

**The experience of people  
who contact the  
Single Point of Access (SPA)  
for adult mental health services  
in Kirklees and Calderdale**

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# Our work at a glance...

**What was the issue?**

Healthwatch Kirklees and Healthwatch Calderdale received concerning feedback about SPA from various sources: from reviews left on our websites, through our Complaints Advocacy service in Calderdale and from some of the mental health support groups in Kirklees.

**What did we do?**

We asked people to tell us about their experience of contacting SPA for themselves or on behalf of someone they care about. We also engaged with staff who contact SPA on behalf of people they work with.

**What did we find out?**

People told us good things about the responsiveness and accessibility of the SPA service and there were some positive examples of good quality interactions and support.

People shared feedback on things they feel could be improved such as the attitude and approach of some of the staff who respond to SPA calls. People sometimes feel dismissed and that there is a lack of empathy, understanding and compassion.

Carers told us that they don't always feel well informed about available support and that sometimes their concerns are dismissed.

Professionals greatly value the Mental Health Liaison Nurses available in the Police Hubs. Some are concerned about resourcing and capacity of mental health support services, including SPA, and feel this sometimes impacts the quality of service they receive.

**How will we use people's feedback?**

The provider of SPA (South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust) are looking at the way they deliver this service as part of a wider review. Our findings and recommendations will go to those who are involved in the review and Healthwatch will ensure that the voice of those who access SPA is represented at every opportunity.

**How will we report developments?**

We will publish responses alongside this report on our website <https://healthwatchkirklees.co.uk/our-current-work-2019/>

We will share any developments on social media and will keep partners updated by sharing updates at relevant meetings and groups.

## What is the Single Point of Access (SPA) for adult mental health services?

The following description is taken from South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust's website who provide the SPA service in Kirklees and Calderdale:

The Calderdale and Kirklees Single Point of Access team receives all referrals for mental health services in Calderdale and Kirklees. The team directs all the referrals to the most appropriate Trust services or advises the referrer of the best organisation to contact.

The team screens all referrals for urgency i.e. whether they need a response within 4 hours, 24 hours or 14 days. They meet with people who have been screened to need a 4 or 24 hour response (urgent referral) face to face to assess their needs and also sees some people who need an assessment within 14 days.

The single point of access team also provides a 24 hour, 7 day a week helpline for service users and can offer advice to referrers at any time.

It also manages all inpatient ward beds in Kirklees and provides a gatekeeping service to assess whether people need to be admitted to hospital or can be nursed in their home environment. It does this along with its sister team, Kirklees intensive home based treatment.

Some people in Kirklees refer to SPA as 'the crisis team' or 'crisis helpline'.

The SPA service is delivered by 2 separate teams: from 8am to 5pm the SPA team take calls and referrals and from 8pm - 8am the Intensive Home Based Treatment Service receive all incoming contacts.

## Why we wanted to speak to people who contact SPA?

Healthwatch Kirklees and Healthwatch Calderdale have received negative feedback about people's experience of the SPA service. This included 19 reviews on Healthwatch websites - 15 of which are '1 star' reviews (out of a maximum of 5 stars for people's overall experience of the service). SPA is the service that we receive most unprompted feedback about, through our telephone information service, contact form and website reviews.

Many comments were extremely concerning and Healthwatch ensured this feedback was brought to the attention of South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS

Foundation Trust (SWYPFT) so that they could respond. If contact details were provided, and people asked for Healthwatch to get in touch, those people were provided with information on how to contact SWYPFT to give more detail about their experience or to make a complaint. In most instances, SWYPFT left a response to the reviews and in some cases were able to speak to the person directly to try to resolve any issues.



Rated by **Anonymous**

22nd February 2019



Response from provider

## Disgusted

Ring up for help, which it took best part of 3hrs just to dial the number to be told to see my gp...and they wonder why mental health system in trouble. If they helped people at the first point of contact and put support in place or even a friendly voice on the phone it would reduce admissions, save money. This is the last place I would ring when in crisis, they make u feel like a time waster that's over exaggerating. Disgusting  
less ▲

### **Response from Consultant Adult Psychotherapist Manager Calderdale and Kirklees Single Point of Access, Single Point of Access (SPA) - Mental Health**

I am sorry to hear of your dissatisfaction with the Single Point of Access. I would be happy to meet with you and if you would find it helpful staff from Healthwatch. You could either contact me on 01924 316830 or through asking Healthwatch to make contact with me.

There can be various appropriate reasons why we might appropriately ask a person to contact their GP in the first instance, but to understand whether this was appropriate in your situation I would need to have more details.

