



## **Briefing – experiences of local NHS services**

**What local people said about access,  
trust in services and their health and  
wellbeing**

**June 2023**

## Summary of findings

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- 55% had 'some trust' in the NHS
  - 62% said accessing health service is getting harder
  - 47% found it difficult or very difficult to access GP practice by phone
  - 58% said it was difficult or very difficult to get a GP appointment
  - 52% said cost of living impacted on access to NHS dentistry
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Healthwatch Coventry is the independent champion for NHS and social care. Our outreach sessions in the City of Coventry Health Centre (a multi-use NHS building) and Central Library reached 89 people from across the City. We asked people a number of questions about their feelings about and experiences of local health services.

This report captures a snapshot in time of between January and March 2023. 30% who took part were White British and nearly a third were from Asian/Asian British/Indian. A range of ages were represented, although most 60% came from people aged 25 -64. People were registered with a wide range of GP practices.

Most people said they had 'some trust' in the NHS (55%), which compares with less than 35% who have very high trust or high trust. The issue of trust in NHS services to deliver and be available to people has been discussed locally as a developing issue. From this sample, 55% having some trust is something that can be built on by the local health and care system.

While there were some positive comments about people's experiences of services there were also challenges around access to GPs and other health services. There were also concerns about continuity of care.

There was a perception that people thought that accessing health care services was getting harder 62%.

How people could access their GP and health services was an issue, particularly around not being able to get an appointment by phone as people found it difficult to get through on the phone, due to the number of calls before them on the line. Appointments were not readily available and often people had to wait.

Some people preferred a face-to-face appointment and found this was also difficult to access.

- *“Difficult to get through. Get appointment over the phone, always prefer face to face appointments”.*
- *“By the time you get through on the phone, there are no appointments left”.*

However, over 30% felt that it was ‘very easy’ or ‘easy’ to get access to their GP by phone, but less than 30% thought that it was ‘easy’ or ‘very easy’ to get an appointment.

Most people, over 50%, said that the appointment delivery was ‘very easy’ or ‘easy’, and there were positive comments about this:

- *“Basically, it is very good for me, so far, thank you!”*

There is an awareness of staff at the GPs and elsewhere being very busy.

- *“It was great, but lately they are just overwhelmed”.*

Ten people said they had been waiting over a year for NHS tests or treatment. There were positives about communication from NHS services regarding waiting for tests or hospital appointments, as 65% said that they thought that communication with the NHS was good.

The survey also focused on the rising cost of living and how this impacts on people’s health and wellbeing. Over a third of people were finding it difficult to pay for travel to appointments, pay for over the counter medication and harder to use the internet. The highest level of difficulty in payment was a visit to the dentist, with 40% saying that the rising cost of living was impacting on their ability to do this.

These issues have broader impacts in terms of being able to access support and providing the services people need. One person indicated that this was affecting people’s mental health. Comments include:

- *“Travel is difficult, buying medicines sometimes hard.”*
- *“Yes, it definitely affected my mental health.”*

Suggestions were made about how services could make a difference to the rising cost of living, through vouchers or affordable gym classes.

# Contents

Summary of findings .....	2
Introduction .....	5
About this work.....	5
What we found .....	5
About our participants.....	5
People's health .....	7
Experiences of services .....	7
Conclusions .....	12
Recommendations .....	13
Acknowledgements .....	13
Appendices .....	14
More about participants.....	14

## 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 January and the end of March 2023 we piloted pop up Healthwatch outreach sessions, with members of staff, and the possibility for running it with volunteers in the future. The pop ups took place in the City of Coventry Health centre (a multi-use NHs building) and Coventry libraries to talk to local people about Healthwatch and ask questions about:

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 89 people.

