

INSIGHT



January- March
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.

January – March at a glance

**We engaged with
948 people**

**We gave
14 “help
us to help
you” talks**

**We held 16
virtual
events**

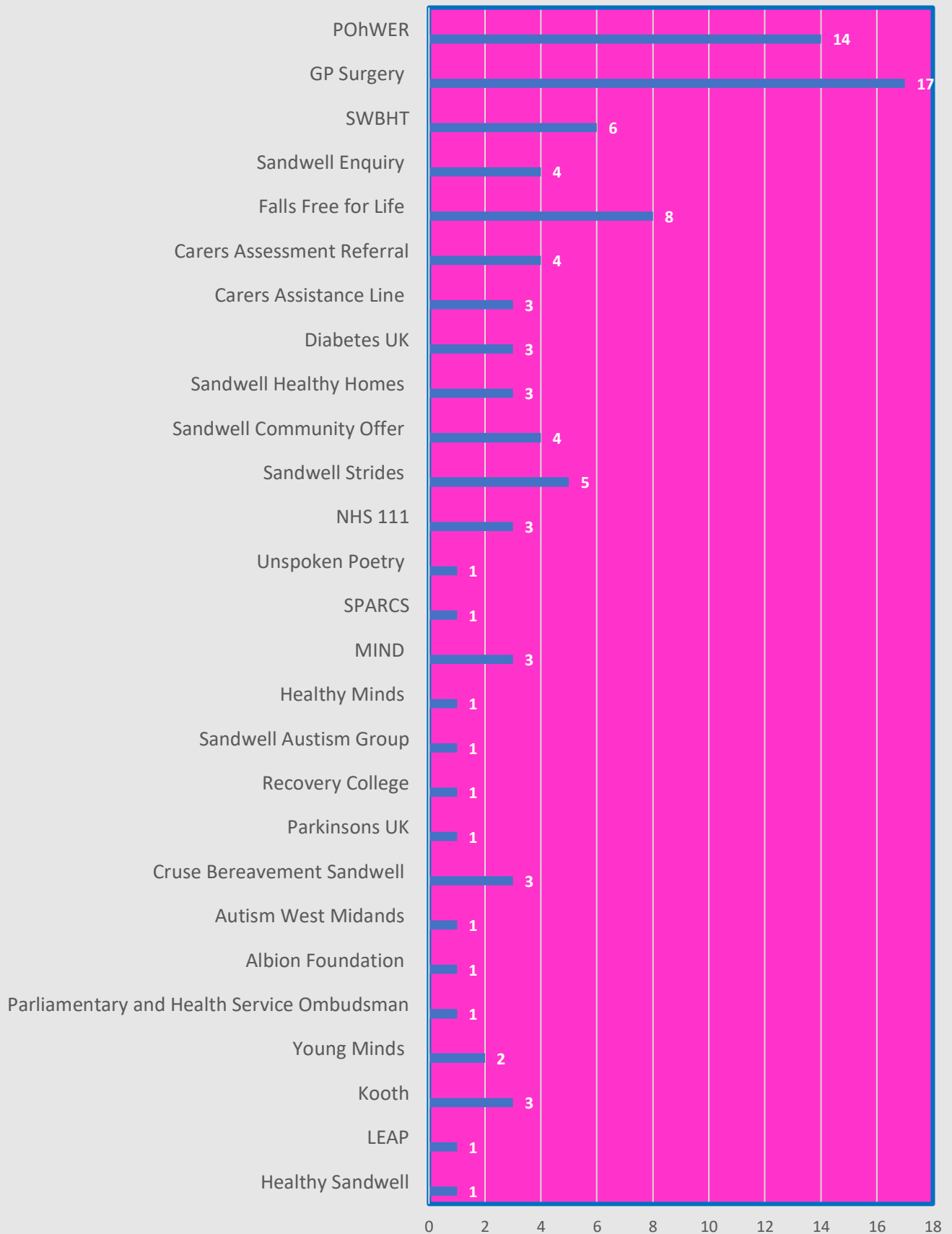
**We had 2074
web site visitors
& 5142 page
views**

**We have 24 live
cases where we are
still offering support**

**We attended
30 community
outreach
events**

We signposted 96 people to support services

Signposting



Snapshots of what people have told us

Lack of confirmation of diagnosis from GP.

We heard from a person who has a hernia and unable to work, they required confirmation of diagnosis for a medical negligence claim.

The GP would not confirm this. The outcome has affected the persons mental health which has resulted in unemployment and marriage breakdown.

Concern about care at Sandwell General Hospital

HWS were contacted by a distraught family about alleged lack of care of their relative at SDGH. The family were pursuing the Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust complaints procedure but needed guidance and advice about the process.

Prescription Issue

We heard from a parent who required a repeat prescription for their child's seizures. The GP actioned the request. The parent telephoned the Pharmacy who said that they had not received the prescription from the GP. The parent telephoned the GP to resolve the issue. The parent attempted again to pick up the prescription but was told there was no prescription. The parent was concerned as the child had no medication left due to the delay.

Concerns about hospital treatment

We had a referral about a person who experience of a previous hospital stay had left them traumatised. The person required more hospital intervention but was anxious to attend. The person was in pain but refused to be admitted. HWS were able to support the person in speaking about their anxiety to the relevant people which resulted in a successful outcome.