John Price Single Point of Access Manager



*Rated by Emma*

30th December 2018



*Response from provider*

### **"This isn't the Samaritans"**

Really dissappointed again by the Crisis Team. There really needs to be more training. To say to someone in crisis who finds it hard to speak out that this isn't the Samaritans is actually horrific. I agree it's not the Samaritans and I was told that during the gap till my psychologist returns if I was in crisis out of hours I SHOULD contact the service. I have said this before and I will say it again because something seriously needs to be done... apparently according to the crisis team there is a 'correct' and an 'incorrect' way of dealing with your own crisis!

#### ***Response from Consultant Adult Psychotherapist Manager Calderdale and Kirklees Single Point of Access, Single Point of Access (SPA) - Mental Health***

Hello Emma

Thank you for agreeing to meet with Clare and myself to get more understanding of your disappointment with SPA. Whilst I will not get into details of our conversation here I hope that you found it helpful. As I said when we met, it really helps to speak to Service Users when they have constructive thoughts about how services can be improved. I agreed that I would acknowledge this on this site.

May I also wish you well with your on going recovery. If you feel the need to speak further please do not hesitate to contact me. Kind Regards John

All reviews can be seen on Healthwatch websites [www.healthwatchkirklees.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchkirklees.co.uk) and [www.healthwatchcalderdale.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchcalderdale.co.uk)

Around a quarter of the complaints about health services through the Healthwatch Calderdale Independent Health Complaints Advocacy Service are about mental health care. Several of these have included concerns about access to the Single Point of Access for Mental Health.

Here are some key overarching learning points from complaints advocacy around the SPA:

- Individuals with complex ongoing needs do not feel they have proper access to the SPA - in a small number of cases, individuals have struggled to access care from SWYPFT services more broadly due to the challenges they present, such as diagnoses for which no specialist services are provided locally. In these cases, the individual may attempt to contact SPA for immediate support in times of significant difficulty, but are told they have already been assessed and that SWYPFT cannot support them. This is an issue of particular significance to adults with Autism Spectrum Conditions. We have also heard examples of people being told to go to A&E for crisis care when presenting to the SPA with significant mental health needs.
- Complainants have reported negative attitudes and responses from SPA staff - several clients have been dissuaded from contacting the SPA because of

the attitude and responses of staff; some have been dismissive of concerns and state that the person's level of distress is not significant enough to warrant offering support. Some individuals have been dealt with rudely by staff, who are unwilling to listen to the concerns being raised, and who have put the phone down on the individual during a period of heightened emotion.

- Callers have been told that the organisation is struggling with resource - some clients have specifically been told that mental health services are under too much pressure, and they do not have the resource to be able to support them, in spite of their mental health difficulties.

On occasion, it has been necessary for staff from Healthwatch to make contact with the Single Point of Access on behalf of a client. This has always taken place during the day time. As we are often calling on behalf of the most complex clients, who feel that they have been side-lined by the service, we feel we may get a disproportionately negative response, however we have also felt dismissed when contacting that team. It is not the role of Healthwatch to establish the extent of someone's suicidal feelings, but this is something that we are asked to comment on by the SPA staff. Although on most occasions we have been able to secure a call back for the individual who we see as in need of support in a mental health crisis, this has sometimes felt hard fought, with Healthwatch staff reporting their frustrations that the comments from the individuals were not taken seriously. This is concerning, as it is discouraging for representatives from voluntary and community sector organisations who may need to alert to an issue around someone's safety.

## What we did to find out more

From March - May 2019, Healthwatch engaged with people in the following ways:



Surveys were made available for people who have contacted the SPA for themselves or for someone they care about (Appendix 1) and for staff who have contacted the SPA on behalf of people they work with (Appendix 2). Surveys were shared across Kirklees and Calderdale, targeted towards groups working with people with mental health issues and adults at risk. Surveys were also shared widely on social media.



We offered an interactive workshop to look at whether people know where to go if they're struggling with their mental health and how/where they would like to access information like this.



A drop-in session took place at Huddersfield Mission and Basement Recovery in Huddersfield to capture feedback from people who use services there.

## What we know about people who engaged with us

**Surveys** - 258 responses in total. Healthwatch understand that this is a relatively low number of responses considering there are around 900 referrals to the SPA service every month. Around 6% of these referrals come directly from people experiencing mental health issues and their carers, which equates to around 55 people per month. As we are capturing the experience of people who have made direct access with the SPA, we are confident that the responses are representative of the experience of people who contact the SPA service.

**Overall, there were more negative comments and suggestions for improvement than there were positive comments.**

### 146 responses for Survey 1 - from service users and carers

38% of people live in Calderdale

62% of people live in Kirklees

49% of people called SPA to access support for themselves

51% of people called SPA to access support for someone they care for

### People who call the SPA to access support for themselves:

51% currently access support from mental health services. Just over half of these people receive support from the Community Mental Health Team and 24% from Adult Psychological Therapies.

