

**Snapshot Report:  
Rotherham Hospital  
appointment wait  
times- your  
experiences heard**



## About us

Healthwatch Rotherham:

We are the independent champion for people who use health and social care services in Rotherham. We are here to make sure that those running services put people at the heart of care.

Our sole purpose is to understand the needs, experiences and concerns of people who use health and social care services and to speak out on their behalf. We focus on ensuring that peoples' worries and concerns about current services are addressed and work to get services right for the future.

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## What we heard/what we did:

Following our 2023-2025 work plan, we wanted to explore more hospital topics, issues and themes. Based on our enquiries and feedback we have heard recently at our outreaches and events, we decided our first focus would be on hospital appointment wait times at Rotherham Hospital.

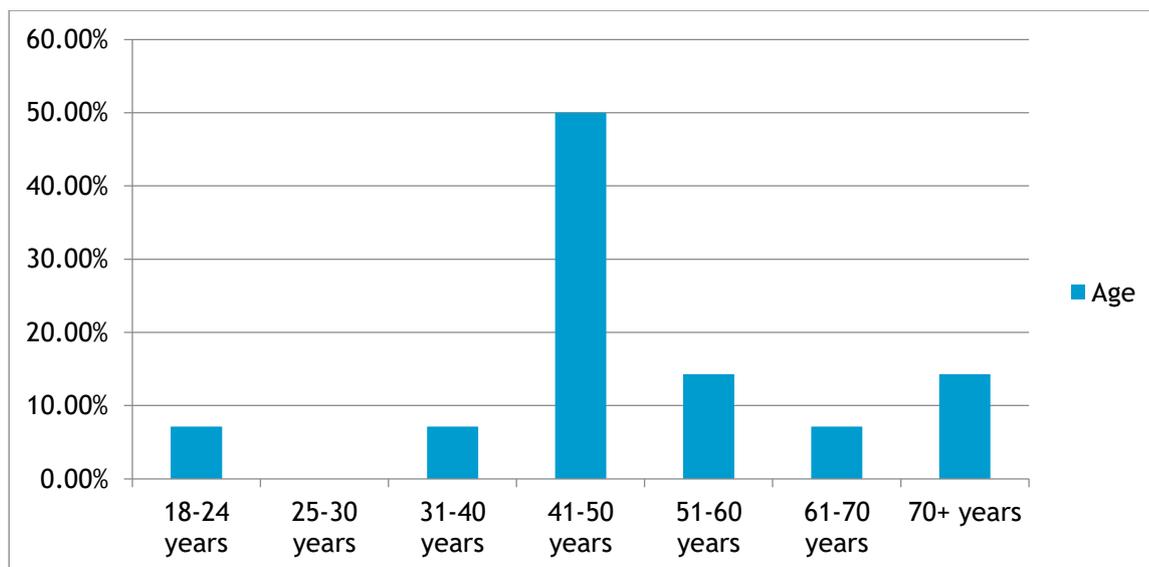
We did not want this to be a large scale report, so conducted this project over 3 weeks where we obtained 14 responses. This report will provide an overview/snapshot of what some patients are experiencing, and any common themes that surface from this initial report will be investigated in more detail in the future.

The survey was shared on our social media pages, as well as on our website and amongst local services and organisations. We also conducted some in-person engagement at Rotherham Hospital itself, where we hold a monthly stall; allowing people passing to provide feedback and comments and share their experiences with us face to face.

## Findings:

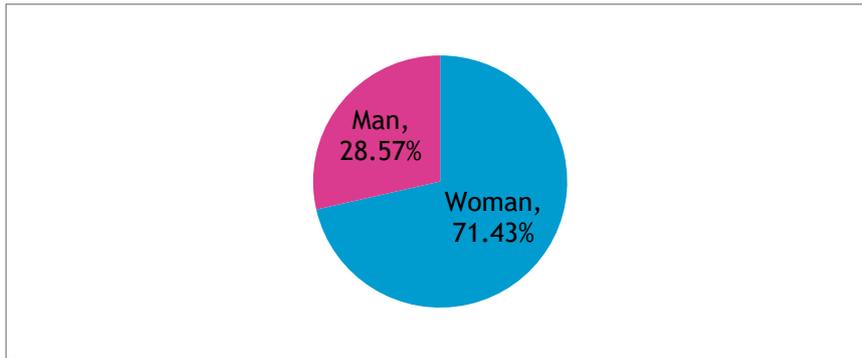
### Demographics:

