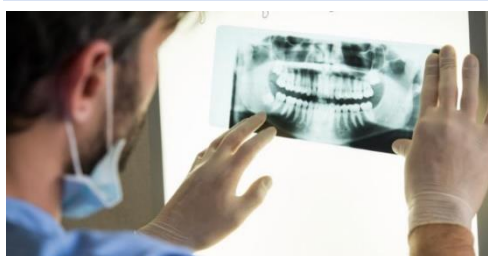


This update is split into the following sections:

- (1) Your Healthwatch: news about our work and that of Healthwatch England (page 1)
- (2) [Health and social care updates](#) (page 7)
- (3) [COVID news](#) (page 13)

## (1) YOUR HEALTHWATCH

### A) Healthwatch feedback contributes to reform of NHS dentistry



NHS England announced changes on 19th July to the NHS dental contract - the first in 16 years, which should start to improve access for patients.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Healthwatch teams in Sussex have seen an increase in the proportion of people telling us they have found it hard to access NHS dentists.

Hundreds of people have spoken out about their poor experiences and Healthwatch teams across Sussex have been listening and raising their concerns. Those concerns have finally been listened to with reforms announced to dental NHS contracts.

You can read our [full press release](#) and what these changes mean [here](#)

If you need more information, you can access the Healthwatch guide to your rights and accessing the treatment you need [here](#)

“

“We welcome the announcement by NHS England as first steps for long overdue reforms to the NHS contract governing NHS dentistry which we hope will make it easier for people to find a dentist. We have been hearing from hundreds of patients about their poor experiences, with many being left in pain or simply unable to afford essential care. We have listened and worked with local dentists, MPs and others to escalate people’s voices. We will be monitoring their impact and will be discussing them with the newly formed Integrated Care System who have taken on responsibility for dental commissioning across our region. We therefore encourage people to continue to share their dental stories with us.”

– Healthwatch in Sussex

”

## B) Healthwatch Brighton and Hove helpline enquiries April to June 2022

The Healthwatch Brighton and Hove helpline service helps people to access the right health or social care service or organisation for their needs.

We also offer information if people want to share their experience or make a complaint. Two trained volunteers help to run the service.

We received a total number of 74 enquiries answered via our helpline April-June 2022.

We received enquiries from individuals as well as people acting on their behalf: 54 enquiries were from individuals, 13 from friends, family or carers, 2 from advocates and one from a health or social care professional (plus 4 'others').

Read our report [here](#) to learn more about the types of enquiries we received, and how we helped.

**healthwatch**  
Brighton and Hove

Our helpline service:  
Public enquiries during  
April – June 2022

## C) Typologies of digital exclusion - a Healthwatch report

**We spoke to 20 people who had 'poor' or 'very poor' internet skills. This study showed that the context of use was an important part of digital exclusion, with some people happy to use the internet for some purposes but not for health and care.**

Healthwatch Brighton and Hove recently surveyed patients registered with any GP surgery in the East and Central Brighton Primary Care Network (eight GP practices in total). One of the survey aims was to follow up with respondents to explore their use of digital technology. To do this, we interviewed 20 people who stated in the questionnaire that they preferred 'not to use the online GP appointment booking system' (e.g. [e-consult](#)) and rated their internet skills as 'poor' or 'very poor'.



These interviews generated four types of digital exclusion typologies:

1. **Non-users:** these were people who did not see the need for the internet and felt it was more natural to speak to someone.
2. **Competent digital users but not in the context of healthcare:** these people commonly used the internet for shopping, banking, booking holidays and having video calls with loved ones, however, found the complicated nature of the online booking system in a health care setting put them off.

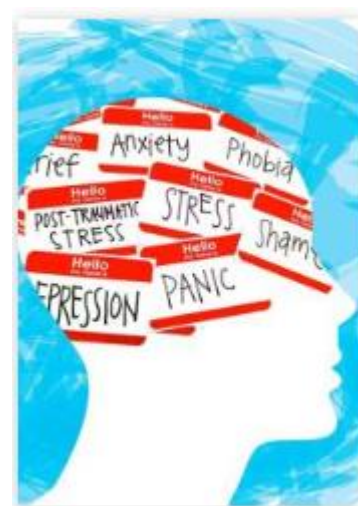
3. **Potential users:** these people currently, do not use digital technology due to a lack of skills or technology, however, would be interested with the right support.
4. **Recent users:** these were people who have become more interested during the pandemic with the predominance of online bookings and appointments.

