

Insight Report

Coffee, Chai and Chat group sessions with ethnic communities including Punjabi, Bangladeshi, Gujarati and Pakistani communities, including both men and women.

Voices from people who aren't being listened to or heard.

August 2024



Background

Apnapan Cancer Support Group

healthwatch
Leicester

healthwatch
Leicestershire

Background

Our coffee, chai and chat group sessions aimed to listen and explore how people from ethnic communities find accessing their local health and social care services, what that experience has been like for them and what barriers there are that stop them from accessing the services that they needed to address their health and wellbeing.

The sessions aimed to encourage communities to take an active part in Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire by having a regular program of themed discussions, workshops and focus groups.

From December 2023 to April 2024, we conducted ten in-depth Coffee, Chai and Chat group sessions with six different groups and organisations across Leicester and Leicestershire.

Date	Group	No. of people	Location
6 December 2023	Bangladeshi Men's Group - Greater Sylhet Council	22	Cafe Mariam Bakery And Desserts
18 January 2024	Apnapan Cancer Support Group	7	Braunstone civic centre
22 January 2024	Ladies Sangam Group	16	Trinity Methodist Church, Oadby
29 January 2024	Diabetic Self-Help Group	16	Belgrave Library
7 February 2024	Diabetic Self-Help Group	13	Wolsey Building
28 February 2024	Bangladeshi Men's Group - Greater Sylhet Council	20	Italian coffee bar, Highfields
5 March 2024	The Women's Mental Health Wellbeing Project - Jamila's Legacy	15	African Caribbean Centre
19 March 2024	Rushey Mead women's group (am)	56	Rushey Mead Recreational Centre
19 March 2024	Rushey Mead men's group (pm)	22	Rushey Mead Recreational Centre
18 April 2024	Apnapan Cancer Support Group	8	Braunstone civic centre

We engaged with people from Leicester, Blaby, Melton, Charnwood, Oadby and Wigston. These were face-to-face group sessions which were culturally sensitive and community interpreters were used where required. In these sessions, we actively listened to individuals when they were sharing their experiences and signposted to appropriate services to accommodate their health and wellbeing needs. These

sessions enabled us to understand and identify the key priorities that ethnic communities want to see addressed by service providers.

Experiences in accessing health and social care

People told us about the health and social care services they had been in contact with recently and shared their experiences.

Throughout the Chai, Coffee and Chat group sessions, we were able to gather individual concerns as well as what matters most to the communities in particular access to primary care services, Hospital services, urgent care, mental health services, language barriers and women's health.

Accessing GP Appointments

GP access was the top priority as far as these communities were concerned. In summary, from 164 feedback forms, over 50% of participants' feedback was that they were unhappy with accessing GP services.

The key themes from all the group sessions were wanting consistency and being able to see the same doctors, having face-to-face appointments rather than telephone appointments, reductions in the long waiting times on the phone to book an appointment and improved customer service from receptionists.

People told us that they were not being heard by their doctor due to time restraints with the doctor, language barriers and having an understanding of the person's condition.

One person shared that, "appointments, consultations, prescriptions, are all good. So many doctors, so always get appointments" in the Community Health Centre.

One person shared positive feedback about their experience in Rosemary Surgery, "the GP and receptionist are very good, e.g. when we call we get the appointment and doctors explain things well including nurse, physicians, etc."

Another person shared positive feedback about Downing Drive Surgery, "very good. First junior doctor sees you, but if they can't sort it out it goes to the senior doctor. It might take a few days but you get seen by a doctor and everything gets sorted. After the appointment, we always get a message saying how your appointment which is good was. We get a message before coming to the GP asking if we are still coming and I send a message 'I am coming' but when I went to message they said they did not message. Therefore, technology and communications is an issue."

Positive feedback for the Merlyn Vaz Health Centre, "it has been very good for me".

Two people raised positive feedback about Spinney Hill Medical Centre stating, "I am very happy with my GP, however, making appointments is difficult" and "My wife died in January and I wanted to compliment the service we received from the wonderful doctor".