#### Age:

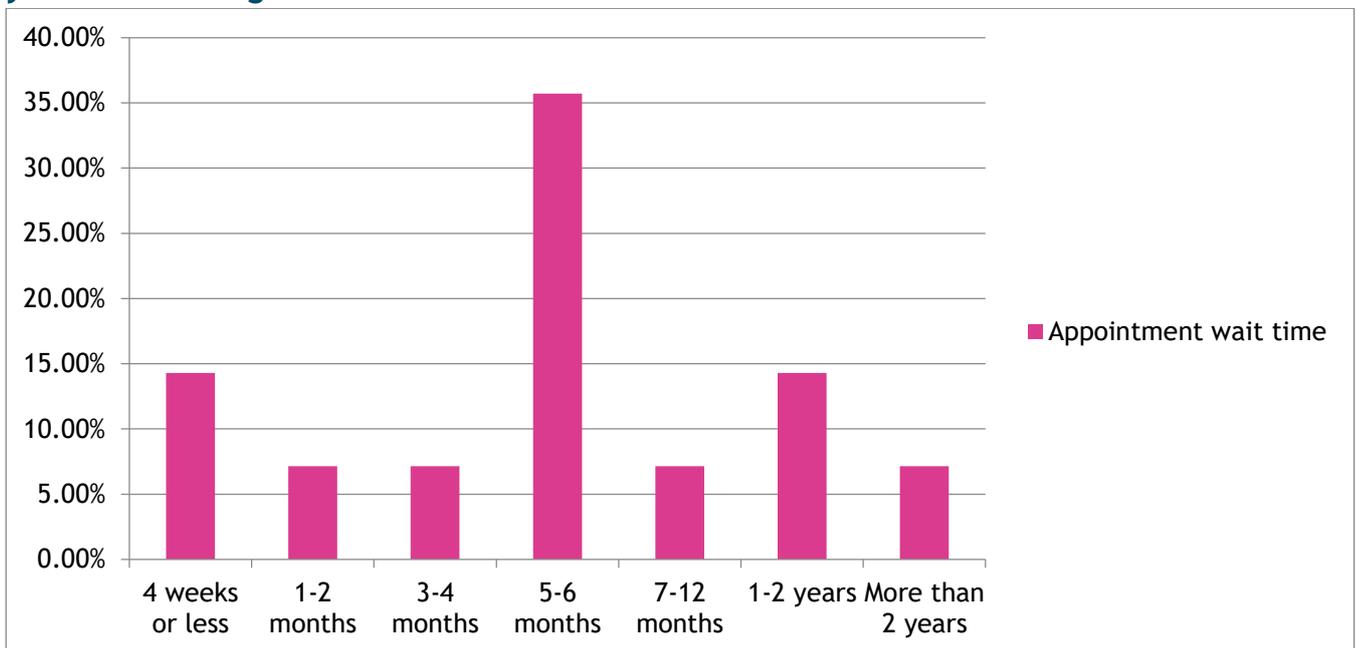


We were pleased that we were able to speak to people from a variety of age brackets despite a small sample of people, ensuring we heard experiences from different generations of Rotherham residents.

