

Is the NHS getting better living with COVID?

What we heard from people between April and June 2022



Accessible formats

This report is available in Welsh.

If you would like this publication in an alternative format and/or language, please contact us.

You can download it from our website or ask for a copy by contacting our office.

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About the Board and Community Health Councils (CHCs)

The Board of Community Health Councils (the Board) has produced this report on behalf of Community Health Councils (CHCs) in Wales.

CHCs are independent bodies that reflect the views and represent the interests of people living in Wales in their National Health Service (NHS). CHCs encourage and support people to have a voice in the design, planning and delivery of NHS services.

There are 7 CHCs in Wales. Each one is made up of local volunteer members who live in the communities they serve, supported by a small team of paid staff. Each CHC:



Carries out regular visits to health services to hear from people using the service (and the people providing care) to influence the changes that can make a big difference.



Reaches out more widely to people within local communities to provide information, and to gather views and experiences of NHS services.

CHCs use what they hear to check how services are performing overall and to make sure the NHS takes action to make things better where this is needed.



Gets involved with health service managers when they are thinking about making changes to the way services are delivered so that people and communities have their say from the start.



Provides a complaints advocacy service that is free, independent and confidential to help people to raise their concerns about NHS care and treatment.

The Board of CHCs (the Board) exists to support, assist, advise and manage the performance of CHCs. It represents the collective views of CHCs across Wales.

Since the coronavirus pandemic, CHCs have been hearing from people in different ways. We have not always been able to meet people on a face to face basis because of the restrictions in place. We have found that many people have learned new ways of communicating and doing things differently using technology.

We also know that this doesn't mean everyone has been able to do this and so we know that there may be people finding it harder to be heard.

What we did

Since we have been living with coronavirus, some of the ways people have been able to share feedback with CHCs about their views and experiences of NHS care is by completing our national and local surveys, or by contacting us via phone, email and website.

It's so important that health and care services know and understand what's working well and what needs to be done differently moving forward if they are to meet the needs of people living in Wales and respond to what matters to them.

The feedback we receive through our on-line surveys is only one way in which CHCs hear from people locally about their NHS services.

CHCs also pick up feedback and issues in other ways, including:

- through our enquiries and complaints advocacy service
- engaging within local communities, through local community networks, community representatives and groups
- monitoring NHS plans and performance, including feedback and complaints
- information shared locally through social and other media.

We ask people across Wales to share their views and experiences of healthcare services with us. The Board and CHCs share what they've heard with their local health services managers, and nationally with the Welsh Government. This is so they can take actions quickly to respond where needed to the things we hear.

We wanted to know so that health and care services can work together to make sure their plans to deliver services respond to the things people are worried about and that matter most to them.

Between April and June 2022, we heard from **361** people who responded directly to our survey. CHCs have also heard directly from people in their local communities. They also ran their own surveys to gather views and experiences about NHS services in their area.

CHCs also heard directly from people in their local communities through their own local surveys and other engagement activities. CHCs heard from hundreds of people during these 3 months.

Following on from what we heard last year, between April 2021 and March 2022, we have looked at what people have been telling us and written a report to say what we've heard.

Our report reflects what CHCs heard from people through the survey alongside what they heard through their day to day activities in local communities. Our report highlights the key things we have heard from people living in Wales**in their own words.**

The majority of comments made via our survey were about people accessing primary or emergency care. Nearly half of those we heard from were describing their experiences of accessing GP services. 47 people told us about their thoughts on the ambulance service and we heard views from 42 people about accident emergency departments.

During this period, we only heard from less than 20 people about their experiences of receiving the COVID-19 vaccination. We expect this is due to not many people being eligible for the booster between April and June 2022.

People also had some wonderful things to say about those who deliver NHS services in Wales. They offered their sincere thanks and congratulated doctors and nurses on their hard work.

Who we heard from

Here is a snapshot of the people who are sharing their views and experiences of NHS care during the coronavirus pandemic through our national surveys.



We do not always have the same kind of information about the people CHCs are hearing from directly because people do not always tell us everything about themselves when they come to share their experiences and views with us.

During April, May and June 2022, we heard from over **360** people just through our national survey.

Over **97%** shared their views and experiences in English

Over **71%** were women, and around **80%** identified as heterosexual

95% of people told us that they were cisgender¹

The largest group of people who have a religious belief told us they were **Christian**.

Around **92%** were White (Welsh, English, Scottish, Northern Irish, British)

Almost **34%** were carers and **28%** of people told us they had a disability or long term health condition

2% of people responding to our survey told us they were or had recently been pregnant.

You can find out in our Equality Plan what we are doing to hear from different groups of people so that we can better represent the diversity of the communities we serve. You can find our Equality Plan on our website www.boardchc.wales

¹ This is the term used to describe when a person's gender identity matches the sex they were assigned at birth

What was happening with COVID-19

Between April and June 2022 lots of changes were made in the COVID restrictions.

