

## Briefing August 2023

**What local people said about access to services and their health and wellbeing**



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## Summary of findings

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- 57% said accessing health service is getting harder slightly lower than the 62% from the previous quarter
  - 48% found it difficult or very difficult to access their GP practice by phone
  - 55% said it was difficult or very difficult to get a GP appointment
  - 52% said rising prices impacted on affording dental care
  - Communication regarding hospital appointments and tests is varied and the comments people made indicate how it can be improved.
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Healthwatch Coventry is the independent champion for NHS and social care. Our outreach sessions reached 67 people between April and June 2023. We asked people questions their feelings about and experiences of local health services.

This report is the second in this series allowing us to compare with the previous three months.

Those who took part were from a range of ethnicities and age groups. 30% said their physical health was poor or very poor. 70% said their health was quite or very good. 42 said they had a long-term health condition. 22% said they had no access to the Internet.

57% felt that accessing health care services was getting harder. Most people said they had high levels of trust or 'some trust' in the NHS.

The figures for people who found it hard or very hard to get through to their GP practice and hard or very hard to book an appointment were very similar to those from the previous quarter. Around half of the people thought both were difficult.

Getting through on the phone to the GP practice and the length of time before an appointment takes place are a concern for people.

We continue to hear that some people prefer a face-to-face appointment and find these difficult to get.

However, approximately a third of people continue to say that for them access to GP service is easy or very easy.

Concerns about the cost of living and knock on impacts on people's use of health services continue. The cost of dental treatment, being able to pay for transport to get to medical appointments and paying for over-the-counter medication were the top three areas of concern.

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*"Try to not visit the doctor as it will be the extra cost of living"*

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Suggestions about how services could make a difference to the rising cost of living focused on services being more responsive to health needs.

Nearly a third of those we spoke to, said they were waiting for a test or appointment. Some reported good communication about the appointment and others had communication gaps or had not had any information so far.

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*"I would like a better idea when my operation will be to lessen my anxiety and stress"*

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*"Didn't receive letter - received phone call reminder"*

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This report provides a snapshot of local people experiences and feelings about NHS services indicating the concerns they have.

It is useful evidence of the concerns of people in Coventry for local NHS managers and planners to reflect and consider how these can be addressed.

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## Introduction

Healthwatch Coventry is the independent champion for NHS and social care. Our role is to represent the interests of patients and the public in local NHS and social care. We gather views and feedback and take this to those who run and plan services to work for change. The Healthwatch role is set out in legislation.

## About this work

The Healthwatch Coventry mission is to hear the experience of NHS and social care services from those in Coventry who do not have strong voice or are ignored. We gather the experiences of local people in relation to NHS and social care services on an ongoing basis through community outreach and online methods.

Between the beginning of April 2023 and end of June 2023 we gathered people's experiences of local NHS services through our pop up outreach sessions in the City of Coventry Health centre (a multi-use NHS building) and Coventry libraries and at other community events:

1. Overall feelings about NHS services
2. GP services
3. The impact of rising prices
4. Mental health
5. Waiting times

The information was gathered through guided interviews or self-completion survey based on the preference of the individual.

## What we found

### About our participants

We spoke to 67 people. 57% were identified as female and 34% as male. The remainder did not answer the question or preferred not to say.

Those who took part were from a range of age groups. Those taking part were from diverse ethnicity. 33% were white British, 15% Indian ethnicity, 9% Chinese, 9% other white background and 7% Pakistani. A third of those who took part lived in CV1 postcode area, meeting our aim of hearing from those experiencing greater inequality.

Eight said they were a family/unpaid carer for someone else.

22% had no access to the Internet and 3% relied on public access routes to go on the internet. 67% used home Wi-Fi/broadband for access to the Internet.

22 people said the rising cost of living was impacting on being able to afford to use the internet/mobile phone.

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>%</b>
Asian / Asian British: Chinese	6	9%
Asian / Asian British: Indian	10	15%
Asian / Asian British: Pakistani	5	7%
Any other Asian / Asian British background	2	3%
Black / Black British: African	2	3%
Black / Black British: Caribbean	3	4%
Any other Black / Black British background	2	3%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups: Asian and White	1	1%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups: Black African and White	1	1%
Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups background - any other	1	1%
White: British / English / Northern Irish / Scottish / Welsh	22	33%
White: Irish	1	1%
White: Any other White background	6	9%
Prefer not to say	1	1%
Not Known	4	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>100%</b>

<b>Access the internet</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes, on home Wi-Fi/Broadband	45	67%
No, I have no access to the internet	15	22%
Yes, on a mobile network	4	6%
Yes, on public Wi-Fi	2	3%
Not Known	1	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>100%</b>

## People's health

19 people were disabled. 30% said they had quite or very poor health. 42 people said they had a long-term health condition.