**Gender:**

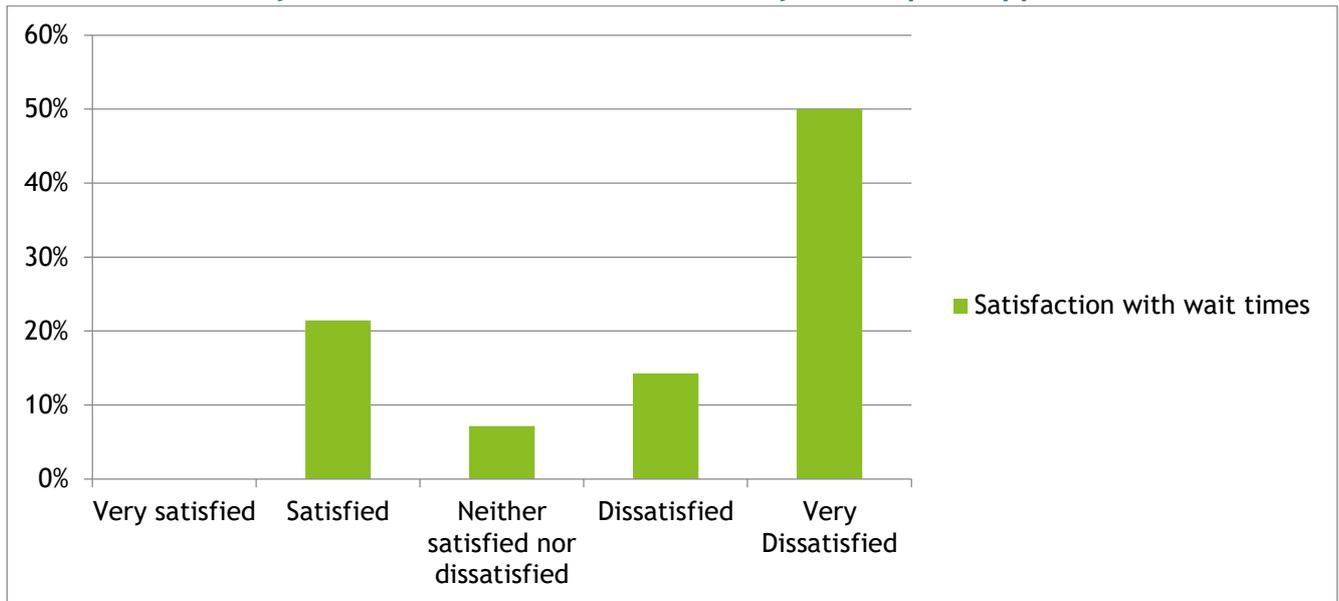


**If you are waiting for a hospital appointment at Rotherham Hospital, how long have you been waiting?**



We found these answers to be fairly varied, with the most common answer being 5-6 months. Some people had been waiting over a year for their appointment at Rotherham Hospital. Some people we spoke to had only recently established they needed a hospital appointment, which is why they answered 4 weeks or less. The actual wait time may be longer than this.

### How satisfied are you with the wait time to attend your hospital appointment?



50% of our respondents stated that they were very dissatisfied with the wait time given to them to attend their hospital appointment. Only 21% were satisfied with their wait time.

### Which department of Rotherham Hospital is your appointment for?

We then asked respondents which department of Rotherham Hospital their appointment was for, to establish if there were any patterns or themes that emerged. As you can see, the answers were fairly varied, with the most popular departments being Urology, Orthopaedics and Gastroenterology.

- Endocrinology
- Urology x2
- Orthopaedics x2
- Dermatology
- Gastroenterology x2
- Physiotherapy

### What type of appointment are you waiting for?

Respondents provided a variety of different answers, with some waiting for more than one appointment type. The most frequently answered appointment type was an operation, closely followed by an appointment for a specific on-going issue.