In **April**, the First Minister announced that businesses and organisations no longer were required to undertake specific COVID-19 risk assessments. Powers were withdrawn for local authorities in Wales to close or control premises or events. Face coverings were still in required in health and social care settings.

During **May** it was no longer a legal requirement to wear a face coverings in health and social care settings in Wales. There was also interim advice issued about autumn COVID-19 vaccines.

In **June**, COVID-19 testing was extended in Wales so people with COVID-19 symptoms could continue to have access to free lateral flow tests until the end of July 2022.

Also, in **June 2022**, the UK Government published the final Terms of Reference for the UK COVID-19 Inquiry and the Inquiry officially begin its work. We are asking people to share their views and experiences about the pandemic so we can share them with the UK inquiry.

If you want to have your say about how the pandemic affected you, you can find out more on our website at the following links:

<https://HaveYourSayCHCWales.uk.engagementhq.com/uk-inquiry>



What we heard

What we have heard about GPs

Most people we heard from during April, May and June 2022, told us about their views and experiences of GP services. GP access continues to cause issues for patients across Wales needing to see someone.

Back in December 2021, the [Welsh Government](#) announced changes to the GP contract in Wales. The aim of these changes was to end the 'morning scramble' to book an appointment and improve access for patients.² However, we are still hearing from people about how difficult it can be to get an appointment in the morning and have not seen an improvement to the morning rush for an appointment.

"Been trying to get a doctor's appointment for my 4 week old baby for 2 days straight on the phone line. I am in a queue all day and when I get to the end, it rings and rings before putting me back in the queue. My partner called in to reception to try and book that way but they refused. It shouldn't be this difficult to get an appointment for a baby."

"Trying to get through on the phones is a nightmare especially for working people."

"The only way to do it is to phone from 8am every day, redialling until you get through to a very long message, then an even longer wait. I have had to redial sometimes over 50 times before I get into the queue..."

² Written Statement: General Medical Services (GMS) Contract Reform for 2021-22 (1 December 2021) | GOV.WALES

We are still hearing from people that they are experiencing problems accessing GP services. People has telling us that they are unable to get appointments and have long waits when calling for appointments often resulting in being told that all the appointments have been taken for the day.

"So difficult!"

"...last week I was on the phone for a full hour just pressing redial again engaged I made 220 calls in that hour..."

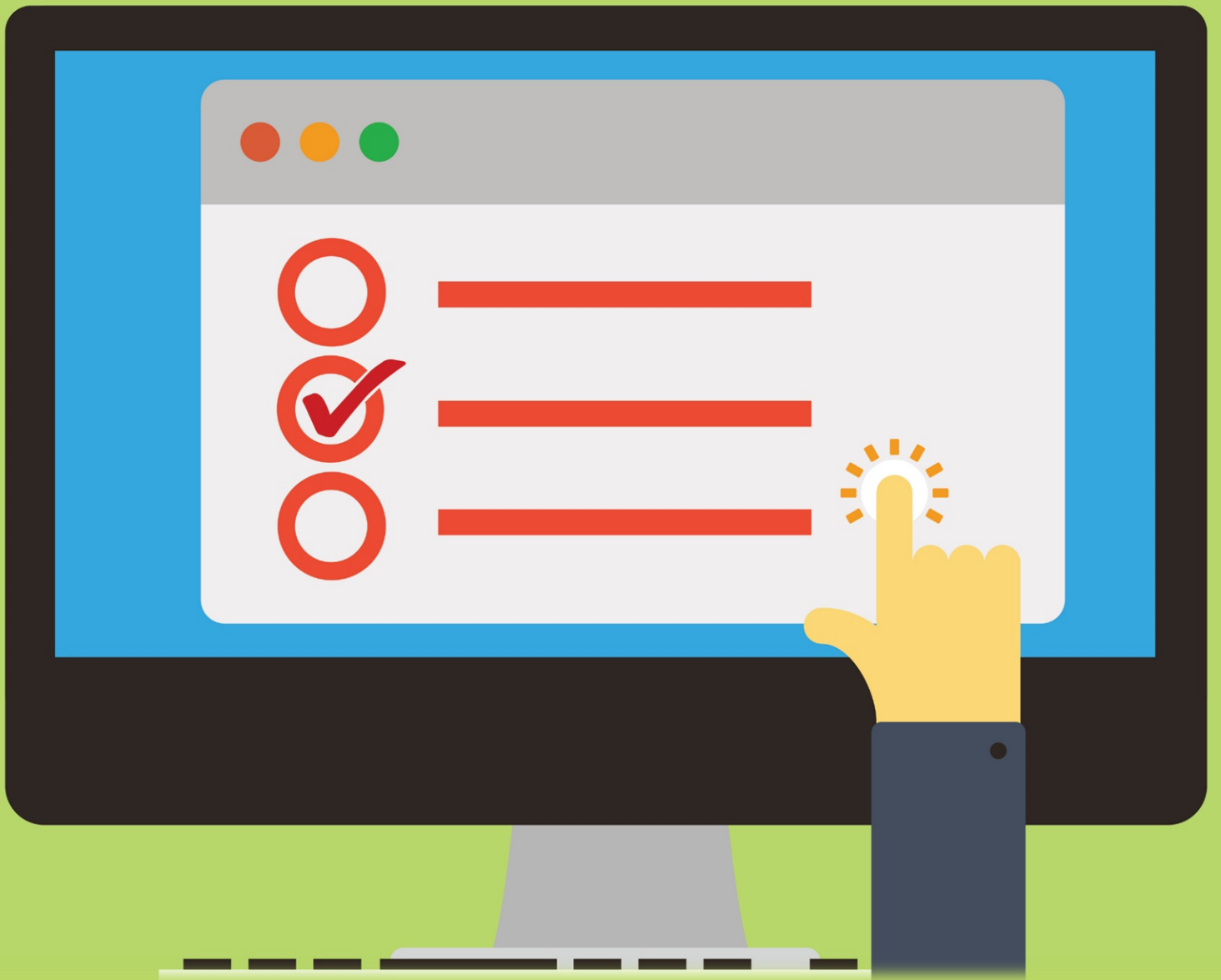
Many patients, are asking for an end to the 'morning scramble' and to use technology to improve how they can book an appointment with a GP.

