



Flu Vaccination Availability in Sandwell



Report by Healthwatch Sandwell

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Contents

Summary	1
Recommendations	1
Findings and Results.....	1
Rationale and Aim.....	2
Background	3
Methodology.....	3
Ethical Considerations.....	3
About Healthwatch Sandwell.....	4
Acknowledgements.....	4
References	4
Appendices.....	5
Appendix One.....	5
Appendix Two	8
Appendix Three.....	9

DISCLAIMER

This report is based on the views and experiences of respondents. Due to the nature of this approach, we recognise that there may be differences between people’s views and providers’ intentions. Efforts have been made to ensure information is accurate or where necessary, reflect more than one view, whilst keeping to the brief.

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Summary

In June and July 2017 Healthwatch Sandwell (HWS) carried out an investigation into the public's awareness of where flu vaccinations could be obtained, and if they had chosen not to, why not.

Based on the findings, HWS makes the following recommendations:

- Publicise where flu immunisation is available, especially supermarkets.
- Publicise the side effects and risks to having the flu immunization to dispels myths, fears and concerns.
- Enhance communication between Midwives with expectant parents about the benefits of being immunised.

The survey found that General Practitioners were the most popular provider of the vaccination. 10% of respondents thought it was available at supermarkets. This is a relatively low number and suggests that the public's awareness of this provider is not widely known.

The background research into the availability of flu vaccinations in Sandwell found information via the internet that advises the public to contact their GP or a participating pharmacy to arrange a convenient appointment. None of the publicity stated that the flu vaccination was available at a supermarket. It was inferred that they are available at a 'participatory pharmacy', but it was not explicit that they are available at supermarkets.

A total of 186 people completed the survey in a variety of settings including local High Streets, libraries, and community groups. The survey was also accessible online and 27 people accessed this.

The mix of working and non-working respondents were equal. The ethnic profile

gives a profile representative of the area in terms of English/British to other groups. The age profile was overrepresented in the 50 – 74 age group (52%).

This investigation resulted from an item at the Sandwell and West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Group (SWB CCG) Primary Care Co-Commissioning Committee, where evidence on the positive effects of flu vaccination in relation to hospital admissions was presented. There was a discussion that identified they are made available widely and that this is publicised. However, there was no evidence regarding public awareness of this availability.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, HWS would make the following recommendations:

- Publicise where flu immunisation is available, especially supermarkets. This could help alleviate pressures on GP practices. as identified in GP Practice Forward View (April 2016).
- Publicise the side effects and risks to having the flu immunization to dispel myths, fears and concerns.
- Enhance communication between Midwives with expectant parents about the benefits of being immunised.

Findings and Results

A total of 186 people completed the survey in a variety of settings including local High Streets, libraries, and community groups. The survey was also accessible online and was completed by 27 people.

The mix of working and non-working respondents were equal. The ethnic profile gives a profile representative of the area in terms of English/British to other groups. The age profile was over represented in the 50 – 74 age group (52%).



For a full breakdown of results see appendix two.

The results found that 52% of the respondents had been immunised in the past year. 41% of the respondents had obtained their vaccination at their General Practitioners. This was the most popular place to obtain it, with their employer (6%) and Pharmacist (3%) also being providers of the vaccine.

22% respondents identified the main reason for not taking up the immunization is because they didn't want one and 9% respondents believed it would make them ill.

Pregnant women were asked about the vaccination and they all refused to have one but didn't give a reason why.

8% respondents didn't think they were eligible to obtain a free vaccination.

No one stated that they didn't have one because it wasn't available in a convenient place which suggests that the provision of the vaccine is in places that are accessible.

There were some general reasons for not getting the vaccination, which included: allergy to the vaccine, fear of needles and not thought of having one. One person stated that 'they have never had the flu and very rarely get a cold' which suggests the misconception that a cold and influenza are synonymous.

A variety of places were listed as to where people thought they could obtain the flu vaccination. The GP was the most popular provider of the vaccination. This may be a contributory factor as to why GP Practices are pressurised, as identified in GP Practice Forward View (April 2016). Other places that were listed were pharmacies, the walk-in centre and A&E/hospital.

10% respondents thought it was available at supermarkets. This is a relatively low number as

the Sandwell and West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Group (SWB CCG) stated that the flu vaccination is readily available here. This low response suggests that the public's awareness of this provider is not widely known.