These typologies provide insights into the barriers and facilitating factors towards the use of digital technology. While technological barriers persist, one of the most significant findings is that some people can use the necessary technology but choose not to in the healthcare environment. The context of use is now added to the more recognised barriers of motivation, skills, trust, access to technology and connectivity, and costs.

Read our full report [here](#)

## D) Mental Health Services in Brighton and Hove - experiences of service users and professionals - a Healthwatch report

Healthwatch were commissioned to explore service user experience of mental health services and accommodation providing mental health support, in our city. This report is about the experiences of 137 service users and 96 mental health professionals



### Key headlines:

#### Quality of care

- On the whole, service users and professionals were complementary about mental health providers, individuals, and organisations.
- Service users spoke positively about being “listened to and treated with concern”, but less positively about providers “*addressing [their] needs or making plans to do so*”, perhaps reflecting the short-term nature of some support.

#### Accessing support

- 57% of service users found it difficult to access services and 77% of professionals found accessing the correct mental health support “difficult”. In addition, 70% of professionals said their clients were not able to access accommodation suitable for their mental health needs. Reasons for this included:
  - GPs, the first port of call for many service users, either did not understand the patient’s emotional needs, or did not recognise symptoms as requiring mental health therapeutic support (as opposed to medication for example).
  - service users didn’t know where to go for help;
  - waiting lists were too long;
  - the service they were offered had been used before unsuccessfully;
  - the service they were offered would not meet their mental health needs; and

- there was a lack of out of hours support offered.

In addition to the above, professionals added the following reasons:

- lack of resources and investment that are not in tune with the increased demand;
- lack of clear pathways and referral processes (including less ‘joined-up working’); and
- thresholds too high for many services, and service users had to be in “urgent” need before being offered anything suitable; and
- poor transition from children and young people’s services to adult services.

#### **Uncertainty in accessing crisis support**

- Most professionals (92%) knew where to go to in order to get support for their client if they were in a mental health crisis, for example posing a risk to themselves or others.
- Nonetheless, professionals were less certain about whether their clients would receive the support they needed, with only 16% having “confidence” that service users will get that support. This is a 76 percentage point difference between awareness and confidence that service-users would receive the crisis support they needed and is one of the most significant findings from this study.

#### **Preferences and tailored Support**

- 90% of service users wanted more services than they were currently receiving.
- The highest preferences were for Therapy, Brighton & Hove Wellbeing Services, Counsellor, Psychologist and GP.
- Services often didn’t meet the needs of people who had identified as LGBTQ+, people whose first language was not English, people from the travelling community, ethnic minority groups, people diagnosed with neuro-diverse conditions, patients dealing with alcohol and substance addictions and those in temporary accommodation support or homeless.
- Therapies offered did not specifically deal with bereavement, trauma, domestic abuse, and post-natal depression.
- Accommodation options are sometimes unsuitable for, and in some cases negatively impacted upon the mental health needs of service users.

You can read our full report [here](#)

### **E) Post pandemic: What are people telling Healthwatch England about mental health support?**



**Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Healthwatch England asked people about their experiences of getting mental health support. Three years on, they look at what has changed and the questions the NHS needs to answer.**

## Before the pandemic

In 2019, NHS England published the Long Term Plan, which laid out its ambitions for health and care for the next ten years. The [views of over 34,000 people](#), who told them they wanted mental health support to improve, helped inform the plan.

The experiences people shared about mental health were largely negative. Concerns included:

- Long waiting times for diagnosis, assessments, referrals and treatment;
- Lack of available support while waiting;
- GP teams being ill-equipped to provide support;
- Not being able to access the right treatment; and
- Support not lasting as long as people needed.

To help fix these issues, the NHS made mental health a significant part of their long-term plan and pledged to give services a bigger budget. The need for this was clear: at the end of February 2019, 1.5 million people were using NHS mental health services.

The COVID-19 pandemic has since had an enormous impact on people's mental health, so they have looked again at what their data now tells them about services.

Before the pandemic, a greater proportion of the public's stories about mental health care were negative compared to other NHS services. A review of the evidence indicates that this trend has continued. In 2021-22, 58% of mental health feedback was negative, compared to an average of 49% across other care areas.

