

# Enter and View Report

*Outpatients' clinics at Birmingham  
and Midland Eye Centre*

*Announced Visit*

*Date: 11th July 2023*



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## What is Enter and View

Part of Healthwatch Sandwell remit is to carry out Enter and View visits. Healthwatch Sandwell Authorised Representatives will carry out these visits to health and social care premises to find out how they are being run and make recommendations where there are areas for improvement.

The Health and Social Care Act (2012) allows Authorised Representatives to observe service delivery and talk to service users, their families and carers on premises such as hospitals, residential homes, GP practices, dental surgeries, optometrist and pharmacies. Enter and View visits can happen if people tell us there is a problem with a service but, equally, they can occur when services have a good reputation so that we can learn about and share examples of what they do well from the perspective of people who experience the service first hand.

Healthwatch Sandwell Enter and View visits are not intended to specifically identify safeguarding issues. However, if safeguarding concerns arise during a visit, they are reported in accordance with Healthwatch Sandwell Safeguarding Policy, the service manager will be informed and the visit will end. The local authority Safeguarding Team will also be informed.

## Provider details



*Birmingham and Midland Eye Centre - Outpatients Clinic.*

Name: The Outpatients Clinic  
Address of Service : City Hospital Dudley Road Birmingham B18 7QH  
Chief Executive: Richard Beeken  
Directorate Lead Nurse on duty: Laura Young  
Service type:

Birmingham and Midland Eye Centre is one of the largest tertiary level facility of its kind in Europe which provides expertise in clinical care, research and education. It is based at City Hospital in Birmingham and is part of the Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust. It receives referrals from hospitals and GPs across the region.

It offers a comprehensive set of services including ophthalmology Accident and Emergency, diagnostics, day surgery and outpatients, as well as housing administrative and educational facilities - all services :

<https://bmec.swbh.nhs.uk/services/>

Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust's Customer Care Promises and the Vision 2020 programme, says it aims:

- to provide a full range and high quality services to patients with eye problems.
- to continue undergraduate and post-graduate trainings, to transfer skills and values to the next generation of eye service professionals.
- to improve patient experience and leading the clinical outcome measures in UK.
- to become a leading institution internationally in ophthalmic research.
- to improve the availability of information to visually impaired people and involve them in decision making during treatment as well as when planning services.
- to raise public awareness of the causes of avoidable blindness and the issues and problems relating to sight loss.

Website: <https://bmec.swbh.nhs.uk/>



0121 507 4440

## Acknowledgments

Healthwatch Sandwell would like to thank Laura Young (The Directorate Lead Nurse - Ophthalmology) her staff team and the visitors to the clinic for their co-operation during the visit.

## Disclaimer

Please note that this report is related to findings and observations made during our visit made on 11th July 2023. The report does not claim to represent the views of all visitors, only of those who contributed within the restricted time available.

## Authorised Representatives

Anita Andrews, Ann Marie Hunt, Melissa Elders and Sophie Shuttlewood conducted the visit. The visit was observed by Craig Holden (Non-executive director of Engaging Communities Solutions).

## Purpose of the report:

This report will provide an overview of the services at the Outpatients Clinic which is part of Birmingham and Midland Eye Centre and will provide patient experience feedback. Where appropriate, recommendations will be made based on the findings of this Enter and View visit and it is anticipated that these recommendations will contribute to improving service delivery within the clinic and in turn improve the service experience for patients.

## Who we share the report with

This report and its findings will be shared with Healthwatch Sandwell Advisory Board, Sandwell MBC, Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust, the Integrated Care System and Healthwatch England. The report will also be published on the Healthwatch Sandwell website: ([www.healthwatchesandwell.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchesandwell.co.uk))

## Healthwatch Sandwell details

Address: Walker Grange, Central Avenue, Tipton. DY4 9RZ  
Website: <https://www.healthwatchesandwell.co.uk/>  
Phone: 0121 569 7211  
Social media: <https://www.facebook.com/HWatchSandwell>  
Instagram: [www.instagram.com/healthwatchesandwell](http://www.instagram.com/healthwatchesandwell)  
Twitter: @HWSandwell

## Healthwatch principles

Healthwatch Sandwell's Enter and View programme is linked to the eight principles of Healthwatch, and questions are asked around each one.