"I think GP practices in RCT need to be using online services more such as Econsult and be partnered with the NHS online GP access services you see on Google to get an appointment. There seems to be a lot available for England. A suggestion of having a form on the GP website to try and book an appointment that way - so someone can ring you back if they feel you need to see the GP."

"Phoning at 8am can be quite difficult but the addition of completing an online form makes things a lot easier for non urgent queries."

"Online appointment system would be good."

"Perhaps all GP practices could have the facility to inform where you are in the queue"



Some patients told us that their GP surgery was using technology to offer a better service but it was falling short of their expectations.

"No response from e-consult for a week."

We also heard that the 'morning scramble' wasn't an issue for some people and they were able to call when they wanted and still got an appointment that day.

"Telephoned the GP for an appointment mid-morning - was given an appointment with the GP for the afternoon..."

Some people told us that as a result of GP practices merging, the service was worse than they had experienced previously with their old surgery.

"There are inadequate GP services in Penarth. Albert Road should never have been allowed to close and we need a new surgery in Penarth. Why have families been split between different surgeries?"

"Our local surgery has been taken away from us and following a telephone call to triage through reception we as patients are advised that there are no doctors in Park Surgery forcing old, infirm and vulnerable patients to travel to St John's Medical Centre in Aberdare. This incurs added costs in bus fare, petrol and parking when there is a perfectly good surgery in Trecynon to serve the needs of the community."

We were told that GP surgeries were advising patients to go to accident and emergency departments instead, adding further pressure on hospitals during the spring/summer.

"Trying to get to see a doctor is impossible. It's heartbreaking that you can't see and explain a situation to a gp. How can a gp tell you you don't need anti biotics for an infection with out even seeing it. Ended up in a and e 2 days later as infection got so bad. Given the strongest antibiotics around as it was that bad and should have been treated earlier by gp."

Others told us that they are still unable to see their GP in person, and we heard that they are not happy with only receiving a telephone consultation.

"I find it increasingly difficult to get to see a G.P. More and more often you are only offered a telephone call and then, usually with a practice nurse. Dentists, opticians etc have to see patients face to face, why not G.Ps?"

"I consider it high time that G.P's return to face to face practice. As a 72 year old without the help of family members I would have found it impossible to have taken photographs and organised a consultation. I am sure I am not alone in this!!"

"Difficulty having a face to face appointment with a GP."

Some people told us that they like the telephone consultations as it saves everyone time of visiting the surgery when it isn't necessary.

"I like the telephone triage. At first I felt it was unpersonable, but now I appreciate the time it saves me and the surgery staff."

"I haven't seen a doctor for nearly 10 years. I telephone and t just get a telephone consultation."

Some people told us that they were unable to book a GP appointment in advance and only same day urgent appointments were available. We heard that they want to be able to make advanced appointments to suit their schedules.

"More access to appointments and flexibility. Health doesn't work Monday - Friday."

"pre bookable appoints rather than having to ring at 8 am every morning for days"



Lots of people answering the survey had suggestions about how services could be improved. They included:

"Simpler, clearer and easy to navigate booking system for GPsconsistency amongst surgeries"

"update telephone systems / get more staff / increase time when you can phone for on the day appointments"

Some CHCs looked at GP services in their area and spoke to people in their local communities and those accessing primary care to find out what they thought.

