



Local Intelligence Report

1st January – 31st March 2021

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We Listen

We Note

We Act

Covid – 19 Update



On 4th January 2021, a further national lockdown was announced following increased coronavirus cases mainly due to a new Covid-19 variant that is believed to have begun in Kent.

The Office for National Statistics has reported that 1 in 50 of the population has the disease – some with symptoms, some without.

The latest figures show that we have 30,074 COVID-19 patients in UK hospitals and that the NHS is under significant pressure.

In Sandwell it was reported on 7th January 2021 that the current Covid-19 infection rate in Sandwell is 886 per 100,000 people based on data from 29 December 2020 to 4 January 2021¹. With 2,913 people in Sandwell testing positive for Covid-19 during this one-week period.

On 8th January, the AstraZeneca vaccination began to roll out in Sandwell following the Pfizer vaccine late last year. At the end of March, 137,409 of Sandwell's 288,116 residents had received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. This equates to a first dose vaccination rate of 47,692 per 100,000 or 47.69 per cent of residents. This is less than the English rate of 51,396 per 100,000 (51.40 %) and ranks Sandwell 27 out of 36 for All English metropolitan boroughs². However on 22nd March it was reported that there had been a surge in coronavirus cases in the West Bromwich areas of Newton and Greets Green

¹ Sandwell Council website

² lginform.local.gov.uk

and Lyng, despite Sandwell showing one of the fastest falls in Covid-19 case rates in the country.

Introduction

Healthwatch Sandwell (HWS) 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.

Our office is located Walker Grange, Central Avenue, Tipton, DY4 9RY. Telephone: 0121 569 7211, however since March 2020 staff have been operating from their home locations.

Healthwatch Sandwell Update

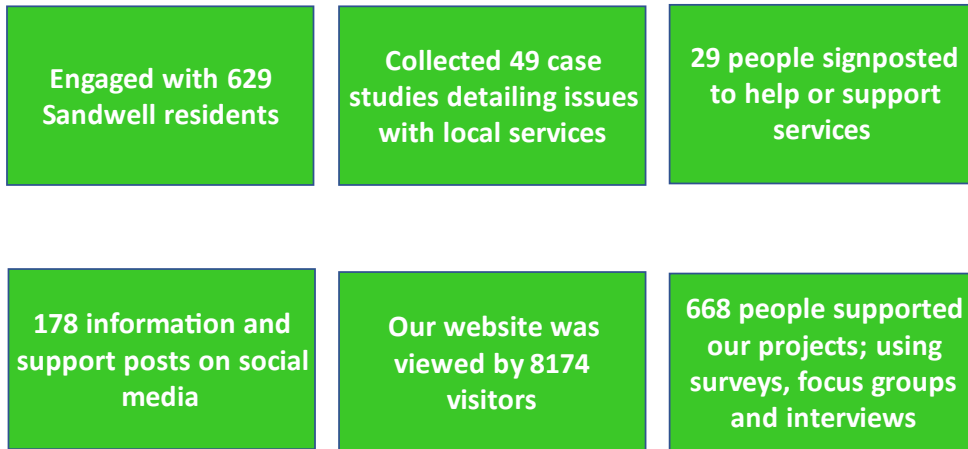
Healthwatch Sandwell staff are currently following guidance and operating from home locations. The Healthwatch Sandwell service will continue to be provided however our contact details have changed.

Contact our staff members as follows:

- Alexia Farmer – Manager –
email alexia.farmer@healthwatchsandwell.co.uk – Tel: 07885 214389
- Anita Andrews – Engagement & Volunteer Lead –
email anita.andrews@healthwatchsandwell.co.uk – Tel: 07885 214421
- Melissa Elders – Community Outreach Lead –
email melissa.elders@healthwatchsandwell.co.uk – Tel: 07885 214547
- Sophie Shuttlewood – Projects & Partnerships Lead –
email sophie.shuttlewood@healthwatchsandwell.co.uk – Tel: 07732 683483
- Leanne Abbott – Youth Engagement – e mail
e mail Leanne.abbott@healthwatchsandwell.co.uk – Tel: 07732 683446