1. **A healthy environment:** Right to live in an environment that promotes positive health and wellbeing
2. **Essential Services:** Right to a set of preventative, treatment and care services provided to a high standard to prevent patients reaching crisis
3. **Access:** Right to access services on an equal basis with others without fear of discrimination or harassment, when I need them in a way that works for me and my family

4. **A safe, dignified and quality services:** Right to high quality, safe, confidential services that treat me with dignity, compassion and respect
5. **Information and education:** Right to clear and accurate information that I can use to make decisions about health and care treatment. I want the right to education about how to take care of myself and about what I am entitled to in the health and social care system
6. **Choice:** Right to choose from a range of high quality services, products and providers within health and social care
7. **Being listened to:** Right to have my concerns and views listened to and acted upon. I want the right to be supported in taking action if I am not satisfied with the service I have received
8. **Being involved:** To be treated as an equal partner in determining my own health and wellbeing. I want the right to be involved in decisions that affect my life and those affecting services in my local community.

## Purpose of the visit

The purpose of the visit was to observe the environment and explore first-hand with patients their experiences of using the Outpatients Clinic. This was achieved by observation and talking to patients and staff.

## What we did

Our Authorised Representatives facilitated the visit and spoke to 18 patients, both male and female of mixed ethnicities and observed the environment on 11th July 2023.

A pre-set of questions were asked that covered:

- Patient experience of the service including booking appointments, care by staff, accessibility to the building and information and any suggestions to improve the service.
- How staff meet individual needs of patients including the communication needs of patients who have impairments, handling anti-social behaviour from patients/relatives, how to support patients who want to raise a complaint/concern about the service and suggestions to improve the service.

Observations were made of the environment both externally and internally, that included:

- Signposting, accessibility, lighting, refreshments, cleanliness, parking and transport links.

## Findings:

### A healthy Environment

#### External

The outpatients' clinics are situated in the main building of Birmingham and Midland Eye Centre (BMEC).

Patients approaching from Dudley Road via the main entrance to the Birmingham City Hospital, there are no signs for BMEC until arriving at the barrier at this main entrance. This meant if patients are approaching from this entrance, they have to enter and exit the first car park before entering the BMEC car park.



The entrance to the outpatients' clinics was signposted via a large outpatient sign to the right of the main entrance. If patients enter via the main entrance to BMEC, it is signposted and accessible but requires patients to walk through the Eye Emergency and Urgent Care Clinic.

The entrance to the outpatients' clinics (front of BMEC) has a ramp but on the day of visit the doors were locked so therefore this entrance was inaccessible.

Once at the yellow outpatient sign, access is gained via walking around the outside of the building, where there are signs for outpatients clinics to a side door which has a ramp. There is good signage to this entrance and the outside of the building is well maintained with shrubs etc.

BMEC does have its own car park which is accessed via a barrier. There was parking facilities for Blue Badge holders and there is a drop off point near the entrance.

There are bus stops surrounding the site, metro and train facilities over a mile away.

Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust is completely non-smoking throughout. Although it supports vaping in the grounds, but not in buildings or entrances. Vaping is allowed outside, and a small number of vaping shelters. These shelters are monitored by CCTV to ensure they are not used for smoking.



#### Internal

On the day of the visit, the clinic was welcoming, clean, free from clutter and the décor well maintained. Covid 19 precautions are in place, signs on the floor for social distancing, sanitising hand gel dispensers at the reception etc.

Prior to our visit a poster was sent to the outpatients' clinics to advertise the visit, this was displayed in the waiting area during the visit.

Around the building there is clear signage using appropriate colours for people who are visually impaired i.e. black and yellow, there are some in pictorial form too.

There is a reception area with protective screens, there were 3 self-check in/booking in stations adjacent to the reception.

There were accessible male, female and gender neutral WCs in the waiting area.

The waiting area had a comfortable seating area which was colour coded to identify which clinic patients were waiting for and were in good condition. It was spacious and suitable to manoeuvre wheelchairs or walking frames.

The waiting area had numerous notice boards with relevant information including eye health, patient support groups, Eye Clinic Liaison Officer and infection control etc.

Surrounding the waiting area are various clinics down corridors off the main waiting area (Clinics 1 - 5) There are approximately 48 consultation/treatment rooms available and an optical dispensers.

