

Our helpline service:
Public enquiries during
April – June 2022

The Healthwatch Brighton and Hove helpline service helps people to access the right health or social care service or organisation for their needs. We also offer information if people want to share their experience or make a complaint. Two trained volunteers help to run the service.

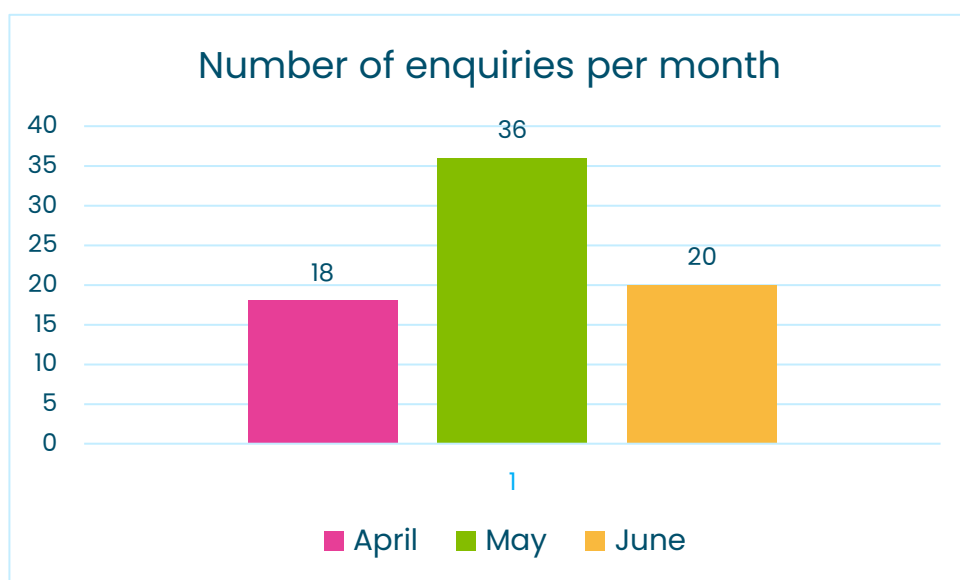
This document provides a summary of the enquiries we received between April to June 2022.

Total number of enquiries answered via our helpline April-June 2022



Method of contact

The most common methods by which people made their enquiry were by email (49), followed by telephone calls (22). Where known, 11 enquiries were from men, and 19 from women.



We received enquiries from individuals as well as people acting on their behalf: 54 enquiries were from individuals, 13 from friends, family or carers, 2 from advocates and one from a health or social care professional (plus 4 'others').

Enquiry themes

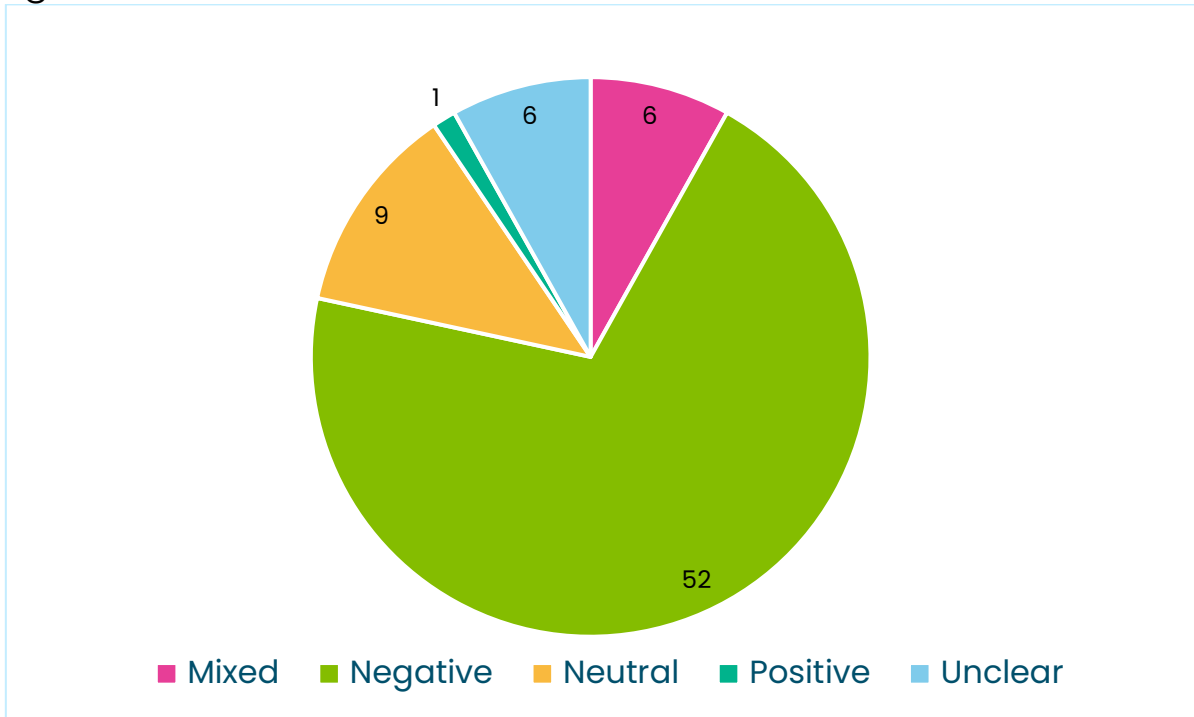
The main enquiry theme we received between April to June related to making a complaint about any health or social care service or treatment, with 28 enquiries.