Email us at info@healthwatchsandwell.co.uk

January to March at a glance

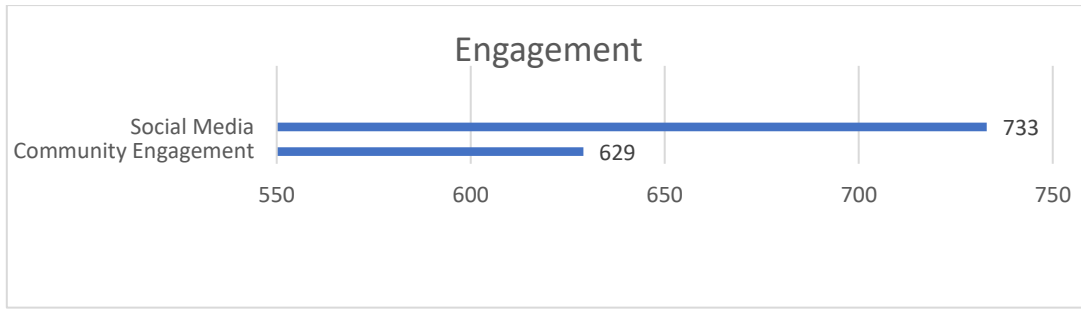


Feedback on local services

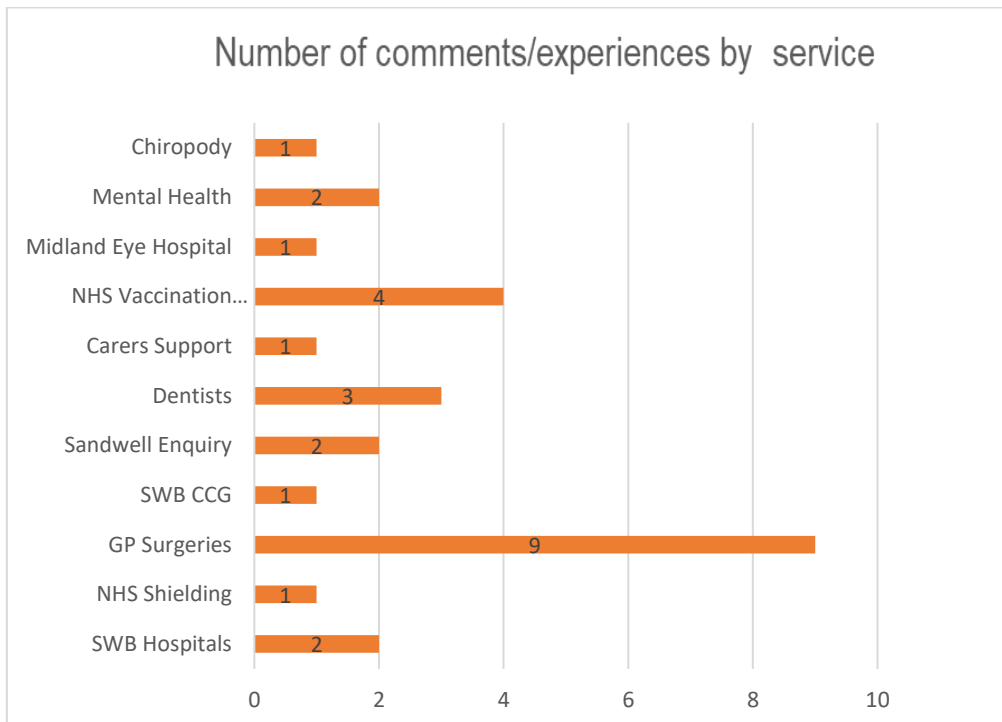
During the period January to March 2021, Healthwatch Sandwell has collated patient experiences. These are sourced from: phone contact with residents/patients, focus groups we facilitate, focus groups we attend, local online forums and service user groups. In addition, we have received service user experiences/feedback via our web-based ‘Feedback Centre’ and since its inception in July 2019 we have received over 274 experiences/comments shared across NHS and Social Care Services. To visit the website use the URL.

