

The Sussex People's Panel Summary Report

'How Do You Best Look After You'

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1 Introduction to the Sussex People’s Panel

The Sussex People’s Panel, funded by NHS England and coordinated by Sussex Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), holds an online membership of over 1100 residents from across Sussex. It provides opportunities for panel members to feed in their views and experiences to help shape local health and care services from across the Sussex Health and Care Partnership by responding to regular online surveys.

The Sussex People’s Panel increases our reach to people who would not normally take part in our traditional engagement work, with a greater focus on hearing from younger people (aged between 16 and 60) whom we seldom hear from through our other usual public involvement methods. Other than age, the demographics of panel members are closely representative of the general Sussex population, which is evidenced in the [Sussex People’s Panel Demographics Report](#).

The Sussex People’s Panel is overseen by a steering group, comprising of CCG Public Involvement staff, CCG Lay Member for Public Involvement, Healthwatch, Public Health and local authority colleagues. The steering group has been established to oversee the design and development of the project, membership and survey content deciding together on the topic and direction of travel for the project, ensuring it is representative of the Sussex Health and Care Partnership’s key areas of focus.

For more information on the Sussex Health and Care Partnership, and People’s Panel, see www.seshealthandcare.org.uk/get-involved/sussex-peoples-panel/

2 What did we ask?

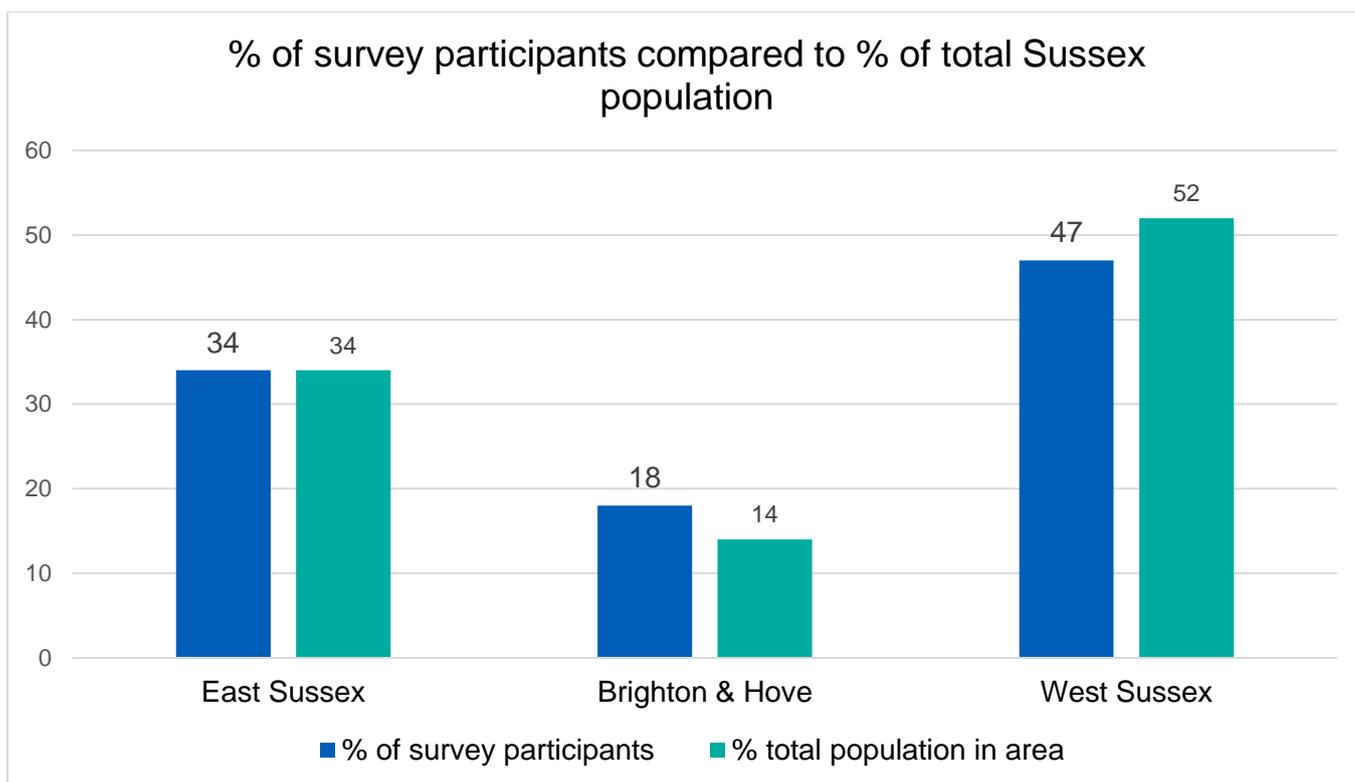
The Sussex People’s Panel’s first survey, entitled ‘*How do you best look after you*’ focussed on self-care, which is about helping people to understand how to better take care of their own physical health and mental wellbeing confidently, and to know where and when to go for help and advice should they need it.

