healthwatch Cheshire West

healthwatch Cheshire East

Healthwatch Across Cheshire

Knutsford

September - November 2021

Introduction

What is Healthwatch Across Cheshire?

Healthwatch Cheshire holds continuous conversations with people to gather and better understand the views of people about their experiences and expectations of health, care, wellbeing support and services. Social distancing guidance and restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic meant that much of our conversations with people during 2020 and the beginning of 2021 were held virtually over the telephone or by video call. People had been contacting us about topics such as COVID-19 vaccinations and boosters, flu jabs, and access to services including GP Practices and dentistry. As well as these topics, conversations with those who plan services and support locally have identified that other priorities in Cheshire include pharmacies, self-care, promoting recruitment into the care sector, and voluntary sector support. Therefore, as restrictions and guidance loosened in mid to late 2021, we launched a set programme of activity - *Healthwatch Across Cheshire* - to once again get out into communities and talk to people face-to-face about these topics in all areas of Cheshire, from Malpas to Poynton and Neston to Nantwich.

Over a 9-week period from 20 September to 19 November 2021, Healthwatch Cheshire took out our engagement stands and a promotional van to find out what matters most to people about their local health and care, and to share key information about health, care, and support. To help with providing more information to people about the COVID-19 vaccine, we focused some of our visits where vaccine uptake has been relatively lower than in other areas, whether this be in terms of location, certain communities or particular age groups.

Everything that people tell us is fed back anonymously to those who plan, make decisions, and deliver health and care services, to help improve people's experiences for the future. This feedback helps the local NHS and Local Authorities to plan how to meet the health, care, wellbeing and support needs of people in Cheshire. It also feeds into Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNA), Place Plans, and the priorities of Integrated Care Partnerships. Where possible, we break people's feedback down into individual Care Communities to help inform the development of services and support at a local level and make sure our information is as useful as possible. Care Communities aim to bring together people living, working or involved in an area to improve the health and wellbeing of local residents. There are 8 Care Communities in Cheshire East and 9 in Cheshire West and Chester.

This report focuses on the responses from people across Cheshire, and then breaks down the information to a local level, which allows Care Communities to better understand the views and needs of their local population.

Cheshire East Care Communities:

- Alderley Edge, Chelford, Handforth and Wilmslow
- Bollington, Disley and Poynton
- Congleton and Holmes Chapel
- Crewe
- Knutsford
- Macclesfield
- Nantwich, Wrenbury or Audlem
- Sandbach, Middlewich, Alsager, Scholar Green and Haslington.

Cheshire West and Chester Care Communities:

- Chester Central (City Centre)
- Chester East (Christleton, Littleton, Huntington, Boughton, Upton, Hoole, Mollington, Mickle Trafford)
- Chester South (Blacon, Lache, Saughall, Eccleston, Handbridge, Dodleston, Kinnerton)
- Ellesmere Port
- Frodsham, Helsby and Elton
- Neston and Willaston
- Northwich
- Rural (Tarporley, Malpas, Ashton, Farndon, Tattenhall, Kelsall, and Tarvin)
- Winsford.

In addition to our team of staff and volunteers, we invited health and care partners to join us in our conversations with people across Cheshire; creating and building partnerships with NHS services, Local Authorities, community representatives and members and organisations within communities, for example Police Community Support Officers, social housing organisations, voluntary sector, pharmacists, councillors, etc.

What is Healthwatch?

Healthwatch Cheshire, consisting of Healthwatch Cheshire East and Healthwatch Cheshire West, is an independent consumer champion for health and care across Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester, forming part of the national network of local Healthwatch across England. Our role is to make sure that those who run health and care services understand and act on what really matters to local people. We hold continuous conversations with people to listen to their views, experiences and expectations of health, care, wellbeing support and services. The information is then shared with those who plan and commission health and care services and support. The information we gather is then analysed so that we can identify and act upon trends and common themes by presenting our findings to decision makers in order to improve the services people use. We also share people's local views with Healthwatch England, who strive to ensure that the government put people at the heart of care nationally.