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

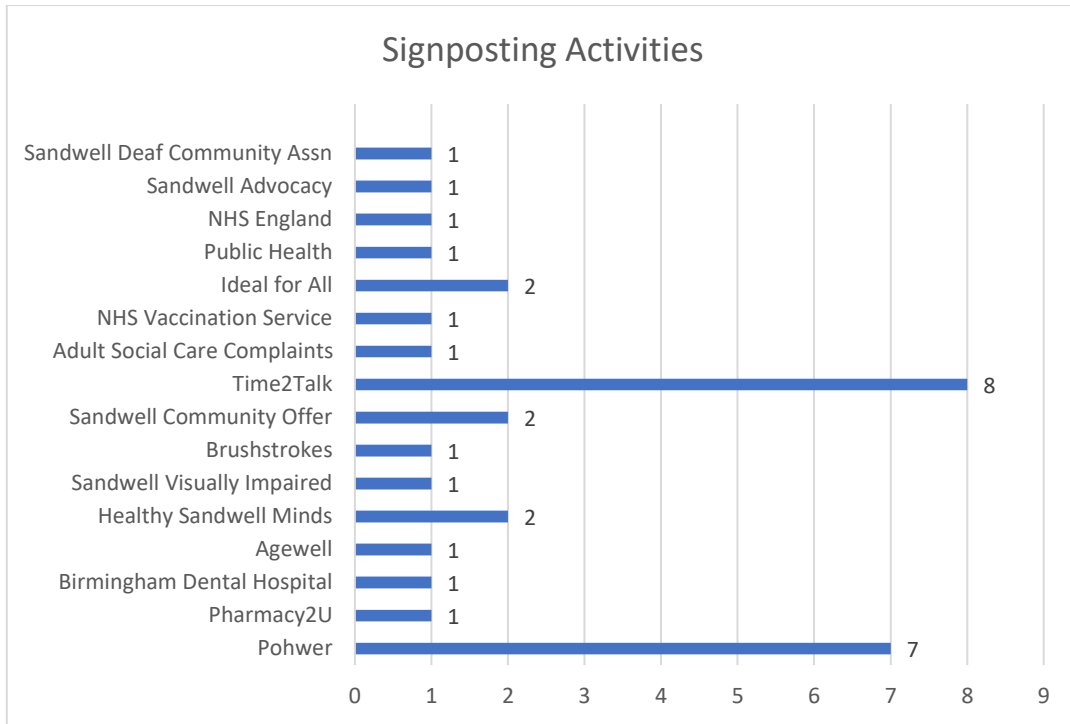
The below graph shows the number of people we engaged with this quarter, this includes a variety of engagement methods, including attendance at meetings by Healthwatch Sandwell staff.



The graph below shows the number of experiences recorded by service.



Our Healthwatch activities involve signposting the public to relevant support agencies to assist them with their concerns. The following graph depicts which agencies have been referred to:



Overview of experiences



GP Surgeries/Services

1. GP referred patient to a social prescriber for support. Multiple appointments were booked, but all were cancelled by social prescriber. No support was given.

ACTION: Patient consented to a referral to POhWER and they were assigned a community advocate. Advocate assisted patient with getting a new social prescriber.

2. Patient querying when partner who is classed as vulnerable and aged 69 will receive COVID – 19 vaccination. Patient had received a text but does not have ‘vulnerable’ letter that is required. Patient unhappy with GP (Carters Green: Your Health Partnership) who has said patient is not eligible at that point in time.

ACTION: Patient advised to speak to Practice Manager.

3. Patient, aged 59, unhappy that wife who is younger has been called for vaccine especially as he has lots of health conditions. Caller has complained to Practice Manager.

ACTION: Patient advised to contact Time2talk.

4. Patient's optician gave forms to patient about an eye condition to give to their GP, patient hand delivered to the Practice (Whiteheath Medical Centre). The carbon copy of the form couldn't be found, the receptionist stated that it wasn't received at the Practice. Patient concerned about a breach of data.

ACTION: Patient advised to contact Practice Manager.



Hospitals

5. Carer rang on behalf of her partner who has long COVID and requires a chest x ray. A referral form from Patient's GP has been acquired and hand delivered by Patient to X-ray department after the electronic forms had not been received by X-ray department at Sandwell General Hospital. This was the 4th attempt to access X-ray department. The GP had been in touch with the department and has had to make another referral and patient must wait another 48 hours. Carer advised if partner has breathing difficulties to present at A & E.

Patient contacted Chief Executive of Local Authority and Director of Public Health to query why this was happening and why Patients who require an x ray must travel to City Hospital and not Sandwell General Hospital.

Managing Director Sandwell (Black Country & West Birmingham CCG) responded and explained the situation at the SWB NHS Trust:

Due to the increased pressure on inpatient flow within the acute sites they have temporarily had to reduce routine outpatient work in select

locations to fill gaps and support flow throughout the hospital. The Trust have stated that this is a temporary measure and comms are to be shared out more widely tomorrow to ensure our citizens are sighted on what services are running and where.

