



healthwatch

Bracknell Forest

The Big Health Chat

August 2023

Thank you, Bracknell Forest

We would like to say a massive thank you to the 50+ people who entrusted us with their experiences and views. We would like to thank, The Lexicon, Happiness Hubs, and Parallel Event that helped to support our conversations with residents.



Background and scope

We wanted to hear from a variety of people from different communities, gathering insight into the health and social care experiences of residents in Bracknell Forest.

The Big Health Chat allowed us to collect a wider range of views and experiences across the area. The tour and report recognise how a variety of services, and the environment that people live in, affect the health and wellbeing of our community.

We wanted to listen to people about what matters to them. We kept our questions open to encourage individuals to share their views.

Methodology

When planning our engagement, we wanted to make sure we went to places where people of different ages and demographics gather. We visited places on different dates and times, to capture experiences from people who may be at work, school or have caring responsibilities.

Our locations were:

- Lexicon Town Square
- Happiness Hubs in Bracknell Forest
- Parallel Event, The Great Park Windsor



What we asked

1. **What things would help to improve your health and wellbeing?**
2. **What could make your neighbourhood a happier and healthier place to live?**

We heard that health and care experiences are varied, but that there are common themes. Many people were positive about their environment and its effect on their health and wellbeing.

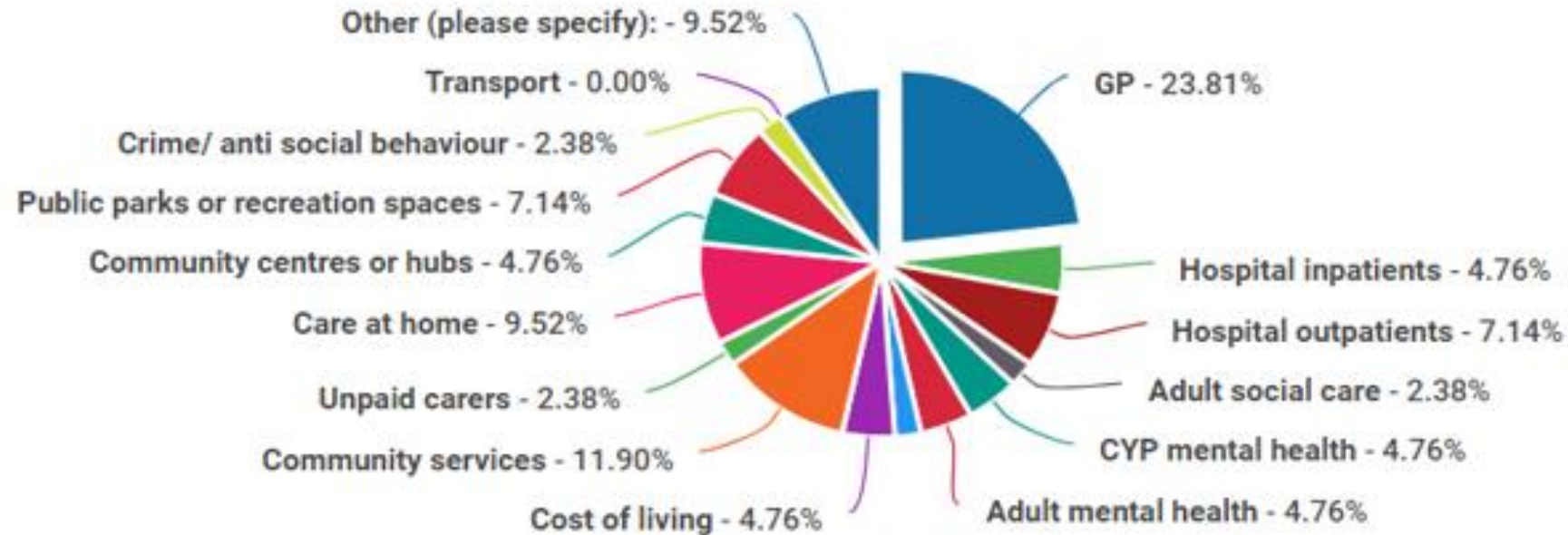
The top five common themes were:

- GPs
- Community Services
- Support for unpaid carers
- Hospital Outpatients
- Public Parks, recreation, wellbeing



Themes

Feedback from 50 local people



- GP
- Hospital outpatients
- Adult social care
- Adult mental health
- Cost of living
- Unpaid carers
- Dementia care
- Community centres or hubs
- Crime/ anti social behaviour

- A&E
- Dentistry
- Pharmacy
- NHS 111
- CYP social care
- Residential care
- Walk in centres
- Public parks or recreation spaces
- Transport

- Hospital inpatients
- Ambulance
- CYP mental health
- Cancer care
- Community services
- Maternity
- Care at home
- Town centre amenities
- Other (please specify):

What people told us.

