

Speak Up Project Report

Burton Street Foundation

June 2018



Outline of the Project

At the end of May 2018 we took a questionnaire to 32 clients that access our services at Burton Street. The aim of this project was to try to better understand:

- 1) What people's relationship was like with their GP
- 2) Whether they had any health concerns themselves
- 3) If there was anything they felt Burton Street could do to help

We were therefore trying to find out whether people were accessing their local health services, what sort of health issues worried them personally and what we could do in the future to help support them to address these concerns and to generally lead healthier lives.

Given the sensitive nature of some of these questions, it was made clear to the clients firstly that their names would not be included at any point and also that if they did not wish to answer any of these questions, they did not have to. Each client was advised that if they divulged any information to the project worker, that the worker thought may result in harm to the client, they may have to let their manager know, who in turn may need to alert a member of the local safeguarding team.

The questionnaire we supported the clients to fill in was as follows:

- 1) Have you been to the doctors in the last year?**
- 2) What was this for?**
- 3) Do you know your doctor's name?**
- 4) Do you like going to the doctors/not like going to the doctors or don't mind?**
- 5) Do you have any worries about your health?**
- 6) How do you think we can look after people's health better at Burton Street?**

The clients who completed the survey would generally be considered to have a mild/moderate learning difficulty. Some people struggled more with some questions than others, but nearly all those surveyed were able to verbalise their answers clearly, when they both understood and chose to answer the question. It is also worth noting that most of the

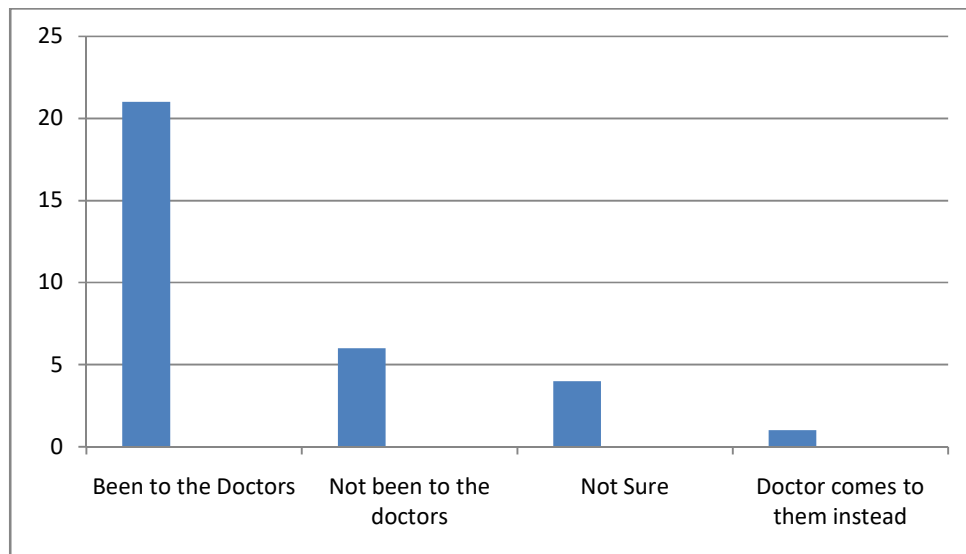


people who took part in the consultation live at home and are supported by their family to access services.

What we found

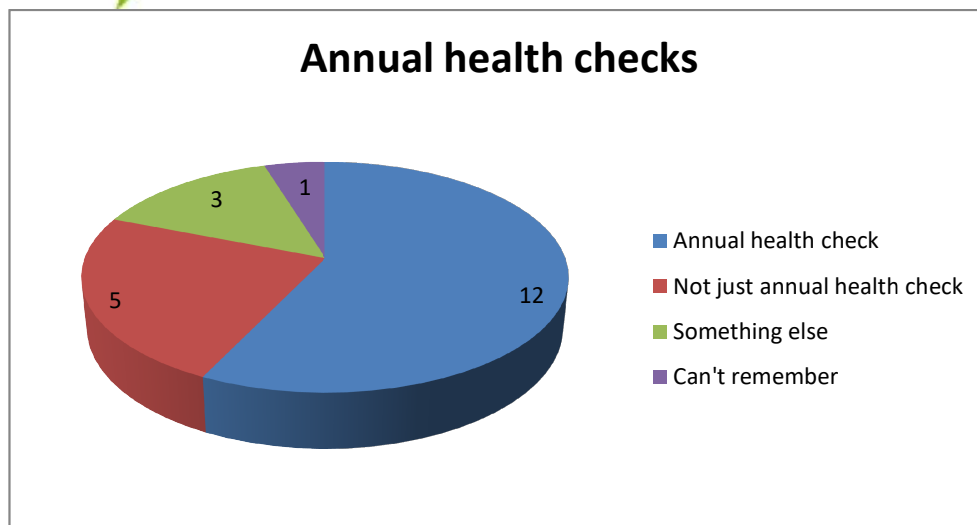
Below is a detailed summary of the responses to the questions that we asked our clients.