Also the Asst Service Manager – Imaging explained that they are encouraging all GPs to use ICE (an imaging referral system) as it is the most effective and safe way to request, process, report and audit diagnostic imaging examinations. Currently, whilst we are in a period of transition of all GPs moving onto ICE, we are accepting manual requests to a specific email address which has been widely communicated to our GP partners. The Primary Care Liaison team have been in contact with the GPs who are manually requesting to assist them in a move to ICE (Due to Covid-19 and since the reintroduction of non-urgent diagnostic imaging earlier in the year, we are not operating a walk-in service for X-rays. This is to ensure appropriate social distancing and patient flow in our departments. All referrals received are offered appointments, prioritised by urgency and longest waiting, as per Trust guidance.

ACTION: HWS agreed to pass this information to carer.

6. Person informed HWS that inpatient care was good but still waiting for a follow up appointment that should have been in December. They were worried about issues progressing if not seen soon. Also told they refer them to a Birmingham hospital regarding another condition. No appointment sent.

ACTION: Person consented to a referral to POhWER and assigned a community advocate. Advocate assisted person with getting a follow up appointment and nurse support.



Adult Social Care

7. Parent/carer of young adult with Learning Disabilities and elderly parents contacted HWS about postponement of respite care and day care for adult with learning disabilities during COVID-19.

In March 2021, the services for respite have resumed but on a limited basis but day care has not re-commenced. The service user has been offered outreach (visiting parks etc) which is not suitable due to the person's care needs and cold weather.

Parent has informed 2 local MPs and has spoken to Social worker who was described as '*unhelpful*'.

ACTION: HWS signposted to complaints at Local Authority but caller did not want to pursue. Also informed carer of HWS recent report about carers during COVID – 19, of which HWS has made recommendations to Local Authority.

8. Parent of adult of with profound learning disabilities who is a resident in a care home, queried whether the Sandwell and West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Group have provided care homes with iPads as part of the Adult Social Care Winter Plan to aid communication with care home staff and relatives during the Pandemic.

ACTION: HWS contacted Time2talk for information, who confirmed that this true.

Children's Social Services

9. HWS attends meetings with Sandwell Autism Group which is for parents of children pre and post autism diagnosis. Parents have highlighted frustrations with the diagnosis and assessment system and the need for specialist therapist services. HWS have helped the group identify ways forward in to address the problems. Sandwell Autism Group is a strong self-advocating group and as such have made good progress in commitments to improved services from Sandwell Council which are still being developed up.

ACTION: HWS attend meetings and help raise awareness on issues and support and empower Sandwell Autism Group.



Pharmacies

10. Person stated that before the pandemic medication was dispensed into a bottle. The person's condition makes it hard to open blister packs and they end up having to ask for help. Also, when they go to pick up medication there is usually a lot of waiting and they cannot stay on their feet for long.

ACTION: HWS advised they talk to the pharmacy about their concerns and possibly call the pharmacy in advance to see if the prescription is ready. When HWS completed a referral to the Community Offer for a different issue the person was able to have all issues resolved.



Mental Health

11. Relative concerned about the events that led to a family member committing suicide.

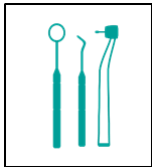
The relative listed services who the family believe did not respond appropriately, which included: GP, West Midlands Ambulance Service, Black Country Mental Health Trust, Sandwell Healthy Minds and Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust (A&E)

ACTION: HWS referred to POHWER for an advocate to assist the caller with their complaints.

12. Parent distressed about child who is in Hospital under a section 20 (Children's Act). Parent believes that Child and Adolescent Mental Health

Services are not assisting appropriately especially regarding diagnosis. Parent also concerned that child is not in education.

ACTION: HWS referred to POhWER for an advocate to assist the caller with their complaints. HWS also signposted to appropriate complaints procedures.



Dentist

13. Patient has been trying to find a local dentist who is taking on new patients but has been unsuccessful.

ACTION: Signposted to Time2talk.

