

# Insight



**July - September  
2022**

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.

## July - September at a glance

We engaged  
with 1818  
local people

We had 1190  
web site visits  
and 3415 web  
page views

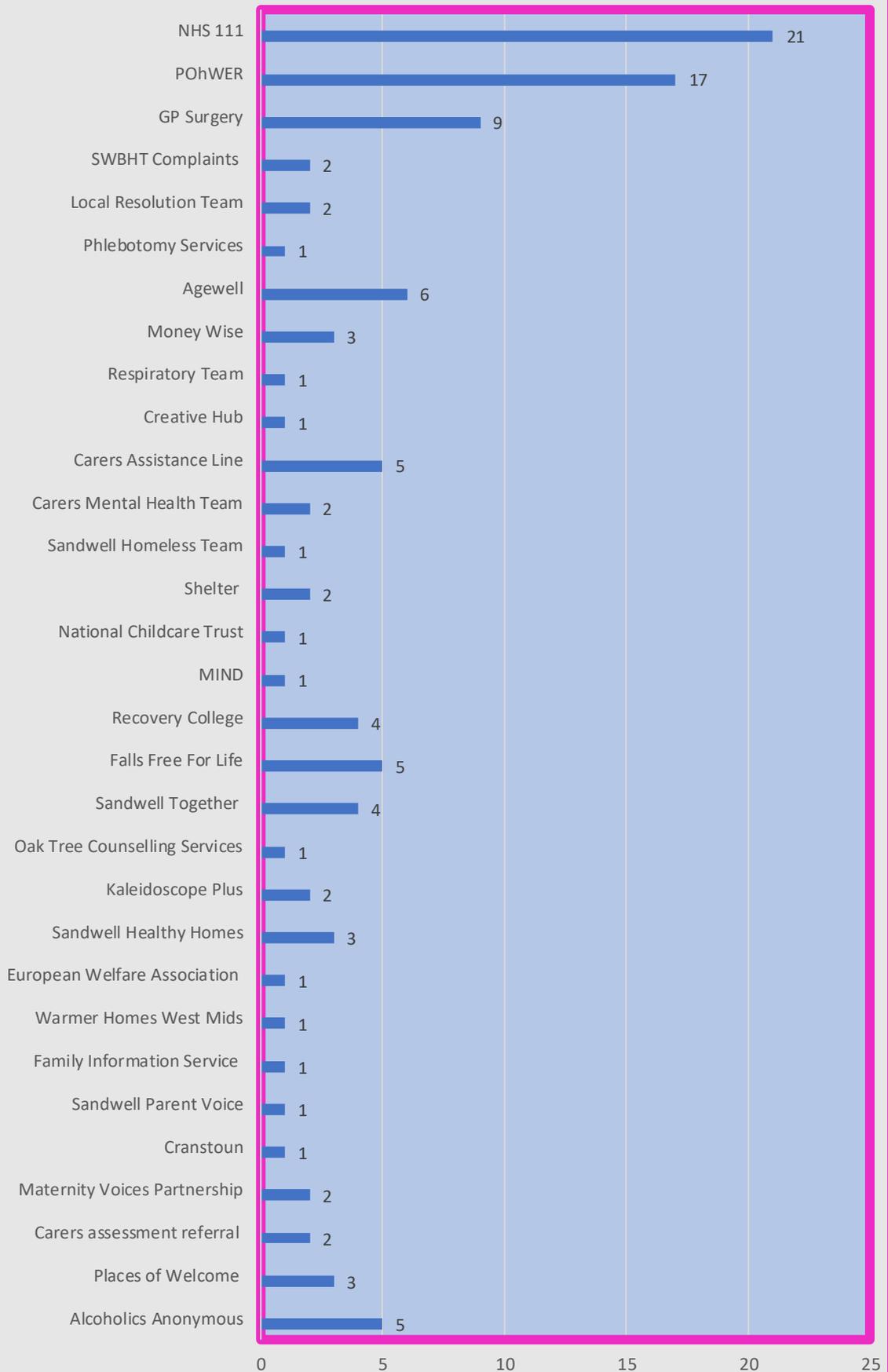
We attended 52  
community  
engagement  
events

We have 37 live  
cases where we are  
still offering support

We gave 21  
talks to  
community  
groups to  
inform what  
we do

We signposted 111 people to support services

## Signposting Information



# Snapshot of what people have told us about

## ACCESS TO GP APPOINTMENTS

HWS continue to have multiple conversations with people about booking a GP appointment and the lack of available appointments. People have told us that they are overdue with reviews for their health conditions. People have also told us that they are struggling to get mental health support through GP referral.

HWS continue to bridge communication between people and GP surgeries

## PHLEBOTMY

HWS have had concerns raised about the long wait on the telephone to book blood test. Some people have told us that they have given up! Some people are unable to use the alternative option of email to book an appointment and in some instances HWS have emailed on the persons behalf.

## ANNUAL HEALTH CHECK FOR PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

HWS have been engaging with parents and carers about annual health checks for their dependents.

There has been some positive feedback from carers where pockets of good practice have been identified. However, in the main there are inconsistencies from practice to practice to do with both accessing GP appointments and the annual health check. There is a definitive inequality and who is served best depends on which GP service people are registered with.

