

Sudbury WATCH

Working and Acting Together for Community Health

Annual Report, 2015-16

Executive Summary

This is a summary of the annual report, for 2015-16, of Sudbury WATCH, a community group which concerns itself with local health matters in the Sudbury area.

WATCH stands for Working and Acting Together for Community Health. It started life in 2004 as WHAC (Walnuttree Hospital Action Committee) and led a successful campaign to save Sudbury's health services.

This report highlights a number of local matters with which Sudbury WATCH has recently been concerned or involved or both. These are:

- **Sudbury's Community Health Centre.** WATCH led the campaigning and legal fight over a decade ago which resulted in the decision to build a new health centre – and has remained involved, primarily through its then Chairman (Peter Clifford), in driving through the process of planning and building the new centre.

WATCH has continued to work behind the scenes, raising questions with NHS management about, for example, the continuing absence of a pharmacy and adequacy of the new blood testing system. And considering the importance of planning for future development and expansion of the health centre – for instance, the need for a minor injuries unit in Sudbury.

- **Hospital discharges from West Suffolk Hospital.** WATCH continues to be informed about some discharges from West Suffolk Hospital (WSH) which are poor. Following a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request made by WATCH, WSH confirmed that it keeps no information about poor hospital discharges. And has no criteria with which to identify poor discharges.

- **Accident and Emergency services at West Suffolk Hospital.** WATCH continues to be informed of some people suffering long waits to be seen in A&E, with ambulances queuing outside.

- **Community nursing.** WATCH continues to be informed of high caseloads for district nurses within Suffolk Community Healthcare, of the consequent pressure placed on those district nurses and other community nursing staff, and of the potential adverse impact on both patients and staff.

- **Community rehabilitation** including physiotherapy and occupational therapy following, stroke, heart attack, a fall etc. Since the loss of NHS inpatient rehabilitation beds at Walnuttree Hospital, WATCH has received consistently reports of concerns about the quantity, range and depth of

community rehabilitation services, from Suffolk Community Healthcare, available to some patients – particularly those with more complex needs - in their own homes.

- **Mental health services.** WATCH continues to hear that adults, young people and children with mental health problems can face difficulty gaining help from the Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust.

- **Fragmentation of health services and establishing accountability.** Increasingly complex commissioning, contracting and sub-contracting processes mean that it can be difficult for the local community to establish responsibility and accountability within the NHS.

- **Sudbury Connect.** Sudbury Connect is a new local initiative designed to ensure more integrated working between different services, identify help within people's local communities and help prevent needs arising or escalating.

- **Social care: visits in people's own homes.** WATCH put a FOIA request to Suffolk County Council, asking whether it was still providing 15-minute visits for people in their own homes requiring help with personal care – contrary to national policy and guidance. The Council was unable to confirm that it was, in practice, complying with this national guidance – although stated that its unofficial policy was to comply with it and not commission such visits.

Inevitably, some of the issues WATCH raises in this report are based on anecdote – individual accounts from patients, families and health professionals.

WATCH has made a judgement to include these issues, based on the consistency over time of the information it receives - and the likelihood therefore that the issues are more than trivial.

Any problems highlighted in this report do not represent a criticism of individual NHS staff. Rather they are a comment on systemic issues, by no means confined to Suffolk.

They are raised constructively, not in the spirit of blaming anybody. WATCH is acutely aware of the pressures on the NHS. But believes that potential problems should at least be discussed transparently and publicly. Problems that are not acknowledged cannot be solved.