

The impact of the cost-of-living crisis on access to healthcare

What we did and why

Cost-of-living has been rising in the UK since 2021. At Healthwatch Sheffield, we wanted to understand whether this has impacted people's **access to healthcare**. So, at the end of 2022, we undertook a project looking at how those living in Sheffield were being affected.

Access to healthcare

includes things like travel to and from appointments, paying for prescriptions or how easy it is to get an appointment e.g., dental and eye care.

Summary of findings

1. People are worried about their financial futures



People are worried about their financial situations changing and what the impact might be on their ability to afford future healthcare-related costs.

2. People are finding certain healthcare services like eye care and dentistry harder to access

I haven't been to the dentist in a few years because I can't find an NHS one, I think I'll have to pay privately if anything happens and am worried about how much it will cost

3. People are struggling to afford medication costs

I am a student I find it very difficult to pay for prescription, opticians etc. I have no income yet I still have to pay.

4. People are cutting back on activities that improve their health and wellbeing

Activities that are important or even vital to people's general health and wellbeing are something that people are having to cut back on due to the cost of living. This includes leisure activities like going to the gym or group sessions.

5. People are struggling to afford travel costs

Travel fares are becoming more difficult to afford, preventing people from getting to appointments and health and wellbeing activities.



Who we spoke to

We designed a short survey looking at the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on access to healthcare. We covered various potentially affected areas e.g., eye-care, travel, health and wellbeing costs. We distributed the survey both online and as paper copies.



We visited a local market to listen to people's experiences. We asked people to fill out our survey if they had time as well. We spoke with both members of the public and stall owners.

We spoke to people belonging to various groups across Sheffield, including*:

- **Sheffield voices** – a self-advocacy group primarily made up of adults with a learning difficulty and autistic adults
- **Sheffield cycling 4 all** – inclusive cycling project run by Disability Sheffield
- **SACMHA Health & Social Care and SADACCA (Sheffield And District African Caribbean Community Association) Social Café** – a collaboration between SADACCA & SACMHA which provides an inclusive, informative community space in which to socialise and build friendships
- **Roundabout** – provides shelter, support and life skills to young people in Sheffield
- The women's group at **Israac** – a Sheffield-based Charity offering an inclusive and warm welcome to the Sheffield Somali community and embracing all communities in the local area
- **ACT (Aspiring Communities Together)** – community organisation for Black and Minority Ethnic communities across Sheffield
- **Sheffield Children's Hospital NHS Foundation Trust**



*Descriptions of these groups are taken directly from their websites

Survey results

Who responded?

72%
Female

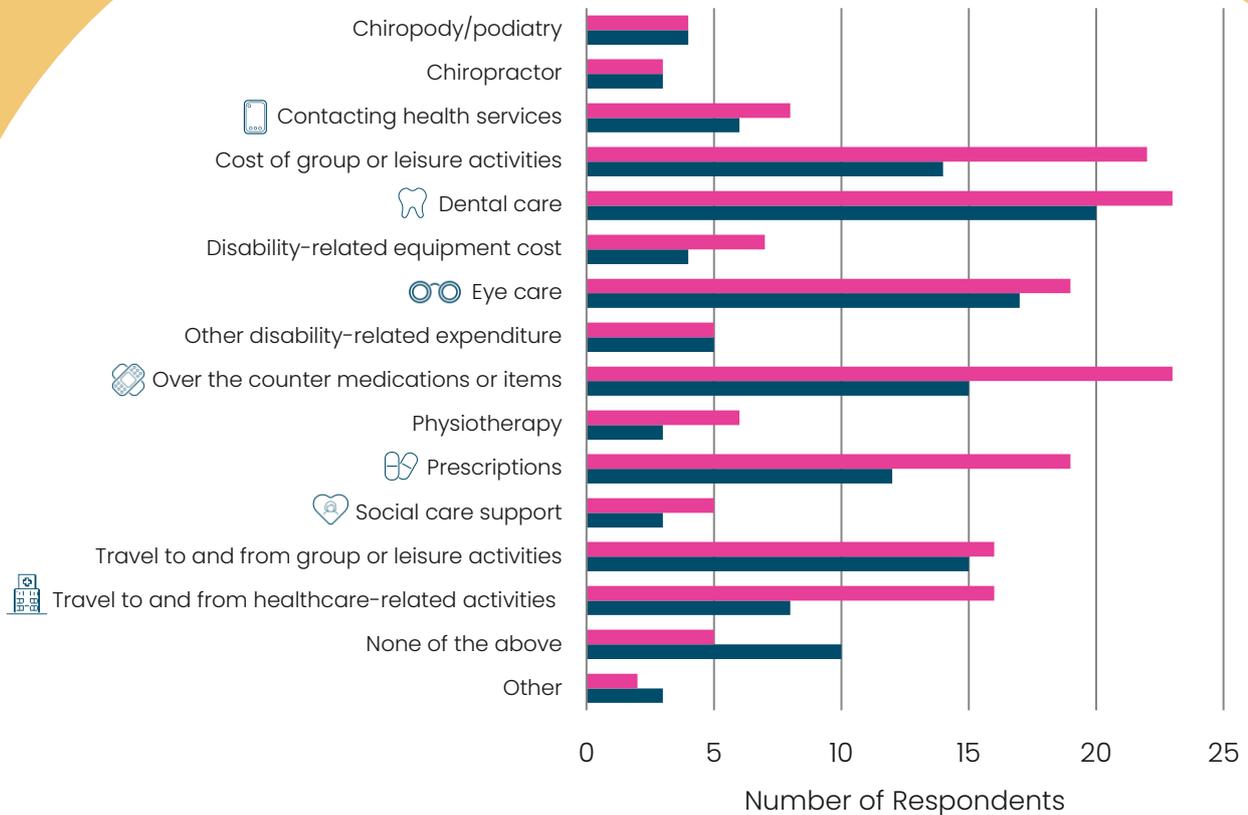
35%
Communities
marginalised by race
and/or ethnicity

Average
age of
33

56%
students

Present and future concerns

In our survey we asked people which areas of healthcare access they felt were currently and might be impacted by cost-of-living. The key areas of concern were cost of group or leisure activities, dental care, eye care, travel, and medication costs (prescription and over the counter). The results are below.



■ Future concern ■ Present concern

Personal stories

I recently had an operation. I think I **need to be seen again** as something doesn't feel right the only **appointments** available are within **business hours** so I **don't bother**.

If I close my business that would mean **no income for me and my family**. The wait time at the walk-in would be too long for me to shut the business and lose income.

I **run my own business**, open 6 days a week, **cannot afford to close** to access healthcare. I can't rely on anyone to help out my business if I was ill.

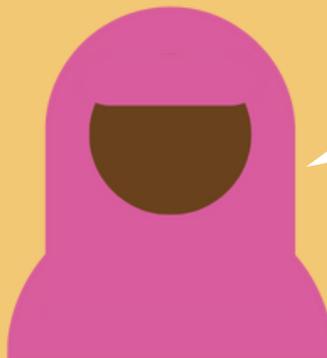


Male, British-Pakistani

My child needed two pairs of **specialist glasses** which were very **expensive**, but the cost wasn't covered by any voucher scheme.

Luckily, I applied for some **funding from a charity** which helped to pay for the glasses.

I think, with the way things are, if I had more **barriers to understanding** the process (like English as a second language) **the experience would have been worse**.



Female, Somali

Next steps...

Thank you to everyone that took part in this project. If you feel you have anything else you might like to add, please get in touch with us.

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