



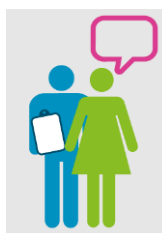
Local Intelligence Report
1st July – 30th September 2020

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We Listen



We Note



We Act

Covid – 19 Update

On Monday 9th March 2020, in response to the covid-19 pandemic and to protect our staff and the public, Healthwatch Sandwell made the decision that:

- All Enter and View activity to be suspended
- All volunteer led activities to be postponed and rearranged.
- All community engagement events to be postponed/rearranged to dates in the future once the outbreak settles down.
- All strategic meetings will be risk assessed as to whether our attendance is necessary although bearing in mind that we can fulfil our role of providing information to the public and signposting them to services and about important Public Health messages.

We recognised that we needed to act responsibly and avoid any community transmission being caused by our activities as well as safeguarding our staff and volunteers.

Our face to face engagement activities have been restricted, and we are using other methods of engagement, telephone contact, e mails, social media and teleconferencing software e.g. Zoom, Microsoft teams, Skype etc wherever possible.

Throughout the coronavirus pandemic, Healthwatch Sandwell have continued to support residents with the latest local and national information through website and social media updates.

Up until July national lockdown measures were being gradually reduced, however the number of coronavirus cases in Sandwell have begun to increase once again with areas of concern being Smethwick and West Bromwich. At the end of July, Public Health in Sandwell began its own contact tracing system in response to the local surge in cases.



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 in order 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@healthwatchesandwell.co.uk – Tel: 07885 214389
- Anita Andrews – Engagement & Information Lead – email anita.andrews@healthwatchesandwell.co.uk – Tel: 07885 214421
- Ian McGarry – Engagement & Information Lead – email ian.mcgarry@healthwatchesandwell.co.uk – Tel: 07885 214392
- Melissa Elders – Community Outreach Lead – email melissa.elders@healthwatchesandwell.co.uk – Tel: 07885 214547
- Sophie Shuttlewood – Community Outreach Lead – email sophie.shuttlewood@healthwatchesandwell.co.uk – Tel: 07732 683483

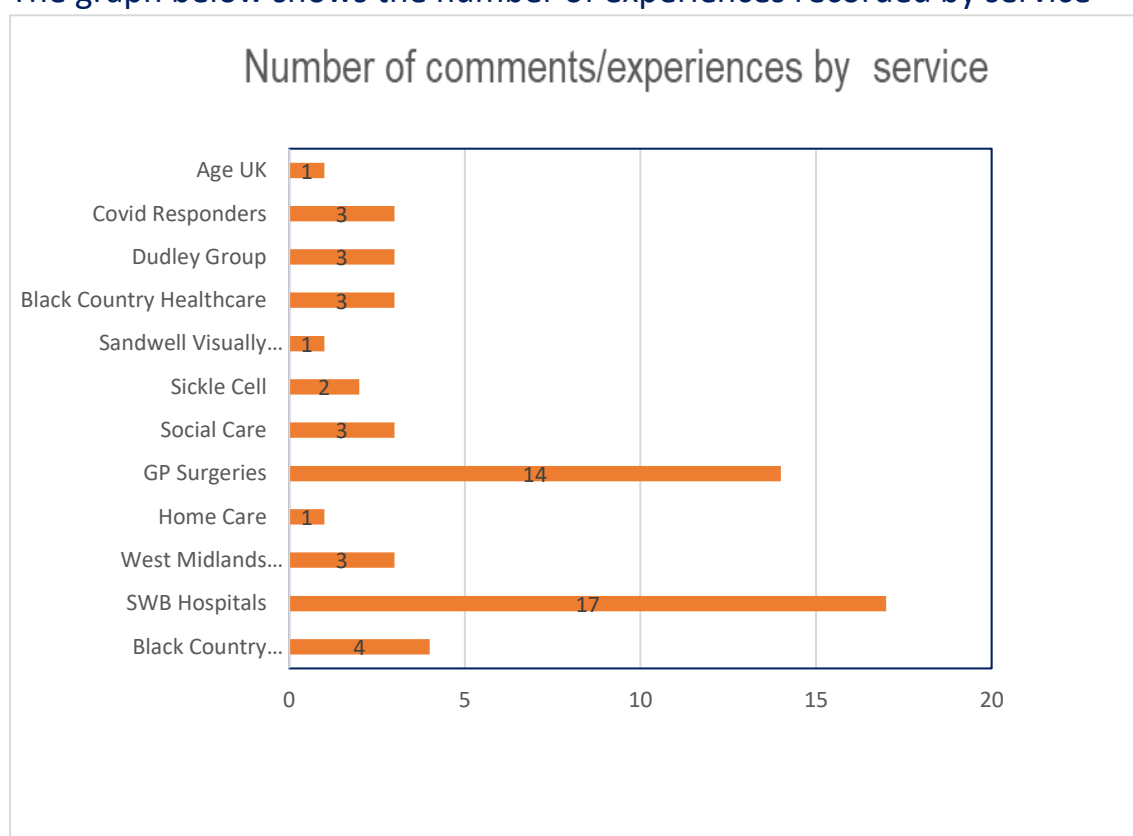
To contact us, use the messaging facility on our website [HERE](#)