How would you describe your physical health	Count	%
Very Good	12	18%
Reasonably Good	35	52%
Quite Poor	16	24%
Very Poor	4	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Experiences of services

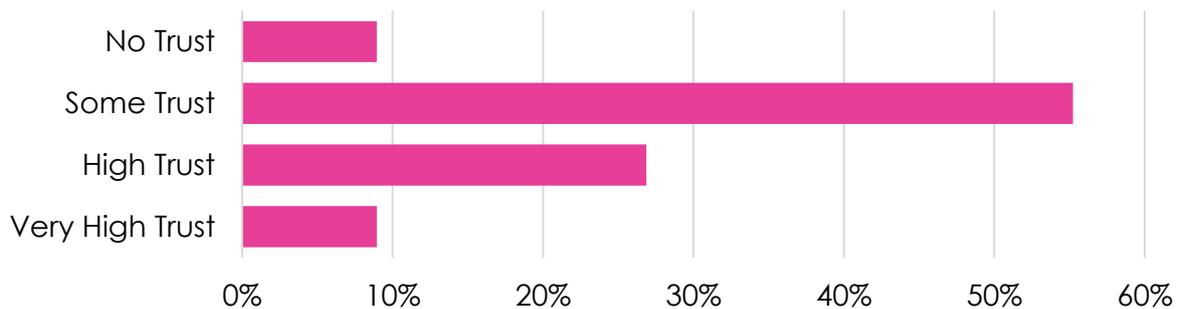
### Access to health care overall

We asked if people thought access to health care services in Coventry is getting easier or harder. 57% felt it was getting harder.

	Count	%
Harder	38	57%
About the same	8	12%
Easier	16	24%
Don't know	5	7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>100%</b>

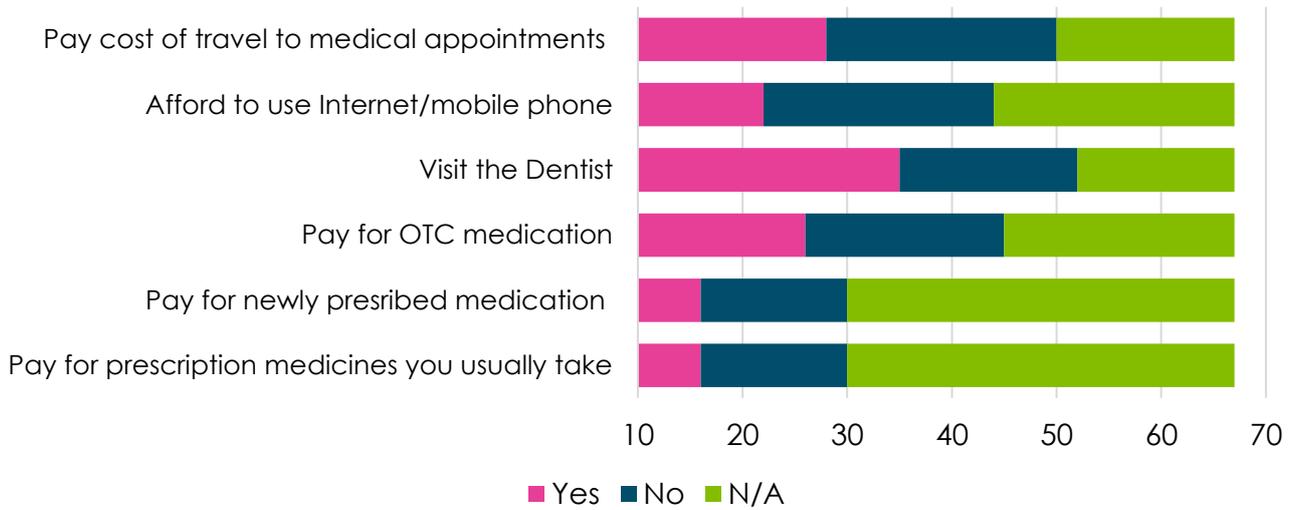
### Trust in services

How much trust do you have in the NHS to provide health care to you when you need it?

