



Transport support for outpatient appointments at Birmingham Children's Hospital



Contents

Executive Summary	3
Birmingham Children’s Hospital Response	5
Introduction	6
Key Findings.....	8
Improvements To The Travel Support Offer	17
Conclusion	19
Appendix 1: About Healthwatch Birmingham	20
Appendix 2: Demographics.....	31



Executive Summary

Introduction

Many people tell Healthwatch Birmingham about the importance of having convenient ways of travelling to and from health and care services. Key issues are access to and cost of parking and a lack of money to travel to appointments, with our recent study¹ with Healthwatch Solihull finding that the cost-of-living crisis has had an impact on people's use of health and care services.

As part of the National Paediatric Accelerator Inequalities Agenda, Birmingham Women's and Children's NHS Foundation Trust (BWC) established the free transport project in January 2022, which aims to support children and their families to attend outpatients' appointments.

This report is based on an analysis of the views of people who were offered transport cost support to attend outpatients' appointments at Birmingham Children's Hospital. We sought to understand people's views around the different ways of accessing free transport, choice, flexibility and how well the support met their needs. We also sought to understand any challenges they face when accessing free transport support from BWC and their views of how this support can be improved.

Methodology

We designed a survey which was shared directly with people who were offered and/or used free transport support by BWC. Six hundred and ninety-eight people completed the survey between November 2022 and June 2023. After cleansing the data, a total of 519 responses were analysed.

¹ [How has the cost-of-living crisis affected health and social care for people in Birmingham and Solihull? - Healthwatch Solihull](#)

Key findings

Our research shows that participants valued the travel support offered to attend their or their child's appointment. We found that:

- Affordability and reliability of travel, availability of parking and cost of parking and travelling through Birmingham's clean air zone are among the barriers people face when attending their appointments.
- These barriers lead to considerable anxiety and stress, especially for those on low incomes, those struggling with the cost of living and those having to attend appointments frequently.
- For the majority of participants, travel support made the journey affordable and helped reduce stress and anxiety.
- Although a majority of the participants felt that the support on offer was varied and their transport needs were considered in the travel support that was offered, others did not agree.
- Some participants note that travel costs can be reduced by remote appointments or by having a mixture of appointment types. However only one participant changed to a remote appointment when offered.

Participants would like to see the following improvements:

- Ensure that the travel support offered can be used, as some participants spent more or missed appointments.
- Offer people choice of travel support.
- Timely delivery of travel support (e.g. train or bus tickets) or use of alternative delivery method (e.g. email).
- Offer appointments at different times and combine appointments.
- Continue and increase availability of travel support in the future.
- Clear information (e.g., about the scheme, instructions for using the parking ticket and directions).
- Provide contact information for enquiries.
- Let people who can benefit from the travel support know about the scheme.

Next steps

We have shared this report and its findings with BWC. This report will help inform the trust about what is and is not working well with the free transport support project and help understanding around barriers people are facing in accessing free transport support and improvements people want to see in the future.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the service users and their families who took time to complete the survey or got in touch with Healthwatch Birmingham. We thank the staff at BWC for their support throughout our research.

BWC response

Birmingham Women's and Children's NHS Trust have been working to mitigate the cost-of-living crisis and the huge impact it has upon our patients and families when accessing healthcare. We know that Birmingham has some of the neighbourhoods in the UK most affected by poverty but also that parents accessing our specialist care from across the region struggle with high transport costs.

We have a number of measures to help our families. Our Trust Charity has supported Citizens Advice to work in the hospital helping to maximise income. Our transport project has worked alongside to help reduce non-attendance at hospital appointments, where cost of transport may be a barrier. Our national Childrens Hospitals Alliance are also seeking to help families with the extra costs of a sick child and guide NHS England policy.

We are very grateful to Healthwatch Birmingham, who carried out this in-depth study. Whilst we knew that patients and families appreciated the support, we needed to know how it could be most effective and which methods of giving support were particularly helpful. Our future work includes working to increase awareness of the national Hospital Travel Costs Scheme and working with the local bus and train companies to make travel cheaper and easier to our hospitals. This report will help us to target any future funding, where we are able to offer further transport related subsidies.



Introduction

Background

In a recent report¹ NHS England recognise that people's experience of healthcare does not start and stop at the hospital door, stating that transport to and from treatment plays an important part in people's experiences. Healthwatch England² notes that the journeys people make to and from hospital are not always straightforward and the NHS must think about the stress travelling can put on people. The issues people face include driving to appointments, availability and costs of parking, other travel costs, missing appointments or risking parking fines if appointments are running late. Issues with transport to health and care services have been highlighted in Healthwatch Birmingham's reports into the NHS long term plan and people's experiences of hospital waiting rooms.

The non-emergency patient transport support (NEPTS) scheme has been the main support provided by the NHS to help people, especially those with a medical condition or mobility concerns, to attend appointments and receive treatment. NEPTS has four components:

- Co-ordination and triage capacity to assess eligibility, broker and manage journeys and signpost to independent transport.
- Specialist transport services for those in need of adapted vehicles and support from staff.
- Non-specialist services such as private hire, taxis and community transport.
- Reimbursement of travel costs to allow patients or their families to cover the cost of private transport. Those on low incomes or who meet other criteria are entitled to reimbursement through the Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme.

However, many people do not meet the eligibility criteria for NEPTS support. Healthwatch England (2019) argues the NHS offer of Healthcare Travel Costs to help with bus fares, petrol and parking is not well known. In addition, it does not address logistical challenges faced by those without access to patient transport. In most cases, people are expected to pay travel costs upfront and claim the money back after, which is challenging for those on low incomes and those in deprived areas.

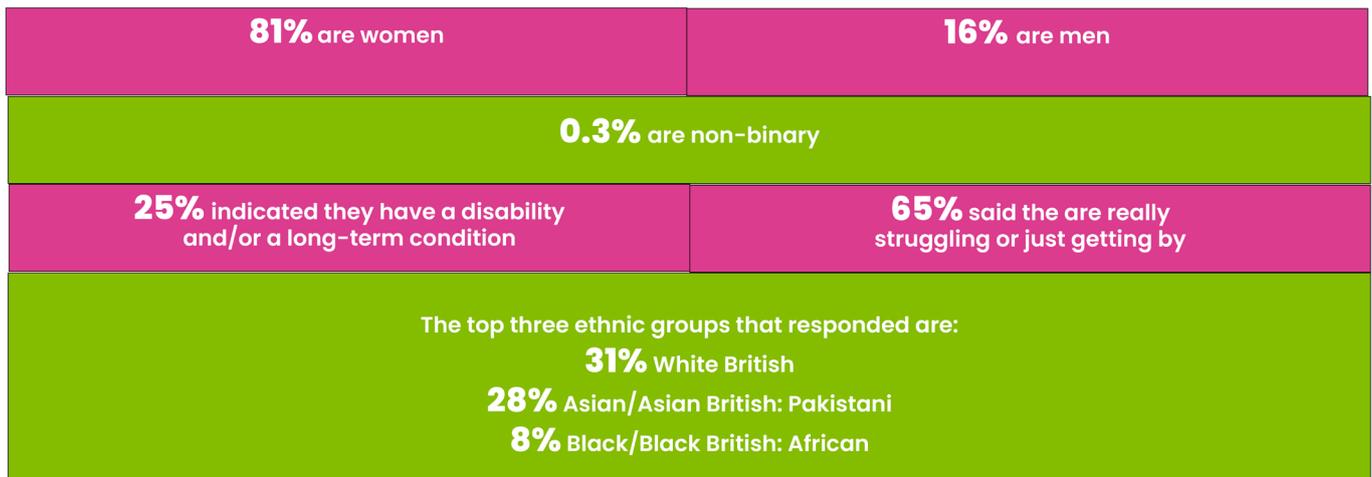
The NHS has developed a new framework that has updated national guidance on eligibility for transport support. It has also outlined support for wider transport planning and journeys for all patients, in particular by simplifying the process for accessing the Healthcare Travel Cost Scheme and aligning it more closely with NEPTS and wider transport co-ordination. The plans outlined in the new framework are to be implemented alongside wider measures to reduce the need for people to travel to hospital outpatients' appointments (NHS 2021).

