



healthwatch

Windsor, Ascot and
Maidenhead

The Big Health Chat
RBWM
August 2023

Thank you, Windsor, Ascot and Maidenhead

We would like to say a massive thank you to the 40 + people who entrusted us with their experiences and views through conversations with Healthwatch.



Background and Scope

We wanted to hear from a variety of people from different communities, gathering insight into the health and social care experiences of residents in Windsor, Ascot and Maidenhead.

The Big Health Chat allowed us to collect a wider range of views and experiences across the area.

The tour and report recognise how a variety of services, and the environment where people live, affect the health and wellbeing of our community. These include housing, transport, leisure, police and community assets.

We wanted to listen to people about what matters to them. We kept our questions open to encourage individuals to share their views.

Methodology

When planning our engagement, we wanted to make sure we went to places where people of different ages and demographics gather. We visited places on different dates and times, to capture experiences from people who may be at work, school or have caring responsibilities.

Our locations were:

- Windsor Yards
- Maidenhead High Street
- Sunninghill Happiness Hub
- Maidenhead Library
- Parallel Event, the Great Park



What we asked

1. **What things would help you to improve your health and wellbeing?**
2. **What could make your neighbourhood a happier and healthier place to live?**

We heard that health and care experiences are varied, but that there are common themes. Many people were positive about their environment and its effect on their health and wellbeing.

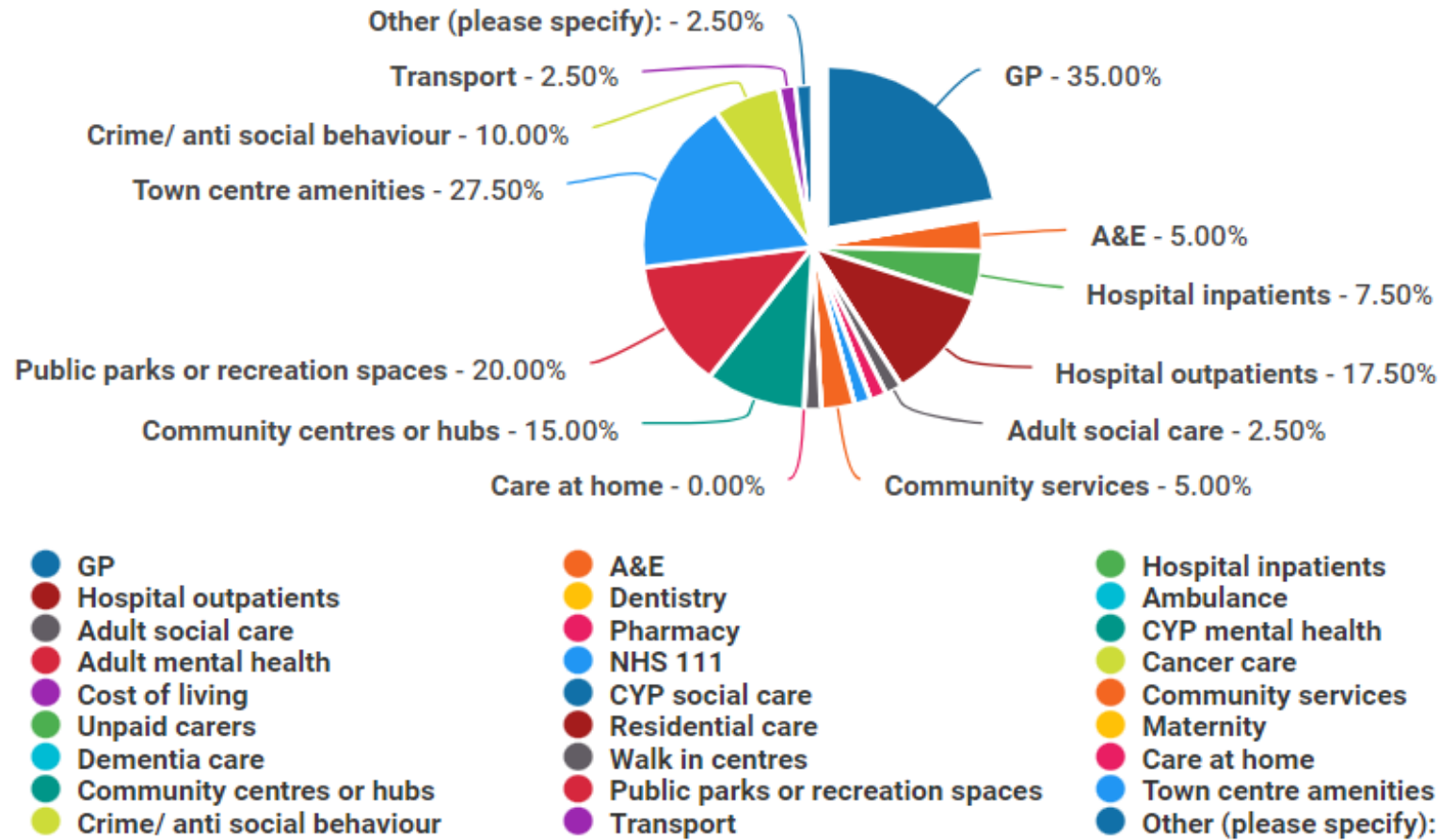
The top five themes obtained during our conversations with residents were:

- GP access
- Town centre amenities
- Public parks or recreation spaces
- Hospital outpatients
- Youth centres and activities



Themes

Feedback from 40 local people



What people told us.

Theme 1: GP Access

People expressed frustration about long waits to get through to their GP practice on the phone and lack of face-to-face GP appointments when they did make contact

“Difficult to get an appointment, you have to call between 8-8.30am for all appointments which means long waits. If you do get through the receptionist triages you which don't think is right”

Often the individual told us that their day-to-day life was affected while they were waiting ***“Difficult to get to see a GP. I have to have an annual blood test for a long-term condition. Really hard to get through on the phone so I had to go down and see them. The next appointment is in 3 weeks' time, so I have an anxious wait ahead of me for my results”. I would like to be seen more quickly”***

Despite recent communications campaigns there were some people who were not aware of the possible options for treatment of minor conditions.

“There are no GP appointments and 111 are not very good. Just not sure who to turn to when I need advice on little things like a rash or swollen ankle. I know I can see the pharmacist, but they are always busy”.

Theme 2: Town Centre Amenities

Maidenhead residents told us that they were unhappy with the variety of shops and town planning ***“Maidenhead town centre planning needs to be improved. The buildings are awful. The council invests in Windsor but forgets Maidenhead. We need more green spaces and nice places to walk”.***

Windsor residents also talked about empty units and the town shops being targeted at tourists, so the prices are too high.

Safety in Town Centres

Maidenhead was felt to be a safe place to live, by people of all ages, ***“Maidenhead is a very safe place to live. I’m in sheltered accommodation and I always feel safe in the local area”***

In Windsor we were told about problems with vandalism, drinking and drug use which made some residents feel unsafe ***“There is a lot of vandalism in Imperial Park (Windsor) The local kids have nothing to do so unruly behaviour is common.”*** Both young and older people felt that this was caused by lack of opportunities for young people in the community and absence of local police. ***“People do what they want because of a lack of police presence. I work in London and police are visible on the streets all the time.”***



Theme 3: Public Parks or recreation spaces

The Royal Borough has a wealth of natural assets such as parks, woodland and other outdoor spaces for the community. People told us that getting outdoors in these spaces helped to improve their wellbeing, although they would like more events that are aimed at local people rather than tourists ***“I live in Windsor, so we are lucky to have lots of green spaces to get out and about. I would like more community events”.***

The Braywick Leisure Centre was mentioned by a group of young people in Maidenhead. They all take part in different activities there ***“Local leisure centre in Maidenhead is very good, I have lived here all my life and very happy with the amenities”***

In Sunninghill the importance of community was highlighted by attendees of the Happiness Hub

Sunninghill is a lovely, friendly community. I am a full-time carer, for my wife and everyone in the shops and cafes knows me and looks out for me



Theme 4: Positive feedback for hospital outpatients

We spoke to a school nurse attending orthopaedic outpatients with a child. ***“Orthopaedics at Wexham have been really good, we have been seen by 3 departments in under an hour. It's important because the boys who need to attend hospital are here without their families so they can be nervous”.*** (Boarding school)

The Plastic Surgery Department at Wexham were praised, ***“They have been wonderful. They took the time to listen, were very kind and explained everything really well. They are doing a great job”***

Many people we spoke to told us about the wonderful job that hospital volunteers do. The patient transport buggy and it's volunteer driver at Wexham made a stressful experience more positive for people who have limited mobility.