Operation - 42.86%

On-going issue - 35.71%

Consultation - 28.57%

Check-up - 21.43%

Treatment - 21.43%

Rehabilitation - 7.14%

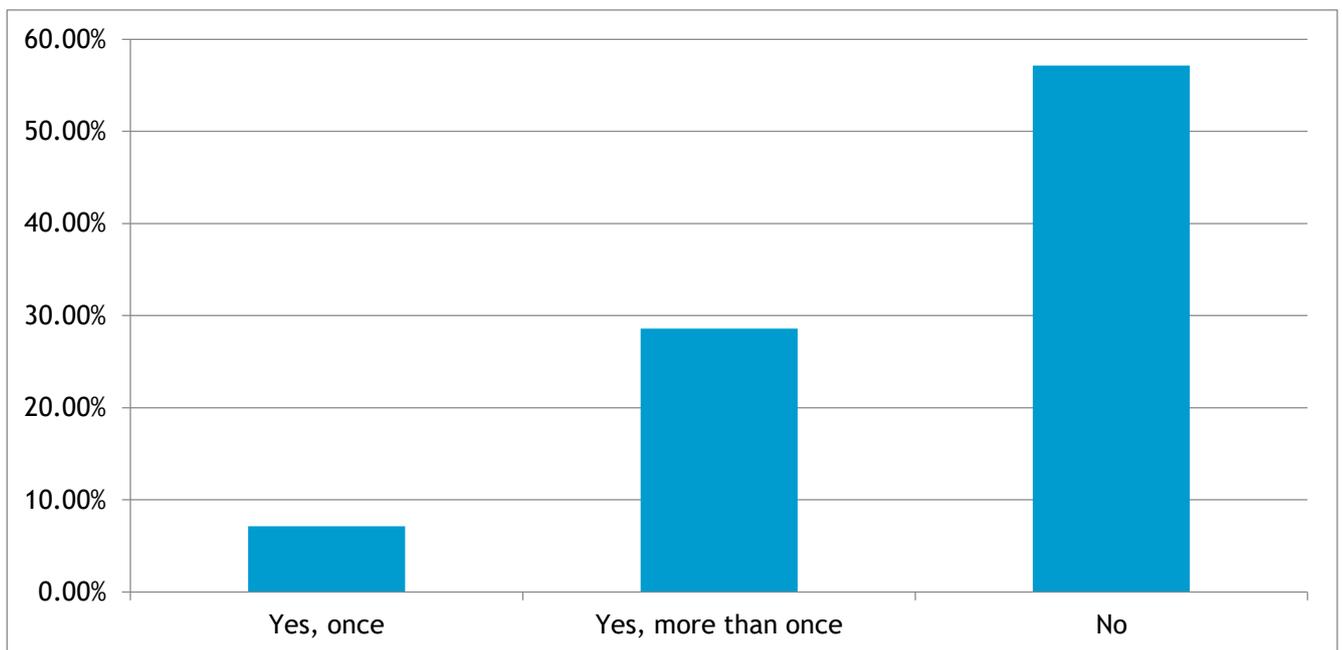
**Comments:**

“I have had arthritis for the last 5 years and I am waiting for this appointment from November last year. My appointment got cancelled twice and my GP was not able to help me relieve my problems”

“I had a stroke 2 years back and I was given a Physiotherapy appointment. It got cancelled multiple times.”

**Was your appointment cancelled at any point?**

Whilst over half of respondents had not had a cancelled appointment, 28.57% of respondents had had their hospital appointment cancelled more than once. This results in delays to treatment and diagnosis, and can be frustrating for the patient.



**Comments:**

“My appointment was cancelled many times. I don't speak good English. So, it is very difficult for me to contact them again and again to get new appointment”

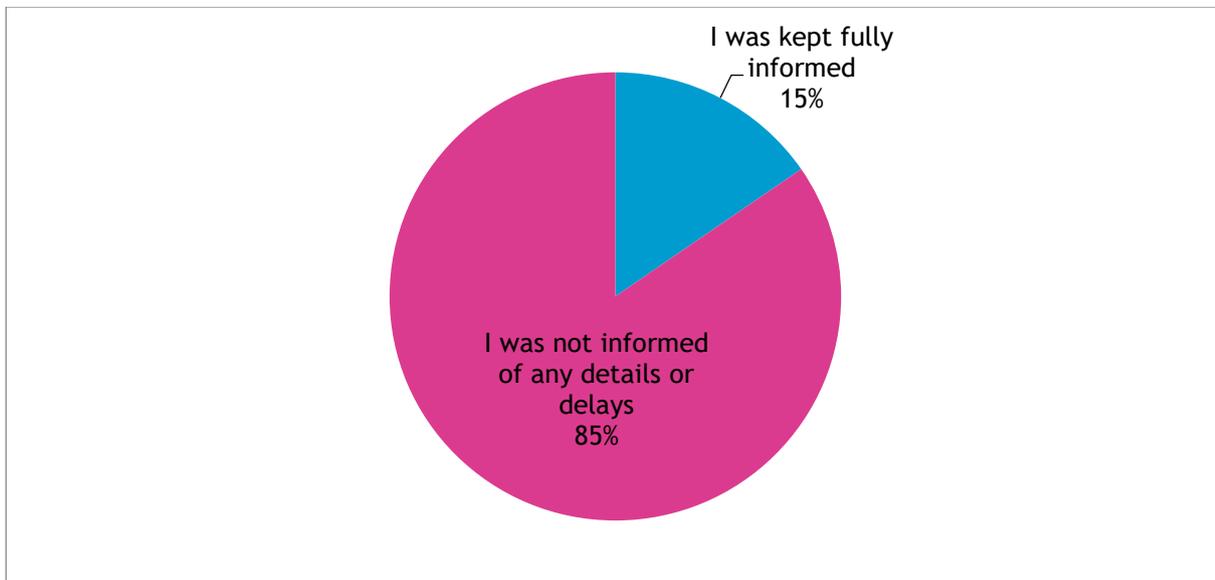
“My appointment was cancelled twice, once around Christmas time and then later in February. They just sent me a letter to inform me about the cancellation, but I received it after the date of appointment. Because of this cancelled appointment, I missed my blood tests and the pharmacy is not delivering my regular medicine for arthritis and I am living in lots of pain for past 5 months.”