Other providers listed were health centres, employers and schools.

It was interesting to note that no one thought that the flu vaccination could be obtained via a midwife, including pregnant women.

For a full breakdown of findings see appendix one.

Rationale and Aim

At a meeting of the Primary Care Co-Commissioning Committee (SWB CCG), research was presented that had found:

'hospital admissions were reduced due to people having the flu jab, based on data on the impact of the flu vaccine on hospital admissions for people aged 65 years and over, between October 2016 and February 2017. This report found that locally for people aged 65 years and over, for every 2 people admitted to hospital who did not have a flu jab, only 1 person was admitted who did have a flu jab. Therefore, people aged 65 years and over who had a flu jab were half as likely to be admitted to hospital than those who did not have the flu jab.'

SOURCE: Dr. Gunveer Plahe (Specialty Registrar in Public Health)

At this meeting HWS suggested that flu jabs should be readily available in supermarkets to which it was stated that they are. However, there was no evidence available regarding public awareness of this availability. It was suggested HWS could consider this.



Background

To find out relevant information about availability of flu vaccinations in Sandwell, a Google search found that SWB CCG website had 3 pages that:

1. identify some of the eligible groups for a free vaccination, there are videos for pregnant mothers (in English, Polish and Urdu languages) and videos for people with long term conditions (in English, Urdu and Punjabi). The videos for expectant mum's state that the flu jab is available from GP, midwife or pharmacist. **(SWB CCG 1, 2017)**
2. Encourage the public to get their flu vaccination. This also outlined those most at risk from the effects of flu. It describes how the vaccination is given and gives reassurances about the vaccine including reactions due to allergies. Where to get further advice GP practice or visit NHS Choices www.nhs.uk **(SWB CCG 2, 2017)**
3. States that In Sandwell and West Birmingham one in three people are entitled to a free flu vaccination, yet every year thousands of people run the lottery of catching the potentially deadly illness rather than have the 'flu jab'. This page stated that everyone aged 65 or over is entitled to the free flu vaccine and in recent years fewer over 65s in Sandwell and West Birmingham have been getting their free flu vaccine, potentially putting even more lives at risk. It also identified the 'at risk' groups. This page advises the public to contact your GP or a participating pharmacy to arrange a convenient appointment and get your jab. **(SWB CCG 3, 2017)**

NHS choices website gives advice to pregnant mums about vaccinations in pregnancy, and this includes the flu vaccination. All pregnant

women are offered the seasonal flu vaccination as they are at extra risk of severe illness if they get flu. It states that GP practices will update the patient registers throughout the flu season and pay particular attention to women who become pregnant during the flu season, the beginning of October until around January or February. **(NHS 1, 2017)**

Methodology

A simple 4 question survey was designed that would provide data relating to if people had a flu vaccination in the past year, where they had obtained it from, reasons why people didn't obtain one and finally where did they think they could obtain one from. We also collected demographic data. See appendix three for survey.

This approach was chosen, as surveys are a practical way of receiving information from a large number of people in a short period of time and in a relatively cost effective way, when relatively objective data is required.

The survey was facilitated by staff and volunteers in all 6 towns of the Borough. It was completed over 1 week in June on a variety of days. The survey was also advertised on line using social media with a link to it (Survey Monkey).

This had a reach of:

Facebook – 263

Healthwatch Sandwell website – 4 hits

Twitter – 707 impressions

The survey was piloted with a small sample group and was amended accordingly.

Ethical Considerations

Throughout this research HWS gave due consideration to ethical issues. Codes of confidentiality were adhered to and the



information gathered was recorded and stored as defined by the Data Protection Act (1998).

About Healthwatch Sandwell

HWS is an independent consumer champion that gathers and represents the public's views on health and social care services in Sandwell. It ensures that the views of the public and people who use the services are taken into account by those who commission and provide services.

Healthwatch Sandwell's activities include: Experience Gathering. HWS staff meet with the public at various locations including community events, supermarkets, bingo halls, high street etc. They provide information about Healthwatch and ask if people would, 'describe their last experience of health or social care services'.

Enter and View. These are-visits to health and social care premises, involving staff and volunteers to look at the quality of services from the patients' perspective.

Information and Communication. HWS provides information and means for people to contact through various means including: telephone, website, email, public meetings, networking with community groups, Twitter, Facebook.

