



# What Matters Most?

Your feedback and experiences of health and social care services in Bracknell Forest.

Spring 2021

**What Matters Most?**

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## What Matters Most?

### At a Glance

#### Summary



We heard from **155 residents** in Bracknell Forest

We asked what they thought of their local services:

**206 positive experiences**

**133 negative experiences**

#### Service Ratings



We asked residents to rate their local services:

**COVID-19 Vaccinations** was the highest rated service

**Adult Mental Health Services** was the lowest rated service

**44%** of residents found it **difficult to access** services

#### Health and Wellbeing



We heard that:

**Being outdoors** was the biggest support to residents in the past 12 months

**Exercise and fitness** related goals were the most desired for the next 12 months

#### Healthwatch Bracknell Forest Priorities



We asked what Healthwatch Bracknell Forest's future focus should be:

**36%** said we should focus on **GP Services**

**21%** said we should focus on **Mental Health Services**

**19%** said to improve **Access to Services**

## What Matters Most?

### Introduction

#### About Healthwatch

Local Healthwatch organisations are independent champions for people who use health and social care services. We are here to find out what matters to people and help make sure their views shape the support they receive.

#### Project Background

In March 2021, the three local Healthwatch organisations across East Berkshire (Bracknell Forest, Slough, and Windsor, Ascot, and Maidenhead) worked together to develop their foundation of knowledge about the local communities, including their health and social care needs. The survey ran until May 2021 and collected people's opinions, concerns, and experiences of using, and accessing, health and social care services.



The responses we received focused on a variety of NHS services, ranging from GP surgeries to blood tests, and hospitals to COVID vaccination sites. Responses also gave an insight into the biggest health and wellbeing support across the past 12 months, and health and wellbeing goals for the next 12 months. The same survey was asked across the three Healthwatch localities; this report focuses solely on the responses received from residents in Bracknell Forest.

#### About the Survey

We asked Bracknell Forest residents about:

- Health and social care services they had used in the past 12 months
- Any positive or negative experiences with health and social care services
- How easy/difficult they found accessing the services
- Health and wellbeing support used in the past 12 months
- Individual health and wellbeing goals for the next 12 months

Participants were able to tell us their views anonymously via an online survey. This could be accessed privately, via the Healthwatch Hub, and during forum meetings. We engaged with local community forums such as the Bracknell Forest Young Health Champions, and the Bracknell Forest Place Committee. The survey was also promoted by a range of stakeholders such as the local councils, voluntary sector organisations and NHS trusts. This was via newsletters, announcements (text, emails, and virtual meetings) and on social media sites.

The total number of responses received for Bracknell Forest was 155; this does not include any partial responses as these were excluded from analysis.

## What Matters Most?

### Services used in the past year

Participants were asked to select the health and social care services which they had used in the past year and rate these services as 'Excellent', 'Good', 'Ok', or 'Poor'. The number of responses for each service ranged from 4 (Sexual Health Services) to 131 (GP Services). The most used health and social care services used by the participants in the past year were:

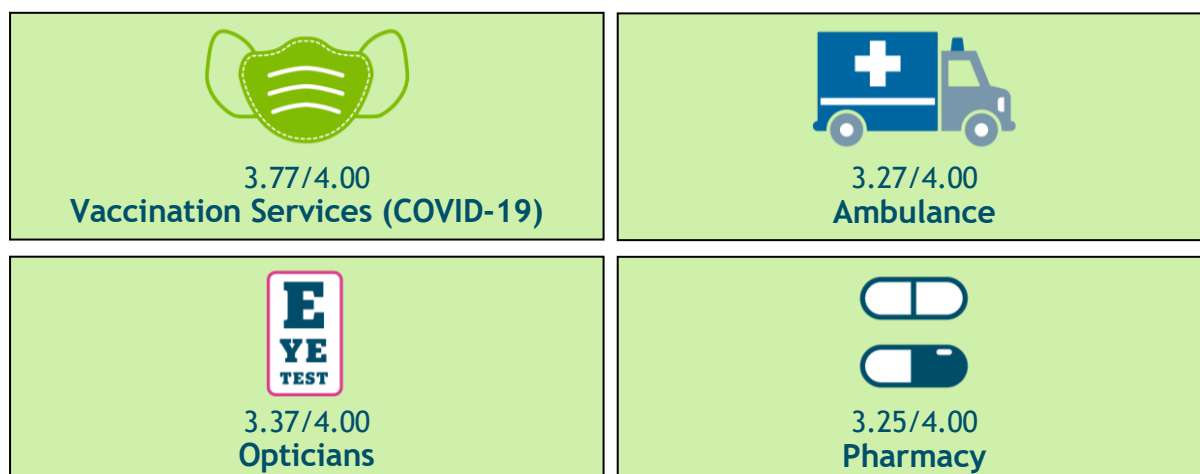
- GP Services - 131 responses
- Vaccination Services (COVID-19) - 121 responses
- Pharmacy - 117 responses
- Blood Tests - 86 responses
- Dental Services - 74 responses

### Service Ratings

The ratings for each service were coded to find the average rating, so that the number of responses would be taken into consideration. 'Excellent' was coded as 4, 'Good' as 3, 'Ok' as 2, 'Poor' as 1; this meant the highest average rating a service could achieve is 4, and the lowest rating could be 1. All the service ratings are shown in the graph on page 6.

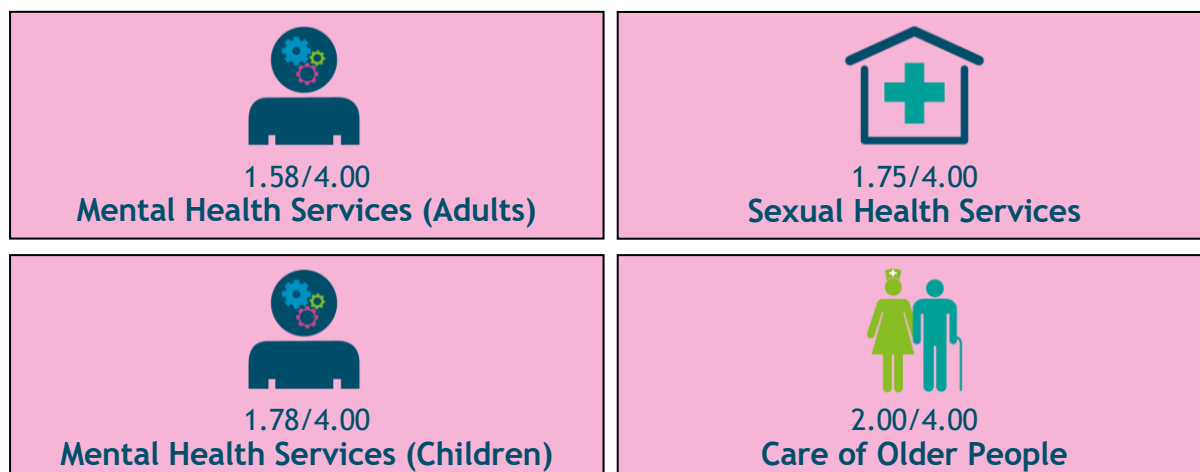
### Highest-rated Services

The highest rated health and social care services in Bracknell Forest are:



