



Insight Report

January – March 2023

Healthwatch Sandwell is your independent consumer champion for health and social care services in Sandwell. Our job is to champion the consumer interests of those using the services and give local people an opportunity to speak out about their concerns. We listen to views, concerns, and compliments about services to help shape and improve them so that people are accessing the most quality and appropriate care.



January - March 2023 an overview

10,558 people engaged with us

People we reached
on social media

5191

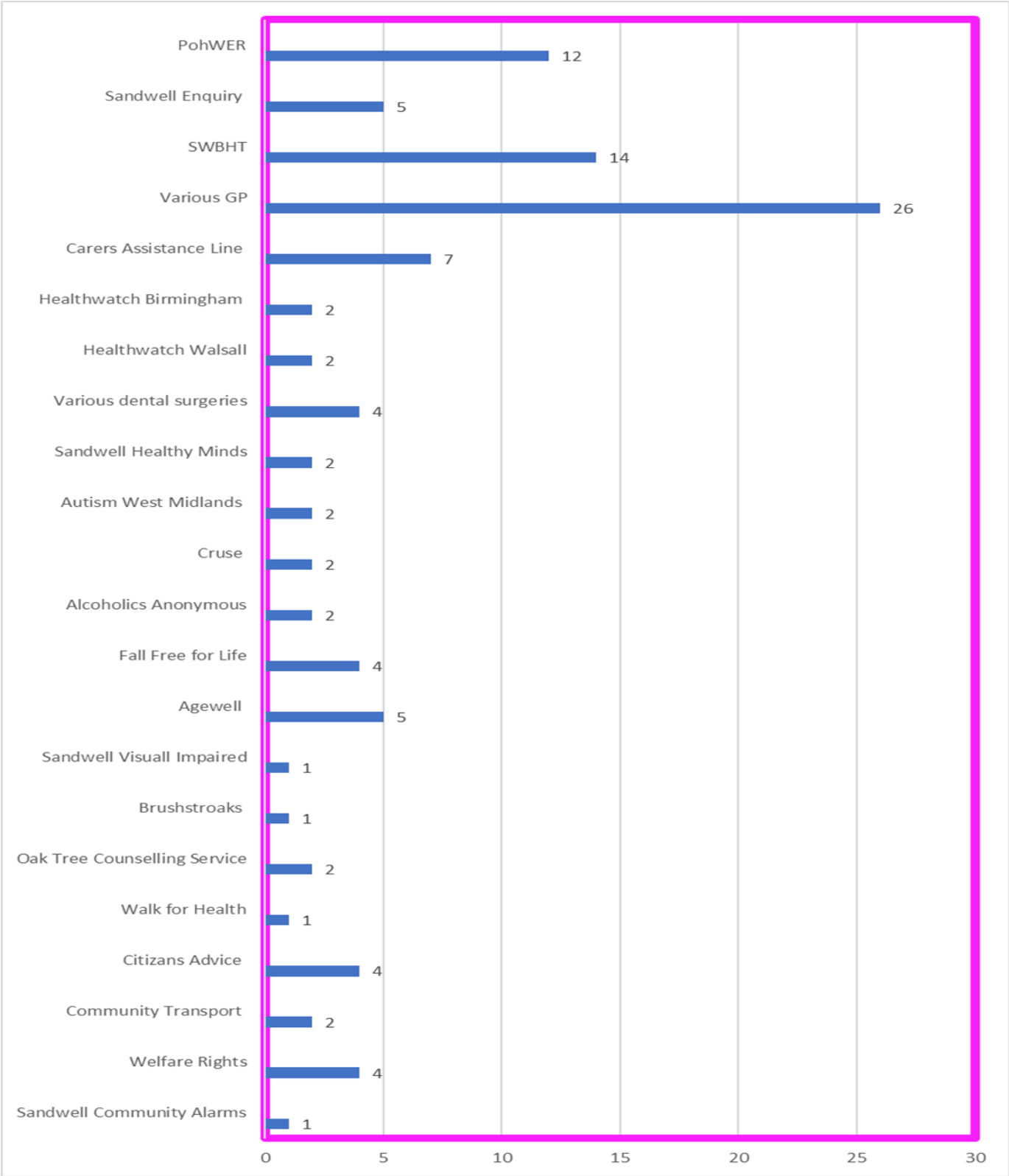
Visits to our new
website

3603

People we engaged
with at outreach

1764

We have signposted 105 people to support services.



What we have been hearing About

**Struggling to get the care
you need?
Then come and talk to us.**

healthwatch
Your health and social care champion



HWS continue to have multiple conversations with people about difficulties they are experiencing with health care services.