During March and May 2022, **Aneurin Bevan CHC** surveyed people in the Gwent area to find out their views of accessing mental health services via their GP. The report can be found here - <https://aneurinbevanchc.nhs.wales/what-we-have-to-say/report-library/reports/primary-care-mental-health/>

Aneurin Bevan CHC also heard from **209** people about GP access.

Between January and April 2022, **South Glamorgan CHC** undertook an online survey to find out people's views of pharmacy services in the Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan areas. This included questions about some aspects of GP services including prescriptions and accessing services previously provided by GPs under the minor ailments scheme. The report can be found here -

<https://southglamorganchc.nhs.wales/files/reports/reports-2022-23/final-pharmacy-services-survey-reportpdf/>



Between April and June 2022, **Powys CHC** attended various events and talked to people about access to their GP.

Swansea Bay CHC engaged with people about accessing their GP. The report will be published on their website shortly - www.swanseabaychc.wales



Ambulance services

The second most common issue people were telling us about, was the ambulance service. Nealy **50** people told us about their experiences. The most common theme was long waiting times for ambulances to arrive.

"A relative collapsed and a cater called 999 for an ambulance at 9pm, she had many stroke indicators. There were no available ambulances, a rapid response paramedic came at approximately 2.30am, 5 and a half hours later, and was also concerned by the stroke indicators, an actual ambulance came to take her into hospital at 8.30am, a whole 10 and a half hours after calling 999."

"Dialled 999 after suffering a heart attack told there's a 3-5 hour wait"

"My 79yr old mum fell we couldn't pick her up waited 8hrs for an ambulance in the mean time she had a hypo lying on the cold floor hasn't done her any good."

"Sept last year my husband was having a heart attack at home. 999 advised it would be at least 6hrs for an ambulance to get to us.

I had no choice but to move him and drive to A&E myself. In less time it would've taken the ambulance to arrive he'd been in theatre and been fitted with a stent. Had I waited he'd been dead."

We heard family members were not allowed to go with their loved ones in ambulances or be with them in hospital. This caused them anxiety and worry. We also heard that it was difficult to find out how their loved ones were, and communication was an issue.

"...my father was bleeding internally, had a seizure, was vomiting blood and messing himself. He waited from 4am to midday for an ambulance, then he was in that ambulance until 1am. He was in A&E for 24 hours before being taken to a ward.

Even though my mother's details had been given to the paramedics, no one contacted us. A&E wouldn't answer my calls. On day two, I was transferred to the desk at A&E and it rang for 45 minutes before I was cut off. No one phoned me. For 4 days, the only information I got was from the first number I dialled who could only say "the system says he is currently in the ambulance bay" or "the system says he is on bed X in A&E" on day 4 I asked if a doctor could tell me if he was still alive or not, so a doctor finally phoned us."



"My husband, who suffers from chronic Heart Failure, was admitted as an emergency just after Christmas following a fall at home. Unknown to me at the time, he had sustained serious chest trauma...our adult children were with us as it was Christmas and as his condition had worsened we all decided that we needed to dial 999 for help.

My daughter called, describing her Dad's symptoms and was advised by the call handler that there was a 3-5 hour wait....We were all very anxious and cannot remember how long we waited but it was under 2 hours when the Paramedic and Army assistant arrived. The Paramedic did a heart trace and agreed that he needed to go to A& E ...and I assumed that as his carer, I could go with him in the ambulance, however I was told that due to Covid restrictions this was not possible. We asked if we could follow by car, again told 'no' you will not be allowed in the ED due to Covid restrictions.

I was extremely anxious because my husband relies on me for everything and is deaf, he cannot hear what is being asked of him especially through masks. He was frightened and confused when I explained that we were not allowed to go with him. I asked the Paramedic which hospital he would be going to? She replied that she needed to take him to the hospital with the least handover times, as he needed to be seen ASAP. This turned out to be Withybush, I explained that my husband's heart condition meant his extensive notes are held at Morriston and Glangwili but she confirmed that he was going to Withybush and they would access his notes...my husband was admitted and kept in hospital for a further 5 weeks in a side ward, which was fraught with anxiety and worry for us as a family...no family should ever be treated as we were. Where has the compassion gone?"

Others told us about their experience of long waits for ambulances to arrive which was then followed by a long wait in the ambulance outside the A+E department, waiting to be admitted to hospital.

"After a garden fall, in extreme pain from what turned out to be 5 broken ribs! I [rang] for an ambulance on a Friday evening, eventually being transported to Murrison hospital at 2a.m the following Monday 11th April '22. I then remained in the back of that ambulance for 14 hours! with intermittent trips across the car park on a jolting gurney, for x-ray, scans etc. Unbelievable, I am 81 years old....Please!"