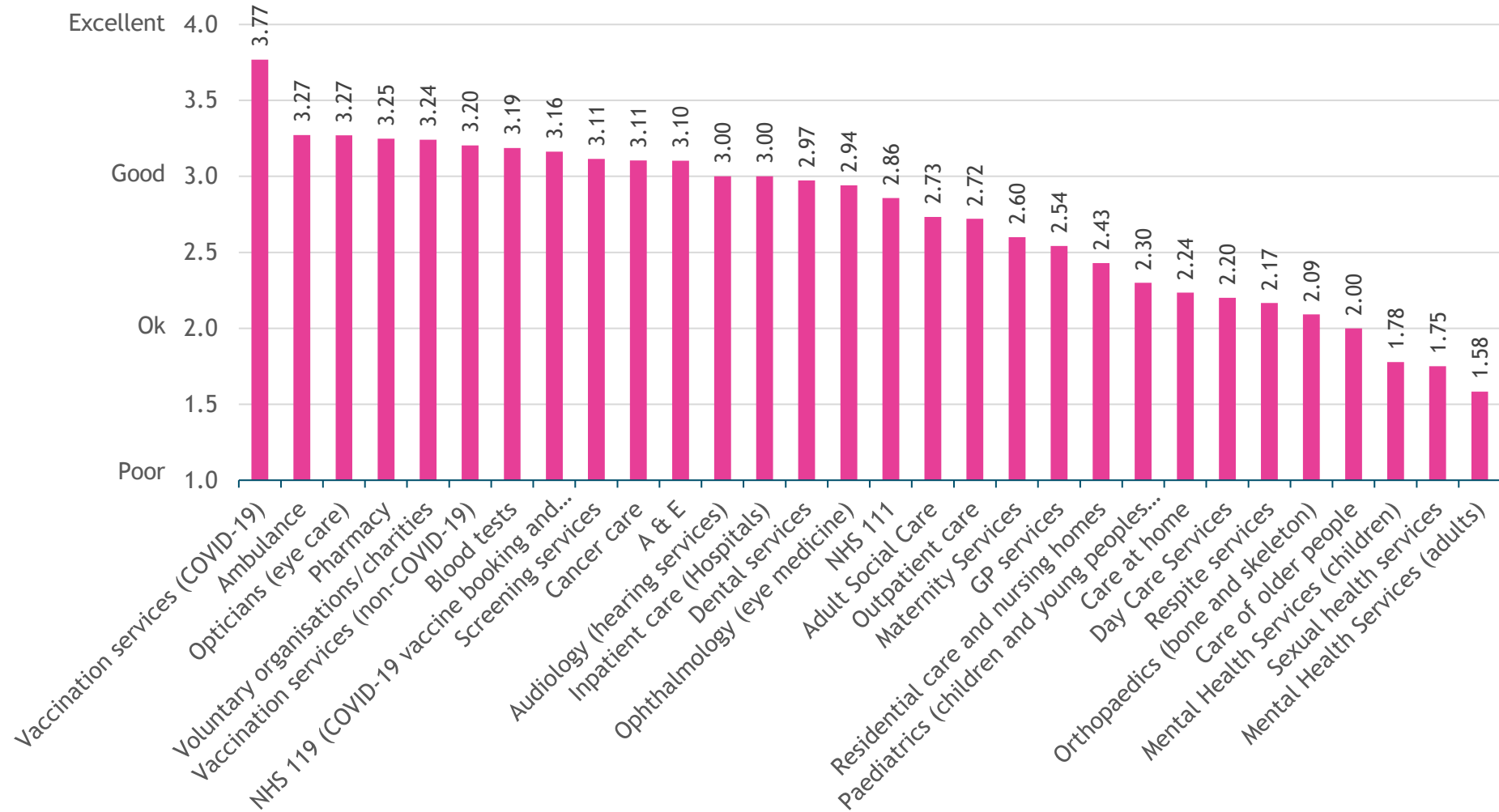
### Lowest-rated Services

The lowest rated health and social care services in Bracknell Forest are:



## What Matters Most?

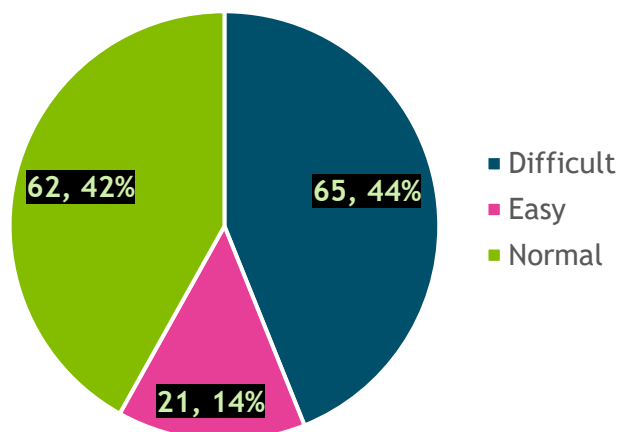
Health and Social Care Service Ratings in Bracknell Forest



## What Matters Most?

### Access to Services

Participants were asked how easy or difficult they found accessing health and social care services within the past 12 months. There were options of 'Easy', 'Normal', or 'Difficult'. The findings are in the graph below, showing number of participants who selected each option.



### Easy to Access

Services which were described as 'Easy' to access and get help from:

- Binfield Surgery
- Bracknell Forest Council (Customer Services)
- Frimley Park Hospital (Ophthalmology)
- Gainsborough Practice
- Sorelle Support

Factors which made the services easier to access included:

- Helpful and friendly staff
- 'Simple' booking system with appointments running on time
- Receiving a quick response to enquiries about booking appointments, and receiving prescriptions
- Variation of appointments available from the services:
  - Face-to-face when requiring an examination, rather than relying on technology
  - eConsultations and askmyGP online systems
  - Telephone or video appointments for those unable to travel to the service location

### Normal to Access

Some who selected 'Normal' described a mixed review of services (some easy to access, some difficult), some stated that the services were "as expected", and some said the services have always been "poor" so therefore still performing at the "pre-pandemic" standard.