“Didn't even let me know! Just did not ring on appointment day as it was a telephone appointment again.”

“Didn't turn up to appointment as letter was never posted or signed off by the doctor”

**Were you kept informed by the NHS whilst you were waiting for your appointment, including appointment details, timelines, and any delays?**

A huge 85% of respondents said they were not kept informed by the NHS when waiting for their hospital appointment, including information regarding appointment details, timelines and delays.



**Other Comments:**

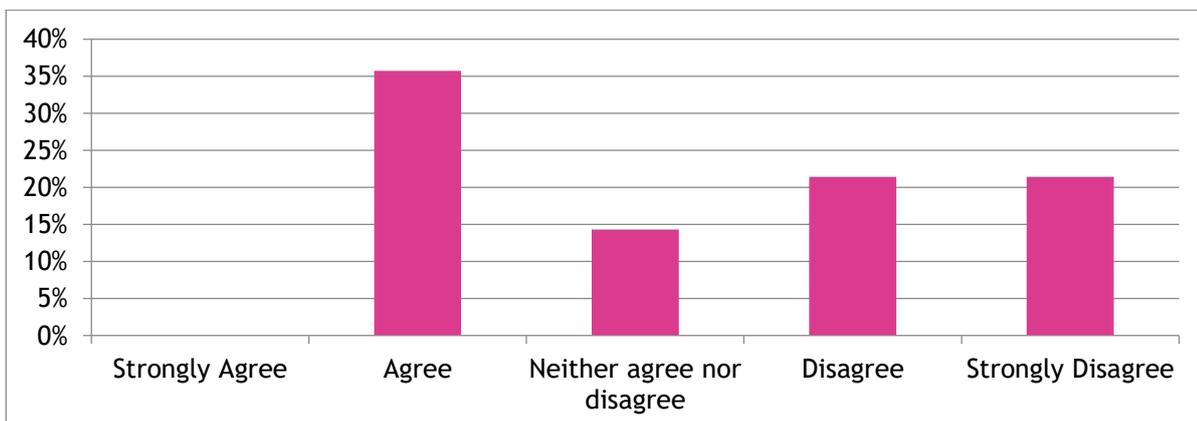
“I had to call and chase numerous times”

“I rang the contact centre myself to be told my appointment is pending”

“I just received a letter informing me of the cancelled appointment. But neither the next appointment nor any other details, such as the waiting period or other options, were made known to me. Even I was unable to visit the hospital since my GP had sent me here”

“I was not given any information about delay or any details. I got a message on my mobile that my appointment is cancelled. There was no other information about what to do, whom to contact etc.”

**The communications I received from the hospital regarding my appointment were clear, accessible, and easy to understand:**



**Comments:**

“There was no communications at all from the hospital. I had explained my condition to them. I had stroke and my right side of the body was affected. I was not even able to move my hands. But, they were ignoring me and cancelling my appointment”

“Nothing was clear. There was no adequate information on the cancellation and other details”

“Had a text reminding me of an appointment I did not know I had then did not bother ringing me at said time! Appalling service”

**How does Rotherham Hospital communicate information with you regarding your appointments?**

The most common forms of communication between patient and Rotherham Hospital were letter and telephone. A small number also received e-mails and text messages to confirm appointments.