People's queries often related to several different themes such access to dentistry and how to make a complaint and so the numbers below add up to more than 74.

Enquiry theme	Number of enquiries
How to make a complaint about any health or social care service or treatment	28
Queries about dentists and accessing NHS treatment	21
Complaints specifically about GPs or issues with GPs	12
Queries where the patient was chasing up health appointments	5
Queries about COVID-19 vaccinations	3
Complaint about Mental Health services including Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services	3
Complaints specifically about dentists or dental treatment	2
General queries about GPs	2
A query about health records	1
A query about pharmacies	1
A query about social care appointments	1
A query about Care homes	1
A query about therapists	1
A query about vaccinations (non-COVID)	1
Compliment about services	1
A question about obtaining a lateral flow test	1
A query about housing for people with disabilities	1
Help with sick pay	1
Someone seeking an NHS number	1

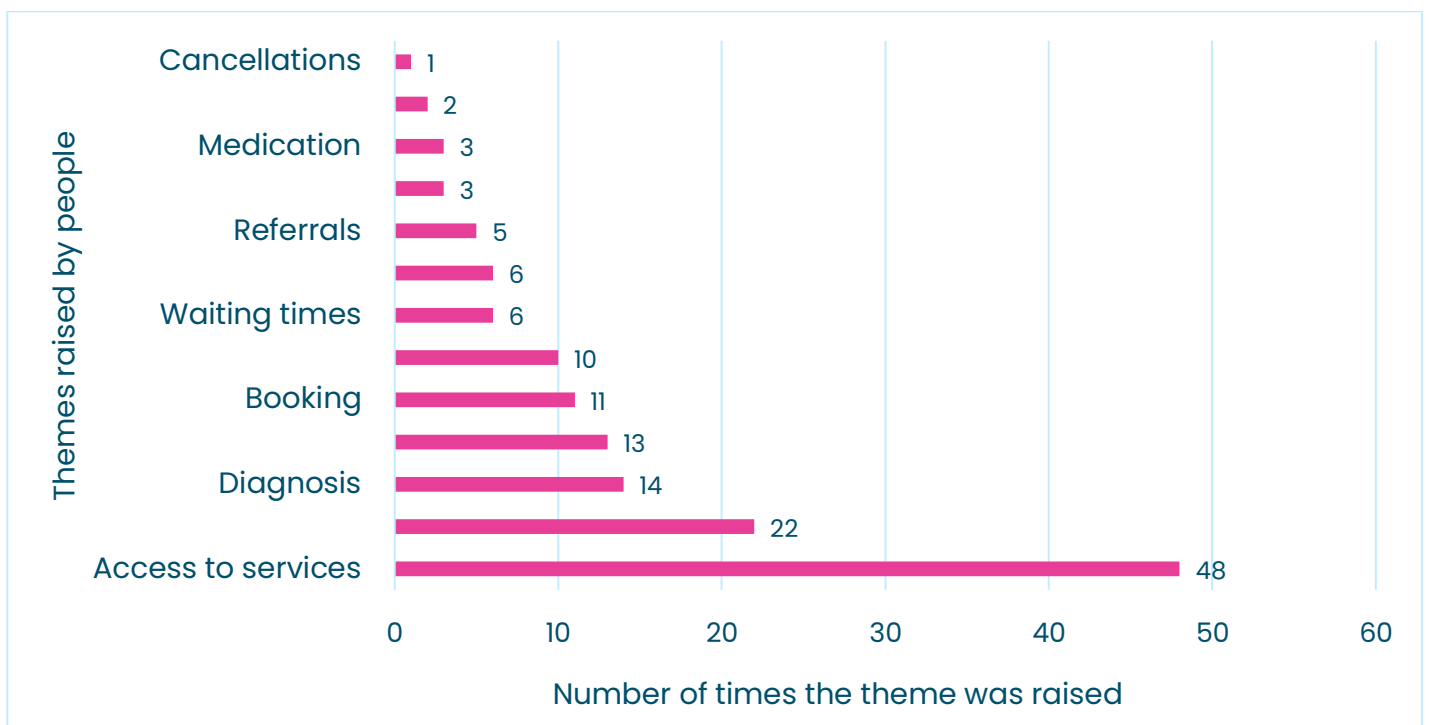
The sentiment of people's enquiries

Most people (52) who contacted us during April to June shared negative sentiments with us about their experiences of health and social care services, although 22 shared mixed views.