Services which were described as 'Normal' to access and get help from:

- Birch Hill Medical Centre
- Great Hollands Health Centre
- Heatherwood Hospital (Phlebotomy)
- NHS 111 and A&E Departments
- Roundshill House Dental Practice
- Skimped Hill Health Centre
- Social Care Services (for adults and children)
- The Waterfield Practice

## What Matters Most?

### Difficult to Access

Services which were described as 'Difficult' to access and get help from:

- Adult Social Care (out of hours)
- Bracknell Forest CMHT
- CAMHS and Adult Mental Health
- Children Social Care and SEN department
- Sandhurst Group Practice
- Forest Health Surgery
- Talking Therapies
- Ringmead Medical Practice

Factors which made the services more difficult to access:

- Long waiting times/delays for patients to be examined and treated
- Reception teams acting as a barrier between the patients and the doctors
- Lack of face-to-face appointments; replaced with virtual and telephone appointments
  - Patients restricted due to limited technology skills and confidence
  - Mobile 'apps' described as not fit for purpose
- Telephone waiting times with long recorded messages and no update of position in the queue

## Positive Experiences from Bracknell Forest Residents

We heard **206** positive experiences of using health and social care services

### Summary

COVID-19 services (vaccinations and testing), and other vaccinations services, were mentioned most frequently with 64 people commending the services: specifically at Bracknell Waitrose, Wexham Park Hospital, and local GP surgeries.

Some responses stated the factors which contributed to their positive experience but omitted the name of the service provider. Of the responses which did mention the service provider, Bracknell Waitrose appeared most frequently (31 responses), followed by Frimley Park Hospital (14 responses), and Heatherwood Hospital (11 responses).

People valued health and social care services which had:

- Efficient and well organised service
- Professional, helpful, and friendly staff/volunteers
- Easy to book appointments
- Variety of appointment types offered
- Short waiting times upon arrival
- Clear information and communication

### GP Services

28 positive experiences concerned GP services; some service providers were not mentioned by name.

Positive feedback was given to surgeries who were prompt at answering patient queries and providing a diagnosis/treatment. Several responses commended the use of technology, specifically eConsultations, for appointments, or as a screening stage to book appointments. Helpful and understanding staff who accommodate patients' individual needs play a large role in providing a positive experience to the patients.



## What Matters Most?

The GP Services mentioned in response to this question were:

- Sandhurst Group Practice (3 mentions)
- Forest Health Group (2 mentions)
- Great Hollands Medical Practice (2 mentions)
- Ringmead Medical Practice (2 mentions)
- Ascot Medical Centre
- Binfield Surgery
- Evergreen Practice
- Finchampstead Surgery, Wokingham
- New Wokingham Road Surgery
- The Gainsborough Practice

## Testing and Screening Services

Testing and Screening Services include phlebotomy, ultrasounds, x-rays, MRI scans, and cancer screening. 25 positive responses mentioned using this service with phlebotomy as the most frequent. Being able to book these appointments was noted as a key reason for improvements of the services, especially at Heatherwood Hospital. People noted that the service was run more efficiently with less waiting times due to the allotted times. Service providers mentioned in the positive responses included:

- Heatherwood Hospital (9 mentions)
- Brants Bridge (2 mentions)
- Evergreen Practice
- Forest Health Group
- St Mark's Hospital
- Wexham Park Hospital

“Blood test booked on line on day on time and very efficient no waiting just in and out what a difference from pre COVID which was a wait if 45 mins or so.”

“Blood test at Heatherwood are quicker and more efficient now that you book..”

## Pharmacy Services

There were 13 positive mentions of Pharmacy Services which consisted of gratitude towards the staff for efficiently fulfilling prescription requests and offering advice and guidance. There was also praise for the ‘ECHO’ prescription delivery service and collection services. There were specific pharmacies mentioned:

- H.A.MacParland Chemist (2 mentions)
- Birch Hill Pharmacy
- Lloyd's Pharmacy
- Sandhurst Group Practice
- Tesco (The Meadows)
- Tesco (Warfield)

“Using the Echo service run by Lloyds Pharmacy to order and deliver prescription drugs from my GP surgery has been a boon.”

“Mcparland pharmacy have been extremely efficient and helpful during the lockdown when arranging to collect medicine for my dad”

## What Matters Most?

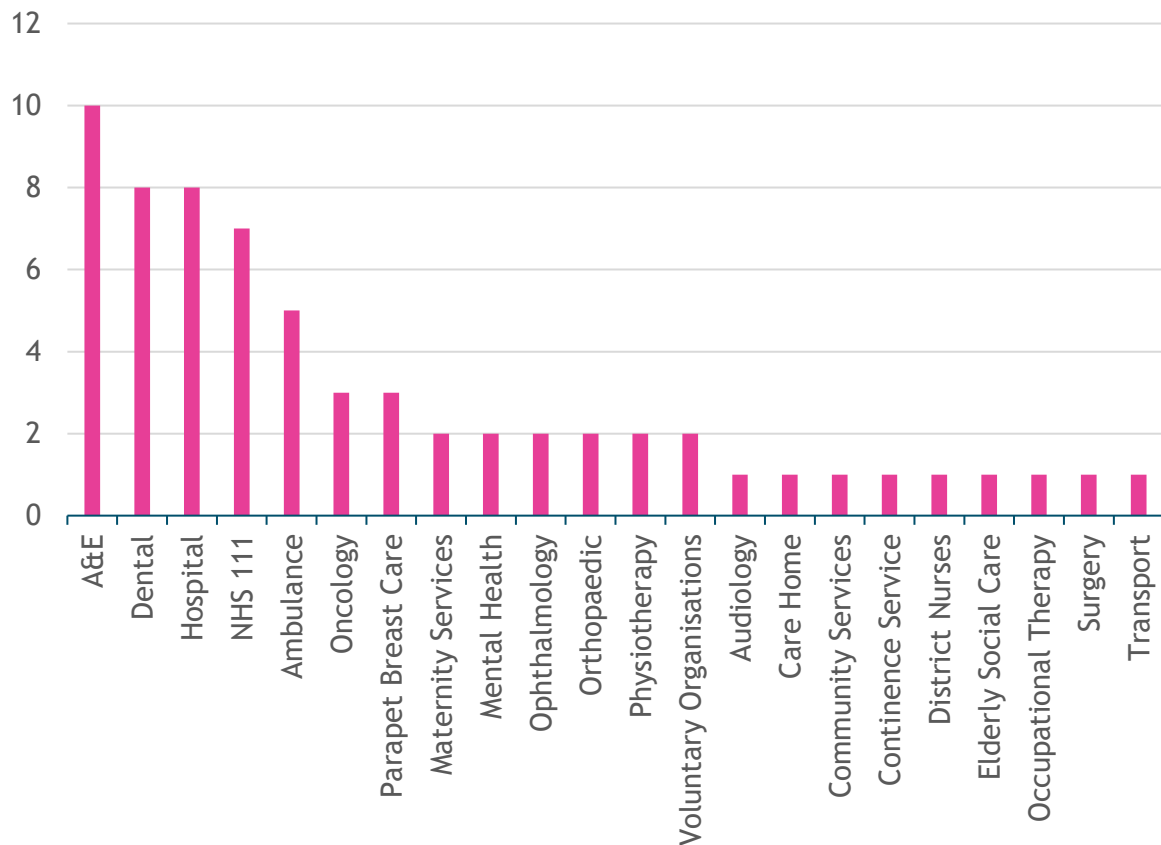
### Opticians

Half of the 12 positive experiences with Opticians did not specify the service location, but they were able to highlight factors which are important in providing a positive experience. Residents valued feeling safe with COVID-19 measures in place, clear communication, and detailed explanation of options for follow up care. The specific Opticians mentioned were:

- Specsavers (3 mentions)
- Boots (no specific branch named)
- Norman Prince (2 mentions)

### Other

There were other positive experiences which mentioned other health and social care services, but these were not mentioned as frequently as the above services. The additional services have been included in the graph below.



