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# Insight Bulletin – July 2022

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## About Healthwatch Surrey

One of the statutory duties of Healthwatch Surrey is to share residents' experiences of health and social care with the people and organisations who make decisions about those services.

This bulletin highlights some of the themes we've been hearing about recently. As we are once again engaging with people face-to-face in the community we have added the source to each of the experiences we feature.

General Practice is the service we hear about most frequently – around 1/3 of the experiences shared with us include praise or problems relating to GPs. To coincide with the publication of the NHS England GP Patient Survey [GP Patient Survey \(gp-patient.co.uk\)](https://gp-patient.co.uk) our insight report this month reflects local experiences of GP surgeries.

## GPs – Praise and Thanks

Most respondents in the GP Patient Survey said their overall experience of their GP practice is good or very good, with high levels of confidence and trust, and we regularly hear stories of excellent care:

“Since [granddaughter] has been with me I've taken her to our GP for her health check when she was registered and they have been wonderful. They jumped into action and she has been referred to the Jarvis Centre, an occupational therapist, a speech therapist and she is due her two year health check and is having it on Friday.”

**Community engagement, Family centre**

“I have a chronic illness - the surgery is very attentive for this and other illnesses. Always on hand and respond quickly in an emergency / new illness.”

**Feedback leaflet**

“It was easy to register, they wanted to see me, well they actually wanted to speak to me on a telephone consultation for new patients. I have tinnitus which makes telephone conversations very difficult and so I asked to be seen rather than having a telephone call. They organised for me to have a face to face and when I got there the doctor understood why I needed to come in because of the tinnitus making it hard to hear over the phone.”

**Community engagement, Community café**

“My doctor is good, she’s been really supportive and she’s helped me with my mental health and things. Before Christmas I found I was losing myself, first time in 10 years I really felt that way. I was really stressed and anxious, everything was very overwhelming. The Doctor prescribed medication, which to be honest I wasn’t too keen on taking, don’t want those pills but it helped me to get a bit clear, she explained that it was a way to help right then and then she referred me to the mental health team. She was really supportive, and I feel like I can call and get to talk to her if I needed too.”

**Community engagement, Foodbank**

## **Making an appointment at the surgery, especially by phone, is a challenge for many**

Experience of making an appointment was the main challenge in the survey, with nearly half saying their experience was very poor/poor/neither good nor poor. This is something we hear about frequently: all these experiences were shared with us in the past 5 weeks.

“Can take 30 mins to get through on the phone. If need to see a GP it can take a week, it’s not good enough.”

**Community engagement, Community centre**

“Disgusted that I can’t get through on the phone. On hold for 2 hours... I have to ring as my internet isn’t good.”

**Community engagement, Community centre**

“Trying to call is always hard as it’s right at the time you are getting kids ready to go to school. I have children ages 10, 8, 18months and one on the way.”

**Community engagement, Foodbank**

“I am hard of hearing in both ears and wear a hearing aid. Having telephone consultations is very hard yet this is usually the first point of access. ...I usually go in to book an appointment.”

**Community engagement, Community centre**

“I can't get an appointment... They push you to do everything on line but can't get an appointment so you have to call up. You then get short shrift from the receptionist.”

**Community engagement, Therapy garden**

## **We still hear concern about telephone consultations, especially from more vulnerable patients**

In the GP survey nearly 90% of those whose last appointment was by phone agreed that their needs were met – slightly lower than those with a face-to-face appointment but still a very high proportion. However, we frequently hear people’s concern, suspicion or practical problems relating to phone consultations:

“Accessing the doctor is different now, and dangerous I think. I am less inclined to contact the doctor as it is a phone call. I had a mole at the start of lockdown and I was asked to send a photo of my mole. I could not do this so I had to have my daughter help me. This has put me off contacting the doctor again and I think others in my age group feel the same.”

**Community engagement, Church event**

“I saw the doctor today, face to face for the first time in about 2 years. Care was very good. I told him it's very distressing not seeing him. I came away with all the information I needed and some antibiotics. Previously I have had telephone consultations but they are not good for us oldies. We like reassurance of seeing the GP face to face.”

