

Access to health and social care services in Sheffield

Key issues from September 2022

In September 2022 we received 89 pieces of feedback related to health and social care services in Sheffield. This month we continued to hear about some previously established themes in relation to difficulty accessing NHS dentistry and GP appointments (especially face to face). Feedback has been shared about hospital care linked to operation and procedure delays and confusion around mask wearing. We have heard a number of views from members of the public related to the Children's Hospital, with main themes linked to issues with communication and waiting times.

GPs

In September 2022 we received 52 pieces of feedback relating to at least 18 different GP practices across Sheffield.

48% of feedback shared was positive, with many reviews related to The Hollies Medical Centre and Sloan Medical Centre. Patients provided comments such as "staff thoroughly listened, were professional and reassuring, are patient led and answer endless questions with patience and understanding".

The issues we heard in relation to GPs covered a wide range of topics. We continued to hear of the difficulties patients are experiencing gaining GP appointments, especially face to face ones. We heard reports that some patients are still being offered telephone consultations and have challenges booking non-urgent appointments. One patient stated they had been trying to access an appointment with their GP for nearly 2 months.

Others had resorted to seeking support from the walk-in centre. When reception staff denied one patient a same day appointment they attended the walk-in centre and were told they needed urgent blood tests. Another patient had a telephone



"Despite being busy and under pressure they respond with kindness and respect and we always feel valued".

"When I do get through after the 23rd-33rd attempt I am told the surgery is at full capacity [...] what am I supposed to do to? "

consultation but felt they needed a face to face appointment for their specific issue. This wasn't granted so they attended the walk-in centre who were able to make a diagnosis.

We heard from one patient who informed us they had tried registering with a new practice but were told this couldn't be granted as they did not have any ID. Feedback was also shared in relation to accessibility of services; three patients felt digitally excluded and were not able to get the information they needed.

Finally, we heard comments about language barriers and translation support. Patient interpreters were largely provided at practices but we heard that translators often spoke a different dialect of the patient's language leading to the appointment not being able to continue. Views were also shared in relation to language barriers experienced when speaking with reception staff, and challenges accessing medication instructions.

“Not everyone feels comfortable sharing personal information in a website questionnaire, downloading an app with their personal health information onto their phone”

Hospitals – operation delays and confusion around mask wearing

13 patients shared their experiences of care in hospital, 31% describing positive experiences. Highlights related to receiving excellent care at A&E, with staff being described as thorough, caring and demonstrating good communication skills.



We heard from a large proportion of patients who had experienced delays to planned operations and procedures. Some told us that they had been waiting over a year, which had led to their pre-op assessments expiring. Two patients told us their surgery cancellations were having a significant impact on their daily activities and mental wellbeing.

“Was very impressed by the level of professionalism speed and genuine care during my visit to the Same Day Emergency Care ward”.

There was one report linked to confusion around Covid-19 staff mask procedures. One patient noticed some staff wore masks on the wards and others did not. They also heard staff commenting that they were unsure of the current procedures.

Children's Hospital

A small proportion of views shared this month were positive praising staff and the service overall. A number of people told us they felt communication could be improved between departments, staff and primary care services. In addition, one patient told us information about individual support needs was not passed over when transitioning from paediatric to adult secondary services. Waiting times to access care was another main theme identified.



We heard that when one person's child was staying in hospital they had to pay for food and drink for themselves which they struggled to afford. There was a lack of consistency here, as others told us that occasionally small items of food were offered to parents and guardians when on the wards. People told us they thought free food and drink should be offered to parents.

Concerns were also shared in relation to the lack of quiet areas being available for autistic children throughout the hospital.

People still continue to struggle accessing NHS dentistry

11 people contacted us in September stating they were struggling to access NHS dentistry; some of these people had not seen a dentist since before the Covid pandemic. Issues included people experiencing dental pain, cracked teeth or problems with their dentures. Challenges continued linked to long waiting lists, lengthy waiting times for treatment, lack of clarity around NHS capacity, struggles to access urgent dental care when experiencing pain and NHS dentists transitioning to private work only.



We heard from two pregnant individuals who were unable to access a dentist despite being entitled to NHS support. One individual told us they were having trouble eating due to their denture fitting incorrectly. Their GP made a referral to the dental hospital however this was rejected. They then called 111 but were told to contact their own dentist even though they did not have one. They reported they

"I'm pregnant and suffering from bad sensitive teeth and gums, and it is hurting my teeth to drink or eat some days"

felt like they were going around in circles, felt confused and did not know what to do.

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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