

Briefing on Access to and Quality of Primary Care Services

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for the Healthier Communities and Adult Social Care Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee

This briefing is a summary of feedback shared with Healthwatch Sheffield about the quality of, and access to, primary care services between January and December 2018 inclusive.

GPs, dentists, pharmacists and other primary care professionals are usually the first point of contact when we need support with our health. This means that primary care is the topic we hear most about. Last year out of 778 reviews on our feedback centre, 447 were about primary care.

Most of the experiences shared with us were about GPs; however, we also received feedback about dentistry, pharmacies and opticians.

There are some recurrent messages about what people want these services to do:

- Make it easier to see a doctor, nurse or dentist quickly.
- Involve them in decision making about treatment and care.
- Talk to them about what happens next and give them information so they can make an informed decision.

Summary

Our feedback centre allows people to rate their overall experience of services out of 5. The infographic shows how many reviews each service received during January-December 2018 and their average rating:

Dentists	74	★★★★☆
GPs	357	★★★★☆
Pharmacies	13	★★★★☆
Opticians	3	★★★★☆

Key Themes

General Practice

Administration

- 144 reviews were recorded about administration, including booking appointments and appointment availability.
- 20% (29) described a positive experience; key messages were reception staff arranging consultations with doctors quickly, and appointment booking systems being improved.
- 78% (112) described a negative experience; key messages were difficulty getting through on the telephone and waiting for long periods of time.
- 2% (3) described a neutral experience.

Waiting times

- 83 reviews were recorded on our feedback centre about waiting times.
- 25% (21) described a positive experience; key messages were responsiveness of reception staff and short waiting times for telephone consultations.
- 71% (59) described a negative experience; key messages were waiting times for referrals and booked appointments, as well as urgent appointments.
- 4% (3) described a neutral experience.

Staff attitude

- 146 reviews were recorded about staff attitude.
- 67% (98) described a positive experience; key messages were people feeling listened to and supported by staff members.
- 30% (44) described a positive experience; key messages were people feeling ignored and appointments feeling rushed.
- 3% (4) described a neutral experience.

Treatment and care

- 131 reviews were recorded about treatment and care.
- 76% (100) described a positive experience; key messages were staff responsiveness, efficiency and understanding.
- 22% (29) described a negative experience; key messages were feeling that appointments were too short and that people were not sufficiently involved in decisions made about appointment times or treatment options.
- 2% (2) described a neutral experience.

Communication

- 25 reviews were recorded about communication.
- 16% (4) described a positive experience; key messages were that notifications of appointments were clear, and advice was given which people could understand.
- 80% (20) described a negative experience; key messages included a lack of communication between health care staff, as well as with patients and carers about their appointments.
- 4% (1) described a neutral experience.

Dentistry

Treatment and care

- 32 reviews were recorded about treatment and care.
- 75% (24) described a positive experience; a key message was staff providing a clear treatment explanation.
- 25% (8) described a negative experience, a key message was difficulty in getting urgent care when needed.

Staff attitudes

- 38 reviews were recorded about staff attitudes.
- 79% (30) described a positive experience; a key message was staff members were welcoming.
- 21% (8) described a negative experience; a key message was appointments felt rushed.

Pharmacies

Waiting times

- 5 reviews were recorded about waiting times.
- 20% (1) described a positive experience; a key message was members of staff were efficient.
- 80% (4) described a negative experience; a key message was waiting times for prescriptions were too long.

Staff

- 7 reviews were recorded about staff, including staff attitude.
- 71% (5) described a positive experience; a key message was staff members were supportive.
- 29% (2) described a negative experience; a key message was feeling that staff members were unprofessional.

What else do we know?

Community Engagement

During 2018, Healthwatch Sheffield awarded small grants to community groups to carry out health or social care related engagement within their communities.

In total organisations gathered the views of around 540 people, hearing from a diverse range of people, including:

- Asylum seekers and refugees
- People with lived experience of mental health distress
- People with learning disabilities
- People with physical disabilities including amputees and wheelchair users
- Young people
- Young men from Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and Refugee (BAMER) communities
- Women from BAMER communities
- Members of the Chinese community.

The importance of primary care was evident in that access to GPs was a cross-cutting theme across nine of the eleven projects.

Difficulties getting GP appointments were raised by a number of groups. This was cited by Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and Refugee (BAMER) men as a reason why they do not attend the GP. Others talked about their frustration with the triage system whereby GP receptionists determine how urgent a patient's need to see the GP is.

Refugees and asylum seekers find the health system confusing and do not know about the different services available to them. Printed information and letters are often too full of text. BAMER women

gave positive examples about accessing health services but also found printed information and letters about clinical information difficult to understand.

A good number of people with learning disabilities knew their doctor or surgery by name and 2/3 of those consulted either didn't mind or actually liked going to see their GP.