



Local Intelligence Report
1st October – 31st December 2020

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We Listen



We Note



We Act

Covid – 19 Update



On Wednesday 30th December Sandwell, along with the rest of the Black Country and other areas in the West Midlands were placed in tier 4 by the government.

For the seven days leading up to Christmas Day Sandwell had a rate of 337.3 new infections per 100,000.[1]

Here is a reminder of what tier four restrictions means.

- Residents should stay at home, unless they have a "reasonable excuse" such as work or education.
- All non-essential shops must close.
- Hairdressers and nail bars must close.
- Indoor entertainment venues must close.
- Gyms and indoor swimming pools, indoor sports courts and dance studios must close.
- You cannot meet other people indoors unless you live with them or they are part of your support bubble.
- People should not leave tier four areas or travel abroad, except for limited reasons (including work and education).
- Weddings and civil partnership ceremonies are only allowed in exceptional circumstances.

The Healthwatch Sandwell website and social media platforms were updated with this information to remind local people of the new restrictions and in addition to updated local sources of information and advice.

[Sandwell was placed into national lockdown on January 6th, 2021. At this time Sandwell, Walsall, Birmingham, Dudley, and South Staffordshire all saw their rates climb over 550 per 100,000 people.[2]]

[1] [2] BBC Sandwell local news

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

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

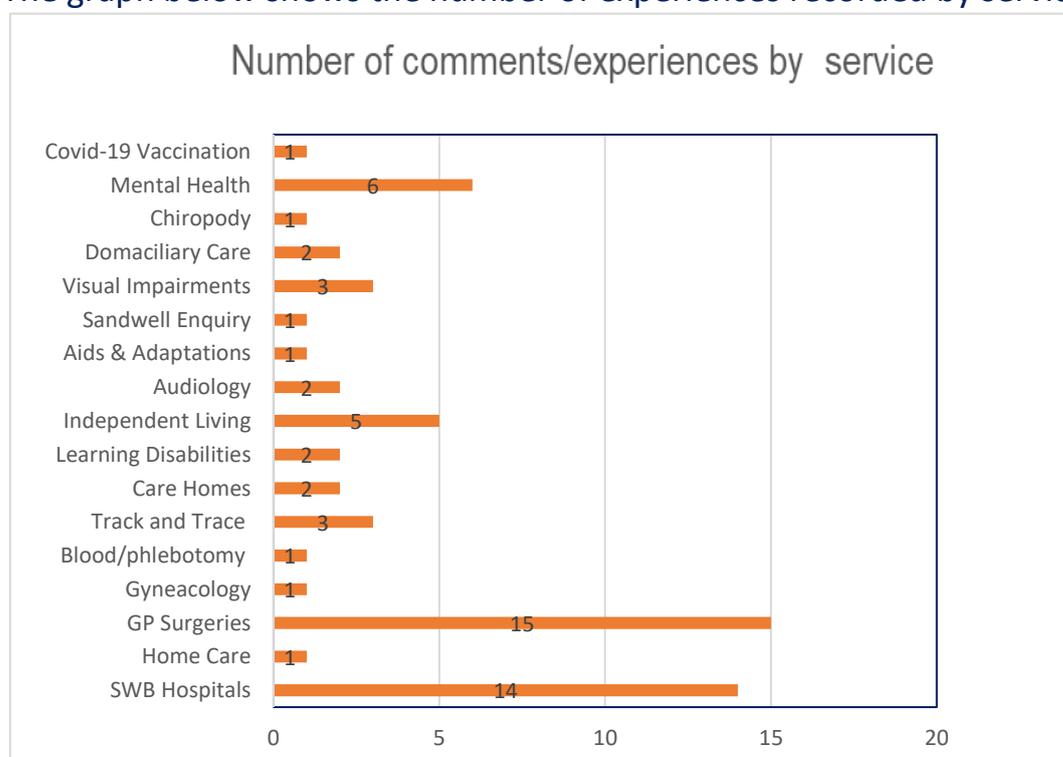
email us at info@healthwatchsandwell.co.uk

Feedback on local services

During the period October – December 2020, Healthwatch Sandwell has collated patient experiences. These are sourced from: phone contact with local 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 240 experiences/comments shared across NHS and Social Care Services. To visit the website use the URL.

