

Improving Wheelchair Services: Kent Physical Disability Forum

One of the priorities of the Kent Physical Disability Forum (PDF) is to advocate for members and highlight their experiences of wheelchair services in the county.

Members have provided their experiences since the contract was re-tendered and there were some serious concerns.

The Kent PDF heard concerns regarding:

Long waiting times for calls to be answered, examples of up to 30 minutes, messages left but no response

Long waiting lists for appointments with no indicative dates given. One example of requesting an appointment for a child who had outgrown their chair and was well known to services, not getting an assessment until July which was only an assessment and then the chair was not provided until September. Frequent phone calls were needed to progress things.

Poor communication around appointments

Chairs provided that are not fit for purpose

Long waits for repairs, even urgent repairs

Repairs not done effectively

Service users with complex needs not being treated in a holistic way e.g. example of a young wheelchair user being told his chair would have to be taken away immediately as it's tyres were worn, but as it was their only chair it meant potentially stranding the child in the school.

There were also two bits of positive feedback received by the forum where service users had been pleased with the service.

Healthwatch Kent fund the support for the Kent PDF and has also been collating feedback from wheelchair service users for the last year:

Summary of Feedback Millbrook Healthcare: April 2017 - March 2018

Key for outcomes:

A=Assisted Information

S= Signposted

R= Referral

C=Complaint

L=Issue Logged

ESC=Escalation

Client Location	Service	Topic	Issue	Out come
ME17	Wheelchair services	Waiting time	It has taken over 330 days since I was referred by my MS nurse for the Wheelchair Advisory Service to visit me. It will then take another 69 working days to supply a wheelchair. Over a year to supply a wheelchair!	S - Millbrook
CT9	Wheelchair services	Waiting times	Contacted as has hassle when wife was in hospital over 2 years ago. Stated that they would not leave wife without a care package. They are still having problems today following the discharge such as the wheelchair. They were refused an electric wheelchair and given a Manual wheelchair. However, they are still waiting for alterations to be made.	L
Same Client	Wheelchair services	Equipment, Waiting times, Patient Choice.	The wheelchair had one part ordered but then was the wrong part and a new part ordered. Still waiting and currently the only way to take his wife to see a specialist is on a stretcher. As she is bed bound.	L
ME15	Wheelchair Services	Complaint Management, Information & Engagement, Coordination of Service, Personalisation, Staff Attitudes.	I hadn't heard anything from Millbrook healthcare since they had acknowledged my letter of complaint. So I emailed them again on the 18 th October asking how the investigation to my complaint was going as I hadn't heard anything. The operations manager from the Kent service centre phoned me and said that there must have been some kind of mistake and that he would sort me out an appointment. I told him that I was going on holiday and the dates that I was away. Then I phoned before I went away in October, he didn't phone me back. So I phoned again today and I was assured that he would phone me today which he has not done. I don't think that my complaint has been dealt with correctly.	R - Kent Advocacy
CT10	Wheelchair Services	Waiting times, Access to information,	The service they are providing is diabolical". Client is waiting for an Anti-static strip for her motorised wheelchair, she has been waiting for three months and when she called on Friday Nov 3rd they had no idea when the part would arrive. Client is getting static shocks from the chair and so are her carers. the other part she is waiting for (same	L

			3 month wait) is arm pads for her manual wheelchair. Both these items do not need fitting they could be sent by post.	
Same Client	Wheelchair Services	Theft, Staff Attitudes, Complaint Management, Complaint Waiting times.	Client has asked that they not send one of the engineers as she has had problems with him in the past but he is still sent. client finds him rude, he leaves her wheelchair sitting on her drive for an hour while he is in his van then test drives her chair up and down the street, he also does not listen to her. Client has made a written complaint but after 10 days has had no response.	L
CT3	Wheelchair Services	Waiting times, Appointment Change of service	Have been waiting months for re-assessment since provider changed earlier this year.	L
Same Client	Wheelchair Services	Change in service, Records Management, Equipment.	There has been no routine review, there were no records of existing service users available following the change in provider. Neither is there any parts available for existing wheelchairs and equipment.	L
Same Client	Wheelchair Services	Appointments Waiting times, Coordination of Service, Suitability of provider (Individual)	Appointment was made incorrectly as daughter should have a band 7 assessment and booked in for band 6. This meant it wasn't the right OT so has to be rebooked, has been reassured that the appointment will be given priority.	L
TN2	Wheelchair Services	Lack of services, waiting times, Appointment	1st visits - Did not turn up.	L
Same Client	Wheelchair Services	Appointment, Suitability of staff, Staff training & Development, Equipment.	2nd visit - Unable to fit the tyres due to lack of training.	L
Same Client	Wheelchair Services	Appointment, Equipment, Quality and risk monitoring.	3rd visit - Wheelchair delivered to us, screws missed spokes out of wheels.	L
Same Client	Wheelchair Services	Staff Training & Development.	Lack of experience of staff.	L
Anon	Wheelchair service	Appointments, Equipment, Suitability of Quality of	Client stated that he had someone from the wheelchair service visit to change the tires on his wheelchair on Monday. The person who came was	L

