



Public engagement events

April – September 2024



healthwatch
Brighton and Hove

Contents

Introduction..... 1

1. Health and Wellbeing event, Community Base, April 2024..... 1

2. People at the Black & Minority Ethnic Community Partnership (BMECP), April 2024 3

3. Deaf Health and Wellbeing event, May 2024..... 4

4. Disability Network, University Hospitals Sussex, August 2024 7

5. Woodingdean Carnival, July 2024..... 8

6. Links Road Surgery Patient Participation Group (PPG), July 2024 9

Introduction

Between April and September 2024, Healthwatch Brighton and Hove (HWBH) staff and volunteers attended a range of different public events. We did this to speak directly with people face-to-face to hear their views about health and care services and to raise awareness of our work. Six different events are described in this paper.

Over the last six months, we have spoken to 120 people with many of these people completing our engagement form to share their experiences of health and care services. The events were attended by a total of around 350 people.

1. Health and Wellbeing event, Community Base, April 2024


We attended this event and held a stall with the support of two volunteers – Sylvia and Adaeze.

We engaged 30 people from ethnically diverse communities, with 8 providing detailed feedback about health and social care experiences.


Concerns raised included:

- Making it easier to get a GP appointment:

GP appointments:



"I would gladly pay to get an immediate and responsive GP service"



- Making sure people have equal access to health care regardless of their background

- Improving people's mental Health
- Helping to improve children's mental health
- Helping people to be more confident using online services
- Reducing hospital waiting times
- Helping people feel less isolated
- Making it easier to complain about any health or social care service
- Making it easier for people to be discharged from hospital:

Integration of services:



"Health and social care need to be properly integrated so that people aren't stuck in hospital"



People talked to us about:

- More needing to be done to help people feel less isolated
- The NHS being very nice
- GP's not referring people for tests patients had requested
- Delayed diagnosis
- Receptionists not being trained to triage / offering poor customer service
- Better communication about the city's Minor Injuries units and walk in centres
- Praising hospital staff
- A lack of dentists and dental appointments
- Long waits to get a sexual health appointment and a suggestion that HWBH should explore sexual health services for older people
- Long waiting lists for elective care
- Long referral times after being referred by a GP
- Difficulties getting a GP appointment.



2. People at the Black & Minority Ethnic Community Partnership (BMECP), April 2024

We spoke at the BMECP to raise awareness of our role and to encourage Black and Minoritised ethnic groups to share their views about digital technology.

This group consisted of around 40 people, all from minoritised ethnic groups.

As well as encouraging more people to share their feedback of health and social care services with us, we also discussed our new digital project which we were particularly interested in hearing their views on.

Our HWBH team member responded to questions and what being involved in the project would entail.

As a result, a focus group was undertaken with six people immediately following the group conversation. This focus group became one important contribution for our final project that sought to understand people's use and attitudes towards digital technology.



3. Deaf Health and Wellbeing event, May 2024

Our CEO attended this event together with a HWBH volunteer who wears a hearing aid.

There were over 100 people in attendance.



Our volunteer attended a focus group discussion on Urgent and Emergency Care at the event. NHS Sussex spoke about our work and signposted members of the public to HWBH after a query was asked by a member of the public about how they could share their views on health and social care services. HWBH was also mentioned in the opening speeches.

We spoke to around 10 people and 5 completed our health and social care survey.

Following this event, HWBH made our website more accessible and uploaded a video which has BSL signing and which explains who we are and what we do. Signlive is available via our [website](#) for anyone with hearing loss/difficulties who wants to share their views with us

The event included information about:

- Brighton's Accessible City Strategy <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/equality/brighton-hove-accessible-city-strategy-2023-2028>
- Brighton and Hove City Council signing the British Deaf Association (BDA) Charter
- A service that provides acute Mental Health beds specifically for people who are d/Deaf, which is based in London
- A Brighton d/Deaf liaison forum
- A local support group called Surdi <https://www.surdi.uk/> which help people who are d/Deaf

- SignLive – a service commissioned by NHS Sussex for all GP surgeries, hospitals and other services.

Some of the issues experienced by d/Deaf people:

- d/Deaf people don't have full or equitable access to health service and digital technology isn't consistent
- Not all GPs offer video calls and some GPs insist on calling d/Deaf patients which implies they don't check patient records (and therefore may not be complying with the accessible information standard)
- Not all GP's have hearing loops
- Care homes are not always set up to support d/Deaf people as they don't always have staff who can sign. An example was given of the Isle of Wight where only one care home can fully support deaf people
- Many d/Deaf people experience social isolation
- People who interpret for d/Deaf people are not always qualified and don't always interpret accurately
- Health professionals can sometimes assume that deafness is illness and need to be re-educated about what wellness is for d/Deaf people. The starting position of "unwell due to deafness" shouldn't happen



"I often feel that because I am deaf, that health professionals focus on that and that I am ill simply because of that, and less on my wellness. Health professionals need to be re-educated to look beyond the fact that someone is deaf."



