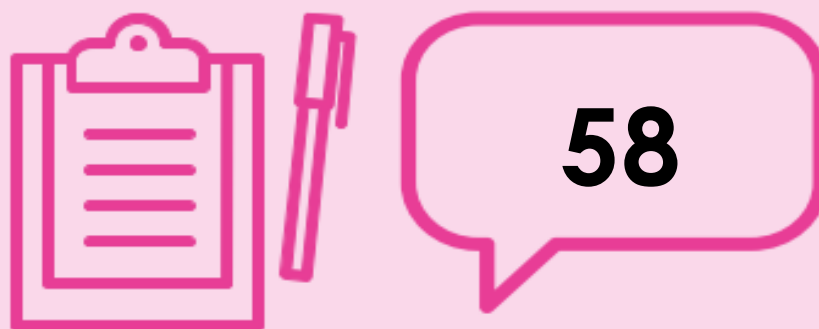


Our helpline service:
Public enquiries during
October – December
2022

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 October to December 2022.

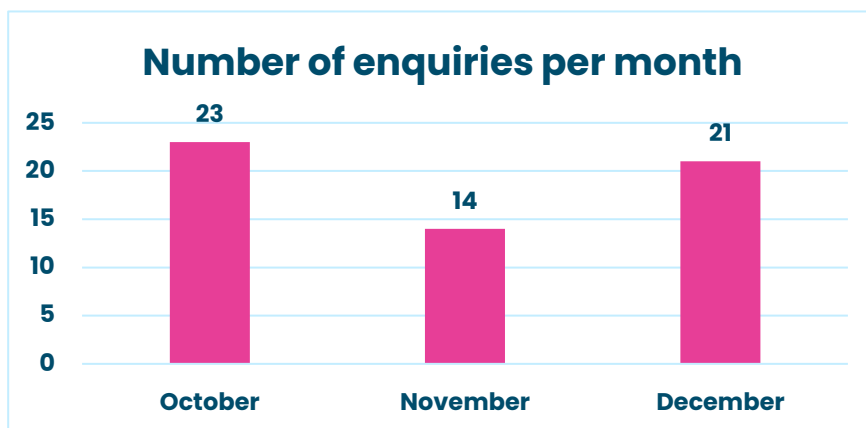
Total number of enquiries answered via our helpline October – December 2022:



Method of contact

The most common methods by which people made their enquiry were by email (39), followed by telephone calls (17).

Where known, 8 enquiries were from men and 15 from women.



We received enquiries from 58 individuals as well as people acting on their behalf: 33 enquiries were from individuals, 17 from friends, family or carers, 2 from health professionals and 6 'other' contacts.

Enquiry themes

The main enquiry theme we received between October to December related to making a complaint about any health or social care service or treatment, with 22 enquiries.

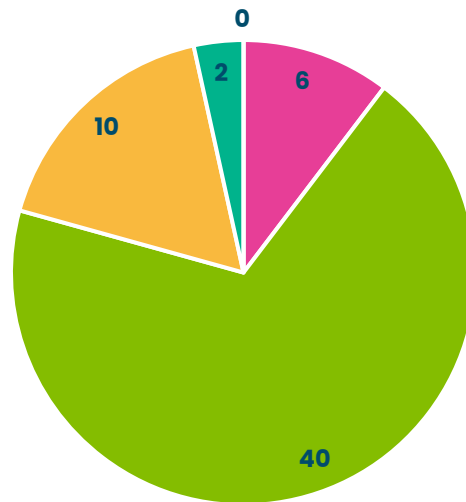
People's queries often related to several different themes, such as access to dentistry and how to make a complaint, which means that the numbers below add up to more than 58.

Enquiry theme	Number of enquiries
How to make a complaint about any health or social care service, or treatment	22
Queries about dentists and accessing NHS treatment	13
Complaints specifically about GPs or issues with GPs	10
Complaints about Mental Health services	4
General queries about GPs	1
Compliments about services	2
Queries about COVID booster vaccinations	2
Queries about pharmacies and related services	1
A query about blood tests	1
A request for help with advocacy	2
Queries about housing	2
A query about health records	1
General queries	10

The sentiment of people's enquiries

Most people (40) who contacted us from October to December shared negative sentiments with us about their experiences of health and social care services, although 16 shared mixed or neutral views, whilst 2 people shared their positive experiences.

