

# Experiences of local health services

Findings of research in partnership with Young Beacons

**May 2023**

# Contents

Introduction .....	3
About this piece of work .....	3
Why we did it .....	3
The aims .....	4
How it was done .....	4
What we found .....	5
About our participants .....	5
Experiences of services .....	7
Information and communication .....	10
Conclusions .....	14
Recommendations .....	15
Acknowledgements .....	15
Appendices .....	16
More about participants .....	16
Survey questions .....	17

## Introduction

Healthwatch Coventry is the independent champion for NHS and social care. Our role is to represent the interests of patients and the public in local NHS and social care. We gather views and feedback and take this to those who run and plan services to work for change. The Healthwatch role is set out in legislation.

Our Steering Group sets a programme of work and priorities to focus our work. This includes priorities to understand:

- Digital access (exclusion/ inclusion) in changed approaches to accessing for NHS services eg phone appointments, online services
- Access to GP appointments
- Better quality (relevant and understandable) information for the public about local NHS and care services.

## About this piece of work

### Why we did it

The Healthwatch Coventry mission is to hear the experience of NHS and social care services from those in Coventry who do not have strong voice or are ignored. We are committed to reaching new people by trying different ways of hearing experiences. We have long established links with voluntary and community groups in Coventry and are hosted by a local charity.

Therefore, we ran a small grants application programme to select community research projects led by voluntary groups.

We asked for applications in relation to our work priorities, to gather experiences of health and care or of barriers to health and care from less heard groups of the local population. Five applications were successful.

For this piece of work, we worked with Young Beacons Ltd.

Young Beacons Ltd is a social enterprise that was set up in 2017. They provide a range of educational, cultural and wellbeing activities as well as arts and drama activities for children and young people from African and Caribbean communities.

Young Beacons' aim is to equip, uplift and inspire children and young people of African and Caribbean descent to reach their full potential. They have a

strong presence in the BME community and continue to support families and help make change for the future.

Young Beacons also works with various organisations, such as Healthwatch Coventry to improve services in the BME community through surveys, and talking to families about whatever is important at a point in time when it is needed. Young Beacons signposts families to relevant organisation depending on their needs.

## **The aims**

This piece of work aimed to reach one of the least heard groups in our city which is underrepresented in surveys and other patient public engagement activity.

Young Beacons was commissioned by Healthwatch to conduct a survey to find out how people in the Black community use services, how they receive information from the hospital or the GPs surgery, and how useful it is for them. Most importantly, how services can be made better by hearing their views and opinions.

## **How it was done**

Young Beacons used this methodology to engage people in the survey.

- Gave out printed surveys and envelopes (hard copies) to people in the city centre and the Coventry market that did not have time to stop and talk.
- One to one discussion on the phone and face to face with people.
- Visited hairdressers and barber shops, African and Caribbean shops,
- Provided access to digital survey through google forms and shared on WhatsApp/or sent by email.

They engaged with people by providing information about Healthwatch and why Young Beacons is working with Healthwatch and the importance of the work.

Young Beacons found it was not always easy to get people to take part as people were busy with daily lives Young Beacons worked hard to identify participants and encourage people to take part.

Some people had no problems stopping and listening, they understood why we are doing the survey and the importance of doing it and got involved.

A digital survey was introduced as people asked for it. This was created through Google Sheets, and the link was sent through a WhatsApp message to the people who asked for it. The people who received the WhatsApp message then forwarded it to their friends and family members. The questions were the same as on the hard copy of the questionnaire. 33 people completed the online questionnaire.

Healthwatch Coventry provided support to Young Beacons for the piece of work through one of the Healthwatch Team. This included providing support with the survey and methodology; problem solving; discussion of outcomes; inputting data and support with data analysis and report writing support.

## What we found

### About our participants

124 people took part, 99 lived in Coventry, 10 in Warwickshire, 13 did not say and two in other areas.

35 people said English was not their first language. 95% of those taking part had access to the internet either at home via broadband or via a mobile phone.

66% received income from wages or self-employment; 8% from benefits of different kinds and the remainder from other sources or did not say.