1) Have you been to the Doctors in the last Year?



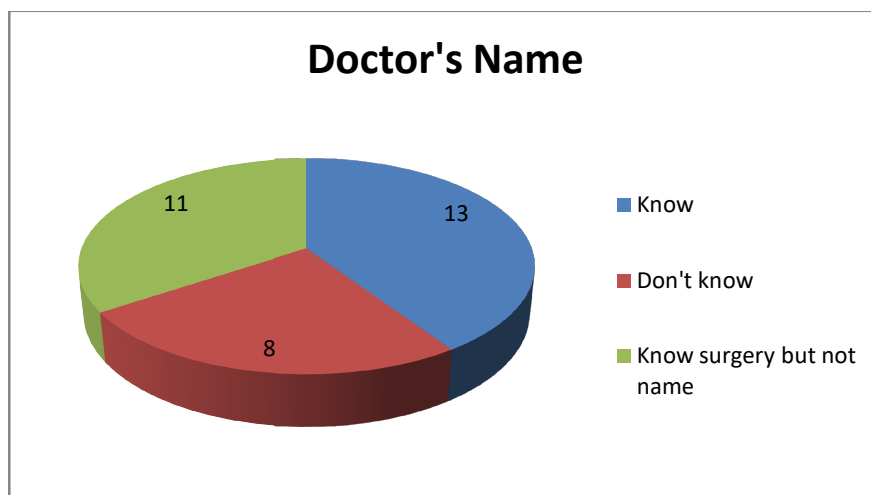
2) What was this for?

This question was asked to see if there were any general trends that emerged about what people were going for. Of the 22 clients that had definitely seen a doctor in the last year, by far the most common visit was for the annual health check. I counted it as an annual health check when people talked about blood tests, blood pressure and general body examinations.



There were a range of other things that people had seen the doctor about, sometimes at the same time as the annual health check. Of these 10 clients, 8 were seeing their doctors regarding a pre-existing and long term health condition.

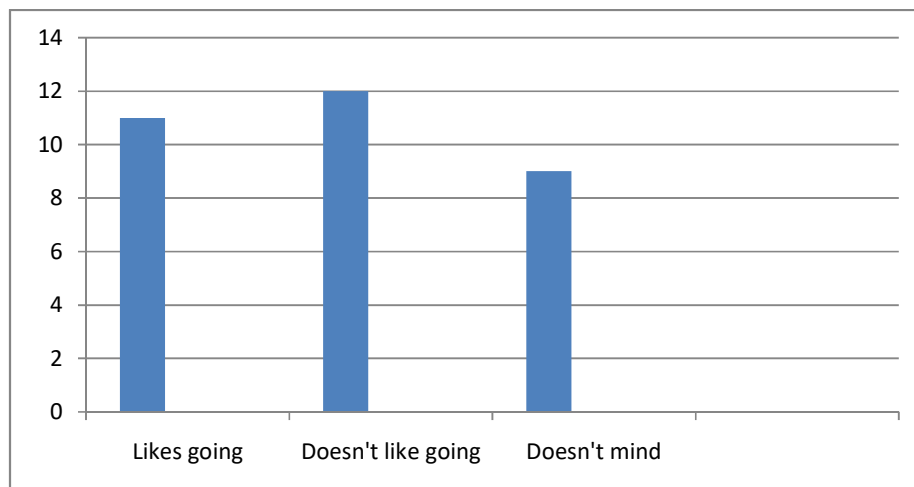
3) Do you know your doctor's name?