Most people raised that they are struggling to book an appointment at the GP.

"Only issue is struggling to book appointments. I call or go in the morning but sometimes they say there are no appointments left."

"Never get appointments, it is very difficult."

"Hard to get appointments, I wait 1-2 hours on the phone, then they run out of appointments and tell me to call the next day. Put appointments with nurses, not doctors, which isn't always good. I have been in pain for 5 weeks, asked for a scan but won't send me, they just prescribe tablet and send me away."

"It is difficult getting appointments sometimes wait 1 hour then the phone gets cut off. Now, I tell the school to call up and I get appointments straight away. The receptionist gets angry when I talk about appointments and tries to answer the questions I have."

"Since COVID, it is impossible to get appointments."

"It is hard to get appointments, call at 8am, go in person and it's not possible."

"I called GP but no appointments left, then I had to ring NHS 111 but I am referred back to GP."

"If someone gets frustrated and raises their voice because they are not getting an appointment then they threaten to remove the patients' name from the GP list."

Feedback raised about GP receptionists includes that they are giving medical advice to patients and people are experiencing poor communication.

"Don't get to see GP, receptionist is giving medical advice or recommending medication. Doctors are only prescribing paracetamol. My wife has been going for 4 years with headaches, they only prescribe paracetamol."

People shared that they would like to have a consistent GP for every appointment.

"Different doctors telling the patient different things and the patient gets confused".

"I would like to be seen by a regular GP."

"When I call up they say they have no appointments. So I get a taxi down to see them and they give me an appointment. Every time I go they have new doctors, more locum doctors. I like to have a consistent doctor that I see every time."

People shared that they want to have face-to-face appointments. Most elderly people said that they want to see the GP and talk face to face, not on phone calls or online.

"GPs need to reconsider the appointment system, I want face-to-face appointments, not online or telephone appointments."

"Over the phone, when the GP contacts the parents are asked to check the child and describe the symptoms which some parents find difficult as English is their second language. GP receptionists ask too many questions before giving an appointment with a GP."

"It takes a long time to get a GP appointment. The GPs do not listen to patients just tell people to take painkillers without seeing or checking them".

"When you ring for GP appointments, told by the receptionist that there are no appointments and ring back tomorrow at 8am."

"Receptionists are rude."

"The receptionist asks too many questions. I do not want to tell my problem to the receptionist because she is not a doctor:"

One session was delivered just for men and in this session the main issues were raised about GP appointments.

One of the people raised issues regarding the care and treatment they received from their GP service, "if the doctors can't find an issue in health then the patient is dismissed. The doctors need to do something if they can't diagnose, give some kind of support or regular check-up to see if it worsens."

"Without any problem, the patient will not contact their GP".

They also raised there are "staffing issues at GP surgery and pharmacy."

"GP services should stop making assumptions about why patients might have not attended the GP appointments. The patients might forget. GPs start blaming patients. But patients would never make an appointment without any health issues".

"GP service should review each patient individually when missed appointment. If in traffic and calling GP saying that I will be there in 2 or 3 minutes but to get to reception takes a long time on the phone."

"I find it difficult to get information because I cannot speak English."

"I do not trust health care because the medical staff giving me wrong information."

"The receptionist are rude to patients who do not speak English well".

"I want to see the GP face to face."

"Local pharmacist are not trained as a GP."

"I am not good at digital system and NHS Apps is not good for me."

"I am elderly and I have no smartphone and connection to internet, so cannot access my digital health information"

"I am deaf and online call is not good for me."

"My GP is very good and he listens to me."

"Waiting time too long."

"My dad is elderly and he had go round and round the garden for his dementia check."

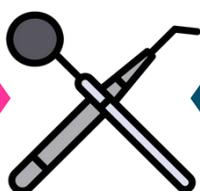


Rushey Mead Women's Group

Accessing NHS Dentist

The key theme from the feedback for dentists was the lack of access to NHS dentist services. Most people said it is very difficult to find and register with an NHS dentist and private treatment costs a lot of money. Most dentists say that they do not take NHS patients currently or are at full capacity. Some people said that they are going back home such as to India for their dental treatment because they are unable to see a dentist in England.