**GP CIC Project Engagement**

“My wife has had months of what look like now as being liver problems. Back in [late March] she called [GP] practice in terrible pain and had a telephone consultation, they said that she had pulled a muscle. She called again still in pain and asked for someone to see her as she didn't feel like it was a pulled muscle and was told it was a 3 week wait for a face to face appointment because not enough doctors were working... In the end the doctor called for another telephone consultation and my wife was told to go over to St Peters... they examined her and she was told she pulled a muscle, but she needed blood tests... but she was still in pain and so called again and received another telephone consultation. This time, after listening to her and seeing she has MS, the doctor said she needed a scan of her liver and kidneys 'straight away'.”

**GP CIC Engagement**

“About 6 weeks ago I called to speak to my GP about my mental health in particular my depression [and am at high risk of anxiety] and they told me it would be 8 weeks for an appointment! Got a phone consultation in the end but I missed the call, they didn't call back again.”

**GP CIC Project Engagement**

## Pharmacy – a crucial link in the chain

Unless we specifically ask people about their pharmacy experiences we tend to hear little about them, and most of what we hear is positive:

“My [local] pharmacy are very good at providing prescriptions, I get them delivered. Very helpful staff there.”

**Community engagement, Therapy garden**

“I often go to my local pharmacy in the high street and get consultation first. 9/10 they can help.”

**Community engagement, Community centre**

However, recently we have heard more negative experiences of busy pharmacies and medication supply problems:

“I had to go down to the pharmacy to get the medication. I haven't for

a while as, like I say, I am lucky and usually get the medication delivered. It was a nightmare, there was a huge queue, the shelves were empty and then I had to go twice, I waited half an hour.”

**Community engagement, Community café**

“Often the pharmacy will have to close, I think that there is a staffing issue there or it's down to short staff, there doesn't seem to be enough pharmacists to dispense, I don't think they can cope with the demand, especially with online prescription's, they seem very disorganised when you are in there.”

**Community engagement, Community café**

“Just discovered the community pharmacy service has no space capacity to take on new Dosette/NOMAD box patients. Another blow for vulnerable, elderly patients.”

**Volunteer engagement**

“I went to see if [pharmacy] could fill my...prescription. ...my usual pharmacy [pharmacy 2u] had said that they couldn't fulfil my prescription but gave me a code that I could take to any other pharmacy... he wrote down the code that pharmacy 2u had given me. Then he only gave me 10 days worth of this different progesterone... I paid for this though as he said he should be getting some in next week. This was 2 weeks ago. I went and asked about where it was and he told me to go back to my GP and get another prescription even though I had paid him for it... I think he split a pack to give me 10 days worth, took my money and knew he didn't know when more supplies are coming.”

**Website**

## Gathering and sharing our insight

We gather feedback through many channels including our agenda-free outbound engagement events, our Helpdesk, website, and social media. We are also continuing our **series of care home visits**, which will see us visiting one care home each month. We also distribute flyers, advertise, engage with groups through our partners and contacts, and initiate focus groups.

If we hear a case of concern regarding patient safety, we immediately signpost the sharer to the appropriate body and escalate the case with the provider/commissioner.

We share our wider themes with Trusts, CCGs, Surrey County Council, Public Health, CQC, and in various boards and groups across Surrey.



Our spotlight for engagements in August is East Surrey, in September it will be Surrey Downs. Please note: these dates may be subject to change.

| DATE     | PLACE   | Time          |
|----------|---|---------------|
| 02.08.22 | East Surrey Hospital  | 10.00 – 11.30 |
| 05.08.22 | St Matthews Foodbank, Redhill                                 | 11.30 – 2.00  |
| 09.08.22 | Wayside Surgery, Horley                                       | 10.00 – 12.00 |
| 09.08.22 | Greathed Manor care Home, Lingfield<br>(Enter and View Visit) | 10.30 – 12.30 |
| 10.08.22 | Merstham Community Hub,<br>Merstham                           | 12.00 – 3.00  |
| 15.08.22 | Caterham Dene Community Hospital<br>(Minor Injuries)          | 10.00 – 12.00 |
| 16.08.22 | YMCA Horley Family Centre (TBC)                               | 10.00 – 12.00 |



## Friends and Family Care Home Survey

Our survey for friends and family of those living in care homes can be accessed via this QR code or found on our website - [Friends and family care home survey - Healthwatch Surrey](#).



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