This report provides a summary of the feedback Healthwatch received from the public during *Healthwatch Across Cheshire*.

Summary of findings

The main themes of feedback from people across Cheshire are summarised below:

Access to GP appointments

The most common theme raised by people in every Care Community was a difficulty in accessing GP appointments. At the time of our Health and Wellbeing During the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic project between May 2020 and March 2021, there was a lot of positivity about the convenience of video and telephone appointments. However, during *Healthwatch Across Cheshire*, many people told us that they were frustrated at not being able to access face-to-face appointments when the perception was that other services were now offering this. In some instances, people were unhappy that they were being asked to wait weeks 'just' for a telephone appointment.

Another issue was that people are experiencing long waits on the telephone whilst trying to get through to a receptionist to try to make an appointment. People gave us examples of having to wait over half an hour, and in some cases an hour, to get through to their Practice. People preferred the option of a call back service rather than waiting in a queue; we were told this was previously offered at some GP practices but was no longer an option. People continue to report that they are reluctant to tell the receptionist about why they wish to make an appointment, telling us that they believe the receptionist is unqualified and does not need to know that information.

Several people told us that they found pre-recorded voice messages on the telephone when they called their GP Practice to be too long, negative, and one comment labelled it as "passive aggressive", with parts of the message relating to the pandemic no longer relevant.

People's experience of GP appointments was also mixed. When people were able to see a GP or nurse face-to-face, they were generally positive about their experience. However, people also told us of long waits for referrals to other services, and that they often had to chase these up, along with results and follow-up appointments they were waiting for.

In terms of video and telephone appointments, we were told of occasions when people had been asked by the GP to send a picture when they felt it was "inappropriate". Other individuals said that they were not given a specified time for telephone appointments or were called hours after the time window that was given to them, occasionally resulting in them missing the call. This represents a barrier to accessing remote appointments, in contrast to face-to-face appointments which provided a set time.

COVID-19 and Flu Vaccinations

There was lots of positive feedback about the COVID-19 vaccination rollout and subsequent booster programme, with people feeling it has been well organised, well communicated, and efficient. At the beginning of the rollout, we received lots of queries from people wanting to know when they would be eligible, but as the programme went on and the booster programme started, people were a lot more patient and the feedback has been very positive. Similarly, the flu vaccination programme also received a lot of praise. In particular, the role of local pharmacies in providing vaccinations was spoken of positively, with pharmacies being the subject of many positive experiences.

Hospitals

In terms of hospitals, many people praised the attitude and approach of staff in providing them with positive experiences at all of Cheshire's main hospitals. Outpatients appointments were described as running smoothly, but there were instances of people feeling that communications and administration around appointments has been poor in regard to letters, phone calls and cancellations. Furthermore, particularly in areas close to Cheshire's borders, people told us that communication between hospitals and healthcare services in other areas has been poor with services appearing to not be working in a joined up manner and sharing information. Accessing hospital appointments was also said to be difficult in some rural areas, with public or hospital transport not providing enough coverage for people to attend appointments if they do not drive.

Other services

Our *Healthwatch Across Cheshire* activity has seen people raise issues around dentists that have been a common theme throughout the pandemic, with people unable to register with NHS dentistry or been told they could receive treatment if they went private. This remains a significant concern, and Healthwatch Cheshire have published two reports looking specifically at these issues, which can be found on our websites:

www.healthwatchcheshireeast.org.uk/what-we-do/our-reports

www.healthwatchcwac.org.uk/what-we-do/our-reports

Other comments included criticism of mental health services in various settings, particularly with regard to referrals and waiting times. Long waits and poor experiences were also noted with Education and Health Care Plans (EHCP).

People told us they felt that there was a lack of support for carers generally, but there was praise for community groups that provided support for a variety of conditions and situations.

What we did

Over a 9-week period from 20 September to 19 November 2021, Healthwatch Cheshire visited 52 venues across all 17 Care Communities using engagement stands and a promotional van. We held conversations with 1,140 people about health and care services, gaining 731 comments on people's views and experiences.

Who took part?