"Difficult to find an NHS dentist for myself and my children."



"Can't register with NHS dentist. Only way I can see a dentist is by going back home. All the dentists are full, it is a major problem."

Pharmacy

The feedback raised about pharmacy services was mostly positive. The key theme of positive experiences is about good quality of service.

"Good medication delivered on time, I never have to call them." – *Somerby Pharmacy*.

"Very kind and very helpful. Ajay and his staff are brilliant, keep it up!" – *Severn Pharmacy*.

"Very good I've not had any problems. They are very caring." – *City Pharmacy*.

"Very good service for 30 years we are with them." – *City Pharmacy*

"Pharmacy gives advice sometimes better than GP."

"Most of the local pharmacies in Rushey Mead are good."

"Repeat prescription in pharmacy sometimes not ready or not in stock so need to leave the pharmacy without medicine. But now they message me if the medicine is ready to pick up."



One of the negative experiences shared about medication was that the "medication boxes are not filled properly".

NHS 111 Service

The positive feedback raised related to the good quality of treatment and the ability to get an appointment.

"NHS 111 service is better than 999 because 111 takes all information and takes action and gives feedback to patients."

"They [NHS 111] gave me an appointment straight away."

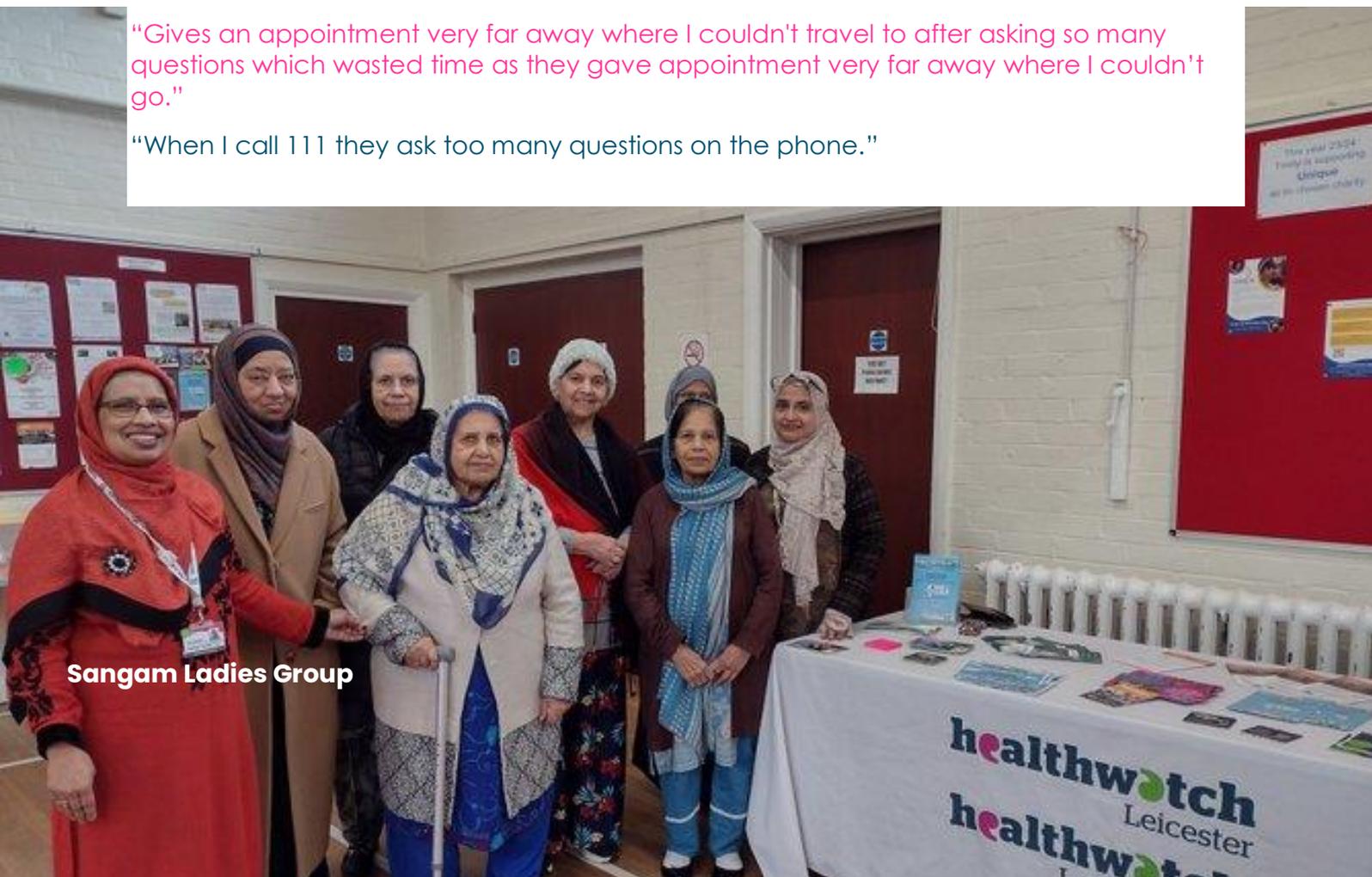


The negative feedback raised was about too many questions being asked to patients, long waiting times to get a call back from a health professional and providing appointments to services which are far away and difficult to travel to.

"111 needs to be more precise regarding the time they will call back. If you want to build patients' trust then be honest with them. If you say in 2 hours you will call back then call back in 2 hours and not 12 hours."

"Gives an appointment very far away where I couldn't travel to after asking so many questions which wasted time as they gave appointment very far away where I couldn't go."

"When I call 111 they ask too many questions on the phone."



Sangam Ladies Group

Hospital services



The key themes of the feedback for the hospital were waiting time, appointment cancellations, diagnosis of treatment, care and accessibility and reasonable adjustments.