Gender	Count
Man	37
Woman	49
Prefer not to say	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>89</b>

<b>Age</b>	<b>Count</b>
18 to 24 years	3
25 to 49 years	36
50 to 64 years	24
65 to 79 years	23
80+ years	2
Not known	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>89</b>

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Count</b>
Any other Asian / Asian British background	3
Any other Black / Black British background	1
Any other ethnic group	1
Arab	1
Asian / Asian British: Chinese	1
Asian / Asian British: Indian	26
Asian / Asian British: Pakistani	7
Black / Black British: African	9
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups: Asian and White	1
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups: Black African and White	1
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups: Black Caribbean and White	1
White: Any other White background	1
White: British / English / Northern Irish / Scottish / Welsh	35
Not Known	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>89</b>

<b>Access the internet</b>	<b>Count</b>
Yes, on home Wi-Fi/Broadband	62
No, I have no access to the internet	13
Yes, on a mobile network	10
Yes, on public Wi-Fi	2
Not Known	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>89</b>

## People's health

16 people were disabled. 47% said they had a long-term health condition. 13 said they were a family/unpaid carer for someone else.

### Physical health

How would you describe	Count	%
Very Good	11	12%
Reasonably Good	53	60%
Quite Poor	21	24%
Very Poor	4	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Experiences of services

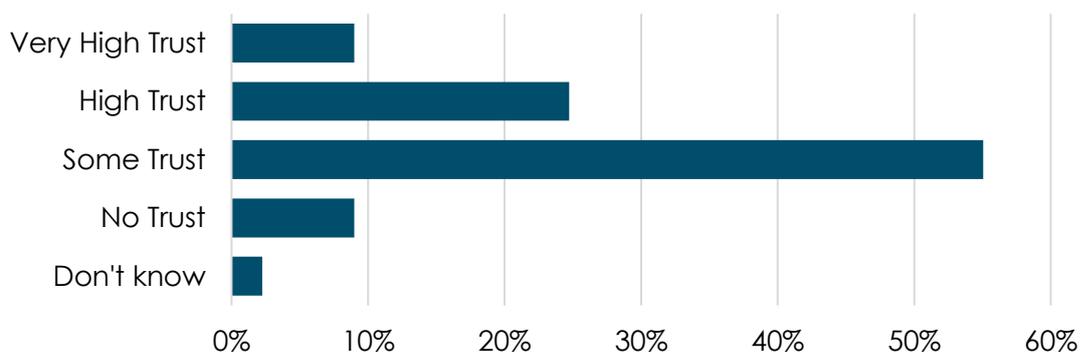
### Access to health care overall

We asked if people thought access to health care services in Coventry is getting easier or harder. 62% felt it was getting harder.

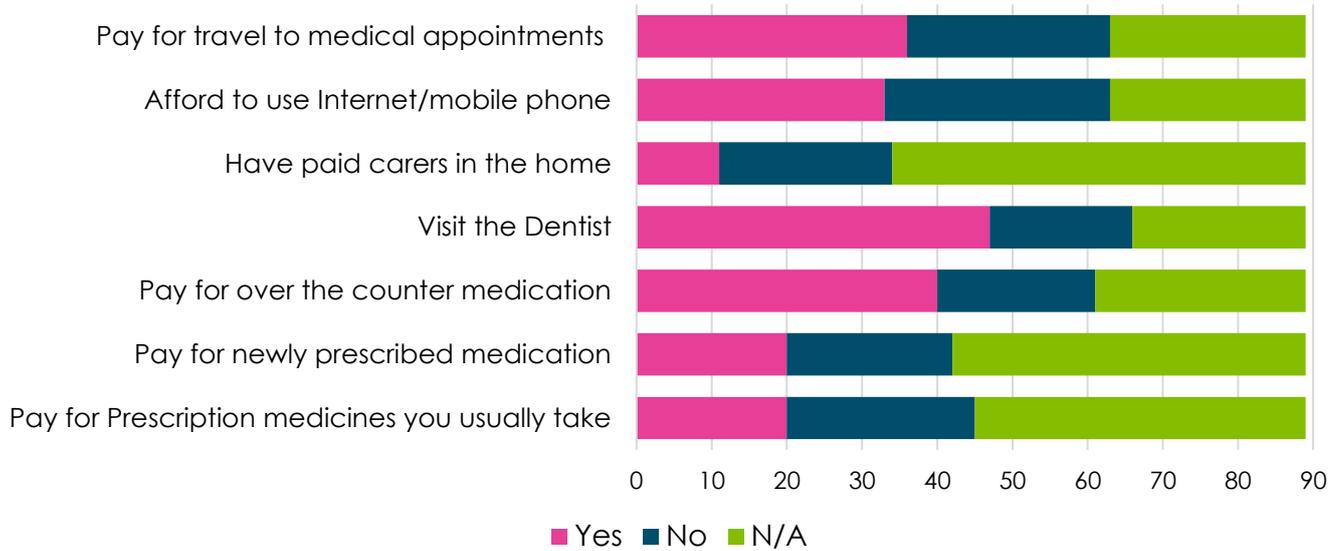
	Count	%
Harder	55	62%
About the same	20	22%
Easier	9	10%
Don't know	5	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Trust in services