"Flexible triage needed. Mother needed an urgent xray/scan. Instead of waiting nearly 10 hours for an Ambulance to arrive and 16 hours outside the hospital she could have gone directly for a scan/xray."

"Utterly appalling. I slipped down the stairs at home and the pain was so bad I thought I had broken my back. Called 999 and told 5 hour wait. Then they called back and said 8 hour wait. My son and a friend managed to get me into the car to go to A&E. when we got there there were 12 ambulances all sitting there doing nothing."



Some people told us that they acknowledged the long waits and praised the call handlers for remaining calm and telling them what they needed to do.

"Call staff were great when our son started choking and advised us that an ambulance would be a 4 hours wait and if we were able to it would be quicker to take him to hospital ourselves which we did."

"My husband was experiencing chest pains so 999 was called. Whilst the person receiving the call was very calm and offered comprehensive instructions - when she checked on the waiting times for an ambulance, I was informed that it was between 4 - 7 hours and she suggested I transport my husband to Morriston Hospital myself."

Others told us that they understood the reasons for the long ambulance waits and made suggestions on how to improve things for patients.

"Emergency departments need to be extended, ambulances need to off load and be back on the road not waiting outside hospitals for hours."

"At the risk of stating the obvious! Increase the number of paramedics & their vehicles. Sort out the intake of patients into hospitals, from the ambulance, so, make ambulances better equipped, improved ambulance to hospital bed system!"

Sometimes there were significant implications for those patients waiting hours for an ambulance.

"On Saturday 21 February my husband waited seven hours for an ambulance. By the time he got to hospital his infection had developed into sepsis."

"I was at the roadside for two hours waiting for an ambulance with what turned out to be a broken back. The delay could have resulted in a life changing injury, fortunately that was not the case."

"After a fall down stairs, my mother had neck/head pain. Unable to move, we couldn't get an ambulance after ringing 999 for hours. She had two fractures in her C spine, a fracture in her sternum and two fractures thoracic spine. She's left with life changing injuries. No ambulances in Neath, awful situation to be in. And from listening to others the situation is nowhere near improving."

"...I didn't call an ambulance as despite the bleeding I felt wrong to do so. I didn't drive and had no one to take me so I took a taxi which cost £25. I only live 13 miles away so it worried me about the future if the A&E is closed.....by this time there were no buses."

Some patients told us that they faced a difficult and sometimes risky decision, whether to risk getting themselves to A+E or to wait for the ambulance to arrive.

"I had a serious chest lung virus back in November 2021, my Doctor would not come out to see to me. I was very ill. I had to fight with the Dr to get antibiotics which I did receive in the end, but no improvement. I wanted to try and speak to a Dr the receptionist refused and that I ring 111 or 999, rung 111 and spoke to someone that said an ambulance would take up to 7 hrs to get to me and there were up 15 ambulances parked up outside with patients so I took a chance and my partner and I both tried to keep me alive."

"I was looking after my baby granddaughter and she started making really bad wheezing noises and appeared to be struggling to breathe. I called 111. They could hear her and called 999. They stayed on the phone with me and a paramedic arrived shortly. Her parents arrived and they were advised to drive her to hospital as no ambulances available. The care we received was fantastic from making my initial call but I think my son was stressed at having to drive her all the way from Sketty just over the road from Singleton hospital to Morrision. Same thing happened when she had a fit. It is a long way to drive with a sick baby."

We also heard that some patients were treated in the ambulance outside the hospital due to the pressures on A+E departments.

“My uncle had a 999 response ambulance to take him to Glangwili.

Thankfully he responded with paramedic crew and was assessed, investigated, and treated all in the ambulance due to site pressures.

8 ambulances outside.

The paramedic crew looked after him amazingly for 6 hours.

Doctor came to assess and give results.

Nurse came to give medication”.

Whilst the majority of people who completed the survey during this time told us about delays and other negative experiences with the ambulance service, we also heard lots of positive feedback too.

“The times when I had needed them in an extreme emergency, they have been there within 5 mins. The ambulance service have saved my life. I'm extremely grateful and pleased with the wonderful treatment I received both in ambulance and hospital.”

“Very quick transfer from Machynys gym where I collapsed on treadmill and was given CPR by fellow gym member, ambulance arrived quickly and transported me to Prince Phillip and into MAU smoothly”

"My son has a serious complex heart condition and is only 18 months old. Since last April we have used the emergency ambulances over 6 times due to my son being very ill. Our last admission was only in March 2022. All teams that have attended have been amazing. They listen to my son's condition and read all the medical information I have on him which means a lot. My son has really bad anxiety and they are amazing at communicating with him as well. After our second time we had to call 999 we was placed in a long queue on hold by the operators even though I told them how serious my sons condition was and how ill he was. It was so bad I had to ring our cardiac team in Cardiff to get us bumped up. Once the paramedics arrived, they had attended to my son before they were so concerned they actually took it upon themselves to have our home address flagged in case we needed to ring again we wouldn't be waiting. I'm glad they did cos our next admission was serious. Your paramedics are amazing and need a lot of credit."