## What Matters Most?

### Negative Experiences from Bracknell Forest Residents

We heard **133** negative experiences of using health and social care services

#### Summary

Some comments were made by those who felt they had received poor care. 75 of the comments did not specify the exact service location but did provide details about what made the experience poor. Factors which contributed to poor experiences with health and social care services:

- Difficulties making appointments
- Waiting times upon arrival at service
- Negative and unhelpful staff attitudes
- Long waiting lists to get an appointment
- Lack of follow up care
- Poor communication with patients
- Heavy reliance on technology
- Expensive parking charges

#### GP Services

55 of the negative experiences concerned GP Services, 27 of these omitted the service provider's name. However, from these 27 responses we can see that people's experiences were perceived as poor if there is a poor method of booking appointments, delays to receive a referral or prescription, and difficulty seeing a doctor (whether that is because of reception teams acting as "barriers", or there are long waiting lists).

The GP Services receiving negative responses in this question were:

- Sandhurst Group Practice (11 mentions)
- Forest Health Group (7 mentions)
- Ringmead Medical Practice (2 mentions)
- Ascot Medical Centre
- Binfield Surgery
- Birch Hill Medical Centre
- Boundary House Surgery
- Easthampstead Surgery
- The Gainsborough Practice
- Waterside Medical Practice

"The booking system for GPs is unbelievable, calling at 8am on the day even for not urgent appointments make 0 sense. Depending who you speak to at the practice, some staff are helpful, others are plain rude!"

"Not easy to contact GP services, all digital which don't find easy to use, long wait times. Stressful."

"I have had one poor experience of finding it very difficult to get through to the surgery and gave up after 50 minutes (not at a peak time) when having got to number 1 from number 15 in the queue, the phone cut off and I gave up."

## What Matters Most?

### Mental Health Services

Mental Health Services were negatively mentioned 6 times. The following service providers were mentioned:

- Talking Therapies (3 mentions)
- Bracknell Forest CMHT

There were several concerns about the availability of Mental Health services, and the communication offered to patients. Even though some responses described themselves in a “crisis situation”, these residents still experienced delays before receiving advice and guidance. Other comments concerned the provision of care not meeting expectations, thus not helping the patient. There was a common theme that service users felt that staff members were following process steps and not spending time to listen to the patients’ needs.

“Talking Therapies - clinician was unhelpful when I was upset about something they said. Instead of being understanding, they made me feel to blame for them not understanding.”

“Bracknell CMHT, due to Covid, the communication side could do with a review an improvement”

“My mental health problems are 100 times worse and they offer no help at all.”

### Testing and Screening Services

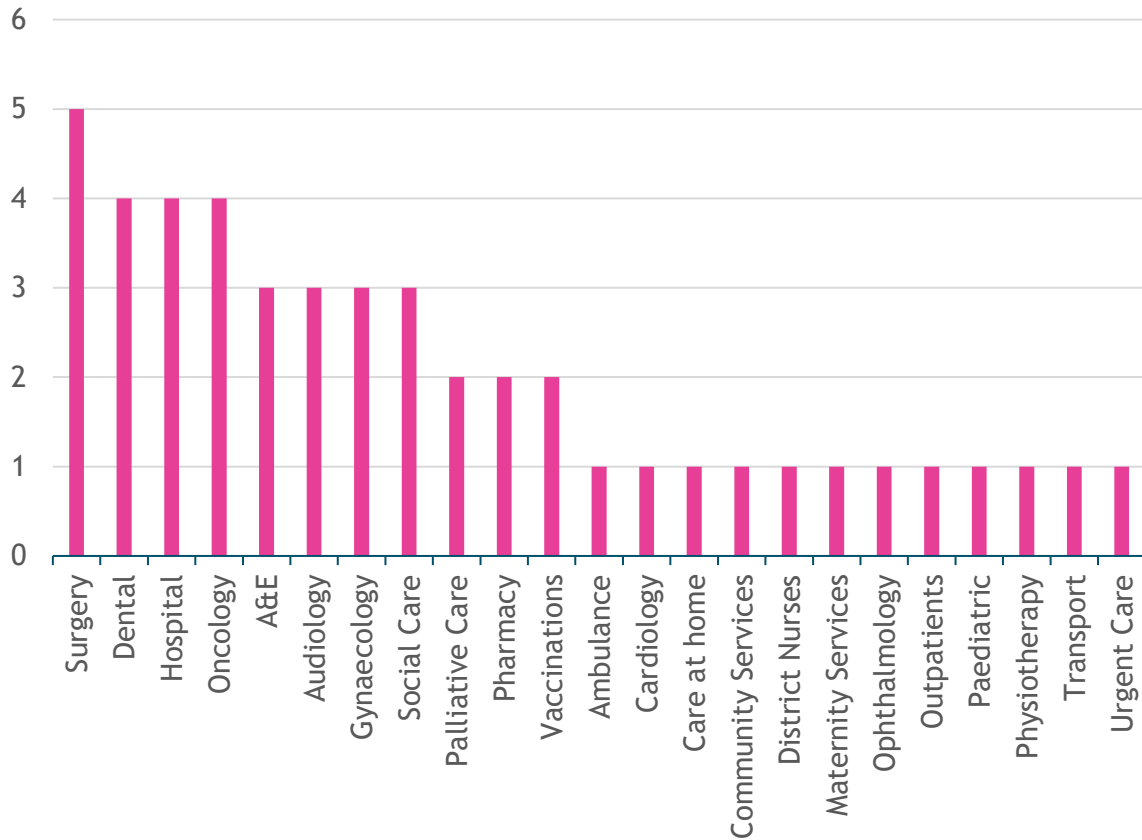
There were 6 negative responses concerning Testing and Screening services, specifically phlebotomy, CT scans, and EKG scans. Heatherwood Hospital was the only location mentioned; 4 responses did not name a location. The main factor which led to patients describing their experience as poor included prolonged waiting times upon arrival, or for their results. Another reason was that there were no local locations offering the service, so the patients had to travel out of area.

“I don't understand why I can't get a blood test from my surgery and get sent elsewhere for one yet other patients from different surgery are sent to my surgery no problem.”

## What Matters Most?

### Other

There were other negative experiences which mentioned other health and social care services, but these were not mentioned as frequently as the above services. The additional services have been included in the graph below.