Letter - 64.29%

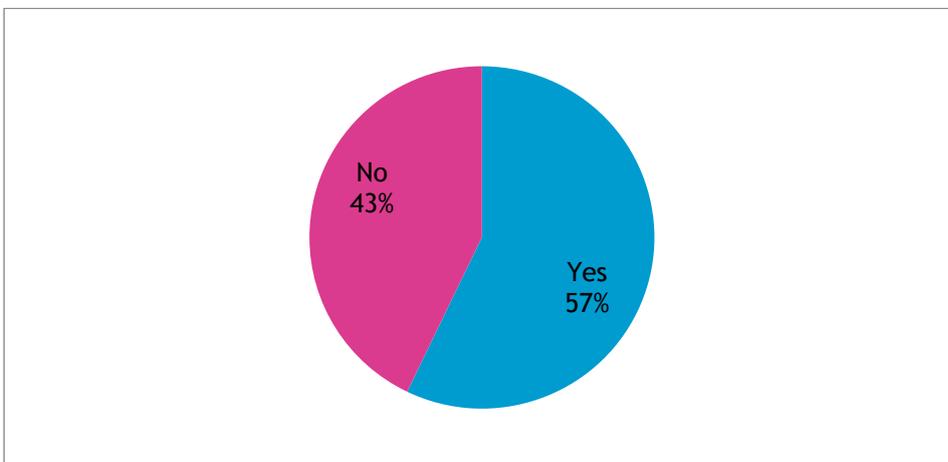
Telephone - 50%

E-mail - 21.43%

Other - 28.57%

- Text
- Rotherham Health App

**Are you happy with the communication method chosen for you to receive this information?**

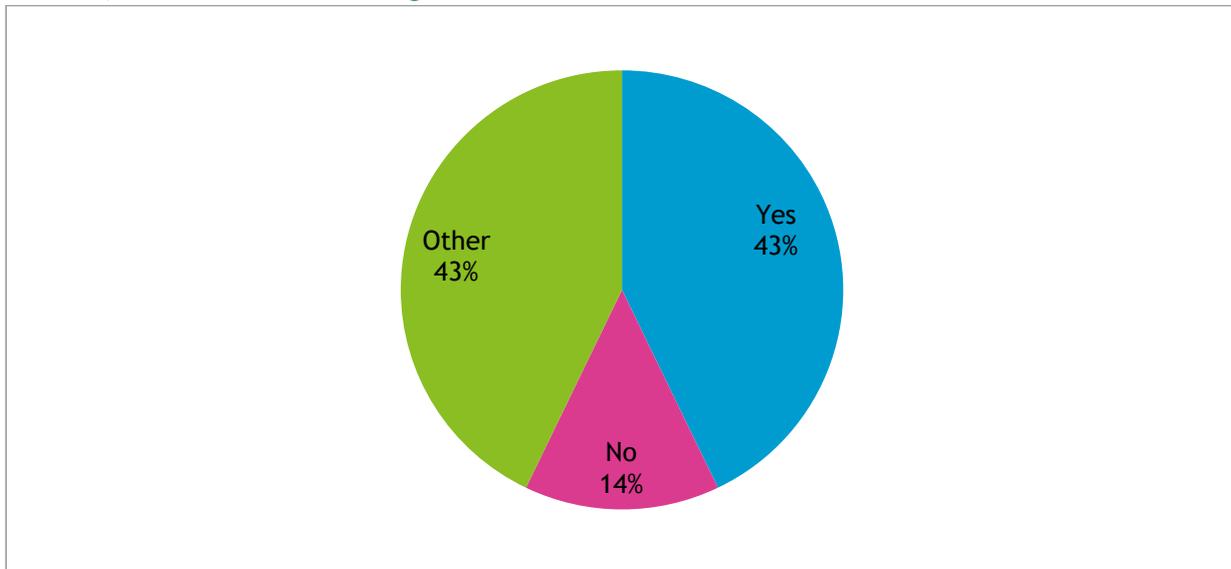


**Comments:**

“I wish somebody would have called me to inform me about the cancellation and help me rebook my appointment”

“They could have phoned me to let me know the appointment was cancelled. Due to a postal delay, I received the letter after the appointment date had passed. I agree it is not their fault, but phone was a better option”

### Did Rotherham Hospital tell you about your appointment in enough time for you to attend, and/or make arrangements?



Only 14% of respondents felt that there was not enough time given by Rotherham Hospital for the patient to attend their appointments. Other respondents felt they had ample time to attend their appointment, whilst others were still waiting for their appointment to come through so could not comment.

