

People's experiences of accessing NHS services

May 2024



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Introduction

Healthwatch Coventry is the independent champion for NHS and social care.

The Healthwatch Coventry mission is to hear experiences of NHS and social care services. An important part of our mission is to enable those in Coventry who do not have strong voice or are ignored to share their experiences of barriers to accessing care.

We gather the experiences of local people on an ongoing basis through community outreach which includes stalls at the City of Coventry Health Centre, Central library, and community settings.

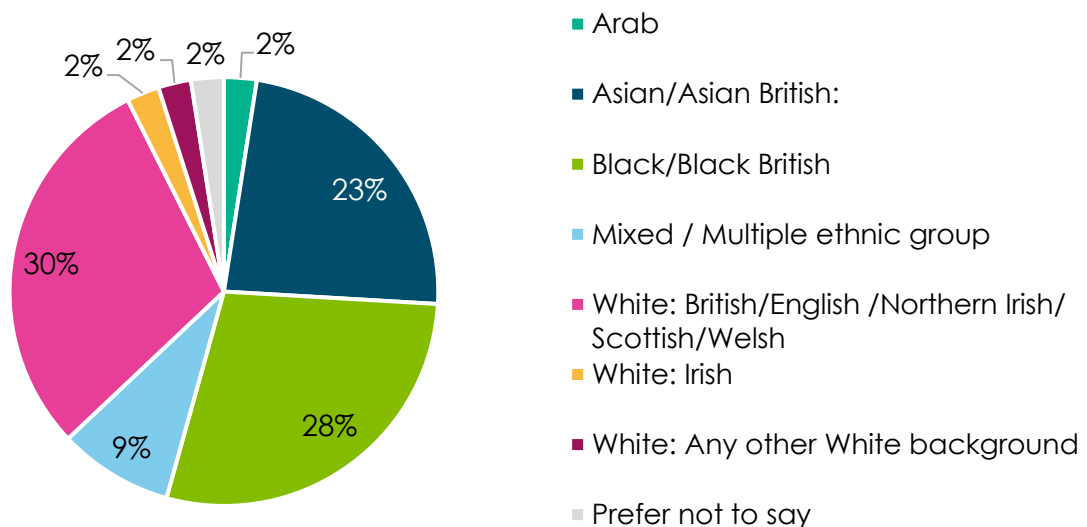
Who we heard from

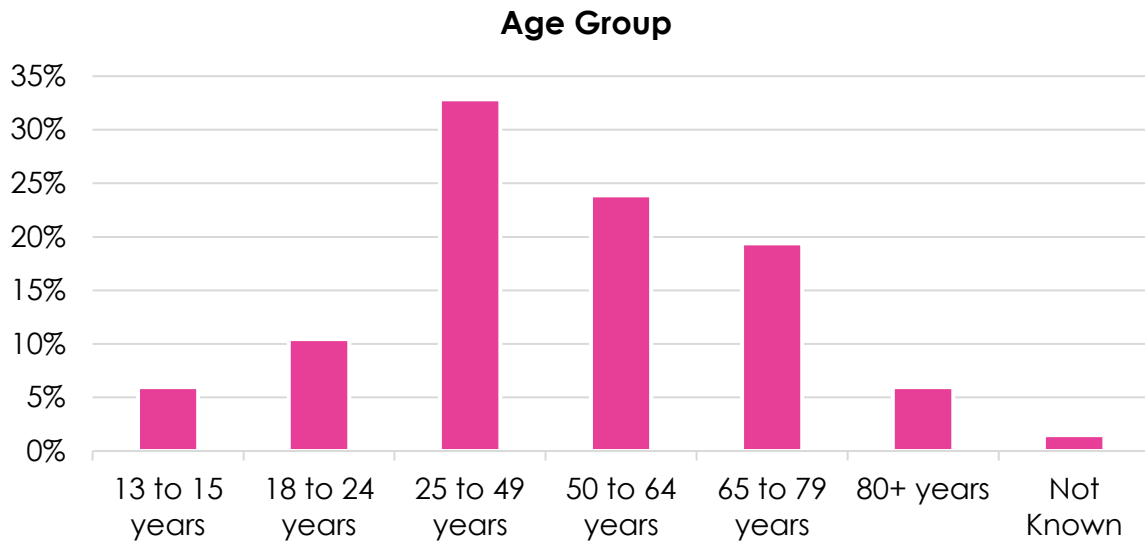
Between January 2024 and March 2024, we spoke to 81 people about their experiences of local NHS services. 43 % were male, 53% female and 4% preferred not to say.

