

Our helpline service:  
Public enquiries during  
July – September 2022

**The Healthwatch Brighton and Hove helpline service supports 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.**

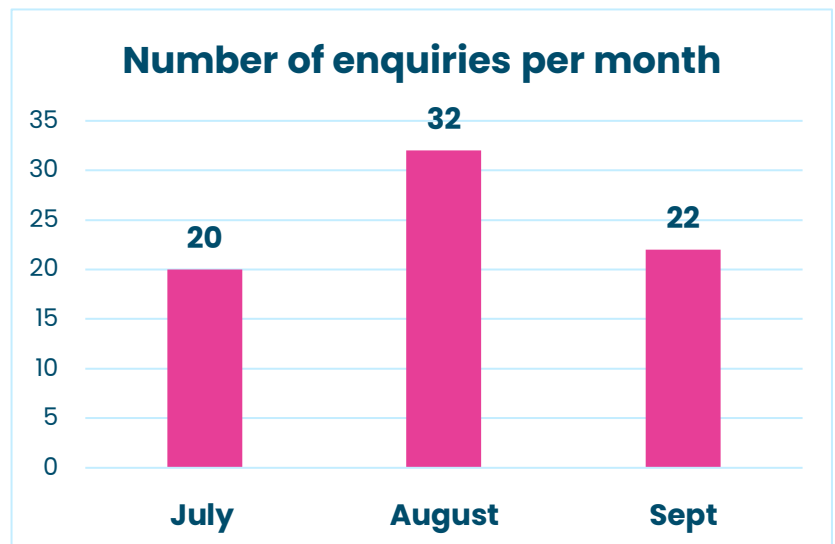
**This document provides a summary of the enquiries we received between July to September 2022.**

**Total number of enquiries answered via our helpline July - September 2022:**



### **Method of contact**

The most common methods by which people made their enquiry were by email (48), followed by telephone calls (10) or contacts via our webpage (10). Where known, 12 enquiries were from men and 22 from women.



**We received enquiries from 74 individuals as well as people acting on their behalf: 53 enquiries were from individuals, 17 from friends, family or carers, 3 from health professionals and one from a local campaigner.**

## Enquiry themes

The main enquiry theme we received between July to September related to making a complaint about any health or social care service or treatment, with 36 enquiries (8 more than in the previous quarter).

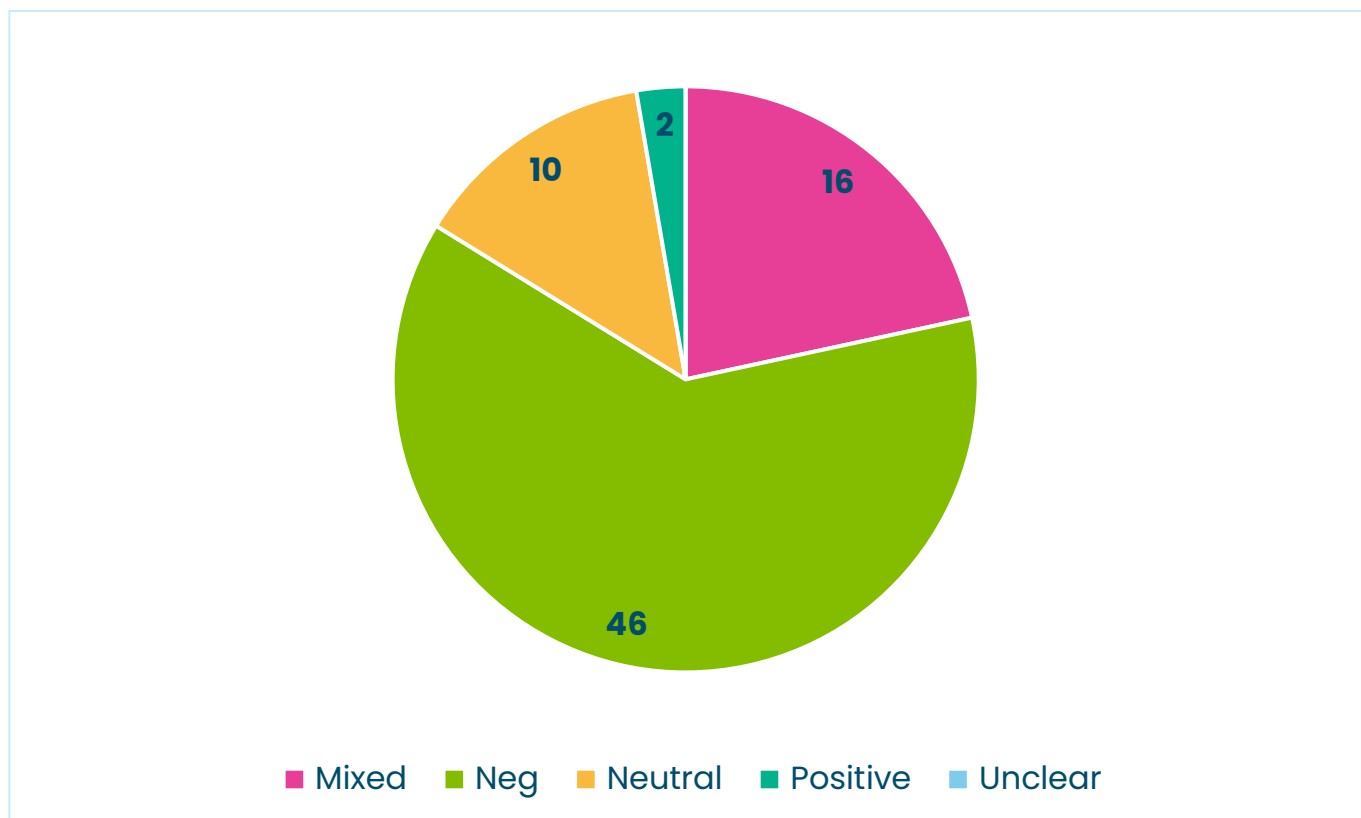
People's queries often related to several different themes, such as access to dentistry and how to make a complaint, which means that the numbers below add up to more than 74.

