

Access to health and social care services in Sheffield

Key issues from May 2022

In May 2022 we received 55 pieces of feedback about health and social care services in Sheffield. This month we have heard reoccurring themes of people experiencing difficulty accessing GP appointments, NHS dentistry and mental health services. We have received mixed feedback about a wide range of GP practices across the city as well as those who have experienced hospital treatment. We have also received feedback about care and nursing homes.

GPs

In March we heard 24 pieces of feedback relating to 13 different GP practices in Sheffield. The majority of those reporting gave positive feedback around helpful staff, good care and were satisfied overall with the service. One individual praised the new telephone systems installed by their GP practice. This enabled the patient to hold queue position and receive a call back when they reached the top.

The majority of the feedback related to difficulties getting through to GPs on the phone, booking appointments and long waiting times to be seen. An individual reported when calling their GP to access urgent help with medication the line kept disconnecting leaving them to struggle without the pain relief that they needed. Additionally, we heard from patients calling their practice in opening hours however received automated messages advising them that the surgery was closed.

We also heard from a patient who stated that they had been trying to get an appointment with their GP for the last 5 months. Every time they finally got through on the phone they were told there were no appointments for the foreseeable future leaving them feeling helpless.



“From start to finish I have received excellent service from extremely professional people”.

“Practice phone keeps disconnecting me when I was seeking urgent help”

Hospitals and ambulance service

In April we heard from 7 people's experiences of hospital services. Largely, people who had visited hospital were positive about their experiences, describing helpful and friendly staff who were excellent at their jobs. Furthermore, an individual praised the South Yorkshire Ambulance Service. The team attended a home emergency and promptly adapted their communication style to meet individual need and ensured clear communication with the patient was provided throughout.

We did hear concerns about hospital appointments being cancelled. One person received communication stating their appointment had been cancelled but upon reading the letter felt it implied that they had cancelled the appointment themselves when this wasn't the case.

Dentists

This month the theme continued around people struggling to access NHS dentistry. We continue to hear from many people struggling to access routine and urgent treatment, unfortunately waiting lists still remain to be a long process. We continue to advise people if they are experiencing pain, ask to be triaged by any local dentist or alternatively phone NHS 111.

We continue to raise issues accessing dentistry at a regional level, and continue to support Healthwatch England's national campaign to #fixNHSdentistry. We believe that contract reform and meaningful, sustained funding is urgently required to get people the care they need.

Mental Health Services

One individual praised a member of the Single Point Access Team stating "I don't know if I just fell lucky for a change when I had to phone up the out of hours team but I had the most amazing person who I was talking to. They were so understanding and they listened to what I had to say".



"Without exception you were truly professional in every aspect of my care. What would we do without you".



"My child needs braces. I can't get them in to see a dentist leaving them without the treatment they really need".



We have continued to hear from people experiencing difficulties accessing NHS mental health services with long waiting times being a major theme.

Inpatient wards (Mental Health)

We have also heard that when relatives have attempted to contact mental health wards, some calls were going unanswered leaving them unable to speak to staff. Additionally, reports were made that phonelines were not working properly and staff were not calling individuals when they were advised they would receive a call back. Patients have reported problems trying to access a mobile phone signal on some of the wards and WIFI signal was described as being poor in some establishments.

Other themes included prominent staff shortages leading to medication and support delays and a shortage of interpreters leaving some people unaware of their rights. Lack of continuity of care was conveyed as patients were having to communicate with different staff members. Furthermore, feedback was given that some staff members had a lack of understanding of the legislation involved with the Mental Capacity Act 2005 meaning individual rights were being withheld.

Care and Nursing Homes

We have heard mixed reviews about older peoples care and nursing homes. Some praised the homes stating that the staff cared and looked after the residents well. A number of people have expressed concerns around difficulties trying to speak with staff on the telephone and prominent cases of staff shortages. Concerns were also raised in relation to resident trips out of the home not being offered in some establishments despite the fact that Covid 19 restrictions have been lifted and people were asking to go out.



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

Want to share your own experience? Get in touch

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