The people we spoke to were diverse, reflecting the population of Coventry.

Demographics

Ethnicity





People's health

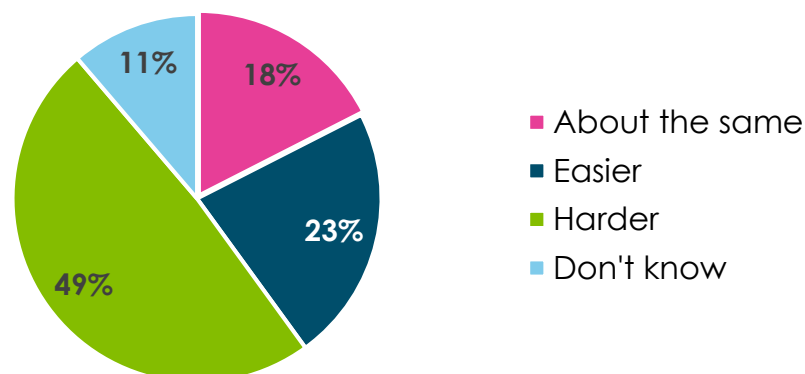
14% said they had quite poor health and 32% said that their health was very good. 31 people (38%) said they had a long-term health condition. 14 people (17%) considered themselves disabled. Five people (6%) said they were a family/unpaid carer for someone else.

What we found

Access to health care overall

- 49% felt access to healthcare overall was getting harder in Coventry. This is 9% more than in our last survey sample where 40% said it was getting harder.

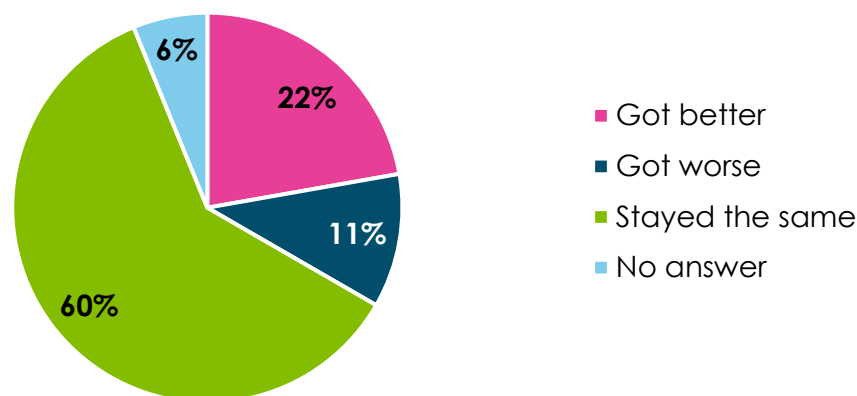
What is your rating of access to healthcare?



Mental health

- For the majority, 60%, their mental health had stayed the same and nine people felt it had got worse:

How is your mental health?



- Ten people said they had sought extra professional support for their mental health.

GP services

People were registered with different GP practices (see appendices for more information). Three people were not registered with a GP.

41% had contact with their GP practice within the previous month and a further 20% had been in contact with their GP practice in the last three months.

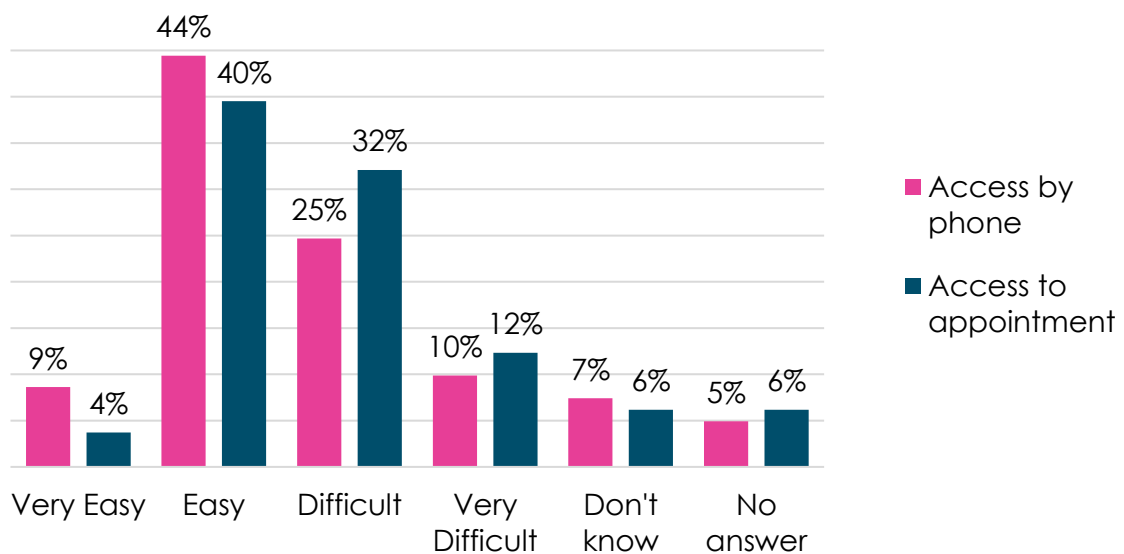
Last contact with GP practice	Count	%
In the last week	13	16%
In the last month	20	25%
Within the last three months	16	20%
Within the last six months	8	10%
Over six months ago	15	19%
No answer or don't know	7	8%
Not registered	2	2%
Total	81	100%