Priority 1: GP Access

People expressed frustration about long waits to get through to their GP practice on the phone and lack of face-to-face GP appointments when they did make contact. ***“I want to see a doctor when needed, not a nurse or paramedic”***

For some patients access was a problem so they turned to A & E

“Because I could not see a GP, the bite on my leg got really bad, had to go to the Hospital, which could have been prevented if I had seen a GP?”

Some residents shared positive experiences and wanted to recognise that their GP was doing a good job for the community.

Forest Health Centre:

“Great staff and practice”

“Always have regular check-ups and great service”

Crown wood:

“Great staff and surgery”

Priority 2: Community Services

Lots of residents were happy with Bracknell Forest community services. People told us that their quality of life had improved, and they felt part of supportive group.

Stepping Stones:

"Really good. Very welcoming for wheelchair users who have limited English"

"Great to drop in, great support and team"

"I have tried activities I wouldn't have done before; it has a real sense of community"

Bracknell Leisure Centre:

"Have a great mobility swim session on Mondays, need more of these please"

Some people asked for more support:

"Need more day centres that you can attend and meet people and maybe get a cheap meal as well"

Some people were worried about safety:

"Scooters on pathways are becoming a real problem. Really unsafe, people going too fast, it's dangerous for everyone but particularly children and older people, it stops you enjoying outdoor spaces. The council and police need to sort this problem out"

Priority 3: Support for unpaid carers

We spoke to people who care for family members and loved ones.

They expressed frustration about carers assessments and the way these are conducted ***“Carers assessment is too complicated . Who reads it? What is done with it? Nothing”.***

“Hate all the “tick box” forms, which get you nowhere, people need to “listen” to understand. It’s exhausting all the paperwork”.

One family felt that they were unable to cope with the current level of support offered to them and their family member with dementia. His needs had changed, and they did not know who to turn to.

“He has a social worker, but we have only met her once and she doesn’t respond to messages. We have tried to call adult social care, but we are getting nowhere.”

We received positive feedback about Signal Carers. ***“They do really help you, they give really good support, they are a lifeline”***

Priority 4: Hospital Outpatients

Bracknell Forest residents were positive about their out-patient experiences.

Brants Bridge *“Excellent service, always supportive, great staff”*

Heatherwood Hospital *“Amazing service, excellent staff – NHS here is brilliant”*

Wexham Park Hospital *“ Compliments to Wexham orthotics team. I had a great service from the surgical and appliances team. I felt listened to and supported”*



Priority 5: Public Parks, recreation, wellbeing

We had some mixed responses. People valued the public spaces and activities in the area, seeing them as an essential part of their health and wellbeing.

One resident was concerned that others in the community were not aware of the opportunities available to them and missing out

“It’s a great place to live with lots of green areas. There have been some great initiatives like warm winter hubs and wellbeing initiatives but we need more comms on what is going on in Bracknell. There are lots of activities and people need to know about them.”

It was felt that providing more for teenagers would benefit the community as a whole. ***“Need more activities for teenagers, lots for primary school age, but not for teens”.***

Other key areas of feedback

Mental Health services

Some people did not know who could support them, ***“I am feeling Suicidal after my partner passed away, who do I contact”***. We spent time listening to this individual and advised them to call 111 and The Samaritans.

Other people were signposted to Talking Therapies or community services ***“I can’t sleep due to my mental health issues; I need more support”***.

It is very important that people receive support and recognition when experiencing mental health crisis. This was not always the case for Bracknell Forest Residents ***“I left a voice mail for the crisis team, it wasn’t answered, and they never got back to me. When you are in crisis it takes a lot of strength to make that call and I felt rejected, I wasn’t important to them. I made a complaint, but I got no response”***.

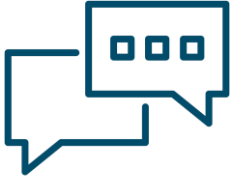
Cost of living

We heard that the cost-of-living crisis is affecting people’s mental and physical health ***“It is really hard to pay all the utility bills”***. A local disabled person was not able to afford the care they need to live an independent life, ***“I need a 24/7 carer, but I can’t afford it”***.

111

“This is a fantastic service. We are so lucky to have this”.

Healthwatch Recommendations:

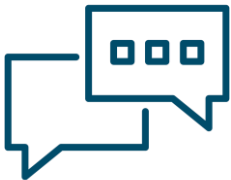


GP Access:

Bracknell GP practices have access to cloud-based telephony systems and improved websites which should make contacting a practice easier for the patient. More needs to be done to communicate the capabilities of the new systems and monitor patient satisfaction.

Triaging of patients to nurses or other medical professionals is possible when a GP appointment is not necessary. The government have set out the Primary Care Access recovery plan to improve access. Some initiatives are already underway, e.g. improving telephone systems so they are digital, this will enable patients to hear where they are in the queue and the option to leave a message and get a call back the same day. Other initiatives are in the pipeline e.g. being able to book more services via GP website.