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



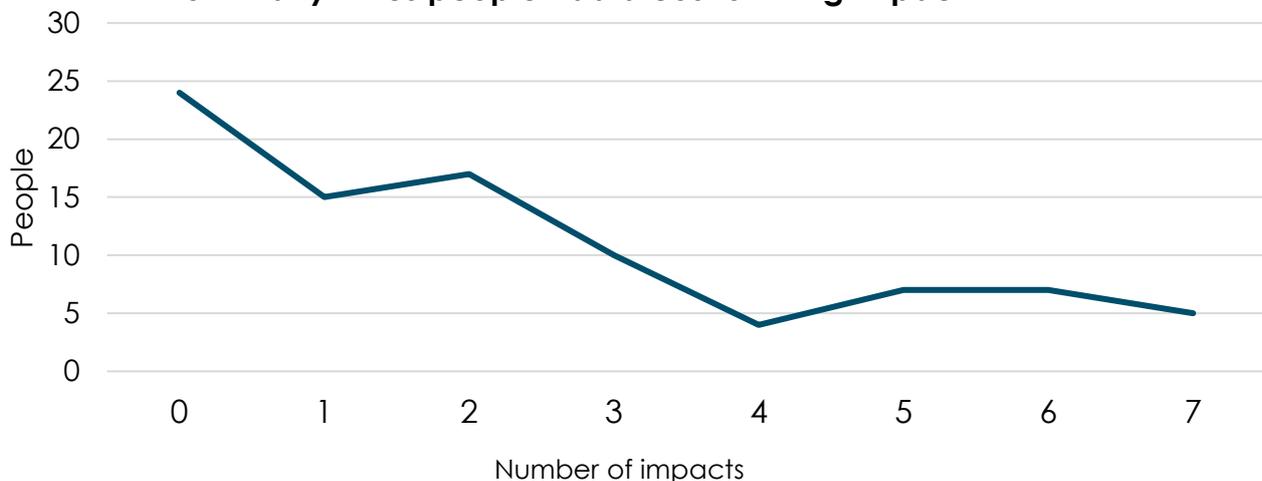
### Impact of rising cost of living on ...



16 comments about impact of cost of living on heating and food, with two specifically about access to healthy food. Five comments related to travel costs and cost of medicine.

- Travel is difficult, buying medicine sometimes hard
- Can't afford medicine
- More appointments at hospital, which cost more catching bus or any other transport
- Food cost, medicine cost
- Yes, it definitely effected my mental health

### How many times people had a cost of living impact



## What would help with cost of living impact?

- Free Medicine. Sometimes we don't know what to use, we love only prescription
- Free car parking for hospital appointments
- Pay for some vitamin and some healthy foods.
- Voucher for Veg, Exercise classes in our area. Dance class not expensive. Meeting place to discuss problems, can't talk to GP always
- To be able to give the services good food and other things at a very reduced price

## Mental wellbeing and health

How is your mental health?	Count	%
Got better	15	17%
Got worse	20	22%
Stayed the same	54	61%
<b>Total</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>100%</b>