In addition to our team of 8 staff and 17 of our volunteers, we invited health and care partners to join us at our events, building partnerships with community representatives and members and organisations. Staff from the following partner organisations joined us at events:

- Cheshire East Council
- Cheshire East Place Partnership
- Cheshire West and Chester Council
- Cheshire West and Chester Public Health
- Cheshire West Integrated Care Partnership
- Cheshire Police Community Support Officers
- NHS Cheshire Clinical Commissioning Group
- East Cheshire NHS Trust
- Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
- GP Practice Managers
- Patient Participation Groups
- End of Life Partnership
- Everybody Leisure
- Live Well Cheshire West
- Primary Care Cheshire Social Prescribers
- Cheshire Change Hub
- Home Instead
- Guinness Partnership Housing

What did we use?

- **Healthwatch promotional van** – We hired a promotional van covered in Healthwatch Cheshire East and Healthwatch Cheshire West branding to attract the attention of people. We used it as a base to hold conversations with people in locations that are normally difficult to visit due to a lack of venues.
- **Engagement activity** – A programme of activity, covering one Care Community per day was planned in order to reach every area of Cheshire. This included activity based around the Healthwatch van in car parks or community hubs, or engagement stands at events or in town centres. The team spoke to people to obtain comments and create links with community representatives with the purpose of signposting people to support and services they may not otherwise know about. Through this we were also able to signpost to our online Feedback Centres for people to leave

comments and utilise our comment cards for people to feed back their experiences by hand.

- **Promotional materials** – Along with our regular Healthwatch leaflets, posters, and other promotional items, we also used leaflets, posters and banners from local health and care partners for signposting and to promote campaigns such as self care.
- **Portable electronic tablets** – Our team used portable tablet devices to add feedback straight onto our system for us to track themes and produce reports. The tablets also have our 'What is Healthwatch' and 'Share Your Story' videos uploaded onto them with subtitles and British Sign Language, so people can understand what Healthwatch do and why they should talk to us about their experiences in an interactive way.
- **Videos** – We have two videos adapted for our local Healthwatch called 'What is Healthwatch' and 'Share Your Story', both in accessible formats. These were played on a loop on the television screen in the Healthwatch van. Videos and slides from local health and care partners for signposting and to promote campaigns such as accessing primary care, self care and flu vaccinations were used. You can watch these videos on our websites at www.healthwatchcheshireeast.org.uk/about-us and www.healthwatchcwac.org.uk/about-us.
- **Websites** – Our *Healthwatch Across Cheshire* schedule was promoted online on our websites, so that people could come along to our events.
- **Social media** – Our Facebook and Twitter accounts documented our events across Cheshire in threads, and links to these are included on page 13.
- **Newsletter and emails** – Emails were sent to partners to promote our activity and also invite them to attend events. Alongside this, a newsletter advertising our *Healthwatch Across Cheshire* campaign, and asking people to get involved and help promote.

Conversation topics

Conversations with people during *Healthwatch Across Cheshire* were based upon topics that people had been telling us about during the previous months. These topics were linked into priorities of health and care partners that are known to us. Care Community steering groups were also asked if there was anything locally that would be useful to ask or promote to people whilst in each area, so that we could understand their priorities. We were able to receive feedback from people, and also share information and signpost to relevant support or services. Conversation topics included:

- COVID-19 vaccinations and boosters
- Flu jabs
- Self-care
- Access to services, including GP Practices
- Pharmacies
- Signposting information about local services or groups, including voluntary sector support, etc.
- Promoting recruitment into the care sector
- Transport
- Vaccination bank staff

Where did we visit?

