



LET'S DO IT COMMUNITY FUND

Healthwatch Bury Health Advice
& Assistance Programme:
Quarter 2 April - June 2022

LET'S
do it!

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July 2022



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Introduction to Healthwatch Bury

This report has been produced by Healthwatch Bury. The Healthwatch network consists of 152 Healthwatch organisations across each of the local authority areas in England. It also has a national body called Healthwatch England based in London. We are all independent organisations who aim to help people get the best out of their local health and social care services, whether it's improving them today or helping to shape them for tomorrow.

Everything we say and do is informed by our connections to local people and our expertise is grounded in their experience. We are the only body looking solely at people's experience across all health and social care in Bury. As a statutory watchdog, our role is to ensure that local decision makers put the experiences of people at the heart of their care so that those who buy (commissioners) and provide our services (NHS Trusts, GPs, the voluntary sector and independent providers) can benefit from what Bury people tell us. Our reports on various elements of health and social care in Bury can be found on our website at the following link: healthwatchbury.co.uk or by contacting us directly using the details on the back cover.





Health Advice & Assistance programme

Background

A weekly health advice and assistance drop-in session in East Bury which commenced on 20th January 2022 providing practical hands-on support on health and social care queries and issues, arising on routine and complex health matters for residents of East Bury. The programme is funded from the Let's Do It Community Health Fund.

The programme is specifically be aimed at residents of the Borough who can't speak English well or at all, refugees, immigrants and asylum seekers and will assist them to access better health and social care and access support from the most appropriate services in the Borough.

The aim is to provide them with advice, information and assist with practical support to contact the right services or complete online application forms and help to provide long term improvements to their physical health and mental wellbeing.





Delivery

The programme is delivered in partnership with Eagles Wing, a well-established Friendship and Support group for Asylum seekers and refugees, operating from the United Reform Church in Bury.

Delivery commenced on 20/01/2022 after an initial meeting with meeting with Eagles Wing to agree times and room hire and this report includes data and information up to and including 23/06/22.

Dates	20/1/22	27/1/22	03/2/22	10/2/22	24/2/22	03/3/22	10/3/22	17/3/22
Queries	6	5	5	6	7	3	6	5
Cumulative totals	6	11	16	22	29	32	38	43
Dates	24/3/22	31/3/22	07/4/22	14/4/22	21/4/22	28/4/22	05/5/22	12/5/22
Queries	6	5	2	0	4	6	4	2
Cumulative totals	49	54	56	Prestwich outreach	60	66	70	72
Dates	17/5/22	26/5/22	2/06/22	9/06/22	16/6/22	23/6/22		
Queries	4	4	0	6	2	2		
Cumulative totals	76	80	BH	86	88	90		

The total number of requests for assistance is 90 over 21 weeks and the number of Individuals supported is 30 over this period as the complexity of the issues have meant that some individuals have attended multiple times so we can assist with different health needs and/or repeated attempts to get the help they need.

2 case studies are included which detail the assistance given to 2 individuals in the last quarter.

In addition to the Individuals supported, assistance has been given to 22 additional family members as GP appointments or dental requests have included children and partners.



Results

Demographic information

Male	Female	Ages 25-39	Ages 40-59	Age 60+
9	21	16	12	2
White British	White Other	Other ethnic	African	Not known
1	1	11	15	2
BL9	M26	M45	OL10	Not known
16	3	2	1	8

First Language

English	Arabic	Russian	Amharic	Kurdish	Swahili	Farsi	Urdu	Tigrinya	Oromo
1	15	1	1	2	2	2	1	3	1

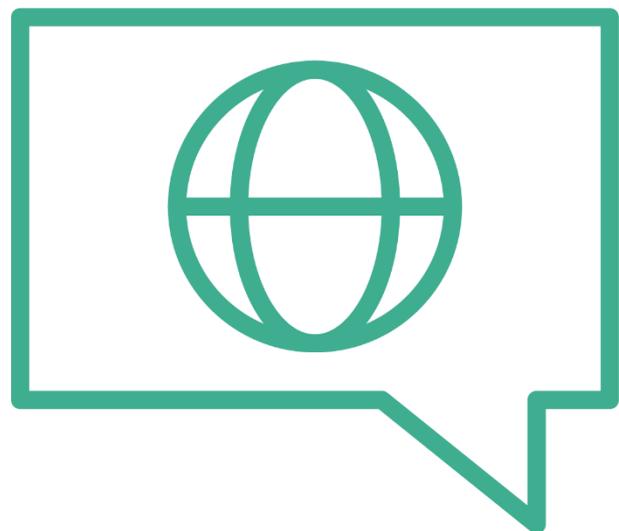
Country of Origin

Kuwait	Ukraine	Eritrea	Iraq	UK	Sudan	Syria	Palestine
2	1	2	2	1	8	4	1
Yeman	Congo	Morocco	Iran	Unknown	Pakistan	Ethiopia	
1	1	1	2	2	1	1	