Enquiry theme	Number of enquiries
How to make a complaint about any health or social care service, or treatment	36
Queries about dentists and accessing NHS treatment	17
Complaints specifically about GPs or issues with GPs	5
Complaints about Mental Health services	5
Complaints specifically about dentists or dental treatment	4
Queries or concerns about patient transport	3
Feedback obtained by our volunteers who spoke with patients at the Royal Sussex County Hospital	3
General queries about GPs	3
Compliments about services	3
Concerns about a lack of support for Long COVID	3
Queries about COVID booster vaccinations	3
Queries about pharmacies and related services	2
A query about home help	2
A request for help with advocacy	2
A query about hormone therapy	1
A query about arranging a care package	1
A question about obtaining a lateral flow test	1

A query about physiotherapy appointments	1
A query about housing for people with disabilities	1
A query about health records	1
A query about home adaptations equipment	1
A query about recovery services	1
Someone seeking an NHS number	1
General queries	4

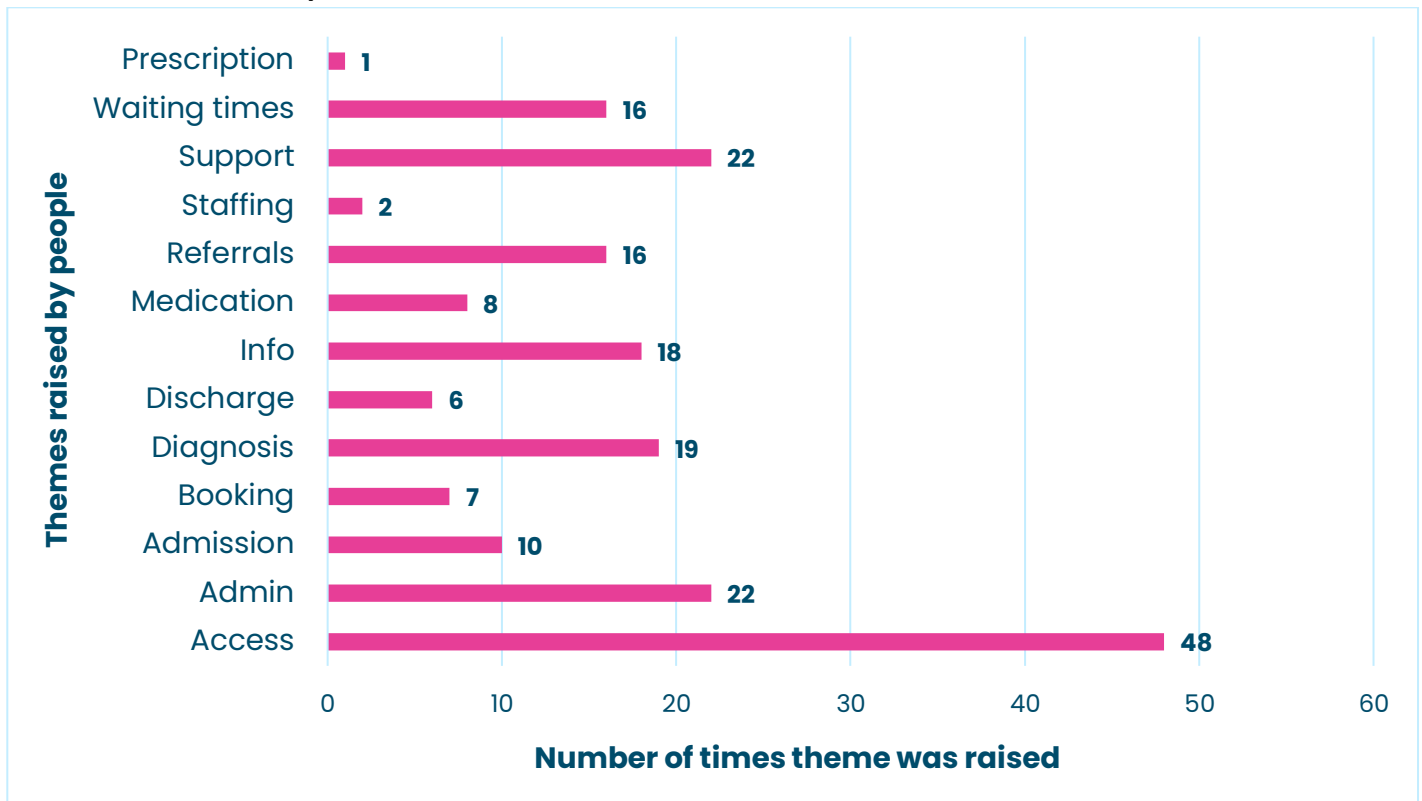
### The sentiment of people's enquiries

Most people (46) who contacted us from July to September shared negative sentiments with us about their experiences of health and social care services, although 26 shared mixed or neutral views, whilst 2 people shared their positive experiences.



## The themes of people’s enquiries

People’s enquiries to us covered a range of themes, but the most common one related to access to services (people’s enquiries often raised more than one theme).