## OUTPATIENTS ADMINISTRATION ERRORS

HWS have heard from people who have been discharged from consultant outpatients due to nonattendance of appointment. People have told us that their original appointment had been cancelled a new date arranged, therefore not responsible for nonattendance. People have been advised that GP will have to refer to consultants again. Due this error some people are having to wait more than three months to get another outpatients appointment

## PRESCRIPTION CHARGES

HWS are hearing from people that they are struggling to pay for prescriptions due to the cost-of-living crisis.

## BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT

HWS have been supporting people who are recently bereaved. People are finding it difficult to get support in a timely way (or are not offered it at all). This is having an impact on mental wellbeing and social isolation.

## GP FEES PAYABLE DIRECT BY PATIENTS

HWS heard from a person who required a medical examination pre-employment from their GP. The cost of this was £175. The person was unable to afford this so was unable to proceed with the offer of employment. Another person told us that they needed conformation from their GP that they were fit to travel. The cost of this was £25. The appointment waiting time exceeded the time scale for this person to travel so were unable to do so, therefore missing out on an important family event.

### Example costs of fees payable by patients

HGV/PCV/LGV MEDICAL	£120.00
DIVING LICENEC/PHOTOCARD DRIVING LICENCE	£25.00
HOLIDAY CANCELLATION SIMPE CIRTIFICATE	£25.00
HOLIDAY CANCELLATION COMPLEX CIRTIFICATE	£60.00
FITNESS TO TRAVEL	£25.00
INSURANCE CLAIM (NO MEDICAL)	£25.00
CIRTIFICATE OF INCAPACITY	£25.00
FITNESS EXEPMTION FORM FOR A HEALTH CLUB	£25.00
LETTER FOR PATIENT FROM GP	£25.00
FOSTERING MEDICAL EXAMINATION AND REPORT	£120.00
MEDICAL EXAMINATION PRE EMPLOYEMENT/FITNESS	£175.00
COURT OF PROTECTION	£120.00
LETTERS FOR SCHOOL, HOUSING OR SOCIAL SERVICES	£10.00

## Work Programme 2022/23 Summary

### HWS priority projects for 2022/23

This information will be used to help inform and influence change in health and social care delivery in Sandwell and as part of the wider Black Country health and care system.

- The patient experience of accessing primary care services
  - Accessibility for patients - meeting information and communication needs
  - Exploring the impact of language barriers in health and care services

# Headlines for PP1 The patient experience of accessing primary care services

Based on **209** responses from **65** project questionnaires **98** snapshot surveys and **46** young people's voices gathered through **face-to-face** engagement and **patient experiences & views** shared from conversations via:

- Community outreach
- Volunteers
- Community groups
- 7 GP surgeries
- Urgent Treatment Centre

Overall, when patients have received appointments, they are **satisfied or happy** with the service. They feel **listened to** and **informed** but a mixed response to feeling **involved** in decisions about their care. **Access to appointments** is the frustration and **low awareness** or use of alternative primary care options is adding to pressure on the system.

From **98** snapshot surveys patients indicated:

- **42%** were unhappy about obtaining an appointment at their G.P. Surgery
- **63%** were unhappy about the process of booking an appointment by phone
- Satisfaction with booking at reception or on-line was low also as often not an option

Feedback and views from young people **46** responses - results to follow  
Key insight gained from the **65** questionnaires completed:

**25%** of patients had received a **face-to-face** appointment  
(The majority of consultations are by booked in as a phone call, no respondents indicated video call, 3 stated a home visit)

Face-to-face appointments are via a) **reception booking** triage process or patient support needs identified/record flagged or b) **G.P./health professional phone consultation** identifying need for face-to-face & then booked in.

Many GP surgeries appear to still be working to Covid guidance - report will refer to:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/documents/advice-on-how-to-establish-a-remote-total-triage-model-in-general-practice-using-online-consultations/>

**9%** had not been seen for an outstanding health issue - which is of concern and had been unsuccessful in booking an appointment or had given up trying to and were not aware of or had not accessed alternative primary care options. A further 11% had also given up but had accessed other primary care options or were self-managing if their health issue was still outstanding.

#### **Access to appointment issues:**

- Multiple phone call attempts & queues without resulting in appointment booked a common issue - public perception is that all appointments are gone even at 8am
- It is a problem for people who work or do a school run to call for an appointment at 8am
- Affordability of multiple long wait calls flagged as a concern
- Inconsistent and low offer for on-line booking as an option
- Most GP surgeries do not offer booking appointments in person at reception

#### **Accessibility:**

- **17%** communication support needs (disability/sensory loss) & language barriers
  - **25%** digital exclusion/digital poverty impact on access options

Main issues raised, including by specific groups of people, will be highlighted in the report and illustrated with mini case studies. Report will reference link to Priority Project 2 & 3 - accessible information standards and language/cultural barriers access/receipt of services.

#### **General issues raised:**

- Public perception and criticism of GP surgery services
- Language barriers to GP access
- Feedback older people feel a lack of care and understanding from services

Public perception that often all appointment slots are gone by 8 am, that GP surgeries are empty of patients and low opinions of receptionist services. Lack of awareness of other health practitioner services provided within GP surgeries - a tendency for patients to want to see their doctor versus a nurse or locum etc. Recommendation in report likely around updating and informing patients on service model.

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To share your patient experiences contact :

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Visit our Feedback review page:

<https://www.healthwatchsandwell.co.uk/services/>

Or Email: [info@healthwatchsandwell.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchsandwell.co.uk)