The sentiment of people's enquiries

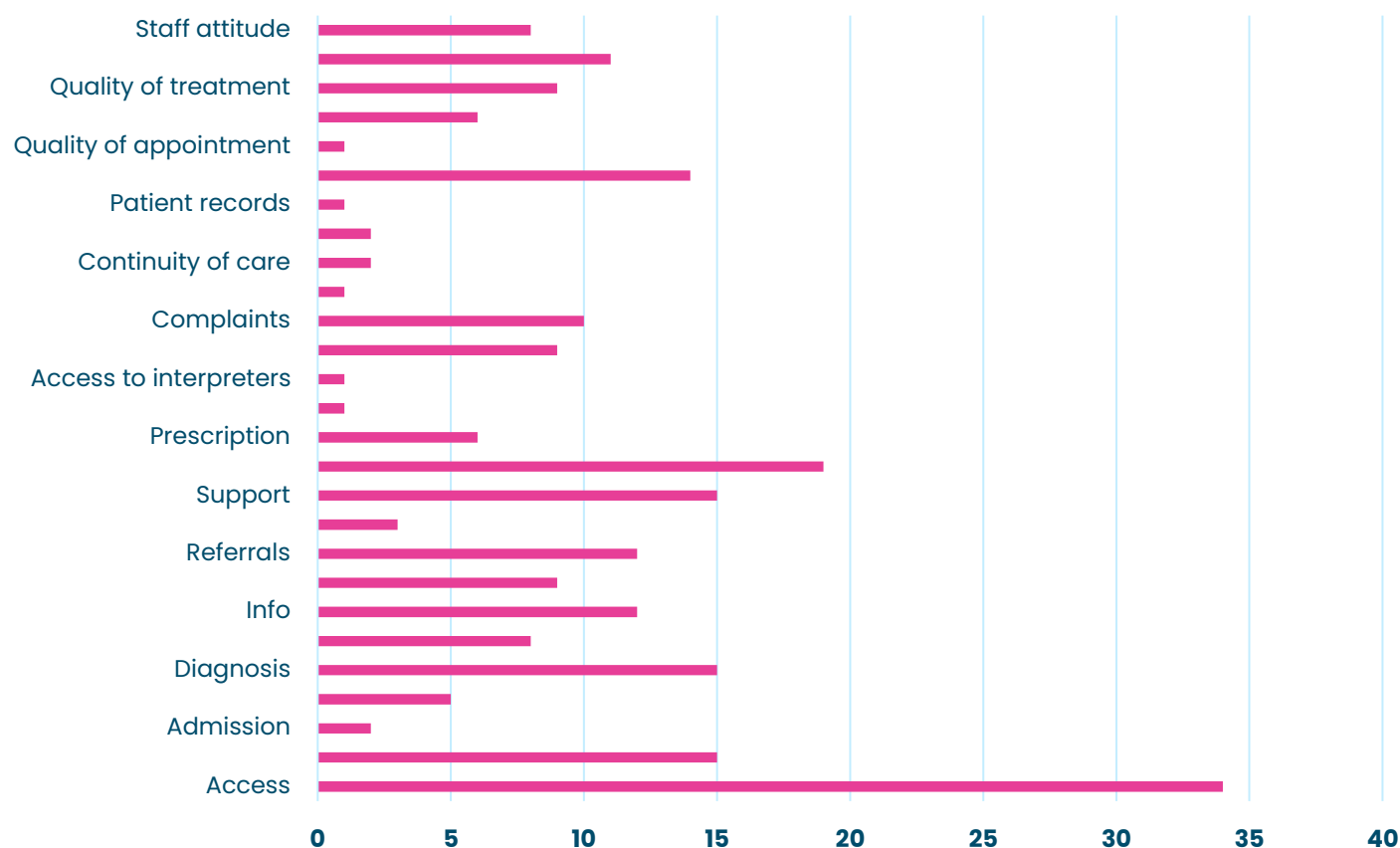


■ Mixed ■ Neg ■ Neutral ■ Positive ■ Unclear

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).