"Ambulance paramedics attended my home in April. I was having a heart-attack, but with left collarbone needing an operation, which I didn't realise at the time. They were excellent - within 2-3 hours of the call my husband, who is profoundly deaf, received a text to say I was on the way to a ward in C.U.H - 60 miles away, after having a stent fitted. Without the exemplary work of paramedics, the care team were also excellent."



Urgent and emergency care

We heard from lots of people about their experiences within accident and emergency (A&E) departments. Some people praised the NHS staff working in such challenging conditions.

"All A&E staff who worked on 2/5/2022 were amazing. Being a nurse myself it can be daunting but all staff were kind and caring."

"After slipping and breaking a bone in my foot in Nov 21. I attended the minor Injury Unit at Cardigan.

Staff were brilliant, polite and helpful.

Doctor phoned following day who was excellent, giving me good advice. I spoke to a nurse in GGH in January regarding pain and appointment was made for following Tuesday at 9.00 a.m."

"Care was first class but the 5 hour wait was awful,"

"Attended Withybush as suspected stroke. Waited many hours to be seen. When eventually seen 1st class attention.

BUT TOO LONG A WAIT. STAFF SHORTAGES. CRITICAL."

Arrived at 2.30am, triaged an hour later, x rayed and treated by 6am. We were very lucky that it was so quiet. All staff were friendly and efficient."

We heard that one issue was staff shortages. This had an impact on waiting times at the accident and emergency departments.

"Short wait for assessment. Long wait of 5 hours before I saw specialists. I was informed that there was no staff."

I arrived in A and E on 2nd March and was there for 10 hours before being diagnosed with a tumour in my skull. I then spent a further 14 hours in A and E whilst they tried to find me a bed. I then was transferred to a day ward to make room in A and E and then spent all day there whilst they eventually found me a bed on a ward. Despite the long wait, not being given a meal or a drink for 36 hours and being asked if I could go home (with a tumour) I could see that the hospital was completely understaffed and the staff were run off their feet."

Many patients told us that they waited a very long time to be seen in the A+E waiting room.

"Absolutely awful! I have been sat here for 17 hours to be told I may have to be admitted because they still haven't had my results back and they could take 24 hours. I have been sat in a chair on crutches in agony for the 17 hours I've been here! Your service is diabolical."

"I came to emergency following a sign of a minor heart attack. I had to wait over almost 10 hours before I see a doctor. Unbelievable waiting time."

We were told that patients had to wait long periods of time to be seen, sometimes with their basic needs not being met.

"My autistic adult son was sent to a&e to see the surgeons as his gp thought he had appendicitis. We had to stand outside in the freezing cold rain as security forgot to tell anyone we were there, only after I went back in, did they realise. My son could hardly stand and was very ill. He was quickly triaged by nurses and sent back to the main waiting area, which was very busy, bright and noisy.

He got very overwhelmed, I had to explain to a nurse - in front of everyone!!! That I was not leaving him because he was autistic and needed support...my sons' medical conditions should be private and not have to be explained in front of a packed waiting room

He had to wait over 6 hours sat on a chair in a cold busy waiting room with acute appendicitis before he got a trolley in a&e (That is disgusting.)

He had to be left there. My son does not speak unless answering a basic question - which might have to be worded a few ways before he understands. So unless he was constantly being asked (which I doubt very much) how is your pain? He would have just laid there and suffered. Luckily he was operated on in the morning."

"2 days & overnight in one hospital without food/hot drinks (of course seeing the problem I was lucky enough to have my car (no ambulances available) in order to collect provisions for her and other poor elderly patients who were alone (due to no assistance allowed inside) this was just one occasion ..repeated in 2 other hospitals shortly following this experience..."

"This relates to The Grange hospital. I'm sorry but I don't know what's happening to our NHS today. How can you expect patients who have serious conditions to receive their IV antibiotics on a chair in a corridor for 12 hours and then go on to spend the next 24 hours, including overnight, on the same chair and then be told there is no bed for you tonight either? It is shameful to expect people to live out of a bag like a vagrant with no proper personal hygiene provisions."