Healthwatch Cheshire visited 52 venues across all 17 Care Communities in Cheshire, speaking to 1,140 people and receiving 731 comments on health and care services. The number of venues and people spoken to, along with comments received, is broken down by Care Community and Local Authority area below:

Area	Number of venues	People spoken to, including signposting and comments	Comment Cards
Alderley Edge, Chelford, Handforth and Wilmslow	1	11	7
Bollington, Disley and Poynton	1	40	26
Congleton and Holmes Chapel	2	22	22
Crewe	4	69	54
Knutsford	2	21	13
Macclesfield	5	186	126
Nantwich, Wrenbury or Audlem	4	72	62
Sandbach, Middlewich, Alsager, Scholar Green and Haslington	4	129	52
Cheshire East Total**	**23**	**550**	**360**

Cheshire East** - 9 venues were cancelled

Area	Number of venues	People spoken to, including signposting and comments	Comment Cards
Chester Central (City Centre)	5	210	83
Chester East (Christleton, Littleton, Huntington, Boughton, Upton, Hoole, Mollington, Mickle Trafford)	1	13	20
Chester South (Blacon, Lache, Saughall, Eccleston, Handbridge, Dodleston, Kinnerton)	2	27	19
Ellesmere Port	2	48	19
Frodsham, Helsby and Elton	3	83	49
Neston and Willaston	2	36	11
Northwich	5	76	52
Rural (Tarporley, Malpas, Ashton, Farndon, Tattenhall, Kelsall, and Tarvin)	5	87	53
Winsford	2	60	24
Cheshire West Total*	**27**	**640**	**335**

Cheshire West* - 3 venues were cancelled

Our full schedule, which was published on our websites is listed below. Some locations were inappropriate for the Healthwatch van, and so those that took place with an engagement stand are noted in brackets:

- Monday 20 September, 11am-2pm – Thrive, Winsford (engagement stand)
- Monday 20 September, 2pm-4pm – The Monday Hub, Knutsford (engagement stand)
- Wednesday 22 September, 10am-2pm – University of Chester Induction Day, Parkgate Road Campus, Chester
- Friday 24 September, 9am-3.15pm - Jobs Fair, Apple Market Street, Northwich
- Saturday 25 September, 9am-4pm – Oakhanger Community Hall, Haslington
- Monday 27 September, 10am-4pm – Winsford Town Centre
- Wednesday 29 September, 10am-4pm – Cheshire Street Car Park, Audlem
- Thursday 30 September, 10.30am-12pm – High Legh Village Hall, Knutsford
- Friday 1 October, 10am-1pm – Oakwood Medical Centre, Northwich
- Friday 1 October, 9am-4pm – Crewe Lifestyle Centre (engagement stand)
- Saturday 2 October, 12pm-4pm – LGBTQ Ellesmere Port Pride Fun Day, Stanney Lane, Ellesmere Port
- Monday 4 October, 8.30am-4pm – Bunbury Medical Practice
- Tuesday 5 October, 10am-12pm – Ness Community Hall, Neston
- Tuesday 5 October, 1pm-4pm – Asda Car Park, Ellesmere Port
- Wednesday 6 October, 2pm-4pm – Tea and Tattle Silver Rainbows, Weaver Museum, Northwich
- Thursday 7 October, 10am-4pm – Nantwich Town Square
- Friday 8 October, 10am-4pm – Everybody Leisure, Macclesfield
- Wednesday 13 October, 10am-2pm – Asylum Seeker Assistance, Hope Church, Crewe (engagement stand)
- Wednesday 13 October, 10am-2pm – Eaton Park, University of Chester (engagement stand)
- Wednesday 13 October, 10am-4pm – Upton Pavilion, Chester
- Thursday 14 October, 10am-12pm – Tarporley Older People Active Lives, Gardenhurst Estate, Tiverton (engagement stand)
- Monday 18 October, 10am-4pm – Tattenhall Village Surgery
- Tuesday 19 October, 10am-2pm – Cheshire East Eye Society Open Event, Macclesfield Town Hall (engagement stand)
- Tuesday 19 October, 10am-4pm – Blacon Boulevard in front of the library
- Wednesday 20 October, 7.30am-4pm – Macclesfield College
- Thursday 21 October, 10am-4pm – Princeway Health Centre Car Park, Frodsham
- Friday 22 October, 9.30am-4pm – Northgate Street, Chester City Centre
- Friday 22 October, 8.30am-2pm – Neston Market (engagement stand)
- Tuesday 26 October, 10am-2pm – Everybody Leisure, Wilmslow
- Wednesday 27 October, 9am-2pm – Disley Community Centre
- Thursday 28 October, 10am-4pm – Car Park between High Street and Lloyd Close, Farndon
- Friday 29 October, 10am-4pm – Lache Community Centre, Chester
- Saturday 30 October, 9.30am-4pm – Northgate Street, Chester City Centre
- Saturday 30 October, 3pm-7pm – Asda, Crewe (engagement stand)