Reports

Report – Access to mental health and well-being services in Sandwell during COVID - 19 pandemic

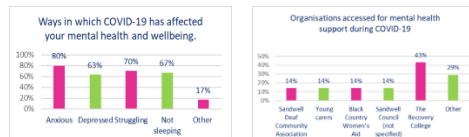
Access to mental health and well-being services in Sandwell during COVID19 pandemic



Methods of engagement



Findings



Coping Mechanisms



Mental health disorders account for almost a quarter of the total burden of ill health³ in the UK. It is well-documented of the burden of mental health

³ <https://www.rsph.org.uk/uploads/assets/uploaded/b215d040-2753-410e-a39eb30ad3c8b708.pdf>

disorders⁴ following disasters, including evidence from previous viral outbreaks⁵. This suggested that COVID-19, and the response to the pandemic, could have a significant consequence on the nation's mental health through increased exposure to stressors. HWS conducted a project during 2020/21, the aim of the projects was:

- To understand how COVID – 19 has impacted on people's mental health and what coping mechanisms they have utilised.
- To ascertain which mental health and wellbeing services in Sandwell were accessed during COVID – 19 including how they were accessed and how effective they were.
- To consider what the longer-term implications are for individuals and mental health services.

The target population for this project were the general population who already had mental health issues prior to COVID-19 as **well as** those who's mental health has been affected by the pandemic. HWS also engaged with specific groups, including:

- Deaf and hard of hearing community
- Young people who are part of HWS Youth Healthwatch
- Adult Carers

There were **50** responses to the survey, **30** participants in the focus groups and **15** telephone interviews.

This project used mixed methodologies to engage with different cohorts of participant.

- Telephone interviews with pre-set question to people who HWS have had contact with during COVID-19.
- Survey (online and hard copies).
- Focus groups with specific groups of people using teleconferencing software e.g., Zoom, Microsoft Teams etc.

The report identifies:

- 1. Mental health before Covid-19.**
- 2. Effects of COVID-19 on mental health and wellbeing.**

⁴ https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/full/10.1146/annurev-publhealth-032013-182435#_i1

⁵ <https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/project/covid-19-social-study>

3. Support from mental health and wellbeing organisations before COVID-19.
4. Organisations accessed for mental health support during COVID-19.
5. Effects on access to mental health and wellbeing services.
6. Rating of support services.
7. Activities to keep mentally well.
8. Long term implications for mental health and wellbeing services after Covid-19.

What people said during the project:

I was anxious before but COVID heightened it...the isolation is awful...feel shut off from the world...now I do more moping about and watching the telly.

The pandemic is affecting more people than you think, and we won't be able to just bounce back easily.

there will be a much larger need for the services as more people will be affected by Covid-19 in different ways.

I have had more time during C19 to focus on my recovery. I may have been forced into employment before and it may have caused my mental health to break down again

being in greenspace, listening to birdsong and being in nature has helped me cope.

speaking to people over the phone or via Zoom and WhatsApp so that I don't become too inward looking.

During COVID-19 respondents identified that they felt anxious, depressed, struggling to cope and were not sleeping.

Respondents accessed various organisations including:

- The Sandwell Carers Service which is part Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
- Places of worship
- Sandwell Deaf Community Association
- Young carers
- Recovery College (Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust)
- Sandwell Asian Mental Health Group (Oldbury Library)
- Sandwell Adult Discussion Group facilitated by Autism West Midlands
- Sandwell Community Information and Participation Service
- Healthy Sandwell, a website provided by Public health department.
<https://www.healthysandwell.co.uk/>

Although access to mental health and wellbeing support organisations had either been postponed or altered to meet the restrictions of the Pandemic and the support had been appreciated. 62% of the respondents who did access support services, rated the intervention as '*excellent*'.

The report found that people have used a variety of coping mechanisms including:

- Getting outside, walking and enjoying time in greenspaces in order to maintain their mental wellbeing
- Keeping in touch with family and friends
- Having hobbies

It was agreed that the long-term implications for mental health and wellbeing services is that there would be an increased demand because of the Pandemic, in particular for bereavement services and post-natal care, addiction and safeguarding.

The report makes recommendations that include:

- Mental health and well-being services be advertised and the resource Route2wellbeing (<https://route2wellbeing.info/>) be updated regularly by SCVO (Sandwell Council of Voluntary Organisations) so that GPs (General Practitioners), as well as the wider public can access mental health and wellbeing services. It should be considered that statutory organisations be added to this resource.
- Bereavement support for the public to be readily available and psychological support for key workers by employers to be available.
- All support organisations for children and young people to consider the effects of the Pandemic (addiction and safeguarding).
- Resources to address loneliness and isolation to be further enhanced and advertised including Social prescribing⁶ in Sandwell.
- Emotional support for new parents to be available for all.