The themes of people's enquiries



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 October to December. 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 5 pieces of feedback concerning School House GP Surgery, largely relating to difficulties accessing appointments, getting through on the phone and getting prescriptions.



“We're having difficulty getting through on the phone to Schoolhouse Surgery, and Church Surgery. even if it's urgent, you can't get through to the surgery it seems.”

Other calls about School House included:

Caller was unable to contact GP surgery for an appointment or for a repeat prescription for medications.

Caller was unable to contact the surgery for her repeat prescription for (cancer) medications plus treatment for a UTI.

Other complaints:

“I have made a complaint regarding Brighton Radiotherapy services at Eastbourne DGH. The complaint was on 06/09/2022 and I am still awaiting a first reply regarding this. The issues are still ongoing and have escalated.”

“After scan and blood test results I have been quite shocked after being told everything is fine, when it's not. I have found problems that need attention early, are being ignored.”



Dentists

Dental queries continue to be one of the main reasons why people contacted us. 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:



“We received a letter last week that the dental practice we have been with for about 10 years has decided to go private. They will no longer see NHS and offered us a monthly plan instead. Preston Circus is the practice. I’m having trouble finding a new dentist everyone I call says they are not taking any NHS patients.”

“I have recently received a letter saying my dentist will no longer be treating my children as NHS patients. I have contacted the two surgeries listed for Brighton as taking new NHS patients and not had any luck.”

“I have phoned around so many dentists and have been told they are not accepting NHS patients some will but only by referral. I have toothache one of my teeth are rotting and I have many holes in my teeth one tooth is so sensitive that I can’t even drink water without being in severe pain. I have phoned the emergency dentist however apparently, I am not eligible as I am not in enough pain for treatment.”



Other types of queries we received included:



"I'm a social worker in a community mental health team in Hove and I'm starting a project to look at how we can make our service more coproduced. It would be great to hear about the work Healthwatch is already doing and whether there might be opportunities to cooperate."

Caller enquiring whether there is or will be a stroke rehab unit at RSCH

A complaint about social housing

Caller from Racial Harassment Forum enquiring whether we can add details of their organisation onto HW website.



Compliments about services



I am deeply impressed with the new phlebotomy services at the Royal Sussex. Its early days but the service is being well received by patients and staff. Easy to book and I was seen right on my appointment time.

***“My 92 grandfather was admitted to RSCH after a car accident. He developed pneumonia and was admitted to HDU where I was told that he was unlikely to survive, which was of course, incredibly upsetting. Amazingly, he pulled through, came off oxygen and was transferred to a normal ward. The care he received was outstanding. My grandfather would become quite emotional talking about the ‘angels’ who were taking care of him. We couldn’t have been more reassured by the care he was receiving. The nursing staff should be hugely proud of what they did for him – and us.*”**



How Healthwatch has helped people via our helpline

1. Escalating patient concerns about a local GP practice

We received patient feedback about School House Surgery/Church GP Surgery. Three patients contacted us saying that they could not get appointments or prescriptions or were disappointed by the service they received. The practice answer machine message provided no information. We raised this with Sussex Health and Care partnership (SHCP), who commission GP services and the Care Quality Commission. They shared with us changes that were affecting the service, as well as patient

communications explaining these which we were asked to comment on to improve them. We were then able to share this information with patients. We shared the patient feedback with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) as they had recently rated the practice as inadequate. We learnt the contact to run the practice was changing, but some delays had occurred.

2. How our Helpline volunteers help people



A lady emailed us to enquire about Autumn Covid boosters. She's disabled and unable to travel far so was desperate to book a booster vaccine close to home. She followed the recommended steps, the NHS website and 119, but was unable to book a booster closer than 40 miles. She was also unable to book or organise travel and was very confused. With the help of the local booster provider we were able to advise her on planned locations and a local pharmacy. Unfortunately, 3 weeks later, the lady still hasn't received her booster and the case is ongoing with Healthwatch's guidance.