Assistance required

Sexual health	Free prescription application HC2	Referral to 111 (Interpreter requested)	Dental access	Hospital booking (Interpreter)	Read & explain letter & forms
6	4	2	10	8	4
GP app. (Interpreter)	GP registration	Child health information	GP app for child (Interpreter)	PIP application assistance	Referral to mental health services
9	2	5	3	5	1
Universal credit health assessment form assistance	Housing/ Homelessness	Hospital complaint	Opticians appointment (with Interpreter)	Dental charge correction	Book patient transport
5	6	1	1	1	2
Repeat prescription	Referral to Red Cross	Referral to Fightback4 Justice	Travel vaccinations	Referral to Trading Standards/ CAB	
1	2	2	1	1	





Issues arising

Ongoing issues yet to be satisfactorily addressed:

- **Dental enquiries** –requests for family dental registrations but we currently only have dentists accepting under 18's at the present time. No adult NHS places available locally. Awaiting information on new government funding and take up by Bury dentists. We will contact those who have requested this assistance when we have confirmation of places available. 1 patient was signposted to 111 for nurse triage for severe dental pain.
- **Access to appointments** – this includes hospital, sexual health clinics, dental and GP appointments. Patients are struggling to get the help needed as language barriers via telephone mean they cannot explain the problem without Interpreter support. Call backs are often missed as they are often reluctant to answer unknown callers or cannot understand the call-back. Healthwatch has spent a lot of time waiting for calls to be answered by GP Practices to explain issue and request call back or appointment with Interpreter present. Issues dealt with but very time-consuming.
- **Housing/Homelessness issues** - this is not part of this programme but is a major issue affecting the wellbeing of refugees and asylum seekers with different issues affecting those in transition from asylum seeker to refugee, refugees, asylum seekers and failed asylum seekers who are destitute. We have been asked to help by patients desperate for assistance but are struggling to navigate local and regional options for people with some services in Bury not yet operational. Assistance in dealing with this specialised area is urgently required.
- **Requests for Patient Transport** – we have booked several journeys for hospital appointments out of the local area but have been made aware that Patient Transport is not available at weekends (this was regarding a visit to a Wirral hospital on a Sunday for a patient who is a refugee and is partially sighted with no other means of transport). We had to change the appointment to a weekday with a further delay to his treatment of 2 weeks adding to his distress.
- **Universal credit queries** – increasing number of queries regarding Universal credit & benefits which we have found difficult to deal with as not our area of



Case studies

Case study 1

We had a request from Eagles Wing to assist a lady who was homeless and needed urgent assistance. She is a 'refused asylum seeker' and had been told to move out from her current address. The lady, in her late 50's, spoke very little English, and was staying with her friend in another area but couldn't stay there indefinitely and needed rehousing urgently. This was impacting her health and wellbeing, and due to the lack of a permanent address, she



Figure 1 Healthwatch staff and volunteers set up ready for the session

faced barriers in accessing health and care services. Healthwatch Bury spoke to the Bury Council Homelessness team on her behalf and was told that due to her destitute status she is unable to access any Bury Council support. They advised the lady to attend Bury Town Hall to check her immigration paperwork to see if there is anything they might be able to help with. Our engagement officers visited the Town Hall with the lady to assist, but there we were advised to ring the Homelessness Team who had already stated that they were unable to help the lady.

We then made contact with Booth House and were given various options to try, and also made a referral to Boaz Trust for her. She was also receiving support via British Red Cross about her Asylum status, but due to lack of evidence, illiteracy, and complex background of this case it was very hard for her to challenge her destitute status legally. We were able to provide information about how to access health services even without any permanent address or proof of address so she could get any treatment she needed.

Two months later we received an update from the Boaz Trust to say that accommodation had become available for the lady, and she had now been housed in Manchester. Despite being outside of the Bury area, the lady still Volunteers at Eagle's Wing sessions on a regular basis and is thankful for the assistance our team was able to provide.



Case study 2

We had a request for assistance from one of the Volunteers at Eagles Wing who is supporting an Elderly disabled man (Patient A). The patient had been approached on his doorstep and had signed a contract for gardening and thought it was cheaper than it actually was. Patient A paid £500 and the Contractors wanted another £1500 that day and a further £6000 for the full contract. Patient A did not understand what he signed and felt intimidated. He was told they will come back for another payment this lunch time.

Healthwatch Bury rang the company ON BEHALF OF Patient A and they became very defensive and abusive. We followed up the call by contacting the CAB consumer helpline for further advice. They advised us to ring the company to notify that we will cancel the contract in writing on Patient A's behalf (as a part of 14 days cooling off period and because he didn't sign the waiving his rights form). Healthwatch Bury rang the company again informing them of the action we were taking, and they became very defensive and said they will accept the loss and consider the contract to be cancelled and they want to just leave the 'poor man alone'.

Healthwatch Bury also contacted Trading Standards and made them aware of this company. They will list as a bogus company. We sent out the contract cancellation email and the company confirmed on the phone they will no longer pursue a payment from Patient A.