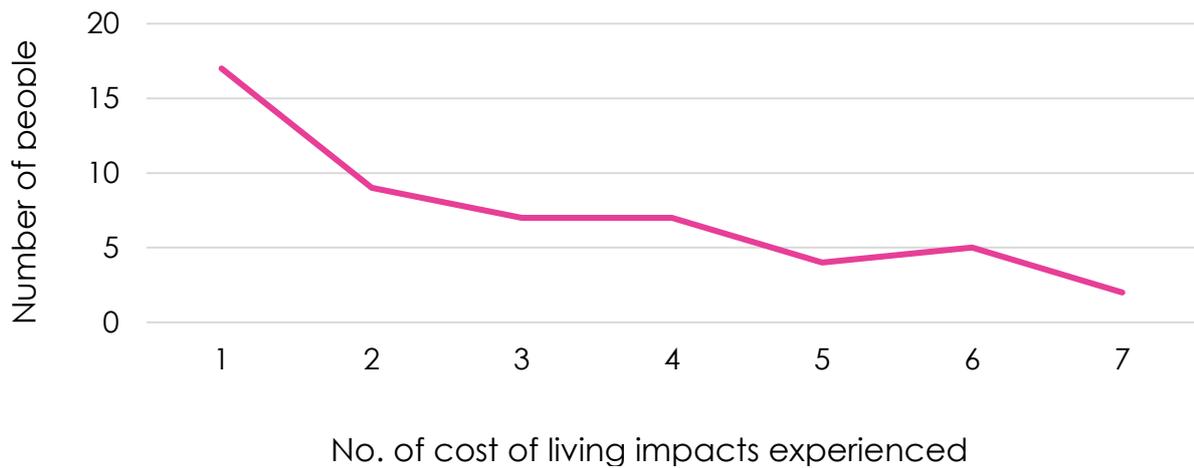


35 people said that rising prices impacted on being able to afford dental treatment, for 28 it impacted on their being able to pay for transport to get to medical appointments and for 26 paying for over the counter medication was harder to afford.

### Cost of living impact on being able to...



### Cost of living impacts



We collected the following comments about the impact of rising prices on health:

Try to not visit the doctor as it will be the extra cost of living	Access to health service
Need to keep warm due to condition. Not able to put heating on	Heating and health
If I have more than three medications to take the cost is so	Medication costs

high. I would not be able to buy them all. This will have an impact on my health	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fresh fruit and veg are more expensive. Due to price I go for the cheaper processed food</li> <li>Harder to purchase high quality food e.g. Fresh fruit</li> <li>Food prices mean that the price of eating a diet that suits my health needs has doubled - in some cases tripled.</li> </ul>	Healthy food – cost prohibitive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Very stressful- fall in my mental health. Healthy food options harder to find</li> <li>Increased stress</li> </ul>	Mental wellbeing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dentist is very expensive – can't afford</li> <li>I keep on putting off visit to the dentist and opticians. New glasses cost etc.</li> <li>Struggle to pay dental costs for treatment. Nothing can be done on NHS and end up always having to go private</li> </ul>	Dental costs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cutting down on everything, especially social activities.</li> </ul>	Social interaction

And the following suggestions for what would help. Most of these comment focus on the responsiveness of services:

### What would help with cost of living impact?

- Reduce the costs of prescription and over the counter medication. The cost of dental care is also too expensive
- Keep in touch and see how we are. GP/Nurse contact info. about services
- More information if new problem arise (New Diagnosis)
- Increase face to face appointments, decrease waiting lists, letter system for appointments. Being able to book appointments

- 💬 Increase staff, reduce queues, appointments don't run on time
- 💬 Shorter time for appointment
- 💬 My husband has been waiting for a scan for long time
- 💬 GP receptionist to be more gentler [sic] on the phone. Bus fares are set to rise

## Mental wellbeing and health

For the majority, 67%, their mental health had stayed the same and 15% felt it had got worse:

How is your mental health?	Count	%
Got better	8	12%
Got worse	10	15%
Stayed the same	45	67%
Did not answer	4	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>100%</b>