email us at info@healthwatchesandwell.co.uk

Feedback on local services

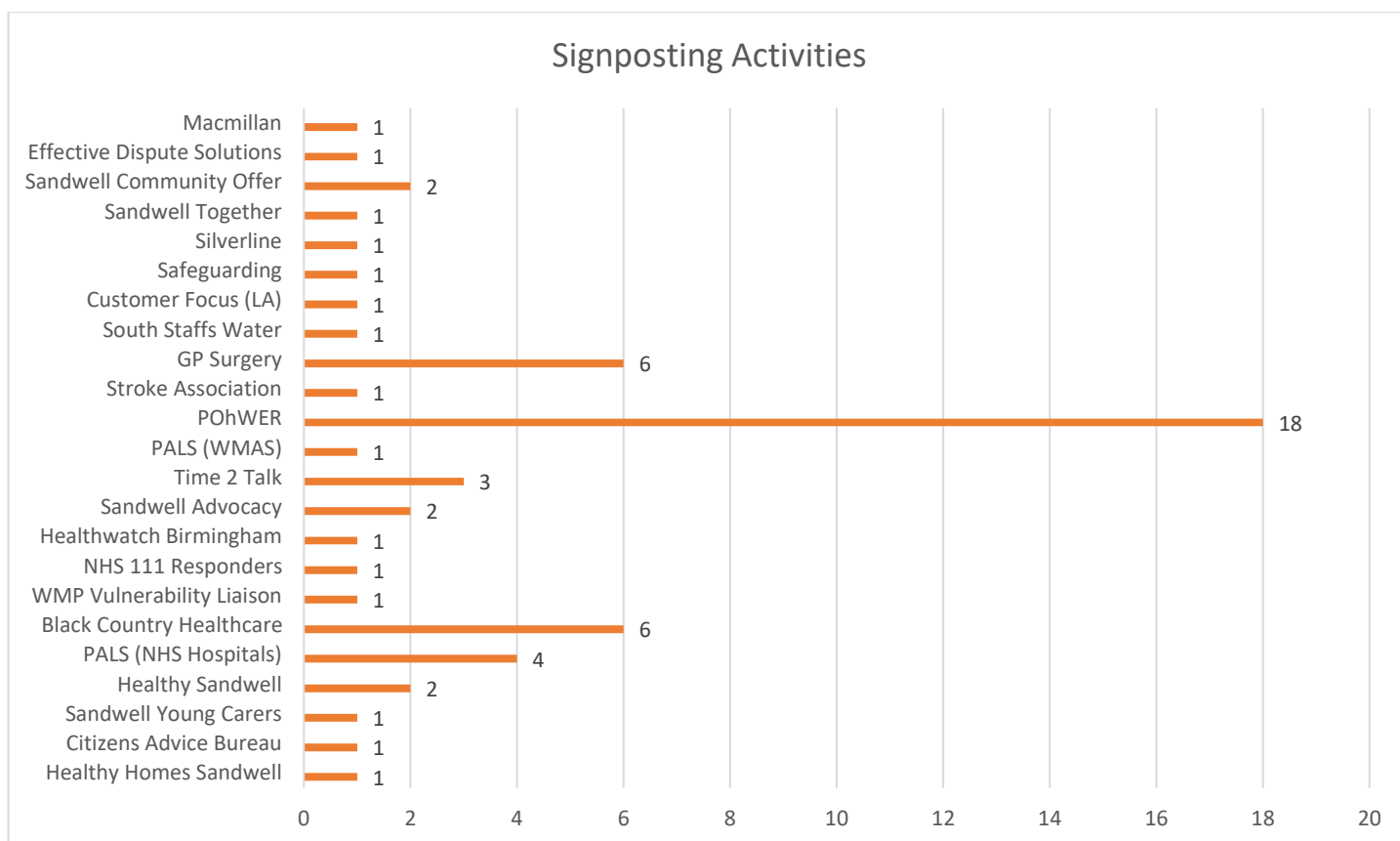
During the period July – September 2020 Healthwatch Sandwell have collated patient experiences. In addition, we have received service user experiences/feedback via our web-based 'Feedback Centre' and since its inception in July 2019 we have received over 220 experiences/comments shared across NHS and Social Care Services. To visit the website use the URL <https://www.healthwatchesandwell.co.uk/services/>