The NHS observes that there is a diversity of patients transport needs, varying local contexts and a rapidly changing technological landscape. It is essential the use of the framework meet local plans. The BWC's 'Free Transport Costs Paediatric Accelerator Programme' is one way of trialling what works for the people of Birmingham. As part of this study, we also asked those in receipt of transport support whether they would prefer an alternative way to attend their outpatient appointment (e.g. virtual).

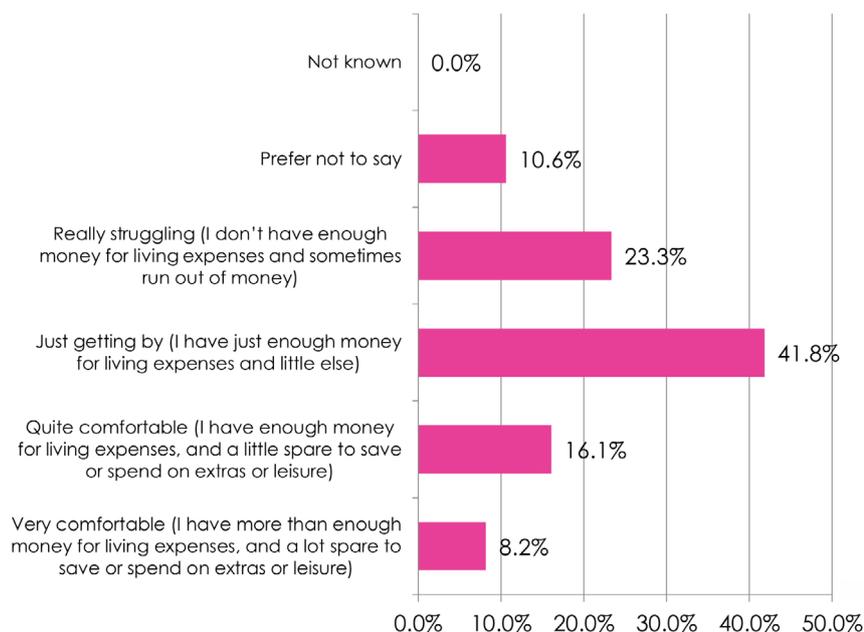
¹ <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/B0682-fnal-report-of-the-non-emergency-patient-transport-review.pdf>

² <https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/sites/healthwatch.co.uk/files/20191016%20People%27s%20experiences%20of%20patient%20transport%20Formatted%20final.pdf>

Information about participants



Participant's current financial situation



Q. Please tick if any of the following statements apply to the child or young person you are sharing feedback about.

I am a carer	20.4%
I have a disability	24.6%
I have a long-term condition	25.4%
Student	17.2%
Experience with mental health	6.9%
Limited family or social networks	4.2%
Digitally excluded (e.g. have no access to a computer, internet on your phone or a smart phone)	0.3%
Digitally excluded (e.g. not confident in using a computer or smartphone to access health services)	3%
No recourse to public funds	4.5%

See Appendix 2 for more detailed demographic information.

Key findings

Our findings indicate that participants who were offered free transportation found this useful. Eighty-six percent said they found the travel support they received excellent or very excellent. As this participant said ***“I am so grateful for this service as it has changed my life. There are struggling families who are in need of help like this, so this service is fantastic and so helpful”.***

Ninety-one percent of those who responded to the survey indicated that they are a parent/ carer whilst 9% indicated they are a young person. Ninety-nine percent of the participants confirmed their appointment following a call from the Trust. One percent cancelled their face-to-face appointment and opted for a virtual appointment instead.

Ninety-six percent of those offered transport support accepted support compared to 4% who did not accept the offer. Most (26.5%) of those that did not accept the offer of travel support have a use of a car and a parking pass. Whereas 2.9% have a bus pass. For 5.9% of the participants, they refused the offer of transport because the offer was not clear and the process to access the support was complex.

Initial contact with the Trust

A majority (93%) of the participants told us they received a call from the Trust to discuss their child’s upcoming appointment, which included an offer of support with travel costs. Fifty-seven percent found the call and offer of travel support extremely useful, 36.2% very useful and 6.7 % somewhat useful. As one participant said, ***“the call made me know that the hospital has the patient in mind and providing transportation is a such a relief”.***

Only one person indicated that they did not find the call, nor the offer of travel support useful. This was because they changed their appointment to a virtual appointment.

For most of the participants, telephone contact was important because:

- They had not received a letter regarding the appointment.
- It served as a reminder of an appointment they might have otherwise forgotten.
- Most appointment are made far in advance so can sometimes be forgotten.
- It helped reduce the likelihood of a Did Not Attend (DNA).
- It offered some much-needed help with transport.

It was good as I didn’t receive a letter regarding the appointment and didn’t know my child had the appointment as we was on the waiting list for years. Great fully they reminded and informed me of the appointment b4 time, Thank you.

I did not receive the letter for the appointment, so the call was extremely helpful, and the offer of free transport was a big help.

Helped to reduce likelihood of ‘do not attend’ – served as a reminder.

Is extremely useful because is about my child appointment which I almost forgot, and to top of that they said they will send me buss pass which made me very happy, because I always bought the bus pass, I really appreciate it thank you so so much

Good to get a vocal reminder of the appointment and to be offered free train travel to get into town.

Confirmed my appointment which is a good reminder when u work full time. Offered me a free parking ticket very helpful as the week before had my son appointment at the same hospital but was not offered free parking ticket and ended up paying £7.

It's great to have a call to remind us with everything going on it can be forgotten.

Reminder as appointment letters are sent out very far in advance.

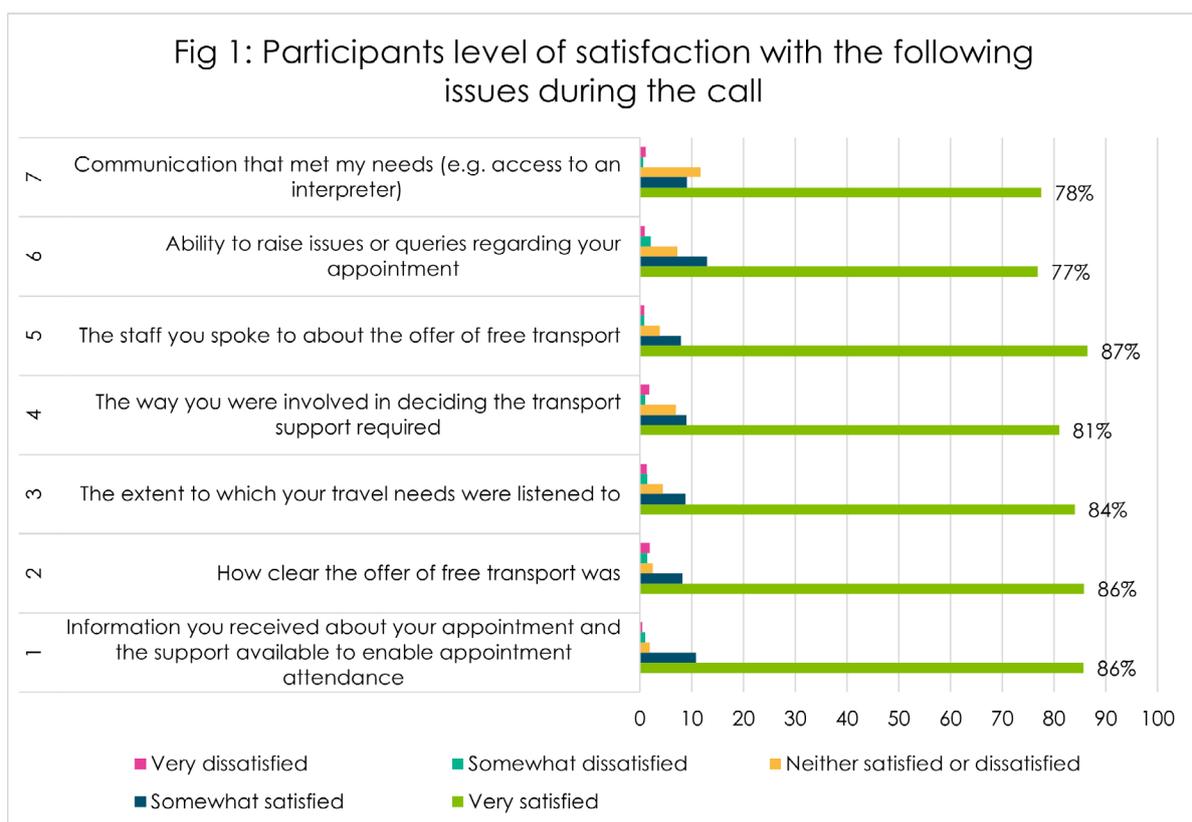
We asked participants about their level of satisfaction with seven issues during the call from the Trust (see figure 1). On average, four-fifths of the participants expressed satisfaction on these issues. Eighty-six percent felt that the offer of free travel support was clear and they understood what support they were going to receive.