- Hospital services do not have /do not provide interpreters to support women giving birth:



"When I was pregnant, I went to hospital to give birth but they had no interpreter to support me to communicate with the midwives. Luckily, I had a friend who had Signlive on his phone which we were able to use but why did the hospital not have this service themselves? This was a stressful enough situation."



- Without the right support to communicate effectively, this can make a stressful situation worse:



“I went to AE, bleeding from the ear and told reception I was deaf and was asked by staff to wave to get her attention. This did not happen and I ended up waiting a long time.”



Some of the needs expressed by the d/Deaf community:

- Consult the d/Deaf community more
- d/Deaf people have their own interpretation of wellness that is often unknown to hearing people
- Paper surveys are not enough and there needs to be more face-to-face support too
- All services need to offer Signlive
- There need to be better ways to make it easier to register communication needs. An example was given of people attending to install adaptations equipment knocking the front door which the d/Deaf person couldn't hear
- There needs to be better availability of BSL interpreters.

The British Deaf Association presented at the event

- They have a 10-yr plan and a charter (#BSL2032) which seeks to reduce barriers for d/Deaf people accessing the health system
- A lot of young people haven't learnt to sign and it's expensive to do so. Yet, BSL is the UK's 4th largest indigenous language
- They want more research and evidence to support their ambitions
- They want the d/Deaf community to be consulted more
- Ensure staff working with the d/Deaf community can communicate effectively.

4. Disability Network, University Hospitals Sussex, August 2024



HWBH were asked to attend this event to speak about our work and listen to the views of staff members who are part of this network. Our volunteer, Mazzie joined a meeting in August.

The Staff Network includes clinical and non-clinical staff with a range of disabilities and impairments and is one of several Staff Networks across the whole Trust.

Questions asked by the group to HWBH:

- ***Is HWBH planning or involved in any work or research around Friends, Families and Travellers?*** After the meeting we able to share details of how we had acted on concerns to our helpline about the closure of public toilets, by partnering with Friends, Families and Travellers to understand the impacts on vulnerable traveller groups and successfully lobbied for the reinstatement of facilities.
- ***The hospitals Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) was mentioned, which supports people to make complaints or share feedback.*** It was highlighted how under resourced the team are and it was suggested that some better public communications could be issued and that HWBH could collaborate with the Trust on this. After the meeting we shared the results of our patient poll about PALS, which we ran in March 2024. This was one of a series of monthly polls that the three local Healthwatch in Sussex teams have delivered this year. 94 people from across Sussex shared their views with us. You can read our report [here](#). We shared our findings with the Trust who are producing a new PALS leaflet.
- ***A member of the Network felt there were opportunities for some further collaborative working*** to help identify key issues and flag up key areas of concern based on systemic issues that may need wider and strategic solutions. We are following this up.

5. Woodingdean Carnival, July 2024

The Woodingdean Carnival is an event held every year in the grounds of the local primary school in central Woodingdean. Katy, a HWBH team member and Adaeze, our student placement volunteer, ran a stall alongside 20 others.

Approximately 200 people attended the carnival bolstered by the parade that happened early in the event.

We attended the event to continue our engagement with local communities and to publicise our project to capture patient's experiences of the local Woodingdean Medical Centre.

Some people completed our standard feedback form sharing some positive and less positive experiences of health and social care. We had detailed conversations with around 30 people.

The event showed that our publicity of the Woodingdean Medical Centre survey had been effective, with several people commenting that they had already completed our online questionnaire. Several people took physical copies of our survey with freepost envelopes to return them, and a number completed the survey online via our QR code link.

There was mixed feedback about the Woodingdean Medical Centre. Most people said they had struggled to get an appointment.



Woodingdean Medical Centre: patient stories

One woman described how difficult it was to get appointment over the course of a few days when she was feeling very unwell.

Another woman, with a long-term condition, said that she always has a positive experience with the surgery and does not find it hard to get appointments.

You can read our final report about Woodingdean Medical Centre [here](#).

6. Links Road Surgery Patient Participation Group (PPG), July 2024

Lester, a HWBH team member attended this meeting to raise awareness of HWBH and share our findings from our digital engagement projects. This was pertinent as digital technology is increasingly being used by this surgery.

A group of eight PPG members aged 70+ provide some reflections:

Links Road GP surgery: patient views about digital technology

PPG members said they did not use digital technology, either having no equipment or were 'not bothered' about using digital technology.

Two people said they had worked with computers all their working life and could not wait to stop using them in retirement.

PPG members all felt the quality of care at the surgery was good but tended to say they did not want to bother the doctor over minor issues.

They also told us that they did not like being triaged by the receptionists, especially if it was a personal matter and they did not always trust their expertise.



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