45% called Monday to Friday between 8am and 8pm; 20% were not sure of the time of their call, 25% called at the weekend and 10% called Monday to Friday 8pm-8am.

### People who have called the SPA on behalf of someone they care for:

41% of people who the call is made on behalf of are currently access support from mental health services. Of these, 40% receive support from the Community Mental Health Team and 27% from Adult Psychological Therapies.

71% called Monday to Friday between 8am and 8pm, 15% were not sure, 7% called Monday to Friday 8pm-8am and 7% called at the weekend.

### 112 responses for Survey 2 - from staff who contacted the SPA on behalf of people they work with:

89% of respondents work in Kirklees.

11% of respondents work in Calderdale.

59% of respondents work for the Police.



13% of respondents work in 'other' organisations such as education, Probation Service and young people's services.

10% work in **voluntary and community sector** organisations.

There were only a handful of responses from primary, secondary and social care. No responses were received from Yorkshire Ambulance Service.

Respondents could select more than one option to tell us about the time of making their call to SPA.

72% said they were most likely to call SPA from **Monday to Friday, 8am-8pm,**

40% said they were most likely to call **Monday to Friday, 8pm - 8am** and **36%** said they call at the **weekend.**

22% of people who responded said they **could** access timely, appropriate support for people who are experiencing a mental health crisis;

24% said they **couldn't,** and **54%** said they **could sometimes.**

**Workshop** - Healthwatch ran an informal workshop at Take Ten in Dewsbury. Take Ten is a peer-led group for people looking for support with their mental health. **8 people took part in the workshop.**

**Drop in and outreach** - A drop-in session was held at Huddersfield Mission and, due to low levels of engagement there, a spontaneous visit to Basement Recovery Service also took place. People at both services are often living with multiple, complex issues such as homelessness, problems with drug/alcohol use and mental ill health. **10 people spoke to Healthwatch about their experience of accessing mental health support.**

**Reviews on Healthwatch websites** - **19 reviews** for the SPA have been left on Healthwatch Kirklees and Healthwatch Calderdale websites.

## What did we find out?

### The good stuff

#### Prompt answer when calling the SPA

When asked 'tell us anything you think is good about the SPA', many of the comments related to the accessibility and promptness of answering calls. Most of these comments were made by people who have contacted the SPA on behalf of someone they care for.

Always answer phone fast

24 hour access

It is responsive

Phone was answered promptly. They did call back when they said they would

#### Accessibility of the service

Professionals in particular seem to appreciate that the service is accessible via a single number, available 24/7 which means there is always someone to call for advice and information.

It is manned 24 hours a day

Ease of contact whilst on duty. Makes dealing with mental health patients easier when appropriate advice given

There is always someone on the end of the phone, at all hours of the day and night

It is one phone number that saves having to phone a million places

It is good to have a point of contact that you can get information on a person re the mental health records to assist you with decision making

It is a service that is able to direct referrals to the most suitable professional depending on the type of mental health issue

Having one number to call lessens the fretting over which service to call.

(all comments above are from professionals)

#### Examples of good quality responses and care

Some people describe being pleased with the response they have received when contacting the SPA because they feel the person taking the call listened to them, understood and acted on concerns where appropriate.

Reassuring. Calmed me down, gave me good advice

Showed great empathy

After many bad services I called this time and it was a familiar voice who was on the other end of the line...I was very reassured

Some people are compassionate and understanding

The people on the other end are welcoming and kind

They were a lifeline for me when I was feeling low

Listen to me as a professional and respond helpfully – take time to talk things through  
(comment from professional)

There were also some positive comments made about the quality of the response, care and treatment people received as a result of contacting the SPA.

The workers were really helpful and supportive. They were brilliant at providing me with medication and was there to help out with my anxiety and self harming

They help you at crisis point to get some help

Always able to answer my queries. Will give advice on options. Staff explain reasons for accepting patients or not (comment from professional)

When the staff member is helpful then the SPA service is excellent...if SPA can speak to the person either directly or over the phone then they are best placed to make an informed decision and advise me about what to do next (comment from professional)

It is a service that is needed and can save lives (comment from professional)

They always try to help and offer advice (comment from professional)

Convenient. Simple, clear and quick advice (comment from professional)

It's good to have somewhere to call for service users who are experiencing difficulties that we can pass on (comment from professional)

A few people who contacted the SPA on behalf of someone they care for told us good things about their experience

Think it is good there is someone on hand to support people in their time of need

Every nurse that has been out to see my husband have been brilliant and he has finally received the help he needs, brilliant service

Always caring on the phone

## Things that people feel are not working so well

People told us about numerous issues, ranging from finding it difficult to make a call to the SPA, problems with staff attitude and people feeling like they didn't receive the help or support they felt they needed when experiencing a mental health crisis. Issues such as these were raised not just by people trying to access support for themselves or someone they care for, but from professionals who contact the SPA on behalf of people they work with.