Offered free parking with instructions on how to get it.

They gave me all the information I needed.

Sent it in the post and it arrived the following day, very speedy, very pleased.

Went to the correct car park, got my ticket, then went to reception desk to get my free parking ticket, very easy. Just had to walk to main entrance of the hospital the other direction of the car park to get the free parking ticket.



Eighty-four percent felt that their travel needs were listened to and 81% agreed that they were involved in deciding the travel support required.

My child is autistic, so they offered a taxi.

Our needs for transportation has been met and since I wasn't aware I could have transport to and from hospital, we appreciate the help. we are satisfied for everything.

Lady I spoke to was very clear about the support available via bus day passes and asked how many were needed as I had an older child I had to bring with me. She provided passes for me and my older son as my daughter was 1 year old.

Some participants noted that the support on offer was varied and met their travel needs.

Helped with parking and if needed help with clean air zone before my appointment.

Was not expecting this. Free bus tickets. We were asked ways in which we travel to children's hospital for an appointment.

I was offered free parking voucher and fuel exemption tickets to collect from front desk.

Slightly less people (77%) said they were able to raise issues or queries regarding their appointment, while 78% were happy that their communication needs were accommodated.

The hospital arranged me an interpreter that speaks my language. This gives me the ability to talk to someone and explains it to someone such as a doctor who does not speak my language. Thank you very much.

All and any queries or concerns I had, they had respectfully listened to me and thoroughly explained to me.

For those who were dissatisfied, issues ranged from not being given a choice as to the transport support they wanted or needed and the complexity of collecting tickets or barrier cards.

The call was clear but the technical process of getting a barrier card etc from reception was clunky.

The gesture is good but need to be streamlined i.e. cost of posting separate ticket. Complex process of collecting ticket etc I think for the average person there are too many steps to follow.

We did not discuss modes of transport or my preference. It was a case of "how will you be getting to your appointment" "How many people will be attending." We will send you the day savers through the post".

I informed her I take taxi but she was quick to offer me day saver she did not listen to my concerns.

I wanted to say I wanted them to give me money for taxi but the woman, said she will send me tickets pass for me and my daughter, so we can come but I find bus hard. because had to walk a lot and I can't walk because have back pain and leg pain

I wasn't given any choice in selecting type of travel assistance. Instead of bus I would have chose taxi.

I was not offered a taxi ride, I have previously mentioned that the taxi options would be better for me and my child as he has Autism and the noise level and sensory experience on the bus is a bit overwhelming for my child. I was told that it was not available as yet but will speak to a manager and get back to me but nobody returned the call.

Choice of travel support

The majority (52.3%) of participants chose travel support with public transport, such as a bus or train ticket. Thirty seven percent chose support with parking tickets, 10.2% chose to use a taxi and 0.5% chose not to take up support. Reasons for participants choice of travel support varied from inability to use their personal car in Birmingham’s clean air zone to environmental considerations.

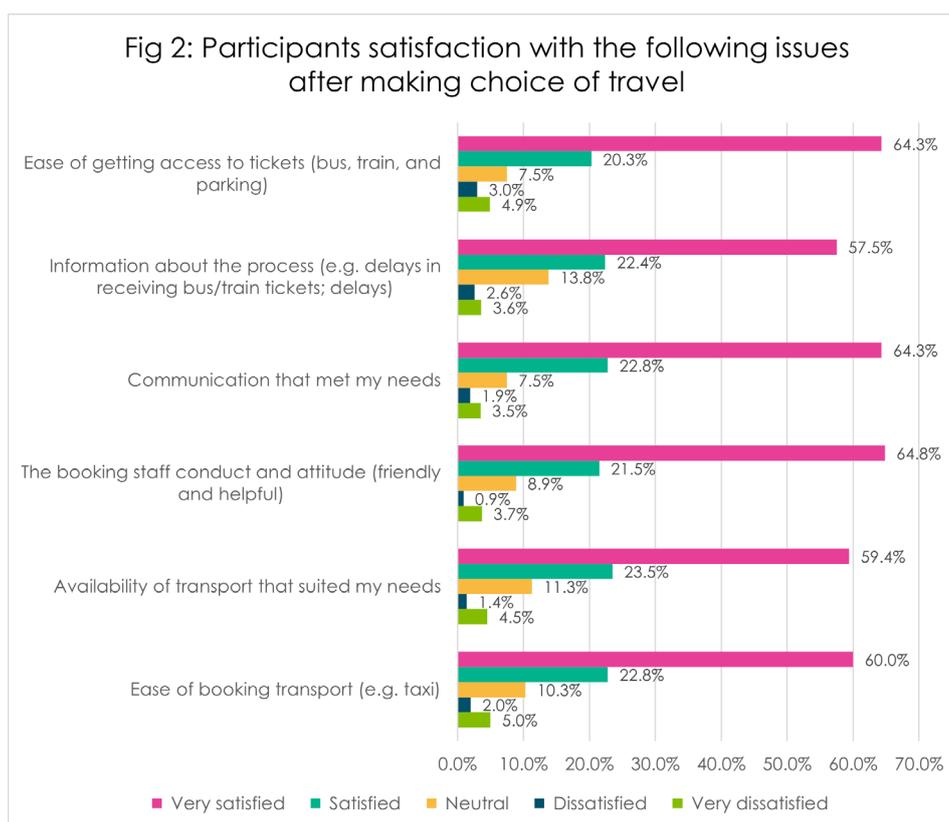
My son is normally tired and prefers a car where he can sleep on the journey but because of clean air charges and parking I try not to drive to the Hospital, so this is really helpful. Thank you.

I have a family car which now cannot enter the CAZ, so these free bus replacement tickets were a bonus.

I chose taxi because I usually get a taxi to the hospital and the bus stop is too far and I have to walk a lot.

Daughter likes trams and public transport, plus better for environment.

We were going to go by bus anyway so when I was offered the free bus ticket I took it for myself and my son.



On average, a majority (83.9%) of participants were satisfied or very satisfied across the six issues presented in figure 2, with 87.1% highlighting that their needs were met.

Everything went smoothly and according to our needs.

The tickets were posted out to my address in advance of the appointment, and I was able to plan my journey on buses ahead of time.

Went to the correct car park, got my ticket, then went to reception desk to get my free parking ticket, very easy.

Everything ran smoothly. I exchanged my parking ticket for a free one and it worked in the ticket machine to exit the carpark. As a single mother cost of parking have had a huge impact on an already difficult challenge of coping with my child's long-term condition. I greatly valued this scheme and the peace of mind it offered.