"I took my daughter to A&E in Glangwili after being advised by 111 to do so. They wanted to send an ambulance out to her as she is only 2.5 years old and said she needed to be seen asap, however we live very close by so took her ourselves. On arrival to A&E it was extremely busy, she was triaged within 30 minutes, and I was reassured that she would be seen quickly as she was young. However, 7 hours later we were still waiting for her to be seen, by this point she was screaming in pain, we had been sitting on the freezing cold floor all this time and she was not offered anything to eat or drink. She was finally seen at 3am and discharged home with medication. They were visibly understaffed, and they were short of rooms. Patients were being treated in the waiting area and it was awful to see. Patients' dignity was totally forgotten about."

"Dirty toilets overflowing with poo
10 hour + wait
No offer of food or water."

"Total disgrace. Filthy, rubbish everywhere, on all windowsills and floor, no soap in toilets despite warnings everywhere to wash hands. Elderly disabled (leg lost last year to covid) man treated with no care, empathy or dignity and spent 31 hours, yes 31 hours in A&E before being transferred to ward where he is now in a state of dehydration and confusion. Daughter took food and drink in for him to A&E and was told to go and they would see he was fed. However, staff just left it on floor with no thought as to how he would reach it and clearly didn't check on him for hours...Absolute chaos."

People told us that when they attended A+E, the department was unable to accommodate the number of people present.

"Attended A&E at night (20:00hrs) with family member that had been seen by GP earlier in the day and advised to attend A&E if condition deteriorated. Was told by receptionist that it was likely he'd be sat in waiting room all night due to volume of patients. He required a trolley as was unable to sit up. There were no trolleys available unoccupied in the department. Ambulances queuing up outside to offload patients but nowhere for them to go either!!"

"Absolutely rammed with patients, some having been waiting over 20 hours no one coming to see how they are, 1 lady who is diabetic has been waiting since Sat 6pm and it's now Sunday 16.00pm, absolute shambles."



Some CHCs looked at urgent care services in their area and spoke to people in their local communities and those accessing urgent care to find out what they thought.

In April 2022, **Aneurin Bevan CHC** published a report on their virtual visits at the Grange Hospital which includes reference to the A+E department. The report can be found here -

<https://aneurinbevanchc.nhs.wales/what-we-have-to-say/report-library/reports/virtual-visits-at-guh-april-2022/>

In June 2022, they also published a report on the patient experience in emergency departments and minor injuries units. The report can be found here -

<https://aneurinbevanchc.nhs.wales/what-we-have-to-say/report-library/reports/winter-patient-experience/>

The Welsh Government has announced its commitment to provide urgent and emergency care services in the right place, first time. It has developed 'six goals for urgent and emergency care' supported by £25m recurring funding. To find out more, click on this link -

<https://gov.wales/written-statement-six-goals-urgent-and-emergency-care-and-expectations-system>

Other things we were told

People also told us about their experience of long waiting times for operations, treatment and results. This continues to be an issue for a lot of people as the NHS recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic.

“I have been waiting for prostate biopsy results since the 7th of February it's now 8 weeks and 2 days ridiculous... this not having results is making me ill”

We also heard from lots of people about their experiences of receiving eye care, including cataract operations. We were told of long delays in receiving treatment and some patients were forced to pay privately due to the delays. They were worried that they may lose their eyesight if they waited for NHS treatment.

“In May last year my optician wrote to the Hospital advising that he could not tell if my diminishing eyesight was due to cataract or worsening glaucoma problems. My optician asked for a referral to be made. I appreciated that there would be a delay caused by COVID, but by November, I was concerned as my eyesight had worsened. I checked with my optician that he had made referral and attempted to contact the hospital myself as I had not heard anything. After being passed from pillar to post by numerous people, I was able to speak to the consultants secretary (who was working from home), that I was not even on their urgent list for an appointment. I could no longer risk my sight getting any worse and had no alternative but to seek help in the private sector. I duly discovered that I needed two cataract operations which I funded myself.”

We also heard from people about their follow up appointments and care, delayed transfers of care, dental care, treatment and care for women, pharmacy, vaccines and COVID-19, inpatient experiences and mental health services.

Dental: "I am registered with an NHS dentist. Had several serious gum infections [and] need a complex extraction. Referred to BCHB for extraction. It is painful constantly makes me feel ill, am told it will be at least another year for extraction."

Mental health: "Really bad. We waited in a crowded waiting room with lots of kids and illness's, my son had recently attempted suicide, we saw the GP at 2.10pm and across the road in Padarn surgery, came straight here being told the crisis team will come and are still waiting now at 6pm! No option to go to Gorwelion or to be seen at home."

Women's health: "Several gynecology appointments cancelled.

Telephone consults with no face to face app.

Surgery not an option due to covid, had to go on a chemical menopause which had had a huge negative impact on my life.

Breast lump found, meant endometriosis treatment could not move forward.

Told 18 months wait for breast appointment which means I can not move forward with other treatment.

Huge amount of stress, pain and discomfort."

What else CHCs heard locally

CHCs also heard from people in their local communities about NHS services. Some CHCs undertook surveys, others did virtual visits to gather patient views.

