

Access to health and social care services in Sheffield

Key issues from November 2022

In November 2022 we received 97 pieces of feedback related to health and social care services in Sheffield. This month, we continued to hear from patients experiencing difficulty accessing GP appointments and NHS dentistry. We also heard views on hospital care and treatment, including issues around blood testing and accessible information. Feedback was shared relating to pharmacy services, where some people have encountered difficulties receiving their prescriptions. We have also heard views in relation to patient experiences in care homes.

GPs

In November 2022 we received 46 pieces of feedback relating to at least 16 different GP practices across Sheffield. Just under half of the feedback we heard about was positive, with many reviews relating to good encounters with practice staff and with the care and treatment received.

Less positive themes shared related to patient experiences when trying to access appointments. Many expressed their frustrations of having to phone the practice as soon as it opened to try and book a same day appointment. We heard this appointment system was inaccessible for many due to inflexibility. People also told us at most practices, non-urgent appointments can't be booked in advance.

A large percentage of patients told us they had experienced long wait times on the phone and when finally getting through were told no appointments were available. Furthermore, we heard reports when some patients reached number 1 in the queue, calls were not answered, phone lines were cut off or the call was diverted to re-join the back of the queue again. Two patients were advised to go to the practice in person as soon as it opened when they could not get an appointment by phone, but this was impractical for them both.



"All the staff (reception, nurses, doctors) have been so friendly, attentive and quick to help."

"2 months not getting appointment for child. Call every morning at 8am they give call back after 10am and say no appointments."

One patient informed us that due to not being able to get an appointment to discuss a matter with their GP, they had to privately pay for their own investigative test kit as they were concerned about a health issue.

Another patient was invited by their practice for a shingles vaccination but after making a challenging journey to get there, were told they were not eligible for the vaccine due to their age. The patient stated they felt upset and discriminated against.

Finally, we heard from two patients who reported their GP had asked them to find a new practice as they were outside of the catchment area and the practice was oversubscribed, despite them being with the same surgery for over 40yrs.

“This used to be a really good, accessible surgery but all that has changed since covid.”

Hospitals

13 patients shared their experiences of hospital care, the majority of feedback received related to positive experiences.

Highlights included feedback which praised staff and care at dermatology, the stroke unit, angio day ward, ophthalmology, colorectal surgery and A&E. Staff were described by patients as being very efficient, caring, compassionate and kind.

Concerns shared related to a variety of topics. One patient was told by a department that they “must come in” for a blood test despite being housebound and accessing other phlebotomy services at home. They asked if staff could use a recent full blood test taken instead, and receive a telephone consultation, but this was not granted. A new blood test was carried out at the appointment but a consultation did not take place, they were told this would now happen by phone at a later date. The total journey time to and from the appointment took a considerable amount of time leaving the patient extremely fatigued and experiencing significant impacts to their health for some days afterwards.

We heard from another patient who was given information leaflets relating to nutrition and diet when attending their appointment. The leaflets were not translated into the right language and contained food examples they felt were culturally inappropriate.



“The doctor explained things in an understandable way for my 80yr old dad and made us feel like we were really valued and not rushed at all.”



Care Homes

This month we heard feedback relating to lack of staff knowledge with regards to hearing aid fitting, removal and general maintenance checks. Lack of denture care was another concern, with issues associated with correct fitting, removal and general cleaning. It was reported that denture adhesive had been left overnight on one patient's dentures – this resulted in the substance hardening, which left the patient unable to wear them and not being able to eat.



Community Pharmacies- issues with prescriptions

Members of the public shared their experiences of pharmacy services. Some stated that after ordering a repeat prescription with their pharmacy, they were unaware that their GP had declined to process the order. As this information wasn't communicated, patients only found out when making a journey to collect the medication, or if it wasn't delivered to their home. Others stated they had experienced errors with medication, medication being out of stock and unexpected delays when receiving medication. Lack of communication around processing times was another issue; often people went to collect their prescription it wasn't ready, due to not being told how long the processing time would take.

"Our pharmacy is good, they're very busy and sometimes get things wrong because they're busy, but the staff can be quite short."

People still continue to struggle to access NHS dentistry

7 people contacted us in November stating they were struggling to access NHS dentistry. The majority of these people were seeking support to try to obtain routine treatment as they were not currently registered with an NHS dentist. All of the people we spoke to told us they had tried contacting many dentists but all had long waiting lists.

"I've been unable to find an NHS dentist in Sheffield, calling everyone on the NHS website, please help."

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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