

## READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

### HEALTH & WELLBEING BOARD

16 JULY 2021

QUESTION No. 1 in accordance with Standing Order No 36

Tom Lake to ask the Chair of the Health & Wellbeing Board:

#### GP Phone Systems

Last November/December South Reading Patient Voice carried out a survey of the experiences of older patients with regard to the new electronic forms of access to GP surgeries.

In the course of that work we discovered that a couple of pharmacies that we visited had patients who were failing to obtain repeat prescriptions for long term conditions, even to the extent of abandoning their medications. Difficulties in contacting their GP surgeries, to arrange repeat prescription or required medication reviews were the cause of this difficulty. We contacted Berkshire West CCG about this.

We would like to congratulate Reading Healthwatch on their investigation of this problem, which, as the paper on today's agenda shows, is illustrated by plentiful, eloquent evidence.

We would like to draw the Board's attention to the provision of telephone systems as a Systems Design problem. An inadequate system can leave its controllers unaware of the harsh difficulties being experienced by its users. It may be asking too much of a GP or practice manager to be the designer of a system which avoids such indirect communication bottlenecks.

Will the Board urgently call for an external review of the telephone systems in use at our GP surgeries to check that they present timely and representative management information in an easily accessed and digestible form so that patients' difficulties in gaining access are clear to the surgery management and their PPGs? Also to check capacity against demand.

**REPLY** by the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board (Councillor Hoskin):

Thank you for your question Mr Lake and I'm also very grateful for the attention that South Reading Patient Voice has been paying to this issue and ones about access to primary care in Reading.

In my role as chair of this board and Reading's lead councillor for Health I am taking a keen interest in the developing picture of access to primary care services in the changed world that the Covid pandemic ushered in. Work is taking place more widely around this and I am keen that this Board, the council, partners and residents input into that work.

A telephony project is underway which will evaluate the platforms being used by GP Practices with the aim of identifying the best telephony solutions to be deployed across sites. Once deployed it is envisaged that this will support collaborative working across practices and Primary Care Networks, improve demand and capacity capabilities as well as greater resilience within primary care. The initial evaluation stage is due to be completed by March 2022.