- 53% found getting through to their GP practice on the phone easy or very easy and 35% found this difficult or very difficult.

- 💬 *Phone call waiting is a long time.*
- 💬 *Sometimes you have to wait for half an hour on the phone. Sometimes when at work, its[sic] hard to call for an appointment at 8.30.*
- 💬 *Having to ring up each day for appointments that day makes it very difficult.*

- In total 44% found getting an appointment at their GP practice was very difficult or difficult and 44% found getting an appointment very easy or easy.

Access to GP services

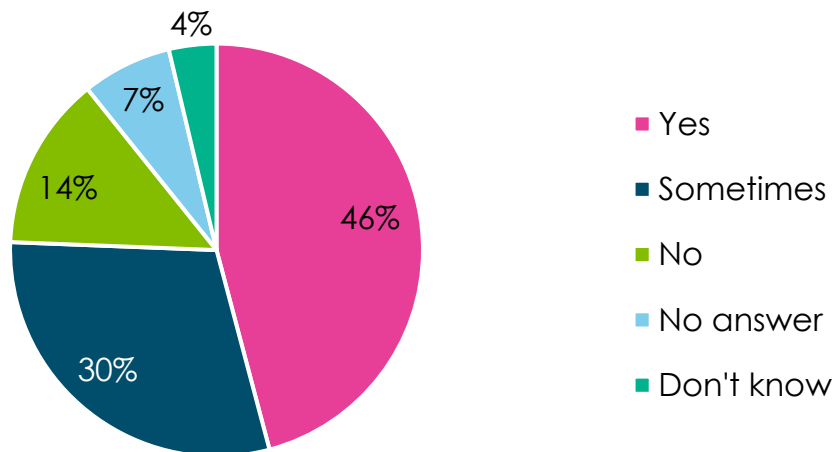


- 💬 *Just hard to get through and then hard to get a face to face. appointment*
- 💬 *Never any appointments in the time slot I need.*

Phone, online and face to face appointments

There was a mixed picture with people having different experiences about the format of GP appointments and if they thought this met their needs eg face to face or phone appointment etc. 43% felt it was as they wanted/needed, 30% said it sometimes was and 14% said it was not as they wanted.

Are appointments delivered in a way that works for you?



☞ Sometimes you need face to face and they refuse, sometimes you have phone appointment and they don't even call you.

☞ The surgery reception will go a long way to avoid you seeing a GP in person.












☞ Easier now they have a call back, as I couldn't make an appointment over the phone. I like face to face but don't get it, how can they say what's wrong with you if they can't see you.

☞ Too much telephone consultations, not enough face to face contact with doctor.

☞ Sometimes they give the appointment ages after we ask for it.

☞ Easy to book appointments over the phone and saves me less of a hassle in person.

- 21 people expressed positive sentiments and comments about their GP practice. Examples of positive feedback are:

Access/ flexibility	 <i>GP practice is very good, never a problem booking an appointment.</i>
	 <i>My GP service is very good. I can usually get an appointment first over the phone. Consultation then face to face if needed. The GPs keep a check on me as I have a few health issues going on.</i>
	 <i>Very good service understood me very well.</i>
	 <i>I am able to adjust appointments if I am unable to show up.</i>
	 <i>It is very good and prompt service for kids.</i>
	 <i>The GP is very good and very accessible anytime I wanted to see them.</i>
Positive feeling - patient focus	 <i>Seeing the Nurse is great and reassuring.</i>
	 <i>Very courteous, helpful and obliging telephone.</i>
	 <i>Very free to explain the condition of health and had great advice from the doctor.</i>
	 <i>I find my GP service, very good in handling me personally.</i>
	 <i>I have a brilliant GP who is very supportive and takes my concerns seriously. However, getting an appointment with my GP (and getting referrals to hospitals) takes longer than I would like.</i>

Pharmacy services

- 94% thought it was easy to visit a community pharmacy
- 70% had visited a local pharmacy within the previous six months.

