



healthwatch
Leicester

healthwatch
Leicestershire

Insight Report

Accessing Health and Social Care Services:
Asylum Seekers and Refugees

Accessing Health and Social Care Services:

Asylum Seekers and Refugees

Our access to Health care project is to listen and to explore how people have been accessing their health care and what that experience has been like for them.

In January 2023, we held two separate face to face focus group sessions with Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Leicester to seek their views, concerns on their experiences in accessing health care services

Group 1

We engaged with seven Sudanese men who took active part in the discussion. This was culturally sensitive and one person from the group translated for the rest of the group members.

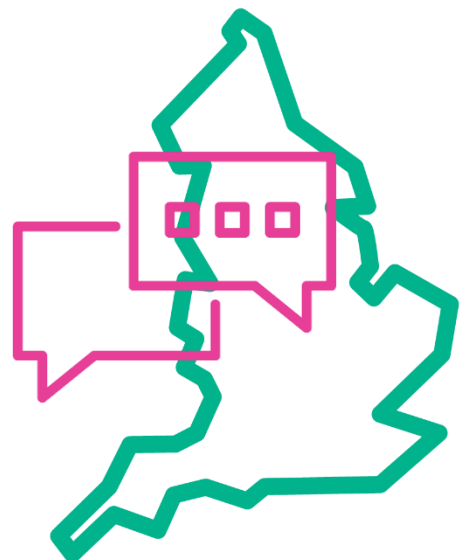
Most of the group have not been accessing services because they are not aware of their entitlement in the UK especially which are free or paid for services.

Accessing dental appointments



Two participants are registered with a dentist and the others are not because they do not know how to do it.

The participants who accessed their dentist said they had good service from their dental practice when they went for treatment.



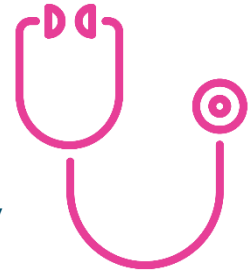
Accessing GP Appointments

All of the participants were registered with a GP.

Comments were made that GP appointments were only by telephone and it is hard to get face to face appointments.

People were waiting a long time for the phone to be answered and when answered all the appointments have been allocated to other patients. Been advised to ring back next day in the morning at 8am.

All the participants stated that, *"it is very difficult to explain our illness over the phone"* as English is our second language.



Accessing optician appointments

None of the participants have accessed optician services because they are not aware of this service and not sure where to go.



Support Needs

Language is one of the main issues for this group of people and knowing where to go for help and support.

Services that are working well

One participant stated that dental services are good.

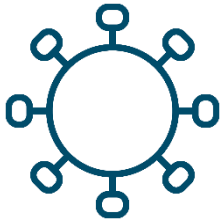
One participant stated he had a heart operation; he was provided with interpreter, and he felt the services was good for him.

One participant said, *"I went into hospital and the NHS services working well for me."*



Group 2

We engaged with six women from Afghanistan and the Middle East who took active part in the discussion. This was culturally sensitive, and we had a translator present.



Impact of Covid-19 pandemic on services

People in the group felt that since the pandemic that services had become worse.

One participant spoke about the services that used to be provided to them pre covid and the difference after the pandemic.

“Health services have become careless, pre-covid period they used to provide juice cart, after covid they have been passing to one person to another person, they used to provide activity for children, when asked if they can provide the same, they were told ‘no google it.’”

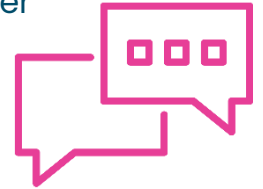
One participant said their appointments had been affected, *“not giving appointment, delayed appointments, appointments are far and I have to change buses.”*

One participant commented on the difference in the services provided in other countries, *“I’ve been here about a year and have arthritis. I used to live in France, doctors in France used to provide care, blood analysis, any kind of medication etc. GP here not giving any medication or analysis, not taking French letters and prescriptions.”*

One participant commented on the costs of prescriptions, *“they don’t provide free medication, have 5 children and could not get medication, have to pay.”*

Language Barriers

All participants commented that language is the biggest barrier to communicating with services.



Comments included:

“They promise to bring translator but they never do.”

“Now they can but they don’t, before they used to do it, since covid it’s got worse, they don’t bring translator.”

One participant had spoken about the language barriers they faced at a GP appointment, *“They don’t provide translator, they promised they would but they didn’t provide one. Happened yesterday. GP speaks Arabic but refuses, insists I should use English.”*

One participant said, *“I want appointment, not speak good.”*

Services that are working well

When asked if they felt that they are treated fairly, all participants said, ‘yes.’



Comments included:

“Optician working well, eye doctor helping.”

“Dentist are becoming better after changing dental practice. Old dentist used to speak Arabic but refused to facilitate, this is the reason first dentist would not give appointments unless I bought in translator. Second dentist tries to bring in translator.”

Services that are not working well



Three participants said dentists are not working well.

Comments included:

“its catastrophic, GP, dentist, biggest problem to book appointment with a specialist but cannot get through to GP to get letter.”

“I have arthritis, GP said will refer but has not done it yet.”

“Daughter has tonsillitis. The hospital will not remove tonsils unless they get letter form GP, been to GP twice, GP not giving letter for tonsil removal. Used to go twice a month, once her heart stopped, was in hospital for 5 days, doctor at hospital said it is urgent, they won't do it because they need the letter from the GP.”

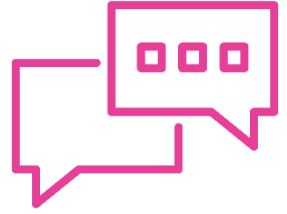
“there is a huge difference between health services to here to France, people are actually going back to France because UK service is so bad.”

“Used to get contraception, used to get the injections, it would make me gain weight, by the fourth one I told doctor to stop injection as I gain weight but GP shouted at me.”

Overall, the participants have said they are too scared to complain because they think it will make things worse.

Improvements to services

We asked participants what improvements they would like to see.



Comments included:

“The way they treat us, not delaying appointments, giving appointments as soon as they could.”

“We need translator, medical translator, when asking questions, it can be confusing, want effective communication as things can be missed or misheard.”

“All services should improve.”

“Some diagnosis is over the phone, and medicine is prescribed over the phone. I am not a doctor; how can I describe the problem properly?”

“it’s the calling at 8am sharp but they don’t answer, I called every day. I was on the phone and it was ringing and I went to the surgery and I can see the phone ringing and I said that’s me calling, they said they are busy.”

“if one minute late, they would say re book the appointment, if I am 5 minutes early then I wait 30 minutes until I am seen.”



Contact us



0116 251 8313



enquiries@healthwatchll.com



**Clarence House, 46 Humberstone Gate
Leicester, LE1 3PJ**