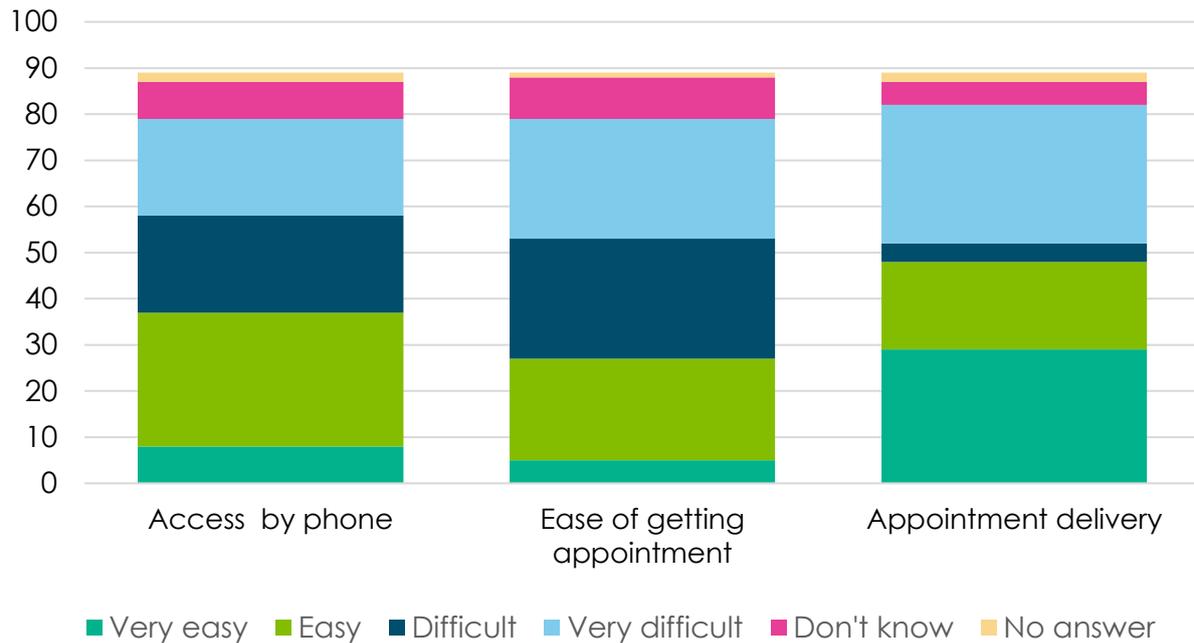
Thirteen people said they had sought professional support for their mental health. We asked how helpful people had found this support with 75% saying very helpful or helpful and 25% not helpful. However, we got more than 13 responses to this question.

## GP services

65% had contact with their GP practice in the last month and another 25% within the last 6 months. A list of GP practices they had used can be found in the appendices.

	Count	%
In the last week	30	34%
In the last month	28	31%
Within the last three months	9	10%
Within the last six months	12	13%
Over six months ago	4	4%
Don't know	3	3%
no answer	3	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Ease of access to GP services



19 comments about access to GP services such as not able to get an appointment or waits for appointments. Examples of comments made are:

Some people preferred face-to-face appointments or commented that it was harder to get face to face appointments.

- When in pain you have to show and explain, face to face is good. I don't agree with the phone, harder for me to talk, can you body language
- I have hearing problems and cannot always hear my phone ring. I have been waiting 5 weeks for a prescription of a skin gel to go through from Walsgrave skin doctor to my local chemist. It still has not come through
- Want to see doctor face to face and not have appointment over phone
- Hard to explain on a phone what your problems are
- Just over the phone - no face-to-face option. Can wait 2 weeks for an over the phone appointment
- Some time for children it is much easier to get face to face appointment but for adult usually get a telephone call appointment
- Difficult to get through, get appointments over phone, always prefer Face to Face appointments

- 🗨️ I have difficulty to get face to face appointment because I'm 19 they think I don't need it
- 🗨️ I like to see the doctor but can't see them. Since corona finished haven't seen doctor. On phone can't see the issue or examine. How do you explain it all on the phone.