The government has said all patients should see their GP within 2 weeks depending on clinical need. Government press release May 2023. "If their need is urgent, they will be assessed and given appointments on the same day. If it is not urgent, appointments should be offered within 2 weeks, or patients will be referred to NHS 111 or a local pharmacy". Communicating these changes so patients understand their options is important.



Community Services and Bracknell Forest Residents Information

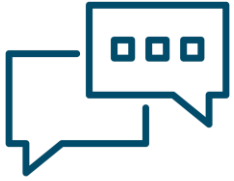
Improved communications to residents to help people understand what community health and wellbeing services are available and how they can access them. Consideration should be given to those who are not digitally enabled.

Healthwatch can support adding to their website, newsletter and social media communications.



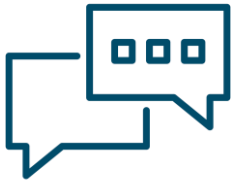
Carers Support:

Unpaid or family carers need a key contact at Bracknell Forest Council Adult Social Care so that they can quickly and easily speak to them about the cared for. Raising concerns and those concerns being heard and acted on may help carers to fulfil their role for longer. We note that there is a new draft Carers strategy in Bracknell Forest Council and a proposed new 'single point of contact in Adult Social Care to make it quicker and easier for Carers to get to the right contact. The draft strategy at this point in time is due to go out for consultation.



Parks and community spaces:

Suggest some communications from Bracknell Forest Local Authority and Police regarding, "E-Scooter Safety"



Mental Health Support :

The 'One Team' mental health transformation program should consider how they will ensure that nobody gets missed when calling for crisis support. Complaints about the service should always be acknowledged and acted upon.

Response from Frimley ICB regarding Healthwatch recommendation

We would like to inform patients,

- of the roles within a general practice health care team, including pharmacists, mental health practitioners, paramedic practitioners, physios, and social prescribers now available in every part of the country
- how practices have continually been working hard to improve patient experience and access to their team, recently this has included adopting new digital phone systems which allow a call back, informed queuing and signposting to services if appropriate
- of the different ways to contact your practice giving patients choice: online, telephone and face to face
 - Online – Use the form found on your GP practice website. It's convenient and secure and can save time. You'll get a response within 48 hours.
 - Via the phone – Telephone lines are active during your surgery opening hours and have been improved, in line with feedback, to improve capacity, reduce waiting times and in some cases offer call back options.
 - In person – Pop into your practice to speak with the team. Let the Care Navigator know if you would like to talk privately.
- When you get in touch, you will be asked what you need help with. The information you provide will be used to help choose the most suitable doctor, nurse or other health professional in the team to help or you may be signposted to a more appropriate service.
You can always tell your practice:
 - If there's a specific doctor, nurse or other health professional who you would prefer to respond to you
 - If you would prefer to consult by phone, face-to-face, by video call, text or email
 - If you need an interpreter
 - If you have any other access or communications needs

What Healthwatch has done so far:

GP Access

Healthwatch Bracknell Forest is currently scoping a project about GP access. This was the most commonly raised concern for residents in The Big Health Chat and our What Matters Most survey. We regularly communicate with primary care leads to share intelligence and raise patient concerns.

Mental Health Support:

Healthwatch are keeping in touch with mental health service providers regarding the mental health transformation plan. This will help to create a clearer, joined up mental health offer to residents, enabling it to deliver the right care, in the right place at the right time. We will continue to share public feedback about all aspects of mental health services with providers.

Continuing our engagement

Using continued feedback to evaluate any changes in services.

Carers Support

According to the Bracknell Council draft carers strategy 87% of carers in the Borough are not know to the council. During our engagements and via our media channels Healthwatch can highlight to people the importance of registering as a carer and the support they can get as a result.

Passed on congratulations to services that received positive feedback

Next Steps:

Healthwatch Bracknell Forest will share this report with Bracknell Forest Health and Wellbeing Board, Bracknell Forest Place Committee, Bracknell Forest Council and Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust.

“A BIG THANK YOU “

Healthwatch Bracknell Forest wishes to thank all the residents and Healthwatch Volunteers of their time and feedback shared with us.



ADVICE AND INFORMATION

We are here to help, advise, give information, and listen your experiences

Healthwatch are the independent champion for people who use health and social care services. We're here to find out what matters to people and help make sure their views shape the support they need.

We also help people find the information they need about health and social care services or support in Bracknell Forest.

Here to help you on the next step of your health and social care journey

We have the power to make sure that the government and those in charge of services hear people's voices. As well as seeking the public's views ourselves, we also encourage services to involve people in decisions that affect them.



Contact Us: 0300 012 0184



info@healthwatchbracknellforest.co.uk



www.healthwatchbracknellforest.co.uk



[@HWBracknellForest](https://www.facebook.com/HWBracknellForest)



[@HealthwatchBF](https://twitter.com/HealthwatchBF)



[@HWBracknellForest](https://www.instagram.com/HWBracknellForest)