Two positive feedbacks were raised about Leicester Royal Infirmary. One person said, "I had an appointment, they did a blood test within 5 minutes and I was done". Another person shared, "excellent service in Ward 4".

Most people feel that the hospital medical system is not accessible and the general public is finding it difficult to access services. People said the waiting time for the appointments are very long and they face language barriers. Most people say, that getting messages on NHS Apps does not help because they cannot read English, and some people have no smartphone or do not know how to use the digital App system.

"I have been waiting for appointment for 2 years from LRI and still not heard from them."

"GP referred to LRI for ear test but when I attended the appointment I was told the appointment is cancelled. Took 6 months to get the appointment. They then cancelled the appointment twice."

"When you go for your appointment consultation do not have enough time to listen to our problem."

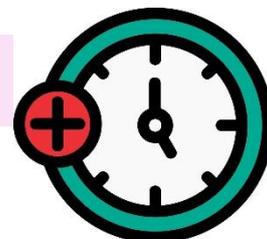
"I cannot speak English and I find it difficult to explain my issues with my little English."

"I do not know where to get help from."

"I am happy with the services, and I can speak English. However, "I know people are struggling to access services."



Accessing Urgent Care services



People say that there are very long waiting times before you can be seen, but then they are only getting painkillers. In addition, people have lack of knowledge of the process and trust in the service.

We heard that people with children going to the Children's Emergency Department (ED) find it difficult to stay and occupy their children before they see the doctor. Overall, negative experiences have been shared regarding the care, quality of treatment and waiting times in the ED.

"Took my daughter to A&E and they kept passing her from department to department. We were there for 8 hours."

"Doctors after checking the patient they cannot find anything wrong with the patient but she cannot move her leg. Told to take painkillers."

"6 hours long wait. Only calling one patient all the time for 2 hours. Simplify procedure of treating and seeing the patient."

Access to other NHS services

Most people that we have come in contact with have shared that they do not know what NHS services are available for them to access and who to contact.