Gender	Count
Men	42
Women	76
Non-binary	2
Prefer not to say	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>124</b>

Age	Count
0 to 12 years	2
13 to 15 years	5
16 to 17 years	7
18 to 24 years	32
25 to 49 years	56
50 to 64 years	16
65 to 79 years	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>124</b>

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Count</b>
Arab	3
Asian /Asian British: Chinese	2
Asian/Asian British: Indian	3
Asian/Asian British: Pakistani	5
Black/Black British: African	60
Black/Black British: Caribbean	15
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups background - any other	3
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups: Asian and White	2
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups: Black African and White	6
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups: Black Caribbean and White	5
White: British / English / Northern Irish / Scottish / Welsh	4
Any other Asian / Asian British background	4
Any other Black / Black British background	3
Not known	3
Prefer not to say	5
Any other ethnic group	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>124</b>

<b>One or more medical condition</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	76	61%
No	48	39%
<b>Total</b>	<b>124</b>	

<b>Type of long term condition</b>	<b>Count</b>
Asthma, COPD or respiratory condition	20
Blindness or severe visual impairment	2
Cardiovascular condition	1
Deafness or severe hearing impairment	2
Dementia	2
Diabetes	8
Epilepsy	1
Heart disease	1
Hypertension	15
Kidney disease	4
Learning disability	6
Mental health condition	5
Musculoskeletal condition	6
Sickle Cell Anaemia	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>74</b>

**[Note:** The amount of people who identified health conditions under this question differs from the 23 people who reported having a long-term health condition in a sperate question with data in the appendices of this report. The reasons for this could be because the questions were asked in separate parts of the survey, or because the person did not understand the question or did not consider their reported medical condition as long term condition]

Twenty-nine people with a long-term condition said they were receiving a medical service. For most this was GP monitoring or annual check-ups for condition such as asthma. One person said pain management, under rheumatoid department at UHCW. The majority were positive about the medical support they were receiving. Four raised concerns about waiting and access to appointments.

## Experiences of services

Participants said they had used the following NHS services:

Which services used?	Count
GP Services	114
Sexual Health Services	15
Out of Hours Services	17
Walk in Centre	52
Accident and Emergency	35
<b>Total</b>	<b>124</b>

Overall the majority of comments made about service were positive (48%) with 35 negative or mixed comments, the remainder were neutral or unclear.

Positive	60	48%
Mixed	18	15%
Neutral	6	5%
Negative	25	20%
Unclear	15	12%
<b>Total</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>100%</b>

## GP services

Most of the comments collected related to GP services or the Walk in Centre [now known as the Urgent Treatment Centre] within the City of Coventry Health Centre. Many people were happy with GP services. 59 people made positive comments about GP services saying their GP service was good or meeting their needs, for example:

- 
- *Good experience so far, get seen by the doctor or nurse fairly quickly after making an appointment"*
  - *Good, better than my country in Ghana*
  - *Have been well looked after, especially at GP surgery*
- 

However, experiences varied, 25 people made negative comments about GP services. Issues identified included access to appointments, waiting for appointments, not feeling listened to and for some a preference for face-to-face appointments. Examples are:

- 
- *It's very difficult to arrange a GP appointment unfortunately because you have to call at 8am to obtain an appointment, but because I work as a doctor it is hard to call at that time as I am at work and on weekends they aren't open. I use 111 for out of hours services to obtain an appointment*
  - *Had an appointment with out of hours GP several weeks ago. Message sent to GP surgery to instruct them to offer me a face to face appointment but still no appointment despite calling my GP surgery this week.*
  - *I ring the GP they have no appointments*
  - *I had asthma for years and my regular GP ignored it. Second opinions are very important. People know their body and symptoms better than GP's (Especially as a black person or POC – (person of colour))*
  - *Difficult to get appointment, feel rushed*
  - *Long waiting dates for Dr. appointment face to face*
  - *Not good. Was not taken seriously*
  - *Long wait, rude receptionist*
  - *Would prefer GPs to see patients face to face*
  - *Customer service could be better, more empathy*
  - *Over worked staff, lack of empathy, rude*
  - *They take too long to answer*
  - *Long waiting period, little unorganised, very strict with appointments. Rude Receptionists*
-



- *Difficult to get an appointment, poor service*
- *Bad, not enough staff*
- *Rude receptionist especially if you're a non-English speaker. Not a good experience*
- *GP - Poor experience - difficult to book appointments - not taken seriously and belittled*

A further 20 people gave mixed comments expressing both positive and negative sentiments. With nine people, commenting about it being hard to get through or access appointments.

- *GPs can be difficult to get an appointment. Receptionists can be rude*
- *GP is very good. Walk in experience bad*
- *Good, but difficult to get appointments*
- *Ok. Hard to get appointments*
- *Can sometimes be too busy*
- *Good - Long waits though*
- *Good but hard to reach*
- *Satisfied, however, the time slots are short*
- *It was good. It takes time when trying to reach the GP via phone call*
- *They all went well, just hard to contact. Receptionist should be respectful*
- *Not as available for myself as an adult but more accessible for my four year old child*
- *Mostly great, lots of doctor changes*

### What would help?

Accessibility

Five comments about the accessibility of service including lack of accessibility of apps and physical access

Communication	Three comments about understanding professionals; and about promoting services
Responsiveness	Eight comments about reducing waiting times; better phone answering; and more appointment slots
Staffing	Two comments about need for more staff
Quality	Four comments about better quality care/services
Other	Two comments about more health checks  One comment about more flexibility to need of individual

## Information and communication

The NHS website and GP practices were the most frequently used sources of information about NHS services. Most people said they understood the information (59%). 21 people thought that understanding information about services was difficult or very difficult. 11 said they needed support to understand information.