		treatment, Involvement and engagement.	unsure how to remove the tires and was going to get them off with a saw. Client had to step in and remove the tires himself to prevent potential damage to his wheelchair.	
Same Client	Wheelchair service	Equipment, Staff training and development, Quality and risk monitoring.	Client advised that he looked at the tires yesterday and that one was not fitted properly. Client stated that he has since managed to put it on properly. Client stated that the staff are not trained properly.	L
Same Client	Wheelchair service	Waiting times, Access to information, Information and engagement.	Client contacted the Wheelchair service regarding the tires not being fitted properly and they were not very quick to respond.	L
Same Client	Wheelchair service	Staff training and development, Information and engagement.	Client stated that he feels that any staff who can fix a bicycle tire could change a tire on a wheelchair and this is not the case. Client stated that staff needs to have the appropriate training and perhaps this can be delivered with wheelchair users involvement. Client stated it would not be difficult to involve the wheelchair users as they have a wheelchair meeting group there frequently.	L
ME18	Wheelchair service	Access to services, Equipment repairs, Equipment, Waiting times, Access to information.	Client has been waiting since September 2016 for her new motorised wheelchair. She was referred 16th sept 2016 and she has been contacting wheelchair service every month since to ask about progress. She has been promised call-backs which have not been returned. In September 2017 she contacted her MP who informed her that the wheelchair service were not responding to her secretary.	E - Escalation
Same Client	Wheelchair service	Appointments, Equipment repairs, Equipment, Waiting times.	Jan 22nd, 2018 Client had appointment at Gillingham where her new chair was adjusted for her needs now has to wait for it to be delivered. Client contacted wheelchair service, 29th 30th when computers were down & today 31st and was told that she should have picked up her chair from Gillingham, she then spoke to O T who told her that they were picking up chair today and will contact her when it will be delivered, possibly Friday 2nd February. When client gets her chair she will then have to wait again for the hoist in her car to be adjusted. Client feels that if she had had her powered	E - Escalation

			wheelchair the accident would not have happened. She also stated that her confidence in going out alone has been lost.	
Anon	Wheelchair service	Equipment	We were advised by a friend to contact you regarding our experiences with the Medway Wheelchair Clinic. X is a full time electric wheelchair user. He has accessed the Clinic recently regarding seat discomfort issues and has also needed parts fixed and fitted.	L
Same Client	Wheelchair service	Waiting times, Access to information, Appointments, Coordination of services, Access to services	Currently he is waiting for some new parts and his Mum has had to chase them up and call a number of times, still to be told the person who needs to book the appointments is not responding to emails. Even though he has been told the parts are in, he cannot be booked into the Clinic to receive them.	L
Same Client	Wheelchair service	Waiting times, Appointments, Equipment,	X himself is unhappy about the long wait for appointments, especially when he is in pain and discomfort and can't be seen. There were a couple of occasions we waited all day for an engineer and no one came - we understand there can be mix ups, but it is frustrating when someone is in pain and you have waited in all day.	L
Same Client	Wheelchair service	Complaint, Complaint Management, Equipment.	The Team have worked with X for a number of years and ultimately, they do solve his issues. They come up with some innovative ideas, however, the length of time between appointments and once a month availability combined with not getting parts when needed is unsatisfactory.	L

Action Taken so far:

The Kent Physical Disability Forum (PDF) has been extremely proactive in raising these issues with the provider and commissioners:

They have encouraged service users to use the Millbrook complaints process

Together with other wheelchair user groups, Kent County Council and the Medway Physical Disability forum they have met with Millbrook to raise the concerns directly.

They have been in contact with the lead commissioners (Thanet CCG) from December 2017 and eventually met with them in April. The commissioners appeared unaware of any problems with the service as performance monitoring reports from Millbrook did not give any indication of concerns.

The Kent PDF is having a follow up meeting with Thanet CCG on 12 July and will be able to provide an update to the Kent Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 20th July.