Patients at Heatherwood told us about good experiences ***“Heatherwood, have been great, I have been looked after really well.***

Communication was highlighted as an issue by some patients ***“Sometimes communication can be slow. There has been a delay in getting letters”*** We were also told that some patients received email and written letters that contained contradictory information.



Theme 5: Youth Centres and Activities

Young people in Maidenhead and Windsor felt like they had nothing meaningful to do. Youth centres had been closed.

“We need more for young people to do. There is not much for us when we are on school holiday.” (Windsor)

“We need more youth centres. There was one at the top of the high street but that closed down (Maidenhead) and there is nothing for young people to do”.

Older people also felt that more activities for young people would help to reduce crime in the Borough.

We spoke to one young person who had been well supported by Windsor social prescribing team. They had visited A&E in mental health crisis 15 times while living in London and had received no on-going support. Since moving to Windsor, a social prescriber has helped them attend various community groups. It has been helpful, and they are able to get out and about again.

Young people also highlighted the lack of information on vaping, ***‘we don’t know what harm it’s doing’***. ***“My friends throw vapes in bins; it is bad for the environment”***

A group of teenagers told us that they don’t know how to make a GP appointment, their parents do it for them. They didn’t know the name of their GP practice or how to make contact with them.

Other key areas of feedback

Dental Care:

"Smile Clinic in Dedworth, are very good with children, they make a real fuss of them. We feel very lucky with where we live in Dedworth, all the health services are very good"

Blood Services at King Edward Hospital

"I had a blood test at King Edwards which was a great service"

GP Wellbeing Event

"Redwood House had a, "Wellbeing Patient Event", checking patients BP, weight etc. GPs were in attendance along with lifestyle coaches, dietician, nurses. Over 100 people attended, it was a huge success, we need more of these please".

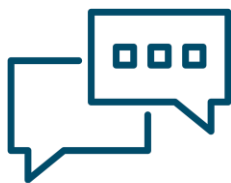
Issues for injured carer

Full time carer had an injury and could not attend A&E as the cared for person could not be safely left alone. Because they had passed the time for it to be classed as an immediate risk they were turned away from A&E the following day. They had to be referred for an x-ray at St Marks. It is now 1.5 weeks since the injury and the patient is in a lot of pain and not sure what is happening next.

Adult Social Services

Windsor resident- "Adult social care is very poor. I called 20 plus times when caring for my elderly father with dementia and never got any help".

Healthwatch Recommendations:

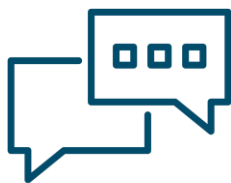


GP Access

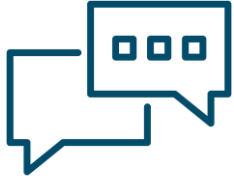
Windsor, Ascot and Maidenhead GP practices have access to cloud-based telephony systems and improved websites which should make contacting a practice easier for the patient. More needs to be done to communicate the capabilities of the new systems and monitor patient satisfaction.

- Triaging of patients to nurses or other medical professionals is possible when a GP appointment is not necessary. Although this can be unpopular with patients. The government have set out the Primary Care Access recovery plan to improve access. Some initiatives are already underway, e.g. improving telephone systems so they are digital, this will enable patients to hear where they are in the queue and the option to leave a message and get a call back the same day.

Other initiatives are in the pipeline e.g. being able to book more services via GP website. The government has said all patients should see their GP within 2 weeks depending on clinical need. Government press release May 2023. “If their need is urgent, they will be assessed and given appointments on the same day. If it is not urgent, appointments should be offered within 2 weeks, or patients will be referred to NHS 111 or a local pharmacy”. Communicating these changes so patients understand their options is important

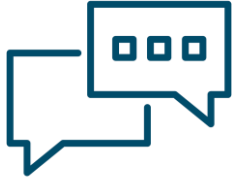


Consider running “Wellbeing Events” at GP Practices across the Borough. The Redwood House event was well received by patients. This would also provide an opportunity for education around self-care and to engage with patients.