It was surprising how many of the clients either knew the name of their doctor or at least their surgery. There were some clients as well that did know that they saw the same person, they just didn't know their name.

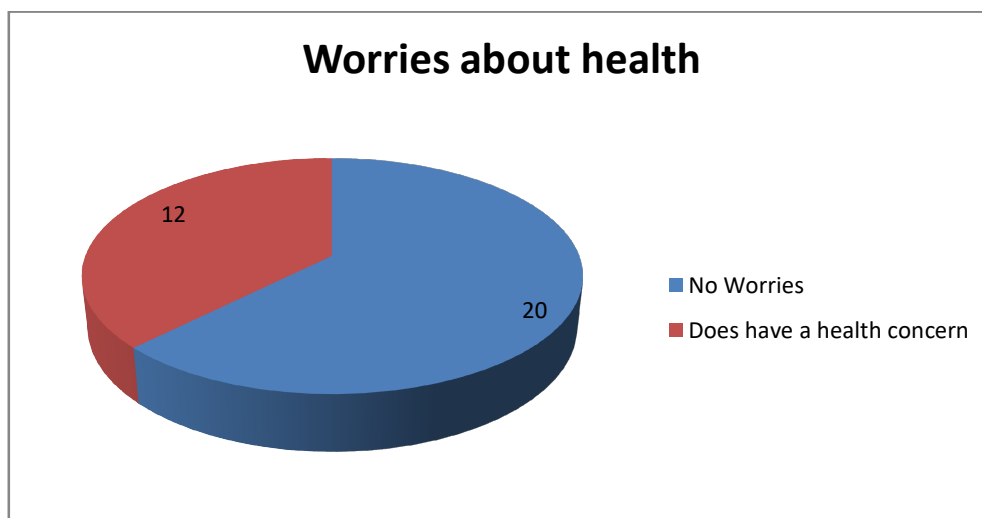


4) Do you like going to the doctors/not like going to the doctors or don't mind?



Of the 32 people we spoke to there was a really even split between the 3 responses. Not everyone was asked why they answered in certain ways. In retrospect, this would have been a good idea, but some people gave information about this. Naturally for most of those who didn't like going, they associated it with either feeling poorly or having a needle for the blood test. Interestingly and perhaps not surprisingly there was a good correlation between people who liked going to their doctor and those clients who knew their doctor by name.

5) Do you have any worries about your health?





This was an interesting question. Most of our clients when asked this question replied no without little or no hesitation. There are various possible reasons for this:

- Whether they had a health issue or not, they genuinely weren't worried about it.
- Some clients may not have wanted to discuss it with the project worker, either as someone they knew or as a man.
- They may not have wanted to talk to about something that caused them pain and discomfort.
- It may not have been easy for them to find the right words to talk about it.
- They were just answering automatically and saying what they thought was the right thing to say.

This question felt like others in this questionnaire, that it could be a research topic on its own. How easily can we gauge people's own concerns about their own health? Many people, regardless of learning difficulties, find it very difficult to discuss their own health. Add to this the communication barriers and often low levels of self confidence and/or knowledge of their own health issues, and we can see how difficult it is.

About half the people who did talk about a health concern needed some gentle prompting from the project worker about some health issue that we were aware of at Burton Street. One client, for example, has issues with his kidneys. He initially answered no with a confident smile, but when I mentioned his kidneys, he said "oh yes!" and then admitted that he did worry about them.

Some people did talk quite openly and in detail about their concerns.

Perhaps quite naturally these tended to be people with very good communication skills and also those who had longer term health issues.

6) How do you think we can look after people's health better at Burton Street?

One of the main reasons for conducting this initial piece of research was to ask our clients what measures we could take at Burton Street to help improve our clients' health. Whilst quite a lot of those questioned had seen a doctor recently, we are well aware that adults with learning difficulties in general are one of those vulnerable groups who can easily fall under the medical radar. We know many of our clients do not have the annual health checks they are entitled to and even if they do, they are often left unclear as to what this is for and what the implications may be for their own health.



It is important for us therefore to help educate our clients in any way that we can and encourage them to make healthier lifestyle choices if possible. Of the 32 questioned, 16 had some suggestions with the other 16 unsure how to answer the questions.