As part of HWS's statutory functions, it is our responsibility to make:
'...reports and recommendations about how local care services could or ought to be improved.' (1 Section 221 (2) of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act - 2007)

Acknowledgements

HWS would like to thank SWB CCG and HWS volunteers and staff for their time and contribution to this research.

References

NHS England (April 2016) General Practice Forward View

SWB CCG 1 (2017)

<https://sandwellandwestbhamccg.nhs.uk/stay-well-this-winter/1266-flu-vaccine>

SWB CCG 2 (2017)

<https://sandwellandwestbhamccg.nhs.uk/news-a-events/889-don-t-delay-book-your-free-flu-vaccine>

SWB CCG 3 (2017)

<https://sandwellandwestbhamccg.nhs.uk/news-a-events/1508-one-in-three-entitled-to-a-free-flu-vaccine>

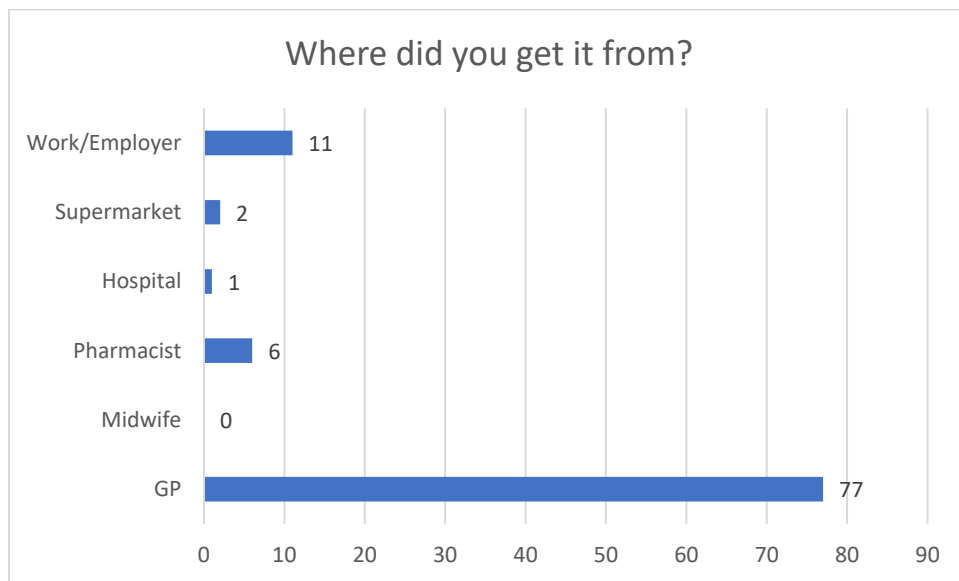
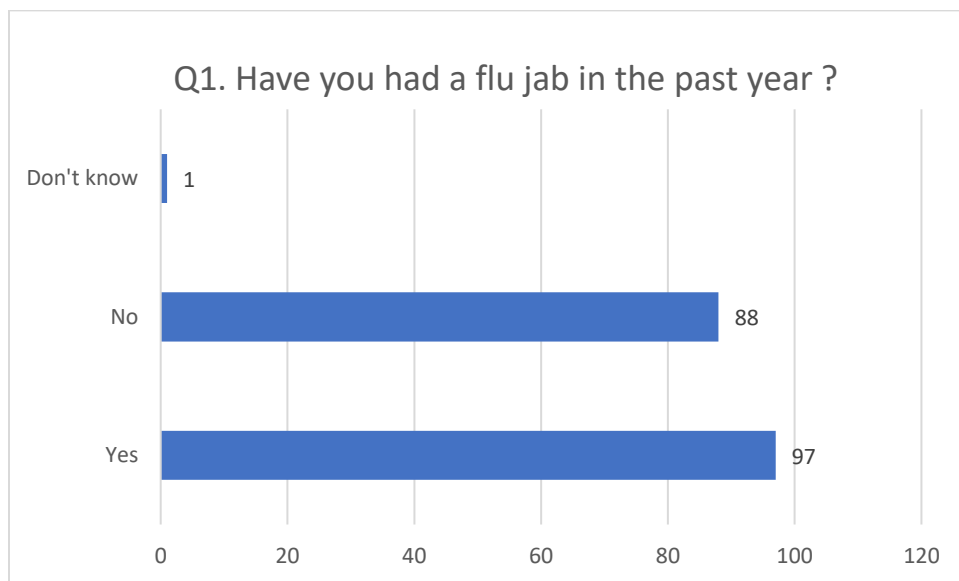
NHS 1 (2017)