Panel members, through an online survey, were asked about their experience of accessing services when they need them, how people look after their own physical and/or mental health and wellbeing and how people access information to support their own health and wellbeing.

3 Who took part?

A total of 179 people responded to the survey, which represents 16% of the total panel membership. The survey was first circulated on 23 December 2019, and closed on 31 January 2020.

We received a good representation of responses from participants living in each of the three areas within Sussex in comparison to the total Sussex population living in each area:



47% (85 people) we heard from told us that they are aged 60 and above, and a further 51% of panel members who took part in this survey were aged between 16 and 59, which does closely reflect the average age demographic of the county's overall population.

7% of survey respondents identified as BAME (Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic), and 93% identified as White English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British.

53% of respondents identified as female, 41% stated their gender as male and a further 1% identified as non-binary. 2% of people preferred not to state their gender, and 3% were unspecified.

The demographics of the Sussex People's Panel membership will continue to be analysed, and targeted recruitment will continue as the membership grows to ensure it remains a key way to reach some of our key groups and communities across Sussex.

4 Summary of the findings

Overall, the majority of those responding have reported positive experiences of using health and care services across Sussex. However there are some key insights about why people use services, and the barriers or problems they sometimes face when finding the support they need.

For many, A&E continues to be the service considered as most accessible at any time of the day or week, and can also be the place where people are going to in the first instance for healthcare needs. This is especially evident when same day GP appointments have not been available, or the issue was not considered to be something that a pharmacist could help with.



“Always hard to get an appointment and often doctor makes you feel like a time waster”

Encouragingly, the majority of survey respondents told us that they either find it very easy or fairly easy to book a GP appointment that works for them.

However, there was a significant proportion of people that told us this is not always the case and that booking GP appointments can be difficult.

This survey has highlighted that there is still work to be done to raise awareness that there are weekend and evening appointments available to be booked with your GP, and other alternative services that may be more appropriate than A&E.

Many people told us that being able to see their “own” GP when they need to would enable them to take better care of themselves, which suggests the need for greater promotion of the benefits of accessing other clinical professionals in order to reduce the demand and reliance on already overwhelmed GPs, such as a pharmacist.

Information received has revealed that, for numerous reasons, many people have delayed or avoided accessing healthcare support despite feeling that it was needed. People told us that this links with difficulties around accessing GP appointments and a lack of trust or confidence in the service. Other reasons for not accessing health and care have included being too busy or hoping that the situation would just clear up on its own.



“Little faith in services for mental health issues such as depression and anxiety”

This suggests that may perhaps there is some consideration required by health and care partnerships when it comes to promotion of self-care messages that recognises the importance of people getting things checked sooner rather than later, and not thinking that they are being a burden.

Interest has been shown throughout this survey in using digital solutions to improve and speed up access to health and care services in a timely way, and online searches are by far the most likely place that people go to find out information on a health condition or related problem.

Time, energy and money are the most common barriers cited to being more physically active. Also, it has been commented that we need to make sure that our messages across the health and care system are consistent to increase people’s understanding of the support available to them.

