

People's experience of accessing health, wellbeing and community services when working in agriculture

Cheryl Berry Community Partnership Lead, July 2026.

Introduction

Agricultural workers and their families face unique, often hidden barriers to accessing healthcare and community support. These challenges are often rooted in a combination of the demanding nature of working in agriculture, and geographical location. Working in agriculture is physically, emotionally, and mentally demanding. Having to balance long hours, being on call 24/7, working with heavy machinery, and potentially dangerous chemicals. As well as the economic and environmental issues.

During May/June 2026, Healthwatch West Sussex survey went live and was widely promoted. Eight people completed the survey.

Thank you

We would like to thank everyone who has taken the time to complete the survey to support this important piece of work.

Findings

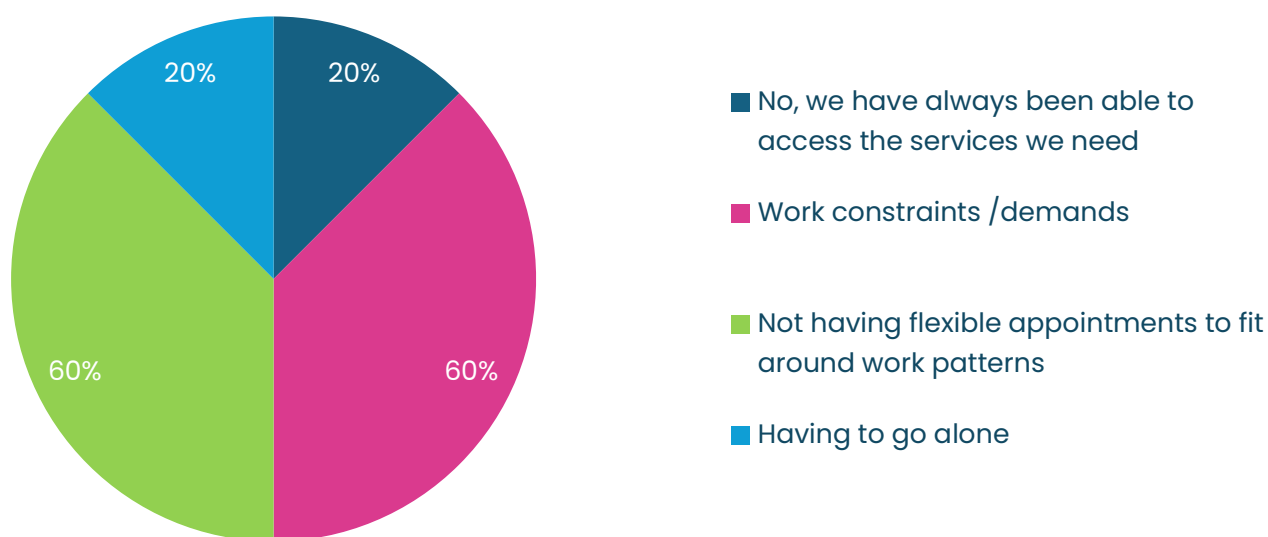
The eight responders live in the Horsham and Chichester areas of West Sussex. The age range of responders was between 35 and 65 years. All responders were self-employed with one person living with a disability.

Health and wellbeing access

The main barriers to accessing services were work constraints and demands, not having flexible appointments to fit around work and having to go alone.

One responder shared that they have always been able to access services they needed.