### Contacting SPA

For service users and carers, the key issue was the emotional challenges of making a call to the SPA. For professionals, they want the process of making referrals to be made easier.

When you are low and depressed you cannot open up and speak on a phone to someone you don't know and get out what support you are wanting to receive

More understanding of how difficult it can be to call and talk

I think there should be a better access way rather than having to ring and talk to a total stranger on the phone when you feel you cannot approach by phone as confidence is already low at this point

Need to understand that the person experiencing the mental health [issue] is autistic and may not be comfortable speaking to a stranger on the phone. I had to call and complain when a nurse told my daughter they would not speak to anyone else but her

Make it easier for professionals and service users to make referrals (comment from professional)

Accept email referrals (comment from professional)

### **Staff attitude and response to requests for support**

People frequently commented on a problem with the attitude of some staff who answer phone calls to the SPA. A lack of understanding, empathy and a dismissive approach is described.

Lack of empathy or constructive advice or support

[could be improved by] staff that know what they're doing and aren't shocked when someone who is suicidal/upset calls them

Staff were insensitive and did not listen to my concerns or let my community team know of my contact

Proper support and not told to go away and have a cup of tea and calm down then ring back up at a more convenient time

Either scrap the service or change staff recruitment and training in order to provide a service that is respectful, empathetic and safe for vulnerable to use

Some staff require additional training around how to support crisis situations from callers

The staff I have spoken with at SPA have not been helpful. They have disregarded any concerns I have had as a professional regarding the people I am supporting.....I think that the service should have more professional people working at their call centre...need to be more empathetic to the people who are requiring urgent mental health support (comment from professional)

I don't feel I'm taken seriously when I call about someone who is unwell. I also feel like the aim is to fob callers off (comment from professional)

Attitude of some staff is not always helpful. Had negative experiences of over-defensive staff – felt like looking for ways not to help (comment from professional)

I have heard staff ask very leading questions such as 'you're not going to hurt yourself are you?' when the person has just stated that they feel like doing just that (comment from professional)

People expressed frustration at feeling dismissed, not listened to, not taken seriously and feeling like they're being 'fobbed off' when they contacted the SPA for support. Some feel they don't get the service they need because of the way their call is dealt with.

When I call it because I need urgent help and can't wait until 'the next available appointment'

I was only looking to speak to someone but felt very dismissed and alone

Sometimes when they ask questions like have you tried distraction or relaxation it can be frustrating as when I ring SPA I have tried everything. I ring them when nothing has worked and I need help

A hot bath and warm milk does not fix someone in distress

Staff often seem overworked and unsure of the support available and reluctant to offer more intensive support

It genuinely feels like SPA aim to make getting access to services so complicated and stressful that we give up, thus saving mental health professionals from further referrals

It would help if I thought that the team could deal with the crisis and be able to deal with the referral quickly and efficiently (comment from professional)

Response times and screening, sometimes urgent cases are missed (comment from professional)

SPA unhelpful when staff were dealing with a very distressed person who had written a declaration of suicide (via Universal Credit system).... felt 'handed off', 'not our problem'. Staff ended up calling for assistance from the Police (comment from professional)

We phone the number we are given then we get directed numerous times and have to say the same thing over and over when we are trying to get help and deal with potentially dangerous individuals (comment from professional)

**Some people told us that the negative experiences they have had when contacting the SPA have led to them no longer accessing support via SPA which, on occasion, has negatively impacted their mental health.**

I ended up not calling SPA after the incidents which resulted in my husband having to ring the NHS for a doctor to come out to see me in the middle of the night. He was able to tweak my medication and support me to feel safe after drinking bleach

My experiences have been that staff can provide neither information on getting access to care, nor compassionate response to my distress....I have chosen to use the Samaritans in suicidal times vs risk the dismissive rudeness of SPA. Unfortunately that means my level of suicidal ideation isn't recorded on Rio systems and so that makes it harder to get help from clinicians

I don't contact SPA anymore. I just hibernate, hide, withdraw

### **Accessing urgent assessment or support**

**Some people described experiencing difficulties in accessing an urgent assessment and feeling that the threshold for receiving support was too high on occasion.**

Make you feel like you're 'not suicidal enough' – what is the criteria? How do you prove that you're feeling suicidal?

Sometimes difficult to get patient assessed as not 'actively suicidal' but still high risk (comment from professional)

It feels like service users have to be in a very bad way (suicidal) for any quick support. Some users have to wait weeks for any contact or support and by this point either the situation has been dealt with or it has worsened (comment from professional)

## Communication and sharing information

There is some frustration from professionals about the lack of communication between different departments and services, and difficulties related to sharing of information.