The themes of people's enquiries

People's enquiries to us covered a range of themes, but the most common one related to access to services (people enquiries often raised more than one theme).



Complaints about health and social services

Complaints about any NHS health or social service were one of the main reasons why people contacted us between April to June. Patients who contacted us wanted help to make a formal or informal complaint. Issues related to poor treatment or advice, delayed or cancelled procedures and poor communication. Some of the enquiries we received were:



“I went to the GP for a pain in the lower right of my stomach and the GP sent me home with some laxatives. I didn't trust this, and I went to the A&E and after waiting 9 hours I was diagnosed with acute appendicitis.”

“Awful experiences at the moment with my husband in ICU with a severe head trauma.”

“Following a traumatic leg injury, I was told that I would receive an appointment for physiotherapy. I received a letter explaining that my appointment would take place on the phone, as they were not offering face to face. This is extremely disappointing, as I am at a point when I need support, advice and physiotherapy”

“My fifth operation has been cancelled today for non-clinical reasons (the clinical team being too over-stretched) and they are not fully confident that I will even have the operation over the weekend. I remain feeling stranded and in limbo”



Dentists

Dental queries are one of the main reasons why people contacted us. The number of queries rose in May (10) but were lower in April (6) and June (5). People were concerned about not being able to get an NHS dentist appointment and asked for help to find an NHS dental practice who had with availability. 2 queries related to complaints about treatment or advice. Some of the enquiries we received were:



“I have been trying to get an appointment, but they have had no dentists for the last 6 months and not likely to have in future. I am a pensioner, non-taxpayer so very limited income and cannot pay privately for treatment.”

“We have recently moved to Brighton and have been unable to access NHS dental care within a 40 mile radius. My wife is pregnant and is entitled to free dental care but unable to attend any practice.”

“I am hoping that you can help me with a dentist who is taking NHS patients and can accommodate me in a wheelchair.”

“Neither my partner nor I have had a dentist since the pandemic started. We have called numerous dentists, constantly searched the NHS website (which never seems to get updated) and really don't know what else we can do? It's becoming more of an issue now, as my partner has had to have recent emergency treatment and was told it was a temporary solution and needs to find a dentist. I too am having problems and am in pain.”



Other types of queries we received included:



“I needed a COVID pass and found out that my ID had been mixed up with someone else’s by the NHS and I was forced to pay for a test to enable me to travel as it wasn’t resolved in time and ended up taking just under two weeks to resolve. I feel like both GP practices I dealt with were not accepting responsibility and therefore I spent four days back and forth on the phone.”

“Waiting for appointment for MRI and x rays since July 2020.”

Caller needing help advising Ukrainian residents how to register with GP's.

Caller on behalf of a friend who is concerned about the care some people are getting in the outpatient department at Royal Sussex Count Hospital.

Caller enquiring about her and her family's vaccinations for travel to Egypt.



Compliment about services



“I attended the Royal Sussex County Hospital’s Cardiac Day Case Unit to have an angiogram. The care I received was excellent. The staff were friendly, relaxed, knowledgeable, professional and efficient. I arrived at 10am and was immediately welcomed by the receptionist, was shown to my bed and the procedure was clearly

explained to me. I was given a choice of hot drinks and sandwiches. The unit was clean, tidy and well maintained. At 4pm after the procedure was completed my partner came to collect me. The medications that had been prescribed for me were ready for me to take home and I was given the necessary information about what to do over the next few days and who to contact if I had any problems or had further questions. The service I received was superb.”