For more information:

Contact Anita Andrews Engagement and Information Lead

⁶ Social prescribing is the term given when community-based solutions are identified for people:

- with one or more long-term conditions
- who need support with their mental health
- who are lonely or isolated
- who have complex social needs which affect their wellbeing



Report – Using Digital Technology in Accessing Primary Care Services

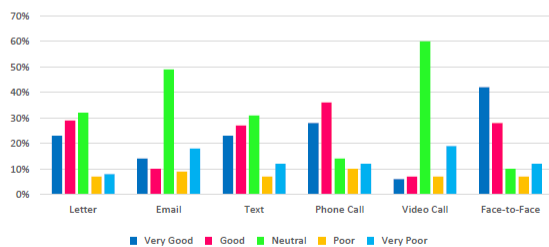
Using Digital Technology in Accessing Primary Care Services

Methods of engagement



Findings

Communication method rating



Focus Groups

- Reduced abilities
- Communication methods
- Skill levels
- Digital Poverty

Recommendations

- Person Centred Services
- Reasonable adjustments
- Accessible communication formats
- Engaging patients in service development



HWS looked at the patients experience of using digital technology in primary care services especially in relation to the increased use of remote service options because of the changes in primary care services brought about by the impacts of Covid-19.

Healthwatch Sandwell found that patients have been willing to try to adjust and use digital technology in accessing services. Overall patients have been happy or satisfied with the services they have received within primary care. Many have adjusted well to using digital technology and state some benefits. The feedback on patient experiences provides some useful insight that could help inform continued development of digital technology within primary care services.

However, the Healthwatch Sandwell survey results also showed that 44% of the public said they found digital technology difficult to use and over 30% had challenges with accessing equipment or internet data supply. Focus Groups were held as part of the project to explore in more detail the issues and barriers and how they might be able to be addressed. The Focus Groups included people over 65 years old, sensory and learning disabilities, people from minority ethnic communities with language barriers and “digital poverty”.

HWS are very appreciative of the support and contributions to the Focus Group work provided by:

- [Rights and Equality Sandwell](#)
- [Sandwell Visually Impaired](#)
- [Sandwell Deaf Community Association](#)
- [Parkinsons Support Group](#)
- [Sandwell African Caribbean Mental Health Foundation](#)
- [Ileys Community Association](#)
- [Ideal for All](#)
- [Recovery College](#)
- [Sweda](#)
- [Youth Healthwatch Sandwell](#)

The main findings, reflected in the report recommendations are:

- Accessible communication options to be reviewed and developed up.
- A person-centred approach with choice and reasonable adjustments to match individual needs.
- Promotion of virtual Patient Participation Groups through the Primary Care Networks. These meetings could be supported by Healthwatch Sandwell.
- Primary Care Networks to work with Healthwatch Sandwell to continue progressing the patient experience and the use of digital technology.

The full report will be published and available on the HWS website in April 2021.

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

To feedback your comments on this report of for more information please contact:

Community Outreach Leads

Sophie Shuttlewood

Email: Sophie.shuttlewood@healthwatchsandwell.co.uk

Tel: 07732 683483

Melissa Elders

Email: Melissa.elders@healthwatchsandwell.co.uk

Tel: 07885 214547

Insight Public Meetings

Midland Metropolitan University Hospital - #morethanahospital
Healthwatch March 2021

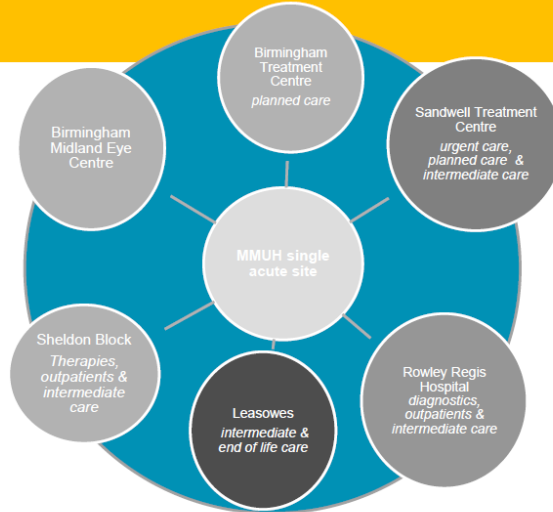


11

On 31st March 2021 we had an update on the progress on the Midland Metropolitan Hospital which is scheduled to open in 2022

The site model

- **Birmingham & Sandwell Treatment Centres become our cold bases, with MMUH our hot site**
- When MMUH opens, **both of our general hospital sites change:**
 - 2/3rds of City site now owned by Homes England and has planning permission for housing
 - 1/5th of the Sandwell site is already in re-development for social value schemes like our Live Work scheme



34 people took part in the meeting in which Rachel Barlow, Director of System Transformation at Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals Trust gave a presentation about the progress of the construction and the proposals for the remainder of the site surrounding the new hospital.