GP not actioning consultant's requests

We heard from a person who was concerned as their consultant had requested a referral from the GP for further treatment and this had not been actioned by the GP. The consultant had also requested that GP prescribed medication that was required to treat the person. This had not happened. The person has tried to communicate with the practice manager about this situation, but this has been slow to happen. HWS supported the person to put in a formal complaint via POHWER. The case is on-going.

Transport concerns

A parent called us very worried about transport for their child to a hospital that was some distance away. They do not have their own transport and the child is too poorly to travel on public transport. HWS were able to support the parent in booking hospital transport for their child.

Making an appointment with GP – Experience of a person with Learning Disabilities and Autism

Robert is 22 years old and is in full time paid employment. Robert lives with his mom and although has capacity requires some support to maximise independence.

Robert needed a repeat prescription for a skin condition that flares up on occasions. His mom tried to order a repeat prescription but was advised due to the time lapse from the last prescription, an appointment with GP was necessary. Robert tried to make an appointment on the telephone, but due to his working hours, calling from 8am onwards was a difficult option and caused Robert anxiety as he was aware he needed the appointment but also concerned that he had to work.

Robert has difficulty with reading and needs time to process verbal and written information so the on line and NHS app booking system were not suitable. Eventually Robert's mom was able to link an account for Robert to her on line account so was able to book an appointment for four weeks later. Although Robert was pleased there was an appointment, he was frustrated that there was no suitable way for him to book an appointment independently and was also aware without his moms support he would not be able to access a GP when necessary.

Robert's appointment was by telephone within his working day. Robert would find it challenging to explain himself on the telephone and also was anxious about understanding what the GP was saying as there would be no visual clues etc. Therefore, his mom had to take time from work to support Robert with the appointment.

The GP did not call at the appointment time – it was an hour later. When asked about this the GP said that people should allow a two-hour slot – however this is not stated on the web site when making a booking. The GP prescribed the usual medication and said that Robert should have booked a face-to-face appointment due to his learning disability and autism. There is no function on the on-line booking system for this and when a request made with the GP receptionist the parent was told that it had to be a telephone appointment.

Roberts skin condition had deteriorated, there were open lesions, and the skin was very itchy and sore – this was in an intimate area of Robert's body. The medication could not be used until the lesions were healed.

If there was better and more timely access to the GP and the appointment system was conducive to Roberts needs, his skin condition would not have become so inflamed, Robert would have been able to make his own appointment and Robert's wellbeing would not have been affected.

Update on Hospital Treatment Pathways Project

Covid -19 has impacted on the management of hospital non urgent treatments and operations, creating a record number of people waiting for HNS treatment in England.

The project aims were to gain insight on:

- Impacts of extended waiting periods on patients health and wellbeing
- Experiences of health and care services along hospital treatment pathways
- Quality of communication of information and support provision offer
- How well informed and involved patients feel in their treatment pathway options

Overview of findings

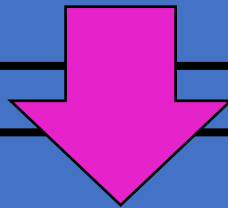
- Majority of treatments/operations completed during Covid-19 especially urgent such as cancer. Good feedback on experiences of eye treatments.
- Some patients no progress with referral pathway of serious debilitating conditions. Looks like some lost/dropped out of systems during Covid-19. Some patients sign off and finalisation of post hospital treatment processes not completed, left in limbo.
- 20% experience of 1 or more cancellations – not all Covid related.
- Some lack of confidence in systems and feeling need to start again with GP referral
- Communications - mixed experience re quality and amount of useful information 50:50
- Room for improvement in accessible information for communication support needs (*report recommendation proposed*)
- Mixed views re patient well informed and involved in decision on treatment options 50:50
- Longer waiting periods impact on physical health, mental wellbeing (anxiety), pain experienced and day to day activities – degeneration of condition for some
- High level response for more information on condition, hospital waiting periods info system, contact person and access to support (*report recommendation proposed*)
- Some treatment pathway issues indicated for elderly with hip problems
- Learning Disability/Autism – issues highlighted with insufficient LD Liaison Nurse and recognition/use of Hospital Passports as a communication needs tool (*a spotlight on the issues will be part of the report*)

Work Programme 2022/23 Summary

HWS are planning the following priority projects for 2022/23

- 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

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.



Addressing inequalities in health and care services

Healthwatch Sandwell engaged and consulted key stakeholders to set the 2022/23 priority projects.

Feedback helping set the priorities included:

- Sandwell residents - access to G.P. appointments, concerns for elderly, autistic, and learning-disabled people.
- Sandwell Local Authority Commissioners - Health inequalities – impact on families with children/dependants with disabilities, digitally excluded, very elderly people.
- Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust – improving patient care and population health outcomes through the Trust’s “Fundamentals of Care” programme. Ensuring service delivery will be what patients want/need – that patients feel **listened to, well informed, and involved in decisions about their care**. Patients engagement, involvement in Sandwell Place Based Partnership



healthwatch Sandwell

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Visit our Feedback review page:

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

Or e mail: info@healthwatchsandwell.co.uk

