consistent and easy to access complaints support services. Whilst NHS advocacy is fragmented with the level of service varying across the country, advocacy for complaints in care is almost non-existent.

If the health and care system is to learn from its mistakes then the complaints system needs to be simplified, it also needs to be more joined up to ensure there is 'no wrong door' for those looking to raise a complaint, and the right information and support needs to be made available for those who want to complain.

Anna Bradley, Chair of Healthwatch England, said "It's no wonder the public are left confused and frustrated. With so many organisations involved it's difficult to know where to start, let alone having the strength and persistence to navigate the system on your own.

"A key improvement would be a straightforward and independent advocacy service to provide the support people need to make their voices heard.

"There will need to be very significant change in the complaints system if it is to benefit from the intelligence and insight that complaints can offer and use it to drive real improvement for the people actually using services."

**Have you made a complaint recently? or wanted to complain about a service but you did not know how to?** If so please tell us your story and experiences by completing our **'have your say' form**.