Construction and site update



- Scheduled to open in 2022 date to be confirmed in Q1
- Over 800 staff now working on site
- 30 days slippage on programme
- Covid – challenges of logistics vertically and horizontally; new temporary welfare facilities in carpark, loading of equipment OOH, specialist review to mitigate covid delay risk
- Clap for businesses, thank you safety snoods
- Site staff testing starts this month

A few construction facts:

- The site has had enough deliveries of construction supplies to create a 13 mile tailback
- Enough vertical plasterboard wall materials was installed to stretch from Birmingham to Glasgow – more than 400km
- We racked up 11,000 hours moving construction workers and goods up and down the building
- Installed 61km of electrical cable trays and conduit (used to protect and route electrical wiring in a building)
- Floors and wall finishes are going into ED, medical gas flow meters wall mounted

Questions and Answers from the meeting:

1. What is happening for services for Sickle Cell & Thalassaemia and will there be a specific ward for allocated for Sickle Cell & Thalassaemia patients?

Answer. *The Sickle Cell & Thalassaemia service will be hosted in the Midland Met hospital and will have its own area in terms of beds, the*

plans for this are not agreed yet but will be confirmed in April and it will be allocated area.

The MMUH Engagement programme has recognised the need to engage with patients with Sickle Cell & Thalassaemia. HWS work closely with OSCAR Sandwell who support people with Sickle Cell & Thalassaemia. HWS and will continue to do so during the information and engagement programme for the MMUH.

2. Will the hospital engage with residents living directly opposite the site?

Answer. We have had to review radically the way we plan to engage post covid if we can have big meetings on site that would be a bonus, possibly using the car park. local residents are a cohort we need to communicate particularly specifically with from our point of view. The regeneration and the opportunities for the local population is key for us. This isn't just a hospital. We are also going to start a local resident's group, parking and travel could be one of the first things we talk about

3. The Learning Works (a one-stop-shop for access to training, development and employment opportunities), does that mean that the existing building on Unett Street will be vacated?

Answer. It will be the accommodation isn't big enough now and we're looking to reinvest and expand on the new learning campus site.

4. Can you tell us a bit more about the robots please? Are patients going to be dealing with these?

Answer. You won't even see the robots. They start their day in a receipt and distribution area where our goods are delivered. They are about half the size of a Mini and a bit taller, like a little electronic vehicle and they carry medical equipment, medicines and waste behind the scenes. They won't affect ward patients.

Youth Healthwatch



One of our priorities this year has been to establish and develop a thriving Youth Healthwatch in Sandwell. Following our first meeting in July we have now recruited 9 young people who are passionate about having the voice of young people heard in Sandwell.

During March focus groups were held with children cared for by Sandwell Children's trust and care leavers. A full report will be published shortly, and regular engagement will continue to ensure the voice of these young people will be heard.



“I am very proud of completing the course and want to support people”

During March, a two-day Mental Health Foundation training course was commissioned to support recommendations from the young people's research project previously highlighted. The opportunity to participate in the training was offered to young people aged 16 and above who can support other young people. Young People attended from the following organisations:

Youth Healthwatch Sandwell

SHAPE Forum

Leaving Care Forum

Ideal for All

Health Futures College

For more information visit
www.HealthwatchSandwell.co.uk
Call or text Leanne Abbott
on 07732 683446



youthhealthwatchesandwell



@yhwsandwell



Community Cash Fund

Healthwatch Sandwell, the consumer champion for health and social care in Sandwell has launched the Community Cash Fund to invest in the capacity of small grassroots projects and groups that hope to improve the wellbeing of and amplify individuals' voices in their local communities. Listed below are the four projects selected.



Community Cash Fund Awards



Grants of up to £1,500 available for local people to improve wellbeing in their community.

