

Access to health and social care services in Sheffield

Key issues from June 2022

In June 2022 we received 66 pieces of feedback about health and social care services in Sheffield. This month we heard reoccurring themes of people experiencing difficulty accessing GP appointments and NHS dentistry. We also heard views on hospital care and treatment, including issues around accessible information and patient transport services. We also heard feedback relating to pharmacy services, where some people have encountered difficulty and delay while getting their prescriptions.

GPs

In June 2022 we heard 26 pieces of feedback relating to at least 12 different GP practices in Sheffield. Praise was given from a large proportion of individuals reporting excellent care and treatment and polite and helpful staff.

Existing themes continued this month with regards to booking appointments, including difficulties getting through to GP's on the phone and long waiting times to be seen. Additionally, feedback was provided around restrictions registering with GP's who have strict catchment area boundaries. One person reported they had called many GP practices locally to try and register their elderly relative who was in desperate need of a medication review and check-up. Despite living less than one mile away from some surgeries they were still unable to be registered. Another person reported that they had been removed from their surgery due to catchment area boundaries even though they had been a patient at the practice for over 40yrs. This left them feeling really worried and anxious about the thought of trying to register with another practice.



"Doctors take time to talk and explain and offer help and information and kindness they are excellent, also a good team of nurses"

"I just want to be able to make an appointment like in the olden days before Covid"

Feedback was also provided by an individual around mask wearing. Despite a recent change in government guidance and notifying surgery staff members that they were exempt they were still told by a reception staff member that they had to wear a mask when entering the building.

Hospitals and patient transport services

We heard from 15 people who expressed their views about hospital services. Largely praise was provided with main themes linked to satisfaction around the treatment received and how professional and caring the staff were.

We received some feedback to say some individuals had struggled with accessing certain hospital information such as instructions on medication, patient leaflets and forms. It was reported that when some patients had asked staff for help they felt that they were too busy to offer adequate support and alternative information formats were not provided.

Concerns were also shared about errors with patient transport services. For some people, transport had not arrived on time or turned up at all, leading to late arrival or missed appointments. Incorrect types of transport were also being booked with transport provided not being suitable to accommodate individual need – again, on some occasions this has led to missed appointments. Frustration was expressed around a waste of time, resources and the disappointment of not being able to get the healthcare they were due to get.

We also received feedback from a local group whose service users frequently access the audiology department. They reported some reception staff had used raised voices when directly communicating with them which was not deemed as necessary and was very uncomfortable for some autistic patients. The group also told us about the lack of different hearing aids available in suitable skin tones was frustrating for adult patients, usually the only



“Excellent professional service by all the staff especially the nursing staff and auxiliaries”.

“I was unable to attend my hospital appointment today. My patient transport never turned up”

colours on offer were grey, black and a beige colour. They also noted that when visiting other hospital departments, the opportunity to provide feedback and express views was prevalent however they had not been presented with an opportunity to share views about their experiences in audiology.

Pharmacy

We received feedback about a number of staff shortages in some community pharmacies leading to delays in receiving medication, long customer queues, delays in opening on time and reports of stores closing earlier than normal. We heard from one individual when going to collect their medication in store they were turned away by staff as they were told the prescription had been lost. Upon further questioning to understand the situation fully, staff stated that this was due to a change of IT systems. This left the individual without medication over the weekend.



Dentists

We still continue to hear from people struggling to access NHS dentistry. Unfortunately, waiting lists remain very long. We continue to advise people if they are experiencing pain, ask to be triaged by any local dentist or alternatively phone NHS 111. Charles Clifford Dental Hospital are also taking appointments for adult urgent care for those not currently registered with a dentist. Appointments at Charles Clifford are carried out with dental students with supervision from a senior practitioner.

We continue to raise issues accessing dentistry at a regional level, and continue to support Healthwatch England's national campaign to #fixNHSdentistry. We believe that contract reform and meaningful, sustained funding is urgently required to get people the care they need.



"I have rung over 30 dental practices in Sheffield. Everyone had at least a two-year waiting list. I can't afford to pay for private treatment!"

This summary of key issues is a snapshot of what we are hearing about. We want to reflect the experiences of people who share their stories with us, and we hope that it can help services, and

commissioners of services, by indicating potential areas of focus. It is based on:

- Experiences that members of the public share with us through our information and advice service
- Feedback shared by voluntary sector partners who support clients in Sheffield
- Stories shared through Care Opinion, who we've partnered with to provide a feedback-sharing platform

Want to share your own experience? Get in touch

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