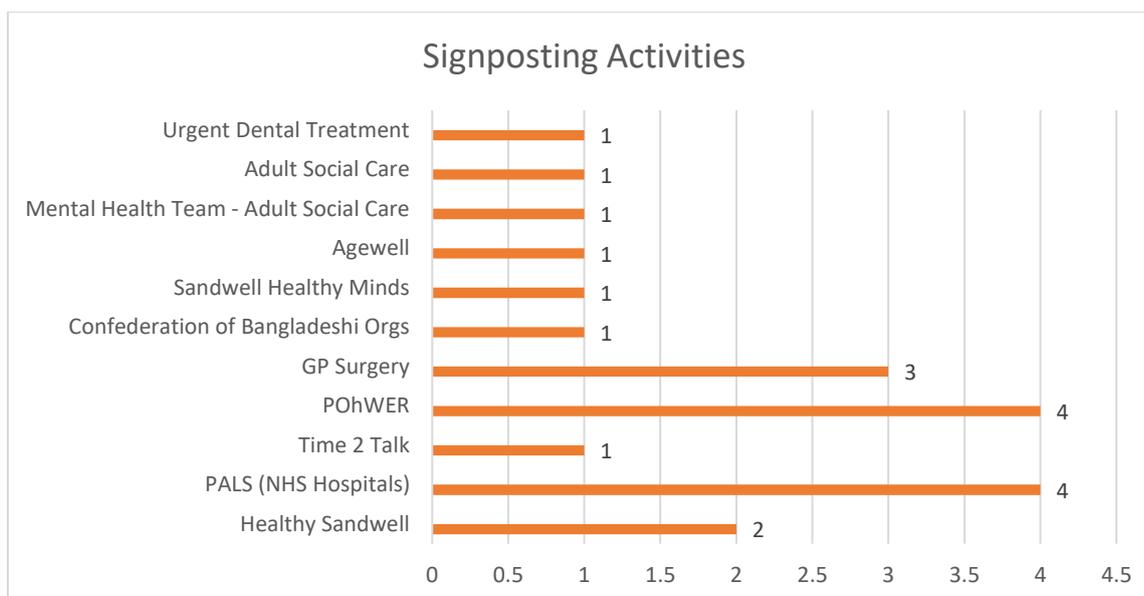
<https://www.healthwatchesandwell.co.uk/services/>

The graph below shows the number of experiences recorded by service



The table above shows Healthwatch Sandwell (HWS) has received 61 comments or experiences from service users in Sandwell over the three month period. In addition HWS engaged with 504 individuals in community forums, focus groups and other networks.

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. Patient attended GP Practice for an appointment, after sitting for 40 minutes and not being seen, the patient asked the receptionist why they had not been seen. The patient was informed that the appointment had been cancelled. However, no one had informed the patient. This had also occurred for appointments at the diabetic clinic at the same practice.

The patient was also concerned that an appointment at the Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease clinic would be by telephone so therefore no breathing tests would occur, it would just be a well-being check. This is due to COVID 19 restrictions.

Action: Advised patient to speak to Practice Manager

2. Relative concerned that their 94-year-old parent had not been called for COVID 19 vaccine.

Action: Contacted the patients GP to check that patient was on the list. This practice does not have a supply of vaccines but confirmed that patient will be contacted. The relative was informed of this.

3. Mother took young child for a blood test; the procedure was distressing for the child. Unfortunately, the Nurse did not take enough blood (Mother did comment on this at the time). Sometime later the patient's own GP said there was not enough blood and child needed to go through the process again.

Action: Sign posted to Practice Manager at Practice and Complaints at Blood Clinic at Sandwell General Hospital.

4. Patient has a shared care agreement with eye hospital (City Hospital) and GP. The care plan outlines the relevant medication, but the prescription had not been received at the pharmacist. Patient really frustrated and required assistance.

Action: HWS rang GP who informed HWS that the Shared Care agreement had been received from eye hospital and had e mailed the eye hospital regarding this matter yesterday. Patient received appropriate medication from the eye clinic.

5. Service user needs hearing aids adjusted but has to travel to the Lyng in West Bromwich but lives near Rowley Regis Hospital which has an audiology clinic and wants to go there instead.

Action: HWS rang Rowley Regis Hospital to find out what criteria is to use the audiology clinic. There is a requirement for a referral form the Lyng to access audiology at Rowley Regis Hospital. Service user signposted to Audiology at the Lyng.

6. Patient was having difficulties with sight and Optician referred patient to Eye Clinic at SWB NHS Trust. However, the patient had not received an appointment letter for the latter.

Action: HWS contacted GP who had no record of referral from optician but pursued the eye clinic on behalf of the patient. Patient was advised of appointment.

HWS also referred to Sandwell Visual Impairment Team to offer support.



Hospitals

7. Patient was due to have a knee operation just before COVID 19 (February 2020), but it was postponed and had not heard anything about what is happening. Patient was in pain and becoming anxious.