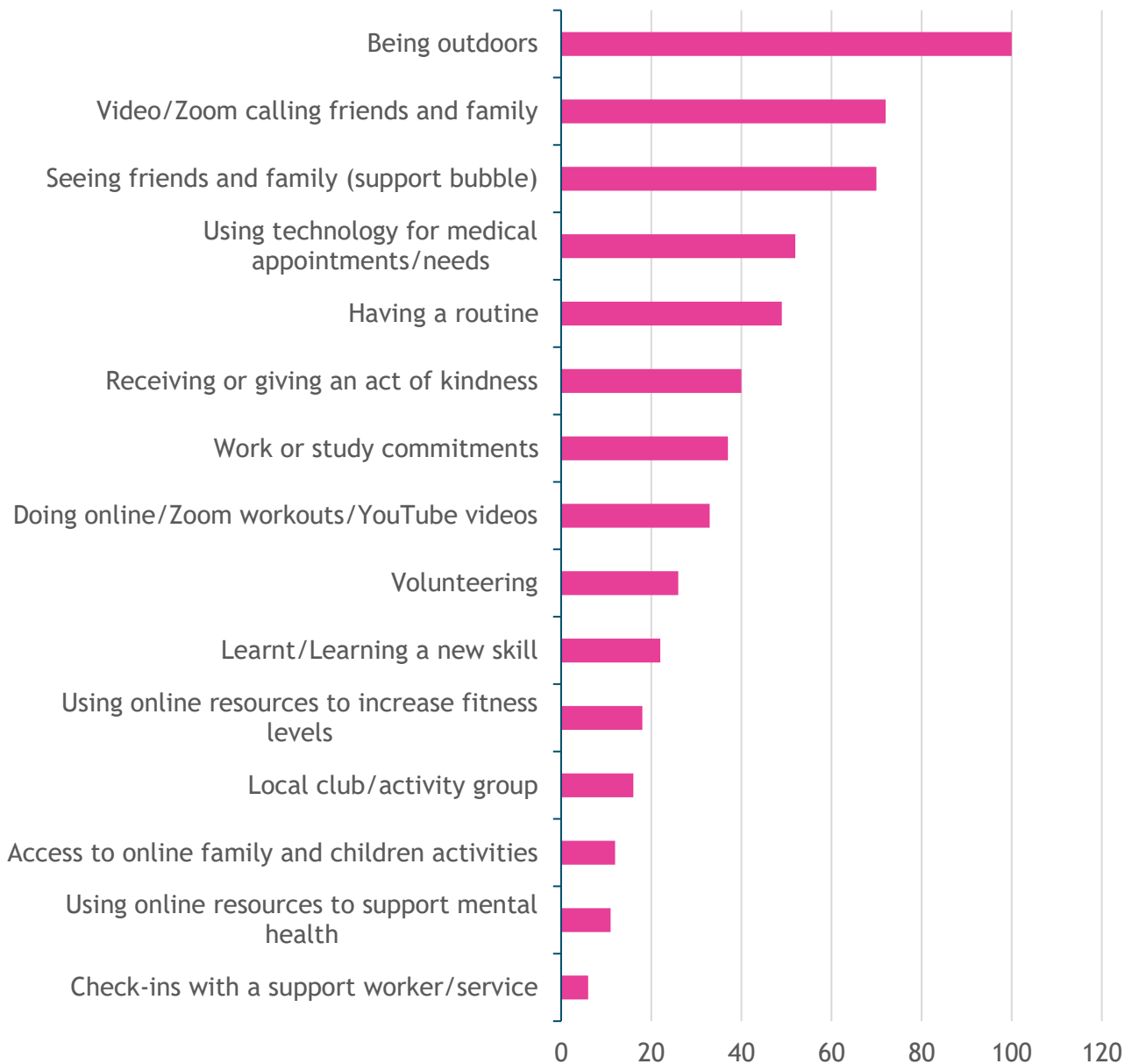


## What Matters Most?

### Health and Wellbeing

#### Looking Back

We asked participants what they felt the biggest support to their health and wellbeing was during the past 12 months.



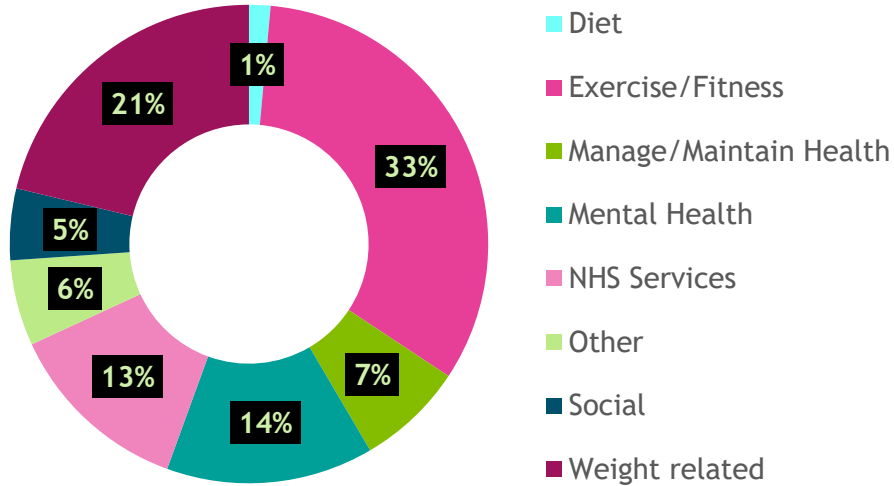
'Other' answers included: support from friends, family, neighbours and pets, exercise (such as cycling, walking, running, and swimming), hobbies (such as reading, gardening, logic puzzles, and crafting), religion and religious services, volunteering, and keeping busy with work.

Some organisations which were mentioned include: Talking Therapies, Bracknell Forest U3A, Macmillan nurses, Parenting Special Children charity, Jolly Dollies for Widows, Berkshire Family History Society, and Bracknell Camera Club.