- Tuesday 2 November, 2pm-4pm, Old Saw Mill, Congleton (engagement stand)
- Tuesday 2 November, 10am-3pm – Brereton Heath Local Nature Reserve, Congleton
- Wednesday 3 November, 10am-3pm – Alsager Market, Asda Car Park
- Thursday 4 November, 10am-4pm – Frodsham Brio Leisure Centre
- Friday 5 November, 9.30am-3.30pm – Crewe Town Square
- Monday 8 November, 10am-12pm – Macclesfield Hospital Rear Entrance
- Wednesday 10 November, 10am-12pm – Bluecoat Centre, Chester (engagement stand)
- Thursday 11 November, 9.30am – 4pm – Sandbach Market
- Friday 12 November, 9am-3.30pm – Macclesfield Market by the Town Hall
- Friday 12 November, 10am-2pm – Community Hall, Malpas
- Monday 15 November, 10am-12pm – Broad Lane Coffee Club, Stapeley
- Monday 15 November, 12.30pm-2.30pm – Mill House Extra Care, Nantwich
- Tuesday 16 November, 10.30am – 12.30pm – Snow Angels, Keep Connected Cafe, Northwich (engagement stand)
- Wednesday 17 November, 10am-2pm – Antrobus Village Hall
- Thursday 18 November, 9am-2pm – Helsby High School

You can view our Twitter threads documenting our *Healthwatch Across Cheshire* activity here:

https://twitter.com/HealthwatchCE/status/1438099923057225740?s=20

https://twitter.com/HealthwatchCW/status/1438099730924507143

Next Steps

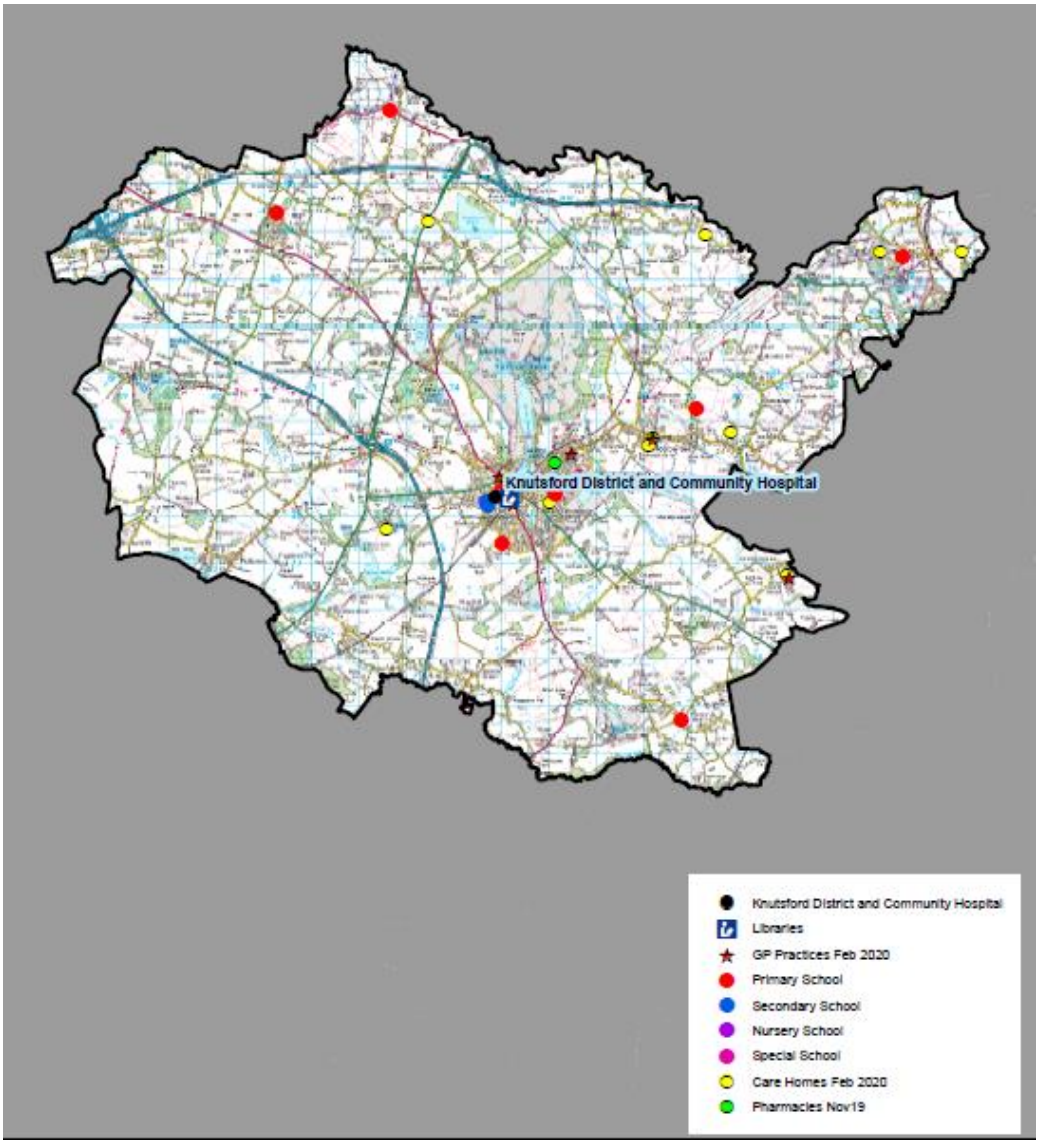
Throughout our Healthwatch Across Cheshire activity, everything that people have told us has been continually fed back anonymously on a weekly basis to those who plan, make decisions, and deliver health and care services, to help improve people's experiences for the future. We provided updates on the main themes of people's comments at committees and groups to ensure that health and care partners were given access to live real-time information, including at the Cheshire COVID-19 and System Pressures Communications cell, and the Cheshire East Partnership Communications and Engagement Network.

The timely insight and intelligence from residents of Cheshire was instrumental in influencing messaging around issues including access to primary care, and the rollout of flu and COVID-19 vaccines. By sharing people's views and experiences on vaccination processes, partners were able to adapt messaging to encourage uptake, provide clear information, and respond to local need. It also meant that we were able to take the latest messages and updates from health and care partners out into the community to tell people about how to access vaccines, where the nearest vaccine clinic was taking place during the roving programme of pop-up clinics, and information on self care to help people to solve their ailments without having to visit a healthcare setting.

These reports provide summaries of activities and themes and will be shared with the local NHS, Local Authorities, voluntary and community groups, and Care Community Steering Groups. They will also feed into Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNA), Place Plans, and the priorities of Integrated Care Partnerships. In addition, we will be reflecting on what people have told us alongside health and care partners to help plan how to meet the health, care, wellbeing and support needs of people in Cheshire, and inform the development of services and support at a local level.

The following provides the findings from our visits to locations in the Knutsford Care Community. Reports from all other Care Communities can be found on our website at www.healthwatchcheshireeast.org.uk/what-we-do/our-reports

Knutsford



During our Healthwatch Across Cheshire activity between 20 September and 19 November 2021, Healthwatch Cheshire East and Healthwatch Cheshire West visited the following locations in the Knutsford Care Community using a promotional van to find out what matters most to people about their local health and care, and to share key information about health and care services:

- Monday 20 September, 2pm-4pm – The Monday Hub, Knutsford (engagement stand)
- Thursday 30 September, 10.30am-12pm – High Legh Village Hall, Knutsford

At this event, we spoke to 21 people to signpost them to local services and talk to them about their views and experiences on health and care. We received 13 comments on services in total.