## Complaints about health and social services

Complaints about any NHS health or social service were one of the main reasons why people contacted us between July to September. Patients who contacted us wanted help to make a formal or informal complaint. Issues related to poor treatment or advice, delayed or cancelled procedures and poor communication. Some of the enquiries we received were:

**We received 17 pieces of feedback about the Royal Sussex County Hospital and 3 about Patient Transport.**



"I was in Accident and Emergency for 31 hours in pain waiting to be admitted. This seems to be the norm at this hospital. The staff were too busy to provide adequate care. Once admitted the care was much better."

**"Waiting over 2 years for day treatment for an impinged nerve. Taking amitriptyline to try and manage the pain but concerned about side effects. Physical fitness impacted as I can no longer walk any distance without pain."**

"Having gone back and forth to various departments, secretaries, and PALS, I am still left stranded and waiting. The digestive diseases department at Royal Sussex Hospital did make an appointment but it was cancelled without any explanation and I have not heard regarding the promised re-scheduled appointment."

**"My father is currently in the Royal Sussex County hospital. My mum took him in 2 weeks ago due to complications. We however are not being communicated with. My father is being told different information by different people. His pain relief isn't managed effectively."**



## Dentists

Dental queries continue to be one of the main reasons why people contacted us. The number of queries dropped in July to 2 but rose to 10 in August, and 7 in September. People were concerned about not being able to get an NHS dentist appointment and asked for help to find an NHS dental practice that had availability. Some of the enquiries we received were:



“I can't find a dentist accepting NHS patients. I need a filling and I'm going to have to pay £185. It's too much.”