A physical parking ticket was sent out in the post, as well as an SMS. I ended up using the SMS ticket confirmation as the physical one didn't reach me until a week after the appointment.

Seventy-nine percent of participants expressed satisfaction with the process, including delays in receiving bus/train tickets, information about the use of the ticket or parking information.

Did not use free parking as couldn't find entrance to the car park as it has recently changed and poorly sign posted.

Ticket was posted. Delayed and arrived 3 days AFTER appointment. So a paid ticket was useless, and I had to pay myself too.

after the appointment the main hospital desk gave voucher for the wrong car park. So couldn't leave car park for 45 minutes. With no one there for support

Nobody told me how to get the free ticket until I had a text on the day.

I validated my ticket for boarding but didn't work so had to pay for the ticket in the end. Was a hassle to have to go back with my baby. Really disappointing as I would have parked at a more convenient place rather than this one designated car park.

The first time it wasn't explained I had to say about free parking, so I just got reduced parking which is nothing to be sneered at but would of been cheaper to get the bus. The 2nd time I mentioned this, and it was explained to me and got the free parking.

I unfortunately was parked in a parking that was not free. This should have been made clearer and also sign posts should have been clearer too.

The tickets did not arrive til the day before and via text she said it would arrive in post. The instructions did not follow the instructions laid out on site and were disjointed and confusing.

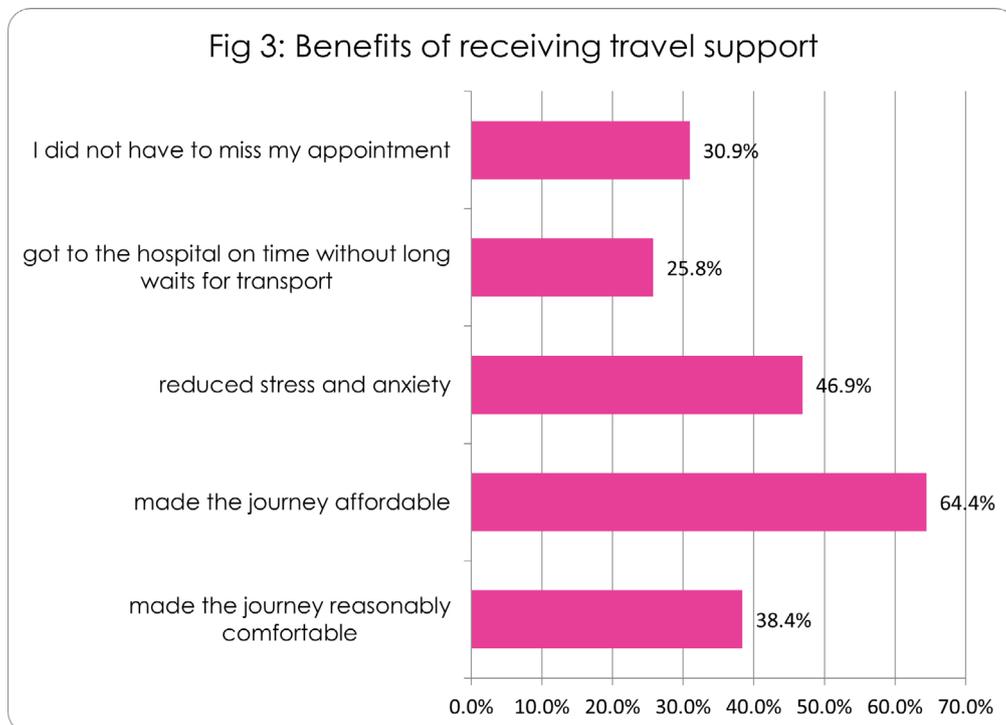
It would be easier if I could use the ticket on taxis so I can get there quicker but I am grateful for the ticket that can be used on buses and trains, we just plan our journey ahead.

When we asked participants if they used the transport support they were offered, 91.6% said they did, 7.9% said they used other means and 0.4% did not attend the appointment in the end. The main issue for the majority of those who used other means was the travel support (e.g., bus ticket) not arriving on time. Other issues included:

- Train strikes impacted their choice of travel, therefore had to make alternative arrangements.
- Refused entry as the transport provider did not know what the tickets were.
- Location of the appointment was changed.
- Switched appointment to phone call appointment.

Benefits of receiving travel support

Travel to and from healthcare appointments is a key issue for various reasons. For instance, poor access to transport and affordability can mean that people are late or miss their appointments and becomes a heavier financial burden for those that travel frequently to hospital for treatment, especially where there is a long-term condition. Consequently, travelling to and from healthcare appointments can exert stress on people.



Participants told us about the benefits they experienced from receiving support with travel costs. The majority (64.4%) of participants receiving support with their travel said this made the journey more affordable. It also reduced difficulties they face in finding parking outside of the hospital.

It's normally very hard to find parking and it's very expensive especially at these times with prices going up people will not be able to pay for parking this offer was very useful to me.

Parking is very difficult and expensive, and it was a great help.

This helped financially and less worrying about where to park. We are unable to use public transport, so this was fantastic to be offered to us.

It's very expensive and difficult to park outside BCH and this offer of free parking space was very helpful.

Great to be offered free parking we live in Telford so always making journeys to BCH is costly so one less worry about paying for parking as it isn't cheap local to the hospital so thank you so much.

Support was even more important for those on welfare support and those struggling with the cost of living.

The free travel pass comes in very useful as I am currently on universal credit and finances are quite tight.

They called just to let us know we have appointment coming up. And that we could have a travel card for the appointment. Which helped us a lot due to us being on benefits.

The person that called me really helped me get taxi to take my daughter to hospital it helped me with cost of living I'm thankful for staff that called and helped me I really do appreciate.

With cost of living it's hard to manage everything and it helps with funding like this to support people who are struggling. Especially as I'm coming into hospital on regular basis with my child. The cost adds up, so it is good to be able to have free transport provided I believe it's a very good initiative.

With cost-of-living crisis it was helpful to have help with the free bus tickets as the appointment was regular once a week so the amount added up, but with the help from this initiative it really helped parents who find it hard financially.

In addition, support reduced the financial burden for those who have multiple appointments and therefore travel to the hospital frequently.

Having attended Birmingham children's hospital regularly for the last 15 years it was amazing to be offered free parking which meant a massive saving for me.

Offered us free parking which is very helpful. I have 2 children who have regular hospital appointments at Birmingham Children's Hospital, we live in Walsall so the cost of fuel, plus clean air charge and parking, previously it's cost me £50+ to get to a hospital appointment. On one occasion it cost me £30 in just parking, plus £8 clean air charge and then fuel costs. As you can imagine this is a substantial amount of money to just attend a hospital appointment for your child, and sometimes we have 2-3 in the same month.

It was a kind gesture to receive free parking especially when we have multiple appointments to attend.

Others (46.9%) said it reduced stress and anxiety.

The call was helpful to confirm the appointments and took a load off my mind when we were offered free transport as I had been really worried about parking costs as I knew we would be at the hospital for a minimum of 3-4 hours.

It made the journey affordable and reduced stress of money and I did not miss my appointment. I really appreciate it.

Before the appointments I use to stress a lot about how we will travel to the appointment and I need to be able to sort out the taxi fares. Now I am so grateful, I'm saving money and the appointments do not stress me out so much I do not have to worry about changing my appointments or even missing them because of situations financially.

I did not have to park on the street which cost a lot and guess the amount of time I'd be parking for. If an appointment over-ran, I didn't have to worry about having the correct change for the parking meter or taking my child to the car to add another hour on or move my car elsewhere if I'd gone over the 2-hour parking limit on the street.

Some (38.4%) participants indicated that one of the benefits of receiving travel support was that it made the journey reasonably comfortable.

My child sat in his wheelchair in the taxi normally I have to close the wheelchair and put it the boot that was the benefit.