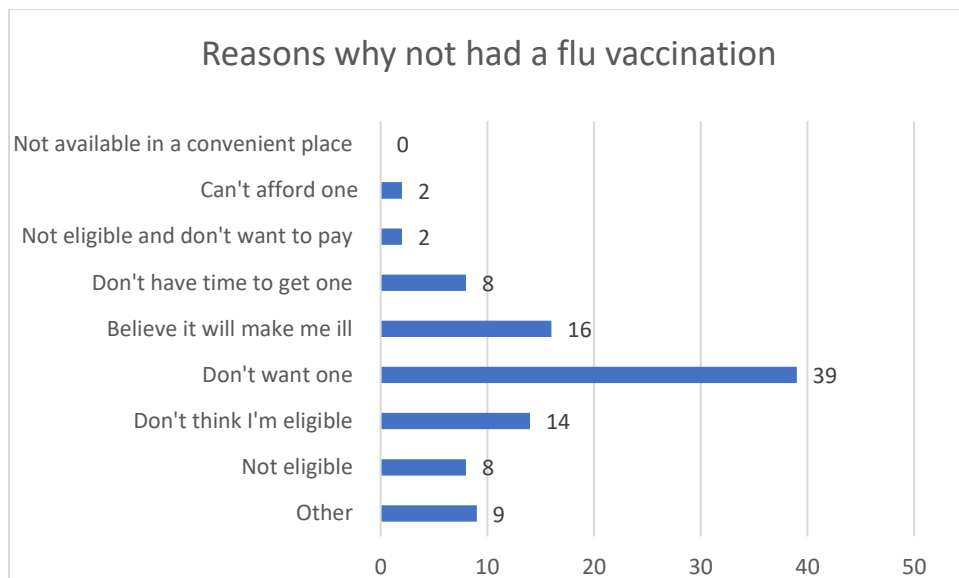
<http://www.nhs.uk/chq/Pages/can-i-have-vaccinations-if-im-pregnant.aspx?CategoryID=54&SubCategoryID=129>