CPN's don't seem to want to communicate with other professionals and work independently which doesn't help in a holistic response [to a crisis] (comment from professional)

More information [should be] available due to sharing of information; with the system the way it is, different organisations have information kept separate that together would save a huge deal of time and stress on the patient's behalf (comment from professional)

Liaison with the referrer as to ongoing intervention which could impact on the current supervision of the service user in the community, also exchange of relevant information regarding risk issues (comment from professional)

The communication between departments is non-existent (comment from professional)

## Consent

The issue of consent came up a couple of times in comments from professionals; some feel that being unable to get consent from the person experiencing a mental health crisis is a real barrier to accessing support and, in these instances, the only option is to involve emergency services.

A customer was demonstrating what could only be described as disturbing mental health behaviour...the response from SPA with regard to the concerns the Housing Solutions Officer had raised was there was nothing that could be done without the customer's consent. I understand the importance of consent, however in situations which could only be described as a crisis, it is very difficult to get consent from individuals, if not impossible....With regard to this case, later during the evening, with Police assistance, there was a s2 mental health admission to the Ashdale Ward in Halifax (comment from professional)

Customers in crisis will not always have given consent. As an organisation that needs to support customers in crisis then we should be able to have service level agreements in place under safeguarding (comment from professional)

## Resourcing

Comments from professionals indicate concern that the SPA (and other mental health services) are not adequately resourced to enable them to work as effectively as they could. For example, people would like to see more staff available to provide support outside of normal office hours and to see urgent support available in the community.

More staff to be able to deploy to patients as and when needed

More beds and staffing to allow police to deal with police matters, rather than babysitting mental health staff

Better out of hours support

[would like to have] a roaming 24 hour single point of contact

Having mental health staff in community settings who can see people in crisis

More resourcing for workers – wait times can be lengthy but this isn't the fault of mental health staff

More funding and more staff availability

More training for schools and resources

### **Access to support for people with a learning disability or problems with drug or alcohol use**

A few comments related to the lack of, or poor quality, service people receive from the SPA if they have a learning disability or problems with drug/alcohol use

It would be easier if the mental health services were more approachable as a whole. My clients are adults with a learning disability and most are unaware of how to contact services and they are disregarded as having a mental health illness due to their learning disability (comment from professional)

More willingness to accept dual diagnosis for substance use (comment from professional)

If someone has taken something, mental health will not speak to them at all. I understand this but some advice would be good to help police/ambulance staff persuade people to go to hospital (comment from professional)

### **Contacting the SPA from 8am - 5pm, Monday to Friday, compared to contacting the service outside these hours**

From the survey responses, there doesn't appear to be a discernible difference between the quality of service received by people who had contacted the SPA between 8am and 5pm, Monday to Friday and those who contacted the SPA outside of those hours (5pm-8am from Monday to Friday and at weekends). The qualitative responses show a mixture of negative and positive sentiment throughout.

When in discussion with people, remarks have been made which demonstrate concern about staffing levels for the SPA out of hours which people feel might affect capacity to deal requests for urgent support. For example, people have shared that they are aware that the out of hours SPA service is provided by the Intensive Home Based Treatment service and that there are only 2 staff on duty who have to go out together to see people in crisis, while remaining available to take calls coming into SPA on a mobile phone.

One comment related specifically to accessing support via the SPA when a patient's CPN is not available:

If someone's CPN is off sick, nothing happens, they just get left. Can't phone SPA during the day as they tell you to contact your CPN so you have to wait until after 8pm to get any help from SPA!

Equal numbers of professionals who contacted SPA had done so during usual office hours and out of hours. Responses from professionals who contacted the SPA out of hours were all from people working in Kirklees and 93% of those were from the Police. Many comments related to a need for better resourcing to ensure appropriate support is available 24/7.

## Feedback from carers

People who have contacted the SPA on behalf of someone they care for describe situations where it hasn't felt like their concerns have been taken seriously enough.

People should not be dismissive if a carer rings, it's because they need help with a situation

Staff were insensitive and did not listen to my concerns

Instead of listening to the whole picture, it felt like they were looking for a reason to write you off their services

Would like an opportunity to discuss how the person we are caring for is expressing their deteriorating mental health and to explore what strategies we could use to alleviate/help the situation and what the mental health team can offer in terms of treatment or support to avert a crisis. We were left with no help and support and the incident deepened.

One comment in particular highlighted the difficulties a parent experienced when trying to access support for her daughter who returned home when she was ill, after living away from home at University:

I rang SPA for help and was told by the receptionist to ring a GP, get her registered and get her seen that afternoon. I knew this would not be a possibility. I then spoke to a practitioner who advised me that I could take my daughter to A&E. The practitioner spoke to my daughter and told her there was nothing that could be done as she was registered out of area. In our time of crisis we were completely let down....