- 57% said they were likely or very likely to go to a pharmacy for minor illness help. However, 35% said they were unlikely to do this or did not think they would do this at all.
- 72% rated their experience of community pharmacy positively. Six people said they had a bad experience.

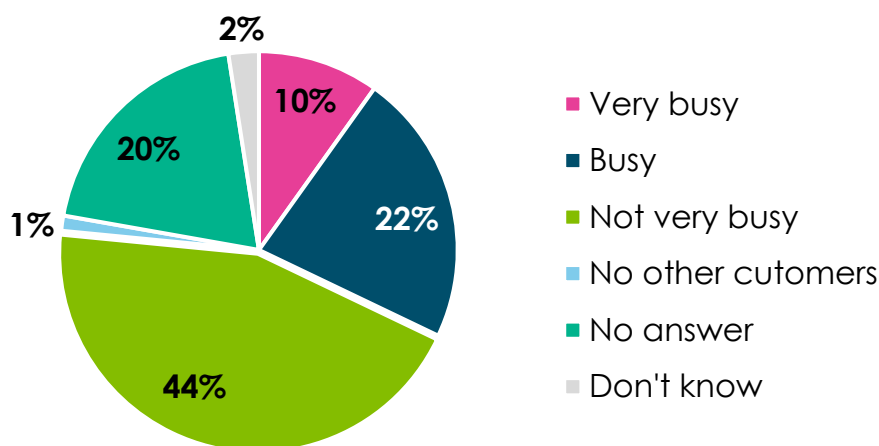
What people used pharmacies for

We asked people to select multiple categories to show what they used pharmacy for. Collecting or buying medication was the most common reason for visiting a pharmacy.

To collect prescription medication	49
To buy over the counter medication	18
For health advice or information	14
For help with new medicines	3
For emergency contraception service	0
For something else please say what	2
No answer	19

How busy was the pharmacy?

With recent pharmacy closures and reduction in opening hours we asked how busy people they found the pharmacy when they visited 45% said it was not busy and 32% said it was busy.



Tests and scans

Overall people were mainly positive about tests and scans in the NHS. 46 people had experienced one or more type of test or scan.

Sentiment about tests and scans	%
Positive	67%
Mixed	11%
Negative	4%
Neutral	15%
Unclear	2%
Grand Total	100%

Blood tests

34 of the 45 people who had use the blood taking service rated their experience positively.

Rating of blood tests	Count
Very Good	12
Good	22
OK	8
Poor	2
Very bad	1
Grand Total	45

“Nurses [in GP practice] often available for jabs and tests. Except blood tests which require often a week waiting from a phone appointment. Some centres need the patient to be in their catchment area too for a blood test especially. There is a waiting time phoning for an appointment as one may be often in a queue”.

Fourteen people had received an x-ray and 10 rated this as good or very good experience and four rated it as ‘OK’.

One person said they had had a poor experience of a heart test.

There were mixed experiences from those who had had a gastrointestinal test (e.g. endoscopy):

Rating of gastro tests	Count
Very Good	3
Good	1
OK	1
Poor	1
Very bad	1
Grand Total	7

Where do you get information about which service to use?

Getting information to help people find which NHS services to use is important and can be challenging, so we asked people which sources of information they used.

- 38 people had used the NHS website and 24 had used NHS 111 by phone or online.

33 people said they had got information about which NHS service to use from their GP practice and a quarter of people got information from friends and family:

Information source	Count
NHS website	38
NHS 111 online	11
NHS 111 phone	13
Social media	9
GP practice	33
Friends/family	21

Digital access/exclusion

- 10% had no access to the Internet and 5% relied on public or work access to go on the internet.
- 83% used a mobile phone or home Internet access.

Access the internet	%	Count
Yes, on home Wi-fi/ broadband	74%	60
Yes, on a mobile network	9%	7
No, I have no access to the internet	10%	8
Yes, on public Wi-fi	4%	3
Yes, at work	1%	1
No answer	2%	2
Total	100%	81

Conclusions

This report highlights what a diverse group of local people think about local NHS services.