The vinyl floors in the main areas were in good condition, however floors in some clinics were bare, with no covering in corners. There were missing ceiling tiles due to water seepage in area 1. Staff raised infection control concerns about old cupboards in clinic rooms. These issues could be hazardous to health and safety and pose risks to patients and staff.

The areas were well lit and the temperature was appropriate.

There were no magazines and newspapers available or literature in community languages/braille other than English.

Announcements for appointments are in person. It was observed that some of the female staff voices were unable to be heard due to low volume and wearing of masks.

We were informed there is a loop system facility on site, however there was not a T sign for the loop system.

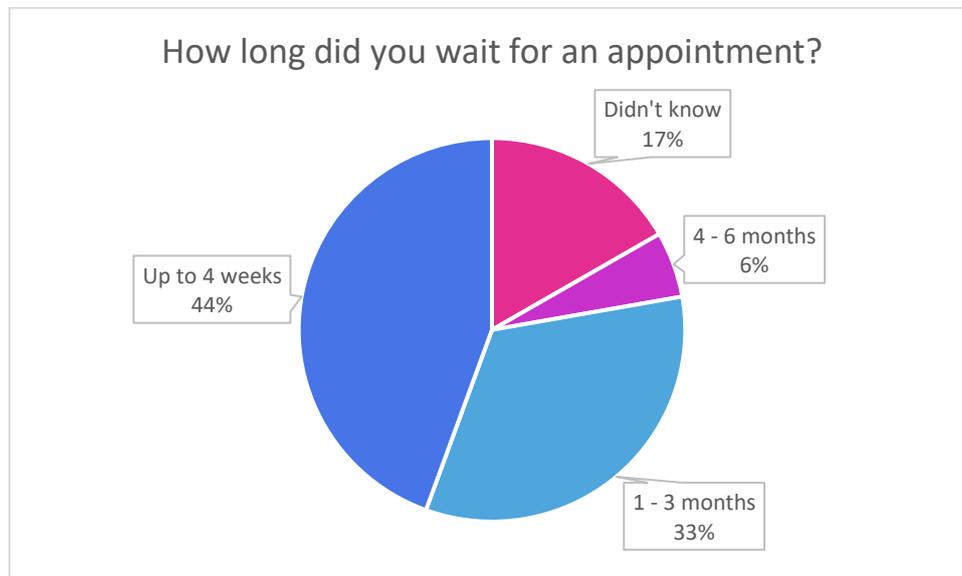
There was a colour TV in waiting area which was on at beginning of the visit (no subtitles) for the patients to watch while waiting for their appointment, but was later turned off on.

There are refreshments available to purchase from the Boaters restaurant which serves hot, cold drinks and sandwiches, which can be ordered from the service counter. Its opening hours are Monday - Friday 8.00 am - 5.00 pm.

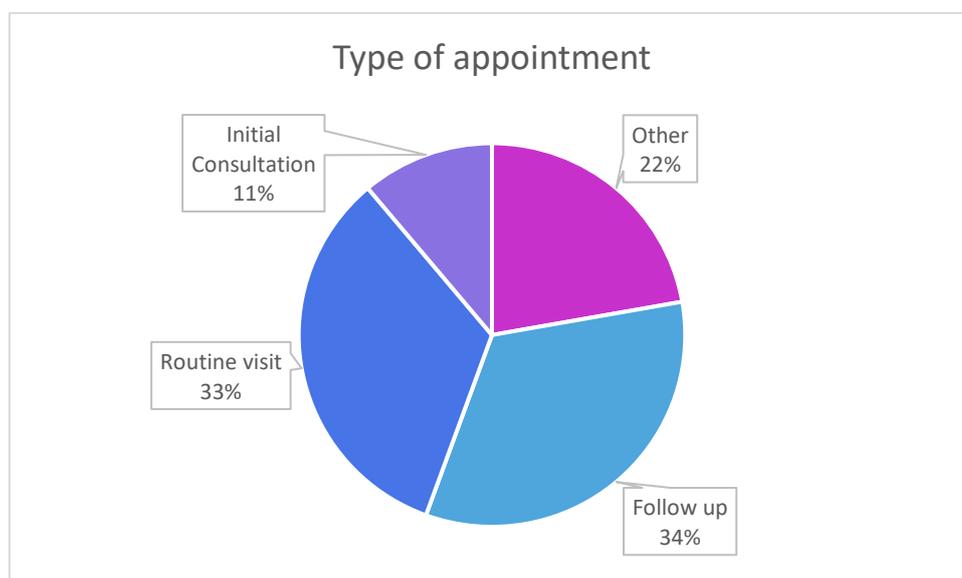
There is no regular access to free water. The water fountains across the Trust were removed several years ago due to infection control and maintenance concerns. During extreme hot weather - the outpatients' clinics provide jugs of water and disposable cups.