The graph below shows the number of experiences recorded by service



The table above shows Healthwatch Sandwell has received 51 comments or experiences from service users in Sandwell over the three month period.

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. A patient contacted us by email with concerns regarding a GP surgery. The patient is disabled and vulnerable and was frustrated as feeling that the practice was not listening to her concerns. This regarded medication not being on repeat despite the patients request which meant that the patient had to make repeated visits to the surgery potentially giving her greater exposure to covid-19.

Action: We explained how the patient could formally complain to the practice and to seek support from the NHS complaints advocacy service if needed. We understand that the patient has now been able to resolve her issues.

2. A patient had received a letter from the GP saying they could no longer support her as she no longer lives in the catchment area. The patient was concerned with having no GP during the current climate.

Action: HWS suggested the patient contact the surgery as the letter she had received could be a standard letter sent when she changed her address. The patient was also given information about how to change GP if needed. We heard back from the patient saying she did not know it was that easy to change GP and she would be following this advice.

3. HWS were contacted by a patient who was unhappy about the appointment system at his surgery. He had been trying to get an appointment for his elderly parents and had rang surgery 43 times. The patient had made a complaint to the surgery but felt the response was unsatisfactory.

Action: The patient was referred to POhWER, the NHS complaints advocacy service, and given contact details for NHS England should he wish to take further. HWS understands that the patient is now being supported into resolving this issue.

4. A patient contacted HWS with concerns about GP not addressing her insomnia adequately and about a lack of coping mechanisms due to a cancer diagnosis.

Action: HWS advised how to complain to Practice Manager and signposted to POWhER and Sandwell Advocacy so that the patient could access an advocate if required.

HWS also referred the patient to Let's Talk Hope (Macmillan) who provide support to people who have had cancer or survived cancer, as well as their families and friends. The support worker has contacted the

patient and is providing on-going support. The patient is very happy with this outcome.

5. A relative of a patient who had been discharged from a mental health hospital was concerned that the GP had not approved the patient's medication and sent it to the local pharmacy. The relative was very concerned that the patient could relapse without the medication.

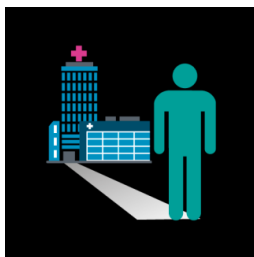
Action: HWS signposted the relative to the Practice Manager, however the relative was unable to speak with them, so HWS rang the Practice Manager and the situation was resolved the same day. The relative was extremely happy and relieved with the outcome.

6. A patient contacted Healthwatch Sandwell in May 2020 seeking guidance and help. She had been suffering problems with her tonsils since December 2019 and had still not been satisfactorily treated to resolve the problems. She had been prescribed courses of anti-biotics which had not worked, received several scans but had no diagnosis of the problem. The impacts on services of Covid-19 had also disrupted communications, consultations, and treatment services. Mrs A had been in a lot of debilitating pain, having to regular time off work and the situation was making her very depressed.