A few comments reflected a need for better information about support available to carers.

It would have been helpful to be told about a carers support group –but we weren't – I found out about this from a friend...

[would hope for] carers support for myself...

[would hope for] proper support for carers

Some carers who attend the Kirklees Carers Mental Health Forum in Kirklees have shared that they have not felt fully informed (before they joined the Forum) about the range of services and support available to them and the person they care for. Members of the Forum receive regular information and updates but for carers who are not currently engaged with groups like this, there may need to be better ways to keep carers informed.





Not to be passed from one organisation to another

Someone to actually advise you and support you instead of just being passed to the next person

A prompt response and not to be put on a waiting list for services when the matter is urgent

Quick appointment or help or advice

A quick response without being passed from pillar to post

At the workshop, people talked about accessing support for their mental health from community based services, but spoke of difficulties they faced in knowing where to go and when accessing some places if they were unwell.

Knowing where to go is OK but getting there is a different matter – no money, feeling stressed, just putting coat on and getting out of the door can be too much

When people are in crisis there's just a 'blackness'. They are not able to look outwards for support. Often just overwhelming panic and need someone to recognise that they're not well and need help

When people access support they can become very worried about what might happen to their children – will social services get involved? This can stop people from reaching out

Crisis café in Huddersfield- not everyone will be able to get to Huddersfield. Every town should have this sort of thing available every night

Some people want to see more support being in place to help people stay well and avoid experiencing a mental health crisis.

Would be better if prevention and support was offered before they go into crisis....

It's not so much about urgent or crisis needs. When it's got to that point it is just about physical life saving. Way before that, help is needed to help with issues day in, day out

During a drop in session at Huddersfield Mission and at Basement Recovery in Huddersfield, Healthwatch staff had conversations with people about their experience of contacting the SPA and mental health support in general. Overwhelmingly, people told us that they hadn't heard of the SPA; they didn't recognise the name or understand how or why they would make contact. People there told us that if they were experiencing problems with their mental health they would reach out to a service they trusted, where they had already established relationships with staff who they felt would help them in times of crisis, such as at Huddersfield Mission and Basement Recovery.

I've only ever got support from Huddersfield Mission. They give me reassurance, somewhere to go where I know staff will help

People need to feel able to go to services when they feel able to and build relationships with people there to help them feel more comfortable

Any support people can access in a safe place with familiar faces, relaxing environment is better than ending up having to call emergency services

Most responses to the survey available to professionals were from people who work for the Police. In their responses there was a lot of appreciation for the support available from the Mental Health Liaison Nurses in their 'Hub' and requests for

support from these nurses to be made available 24/7, such is the demand. Some staff find it far preferable to contact these nurses than to contact the SPA as they report that the service they receive is better.

Our mental health nurse is always happy to speak to the person and offer advice as to how to proceed with a patient, but SPA seem reluctant to do this and seem to just want to give me information about the patient and leave it up to me, when they will be the best people to help the person...

Hub nurses are great and save so much Police time as Officers have the knowledge that if someone is known to them then information and help is at hand

The Hub nurse is crucial for obtaining up to date advice re a subject's current mental health status and providing guidance on how best to offer the correct advice and support

SPA nurse 24/7 at the hub [Police]. Only after certain hours is good but doesn't cater for all situations. It also doesn't give us much scope for making enquiries about people who we need information on that aren't part of an ongoing incident after 2pm

I can always contact SPA but they are not always as helpful as the mental health nurse who works in the hub. Some members of staff can be good, it depends who you talk to

The advice and support seems to be more appropriate and timely when dealing with nurses who are based at a Police Control Room rather than going through the general SPA number

Volunteers at Take Ten spoke about their willingness to support SWYPFT and emergency services in responding to people experiencing a mental health crisis, who may benefit from simply having someone to talk to until health services have capacity to respond, or to appropriately signpost to alternative support. There has been a lot of time and resource invested locally and nationally in training Mental Health First Aiders, and there could be an opportunity to explore the possibility of training and upskilling those people further so that a team of volunteers could provide a 'first response' service, in a similar way to how Community First Responders are called on to attend some emergencies for Yorkshire Ambulance Service.

Why can't SPA and emergency services be supported by a team of volunteers who are willing to go out to people who might just want someone to sit and talk to them. Would help to take pressure off emergency services. We are mental health first aiders and have been to lots of other training, and have lived experience but none of this is recognised or respected

A few comments reflected that people's expectations of the service are not always in line with what the SPA is commissioned to deliver. Some people who spoke to us refer to the SPA as the 'crisis line' and comments reflect that people are often expecting a very swift response.