How did you find out about the services	Count
NHS website	63
Leaflets	8
GP surgery	45
Library	2
Friends	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>124</b>

How well did you understand the information?	Count
Very well	38
Well enough	35
It is okay	25
It is difficult	14
Not at all	7
Not known	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>124</b>

Do you need support to understand information	Count
No	112

Yes	11
Not known	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>124</b>

Things that would help that people identified were:

- [Help] With medications, websites not helpful
- A Dr. to explain information
- Help because of Dyslexia - x2
- More info in braille
- Information in Ghana Language
- More updates through the post
- More leaflets in different languages
- Explaining clearly the important information
- When they give prescription to have it written in Arabic/translated
- Local support - signposting

**Topics of information people thought would be helpful:**

- Ongoing updates for health conditions. Local offers of support
- More health info for teenagers
- Sign post other services
- Able to access past medical records
- How to get help when urgently needed
- More about health conditions such as blood pressure diabetes and some
- Calls for health reviews or health MOTs
- More information about symptoms of illnesses

**Other things people said they would change in NHS services:**

A&E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More help at A&amp;E &amp; more sympathy for disability</li> <li>• Too long waiting at A&amp;E, shorter waiting times</li> </ul>
Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appointment available when needed</li> <li>• More GP Clinics</li> <li>• Fast access</li> <li>• More time and availability access</li> <li>• Access when needed first, able to access GP</li> <li>• To be able to access GP services. It difficult</li> <li>• More appointments</li> <li>• Better care, quick response</li> <li>• Better and quicker responses</li> <li>• More accessible to the public</li> <li>• Answer the phone</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More accessibility for people with disabilities</li> <li>• Have more professionals on the phone to reduce the traffic on phone calls</li> <li>• More of a localised medical community hubs</li> </ul>
Appointment system/delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better appointment systems overall GP &amp; hospital</li> <li>• Appointment system needs to be more available.</li> <li>• Medication for patient on benefits should be free</li> <li>• Face to face appointments</li> <li>• Changes to GP booking, face to face more</li> <li>• More availability of appointments</li> <li>• Available appointment slots to see the doctor</li> <li>• More available appointments. Less wait time when calling to book appointment</li> <li>• face to face appointments, shorter waiting lists for treatment</li> </ul>
Attitude and communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empathy - Work from heart, A go home worker to find useless people wanting treatment</li> <li>• More check up letters to influence you to go Doctor more</li> <li>• People for me that I understand</li> <li>• Good communication, no ignorance, treating us better</li> <li>• Doctors and nurses who seem to care more and listen to your worries. As sometimes it seems you are put without them really listening to the person</li> <li>• To have the NHS listen to foreign voices when it comes to their health</li> <li>• Take more action and people seriously</li> <li>• Patients should be listened to</li> </ul>
Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To be able to choose GP practice without areas</li> <li>• Headlines of new cases of virus</li> <li>• Become organised, have more options, less restrictions</li> </ul>
Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More accessible information, different languages</li> <li>• More frequent updates online</li> <li>• More information online</li> <li>• More information and services for Caribbean people</li> <li>• Maybe communication event to raise awareness/service</li> <li>• Better communicated information</li> <li>• Wider distribution of information</li> <li>• I find it difficult at times to access the internet</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More adverts on how to access an app that you can book sessions</li> </ul>
Mental health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More support for mental health, quick access to A&amp;E services, quicker waiting times</li> <li>• Increased mental health support and finding for young people to access therapy. Different attitude from GP's towards health concerns</li> </ul>
Waiting times	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wait time for referrals</li> <li>• Better waiting times</li> <li>• More improvement on receptionist and wait list</li> <li>• GP appointment and long hospital waiting times Where to get help beside 999?</li> <li>• Reduce long waiting [for] appointments</li> <li>• Services accessible, not waiting too long</li> <li>• Less waiting hours</li> <li>• Shorter waiting times</li> <li>• Response on time</li> <li>• Less waiting time</li> </ul>
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better understanding of Black Skin conditions.</li> <li>• Better access to a GP services for those who work. Better access to repeat prescriptions as POD service is difficult to access.</li> <li>• Referrals to be make easy [and] as soon as possible</li> <li>• To change phone app to freedom for free app?</li> <li>• Reviews and new medications needs evaluation on basis of severity, especially vulnerable</li> <li>• reviews and systems can be swifter than usual</li> <li>• less discrimination</li> <li>• For the NHS to help people more</li> <li>• Look after children and take care of needs</li> <li>• More availability for open sessions</li> <li>• GP services should be available for all, especially the ill. Healthy eating, exercise, info about diseases</li> <li>• More confidence in NHS, and social care funded</li> <li>• Regular check ups and thorough help</li> <li>• Point to natural remedies</li> <li>• More options for Black services</li> </ul>