Action. HWS informed and guided the patient on the GP & Hospital complaint processes and suggested involving Pohwer advocacy services to support her. HWS also brought the issues of the case to the attention of the Care Quality Commission.

Following on from the complaint it is understood that the patient was seen again by consultants, lingual tonsil problems were diagnosed, eventually received surgery in June 2020 and post-operative treatments which resolved the problems.

HWS were thanked for the guidance received and the confidence it gave to get this health problem resolved.



Hospitals

7. Healthwatch Sandwell were made aware of a patient with multiple disabilities, including visual impairment and support needs. The patient had been hospitalised with leg fractures, so was bed ridden. Due to his immobility and visual impairment the patient was stressed about hospital procedures and unclear about hospital discharge processes.

Action: HWS were able to keep regular communications with the patient and help inform on all processes and guide his support within the hospital. The information and links provided helped reassure the patient and ensured that reablement and ongoing support services flowed smoothly on his return home from hospital.

8. HWS were emailed regarding a concern about induced births at Russell's Hall hospital.

Action: HWS advised the patient to raise a formal complaint to the hospital's PALS service and provided information regarding the NHS Complaints Advocacy Service - POhWER. The patient thanked HWS for this information.

9. Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust Hospitals have concerns regarding patients being reluctant to attend hospital owing to concerns regarding Covid-19

Action: HWS have agreed with Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust to talk with patients to find out their concerns and how they can be allayed.



Care Homes

10. A family member was unhappy with the care of his relative at a Care Home, the concerns included a lack of dignified care and poor medication administration.

Action: HWS advised that, in the first instance to contact the Manager of the home to discuss concerns. HWS also signposted to the Local Authority Safeguarding team and Care Quality Commission.

The relative liaised with care home manager about the concerns, and these issues have now been addressed to the satisfaction of the resident and the relatives.

The relative was thankful to HWS for a listening ear and effective advice.



Voluntary & Community Services

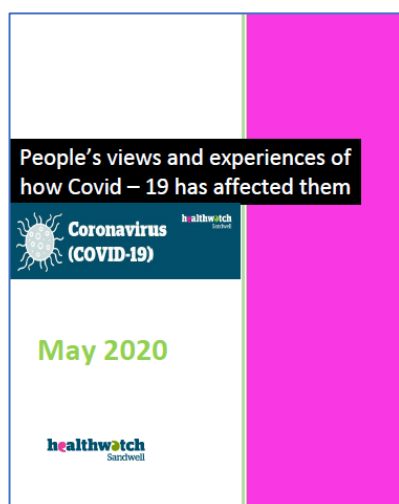
11. In the early days of adjusting to Covid-19 and working arrangements HWS offered voluntary services to support the Sandwell community. This included making welfare and befriending calls to isolated people who were shielding. A patient was shielding due to health risk conditions, and also suffered from anxiety and depression. When HWS first spoke to the patient she was in a very low place due to the lockdown restrictions and isolation, she had only spoken to her Daughter who lived a long distance away and was afraid to even engage with her food delivery volunteer or neighbours from a distance. HWS were able

to reassure the patient and help with practical ways to be able to connect with her elderly neighbour while maintaining safe distancing.

The patient was missing her young Grandson, but she was not confident with using technology. HWS were able to explain about video call functions and at the next weekly call the patient shared that she had enjoyed time engaging with her grandson virtually. This was a great start, in a very short time grew more confident with using video calls, she called up old friends and started some on-line creative projects with them. She became so much better connected that she had people to chat to every day and was a much happier person. HWS were able to withdraw the weekly calls as they were no longer needed.

Reports and Focus Groups

Report - People's views and experiences of how Covid – 19 has affected them



On 9th July HWS published a report, the purpose of the report was to find out people's views and experiences of how Covid – 19 had affected them and how HWS might be able to signpost people to further information or services.