## What are people telling Healthwatch England now?

An analysis of the experiences of 4,054 people highlights several issues regarding getting mental health support. People told us that:

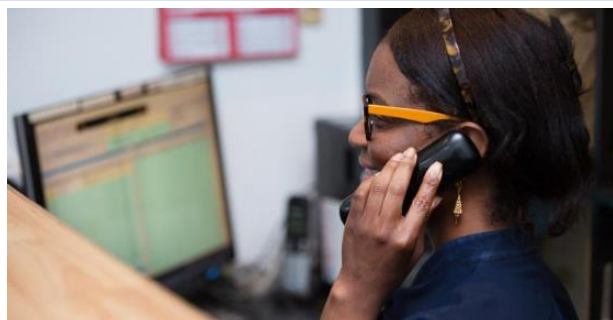
- GP teams can vary in how well-equipped they are to deal with mental health issues, and people can struggle to get their GP to refer them for specialist mental health support;
- Waiting times for services are long at all stages of the mental health system;
- Crisis services are over-subscribed and therefore often inaccessible;
- Mental health assessments can feel hasty and often do not lead to the outcome people want;
- Inpatient treatment is an unpleasant experience, whilst community treatment is patchy and at times unhelpful;
- Services communicate poorly both with patients and with other services;
- Treatment often ends too early, before people feel they are ready, and without adequate follow-up support; and
- Those who need to restart treatment because of relapse often have to start the whole process of getting help again.

You can read the full Healthwatch England report [here](#)

**In section 2, you can find more advice on getting help in a mental health crisis.**

## F) Fall in patient satisfaction with GPs

The latest GP patient survey conducted by Healthwatch England shows that overall satisfaction with services has fallen and more people are avoiding making an appointment.



### Problems accessing support

There has also been a significant fall in people saying they had a good experience booking a GP appointment. The research found that:

- 56% reported a good experience of making an appointment (down from 71%);
- 72% were satisfied with the appointment they were offered (down from 82%);
- 51% had an appointment at a time they wanted or sooner (down from 59%); and
- 53% found it easy to get through to the practice by phone (down from 68%).

### More people avoid making an appointment

The survey also found that 55% of people said they had avoided making a GP appointment, up 13% over the past year.

Common reasons patients gave for not making an appointment included:

- 26% found it too difficult (up from 11%);
- 20% were worried about being a burden on the NHS (same as last year); and
- 12% were worried about COVID-19 (up from 11%).

“ We’re worried by the increase in the number of people avoiding GP appointments.”

Read the full article [here](#)

**Carry on reading for health and social care updates!**

## (2) HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE UPDATES

### A) Sussex Mental Healthline expands support offer for children and young people

The Children and Young People's Sussex Mental Healthline went live on Monday 4 July 2022. An extension of the existing Sussex Mental Healthline, there are now mental health trained clinicians in the service to support calls from children, young people, parents and carers.



#### How does it work?

When a young person calls the Sussex Mental Healthline (SMHL) they will be put straight through to a mental health trained clinician. If the clinician is already on another call, a call back within the next hour will be arranged.

#### Who can call them?

Anyone who is concerned about a young person experiencing a mental health crisis can contact the service for free on 0800 0309 500.

#### When to call them?

- If a young person is suicidal or has self-harmed;
- If a young person is experiencing extreme emotional distress that won't stop;
- If a young person is experiencing sudden or severe anxiety which is preventing them getting on with their normal life;
- If a young person is in extreme emotional distress and would like to speak to someone;
- If anyone needs urgent advice about a young person's mental health.

#### What they can do

- Offer advice and support about how to cope in a crisis;
- Help the young person and carers make plans to keep the young person safe;
- Complete an urgent assessment of risk;
- Offer follow-up from local CAMHS Duty and Liaison Teams;
- Offer signposting to other services that may be able to support.

For more information [click here](#)

## B) Get online support for your mental health and wellbeing

Sussex 85258 is a free, confidential, 24/7 text message service for anyone in need of support.

Trained Volunteers can help with issues including anxiety/depression, suicidal thoughts, relationships, sexuality, money worries. Text Sussex to 85258 to speak to a volunteer.