Action: HWS rang surgeons secretary who had no record of the patient being on waiting list for surgery but said that they were waiting for an assessment by anaesthetist. HWS rang anaesthetist secretary and confirmed that patient is on waiting list for anaesthetist assessment and then there will be a joint meeting to agree the way forward. The patient should receive a letter in January 2021. The patient was informed and is happy with HWS intervention.

8. Frail patient on Newton 3 at Sandwell General Hospital did not have access to telephone (due to being out of order) to contact family who could not visit due to COVID 19. There was a phone at nurses' station but as this ward is for patients with mobility problems it was not practical for patients to use this phone.

Action: HWS called Newton 3 and it was confirmed that only land line available (if safe for patients to use i.e. mobile) it had been reported to their Information Technology (I.T.) department at least 3 times but had not addressed.

HWS escalated this problem to: Acting Chief Operating Officer and Interim Chief Nurse, who raised with Matron and the I.T. team. It was explained that patient wished to remain anonymous.

Outcome: a telephone on Newton 3 was made available to patients to enable communication between patients and their relatives. HWS expressed thanks for this action on behalf of the patient and family.

9. A patient with Sickle Cell (genetic blood disorder) contacted HWS about their recent stay in hospital. A Covid-19 outbreak had occurred on the ward, the patient had discharged from hospital, they had tested negative but needed to self-isolate and were experiencing problems with this due to ongoing pain management needs. The patient was seeking guidance on how to get past these difficulties.

Action: HWS provided information and guidance to the patient re the Covid-19 isolation processes and encouraged the patient to negotiate with the Sickle Cell & Thalassaemia Centre at City Hospital for alternative medication issue during their self-isolation period.

The patient contacted HWS later to confirm they had coped with their alternative medications and isolation period and were feeling better.



NHS Test and Trace

10. Patient had received numerous calls from Track and Trace, after eating at a restaurant in West Bromwich, of the need to isolate. However, the patient was given conflicting dates for when her isolation needs to start and end.

Action: Signposted to Public Health.



Independent Living

11. A resident with visual impairment contacted us to say had been diagnosed with vascular dementia and would like more information about dementia. Also lives alone and would appreciate more contact with others.

Action: We Referred to resident to Agewell who would be able to provide advice and support about dementia and befriending.

12. HWS received a call from a woman who was very distressed about the quality of domiciliary care her husband was receiving and the impact the stress of it all was having on her mental wellbeing.

Action: HWS talked things through with the caller and encouraged the steps needed to complete a change of domiciliary care provision through social services. HWS also put in a referral to Black Country Mental Health Trust who assigned a counsellor and contacted the patient the same day.

13. We were contacted by a resident who has been at an independent living accommodation for 12 years. Apparently, no hand sanitiser has been available since March, although they have heard that it is available in other sites they own.

Action: HWS emailed public health regarding this. A response was received from Adult Social Care stating they had contacted the manager and were satisfied with the response to issue.

We have since been advised by one of the residents that new hand gel dispensers have been fitted and are full. We have advised the resident to contact us if there are any other issues.

Reports and Focus Groups

Report – Deaf focus group report – September 2020



The purpose of this report was to give an overview of the focus group that was held 22nd September 2020 in partnership with Sandwell Deaf Community Association (SDCA) and Healthwatch Sandwell (HWS) using Zoom. It was attended by 6 people, 2 British Sign Language (BSL) Interpreters, and staff from SDCA and HWS. This was the second focus group and there were some different attendees from the first one. The agenda for 22nd September was to focus on people's experiences during the Covid 19 pandemic.

The group stated that they appreciated that COVID 19 has brought about many challenges for all people and that they were trying to be patient. However, being hard of hearing or deaf, the pandemic has exacerbated many of their difficulties with regards to communication and care.

The group's feedback has been divided into 6 themes, as follows:

- 1. Feelings and emotional well-being/mental health.**
- 2. Coping mechanisms during COVID 19**
- 3. Communication Issues**
- 4. Care**
- 5. Hearing Aids**

The report made a number of recommendations, including:

- All patient records to indicate that the person is a BSL user and requires an accredited BSL interpreter.
- At appointments, the patient's name to be displayed on board would be helpful when it is the patient's appointment. Something visual would be helpful not just audio.

To read the full report: <https://www.healthwatchesandwell.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Deaf-Focus-Group-Report-2.pdf>

Insight Public Meetings



On the 17th December HWS held an Insight Public Meeting virtually to hear about the future arrangements accessing urgent care services by using the NHS 111 service first.