HWS engaged with 68 people using 2 surveys, 1 online and 1 telephone between 30th March and 30th May 2020. The report concluded that:

- Information about COVID -19 was key to understanding what is happening and how to keep safe during the pandemic.
- The majority of respondents stated that they had ample, easy to understand and accessible information. However, there was a general feeling that there was too much information, and that the information kept changing and was at times contradictory, conflicting, and not accurate.
- The News on the television was the main source of information. It is important to note that deaf people struggled to access information that was on TV and this may have impacted on their knowledge about COVID -19. Scotland provided this service throughout their television updates. The Equality Act 2010 requires providers of goods and services to the public to make reasonable adjustments to assist people with disabilities. In this situation for deaf people and hard of hearing people, reasonable adjustments should include providing communication aids, such as a British Sign Language interpreter (BSL).
- 5% of the respondents said that had a test which confirmed that they had COVID –19, however over half of the respondents had symptoms but had not been tested. This low percentage may be because the Government prioritised key workers for the test. 42 % did not seek medical advice or care for their symptoms.
- Accessing medical advice varied, some struggled to access a GP, but others were able to have telephone consultations, nevertheless, contacting surgeries by telephone proved to be difficult for some.

- The majority of people were coping, and they had all the supplies they needed and were getting support from the family and the community. There was a sense that everyone was in the same situation and were doing their best.
- Respondents were asked to identify their concerns, which were loneliness and isolation, getting shopping and receiving social care. There were concerns about getting help for existing and new conditions as treatment/consultation/ appointments/operations had been postponed and it was feared that symptoms could worsen. People also did not want to go to a hospital setting for fear of contracting COVID – 19.

To read the full report, <https://www.healthwatchesandwell.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Peoples-experiences-of-how-COVID-19-has-affected-them.pdf>

Accessing Healthcare in Sandwell: Homelessness Project Report 2020 update.



HWS undertook a project with homeless people in Sandwell to understand their experiences of accessing primary healthcare services as well as A &E and other services. The aim was to influence service provision to meet the target groups identified healthcare needs. HWS actively engaged with rough sleepers and homeless people and collaborated with partners during the project.

The findings were published July 2020. To read the full report, [HW-Sandwell Homelessness Project Report 2020](#)

The results were presented at the Sandwell Homeless Forum (a multi-disciplinary group facilitated by Sandwell MBC's Director of Housing Communities, which co-ordinates activity/provision for homeless people in the Borough) in July 2020.

As a result of this presentation the forum has incorporated the 7 recommendations into an action planning document and agreed that all the

key stakeholders would identify what they will be doing to meet the recommendations by submitting a pledge.

HWS look forward to monitoring progress with implementation of the 7 recommendations.

During assertive engagement with Environmental Protection Officers (EPO) from Sandwell MBC, it was identified that effective relationships play a major part in accessing healthcare. One GP practice was identified as providing effective interventions and having good relationships with the homeless people: Dr R K Arora's Practice, Lyng Centre for Health, Frank Fisher Way, West Bromwich.

The EPO team described how the staff will see people who need medical appointments and healthcare but may not be registered at the Practice. The EPO's described how they knew that this practice would be receptive and respectful to the target group who at times can be challenging. These findings were shared with the Practice who have responded by thanking HWS for the report and commented:

'It's very encouraging when your practice has been working endlessly and has been acknowledged particularly through a vulnerable cohort of patients as the homeless. Makes it all worthwhile. Thank you once again'.

Deaf and hard of hearing focus group

HWS in partnership with Sandwell Deaf Community Association (SDCA), created a focus group in December 2019, with adults who are deaf and hard of hearing. The aim of the focus group is for people to share experiences of health and social care in Sandwell.

At the first meeting there was a general discussion, and the group gave feedback about their experiences which can be divided into 3 headings:

1. Communication issues, especially the need for British Sign Language interpreters.
2. Appointments with General Practitioners.
3. Experience at Accident and Emergency Department (Sandwell General Hospital)

Finally, the focus group collectively offered advice to commissioners and providers of health and social care services on how to improve services for deaf and hard of hearing people. To read this report:

<https://www.healthwatchesandwell.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Deaf-Focus-Group-Report-1.pdf>

On 22nd September 2020, a second meeting was held, and the discussion was about experiences of health and social care services during COVID 19. These findings will be collated, and a report will be produced.