For more information [click here](#)

## C) How to access mental health support if you're lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender



Mental health problems are more common among lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBTQ+) people. If you are struggling, feel alone or need a little help, then check out Healthwatch England's guide on how you can get the support you need.

Members of the LGBTQ+ community are more than twice as likely to have a mental health disorder or experience depression and anxiety. Poor mental health may be linked to experiences of discrimination, homophobia, transphobia, bullying, social isolation or rejection due to your sexuality.

It might not be easy, but getting the right help and support is essential.

### What help is out there?

There is lots of advice and support out there for you. Talking with a therapist who is trained to understand your specific situation may help if you:

- Have difficulty accepting your sexual orientation;
- Need help coping with other people's reactions to you;
- Feel like your body doesn't reflect your true gender;
- Are currently transitioning;
- Are trying to cope with bullying or discrimination;
- Are feeling depressed, have low self-esteem, are thinking suicidal thoughts or thinking about harming yourself.

Read the full article [click here](#)



## D) Getting help in a mental health crisis

**If you need to get help with your mental health - or are worried about a family member or friend - here are some things you can do.**

### **What to do in an emergency**

If you feel that your own or someone's life is in danger, we advise you to **call 999** immediately. Please also see our advice on what you can do if you need urgent help in a crisis.

If you or the person you are concerned about currently receives care from one of our services, such as a community mental health team, please get in touch with the specialist team as soon as possible and refer to the care plan. This will contain details of who to contact in an emergency.

### **Talk to someone now about how you are feeling**

- **Call the Sussex Mental Healthline: 0800 0309 500 (see above article)**

24/7 mental health telephone support and information service. If you are worried about your mental health or that of a relative or friend, please call the Sussex Mental Healthline. This is a free service for anyone who may be in crisis and in need of help with their mental health. Find out more about the Sussex Mental Healthline.

- **Call the Samaritans helpline on 116 123**

The Samaritans is a free service which is available 24/7. A volunteer will listen to you and help you talk through your concerns, worries or troubles.

- **Text SUSSEX 85258**

If you are struggling to cope and need to talk, you can text the word **SUSSEX to 85258**. This free, confidential, anonymous text support service is available 24/7 and is led by volunteers who have been trained to have a conversation and can support you to get to a calmer place. Several apps are available to support people who are experiencing mental health challenges.

### **StayAlive app**

If you are having thoughts of suicide or if you are concerned about someone else who may be considering suicide, you may find the [StayAlive app](#) helpful. Download it from the Apple App store or Google Play.

**For more information [click here](#)**

## E) Active for Life - Let's Talk



### Have your say on physical activity, sport and exercise opportunities in the city.

Being active has a positive impact on your physical and mental wellbeing. It helps you to improve your health, feel more connected to other people and can help make the city a more sustainable place to live.

Please tell Brighton & Hove's Climate Change Community how they can better support people in Brighton & Hove to move more and enjoy being active for life.

They want to find out people's attitudes, the types of opportunities you would like to see and what support you need to become more active.

What helps you move more? Does anything stop you from being as active as you'd like? How can we make sure everyone in our community is supported?

They will use your views from the survey and online discussion, as well as events taking place across the city to create a physical activity strategy that will develop opportunities to help people enjoy leading more active lifestyles.

To complete the survey [click here](#)

## F) New Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) service launched in Sussex

Thousands of patients with ear, nose and throat problems are going to benefit from quicker and more direct access to support and treatment after the launch of Sussex's brand-new ENT service



From Monday 4<sup>th</sup> July 2022, all referrals for patients requiring ENT services will be sent to 'ENT Sussex'.

‘ENT Sussex’ provides a single point of access for all referrals for patients with ear, nose, and throat concerns - with an ambition to deliver joined-up and consistent access to services.

It aims to streamline the referral process for GPs and other health professionals and ensure that patients with ENT conditions are seen faster and unnecessary delays can be avoided

For more information [click here](#)

### G) 72,000 people in Sussex will be invited for an NHS lung health check



People aged 55 to 74 living in Brighton and Hove, and Crawley will be invited to an NHS lung health check over the next 18 months in a drive to improve earlier diagnosis of lung cancer and save more lives.