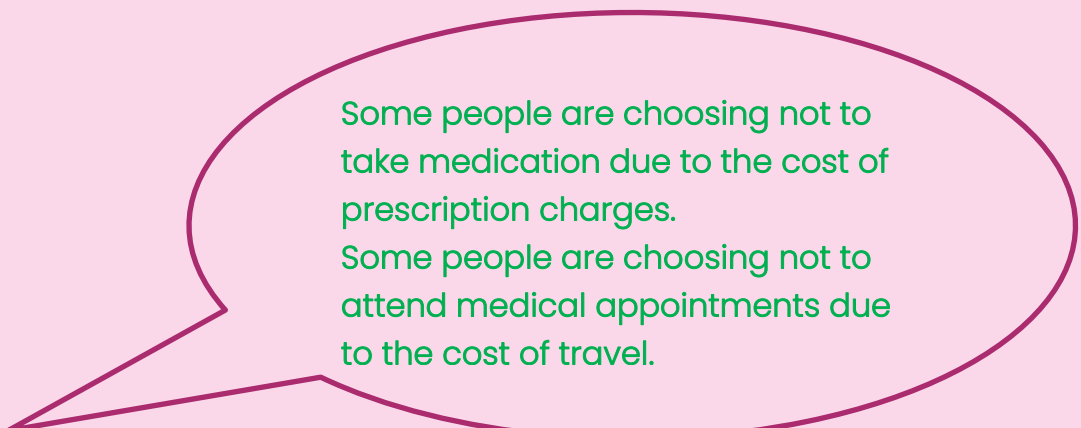
Booking a GP appointment and the lack of available appointments remain one of the key concerns for local people.

People are also concerned that results from assessment, imaging and routine tests are delayed. The anxiety can cause mental wellbeing issues – people have told us that they are just giving up.

“ I caught two buses to get to the GP before 8am to get an appointment. I was told that appointments can only be given on line or on the telephone. It was difficult for me to travel as I am in a lot of pain with my knees – that’s why I need to see a GP”

“I was referred by my Dr to see a heart consultant. I heard nothing for three months and when I contacted the hospital, I was told that there was no referral and to go back to my Dr. I have booked an appointment for six weeks time”

“I waited nine hours for hospital transport to take me back home after my operation”



Some people are choosing not to take medication due to the cost of prescription charges.
Some people are choosing not to attend medical appointments due to the cost of travel.

Issue with Dentistry



We are unable to find an NHS dentist who would treat my elderly mother who also has a chronic long term health condition. Dentists would not book in as an emergency and available appointments were weeks in advance.

My mother is in absolute agony and although we spoke to a few dentists the answers were all the same – that they are unable to offer emergency treatment. We took my mother to the hospital emergency department, but we were turned away as it was a dental issue.

My mother has been taking over the counter medication to help with the pain, but these are not working. The Pharmacist advises that my mother requires prescription medication, but we are not able to secure a dental appointment. This is now having an impact on my mother’s mental wellbeing as well as causing anxiety for myself and other family members.



Blood Test Results issue



I recently had a blood test due to abdominal pain and my results for kidney function were deranged. The GFR suggested my renal function was compromised and I had chronic kidney disease stage 2 but borderline stage 3.

The only reason I knew what the result was because I had access to the NHS app - the GP did not inform me of this result, and worse still on the app it had been logged that I had been informed! I tried to log on at 8am the next day via the Anima system but they were not accepting appointments. I called up and got through to an operative who told me they would put me on the list for call back. I waited until 5pm but no one called so I spent an hour on the phone to find out if I was still on their list. I was told I was, and the GP would call back that day. The call never came.

Roll on Monday and still no call and I am unable to book an appointment via the online system or via their phone line.

I reviewed results dating back 11 years for my kidney function all were below reference range, but no one has ever flagged this up. It is obvious I have chronic kidney disease, but I would be none the wiser as my GP just ignores deranged results. I should have been referred to a nephrologist but now it is too late and the damage is done.



Help from Healthwatch Sandwell

Healthwatch Sandwell have been supporting a person waiting for a carpal tunnel operation. After being referred by their GP the operation should have taken place prior to Covid. This did not take place and the person is experiencing discomfort and pain throughout the day and night.

Healthwatch Sandwell advised the person to contact the Rheumatology department to chase up the planned operation. They did so but got through only after multiple attempts and been told that telephone

contact numbers had been changed several times. They were given the new telephone number but were unable to get through to talk to anyone. The person consented for Healthwatch Sandwell to contact the hospital on their behalf.

Healthwatch Sandwell contacted PALS, who responded and informed the person that Rheumatology would be in contact as a matter of urgency.

After waiting some time the person had not received contact, so Healthwatch Sandwell contacted PALS again. Eventually PALS contacted the person and informed them that Rheumatology had not received the referral from their GP which meant that the person was not on the list for surgery.

Healthwatch Sandwell advised the person to make a formal complaint via POhWER. The person gave consent. POhWER are now supporting the person which has resulted in Rheumatology requesting some tests. Eventually the person was given a date for the operation but unfortunately was cancelled a couple of days prior. Now a new operation date has been given and Healthwatch Sandwell will continue to support.

“Thank you for supporting me throughout the process”

healthwatch Sandwell

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