The main barriers

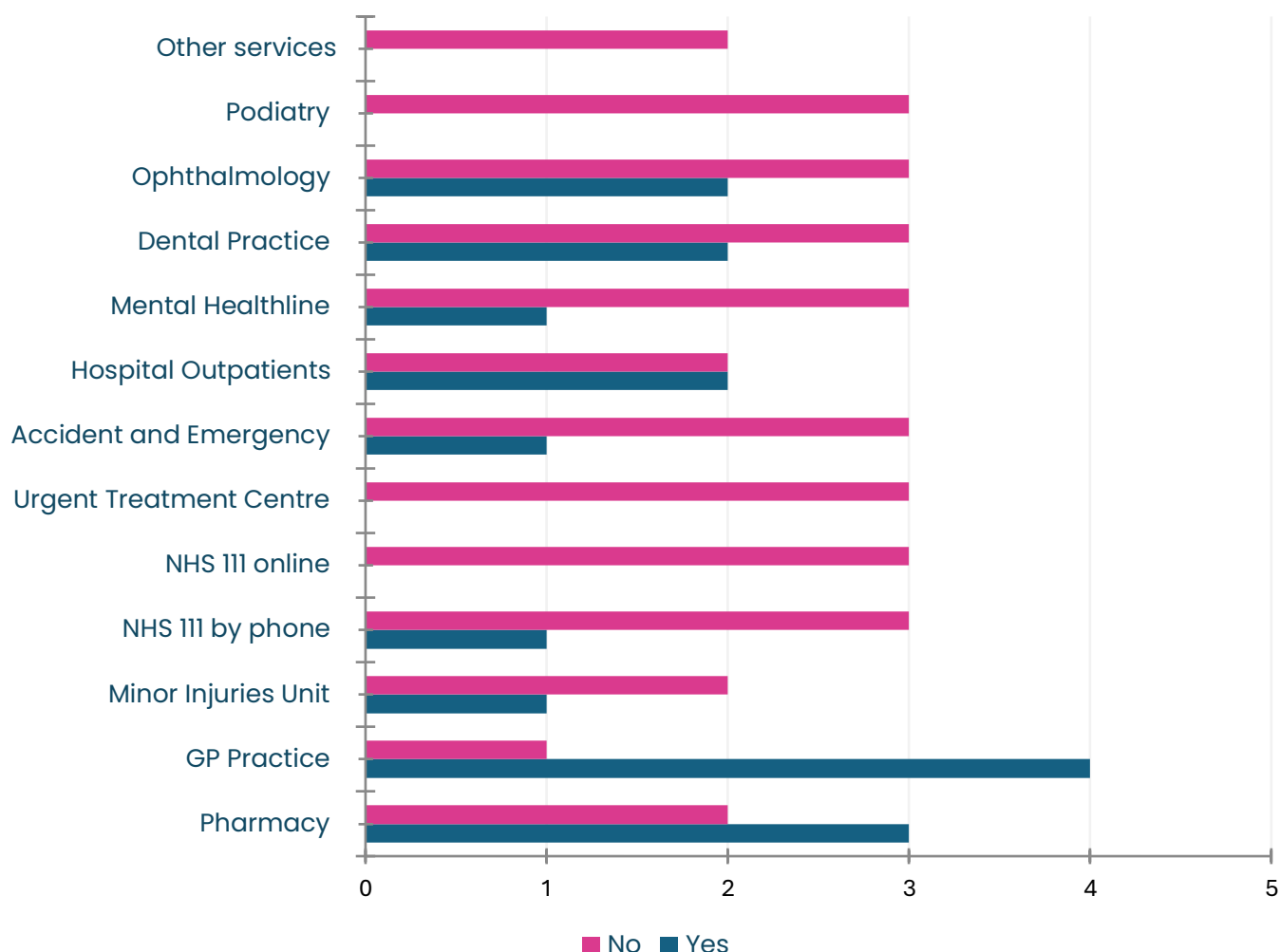


“ It can be difficult to just drop work and go at the time offered. one adult in family prefers to go with someone, which can be difficult to arrange.

The medical services responders have accessed in the past 12 months include:

- Local pharmacy
- GP practice
- Minor Injuries Unit
- NHS 111 by phone
- Accident and Emergency
- Hospital Outpatients
- Mental Health Healthline
- Ophthalmology

Medical services accessed in the past 12 months



Support gaps

Responders shared that they do not know how to access other community services such as stopping smoking, weight loss, mental health services, and community groups.

“ I am not certain about local mental health groups.

Responders shared that their children, family, and friends are important to them. What is important was staying healthy in body and mind. Being respected by peers. My farm.

“ We used to go to the beach all the time, but so much now as there is too much mess around.

Isolation and confidence

Loneliness was a major theme: 60% felt lonely, isolated, or socially excluded some of the time and 40% often.

“ I have felt lonely when family is at work since the death of my parents and still do.

Respondents shared the pro-active support they have accessed: weekly pub supper with friends, and phoning people.

Responders shared the one change to accessing services that would be helpful:

“ Less long waits for services
Farming to be profitable enough to be able to do less and therefore create time.

Summary

Although only eight people completed the survey, the findings should therefore be viewed as a small sample. However, the responses do highlight clear themes in the experiences of people working in agriculture.

These include barriers to accessing health, wellbeing and community services, the impact of work demands, rural location, gaps in knowledge about available support, and experiences of isolation and loneliness.

Next steps

Flexible access: Share the findings with local health and care partners to explore appointment options that better fit around agricultural working patterns, including early, late, telephone or outreach appointments where possible.

Continue listening: Use these early findings as a starting point for further engagement with agricultural workers and families.

Respondents' characteristics

Gender Female (1), Male (4)	Religion Christian (1), No religion (3), other (1)
Disabled (1), Long- term condition (2), none of the above (2)	Ethnic Background White British (5)



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