



**Report on Research into
Camden's GP Waiting Areas
Re: Communication**

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Introduction

Camden Borough User group is the working arm of Camden Mental Health Consortium, a user led organisation set up by service users for service users

This is a short piece of research undertaken by members of Camden Borough User group.

The research was to gather information on what leaflets Camden's GP waiting areas have and to see how service user friendly they were in that respect. The idea was formed from a CBUG member overhearing a conversation in which it had been said that information on Alcohol services had been looked for in their GP's waiting area and had not found any. They had also said that they would not want to have to go and ask the receptionist for the information as it was their family Doctor. This is where the idea for the project came from.

Read on to find out how many of Camden's GP Practices/Health Centres we visited carry information on Mental Health and Drugs and Alcohol. How many of you reading this would be willing to go and ask their family GP receptionist for the information if they were just admitting to themselves they had an addiction or you had just found that a member of your family had a mental health issue and you wanted more information. In a perfect world we would be able to ask for any information without being embarrassed but it is not a perfect world and when someone mentions they suffer from mental ill health or they have an addiction problem, peoples attitude often changes.

The Researchers

The researchers were members of CBUG and the coordinator at CMHC.

CMHC/CBUG Co-ordinator

Lynne Morrison

CBUG Members

**David Hayes
Robert Ryder
Shirley Scott-Norton**

The Research

We made the decision to do this piece of research in one of our monthly CBUG meetings.

This was how we decided we would get the information we needed. David, Robert and Lynne would do the leg work. Shirley would coordinate by finding the routes and maps that would be needed on the internet.

The area Camden General Practitioners/Health Centres

The practices would be done in blocks of 5 some researchers did one block and some did two blocks.

At the first meeting we decided on what questions the researchers should be asking themselves as they entered the GP waiting areas. We came up with 4 and there would be a fifth, if one specific question was answered negatively.

- 1. Are there any Mental Health leaflets?**
- 2. Are there any leaflets on Substance Misuse?**
- 3. Is there an induction loop for the hard of hearing?**
- 4. Is there an electronic name display?**
- 5. Do you have information on mental health and/or substance misuse? This question would only be asked if the question to 1. and/or 2. was no.**

Some of the practices that were visited were curious as to what was being done. If any of the researchers were challenged they agreed that the best way to answer any questions was to say they were doing a bit of Mystery Shopping and this stopped any further questions being asked.

What our Research Found

We visited 37 out of a possible 44 practices

Mental Health Leaflets on Display

19 out of 39 had no leaflets on mental health

Substance Misuse Leaflets on Display

20 out of 39 had no leaflets on Drugs/Alcohol

Induction Loop

29 out of 39 had no induction loop with one not specified

Electronic Name Display

27 out of 39 had no electronic name display

Where there were no Mental Health Leaflets on Display:

When asked 13 out of 14 had no information on Mental Health

Where there were no Substance Misuse Leaflets on Display:

When asked 15 out of 16 had no information on Substance Misuse

More of the Results

**Only 2 out of 39 answered Yes to the four main questions
5 out of 39 answered No to all the questions including the receptionist question; Do you have information on Mental Health and/or Substance misuse?**

20 out of 39 had mental health leaflets on display

19 out of 39 had drug/alcohol leaflets on display

9 out of 39 surgeries had an induction loop for the hard of hearing (with one not specified).

Findings

This has been a very small piece of research but the findings are very revealing.

People out in the community who need to access this kind of health information will not always ask for it. They would be happier to read a leaflet and then make a decision on what to do. That decision on helping themselves will not be made if the information they need is not easily accessible. Most will not ask a GP receptionist for that information, leaflets need to be on full display where people can just pick one up when needed. It could also be a family member or friend of someone who is in difficulty who needs the information and again the stigma attached to these conditions would sometimes put some off asking.

Mental Ill Health and Drug/Alcohol issues will not go away on their own, those who suffer with these conditions need help to get over/minimise the problems that come with mental ill health and/or drug/alcohol misuse. Information needs to be accessible for people to make the decision on getting help.

Thank you to all GP practices

Thank you to researchers for their hard work in visiting all the practices

Thank you to Rena CMHC administrator for all her help with collating the information