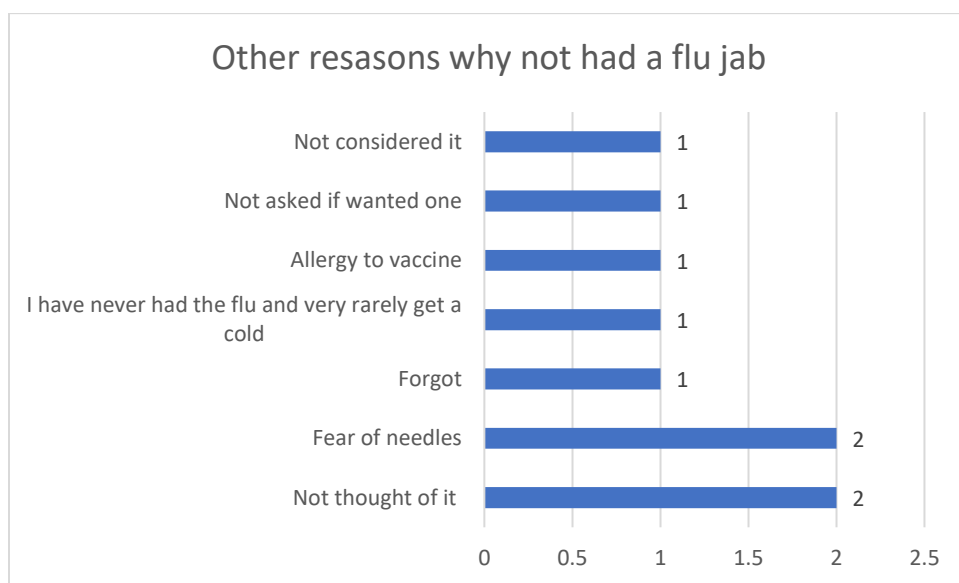
Appendices

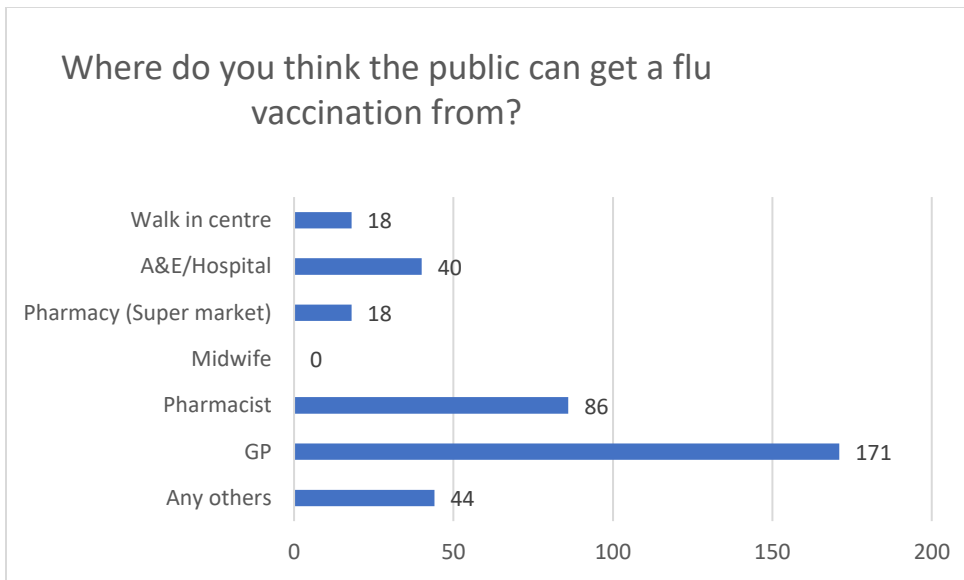
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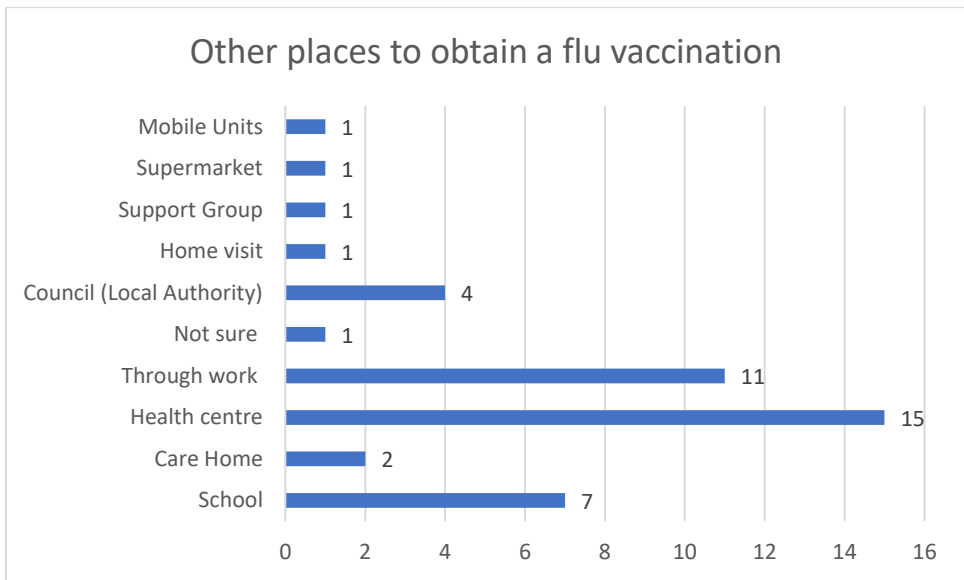


N.B. Some respondents chose more than one reason.