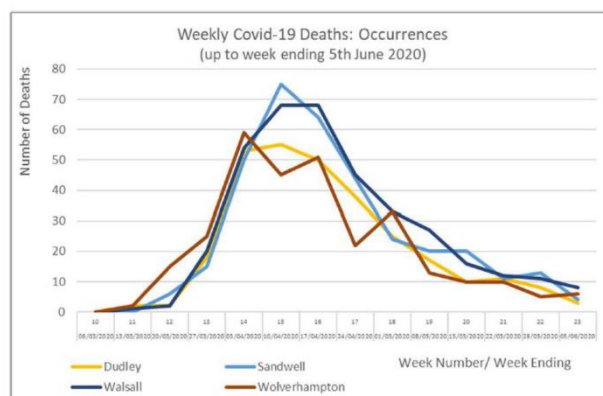
The group will continue to meet, and the next meeting will focus on mental health.

If you would like more information, please contact Anita Andrews:
anita.andrews@healthwatchesandwell.co.uk

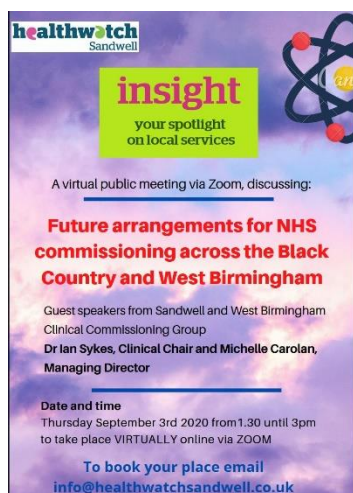
Meetings

Healthwatch Sandwell Annual Public Meeting

Our annual public meeting was held virtually on 12th August and attended by 24 people. Our invited guest was the Director for Public Health in Sandwell, Dr Lisa McNally who gave an update about the Coronavirus pandemic and its impact in Sandwell.



Insight Public Meeting



On the 3rd September we held an Insight Public Meeting virtually to hear about the future arrangements for commissioning across the Black Country and West Birmingham. The proposal is to merge the four Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) to form a single organisation. This would support the move towards an Integrated Care System (ICS) for the area of the Black Country and West Birmingham.

Dr Ian Sykes, Clinical Chair and Michelle Carolan, Director from Sandwell and West Birmingham CCG explained the benefits of creating a single CCG covering this area at the same time ensuring that local communities would be supported.

Working together for healthier futures



Why are we considering changes to the future of commissioning for the Black Country and West Birmingham?

Our ambition:

To have a single CCG covering the footprint of each Integrated Care System (ICS) features prominently in the NHS Long Term Plan. For CCGs there is an expectation that by April 2021 every ICS will have more streamlined commissioning arrangements to enable a single set of commissioning decisions. Therefore our Governing Bodies agreed to seek the views of stakeholders on a proposal to merge the CCGs from the 1st April 2021.

In achieving this there will be a change to the role of the CCG itself - shifting from the traditional model of commissioning to one with a greater focus on strategic commissioning on a bigger geographical footprint. It will also mean:

- ✓ shared decision making with providers on how to best use resources, design services and improve population health
- ✓ support providers to partner with local government and other community organisations at a 'place' level.
- ✓ ensure GPs and community services are supported to deliver at their local level

NHS Dudley Clinical Commissioning Group | NHS Sandwell and West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Group | NHS Stobhill Clinical Commissioning Group | NHS Wolverhampton Clinical Commissioning Group 11

Some of the questions made at the meeting were:

Question 1. *How the patient voice can filter up the new structure?*

Response. *We will have a Sandwell commissioning team headed by Michelle Carolan with whom you can discuss local concerns, this will bring the local issues level to a local level so that you can influence these decisions at a locally.*

Question 2. *How do you prevent very similar work streams from clashing trying to do the same kind of work?*

Response. *Sometimes we set programs up and they look similar to programs the local authority has set up The Integrated Care Partnership the aim is do exactly that, work in partnership.*