"I received a call from a gentleman who had problems with blood tests that his (under 16-year-old) daughter was having. Two of the samples (in succession) had not been able to be processed at RACH due to technical issues at the laboratory which he found most unsatisfactory and wondered if this was a wider issue for the trust. He felt that it was the GP's responsibility to investigate this. I advised that it was not their responsibility, theirs was to request the investigation and to look out for the result and follow up etc. He was

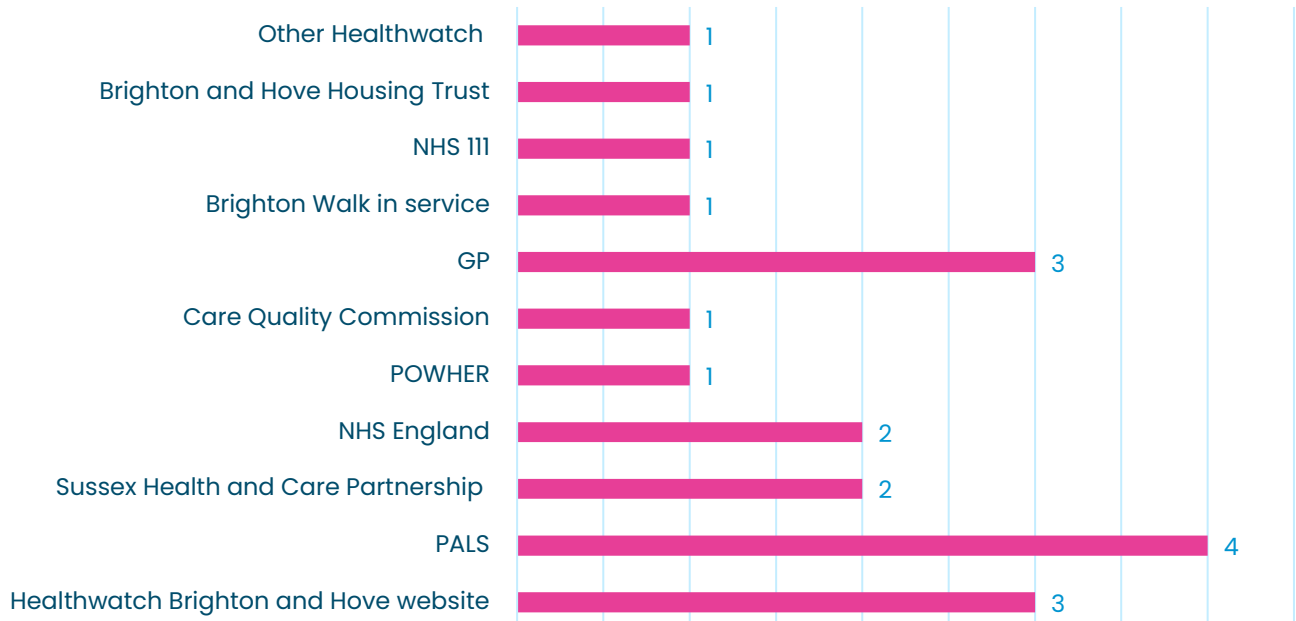
also concerned that her GP was unable to make a diagnosis without the results but didn't seem that concerned.

I firstly advised him that he needed to take it up with PALS at RSCH for them to investigate why there had been problems processing his daughters blood tests- he was happy to do that and understood that it was not the GP's responsibility. I also suggested that he emailed the GP's practise manager, highlighting his concerns so that they could look not the matter and hopefully get some answers, which he was happy to do.

Signposting people to other services

Between October to December, as well as providing advice and information, we signposted 20 people (34%) to 11 services or organisations for further support. In several cases, we were able to direct people to information and advice contained on the [Healthwatch Brighton and Hove website](#).

Signposted to



Contact us



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