## What Matters Most?

### Looking Forward

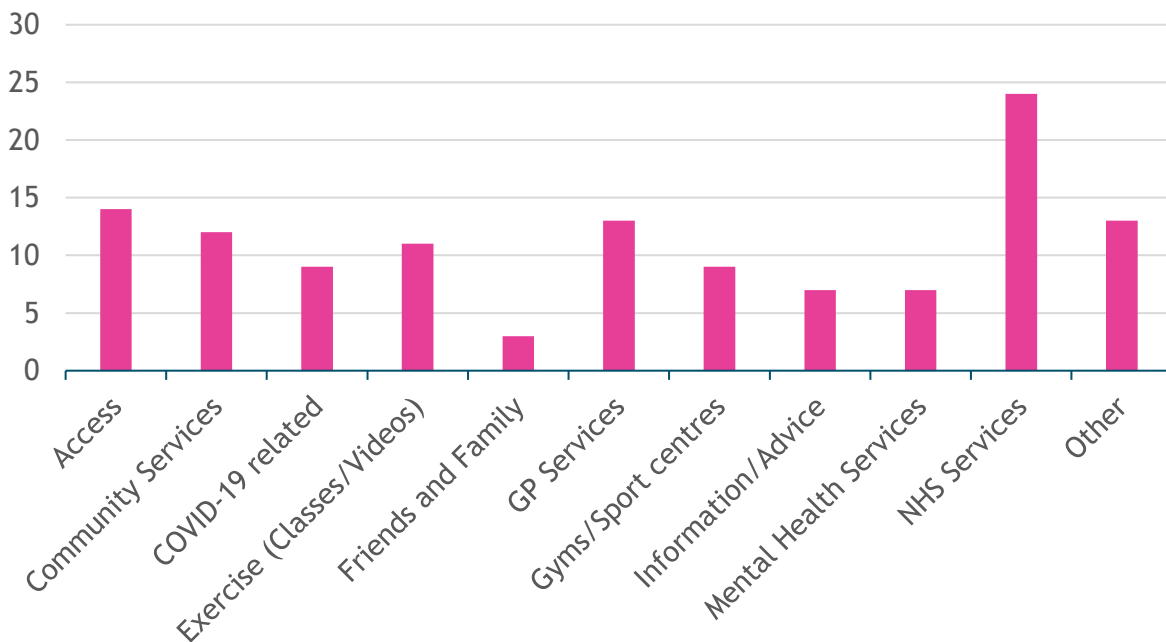
We then asked participants what health and wellbeing goals they have for the next 12 months.



‘Other’ answers included: improving sleep patterns, increasing transport options (individual mobility and driving), normalise hormone levels, going on holiday, and education goals. Some answered “all” to the examples given, and some answered that they have no goals. There was also a suggestion for health professional to take part in patient forums, and to have a constant individual at GP surgeries who understand individuals’ needs.

‘NHS Services’ answers included managing existing health conditions, catching up with postponed treatments and surgeries, getting help and advice from specific services (GP Services, Audiology, Cardiology, and Orthopaedics), and to find more local services which can offer help/advice to avoid travelling too far.

To achieve these health and wellbeing goals, participants asked for the following help and support shown in the graph below. Some responded that they were unsure of what help or support they would need, and some stated that they did not require any help or support.



## What Matters Most?

'NHS Services' answers excluded GP services, as this was mentioned enough to warrant its own category. This category included general NHS Services improvements (such as better accessibility and customer service), audiology services, oncology services, cardiology services, being able to have surgeries completed, and providing regular wellbeing check-ups.

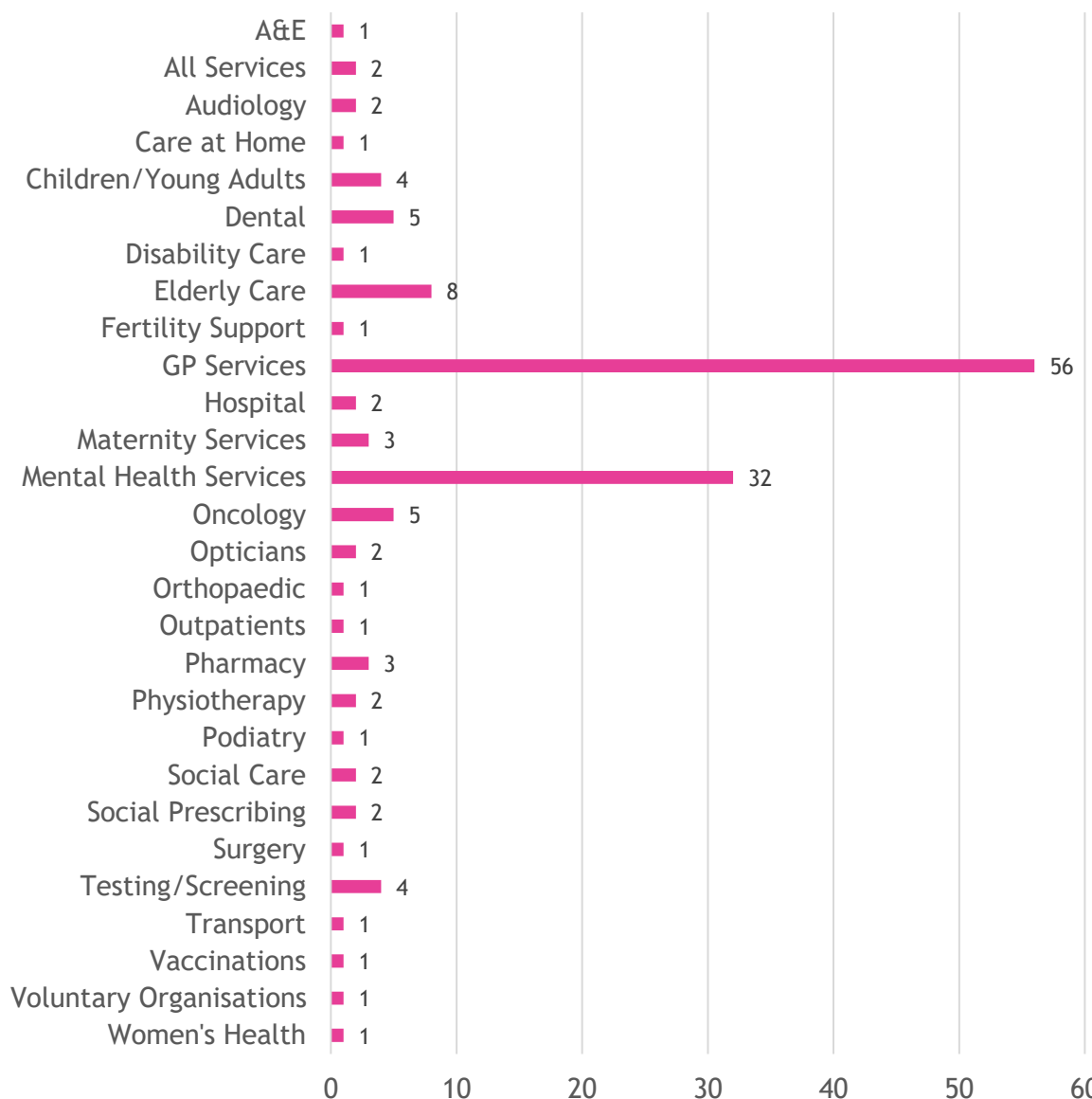
## Healthwatch Priorities

### Services

We asked participants what they think Healthwatch Bracknell Forest's priority should be for the next 12 months. The services with the most mentions were:

1. GP Services
2. Mental Health Services
3. Elderly Care
4. Dental Care

Services for Healthwatch Bracknell Forest to prioritise

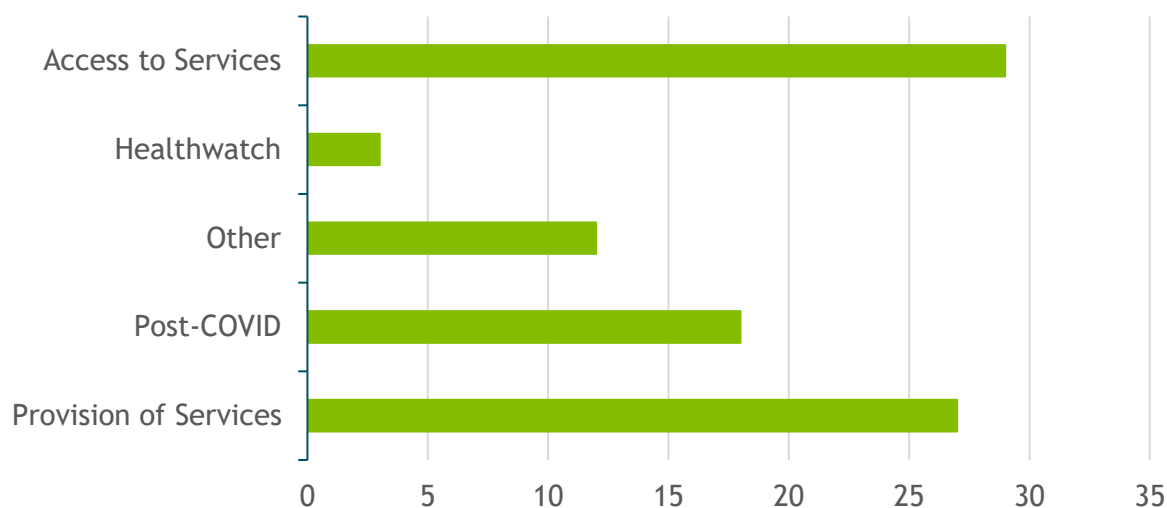




## What Matters Most?

### Themes

Residents also asked Healthwatch Bracknell Forest to focus on certain themes such as: improving their access to the services, preparing the services for after the COVID-19 pandemic, and improving the provision of services.



There were suggestions made for Healthwatch Bracknell Forest: to continue Healthwatch visits to health and social care services, to make our presence better known within the local community, and to challenge CCGs to make patient pathways, and their options, clearer and more transparent.

The 'Other' responses included: relieve pressure on unpaid carers, make services more user friendly (specifically for individuals with autism), increase awareness of PANDAS condition, and support vulnerable people on the streets. PANDAS is short for Paediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorders Associated with Streptococcal Infections. There were suggestions for clarity around which medical options and pathways are most appropriate for individuals, and to encourage more use of technology.

Residents want us to ensure health and social care services have the capacity for the local population, which is ageing but also increasing due to new housing developments. And finally to show medical and ancillary staff that the work they undertake is appreciated.

### Access to Services

The most common theme suggested for Healthwatch Bracknell Forest to focus on is improving patients' access to health and social care services, specifically Mental Health Services, GP Services, Physiotherapy, and Orthopaedics. There were a few factors surrounding accessing services which appeared more frequently:

- Increase number of local services to reduce travel times and increase appointment availability
- Range of contact methods and appointment options available:
  - Those unconfident with technology would prefer face-to-face rather than online
  - Encourage technology for those comfortable to relieve pressure on services

## What Matters Most?

There was an agreement amongst participants that contacting services, especially GP Services, needs to be improved. This was due to prolonged time spent on the phone waiting to contact a service and waiting times for appointments. Bookable appointments, especially the system for phlebotomy services, was described as good practice and to continue with this method. Another access issue described was administrative staff acting as a “barrier” between the patient and receiving care, and insufficient measures in place for patients with a diagnosis of Autism.

### *Provision of Services*

This theme reemphasised the factors valued by patients within their health and social care services:

- Clear communication and information
  - Update service websites with most relevant and accurate information
  - Between different health and social care services when concerning a patient referral
  - Information about reasons for delays or difficulties to book appointments
  - Keep the patient informed of appointments, progress, and treatment plans
  - Keep the patient’s family informed if they’re unable to visit the patient
- Administrative staff to provide a more caring service to patients
- Better follow up care after appointments, procedures, and treatments
- Medical staff to listen more to patients and be open to further investigations
- Improvement to patient pathways
  - Provided with a choice of locations for required service
  - Not needing to explain the same situation to several members of staff

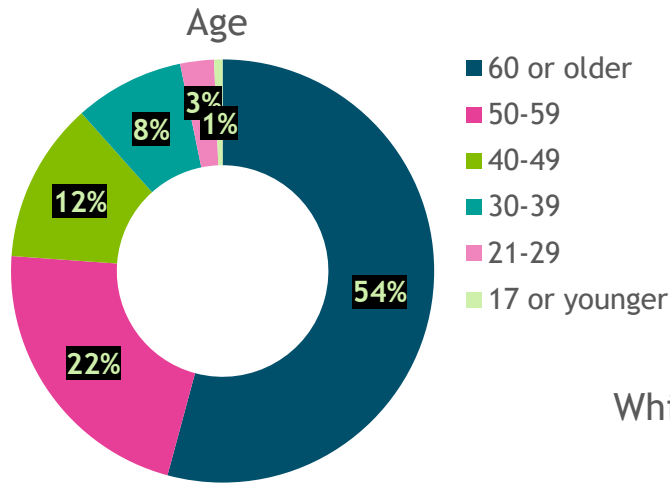
### *Post-COVID*

Responses regarding health and social care services following the COVID-19 pandemic included:

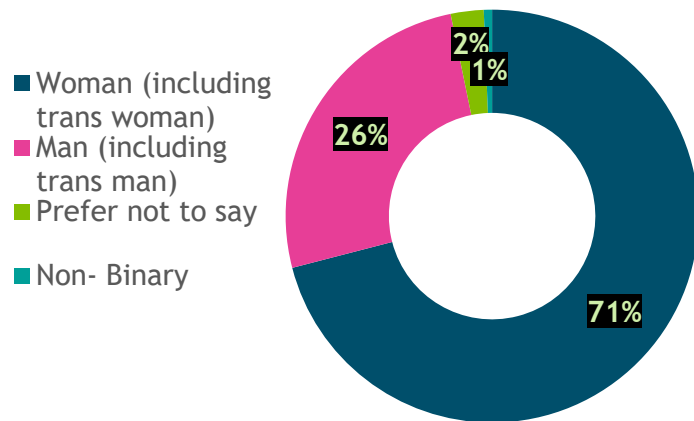
- Catching up on the backlog of screening and treatments which were cancelled
- Offer supporting those with long-covid, especially residents unable to return to work as a result
- Offer increased Mental Health support, especially to those who had lack of contact and are diagnosed with eating disorders
- Continuing with the COVID-19 vaccine programme and to provide accurate information
- Promote patient self-care and information sources
- Encourage community groups for socialising, when appropriate