Could Park near to hospital so not far for my son to walk.

For 30.9% of participants, receiving support for travel meant that they did not have to miss their appointment. They indicated that without this support, they would have been unable to attend their appointment.

So much help without the help of offering to pay for transport I'm not sure we would have been able to afford to go to the appointment.

Friendly and informative representative contacted me to offer me and my 7year old child free travel bus pass to attend the appointment without this help for transport I am not sure how I would have managed to keep attendance to my outpatient appointment.

Remote or virtual appointments

We asked participants how easy they would find accessing their appointments if these were conducted remotely (e.g., over the telephone, online or video). Overall, 8.7% more participants indicated that they would find remote appointments easy or very easy (36.5%) than those that said they would find them difficult or very difficult (27.8%). Thirty-five percent said they would find remote appointments neither easy nor difficult. It is also important to note that only one participant changed to a remote appointment when offered.

Reasons given by people who indicated they would find remote appointments difficult include:

- The child's need for a physical test/assessment or checkup.
- The child has special needs and face-to-face appointments are easier.
- Personal preference.
- The child's condition necessitates face-to-face appointments.
- Communication is more difficult in a remote appointment, especially for those for whom English is not their first language.
- Specialist appointments that need to be face-to-face.
- Face-to-face appointments ensure an adequate assessment is carried out and parents value seeing consultants so as to understand their child's condition.

I don't feel you can get a clear understanding of what's wrong with your child over video. I don't feel like your taken seriously that way.

My son needs heart scans, ecg, consultants' feedback, blood tests and other treatment.

Most of my son's appointments require examination so a remote appointment would not suffice.

It is better to attend face to face so you can be properly examined by the doctor. Online appointments can't really handle health issues that has to do with specialist.

Because English isn't my first language and I prefer to speak face to face.

I would not feel the same level of satisfaction if the appointment was done remotely as I feel my son would not communicate effectively with doctors this way. Also, he physically needs to be seen and gave tests done.

Those that prefer remote appointments indicated that:

- They find these easier and stress free.
- It saves time and reduces impact on family life.
- It reduces travel costs.
- It is helpful for parents that have an illness and other young children to care for.

Appointments at the hospital are a 2 hour round trip by bus, sometimes phone calls are much more suitable. We usually do every 2nd appointment over the phone and the other in person to cut down on travel times and costs. The nurse we see is very understanding and adaptable to our circumstances.

Would take traveling out of question completely and make it easier as we would not require an additional person with us for travelling to tend to our daughters needs if they happened during travel.

Phone appointments mean I don't have to juggle childcare for my other primary school age child.

Video or telephone appointments could also bypass the cost of physically attending appointments.

Having appointments in the community with better parking options could help too.

Some participants indicated that they would prefer a remote appointment if the system worked well.

I prefer to speak online and there are always technical issues.

It would be easy if the connection, sound etc all worked fine, that would be the preferred option.

Some participants noted that depending on the nature of the appointment, they would prefer a mixture of appointment types.

Depends on the circumstances. Where my daughter is physically needed, e.g., for diagnostic procedure, then clearly attendance is a must. If it is a simple follow up appointment, then I guess I would be happy for an online or video appointment. It's the next best thing to actually attending. But saying that, if I had no access to the Internet then a telephone call would suffice.

I have had remote appointments for my son which have worked really well. However, I would like to have face to face meetings too so a mixture of both would be best.

It's nice to see face to face but when you're in and out in 5 mins with something that could have been done over the phone. I would sometimes prefer over the phone.



Improvements to the travel support offer

Participants told us of a number of changes they would like to see to improve access to travel support and communication regarding it.

More specifically the Trust should ensure that the travel support offered can be used and that people are offered a choice, alongside timely delivery of travel support. In addition, appointments should be offered at different times and combined to help with travel arrangements. Overall, people are keen for travel support to continue and for there to be increased availability in the future.

People would also like the clarity of information to improve, for contact information for enquiries to be provided and for people who might benefit from travel support to be told about the scheme.

Some participants reported spending more or missing appointments because the travel support they were offered could not be used.

I was told about getting free car parking if I was to park in the NCCP parking and to go to the main reception area to validate my ticket, which didn't work.

Paid 30 for train tickets. 15 for taxi. 15 for busses. All in one day. The 'free' tickets don't work. Couldn't afford electric this week nor my sons school transport for the week because of this. Not happy. Don't offer something that don't work please.

Unfortunately, someone didn't request the booking properly and accept it (as it was over £100) so my taxi didn't turn up and my son missed his appointment. It was for his first castings to be put on his legs.

Others wanted more choice of travel support.

I was offered a bus fare whilst I take a taxi when I come to hospital. I was not told about any other service available so that I could make a choice. I was asked, how would you travel to the hospital, and I said car because I wasn't aware I had any other option.

Would have preferred a taxi but this wasn't offered to me.

Offer types of travel available from offset so I could have made an informed choice which would have more suited our needs.

Please give more than one option for travel e.g., bus, taxi, train. At the moment I was only offered bus tickets, but taxi would be more better for my child as he has Autism and the bus is loud and overcrowded and noisy.

Timely delivery of travel support (e.g., train or bus tickets) or use of alternative delivery method (e.g. email) is essential.

Very nice offer of free transport, that was posted and delayed until after I had the appointment, so made it all useless.

I was told I will receive bus tickets but my appointment for my daughter was on the 16th December and surprised I received the bus ticket on the 21st December which was of no use to me as they were outdated so not really happy at all.

Why did you have to post the certificate? This is a waste of money I could have been emailed or QR code sent.

Maybe an easier system if this was on going for example 1 yearly phone call to keep us on a list for having to attend the hospital, then maybe having the voucher included in the appointment letter potentially that could bring down your cost of calls and postage.

Appointments should be offered at different times and or combined with other appointments.

To combine appointments, I know this isn't always going to happen as different clinics work on different days, offer bloods at the same time at appointments so they can be done at the same time.

Offer late morning appointments rather than early morning.

Offer early am, weekend appointments late afternoon appointments.

Access to travel support should be increased.

Could transport support be more available in the future for appointments.

I have a child with medical conditions, travel to children hospital every few months and to other many care providers to check my diseased daughter. Having this voucher will help me a lot.

Help with travel every appointment would really help a lot. Especially to those on low income.

Please keep up the free travel scheme - makes all the difference for those coming to the hospital.

It was a relief knowing I had the travel support, so I would say you keep providing the support to everyone that needs it. Keep up with the good work, it's very much appreciated

I really appreciate this scheme and hope it continues and is rolled out to other departments of the hospital or to children who attend multiple appointments at the hospital.

If you could offer this long term, I am in hospital at least 3 times in a month &! Parking can be expensive.

Clearer information (e.g. about the scheme, instructions for using the parking ticket and directions to parking) is needed.

An explanation of the scheme during phone call or in envelope that tickets came in would have been helpful as I was confused about what was happening and why.

Happy with the service except not being told how to use the parking ticket to get out as I have received a fine for parking in b4 car park on the day of my appointment as I've never used the facilities before so been stung with a fine for my appointment.

I think maybe as it's a new support programme maybe more detail is needed as to what services are on offer. I was told I could use the train as that's how we travel to appointments but when I received the tickets to see what train services, we could use I was unsure. As I book assistance at the train station for a ramp, I went to the station to check but the station was closed due to strikes. I had checked online and saw cross country trains on the website that was on the tickets so booked the assistance for the usual train I would have booked otherwise. I had checked at the station on arrival too if I needed to do anything with the tickets. I wasn't told the tickets were only for specific trains which would of been either too early or too late for our appointment. I had only found out when on the train by the ticket inspector when explaining to him about the tickets from the hospital and the above situation. He said he wouldn't charge me but also mentioned the ticket was only valid as far as Wolverhampton and I may be charged on the return journey however on the return when booking the ramp in the travel assistance lounge at New Street station the next train was a West Midlands rail train and that ticket inspector didn't question the ticket at all.