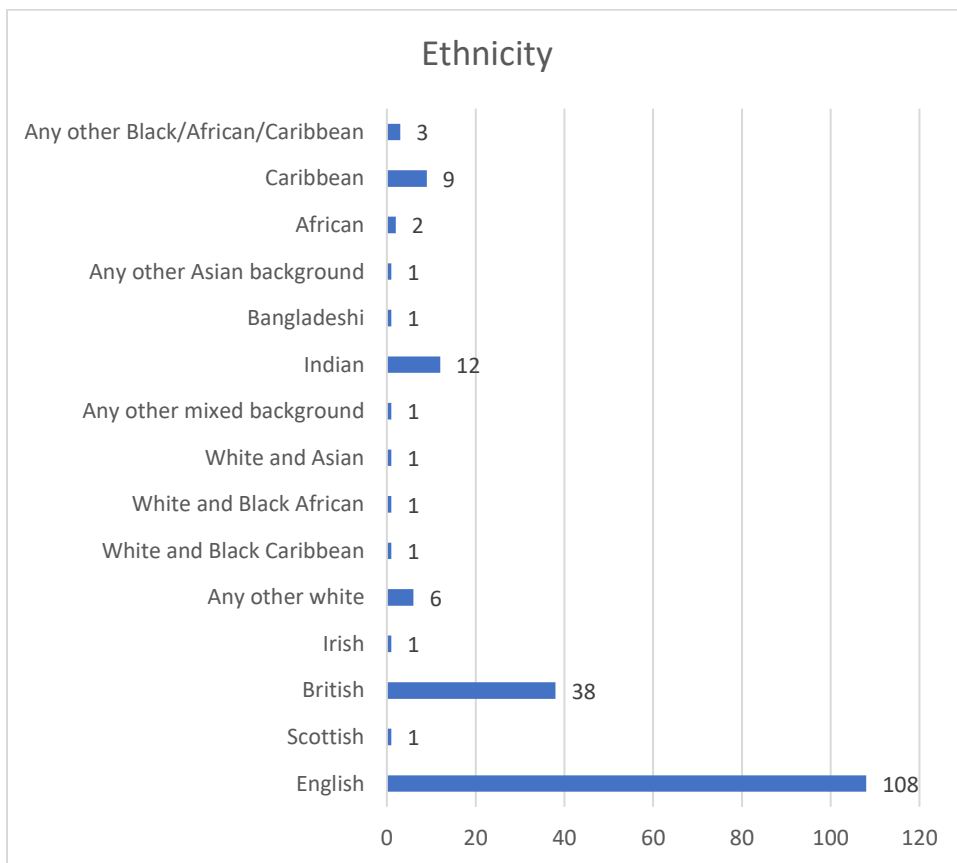
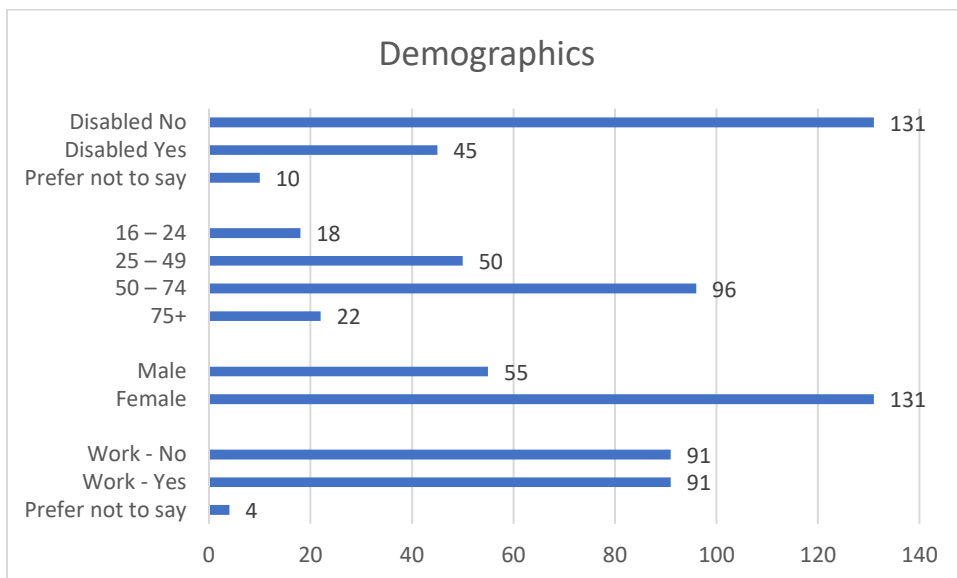


N.B. Some respondents chose more than one venue.





Appendix Two





Flu Jab Survey

Target group: People who use services in Sandwell and may live in Sandwell

Aim: to find out if people know where to get a flu jab from

Questions	Answers		
1. Have you had a flu jab in the past year?	Yes	No	Don't know
2. If yes, where did you get it from			
3. If no, why not?	Not eligible	Don't think I'm eligible	Don't want one
	Believe it will make me ill, possible side effects	Don't have time to get one	Not eligible for free flu jab and don't want to pay
	Can't afford to pay for one	Not available in a convenient place	Other
4. Where do you think the public can get one from?			