## What Matters Most?

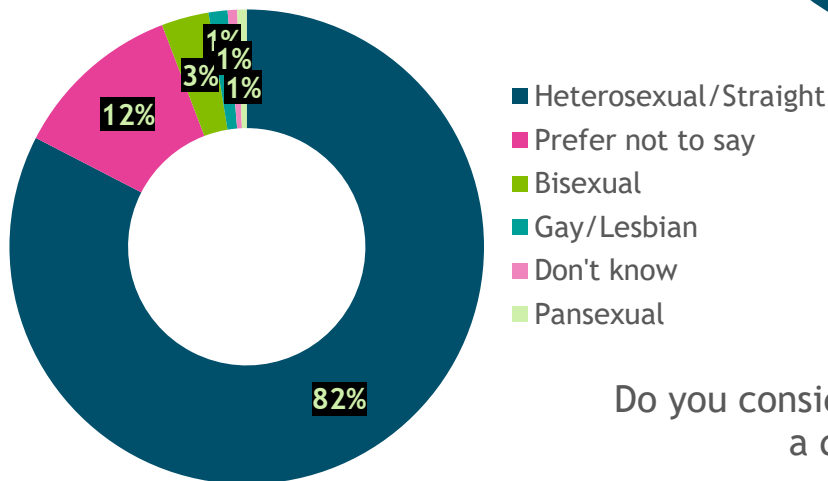
### Survey Demographics



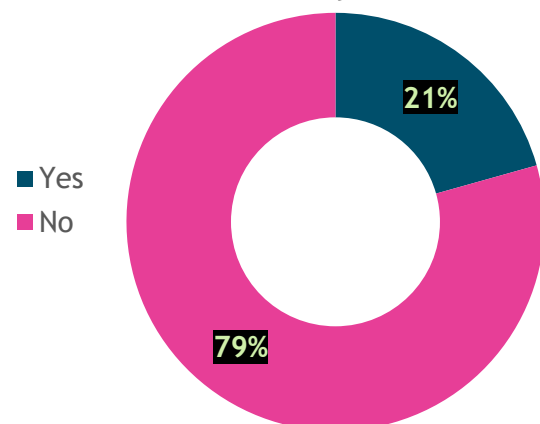
### Which gender do you identify as?



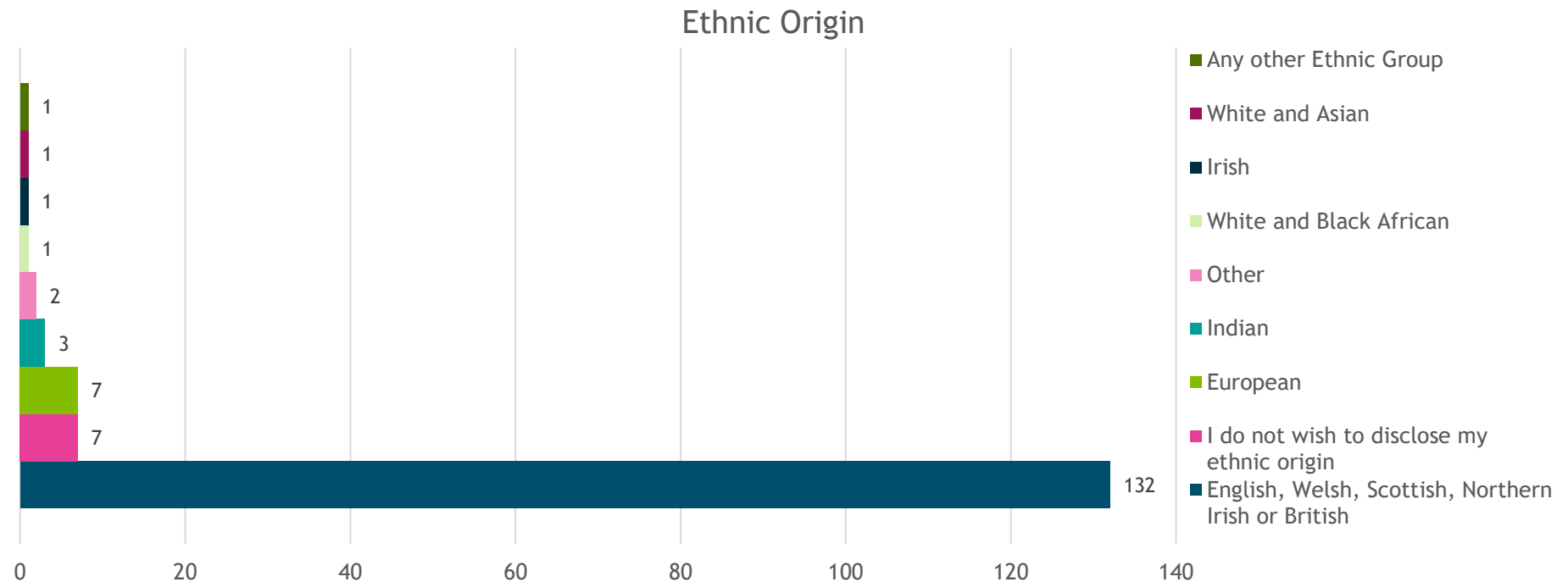
### Sexual Orientation



### Do you consider yourself to have a disability?



## What Matters Most?



Additional answer options were given for all five demographic questions, as well as an ‘Other’ option. Only the options which were selected by participants were included in the graphs above. The ethnic diversity from this campaign is an adequate reflection of Bracknell Forest’s population (as stated by ONS Census, 2011).

### Thank you

Healthwatch Bracknell Forest would like to thank all 155 participants who took the time to complete the survey and tell us about their experiences. A big thank you to all our partner organisations who helped with the promotion of our survey.

We would also like to thank:

- Bracknell Forest Council for promoting the survey on their social media and within their newsletter
- Healthwatch Volunteers for supporting the promotion of this survey across Bracknell Forest

## What Matters Most?

### Talk to us

If you have questions about the content of this report, please either call 0300 012 0184 or email [megan.horwood@healthwatchbracknellforest.co.uk](mailto:megan.horwood@healthwatchbracknellforest.co.uk).

### How will this report be used?

This report summarises 155 responses from the What Matters Most survey to highlight common themes, findings, and opinions. This provides the Healthwatch organisations across East Berkshire with a better foundation of information about their local communities, including what their focus should be in the future.

The report will be shared with the relevant service providers, and other external stakeholders, to support local health and social care services in providing improved care to its users. Healthwatch will also conduct further analyses of the data.

## ADVICE AND INFORMATION

We are here to help, advise, give information, and listen to your experiences

Healthwatch are the independent champion for people who use health and social care services. We're here to find out what matters to people and to help make sure their views are heard.

We also help people find the information they need about health and social care services or support in East Berkshire.

Here to help you on the next step of your health and social care journey.

We have the power to make sure that the government and those in charge of services hear people's voices. As well as seeking the public's views ourselves, we also encourage services to involve people in decisions that affect them.



Contact Us: 0300 012 0184



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