

Access to health and social care services in Sheffield

Key issues from October 2022

In October 2022 we received 337 pieces of feedback related to health and social care services in Sheffield. Many patients told us about the positive experiences they had encountered at their GP practice and when attending their flu vaccine and Covid 19 booster. This month, we visited Burngreave to listen to public views in relation to the proposed healthcare centres being built in the city. We have also heard people's experiences of hospital care and continued to hear from those who are struggling to access NHS dentistry.

GPs

In October 2022 we received 268 pieces of feedback relating to at least 24 different GP practices across Sheffield.

Two thirds of the feedback we heard about was positive, with many reviews relating to The Hollies and Sloan Medical Centres. The majority of these comments related specifically to staff, with patients describing how they had been impressed by their compassion, knowledge, positivity and friendly nature.

Many patients wanted to share their experiences of receiving the Autumn flu vaccination and Covid 19 booster. Patients stated that they found the whole process extremely efficient and well organised. We heard that staff provided clear instructions and people were happy with how quickly the process had taken overall.

Issues experienced this month varied in topic, however, a major theme we continued to hear about was the challenges experienced when trying to contact GP practices by phone. A large percentage of people told us they had encountered very long wait times with some reports of being held in a queue for up to 90 minutes. One patient reported that after waiting patiently in the queue and when finally reaching number 1, they were cut off.



"Wonderful doctors and nursing staff. Reception is also good. I always feel listened to and can speak with ease to a doctor".

"Nurses were very reassuring and friendly. Prompt vaccination and I was in and out of the practice in less than 10 minutes."

They stated this happened repeatedly, which resulted in them going to the practice on public transport to make staff aware of the issue.



Concerns were raised about the lack of flexibility when trying to book appointments due to having to call the surgery as soon as it opened. This wasn't practical for many, including those at work or when taking children to school. It was apparent non-urgent appointments at some practices were not available to be booked in advance meaning an early morning phone call was necessary to access both urgent and non-urgent bookings. When some patients finally got through, many discovered all the appointments had gone for the day and were told to call back the following day. Several people told us they had been trying for such a long time, they had given up completely.

“Cannot get through on the telephone for an appointment and when you do all have gone for that day (try again tomorrow).”

Finally, we heard from two patients who reported due to moving a short distance away from their GP practice were told they could no longer access the service. They described feeling very disappointed by this as both patients had been with the practice for a number of years and had established trust and rapport with their GP.

“Took me one hour this morning to get through to be told nothing available, not even a ring back.”

Proposal for new healthcare centres

To support the public consultation process, we visited places across Burngreave to gather people's opinions on the [proposed new healthcare centres](#) being built in the city. The feedback we received from members of the public varied: some stated they would really welcome a new practice with new facilities, whilst others mentioned concerns mainly relating to travel distance and public transport availability. Decision makers had not heard from as many people living in Burngreave as from other areas involved in the consultation, so our public outreach helped ensure that more people's views were being heard.



Hospitals

26 patients shared their experiences of hospital care. Proportionately, this was evenly split between positive views and experiences of concern.

Highlights related to receiving excellent care and treatment within Endoscopy, Jessops Wing, and the Audiology department, where one clinician was praised for being very patient and understanding. We also heard positive sentiments in relation to the care received at Sheffield Children's Hospital with patients "feeling in safe hands" and feeling "understood and supported". One patient told us about the private hospital care they had recently experienced and stated the service was not as good as the NHS care they had previously received.

Concerns shared related to a variety of topics such as long waiting times at A&E, and long waits for X-ray results. Another concern raised related to accessible information – a patient had requested their letters to be written in a larger font, however despite instructing staff on multiple occasions about their needs they still continued to receive letters in a format which was not suitable.

One member of the public told us they had fallen down and experienced considerable pain but were waiting for an ambulance for over 3 hours. They gave up waiting and a family member took them to A&E instead. Another individual stated their housebound relative was waiting over 48 hours for hospital transport services to arrive after they became unwell.

Concerns were raised by one person related to a lack of fluids being available to patients in A&E. They stated the refreshments machine was out of order which left them which left them with access to coffee, or to water from a bathroom sink which they said was undignified.



"If I could have a magic wand, I would take the care (...) gave me, put it in a bottle and sprinkle it on the other staff so that I could have a good experience every time I visited hospital."



"The staff are caring, confident and very knowledgeable and nothing is too much trouble."

People still continue to struggle to access NHS dentistry

8 people contacted us in October stating they were struggling to access NHS dentistry. The majority of these people were seeking support to try to obtain routine treatment as they were not currently registered with an NHS dentist. All of the people we spoke to told us they had tried contacting many dentists and current waiting lists were 2-3 years. Some reported they could not even get onto a waiting list.

Several practices' information still appears to be out of date on the NHS UK website with some last reviewing their information over 12 months ago. This is despite one of the reforms made to the dental contract in July by NHS England, which focussed on making services more accessible for people. The reforms stated dentists must update the NHS website and directory of services so patients can easily find the availability of dentists in their local area.



"I haven't seen a dentist for a very long time. I really need a check up to make sure everything is ok but this is proving impossible!"

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

Online: healthwatchsheffield.co.uk

Phone: 0114 253 6688

Text: 07415 249657

Email: info@healthwatchsheffield.co.uk