I think the service is very under-resourced and expectations of outcomes from accessing the service are probably unrealistic

What you hope for and what is actually provided are poles apart. There is no support, no guidance, nothing. All they want to do is have a 15 minute chat and off you go until the next meeting or appointment

[hoping that] the person can receive an emergency intervention

[hoping for] immediate support

[hoping for] immediate help

Responses from professionals also indicated that there is a lack of knowledge and understanding around what the SPA's purpose is and what they can provide. There may also be a lack of awareness about other types of mental health support available to people.

[would like] A refresher email to bullet point the key areas that SPA can assist with and the types of information they have at their disposal (comment from professional)

Maybe more awareness of what the service actually offers and what it doesn't. I remember going to a day in Leeds run by the SPA service for both professionals and users to advise them of what the service in Leeds was able to offer, and again what they weren't able to offer (comment from professional)

More outcomes available...if people do not meet the criteria for 136 then there is not much we can do

## Conclusion

People feel frustrated by aspects of the SPA service not working as well as it should; from problems with the attitude of some staff who answer calls to the SPA to feeling let down by an apparent lack of 'action' in response to someone who is in crisis. There are clearly times when people feel badly let down when contacting the SPA.

Where people feel more favourable about their contact with the SPA, the manner in which the initial call is responded to is crucial to their overall positive experience. Having staff who demonstrate values such as good listening skills, empathy and understanding are paramount to people feeling that their concerns are being heard.

What people want and need when experiencing a mental crisis is to be listened to, to be taken seriously and for support, care and treatment to be made available in a timely way. People have told us of numerous instances where one or more of these things have failed in some way which can lead to a mental health crisis not being acted on at all or worsening. It is concerning that this has led to some people withdrawing from accessing support through the SPA.

The impact on carers looking after someone with mental health is almost immeasurable as it is so far-reaching. Without access to appropriate support, the mental health and wellbeing of carers can suffer. Keeping carers informed and providing opportunities for respite and support are essential components of keeping them (and their loved ones) well.

Staff who contact the SPA on behalf of people they work with want to see better resourcing of the service so that it can provide a more timely, full, robust and appropriate response. The Police place so much value on the service they receive from the Mental Health Liaison Nurses in their 'Hub' but these nurses are not available all the time. We know that the Police are dealing with increasing numbers of situations involving people who have mental ill health so better

supporting those frontline workers to deal with challenging situations must be considered.

There are clear discrepancies between what the SPA is designed to deliver and what people expect the SPA to be able to offer. Sometimes, people will inevitably feel let down by the service they receive because their expectations cannot be met. Finding a way to manage expectations from the outset, by clearly defining what the SPA is set up to do, and getting this message to patients, carers and professionals will be an important future step to ensure a more effective service. It is clear from our learning through complaints advocacy that people making sustained use of the service are expecting ongoing support, and are being signposted to the SPA for this.

There has to be some acknowledgement that the users of the service are highlighting a need for something that is not currently available; they would like some immediate support, someone to listen, and this is a gap in service provision at the moment.

During this engagement it has become increasingly clear that people's experience of the SPA starts long before they make that call, and goes on beyond it. Being able to provide an effective 'front door' service for mental health support is dependent on the wider components of the health and social care system working well and in an integrated way. Commissioners and providers should consider what needs to be done to avoid people ending up in crisis. What could have been done differently or better to avoid some calls to the SPA ever having to have been made?

How can people be effectively signposted or referred to appropriate wellbeing and mental health support to help them stay well and not reach crisis point?

How can people be more empowered to access wellbeing and mental health support themselves. Where and how can people find such information easily?

Do professionals understand the range of support services available to people they work with? How can this information be regularly updated and made accessible to those who might work with people who may benefit from low level mental health support?

Not every crisis can be averted but, for some people, having more timely and appropriate support, information and advice in place, could lead to less frequent contact made to the SPA and better outcomes for everyone.

## Recommendations

	Recommendation	Who this recommendation is for
1	Ensure that staff can provide compassionate and appropriate responses to people who contact the SPA.	SWYPFT
2	Deliver a consistent service across 24 hours.	SWYPFT
3	Update SWYPFT's website to show an accurate description of the function and remit of SPA.	SWYPFT
4	Provide people in Kirklees and Calderdale with accurate, accessible information about what is available to help support mental health and wellbeing. This information should be made available online but also in other formats for people who are unable to access digital information.	Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG's) Kirklees Council SWYPFT
5	Consider the possibility of extending or enhancing support available from Liaison Nurses at the Police Hub.	CCGs
6	Consider the extent of crisis support available in Kirklees and Calderdale and whether this meets the needs of the population. Be prepared to look outside of 'formal' support from health and emergency services and consider harnessing community assets and volunteers.	CCGs Kirklees Council
7	Following the transformation of the SPA, complete a program of communication that alerts members of the public and professionals to the scope of the SPA, and where else they can go to receive care.	SWYPFT CCGs
8	To consider providing a dedicated helpline to support people in a crisis.	SWYPFT CCGs

## What happens next?

As a result of this engagement, key findings were shared with senior managers from SWYPFT and a joint approach to next steps was agreed:

Healthwatch will lead on a workshop on 30 July 2019 where service users, carers and professionals will be given opportunity to listen to the findings and discuss ideas for future improvements.