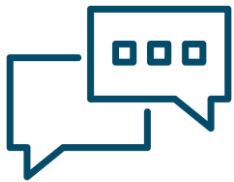
Public Health – Vaping

Vaping insights project on-going in Datchet, Horton and Wraysbury. Public Health to use this insight alongside feedback provided by the Youth Council to the Children and Young People’s transformation board to provide improved information for young people and their parents or carers regarding the effects of vaping on health and the environment.



Young people in our communities

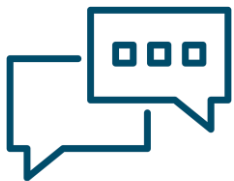
Children and Young People’s transformation board to include feedback in future planning for RBWM. Royal Borough of Windsor, Ascot and Maidenhead to plan engagement with young people before change or closure of youth services.



Safety:

Share communications with young residents on how to stay safe, what to do and how to report crimes.

Consider increasing presence of police, community support officers or RBWM community wardens in Windsor town centre.



Maidenhead Town Centre:

Communicate any plans for town centre re-generation clearly with residents. Involve local people in the planning stage and consultation for any community spaces.

Response from Frimley ICB regarding Healthwatch recommendation

We would like to inform patients,

- of the roles within a general practice health care team, including pharmacists, mental health practitioners, paramedic practitioners, physios, and social prescribers now available in every part of the country
- how practices have continually been working hard to improve patient experience and access to their team, recently this has included adopting new digital phone systems which allow a call back, informed queuing and signposting to services if appropriate
- of the different ways to contact your practice giving patients choice: online, telephone and face to face
 - Online – Use the form found on your GP practice website. It's convenient and secure and can save time. You'll get a response within 48 hours.
 - Via the phone – Telephone lines are active during your surgery opening hours and have been improved, in line with feedback, to improve capacity, reduce waiting times and in some cases offer call back options.
 - In person – Pop into your practice to speak with the team. Let the Care Navigator know if you would like to talk privately.
- When you get in touch, you will be asked what you need help with. The information you provide will be used to help choose the most suitable doctor, nurse or other health professional in the team to help or you may be signposted to a more appropriate service.
You can always tell your practice:
 - If there's a specific doctor, nurse or other health professional who you would prefer to respond to you
 - If you would prefer to consult by phone, face-to-face, by video call, text or email
 - If you need an interpreter
 - If you have any other access or communications needs

What Healthwatch has done so far:

Primary Care – GP Access

Healthwatch Windsor, Ascot and Maidenhead is currently scoping a project about GP access. This was the most commonly raised concern for residents in The Big Health Chat and our What Matters Most survey.

Healthwatch took part in a walkthrough of St Marks hospital to better understand the current service model.

Hospital Communications to patients

Healthwatch has highlighted the mixed messages that residents are receiving when being notified of hospital appointments through different formats. This has been passed onto the Frimley patient experience manager for review. We will be undertaking Monthly engagement sessions at Wexham and Frimley and will use this as an opportunity to ask for more information about hospital communications.

Vaping

Healthwatch has highlighted to RBWM Public Health, the need to inform young residents and students in RBWM about the harmful effects of vaping. Young people are requesting clear communication so that they can make an informed choice.

Passed on congratulations to services that received positive feedback

Next Steps:

Healthwatch Windsor, Ascot and Maidenhead will share this report at the Windsor, Ascot and Maidenhead Place committee, the Health and Wellbeing Board, Windsor, Ascot and Maidenhead Council, One Borough Group and Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust.

“A BIG THANK YOU “

Healthwatch Windsor, Ascot and Maidenhead wishes to thank all the residents and Healthwatch Volunteers of their time and feedback shared with us.



ADVICE AND INFORMATION

We are here to help, advise, give information, and listen your experiences

Healthwatch are the independent champion for people who use health and social care services. We're here to find out what matters to people and help make sure their views shape the support they need.

We also help people find the information they need about health and social care services or support in Windsor, Ascot and Maidenhead.

Here to help you on the next step of your health and social care journey

We have the power to make sure that the government and those in charge of services hear people's voices. As well as seeking the public's views ourselves, we also encourage services to involve people in decisions that affect them.



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