Hand and wrist exercises,

help me to cook, help each other, *have a holiday*,

exercise and **eat healthier,**

health and the body sessions, *mental health*, *not as much noise*,

encourage to bring Asthma inhalers, bring her walker to Burton Street,

mindfulness, *advice on what to look for when not well*,

continue allowing dentist to come

Some of these are very specific requests to the person and others are things that we can and do try to tackle at Burton Street on a daily basis both in sessions and at meal times. The larger the words, the more times it was mentioned by the clients.

What this report confirms is that our clients will benefit from people or organisations helping them to access health services wherever possible and/or providing services that help to educate adults with learning difficulties about their own health.

Recommendations

As a result of this project, we have two key recommendations:

1. Increase the uptake of annual health checks by adults with learning disabilities by offering those checks at community locations such as Burton Street.
2. Learning disability charities and statutory services should work in partnership to educate adults with learning disabilities about their own health.



What we are planning to do at Burton Street

Our challenge is to constantly find ways that our services can educate our clients in fun, interesting, engaging ways that help them to take control of their lives and making choices based on accessible information. One of the major ways that we intend to do this over the next two years is through a partnership project with South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue.

They have given us some funding to deliver sessions/workshops/events/visits/talks on twelve different distinct areas. Most of these relate to health in some way. Some of these subjects such as citizenship, social isolation, hate crime and bullying, can and do have a real impact on people's health, but we are also being asked to look at more direct impacts such as obesity, healthy relationships and sex education, annual health checks, long term health conditions, obesity and eyesight.

We have already come up with many varied and exciting ways of introducing these topics and our clients will be central to how we deliver them. Indeed we have already started making links with people across Sheffield and beyond to see how we can make lasting differences to our clients' lives. Some of those we are forging links with are: Sheffield Health and Social Care Trust, The Community Learning Disability Team at Love Street, Sheffield Food Festival, A Mind Apart, Fit for All Gym, Kadampa Buddhist Centre, The Safe Places Project, BBC Radio Sheffield, South Yorkshire Police, South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue, NHS Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), Healthwatch, Occupational Therapists who specialise in Sex Education, Seeability, Green Top Circus, Sonia Chibb (Yoga) and many of the other service providers for Learning Disability services across the city.

Some of the projects that we will be delivering are:

Healthy Food: Getting our clients involved in the café and looking at what we sell. Continuing our allotment project and sessions that look at where our food comes from, and having a presence at Sheffield Food Festival next Year.

General Health: Delivering an event later in the year centring around flu jabs, that will aim to attract other healthcare professionals such as dentists, physiotherapists and opticians.

Mental Wellbeing: Our next client forum will be centred upon mental health and what makes us happy. The idea is to invite various people to run a series of workshops relating to being active, building relationships, mindfulness, learning new skills and being generous.

Seeing and Hearing: To organise an event in conjunction with Seeability to help educate people about their eyesight and hearing and to have some free tests. They could also come to the health check event mentioned above.



Personal health and hygiene: focusing on hair, hands, clothes, washing and teeth. We thought for this topic it would be nice to either ask an outside agency or deliver ourselves a series of really fun, interesting activities as part of our normal sessions. The idea would be to initially concentrate on a couple of sessions and train up a few of our clients to be able to run these activities themselves, potentially at other learning disability services in Sheffield.

Sexual Education and Healthy Relationships: We have just agreed to start a Relationship and Sex Education Course with some of our clients which is run by two Health Facilitators from the Community Learning Disability Team at Love Street.



About Healthwatch Sheffield

Healthwatch Sheffield is the city's local consumer watchdog for health and social care services. The organisation exists to help adults, children and young people to influence and improve the way health and social care services are designed and run in the city. Healthwatch Sheffield is completely independent from the NHS and Sheffield City Council.

About the #SpeakUp grants

In 2017/18 Healthwatch Sheffield ran a small grants programme called 'Speak Up'. The programme was designed to enable local organisations and community groups to gather views and experiences of health and social care services from Sheffield residents, especially from those who do not traditionally have a voice. The aim is to ensure that health and social care decision makers in the city hear from a diverse range of people about their experiences of services.



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