

ANNEX 8 (Domestic Abuse):

Extracts from a report from Health Watch Surrey submitted to the task group, which includes qualitative data & insight into key Health disadvantages experienced by Individuals suffering from Domestic Abuse:

Refuge users with healthcare access challenges and ongoing mental health challenges

[Foodbank User] I had to flee domestic abuse in 2020. I ended up in a refuge, I had to just leave but I managed to pack a bag. It was amazing and I'm thinking of working for them or volunteering for them. I had my own room, brand new bedding all still in its packaging, brand new toiletry bag, it was brilliant. They said they left everything in the packaging so that they could see that everything was new, and it was for me, and we were ready to start a new life.

I'm at the food bank today because we literally have no money now, I'm finding it hard to get work locally, as I don't drive. I used to be a nurse and I looked at getting to Royal Surrey but because of where I live in Farncombe it's really hard to get to the public transport in time and on a train and across Guildford to do the shifts, also it means you are paying a lot of your wages on public transport. Where I was before the transport links were so much better.

When we moved to the area, we registered at Binscombe GP surgery they've been amazing, really supportive and helped sort out lots of things. I'm also going through the menopause and the GP has been helping me with managing my HRT for menopause. I've been trying to manage my own hormones as I used to be a nurse and twice, I asked for changes to my HRT because I didn't think it was working and I needed a slightly different approach. The doctor has now changed the hormones as I've asked but I googled exactly what I had to say in order to get the changes made as I knew she couldn't give me certain hormones unless I said I had a lack of libido. I was offered therapy via the refuge which was amazing, that was face to face and I found it was really good and appropriate. Last year I felt like I needed to talk to someone again and so I was able to refer myself to talking therapies [over the phone] that was CBT but you know it didn't really help and I thought I needed something more specialised, so I tried counselling by phone for PTSD I had eight weeks of it but I don't think people who are doing the talking really truly understand what it's like to be in a domestic abuse situation. I would have preferred someone with lived experience, they kept saying things like 'well you've got to look after yourself' which I found trite and really have been trying to look after myself since everything that has happened. They kept forgetting my story and I had to keep repeating myself and when you've explained something to someone a million times you kind of think what's the point, it's like starting again each session and then that it's not actually helping me anymore.

One of the problems I've had since I've moved to the area is finding a dentist. I've been at Farnham East Street dentist because my tooth was impacted they saw me but said it was a 52 week wait for it to be sorted out in a hospital. A friend paid for me in the end, and I got referred by East Street dentist to Eastleigh Dentist also in Farnham who did it privately. My daughter who is in her 30's also had problems with her teeth and 111 sent my daughter for help at Woking community dentist at the Woking hospital, it seemed like miles away especially when you're going by public transport.

All in all, we have decided we want to leave Waverley, it's not an easy place to make a new start without money. It's very expensive to live and hard to travel around cheaply we have given up with Waverley housing and have applied to be down in Exeter, so I can hopefully work down there and it's cheaper to live. I have no shame anymore and I have had to resort to using the foodbank to get by.

[Signposting: Back to GP if wanted further mental health support] 172252, July 2022