We had conversations in this Care Community with people about:

- The role of Healthwatch
- Access to GP services
- General health and wellbeing/self care
- Signposting information about local groups and services
- COVID-19 vaccinations and/or boosters
- Flu vaccinations

The following details the comments received and conversations with people in this Care Community.

GP Practices

Conversations were held with people about GP Practices in the Knutsford Care Community and also from outside of Cheshire, mainly in Lymm. Comments included:

- *"They are very good, my experience with my doctor is brilliant. I have been with the surgery since I was born."*
- *"During COVID I didn't use them to alleviate stress. I called them recently and was 21 in the queue, I pressed 5 to get a call back however they never rang back. I went into the GP today to make an appt they said no I have to ring or use an e-form, the receptionist was nice about it. I do not like the website though it is a bit clunky and not very user friendly."*
- *"They have been helping me to manage my tooth as I have an abscess. Nothing is being sorted however."*
- *"I can't get an appointment there are long waiting times on the phone. I waited 40 minutes with no option of a call back."*
- *"I can't get an appointment service could be improved."*
- *"Good service. I have been with the surgery for years. They are taking good care of me."*
- *"Over many years my husband's chronic illnesses has been very well looked after. The front of house staff are superb."*
- *"I had to send a picture to my GP of my ears which were infected. I should have been seen face to face as it was a severe infection. I was prescribed antibiotics once the GP saw the pictures."*
- *"Me and my husband had to chase for the original covid vaccinations. It has been more than six months since the jab and still not heard anything about the booster jab. We were advised to ring 119 to get booked in or book online, which is all very well if you have a computer."*

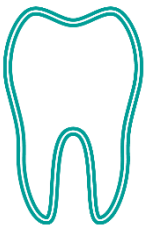
Hospitals

Comments were received from people on Warrington Hospital:

- *"Had an appointment arranged through GP and X-ray within a week."*

- *"Used A&E it was very full there were lots of people standing up, they could have done with more people being treated to stop people standing and waiting."*
- *"Very quick with the appointments regarding waiting time and being seen they are very efficient and helpful."*

Other services



Comments on other services related to dental practices in Knutsford, Lymm and Grappenhall:

- *"Good service. Have dentures and these are great. Getting through to the receptionist is easy, I've been ringing to say when you arrive at the dentist recently."*
- *"They used to be NHS but I had to go their privately for the dentist."*
- *"They have gone private. I do not like the bills."*

General health and wellbeing/ self care

Comments on general health and wellbeing and/or self care included:

- *"I have complex problems and feel like there is a lot of chopping and changing with appointments. My son helps me to manage although he works. I was assessed but told I didn't need support yet I struggle as I can't drive."*
- *"Spoke about self-care, how you can use a pharmacy or call NHS 111 for effective triaging."*

Signposting information about local services or groups

Information was provided by Healthwatch Cheshire staff on the following:

- Provided the info for Disability Positive and the carers association.
- Advised them that when they have a dental emergency can call NHS dental helpline. And use NHS find a dentist to register at a new dentist that takes on NHS dentist appointments. They did not want to though as they are used to going there.
- NHS find a dentist to register at a new one as NHS patient. Does not want to do this likes their dentist but doesn't want to pay the bills, feels NHS should still pay.

COVID-19 vaccines and/or boosters

Conversations regarding COVID-19 vaccines and/or boosters included:

- *"Had both."*
- *"Had COVID [vaccine] very happy and glad to have them."*
- Both vaccines and has been offered the booster.
- *"Had COVID vaccine and booster found this easy glad to have."*

Flu vaccinations

Conversations about flu vaccinations included:

- Had it.
- *"Had the flu vaccine recently and again very happy to have these."*
- Got contacted about the flu vaccine, sent a link, they clicked it 24 hrs later and then there were no appointments anymore.

Healthwatch Cheshire continues to provide up to date information to partners and publish reports on our websites. You can read our reports on what people across Cheshire have told us about their experiences by visiting our website:

www.healthwatchcheshire.org.uk

You can contact us on:

- **Tel:** 0300 323 0006
- **Email:** info@healthwatchcheshire.org.uk
- **Facebook and Twitter:** @HealthwatchCW and @HealthwatchCE
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