## Positive comments

- *Health services are easy to access in my area, this can be done through the internet phone or text*
- *They all give really good care*
- *NHS is life saver*
- *NHS is a great service giver*

---

## Conclusions

Young Beacons reached Black Caribbean, Black African and other diverse people in Coventry. The sample was predominantly of working age people, although 61% had at least one long term health condition.

The majority expressed positive sentiments about their experiences of NHS services, and some were very happy with the services they received such as “NHS is a great service giver” and “NHS is a life saver”.

However, some issues were raised.

Experience of GPs was the area where most issues were described. The main issues were around accessibility, particularly the time it took to gain access to the GP on the phone and the number of appointments available. The length of time for an appointment. Also some people identified the preference for a face to face appointment, which they found difficult to get.

Suggestions were made about improving communication by listening to people and providing information in different languages and having translated information for health conditions. Plus, more information online as well as a wider distribution of information. Four people did not feel listened to, and one person said “*To have the NHS listen to foreign voices when it comes to their health*” would be a change they would like to see.

In some of the responses there were issues around how people understood their treatment, and the specific needs of black communities. For example, one person identified as a positive change “good communication, no ignorance, treating us better” and one person to be “more information and services for Caribbean people” and another “knowledge about black skin conditions”. Although a small number of comments, they show some of the challenges people face. This could potentially be investigated in more depth in the future.

Overall, the report showed that the majority people from the sample of Black African and Caribbean people had a good experience of their health and care services.

## Recommendations

This research adds weight to other evidence and recommendations Healthwatch Coventry has published and shared with local decision makers regarding access issues to GP services and challenges in accessing the right information to navigate local NHS services.

## Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Young Beacons Ltd. and its staff for completing this piece of work, also thanks to the people who participated and shared their experiences. Thanks to the hairdressers and barber shops and Coventry market where some of the surveys took place.



## Appendices

### More about participants

#### Sexual Orientation

	Count
Bisexual	7
Heterosexual/Straight	110
Lesbian/Gay woman	2
Prefer not to say	5
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>124</b>

#### Do you consider yourself disabled?

	Count
No	116
Yes	8
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>124</b>

#### Do you have a long-term health condition?

	Count
No	97
Prefer not to say	4
Yes	23
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>124</b>

#### Carer (unpaid)

	Count
No	111
Prefer not to say	5
Yes	8
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>124</b>

#### Religion

	Count
Buddhist	1
Christian	66
Hindu	1
Muslim	34
No Religion	11
Other Religion	7
Prefer not to say	3
Sikh	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>124</b>



## Survey questions



1. Where do you live?
2. Age, how old are you?
3. Gender
4. How would you describe your ethnic background?
5. Sexual orientation
6. Do you consider yourself disabled?
7. Do you have a long term Health condition?
8. Are you an unpaid/family carer?
9. What Religion or belief are you?
10. Pregnancy and maternity status
11. Is English your first language?

If no, please tick the boxes below

12. If English is not your first language, do you know how to access the translation Service?
13. Have you received translation services in the past?
14. Do you have access to the internet on a regular basis?
15. From which of the following sources do you receive income?
16. Do you have any of the following medical conditions?

17. If you answered yes to any of the above, have you or are you receiving services for this?

18. If yes what service did you receive?

19. What was your experience of this service?

20. Do you use any of the services below? please tick all that apply to you

GP services* which GP do you use?	
Sexual Health Services	
Out of Hours services	
Walk in Centre	
Accident & Emergency Services	

21. What was your experience of this/these service(s)?

22. How do you find out information about the NHS?

23. How well do you understand the information from the NHS?

24. Do you need support to read and understand information?

25. If yes, what support do you need?

26. What changes would you like to see happen for yourself, your family and the community to help you access health and care services?

27. Can you tell us the most relevant information that will be most helpful for you from the health and care services?



Healthwatch Coventry  
Admin: 024 7622 0381  
Public helpline: 0300 0120315  
Email: [healthwatch@vacoventry.org.uk](mailto:healthwatch@vacoventry.org.uk)  
Website: [www.healthwatchcoventry.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchcoventry.co.uk)

Facebook: Healthwatch Coventry  
Twitter: @HealthwatchCov  
Instagram: @HealthwatchCoventry