## Essential services

18 patients were spoken to in the waiting area.

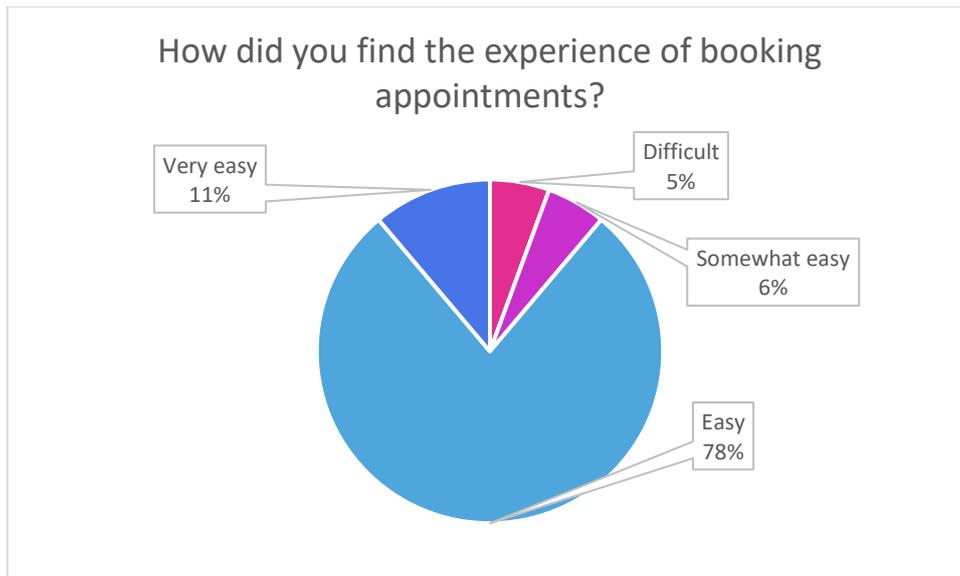


44% had waited up to 4 weeks for their appointment. 34% Patients were attending for a follow up appointment and 33% for a routine visit.



The patients gave extremely positive feedback about the service. 89% were happy with the service and 44% rated it as excellent, and 61% were 'very likely' to recommend this service to friends and family.

11% Patients found the booking system very easy.



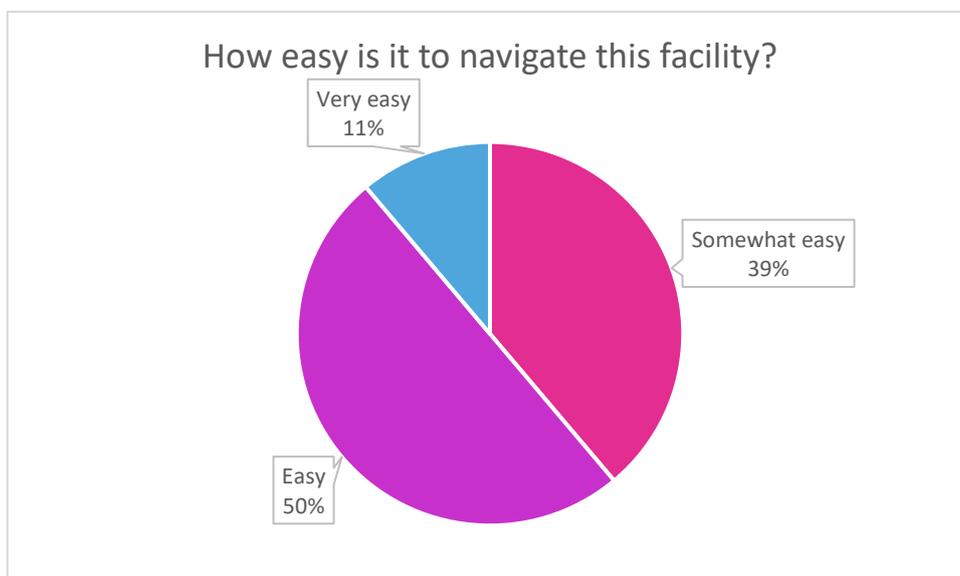
While patients were waiting for an appointment **83%** knew who and where to call if they needed information about their appointment.