Instructions how to get to car park. The car park was confusing to enter and there were many other car park entrances in the same block.

Drive in the car so chose free parking, didn't know where the car park was so had to use sat nav and get stressed in busy town for in the end it not to be free even though I went to main reception to validate the ticket. I ended up paying, should have just stuck to the car park I was familiar with and saved myself a lot of stress.

Contact information for enquiries should be provided.

I have been offered a free transportation but didn't receive it. It was so annoyed, as I refused all sort of help and support offered to me by family and friends. I had no clue where to contact or ask for the transportation inquiry.

I would suggest that you send a contact detail following any transportation offers. If anything goes wrong, there's contact to discuss the issue with.

I think it needs to be introduced better, also to desk staff at hospital so they could at least guide you to another person or provide a phone number in case if you have any questions or issues.

More people who can benefit from the travel support should be told about the scheme.

Maybe where the hospital knows that a person is eligible for help with costs, to then make the offer of free transport because not everyone knows or feels comfortable asking.

I didn't even know this was running until I had a phone call, maybe make it more known so those who need to use it most are getting the help they require.

To be provided not just to low-income family's - both parents work in our household, yet we struggle to pay for parking due to it being expensive especially when you attend and are there for 2 or more hours due to delays and attended more than once in a week/month.

Conclusion

Travelling to and from appointments is a key part of people's experiences of health care and can often cause anxiety and stress. Barriers people face include costs of travel, costs of parking, shortages of parking, reliability of public transport and clean air charges. This report shows that more than four-fifths of the participants highlighted the benefits of receiving travel support to their outpatient appointment, which made the journey more affordable and reduced stress and anxiety. For the majority of participants, the travel support met their needs.

Participants told us they want a continued focus on and provision of travel support for those who need it. However, they would like to see changes to how the transport support scheme is arranged and communicated to recipients.

Appendix 1: About Healthwatch Birmingham

Local Healthwatch were established in every local authority area across England following the Health and Social Care Act 2012. Our key role is to ensure those who commission, design and deliver health and social care services hear, and take into account, the public voice. Healthwatch Birmingham listens to and gathers public and patient experiences of using local health and social care services such as general practices, pharmacists, hospitals, dentists, opticians, care homes and community-based care. We hear these experiences via our Information and Signposting Line, our online Feedback Centre, and through our community engagement activity led by staff and volunteers. You can read more about the work of Healthwatch Birmingham here: <https://healthwatchbirmingham.co.uk/about-us/>

How do we select the issues we collect evidence about?

Some of the issues we hear about from patients and the public may require deeper exploration in order to present a comprehensive report to those who commission, design and deliver health and social care services in Birmingham. Members of the public select these issues as part of our Topic Identification and Prioritisation System. By involving members of the public in decisions about our future activities, we ensure we are operating in an open and transparent way. It also ensures that we understand the public's priorities.

Who contributes to our evidence collection?

We explore selected issues with the help of our volunteers, Healthwatch Birmingham board members, patients, members of the public, service users and carers. They share relevant experiences, knowledge, skills and support. Healthwatch Birmingham also talks to key professionals providing or commissioning the service we are investigating. This helps us to form a deeper understanding of the issue from the perspective of these professionals, and encourages them to take prompt action to implement positive changes for patients and the public.

What difference do our reports make?

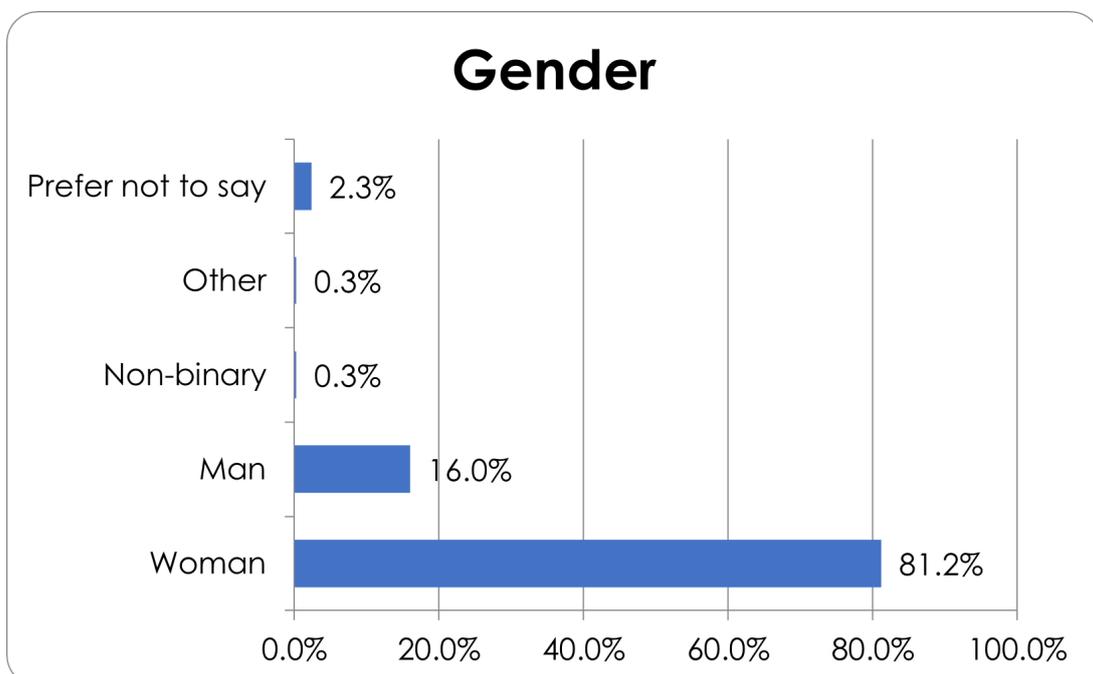
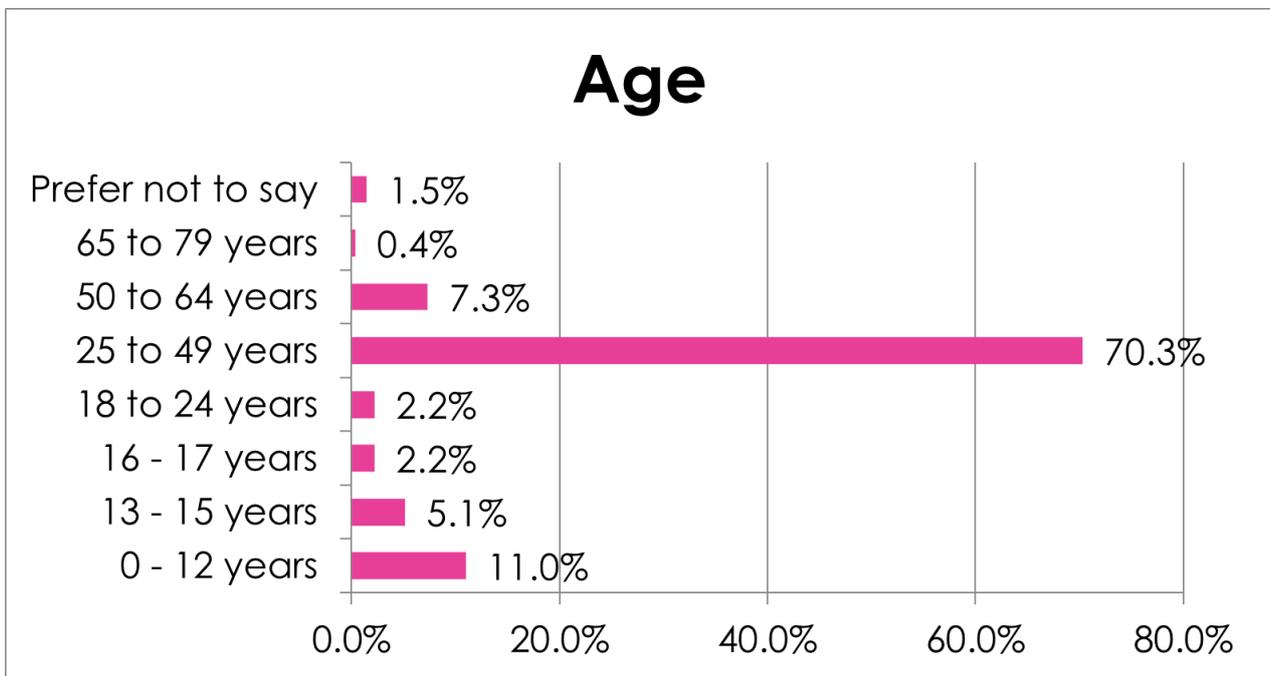
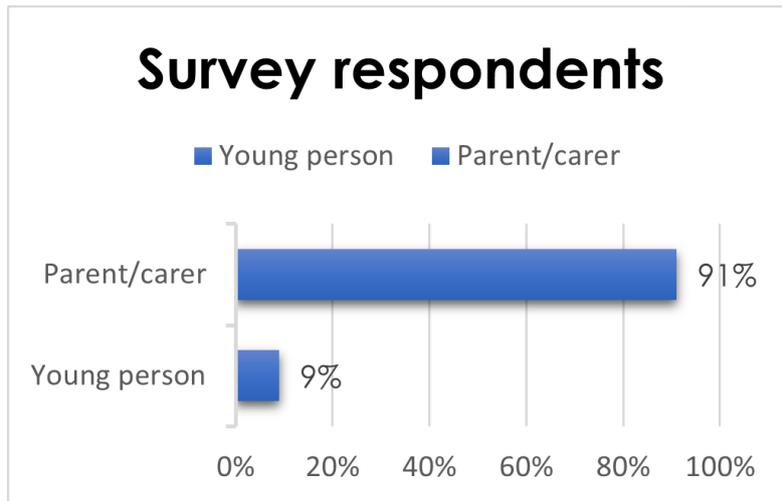
We follow up our reports to see if our findings have made services better for patients and service users. We hold service providers and/or commissioners to account for changes they stated they would make in response to the report. If Healthwatch Birmingham finds no improvement, we may decide to escalate the issue to Healthwatch England and local regulators. We also monitor the changes to see if people experience sustained improvements.