The percentage of people thinking access to healthcare is getting harder overall increased by 9% from our previous survey, reaching 49% of those we spoke to.

However, people spoke positively about some services. For this survey we added questions about community pharmacy and tests and scans.

People had a high level of use of pharmacies and felt positively about them. Over half said they were likely to go to their pharmacy for minor illness help, but the main reason people told us they had been to a pharmacy was for medication.

This survey was conducted when the Pharmacy First initiative was very new. The findings show that there is a willingness to go to pharmacies for the kind of services this provides.

Most of those we spoke to had recently used their GP practice. For the first time since we started this survey the proportion who said it was easy or very easy to get through to their GP practice on the phone was over 50%. 35% found getting through to be difficult or very difficult, which is a slight, 3%, improvement on the previous survey.

There was an even split between those finding getting an appointment difficult and those finding it easy.

Those expressing positive comments about their GP practice reflected on personalised care, access which met their needs and flexibility. Negative comments highlighted access that did not meet individual needs, issues getting through or getting an appointment and needs/preferences not being met in how appointments were delivered.

Recommendations

- For local NHS managers and planners to reflect on the experiences we have gathered as evidence of the concerns of local people and the variance in experiences of different people and work to address this.
- For local NHS managers and planners to use this evidence as part of work to address inequality of access to GP services and broader health inequality in the local population.

- To acknowledge the report as part of wider evidence from Healthwatch and other organisations.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the City of Coventry Health Centre (a multi-use NHS building), Coventry City Council Central Library and Library Services, for letting us use their spaces for a stand.

Thanks to all the people who participated in the survey and spoke to Healthwatch Coventry.

Appendices

More about participants

Ethnic Group	%	Count
Arab	3%	2
Asian / Asian British: Bangladeshi	1%	1
Asian / Asian British: Chinese	1%	1
Asian / Asian British: Indian	18%	14
Asian / Asian British: Pakistani	3%	2
Any other Asian / Asian British background	1%	1
Black / Black British: African	22%	17
Black / Black British: Caribbean	4%	3
Any other Black / Black British background	4%	3
Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups background - any other	3%	2
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups: Asian and White	3%	2
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups: Black African and White	1%	1
White: British / English / Northern Irish / Scottish / Welsh	30%	24
White: Irish	3%	2
White: Any other White background	3%	2
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups: Black Caribbean & White	2%	2
Prefer not to say	1%	1
Not known	1%	1
Total	100%	81

Sexual Orientation	%	Count
Heterosexual/Straight	72%	58
Bisexual	2%	2
Pansexual	1%	1
Prefer not to say	12%	10
Not Known	12%	10
Total	100%	81

Postcode	%
CV1	19%
CV2	16%
CV3	21%
CV4	4%
CV5	5%
CV6	23%
CV7	1%
CV12	1%
CV22	1%
Not known	9%
Total	100%

Name of GP surgery registered with	Number
Allesley Park Medical Centre	1
Alliance Teaching Practice	2
Anchor Centre	1
Balliol Road Surgery	1
Broomfield Park Surgery	1
Cheylesmore Surgery	1
Clay Lane Medical Centre	1
Copsewood Medical Centre	2
Dr Bano and Partners	1
Dr Sani and Partners	2
Edgwick Medical Centre	1
Engleton House Surgery	1
Forum Health Centre	1
Gables Medicentre	1
Godiva Medical Centre	1
Green Lane Medical Centre	1
Harnall Lane Surgery	2
Henley Green Medical Centre	1
Hillmorton Road Surgery	1
Holbrooks Health Team	2
Jubilee Health Centre	2
Kensington Road Surgery	1
Kenyon Medical Centre	1
Longford Medical Centre	1
Mansfield Medical Centre	3
Moseley Avenue Surgery	1
Park Leys Medical Centre	1
Priory Gate Practice	3
Springfield Medical Centre	1
Stoke Aldermoor Medical Centre	2
Willenhall Oak Medical Centre	1
Willenhall Primary Care Centre	1
Windmill Road Surgery	2
Woodside Medical Centre	1
Not registered with GP	3
Not Known/stated	35
Total	81



Healthwatch Coventry
Admin: 024 7622 0381
Public helpline: 0300 0120315
Email: healthwatch@vacoventry.org.uk
Website: www.healthwatchcoventry.co.uk

Facebook: Healthwatch Coventry
X; @HealthwatchCov
Instagram: @HealthwatchCoventry