**89%** said that all their questions were answered and **6%** somewhat and **5%** unanswered.

### Access

Accessibility of the building.

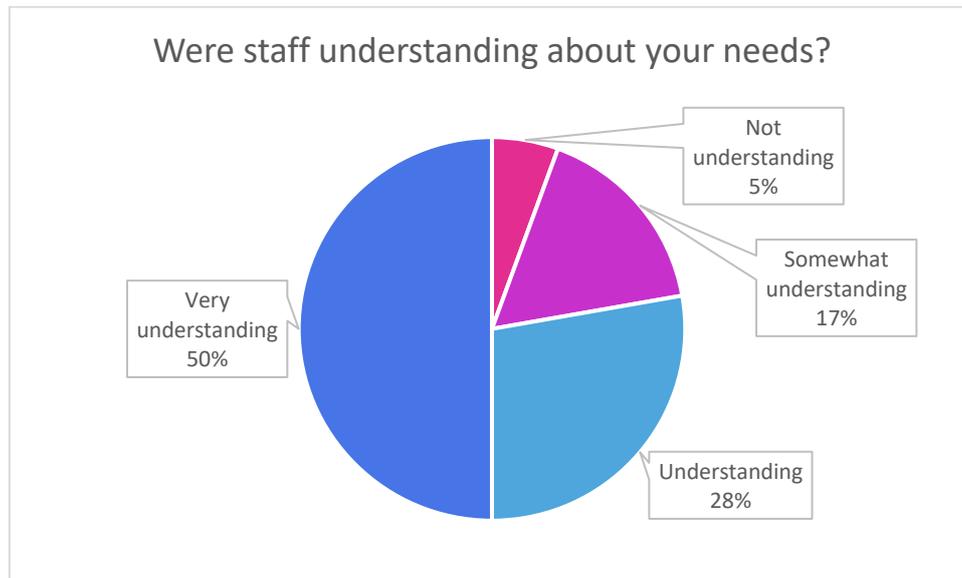
The majority of the patients found navigating the facility relatively easy, once at the outpatients but not when on arriving via Dudley Road.



### Safe, dignified and quality services

Patients described staff as helpful, polite and professional. They were understanding and showed empathy. However **2** people commented that upon arrival they did not find the receptionist helpful and lacked empathy but staff were attentive once in the clinics.

Some patients commented that there were delays while waiting to be seen on the day of the visit, for some patients with diabetes this was an issue.



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*“This is good service... second to none...they have an understanding about dementia and let me assist with my relative”*

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## Information and education

**95%** stated that all the information received about their appointment was clear, concise and easy to understand. **50%** patients were mainly communicated with by letter and preferred this form of communication although some stated that they would like email or text too. **16%** had an email and **33%** had a text. Patients were notified about changes to the service by letter, text or telephone.

Although this is a high percentage rating to receiving clear information, the following was identified by patients, based on their experiences:

- text did not specify which service the appointment was with, this patient attended various clinics in the Sandwell And West Birmingham NHS Trust
- resistance from staff when requesting information in a different format e.g. large text
- text message about an appointment, but patient had an older phone and could not access the information
- a patient showed us 3 letters with different dates for the same appointment which included one letter with no date on, so they were confused as to whether the appointment was still happening so they just turned up.
- a patient suggested an online system booking system.

- request was made for more information in letters about what the appointment is for e.g. laser treatment.

## Choice

78% of patients were allocated an appointment at this clinic and 22% were given a choice of which clinic to attend in the Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust. The Trusts website (<https://bmec.swbh.nhs.uk/contact-us/appointments-2/>) describes Choose and Book, which is a national IT system that enables patients to choose where they wish to attend their first outpatient appointment and to book a convenient date and time from the choices available to them at their GP surgery. The Trust implemented Choose and Book to book first outpatient appointments in September 2005.