**“We have lived in Brighton for 3.5 years. During that time, it has been absolutely impossible to get registered with a dentist for NHS treatment. I understand that there is a responsibility for NHS England to provide access to care.”**

“I have a problem finding a dental clinic that accepts NHS customers. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, I have not been invited for my regular 6 months dental check-up and the dental clinic just signed me off. I found it out recently when I tried to book a check-up appointment. I am a carer and a single parent who is looking after a severely

disabled young adult. I can't afford to pay for full-cost treatment."

**"I have contacted several dentists and they don't take NHS patients. We've been on the waiting list for more than one year at several dentists."**



### Other types of queries we received included:



"I am trying to get some support for my mother-in-law who lives in Hove. She is in her late 60s and suffering from depression and various health issues. Her mobility is affected and she is in a lot of pain."

**"When I asked for urgent help for my son, I was told there were other people before him wanting help. When I rang the next day, I was told that THE SERVICE WAS BROKEN. There was no help for him, and only the police could 'safeguard' him."**

"I wanted to enquire about transportation for appointments to GP and hospital appointments for my elderly parents. My parents are both in their eighties and need help to get to their appointments."



**“I was recently recommended by my Surgery’s PCN team to find an advocate for a secondary service. I’m looking for a non-statutory community advocate in Brighton and have been signposted to Healthwatch.”**

A niece called on behalf of her uncle who has pressure sores and despite various efforts had been unable to get a pressure cushion for him. They wanted our help.



## **Compliments about services**



*I attended the RSCH Cardiac Day Case Unit to have an angiogram. The care I received was excellent. The staff were friendly, relaxed, knowledgeable professional and efficient. I arrived at 10 am and was immediately welcomed by the receptionist, was shown to my bed and the procedure was clearly explained to me. I was given a choice of hot drinks and sandwiches. The unit was clean, tidy and well maintained. At 4 pm after the procedure was completed my wife came to collect me. The medications that had been prescribed for me were ready for me to take home and I was given the necessary information about what to do over the next few days and whom to contact if I had any*

*problems or had further questions. The service I received was superb. Please pass on my thanks."*

**"I had a procedure which took place about a month after it was first spotted. Speaking as a patient, I thought every single aspect of the experience was absolutely outstanding and I cannot praise or thank them enough. That was true of the surgical team the other clinical staff and the ward staff. And the caterers and cleaners. "**

***"The Intensive Treatment Unit (Royal Sussex County) ... where I have to say the care ranged from good to excellent"***



## **How Healthwatch has helped people via our helpline**

### **1. Autumn booster COVID vaccinations**

We promoted the booster rollout but also helped to clarify how and where people could get their vaccinations. We were told by patients that the nearest locations to Brighton on the National Booking Service (NBS) were Haywards Heath, Crawley and Hastings. We were able to point people to local walk-in sites but also to confirm that slower than anticipated vaccine supply was the reason for there being fewer local appointments on the NBS, but that this should improve in October:



Thanks to receiving your email I was able to get my booster today at St Peter's after only a 45 minute wait in the. Most [people in the queue] stated that when they visited the NHS site to book a time, they were offered either Hastings, Haywards Heath or Crawley and that there was no information on the site about walk in sessions. Just thought I would confirm the experience of all who were in the queue today as communication of job availability seems to be patchy on the NHS site. Thank goodness for Healthwatch!

## **2. Helping people to share their experiences of A&E**

We shared two distressing stories describing patients' poor experiences of A&E with the Director of Patient Experience at the Sussex Hospitals University Trust. We also linked them with the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). The Care Quality Commission (CQC) recently visited our local A&E department and said that improvements were needed, so this feedback was timely. We were also able to link patients up with other services to support them. The patients felt listened to and the Trust is investigating their cases:

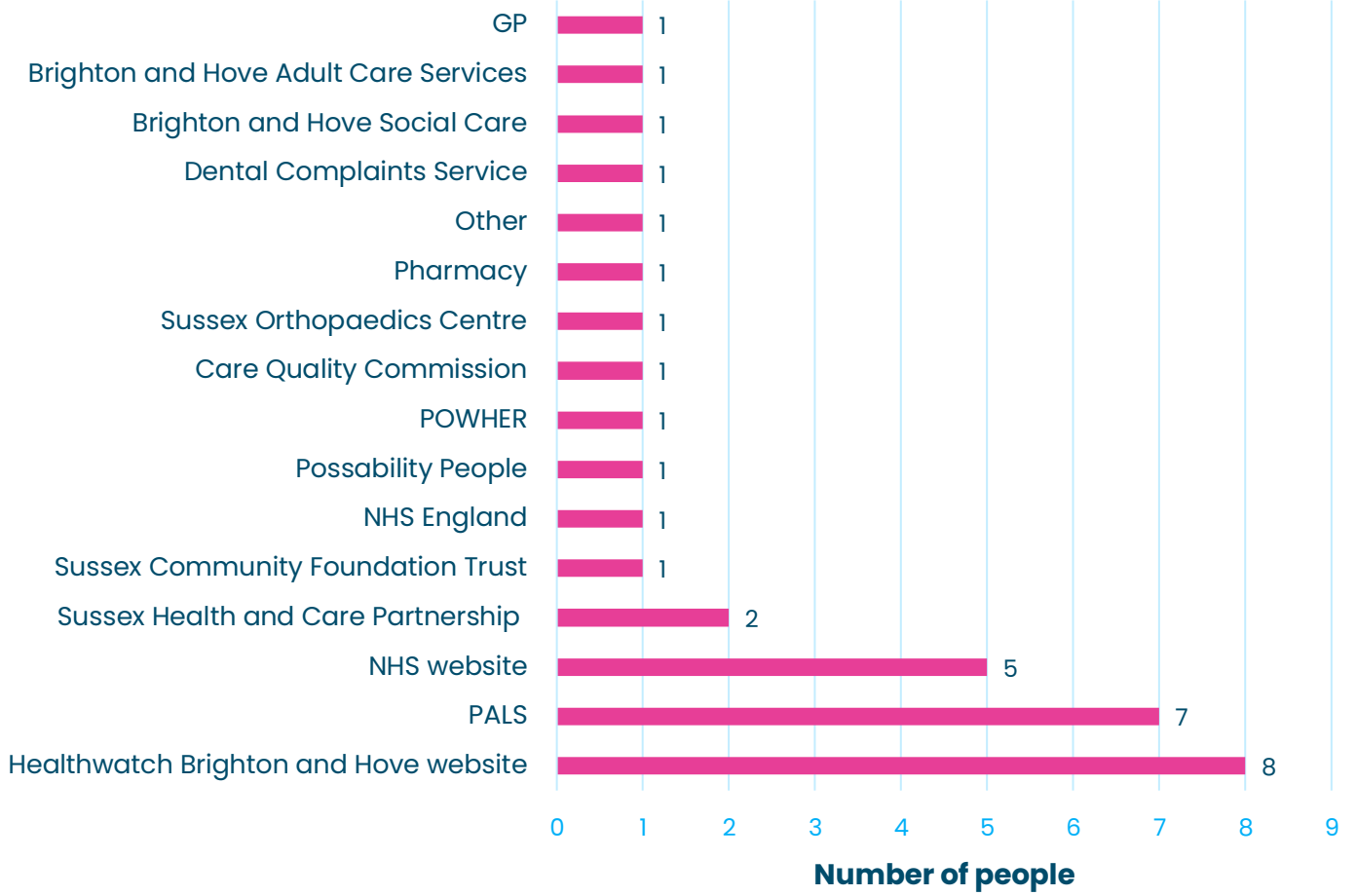


Possibility people have also been great, and offered advice across the board, not just with this issue - I'm feeling reassured and confident that things will resolve and heal up well.

### **Signposting people to other services**

Between April to June, as well as providing advice and information, we signposted 22 people (30%) to 16 services or organisations for further support. In many cases, we were able to direct people to information and advice contained on the [Healthwatch Brighton and Hove website](#).

**Service Signposted to**



# Contact us



Healthwatch Brighton and Hove  
Community Base  
113 Queens Road  
Brighton  
BN1 3XG

[www.healthwatchbrightonandhove.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchbrightonandhove.co.uk)  
t: 01273 234040  
e: [office@healthwatchbrightonandhove.co.uk](mailto:office@healthwatchbrightonandhove.co.uk)  
📱 @healthwatchBH  
📘 [Facebook.com/Healthwatchbrightonhove](https://www.facebook.com/Healthwatchbrightonhove)