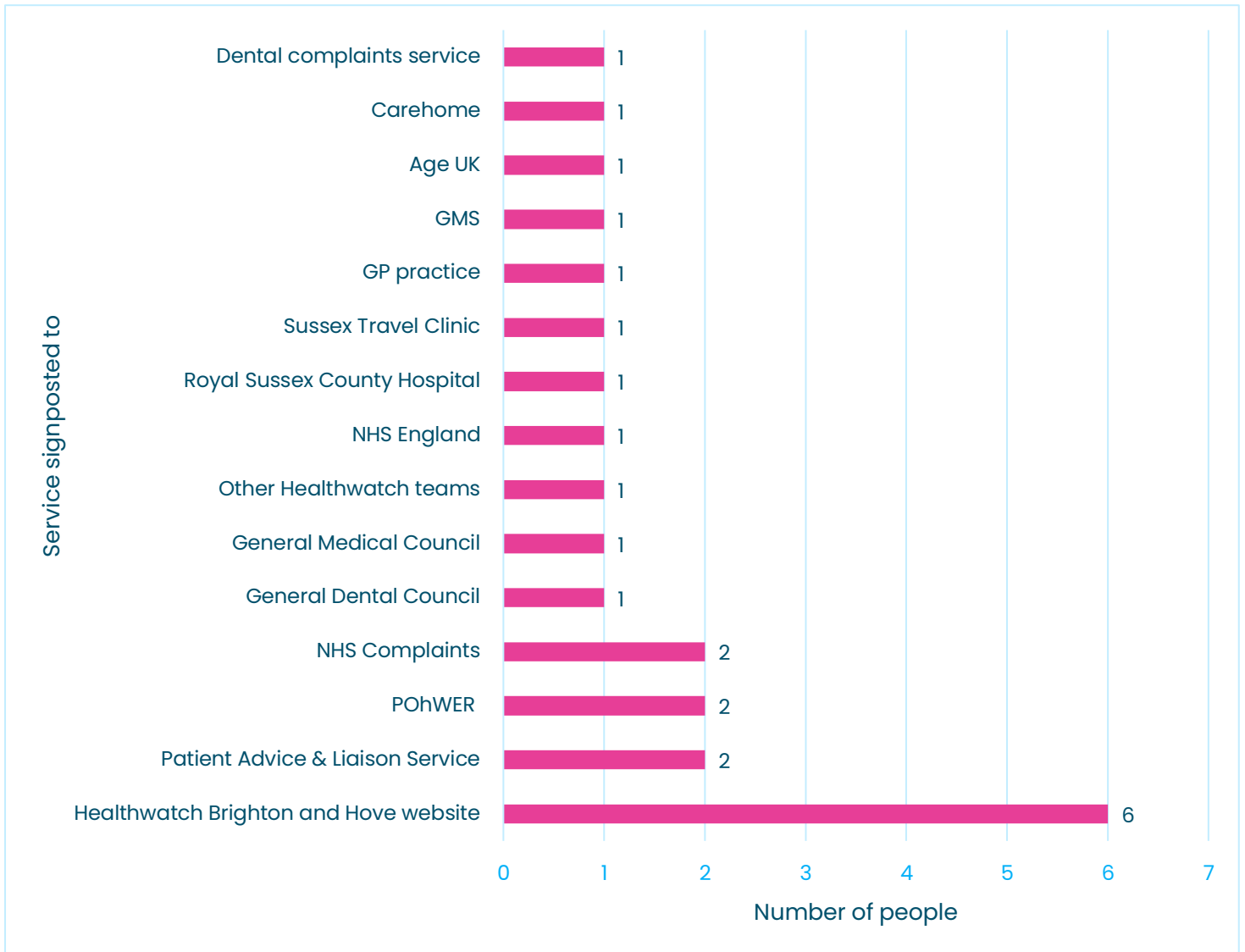


How Healthwatch have helped people

1. A person contacted us to complain about the duty of care at a local hospital and to find further avenues of support. They'd 'exhausted traditional routes'. The patient had contacted PALS to complain of 'misdiagnosis and lack of joined up care', but we also signposted them to [POhWER](#) whom they had not heard of.
2. We spoke to a patient who was having some issues with their GP including face to face visits and being offered regular health check-ups. They wanted to know if there was legislation/duty of care in place that GPs had to abide by when delivering their services. Our Healthwatch volunteer spoke to a local GP to get factual advice which we shared with the patient and provided answers to their questions. We also advised them to write to the surgery's practice manager with their concerns to see if this could resolve his issues.
3. A patient advised us of issues that their disabled partner was having arranging transport to and from hospital appointments and accessible access at the hospital. We advised them to contact the department directly to ensure transport was organised for all future appointments and that staff were aware of their support needs. We also supported them to contact PALS to raise concerns over inaccessible facilities and equipment.

Signposting people to other services

Between April to June, as well as providing advice and information, we signposted 16 people (22%) to 15 other services or organisations for further support. In many cases, we were able to direct people to information and advice contained on the [Healthwatch Brighton and Hove website](#), especially for people seeking help with dentistry.



Contact us



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