## Being listened to

61% said that they have been listened to around their health needs. Although one patient commented they don't think the consultants talk to one another and this communication could be improved. The Authorised Representatives have no evidence to support this.

One patient was disappointed that they had no treatment plan and would have liked more information about their initial diagnosis as they were concerned about their future and this had impacted their mental health, and another was pleasantly surprised that they got their treatment straight away.

## Comments and complaints.

There are laminated posters displayed that requested patient's views, entitled '*You said... we did*' but these were not completed. There were also posters entitled '*Your views matter*' which includes contact details for the Local Resolution Team and the Complaints Team. This poster also encourages patients to talk to staff about concerns and compliments.

However, 56% were unaware of how to raise any issues. Some stated that they didn't know as they had never had a cause to raise any concerns.

Staff described how they support patients who want to raise a complaint/concern about the service, by talking the issue through. It was explained that the majority of times most complaints are resolved at this stage, however, if it can't be resolved they direct to reception for a form and give the contact number for the Local Resolution Team.

89% had not encountered any barriers at this service, however perceived prejudice and long wait for appointments were cited as barriers.

## Being involved

Staff promote patient and carer involvement during the consultations as much as possible.

## Staffing and feedback

There is an established team at this service which includes:

A team of Consultants and a variety of Nurses Bands (2-8 B inclusive), which provide a variety of clinics, including, general, cataracts, glaucoma and ocular plastics etc.

There is an Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (employed by RNIB). This person aims to assist anyone experiencing sight loss, or their relatives and carers, to access the support they may need.

We spoke to 3 members of staff who were very committed to their role and patients care. They aim to provide an effective service despite the challenges that they face. In particular, treating patients from outside of the Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust catchment area. This matter is being discussed with the Black Country Integrated Care Board.

We were informed that staff receive on going staff development, which includes supervision and annual appraisals, where training needs were identified. Relevant training is provided to meet staff's needs. We were also informed that there are career progression opportunities within this service. One person had been in the service for 8 years and had access to career progression including a Post Graduate Qualification at Moorfields Education. We were informed that staff are able to achieve a good work life balance with flexible hours and this was appreciated.

We were informed that staff rarely face anti-social behaviour, but if they do it's due to waiting times to see the consultant. Staff explained that they attempt to explain the situation and calm the patient down.

Staff described how they meet the communication needs of patients such as those who are: visually, hearing impaired, learning needs and language needs of people, this is achieved in various ways:

- utilise the Eye Clinic Liaison Officer
- develop their verbal communication e.g. say patient's name and offer appropriate assistance
- staff are familiar with regular patients
- record needs on the Medisoft system
- British Sign Language and community language interpreters are booked by the booking team, also family/friends are encouraged to join the patient.
- access a Learning Disabilities nurse from the Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust.

- for patients with a learning disability, again family/carers are encouraged to accompany the patient.
- gain rapport especially if non verbal

To improve the service that is offered, staff suggested:

- improve patient transport, this service is provided by the WMAS and at times is unreliable and does not meet patients' needs e.g. provision of ramp to board the ambulance.
- a buzzer to summon help when in consulting rooms
- a staff room with a microwave
- improve the IT system (Iron Mountain.) with regard to consent forms

## Recommendations

The Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust to consider:

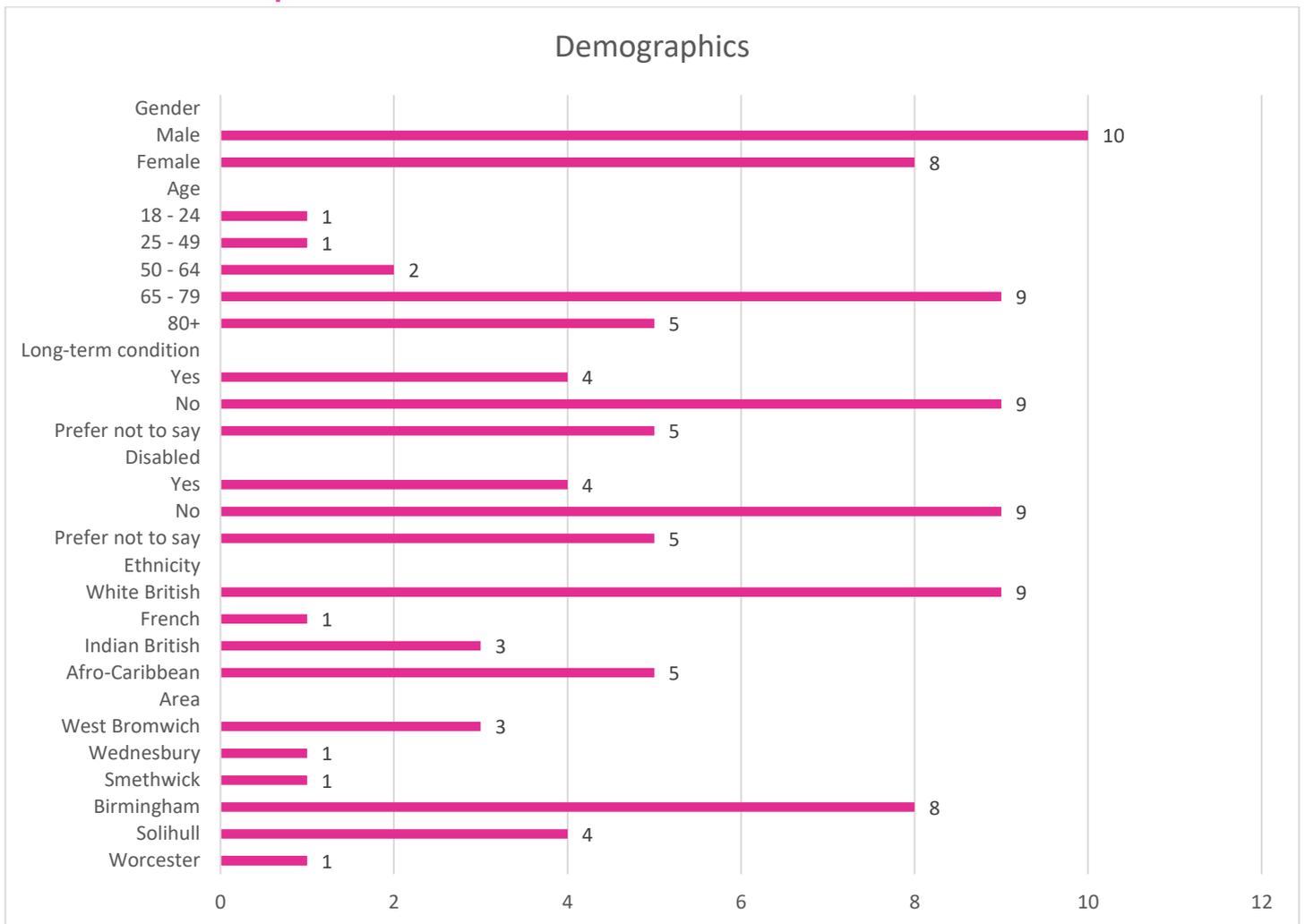
- a sign for BMEC on Dudley Road (A 457) guiding to Western Road
- the main entrance could do with an arrow to the outpatients pointing right
- clinic to be assessed and actioned for remedial work, e.g. floors and ceiling
- use a microphone to call patients names
- a sign promoting the T sign for the loop system
- provide drinking water on a trolley and a sign promoting the tap water in WCs is suitable for drinking
- be proactive about ascertaining comments, complaints and compliments
- respond to staff suggestions outlined in this report

## Provider feedback

The Directorate Lead Nurse - Ophthalmology gave additional information regarding access to drinking water and the nurse bands, these were adjusted in the report.

Healthwatch Sandwell welcome receiving feedback from Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust.

## Who we spoke to:





Address: Walker Grange, Central Avenue, Tipton. DY4 9RZ  
Website: <https://www.healthwatchsandwell.co.uk/>  
Telephone: 0121 569 7211  
E mail: [info@healthwatchsandwell.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchsandwell.co.uk)  
Social media:  
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/HWatchSandwell>  
Instagram: [www.instagram.com/healthwatchsandwell](https://www.instagram.com/healthwatchsandwell)  
Twitter: @HWSandwell