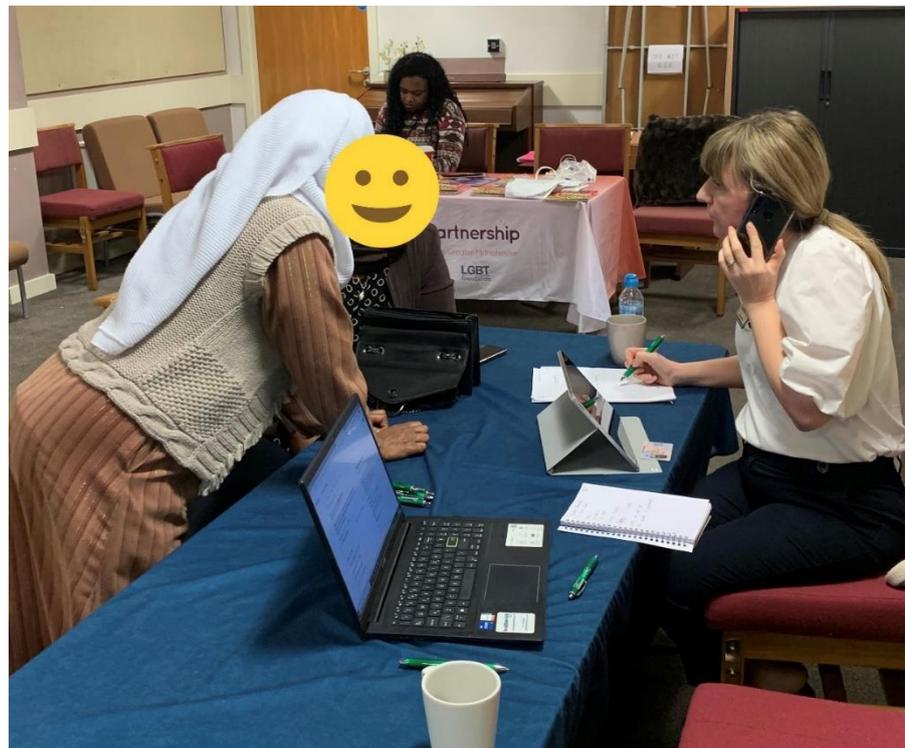


Figure 2 Healthwatch staff assisting with an issue



Project impact

The project we initiated alongside Eagles Wing has provided an invaluable service to some of the most vulnerable members of our community.

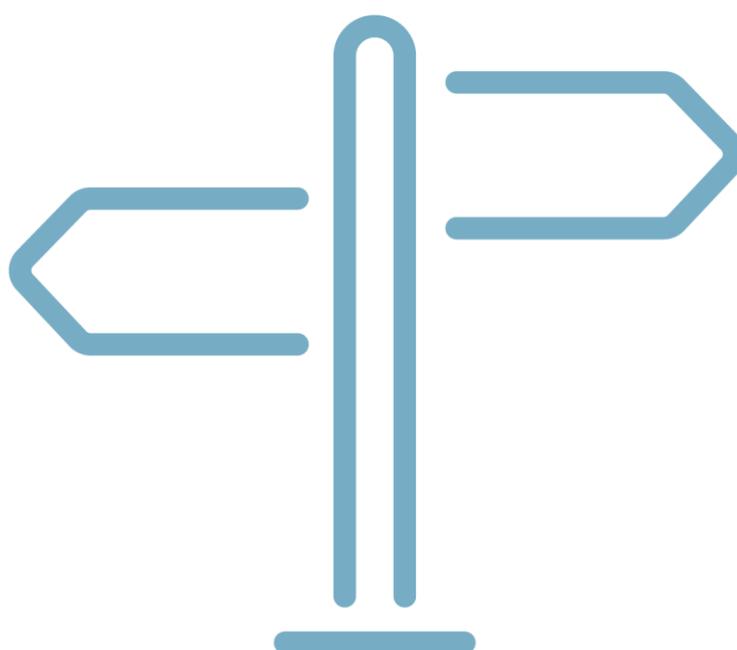
We continue to see between 2 and 6 people each session (average 4) but may deal with 3 separate requests for each individual at times, ranging from completing Infant Development forms, explaining letters from School Health Teams, registration forms for Nurseries, NHS appointments, booking Interpreters, booking Patient Transport etc. Most of the requests are concerning health or social care issues and we have a full spreadsheet of requests, actions and resolutions available which provides a detailed record of the work undertaken (this can be anonymized and provided on request).

As we have built up trust within the local community, the requests have become more complex and we are approached now with a wide range of requests for assistance, some of which are outside our remit and expertise. We try to help with signposting or if urgent, have taken action ourselves to try to resolve an issue.

Our case studies on this report, detail a couple of recent requests for assistance and the actions we took.

We have been able to refer some issues directly to Red Cross and Fightback4Justice who also attend Eagles Wing on a weekly basis and having the expertise from these organizations has been a valuable resource and one that is appreciated by Healthwatch Bury and Eagles Wing.

We have also partnered with The Black Health Agency who attend once a month to carry out HIV testing and give advice around sexual health providing added value to the programme.



Contact us

If you require this information in an alternative format,
please contact our office via the details below.



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