How to share your feedback about the issues heard in this study

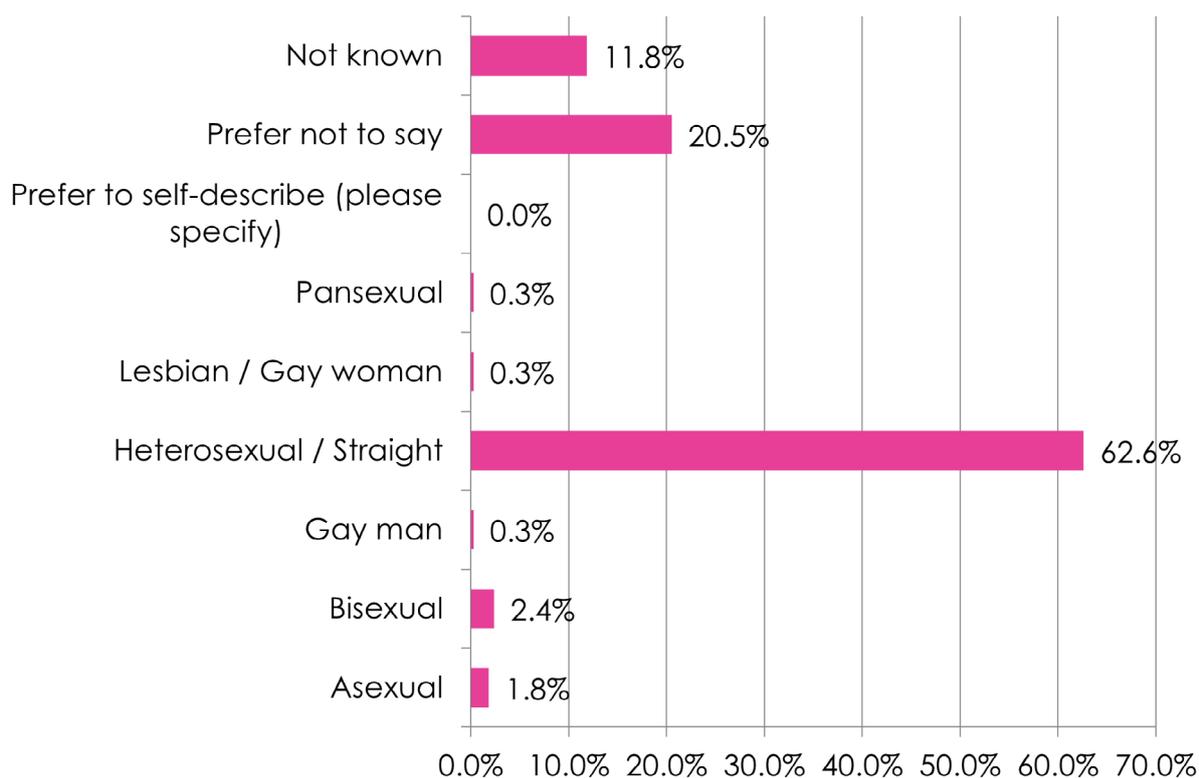
If you are a service user, patient or carer, please do share your experiences with us via our:

- Online [Feedback Centre here](#).
- Information and Signposting line on 0800 652 5278 or by [emailing us](#).