Four Grants have been awarded to organisations and groups to fund new projects that improves the health and wellbeing of local people.

4 Community Trust CIC

We want to work with children and young people gathering views of how they perceive health and social care in Sandwell.

The project will be led by young people and focused on the mechanism of Digital Media.

West Bromwich Dartmouth Cricket Club

So this project is about developing a small area of land for flowers and plants as well as a small pathway and seating area for the local community who may wish to come and work/volunteer to prepare the area and then maintain it.

Life in Community CIC

Life in Community CIC (LIC) is a Community Interest Company, based in Tipton that aims to become an impactful social enterprise; by addressing issues surrounding health, poverty, worklessness, and apathy, learning, and skills deficiencies.

New Baby Network CIC

We plan to offer six workshops to perinatal families focussing on developing skills that can be used in daily life to improve wellbeing. These are especially written with parents in mind.





Want to produce a short video of what Health and Social Care looks like to young people.

The young people will be involved in the design and delivery of the project they will plan the video and its production with their marketing manager.



West Bromwich Dartmouth Cricket Club

Their project is aimed at the elderly and retired people of West Bromwich who come from diverse ethnic communities. The project is about developing a small area of land for flowers and plants as well as a small pathway and seating area for the local community who may wish to come and work/volunteer to prepare the area and then maintain it.



Life in Community CIC

Are seeking to target people across Sandwell – specifically those who have been impacted by the pandemic, who previously would not have considered themselves of suffering with low-level mental health. The service will be aimed at individuals aged 18+ who have been experiencing low level mental health issues (i.e., low mood, anxiety and depression).



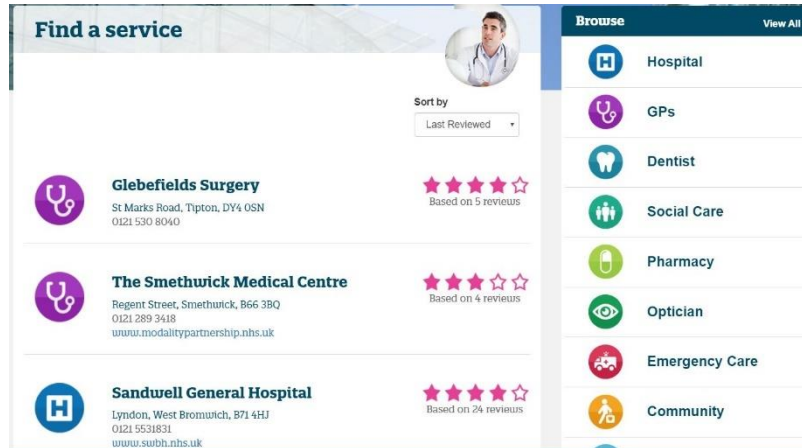
New Baby Network CIC

Plan to offer six workshops to perinatal families focussing on developing skills that can be used in daily life to improve wellbeing. These are especially written with parents in mind. In addition to this, two volunteers at New Baby Network will be trained in safe listening practices, with ongoing supervision throughout, to deliver weekly “listening hours”.

Reviews about your local services

If you would like to leave a review about your experience(s) when using health and social care services in Sandwell visit:

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



Volunteering Opportunities with Healthwatch Sandwell

why not join us?

**become a
Healthwatch Sandwell
volunteer**

We welcome people to join us and support us as volunteers. If you are interested in marketing & promotions, engagement, or research please get in touch with us. More information on how you can support us can be found on our website:

<https://www.healthwatchesandwell.co.uk/get-involved/>

Call: 07885 214389

Healthwatch Sandwell Advisory Board Recruitment

why not join us?

become an
Advisory Board Member

We are looking to recruit Advisory Board Members who share our passion for developing Healthwatch Sandwell as the ‘consumer champion’ for NHS, public health and adult and children’s social care services across the Borough. You will need drive, energy and enthusiasm and the ability to play a leading role in maintaining our vision.

You will need to have experience of organisational development, a knowledge of health and social care landscape, effective cross-sector partnership working with voluntary and community organisations and the ability to involve local people.

So, if you want to play a leading part in shaping the future of a vital organisation, then we would be delighted to hear from you. To receive a recruitment pack and application form please contact us.





To share your patient experiences contact us on Telephone: 07885 214389.

Visit our Feedback review page:

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

Or Email: info@healthwatchsandwell.co.uk