Invitation letters to patients registered with GP practices in the Crawley Care Collaborative Primary Care Network and West Hove Primary Care Network are being sent out from this month to September. A mobile scanning unit will be in place in the car park of Sainsbury’s West Hove Superstore from 18<sup>th</sup> July and the Asda Crawley Superstore from 21<sup>st</sup> July. Other GP practices in Brighton and Hove will be inviting patients over the coming 18 months.

Brighton and Hove, and Crawley are among 43 locations across the country chosen to run the Targeted Lung Health Check programme, selected on a basis of population size, lung cancer prevalence and mortality. Brighton and Hove has the highest mortality rate from lung cancer across Sussex, and Crawley has the fourth-highest lung cancer incidence and smoking prevalence in the region.

Lung cancer is the most common cause of cancer death and can often be caught too late as there are rarely symptoms at the earlier stages. The lung check programme is designed to identify those most at risk of developing lung cancer in order to spot signs earlier, at the stage when it’s much more treatable, ultimately saving lives.

To read the full article [click here](#)

### H) Have your say in how pharmacies can best support your health needs

Pharmacies play a vital role in the health and wellbeing of Brighton & Hove residents and Brighton & Hove City Council are keen to hear how you think this can be improved.

You are invited to have your say in a consultation which is open now and aims to ensure community pharmacies best provide services that matter most to you in the most accessible and convenient way.

To have your say in how pharmacies can best support your health [click here](#)

Brighton & Hove Health & Wellbeing Board has produced the first draft of its 2022 Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment. This informs decisions on the future of pharmacy services and helps pharmacies to better support the health and wellbeing needs of local people. To read the draft [click here](#)

## I) If you need help from the NHS, please make the right choice when deciding which service to use

The NHS is extremely busy, especially with their ambulance services. Please save A&E for emergencies only.

Get the right care for you - [click here](#) to understand which service to use.



Carry on reading for COVID updates!

### 3.COVID NEWS

#### A) Support and treatment for Long Covid

**It's easy to feel isolated and alone when struggling with Long Covid, but we are here to help you find the support and treatment you need.**

Many people make a full recovery from COVID but for some, the illness can last longer. This is known as Post-COVID Syndrome.



There is support available and services that you can access.

You can find out more about what Long COVID is here - [post-COVID syndrome on the NHS website](#).

Another really good place to start with finding out more information, support and advice about your recovery from Long COVID is the NHS Your COVID Recovery Website: [NHS Your COVID Recovery website](#).

Healthwatch England has also produced information - [Find out about Long Covid](#)

On our webpage you can find more information about NHS services (and how to access them), support and services provided by community groups and links to local and national Long COVID support groups. [Click here](#) to read our advice and information.

Healthwatch Brighton and Hove welcomes feedback on your experience of living with Long COVID and the care and support you have received, in particular NHS services and social care services. [Contact us with your story](#).

#### B) Face Masks must once again be worn in all hospital settings (unless you are exempt)

##### Updated guidance for masks in our hospitals

In line with our local health partners across the NHS in Sussex we are reintroducing masks in our hospitals.

The number of patients and colleagues with Covid has risen recently and this rise is expected to continue. As a result, NHS University Hospitals Sussex are reintroducing the requirement to wear masks in all clinical areas of their hospitals, including corridors and public areas.

This recommendation has been made by the Trust's Clinical Advisory Group (CAG) and supported by their executive team.

As of 7<sup>th</sup> July, NHS University Hospitals Sussex had 146 patients with Covid in their hospitals, which is a significant increase compared to recent weeks. They also had 261 colleagues absent following a positive Covid test. Of the total number of current patients, only 10% have Covid symptoms. This suggests the majority of patients admitted to hospital who have Covid don't know they have it. Because the BA.4 and BA.5 variants of Omicron are extremely transmissible, this is a risk to their patients and staff.

Many of their patients are at increased risk if they catch the virus and they have a duty of care to do all they can to keep them safe.

For more information [click here](#)



## Join Healthwatch

You can sign up to receive regular bulletins and information from Healthwatch.

Please email [office@healthwatchbrightonandhove.co.uk](mailto:office@healthwatchbrightonandhove.co.uk)

Share your experiences of health and social care services with us:  
[Have Your Say](#)

Email [office@healthwatchbrightonandhove.co.uk](mailto:office@healthwatchbrightonandhove.co.uk)

Call 01273 234040

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