Using ideas from the workshop, SWYPFT will develop a follow up event, supported by Healthwatch, where it is hoped there will be representation from service users, carers and services involved in providing mental health support in Kirklees and Calderdale. The content and focus for this event will be determined by ideas generated at the workshop in July.

Healthwatch will ask SWYPFT and commissioners to consider the recommendations in this report and will be tenacious in following up developments. Healthwatch will share any updates with stakeholders.

## Appendix 1 – Survey for people contacting SPA for themselves or someone they care for

We want to know what it's like when you call the Single Point of Access for adult mental health services (SPA) - whether you're calling for yourself or for someone else.

Tell us what works well and what you think could be improved by completing this survey.

All your answers will be confidential. We will share anonymous feedback with South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust who provide the SPA service, and with the commissioners who 'buy' this service.

Please skip any questions you do not want to answer.

If you would like someone from Healthwatch Kirklees to get in touch to discuss your experience in more detail, please complete this [contact form](#) or call 01924 450379 or email [info@healthwatchkirklees.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchkirklees.co.uk)

Please note - we have a different survey for staff who contact SPA on behalf of people they work with. Click [here](#) for this survey.

Surveys will remain open until the end of May 2019.

Thank you for sharing your experience with us.

1. Do you live in Calderdale or Kirklees?

Calderdale

Kirklees

2. When you call SPA, are you calling for yourself or for someone you care for?

Myself

Someone I care for

3. Do you (or the person you care for) currently access support from any mental health services?

Yes

No

Not sure/don't want to say



4. Which mental health service(s) do you (or the person your care for) access?

- Adult Psychological Therapies Service
- Assertive Outreach Team
- Calderdale Rehabilitation Outreach and Recovery Service (ROaRS)
- Community Mental Health Team
- Day Services (Highfields or Red Laithes)
- Dual Diagnosis Service
- Enfield Down/Lyndhurst
- Enhanced Team
- IAPT (Improved Access to Psychological Therapies)
- Inpatient
- Insight Team (early intervention in psychosis)
- Intensive Home Based Treatment
- Learning Disability Health Service for adults
- Liaison and Diversion Service
- Memory Service
- Pathways
- Prefer not to say
- Other (please specify)

## Your experience

**Please tell us about the last time you called SPA.**

**You can give us more detail about previous calls if you want to, but please tell us about your experience within the last 12 months if possible.**

5. When did you call SPA?

- Monday - Friday, 8am - 8pm
- Monday - Friday, 8pm - 8am
- Weekend
- Not sure

6. Tell us anything you think is good about the SPA service.

7. Tell us anything you think could be improved.

8. When you need to access mental health support urgently or in a crisis, what are you hoping can be provided by mental health services?

## Appendix 2 – Survey for staff contacting SPA on behalf of people they work with

We want to hear from staff who contact the Single Point of Access for adult mental health services (SPA) in Kirklees or Calderdale on behalf of someone they're working with.

Tell us what works well and what you think could be improved by completing this survey.

All your answers will be confidential. We will share anonymous feedback with South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust who provide the SPA service, and with the commissioners of the service.

You do not have to name the organisation you work for, or give your contact details but if you would like someone from Healthwatch Kirklees to get in touch to discuss your experience in more detail, please complete this [contact form](#) or call 01924 450379 or email [info@healthwatchkirklees.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchkirklees.co.uk)

Please skip any questions you do not want to answer.

Please note - we have a different survey for people who have contacted SPA for themselves or on behalf of someone else. Please click [here](#) for this survey.

Surveys will remain open until the end of May 2019.

Thank you.

1. Do you work in Calderdale or Kirklees?

- Calderdale
- Kirklees

2. Which sector do you work in?

- Primary Care health service
- Secondary Care health service
- Community based health service
- Ambulance service
- Social Care
- Voluntary and community sector
- Police
- Other (please specify)

**Tell us below about your experience of contacting SPA in the last 12 months.**

3. When are you most likely to contact SPA?

- Monday - Friday, 8am to 8pm
- Monday- Friday, 8pm to 8am
- Weekends

4. Do you feel you can access timely, appropriate support for people who are experiencing a mental health crisis?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes
- Not sure

5. Please tell us what would make it easier for you to access support for people experiencing a mental health crisis.