5 Key findings

- Overall, from all of the health and care that respondents have received, 64% of services were rated as either 'Excellent' or 'Quite good', 28% were rated as 'Neutral' and 8% were rated as 'Quite poor' or 'Terrible'.
- 20% (35 people) told us that they have gone to A&E for a non-life threatening illness or injury because they were unable to access help elsewhere.
- 76% (136 people) stated that they had not visited A&E for a non-life threatening illness or injury.
- When asked 'why did you choose to go to A&E instead of another service', 27% (15 people) stated that it was because they were unable to get a GP appointment. A further 18% (10 people) stated they did not know where else to go for support, so decided to go to A&E.
- A further 39% of people who went to A&E instead of another service said they did so because they either find it 'fairly difficult' (20%) or 'very difficult' (19%) to book an appointment with their GP. 9 people (5%) said they found it impossible to book a GP appointment that works for them.
- Nearly a third of respondents reported that they did not access support when they needed it due to difficulties with getting an appointment with their GP (28%). Furthermore, there was a large percentage (13%) who did not get the help they needed because they did not want to be a burden or inconvenience, thought that other people needed the appointment more than they did, or that they didn't want to be seen as a timewaster.
- Being able to see a person's own GP and having access to more affordable health and fitness classes were cited as two of the main things that would help people to take better care of their own health.
- Generally, panel members told us that the main barriers to doing more physical and social activities were cost and lack of motivation.
- When asked which ailments people thought Pharmacists can offer support, the majority of people showed a good understanding of what that they can provide advice and treatments for. The highest recognition of the ailments Pharmacists can treat people for were colds and flu, fevers and/or temperature, allergies and hay fever, and aches and pains.

6 Recommendations

1. It is recognised that anxieties for patients could be reduced by informing people about the likely waiting times for treatments and appointments and organisations within the Sussex Health and Care Partnership will be encouraged to do so.
2. Organisations within the Sussex Health and Care Partnership should consider potential impacts on individuals being wary of accessing health and care services when promoting self-care messages, balancing with helpful signposting and advice.
3. Information on how to make a complaint, and where to ask for advice, support and information on health-related matters is to be shared with the Sussex People's Panel members. This includes details of the PALS service, as well as Healthwatch advocacy service, for patients to gain support on issues they face with their health and care experience.
4. Organisations and professionals within the Sussex Health and Care Partnership should continue to promote ways in which patients can self-care and self-manage health conditions in between seeing their GP or healthcare professional, particularly when waiting times in between appointments may be lengthy.
5. The Sussex NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) are to continue to promote GP Extended Access services to the wider public, to help enable more people to access a GP when they need to.
6. The Sussex NHS CCGs are to raise further awareness amongst receptionists and healthcare professionals working in Primary Care to promote GP Extended Access services to patients as an option for booking appointments over the weekend or in the evening.
7. Sussex Health and Care Partnership organisations are to continue to promote Public Health campaigns and messaging raising awareness of pharmacy services as an alternative to seeing your GP for minor illnesses and injuries, to help alleviate pressure on GP services.
8. Sussex Health and Care Partnership organisations are to promote alternative services to A&E, such as Urgent Treatment Centres, Minor Injuries Units, NHS111 and GP Extended Access appointments at weekends and in the evening.
9. Members of the Sussex Health and Care Partnership are encouraged to continue to target recruitment of people aged below 60 onto the panel.
10. Links to health and wellbeing services for more affordable activities to be promoted through communications channels across the Sussex Health and Care organisations.

7 Next Steps

The feedback and subsequent recommendations collated from panel members' responses will be taken to the Sussex Health and Care Partnership Communications and Involvement Network, where the recommendations will be shared and actions taken by respective partner organisations where possible.

All of the reports, findings and ongoing updates and service improvements that are made as a result of feedback will be made publicly available on the Sussex People's Panel website here - <https://www.seshealthandcare.org.uk/get-involved/sussex-peoples-panel/>

Suggested topics for future surveys and engagement with the Sussex People's Panel had included accessing cancer screening and cancer care, accessing social care, and online consultations and digital services, amongst others. However, future surveys are likely to be affected by the Covid-19 situation, and a temporary pause has been put in place until we are all in a better place to be able to carry out meaningful engagement with the panel members.