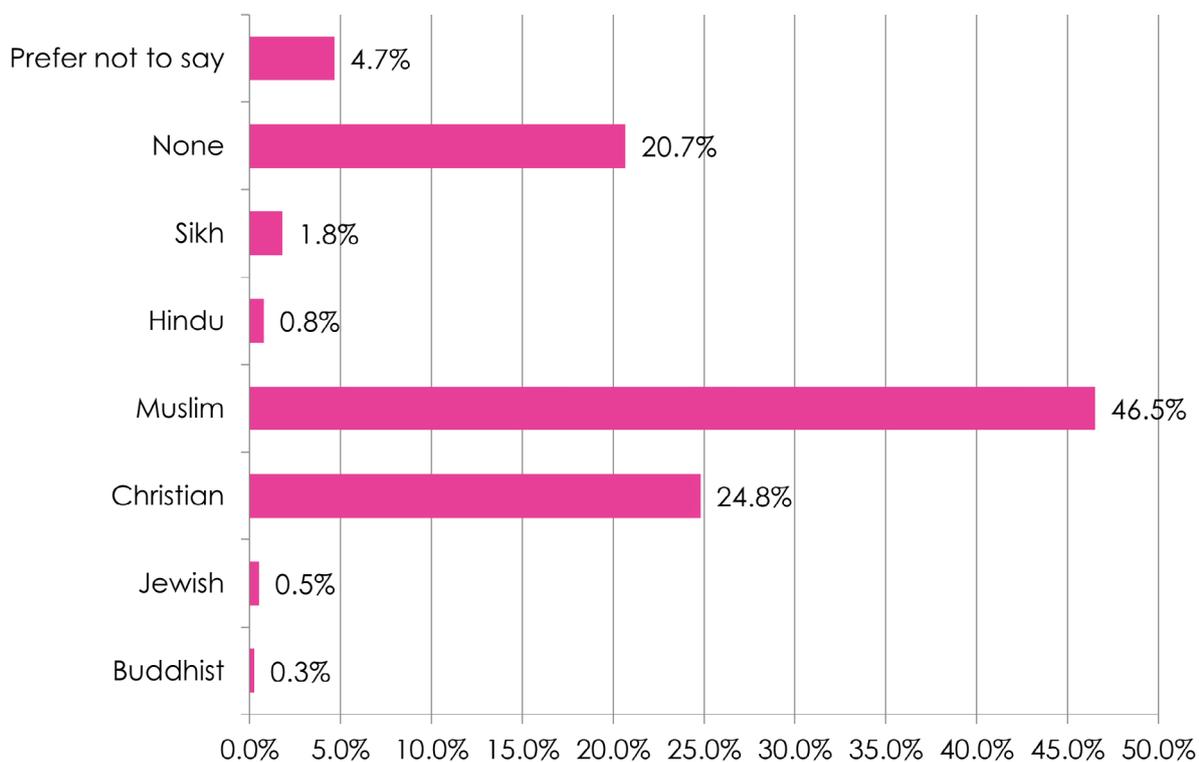
Appendix 2: Demographics

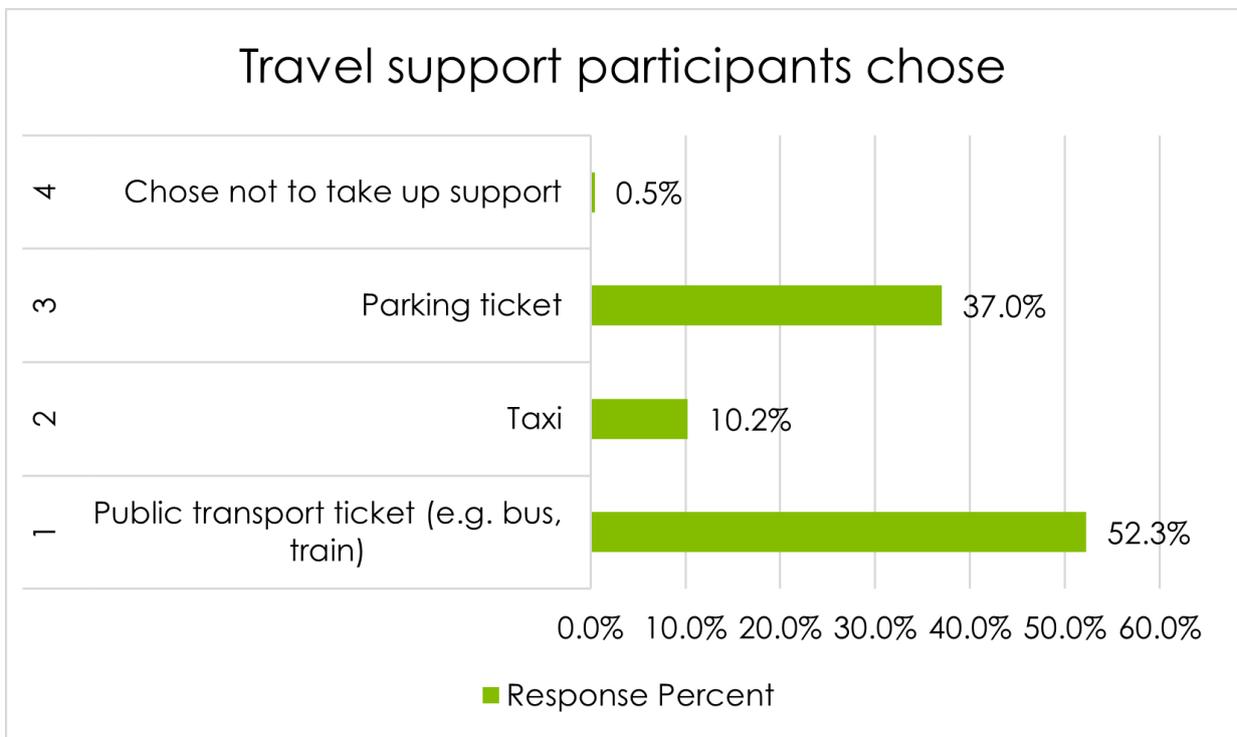
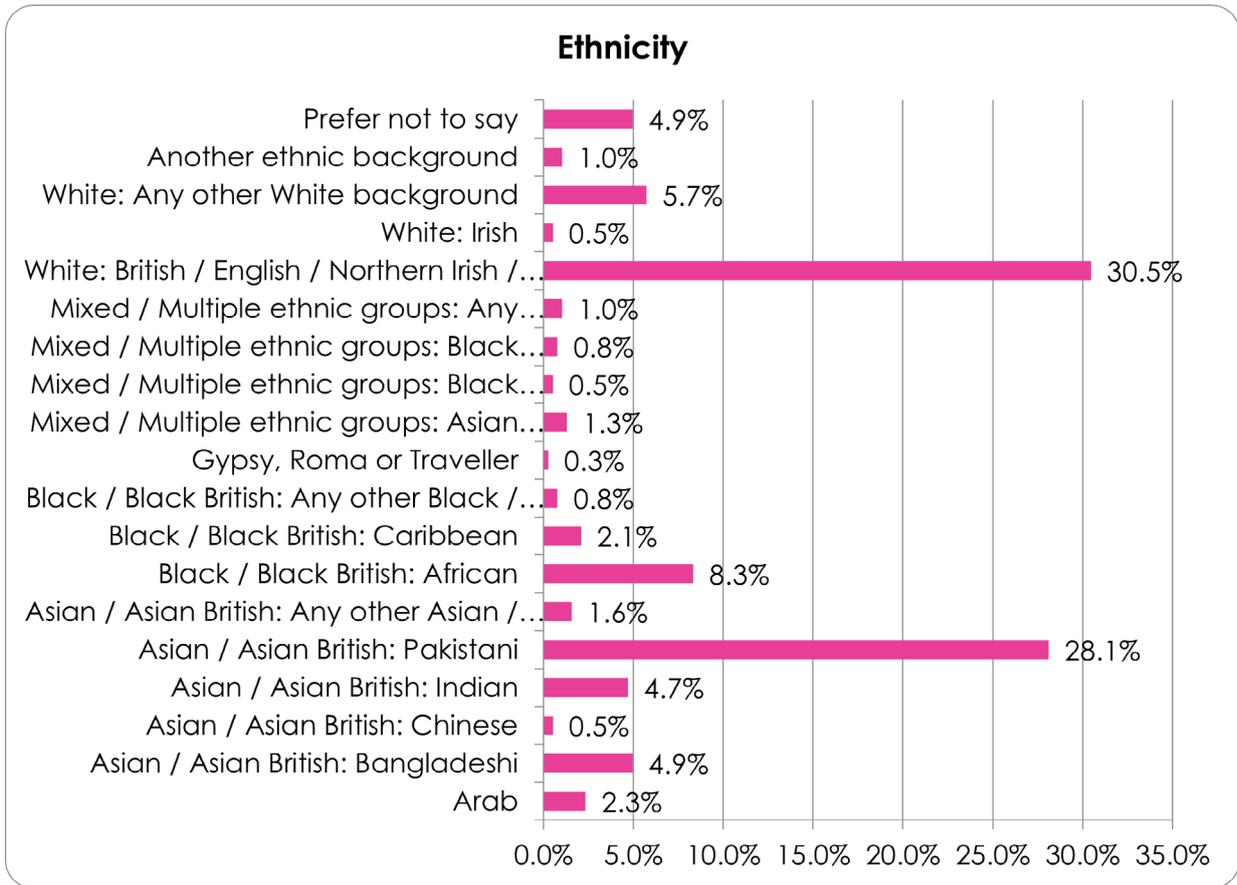


Sexual Orientation



Religion or Belief





healthwatch Birmingham

Healthwatch Birmingham
PO Box 16875 Birmingham, B16 6TN

-  www.healthwatchbirmingham.co.uk
-  0800 652 5278
-  info@healthwatchbirmingham.co.uk
-  @HWBrum
-  facebook.com/HealthwatchBirmingham

We confirm that we are using the Healthwatch Trademark (which covers the logo and Healthwatch brand) when undertaking work on our statutory activities as covered by the licence agreement. If you need this in an alternative format please contact us. Registered England, Company Registration No: 08440757

© Copyright Healthwatch Birmingham 2021