

Birmingham Skills offer

Healthwatch Birmingham welcomes the opportunity to respond to Birmingham City Council's consultation on Birmingham Skills Offer: meeting the needs of current and future employment opportunities. Our key role is to make sure that patients, the public, service users, and carers (PPSuC) are at the heart of service improvement in health and social care.

We welcome the work of the Economy and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Group, and would like to raise two points for further consideration.

Health inequalities and representation

Healthwatch Birmingham recently published a report [Health Inequalities: Somali people's experiences of health and social care services in Birmingham](#). In this report We heard from Birmingham residents how important representation was to them in all professions, but especially in health care.

The lack of ethnically diverse health and social care professionals in communities with a large Somali population was seen as the reason for poor communication, lack of trust and low satisfaction with services. Participants believed that recruiting people from the Somali community into health and social care roles would help address some of the issues faced by the community.

"There are no Somali people in public sector positions, no Somalis represented on boards, education sector of BCC or health sector, community groups. We have difficulties that other communities have but they have representatives working in various healthcare services that we do not have. There is no one representing us, who understands our culture, our system of living - no one defending our rights."

"The only exit we have or solution is to have Somali community representatives in health and social care, otherwise things will continue to worsen."

"To overcome some of the barriers Somali people face, we need to have - especially in the areas where Somali people live or are concentrated such as Nechells, Small Heath and Bordesley Green - equal opportunity in employment. For example, to have GPs that represent the diversity of the community. Have a Somali speaking GP, nurse and receptionists in areas where you have a high concentration of these groupings. When people do not speak the language, you have to have an interpreter and this costs a lot of money and that could be the reason that we are unable to access interpreters for everyone. So, having healthcare professionals from Somali backgrounds would help and save money."



We would welcome the encouragement of all citizens of Birmingham to consider serving their communities in by working in public roles and being given the opportunities to develop skills to do so. This can include but is not limited to work placements and shadowing opportunities.

Health Literacy

Healthwatch Birmingham encourages the committee to consider the needs of young people and working age citizens to further develop their [health literacy](#) as a key skill.

NHS England estimates that the impact for individuals with low levels of health literacy include:

- significantly more negative outcomes across a range of health indicators
- More likely to have unhealthy lifestyles
- less likely to make informed healthy lifestyle choices and engage with preventative programmes
- higher levels of illness and preventable premature mortality
- less able to manage long term conditions
- less likely to adhering to medication regimes effectively.

It identified that up to 61% of the English working age population do not routinely understand health and wellbeing information they are given... "the strongest correlation to ill health – stronger than education level, deprivation, age or ethnicity – is health literacy".

There is a wide body of evidence for the positive impact of developing health literacy skills earlier in life, and the positive impact this has on an individuals ability to lead a fulfilling life.

Healthwatch Birmingham would like to see ways to improve health literacy as a core element of any offer to the citizens of Birmingham.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chipiliro Kalebe-Nyamongo".

Chipiliro Kalebe-Nyamongo
Research and Policy Manager

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sarah Walmsley".

Sarah Walmsley
Data and Insight Officer