#### Comments:

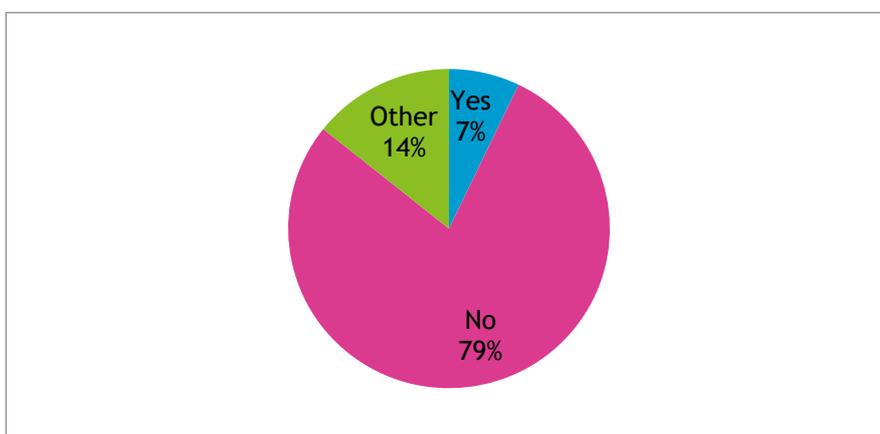
"I had to book the appointment myself. There was no preference/support received from the hospital to rebook the appointment. There should be some way to give priority for the cancelled appointments"

"It was just a text message. Yes, they informed me in advance".

"Still waiting for my appointment"

### Have you received support from the hospital whilst waiting for your appointment?

Almost 80% of respondents felt that they did not receive any support from Rotherham Hospital whilst waiting for their appointment, despite some patients waiting several months or more for an appointment, and others having their appointment cancelled on more than one occasion.



“I received no assistance while I was waiting. I still experience those issues. My illness would have improved if I had sought medical attention and physical therapy sooner. I had approached GP, but they were also not listening to me. Everyone is busy and tells that COVID as an excuse for cancellation. I agree, COVID had affected everyone and hospitals had tough time. But, this is almost 2 years. There should be some way to prioritise people's access to the services. They ignore us”.

“I received no help. Due to the cancellation, I actually had a terrible previous 5-6 months. My GP was unable to provide support, my blood tests were not completed, and the pharmacist declined to provide my medication since prescription had already expired. There should be some systems in place to handle this. People should continue receiving the support and medication they required even if appointments are cancelled. It wasn't there in my situation. I found it challenging to go nearly six months without taking my medications for arthritis because it is a painful condition”.

**If your hospital appointment was delayed, did the delay affect you in any of these ways?**

**My mental health and wellbeing:**

Strongly agree - 16.67%

**Slightly Agree - 50%**

Neither agree nor disagree - 33.33%

Slightly disagree - 0%

Strongly disagree - 0%

67% of people agreed that their mental health and wellbeing was affected by their hospital appointment being delayed.

**Worsened my symptoms:**

Strongly agree - 33.3%

**Slightly agree - 50%**

Neither agree not disagree - 16.67%

Slightly disagree - 0%

Strongly disagree - 0%

83% of people felt that their symptoms were worsened by their hospital appointment being delayed.

**Made it harder to care for someone else/children**

Strongly agree - 20%

Slightly agree - 0%

**Neither agree nor disagree - 60%**

Slightly disagree - 0%

Strongly disagree - 20%

**Reduced my ability to work**

**Strongly agree - 60%**

Slightly agree - 0%

Neither agree nor disagree - 0%

Slightly disagree - 20%

Strongly disagree - 20%

60% of people felt that a delay in their hospital appointment reduced their ability to work.