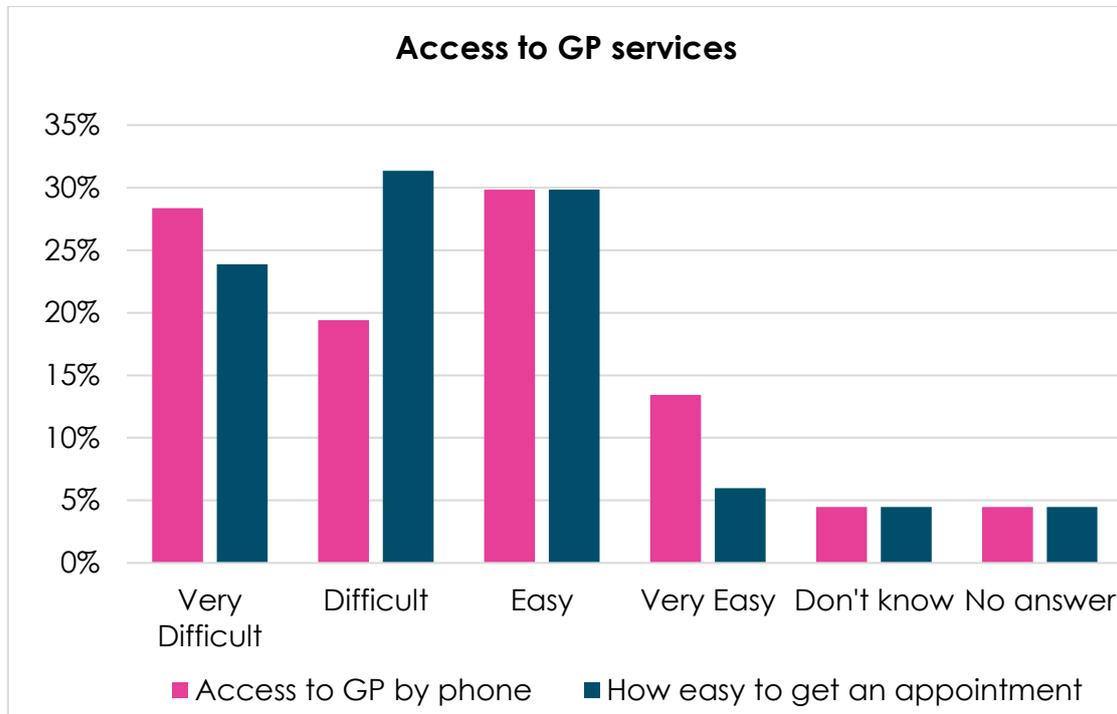
Nine people said they had sought professional support for their mental health. We asked how helpful people had found this support with four saying very helpful or helpful and four not helpful and one did not know.

## GP services

There had been a high level of contact with GP services from those who took part. 25% had contact with their GP practice in the last month and another 27% within the previous three months. A list of GP practices they used can be found in the appendices. One person was not registered with GP.

	Count	%
In the last week	17	25%
In the last month	18	27%
Within the last three months	4	6%
Within the last six months	15	22%
Over six months ago	5	7%
Don't know	1	1%
No answer or not applicable	7	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>100%</b>

30% found both getting through on the phone and getting an appointment at their GP practice easy. However, 48% said access by phone was difficult or very difficult and 55% found getting an appointment difficult or very difficult.



Are appointments delivered in a way that works for you:

Yes	30%
No	16%
Sometimes	37%
Don't know	6%
No answer	10%
Grand Total	100%

### Access to face-to-face appointment

Eight people made comments about difficulty getting or preference for face-to-face appointments with comments such as:

Always offered telephone call but difficult to get a face to face

Much rather have face to face

Face to face rule hard but when they call [you], they then say you need to come in [to the surgery].

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- Never a face to face [appointment]. 6 weeks wait for a useless phone appointment, inappropriate. I'm hard of hearing so phone is difficult. Even when GP says make a face-to-face appointment, the receptionist refuses. My many health concerns are ignored.
  - It is almost impossible to actually see any GP in person
  - A bit difficult when phone appointment, no face to face. Wanted to see nurse but told there were no nurses. Have to see GP - only phone appointment. Hard to explain about your leg - he didn't take video call, have to go back again.
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### Getting through on the phone

The following are examples of comments about long waits on the phone:

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- Telephone lines very busy so difficult to get through. Doctors not always available as some part time
  - Phone is always engaged
  - Long queue in the morning
  - Queuing/ long waits on the phone
  - I am often number 21 in the queue - Sometimes no appointment after waiting. They do try their best to fit me in where possible though, despite pressure they are under
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### Examples of comments about waiting for appointment slots:

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- It is hard to get GP appointments by the time you get your turn on the phone all the appointments are gone. You may be lucky to get one on the day
  - It is very difficult and takes too long for a patient to have an appointment with the GP more especially face to face
  - Takes 3 weeks to get an appointment
-

**Two comments about reception staff:**

- 🗨 The receptionists are rude, unhelpful and act as if they are guarding the gates of heaven
- 🗨 Sometimes reception do not understand my needs and I hate being asked to divulge what is wrong with a receptionist ... Also receptionist does not listen to my needs

**Positive comments received:**

- 🗨 Phoned, Answered within 4 rings. Answered telephone appointment, discussed medication, phones back 1.5 hours. Responses brilliant. Monday tends to be difficult
- 🗨 Really like your practice - lots of different doctors
- 🗨 Can do by phone or face-to-face
- 🗨 Getting better, check-up good (Nurses)
- 🗨 I've been referred to nurse for treatment, nurse has been very good. When required she even gets the doctor involved
- 🗨 Most satisfactory
- 🗨 I have 2 doctors at the surgery, I have a choice, they're very good.