They are also not aware of mental health cafes and social activities happening in communities, breast cancer hubs and menopause services. These are the people who do not come in contact with community events and face language barriers. They live within their local community environment.

Other key themes of feedback raised in the sessions were about digital services, language barriers and issues with accessibility of automated services.

"NHS should not make the assumption that everyone can use digital."

"Online system is not working for patients who cannot speak English".

"Automated telephone service is not suitable for people who might not be digitally confident or not confident speaking English."

One of the people from the Bangladeshi Men's group said, "They [NHS] have stopped the free service where they help cut toenails. I am old now so can't bend down to do it myself. It costs £70 to do that now. I can't afford that".

One person mentioned, "We do not want to scrap the NHS, we do not want it to go private. We need to improve it".

One of the suggestions raised stated that the “health care system should ask how the patient would like to receive the information e.g. email, messages or physical letters because one form of communication might not be suitable for the other patient. Therefore giving the patients the choice of how they would like to receive information.”

Mental Health Services

Mental health services often feel inaccessible and unavailable for the people we spoke with for several reasons. There is a significant stigma in many cultures; seeking support for mental health is often associated with being perceived as "mad." Cultural barriers prevent people from seeking help.

People told us that language barriers make it difficult for them to express their needs and feelings effectively.

There is a lack of education about the available services and how to access them. Online support is challenging for many because they are not digitally literate.

One woman tried to access support at the Merlyn Vaz Centre but found no language support available. She was desperate, seeking help for herself and her son, who was a drug user. We signposting this person to a mental health café, however, continued support is needed for this person which is not available due to the language barrier.

Many men have mental health needs but do not know how to access the available services. Men told us that they are often embarrassed to talk about mental health due to cultural taboos. They are expected to appear strong and in control, which prevents them from accessing services. Culturally, mental health issues are often viewed as a personal failing, further discouraging people from seeking help.

Women's Health - Menopause

There is a significant lack of awareness about what menopause is, as it is not commonly discussed in many cultures, leading to a lack of education and openness about the topic.

The women that we spoke to expressed that Menopause services are limited, and when they visit the doctor, they are often just prescribed medication without any additional support.

Many women experience a lack of support from their families during menopause and do not receive the necessary support to manage both their caregiving responsibilities and their own menopausal symptoms.

Women felt neglected by professionals due to cultural barriers and a lack of empathy from doctors and healthcare providers. Language barriers also hinder effective communication, making it difficult for women to express their needs.

Language Barriers

English is not the first language of most of the people that we spoke to. We were told that people often do not have access to interpreters at appointments and the doctors do not always check that they understand what they are being told.

Some people said that they felt embarrassed about being an inconvenience due to language barriers and therefore do not ask for support. They also fear complaining because they believe they will not receive help.

People are relying on family members to help at appointments which places a burden on their loved ones. Reception staff can be rude due to language issues, avoiding providing the necessary support and making people feel as though they 'do not matter'.

People said:

"When they know we don't speak English, they just ignore us and give us no attention."

"They just want to kill us because we are old."

"I cannot speak English to get my needs met."

"They don't understand my religion and culture."

Next steps

We will share the feedback with service providers to address some of the challenges these communities are facing.

We will be holding community events and working with local provider organisations to engage further with the groups to address the feedback and issues raised.



Appendix 1

We received feedback about the following GP surgeries:

Beaumont Leys Health Centre
St Peters Health Centre
Community Health Centre
Kingsway Surgery
Jubilee Medical Practice
Latham House Medical Practice
Central Surgery
Rosemary Surgery
East Park Medical Centre
Belgrave Medical Centre
Fosse Medical Centre
Doncaster Road Surgery
Spinney Hill Medical Centre
East Park Medical Centre
Parker Drive
Merlyn Vaz Health Centre
Saeed Medical Centre
Shefa Medical Practice
Thurmaston Health Centre
Brandon Surgery
Willowbrook Medical Practice
Rushey Mead Medical Practice
Manor Park Medical Practice
Aylestone Health Centre
Westcotes Medical Centre
Groby Road Medical Centre

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