Why the change?

During the peak months of the COVID-19 pandemic the number of people attending Emergency Departments reduced dramatically, particularly those seeking help for minor illnesses.

However, in recent weeks the number of people visiting Emergency Departments has risen, and in some cases, sharply. At the same time, due to social distancing and infection prevention measures, the space in those departments is greatly reduced.

The change will enable us to provide emergency care safely to those who need it – particularly the vulnerable and shielded – by ensuring appropriate distancing in waiting rooms.

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Dr Ian Sykes, Clinical Chair of Sandwell and West Birmingham CCG explained the reasons for these changes:

- For more people to phone NHS 111
- For patients to be directed to the right service for their needs
- Reduce unnecessary visits to Emergency Departments (EDs)

If a patient does need to go to an ED or a hospital clinic, they will be given detailed instructions and a timeslot, following clinical assessment.

There were 26 people attending the meeting and we have received enquiries from Healthwatch Walsall and Healthwatch Birmingham about how we delivered this event.

A recording of the meeting is available on our website where answers to questions raised by attendees can be heard.

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

Youth Healthwatch Meetings

One of our priorities is 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. The group currently meet virtually fortnightly. The young people have created a short film to encourage others to join Youth Healthwatch Sandwell and have created a Twitter and Instagram accounts. The young people have shared their thoughts, feelings and experiences on the HANDS, FACE and SPACE campaign with the CCG. As well as Healthwatch Sandwell's Priority 1 and 2 research projects. 2 young people have been trained to signpost to the Kooth mental health service.

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

Projects Update

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

HWS have examined how people's mental health has been affected during COVID 19. The project was 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.

The project utilised:

- an on-line survey, a paper version was also made available and posted to people.
- telephone interviews
- a number of focus groups.

The project findings will be produced in a report at the end of March 2021.

Project 2. Using Digital Technology in Primary Care Services.

The on-line survey has been widely promoted including by local community support organisations who have also helped with distribution and completion of printed copies of 1800 surveys. HWS have also completed surveys via individual phone calls. Additional feedback and insight have been gathered focusing on groups of people who may experience challenges or barriers in using digital technology to access primary care services – this has included people over 65 years old, people with some disabilities, those with English not their first language and gaining further insight on financial and skills aspects affecting digital access.

Additional Project Work

Healthwatch Sandwell - Experience of mental health services within BAME communities

Aims and objectives.

- The key aim of the project is to understand the experiences of people from BAME communities in accessing and using mental health services in Sandwell.
- The project aims to co-produce the means of collecting feedback and the development of the final outputs of the project.
- The project aims to identify areas of good practice that can be built upon and replicated across the mental health care system in Sandwell.
- It seeks to understand the personalisation of mental health care in Sandwell for service users from BAME backgrounds.
- A further aim is to foster understanding across services of how they can work positively together and with service users.



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.

The projects do not have to be expensive or complicated. The options are only limited by people's imagination and commitment to improving the wellbeing of their local community.

The projects need to focus on one of the three areas listed below.

- The impact of Covid-19 in accessing mental health services.
- The implications of Covid-19 in accessing Primary Care – using technology.
- Getting views on health and social care from Young People living in Sandwell

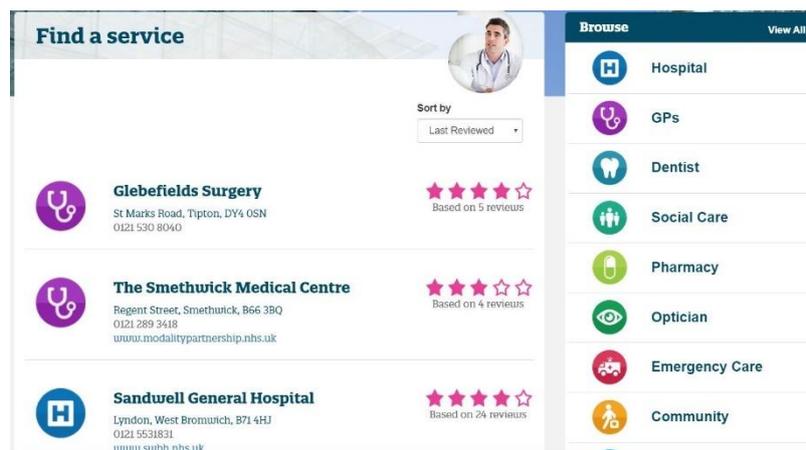
Applications are open for the Community Cash Fund until 12th February.

<https://www.healthwatchesandwell.co.uk/news/community-cash-fund/>

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