### Getting through on the phone

- 🗨️ Even if you call on time, you are 10th in line.
- 🗨️ Lots of calling, not getting through
- 🗨️ Real problem is not getting through on the phone.
- 🗨️ Over an hour waiting time to get through
- 🗨️ Half time don't answer phone, costs money to wait on phone.
- 🗨️ You ring on time and there is 30+ before you and when it gets to your turn there is no appointments left and they then tell you to ring again in the morning

### Continuity of care

For some continuity of care was important:

- 🗨️ There are so many different doctors that getting to know one who understands you, and your health conditions is impossible.
- 🗨️ Don't like the fact you can't see the same GP, each time new doctor.
- 🗨️ Difficult to speak to your GP. Too many changed within the surgery.

### Positive comments

- 🗨️ The receptionist are very helpful
- 🗨️ When contact, always able to see GP face to face
- 🗨️ Very easy to make either phone appointment or face to face
- 🗨️ Basically, is very good for me so far, thank you
- 🗨️ They see me if need to. Service is good
- 🗨️ Good, took daughter for face to face meeting with GP
- 🗨️ The receptionist are very helpful
- 🗨️ I am satisfied, they call, talk to you, give you peace of mind. Very slow for Xray

## Waiting for tests or appointments

36 people said they were waiting for a test or appointment and gave the following times they had been waiting:

Length of wait	Count
1 month or less	8
3 months	7
4 months	1
5-6 months	5
8 months	1
1 year	4
1-2 years	1
2 years	3
3 years	2
not sure	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>

🗨️ *Communication from GP, Hospital really slow*

🗨️ *I received text messages and reminders. Phone is good and two letters.*

We asked how people rated the communication about their tests and hospital appointments with most thinking this was good. However, more than 36 people answered this question, so some of these had said they were not waiting for a test or hospital appointment and were reflecting on different communication about NHS services.

Communication	Count	%
Very Good	7	14%
Good	28	55%
Poor	8	16%
Very Poor	8	16%
<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Conclusions

Overall the report shows a mixed picture of how people experience their GP services and health care. Most people think access to services is getting harder. There are clear concerns about the time it takes to get an appointment with their GP through the phone system, and not always being

able to have an appointment in a way that suits individual needs. Rising cost of living is impacting on people's ability to purchase medications, but also impacting on dental health, both of which might create problems in the future.

This research adds weight to other Healthwatch Coventry evidence and recommendations, as this situation may change within the next quarter, and we can track changes.

## Recommendations

1. To acknowledge the report as part of wider evidence for Healthwatch as it reflects findings in previous reports.
2. 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 our Healthwatch Coventry.

## Appendices

### More about participants

Sexual Orientation	Count
Asexual	2
Heterosexual/Straight	71
Not known	10
Prefer not to say	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>89</b>

Name of GP practice	count
Anchor Centre	1
Broad Lane Surgery	2
Broomsfield Park Medical Centre	2
Central Medical Centre	1
Cheylesmore Medical Centre	1
Clay Lane Medical Centre	2
Copsewood Medical Centre	1
Dr Bano - COCHC	1
Edgewick Medical Centre	1
Engleton House Surgery	3
Forrest Medical Centre	2
Forum Health Centre	1
Godiva Group	4
Harnall Lane Medical Centre	4
Henley Medical Centre	3
Hillfields Health Centre	1
Holyhead Surgery	1
Jubilee Health Centre	1
Kensington Medical Centre	1
Kenyon Medical Centre	3
Limbrick Wood	1
Longford Primary Care	1
Mansfield Medical Centre	4
Market Quarter (Rugby)	1
Meridian Practice	1
Moseley Avenue Surgery	2
Not known	16
Paradise Medical Centre	4
Park House Surgery	1
Park Leys Practice	2

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Phoenix Family Care	1
Priory Gate Practice	6
Quinton Park Medical Centre	2
St Georges Road Surgery	1
Stoney Stanton Health Centre	3
University of Warwick - Sherbourne Team	1
Westside Medical Centre	1
Willenhall Medical Centre	2
Windmill Surgery (Rugby)	1
Woodend Health Centre	1
Woodside Medical Centre	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>89</b>



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