South Glamorgan CHC ran **4** surveys on, transport services, eye care, pharmacies and services for veterans and had **646** responses in total. They also published reports on what they heard when they visited the local hospitals.

You can find the reports on their website here –

<https://southglamorganchc.nhs.wales/what-we-have-to-say/report-library/>

Cwm Taf Morgannwg CHC ran **2** surveys between April and June 2022 on, adult mental health crisis services and waiting times for elective surgery. They heard from **305** people.

A copy of these reports can be found on their website by clicking on this link -

<https://cwmtafmorgannwgchc.nhs.wales/what-we-have-to-say/report-library/>

Hywel Dda CHC ran a survey between April and June 2022 about family experiences when their children are in hospital. They received **108** responses. They will publish the report soon.

Powys CHC ran a survey between 24 June and 3 July 2022 asking about access to dentists in Powys. They received **199** responses. A copy of the report can be found here –

<https://powyschc.nhs.wales/files/report-library/access-to-dentists-july-2022/>



Between April to June 2022, **Aneurin Bevan CHC** published **4** reports, based on the surveys they ran during this time. They heard from **313** people about dementia care in the community, cancelled operations, primary care mental health services and patient experience during the winter months.

They also visited palliative care patients and spoke to **9** people directly about their experiences, and undertook a virtual visit to the new Grange University Hospital.

Copies of these reports can be found on their website by clicking on this link –

<https://aneurinbevanchc.nhs.wales/what-we-have-to-say/report-library/>

Between April to June 2022, **North Wales CHC** heard from **63** people via their surveys, hearing about people's experiences of the pandemic, menopause, dentists, NHS services in general.

Powys CHC received nearly **600** responses to their survey on community pharmacies. They also asked for views about access to dentists in Powys and received **200** responses in one week. The reports will be published soon on their website.

Swansea Bay CHC ran surveys about inpatient and outpatient care and will publish these reports on their website soon.

Summing up

CHCs continue to hear from people about their good and bad experiences of health care in Wales. We hope the feedback people have shared helps NHS staff and others to recognise and value what works well for people.

We also hear the worries, and often delays, people have experienced when trying to see a doctor, dentist or when they need urgent and emergency healthcare – and in the way they need to, when they need to.

We hear the difference it makes to people when people are able to access the care and treatment they need, first time. It also helps to stop further more serious care or treatment being needed later on.

CHCs and the Board share what they are hearing from people in their local communities and across Wales with NHS leaders and policy makers at least weekly, so that health services can respond quickly to the things that matter most to people as quickly as possible.

NHS bodies and the Welsh Government has taken a range of actions in response to the things we heard between April and June 2022.



Some examples include:

- In the **Aneurin Bevan** area, the local health board took action to support people who need mental health support. Care navigation training has been provided to all GP practices so that practice receptionists are better able to arrange the best care professional to meet people's needs.
- In the **Cwm Taf Morgannwg** area, the local health board took action to provide more group-based therapy on hospital wards, to help patients feel that both their physiotherapy and social needs are being better met.
- In the **Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan** area, the local health board changed their hospital visiting restrictions from one visitor for one hour a week to two visitors for one hour a day.

You can find out more about the actions taken by health boards that respond to the things people have said in your area on your local CHCs website.

Nationally, the Welsh Government told us about some of the the things it was doing that responded to what people said needed to get better. This included:

- the full rollout of the 111 helpline across Wales so that people can get healthcare advice 24/7
- more money and plans to improve services for things like urgent and emergency care, action to end long waiting times, dealing with a national shortage of HRT treatment, and support for domiciliary care workers
- new digital technology to support services for people with chronic kidney disease, or who need mental health support

- updated guidance for visiting in maternity and neonatal services.

CHCs continue to be concerned about many of the services people told us about during this period. They have been under pressure now for a long time – despite the efforts of everyone involved in health and social care.

This means that too many people are still struggling to get the care they need when they need it and how they need it. CHCs will continue to monitor their NHS services locally to see if the actions taken by decision makers to make things better are making the difference needed.



Thanks

We thank everyone who took the time to share their views and experiences with us about their health and care services and to share their ideas.

We thank the healthcare staff who are working so hard to care for people and their loved ones as we all look to recover from the pandemic.

We hope the feedback people have taken time to share influences healthcare services to recognise and value what they do well – and take action where they need to as quickly as they can to make things better.

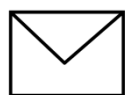
Feedback

We'd love to hear what you think about this publication, and any suggestions about how we could have improved it, so we can use this to make our future work better.

This report is available in Welsh and English.



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We welcome telephone calls in Welsh.

If you write to us in Welsh, we will answer in Welsh. This will not lead to a delay in responding to your correspondence.



Board of Community Health Councils in Wales