**Waiting for tests or appointments**

22 people, nearly a third of those we spoke to, said they were waiting for a test or appointment. Six of these people had been waiting over six months and one had been waiting over a year, at the point we spoke with them.

We asked how people rated the communication about their tests and hospital appointments with most thinking this was good.

Communication	Count
Very Good	3
Good	14
Poor	7
Very Poor	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>

**Communication gaps**

- 🗨 Didn't receive letter - received phone call reminder
- 🗨 There was no communication from the hospital department (Ophthalmology) until I had to call
- 🗨 They send a text message appointment and when you call to re-arrange the appointment the phone is always on voicemail
- 🗨 Communication poor, not any help or support offered
- 🗨 No comms just an appointment date

**Communication worked well**

- 🗨 I get updates
- 🗨 They send letters for me to read and re-read
- 🗨 Helpful paperwork
- 🗨 Letter received with contact numbers on them

**Waiting to hear**

- 🗨 I would like a better idea when my operation will be to lessen my anxiety and stress
- 🗨 No confirmation - right to choose (still waiting)
- 🗨 Still haven't received appointment - very stressful

## Conclusions

This report provides a picture of access to services taken from local people's experiences. The trends and themes are broadly similar to the first report in this series, which covered January to March. Therefore there has been no significant change in access to GP services for local people or lessening of the impact of the rising cost of living.

Communication regarding hospital appointments and tests is varied and the comments people have made indicate how it can be improved.

This research adds weight to other Healthwatch Coventry evidence and recommendations.

## Recommendations

1. For local NHS managers and planners to reflect on the experiences we have gathered as evidence of the concerns of local people and consider how these can be addressed.
2. To acknowledge the report as part of wider evidence for Healthwatch as it reflects findings in previous reports.
3. To continue the pop-up outreach session in libraries and City of Coventry Health Centre to look at people's continuing experiences of health and care.

## Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the City of Coventry Health Centre (a multi-Use NHS building), Coventry City Council Central Library and Library Services, for letting us use their spaces for a stand.

Thanks to all the people who participated in the survey and spoke to Healthwatch Coventry.

## Appendices

### More about participants

Gender	Count
Man	23
Woman	38
Prefer not to say	1
Not completed	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>

Age	Count
18 to 24 years	2
25 to 49 years	20
50 to 64 years	22
65 to 79 years	16
80+ years	5
Not known	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>

Sexual Orientation	Count
Asexual	2
Bisexual	4
Gay man	1
Heterosexual/Straight	45
Not completed	8
Prefer not to say	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>

Postcode where live	Count
CV1	31%
CV2	21%
CV3	12%
CV4	10%
CV5	7%
CV6	16%
CV7	1%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

<b>Name of GP surgery</b>	<b>Number</b>
Broomfield Park Medical Centre	3
Central Medical Centre	1
Clay Lane Medical Centre	1
Engleton House Surgery	4
Forrest Medical Centre	2
Kenyon Medical Centre	1
Phoenix Family care	1
Copsewood Medical Centre	1
Mansfield Medical Centre	1
City of Coventry Health Centre	1
Priory Gate Surgery	5
Dr Sani & Partners	3
Dr Ansari	1
Henley Green Medical Centre	2
Godiva Medical Centre	3
Moseley Surgery	2
Limbrick Wood Surgery	1
Springfield Medical Practice	1
Quinton Park Medical Centre	2
Woodside Medical	2
Foleshill Road	1
Bedworth Medical Centre	1
Jubilee Medical Centre	2
Forum Medical Centre	2
Small Health Medical Centre	1
Dr R Bano & Partner	1
Harnall Lane Surgery	1
Tile Hill Surgery	1
Dr Princewall & Partners	2
Willenhall Oak Medical Centre	1
Woodway Lane Medical Centre	1
Allesley Park Medical	1
Gables Medical Centre	1
Not Known	12
N/A - i.e. not registered	1



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