

## Access to Health and Social Care Services In Sheffield

### Key issues from July 2023

In July 2023 we received 105 pieces of feedback related to health and social care services in Sheffield. Main themes this month are recurring - difficulties accessing GP appointments and getting through to practices on the phone. Examples of positive patient experiences have been shared, with a large proportion relating to hospital care and GP practices. The Community Champions have provided insights into the work they have carried out this month as they continue to provide support within our local communities. We have also heard from people who shared views related to Technology Enabled Care.

### Getting support from a GP

In July, 53 pieces of feedback were received relating to at least 17 different GP practices across Sheffield. 30 of these stories were positive, with people stating they had been seen by attentive staff, had received thorough care and treatment, and had managed to get an appointment.

23 people shared less positive stories, with a large proportion related to difficulties trying to get through on the phone and experiencing barriers when trying to access appointments. 3 people said they had struggled to get an appointment and felt worried as they were experiencing symptoms they thought could be cancer-related.

One patient tried 150 times to get into the phone queue at their surgery. When they finally did, they were allocated an appointment but this was later cancelled by the surgery and they were advised to go to the Walk in Centre instead. They had to pay £20 in taxi fares to get there but were grateful they were seen promptly by staff. A different patient was turned away when they arrived 5 minutes late for their appointment and were advised to go to the Walk in Centre instead.

An individual tried to contact their surgery a number of times to obtain their blood test results but gave up due to lengthy phone queues. They were contacted by staff 7 weeks after the test had taken place to say

“With all the help and support from this GP surgery I have my health and life and independence back.”



“It’s too difficult for me to get an appointment at this surgery.”

they needed to take medication. The patient said they were really disappointed that the information hadn't been communicated sooner.

Three people we heard from went to their GP with various health issues but were concerned as they didn't receive a referral for further investigative work. One of these people said their trust in their GP had diminished. A different person said after visiting their GP a number of times saw a locum doctor instead who took them seriously and finally referred them to see a specialist.



"Patients seem like a chore."

## Patient experiences of hospital

We heard from 13 individuals who shared their experiences of hospital services. 10 of these people provided positive feedback and praise relating to The Hand Clinic, Ocular Oncology, Surgery, the Surgical Assessment Centre, Firth 8, A&E, Weston Park Assessment Unit, Orthopedics, Endoscopy, and Neurology. One patient whose first language wasn't English praised the staff for the care they had received and said that everything had been communicated very clearly to them. They were also impressed with the hospital and facilities in general.



"I must say that my treatment by the staff at the hospital has been absolutely fantastic."

A different patient shared a more mixed experience. They praised the quality of care given by staff but said delays when waiting for medication meant that they had to stay an additional day. We also heard an example where more effective communication would have been helpful - a person got in touch as their relative had been moved to a number of departments during their stay, but no updates were provided to the family leading to confusion and worry.

People shared feedback about how public transport was causing delays and impacting their journeys. For instance, some bus services are no longer operating, sometimes buses do not turn up, and various communities have seen services reduced. We heard if patients arrived late they were often penalised, and parking at the hospital was too difficult for those who were able to arrange a lift.

"I wish staff would recognise how important it is to communicate with relatives."

## People living in a care home

We heard about 3 different care homes across Sheffield this month. One person had previously made a complaint about their relative's quality of care, but felt the response they received was poor. They wanted advice to take the complaint to the next stage. Another relative commented on the resident's food, stating it was often bland and not very appealing. They also felt that residents should be supported to go out on trips more often.



Two residents shared positive feedback. One was happy with their GP visits and felt that their GP was friendly and approachable. The other resident spoke of the care home staff and the good quality of care they provided. They were also pleased with the amount of activities they did in and out of the care home, and said getting out into the fresh air made a positive difference to their wellbeing.

"I really like this place"

## Mental health services

This month 5 people contacted us to share their experiences of mental health services. One person shared their experience of IAPT talking therapies; they said they were given the right support tools which made them better equipped for the future. They praised the staff member they worked with, saying they were an excellent listener and very understanding.

"I am living my life because of this service."

Another person praised the support they had received at St Georges and described the staff member as being patient and demonstrating a genuine interest in wanting to help others.



Three people shared less positive experiences of care. One person said they had experienced poor mental health for a significant number of years but the system wasn't doing enough to help them. They said there was a lack of counselling support available and often medication was offered as a solution instead of targeting the root cause. A different person wanted advice to make a complaint as they felt their relative was not getting the follow-up care and support they needed after inpatient treatment.

Another individual said that they had completed two different assessments but both didn't result in support, as staff felt a diagnosis wasn't beneficial. They felt the Emotional Wellbeing Support (EWS) and Single Point of Access (SPA) teams had left them with no support and said they didn't have any other support systems in place that they could turn to for help.

"My [relative] is not getting any mental health support at all this is extremely worrying and concerning."

## Dentists

Five people got in touch with us this month about NHS dentistry. One person contacted us as they and their three children hadn't seen a dentist for 2 years. They had concerns as their eldest child had overcrowded teeth, which was leading to decay. Recently, they tried two dentists locally but neither was accepting new NHS patients. A different person said they had been trying to get a dentist for three years without any success. We also provided advice to one patient as they received a costly quote for private treatment which they believed could be carried out through NHS work.



"I haven't been able to get a dentist for years, it is far too difficult."

## Technology Enabled Care (TEC)

People shared their views on Technology Enabled Care this month, and although there were many examples of positive feedback there was also a large proportion of concerns raised. One key theme related to the costs associated with running the equipment in the home. For example, electricity, mobile phone, and broadband costs which some people may not be able to afford. People also said that receiving the right digital support would be important, so that they could understand how the technology worked and know what to do if equipment became faulty. Another area of concern related to poor Wi-Fi and mobile phone signals in some areas of the city and how this may have an impact on the equipment running effectively.



## Sheffield Community Champion Insights – pharmacies

The Community Champions are continuing to offer advice and information and have signposted people to appropriate services.

At a recent session, the Champions met with a group of South Asian women and discovered a large majority had experienced recent issues with medication shortages, or knew someone who had been affected. One person said their relative had to wait over a week for their medication due to stock issues. Another was repeatedly told by the pharmacist to "try again tomorrow" but the medication never arrived and they were eventually advised to try a different pharmacy. One group member said they always made sure they had their prescription printed so they could take it elsewhere as their nominated pharmacy often ran out of stock.



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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
- Feedback shared from the Sheffield Community Champion Volunteers

**Want to share your own experience? Get in touch**

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