### **Have you thought about paying for private healthcare in order to receive care sooner?**

The majority of people we spoke to would **not even consider** private healthcare due to the affordability of it. Only 21% of people would consider going private if they could afford it, even if this meant they would receive their care sooner. Despite the often long waits for appointments, the NHS is free and accessible and therefore most people will not, or cannot, pay for private treatment.

Yes, I have paid and accessed private healthcare already - 0%

Yes, I would consider this in the future if I could afford it - 21.43%

**No, I cannot afford private healthcare - 71.43%**

No, I am happy to wait for my NHS hospital appointment - 21.43%

#### **Comments:**

“I am not able to work after a stroke. I cannot afford private healthcare. I depend on the NHS for support”

“I cannot afford private healthcare. It is quite expensive. If not, I would have sought out private medical treatment”

### **Would you be willing to travel to another hospital to receive treatment if this reduced your waiting time?**

64% of respondents would be happy to travel to a hospital local to Rotherham (such as Sheffield) if this meant their appointment wait time was reduced. A further 14% would be willing to travel if they had assistance with the travel itself and the cost of it.

**Yes, any hospital local to Rotherham - 64.29%**

Yes, if I had assistance with travel costs - 14.29%

Yes, any hospital in England - 7.14%

No, I am happy at Rotherham Hospital - 21.43%

Other - 21.43%

**Comments:**

“I would have travelled to Sheffield for medical treatment. Rather than a private clinic, I can afford to go there”

“I can't travel without support from others. I come here because they send vehicle and all these people helps me to access vehicle. I cannot travel to far place independently. I cannot walk properly or hold with my right hand, so going to other places is difficult for me. But, if there is support I would”

**Do you have any other comments regarding hospital appointments at Rotherham Hospital? If so, please tell us below**

“I'm happy with the care I'm receiving at the hospital in Rotherham. However, the helpline phone is poor. They frequently don't answer the phone. We must continue to try. It might take over two days for someone to contact us back after leaving a message for us on sometimes. That must be improved. And in my situation, I think there are problems with hospital and pharmacy coordination”

“I am disappointed in the delay”

“Had no problem before all been good”

## Conclusions

This small snapshot of people's experiences of hospital appointments at Rotherham Hospital allows us to see some of the issues people are facing. We have found that the main issues are not just regarding the lengthy wait times for appointments, but also the lack of support and communication between the hospital and patient. Those with delayed hospital appointments felt that their mental health suffered as a result, as well as it worsening their symptoms and reducing their ability to work.

The majority of people cannot afford private healthcare, and even if they could, would be happy with NHS treatment. 64% of respondents did state however that they would be happy to travel to a hospital local to Rotherham, such as Sheffield, if it meant they could receive treatment quicker.

43% of people were also unhappy with the communication method Rotherham Hospital use to inform them about their appointments.

Whilst this was a small sample of people, we felt we received detailed and in-depth responses from our respondents, which has highlighted a variety of issues Rotherham residents are facing when trying to access hospital appointments. In the upcoming months, we intend to do a follow-up report with a larger sample of people, to see if any of these issues have been addressed and the patient experience improved.

## Recommendations and/or next steps

- Offer support to those waiting several months for a hospital appointment (suggesting relevant charities and organisations that could help etc.)
- Inform patients of delays and details to their hospital appointment

## Responses

The Healthwatch Rotherham service manager presented the above findings and recommendations to the Patient Experience Group at Rotherham Hospital at the end of June. The report was also sent in advance of the meeting to various departments at Rotherham Hospital for comment.

No formal response has been given to insert into this report, however Rotherham Hospital are aware of our recommendations and assure us that patients are informed of delays where possible. It is argued that it is difficult to suggest relevant charities/support organisations for patients waiting several months for an appointment, as the hospital are not fully aware of the patient's condition and subsequent treatment.

We have informed Rotherham Hospital that we will be conducting a follow-up report in 6 months to see how/if the situation has changed, and whether the patient experience has been improved, or if more work is still required.

It has been highlighted to us that Rotherham Hospital offers a 'waiting well' service, which highlights ways patients can manage their own health whilst waiting for an appointment (keeping a diary, reducing stress, eating healthily etc.). You can find more information about this service on Rotherham Hospital's website: <https://beta.therotherhamft.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/waiting-well>

## Acknowledgments

Thank you to everyone who took the time to speak with us and share your views and experiences.