Question 3. *When working with the CCG we felt like a little fish swimming in a big pond, are we now going to be a little fish in a big ocean if it multiplies by 4? That's what concerns me about an individual patient participation group.*

Response. *As we mentioned before, very much trying to move forward with a single CCG so that we can do the big things strategically where it is important, but the hope that being 5 individual 'places' we will have the Sandwell 'place' means we can still remain relatively small to make sure that the local patient voice isn't lost.*

To see the presentations from the meeting and a recording of the proceedings please visit

<https://www.healthwatchesandwell.co.uk/insight-meetings/>

HWS has formally responded to the consultation on 14th September 2020. You can view the response on our website

<https://www.healthwatchesandwell.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/HWS-ccg-merger-response-0920.pdf>

Youth Healthwatch Meeting 1st meeting: 6th July 2020

One of our priorities is to establish and develop a thriving Youth Healthwatch in Sandwell. Following our first meeting in July we have recruited 6 young people who are passionate about having the voice of young people heard in Sandwell. The young people have created a short film to encourage others to join Youth Healthwatch Sandwell. The young people are clear mental health and wellbeing is the area that they wish to focus their efforts.

Progress has also been made regarding the recommendations made following the young people's research project that was carried out January to March 2020. Following discussions with partners (public health, education, youth and play services) an action plan has been developed to address the concerns of the young people interviewed.

To view the young people's film:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oaJoZR9bYwA>

To access the Young people's research project:

<https://www.healthwatchesandwell.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/YOUNG-PEROPLES-PROJECT-REPORT-FINAL.pdf>

If you are 14 – 24 years and would like to get become part of the team, please contact Leanne Abbott by email –

Leanne.Abbott@healthwatchesandwell.co.uk

Our work for the next 12 months

We have now published our work plan which shows our priorities for the next year. Our 3 main priorities are:

Priority 1. The Implications of COVID - 19 in accessing mental health and wellbeing services

HWS will examine how people's mental health was affected during COVID 19. The project will be aimed at the population who already had mental health issues prior to the pandemic as well as those who's mental health was affected by the pandemic.

Priority 2. Using Digital Technology in Primary Care Services.

HWS will examine how people have responded to using new technology to interact with Primary Care during the Corona Virus pandemic. Focus on what has been learnt during this period and gather information about potential developments.

Priority 3. Development of a Youth Healthwatch

Healthwatch Sandwell have recognised that the views of children and young people are seldom heard so we are keen to develop a Youth Healthwatch that will complement the work that we already do. We will endeavour to establish a self-sustaining group of young people who are motivated and equipped to make a difference in health and social care services and have a genuine interest in young people rights and wellbeing. We also aim to encourage young people to

volunteer for the Enter and View Programme and at community engagement events.

You can view our work plan on our website:

<https://www.healthwatchesandwell.co.uk/work-plan-2020-21/>

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/>

The screenshot displays the 'Find a service' interface on the Healthwatch Sandwell website. It features a search bar, a 'Sort by' dropdown menu set to 'Last Reviewed', and a list of three services:

- Glebfields Surgery**: St Marks Road, Tipton, DY4 0SN, 0121 530 8040. Rating: 5 stars (Based on 5 reviews).
- The Smethwick Medical Centre**: Regent Street, Smethwick, B66 3BQ, 0121 289 3418, www.modalitypartnership.nhs.uk. Rating: 5 stars (Based on 4 reviews).
- Sandwell General Hospital**: Lyndon, West Bromwich, B71 4HJ, 0121 5531831, www.subh.nhs.uk. Rating: 5 stars (Based on 24 reviews).

On the right, a 'Browse' sidebar lists service categories: Hospital, GPs, Dentist, Social Care, Pharmacy, Optician, Emergency Care, and Community.

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.healthwatchsandwell.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. The recruitment pack and application form are available below for download.

[Advisory Board Recruitment PackDownload](#)

[Application FormDownload](#)



healthwatch
Sandwell

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

Visit our new Feedback review page:

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

Or Email: info@healthwatchesandwell.co.uk

