

# West Oxfordshire Health Survey

## Purpose

One of the roles of Elected Governors is to represent their constituents, and while personal experience, and the experiences of friends and family offer one dimension, there is the whole of the rest of the community to consider.

While the NHS consists of a number of separate parts with different budgets, such as Primary Care, Hospital Care, and Social Care, patients must navigate from one to the other and this is not always easy. The only direct way to find out how well it is working for patients is to ask them.

## Method

The West Oxfordshire Health Survey set out to test the viability of a very simple, qualitative method to do just this by standing in Witney Market Square on Market Day and asking the same simple and open question to passers-by:

“Have you or your family had any personal experience of using the NHS or social care services over the last 2 years? How did it go?”

The emphasis was on direct, lived experiences that occurred within the last 2 years, not experiences from long ago or those affecting distant acquaintances. Neither was it to create a soapbox for general observations and gripes about the system. In the event that people had complaints, they were directed to the appropriate official channels, such as the PALS system at the hospitals.

Interviewers made concise notes about each interview on a standard form. All results were anonymized, but a note of approximate age, gender and ethnicity was made.

## Aim

Our aim was twofold:

- To collect data on local experiences of the NHS in the Witney area of West Oxfordshire
- To test and refine the study method so that it can be repeated on a regular basis throughout West Oxfordshire, in other Elected OUH and OH Governor constituencies, and potentially across the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West (BOB) Integrated Care System. This will give us a snapshot view of how well the system is working for patients both by time and by geography.

## Interim results

Our test survey took place on Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022 from 10 a.m. until 12 noon outside The Corn Exchange in the Witney Marketplace on Market Day. This was chosen as a day when a lot of people would be present.

Eight researchers took part from: West Oxfordshire District Council, three Witney Patient Participation Groups, the Oxford University Hospitals (OUH) NHS Foundation Trust (FT), and the Oxford Health Foundation Trust (OHFT).

- We collected a total of 116 responses evenly split between men and women
- The majority were white, aged 65+ years and this may have been related to a pensioners' coffee morning taking place in the Corn Exchange
- All three Witney Practices were well regarded but obtaining an appointment (usually via a lengthy telephone process) was an issue for many. Some older people commented that they couldn't work the online booking system. Several patients said they waited up to 3 weeks to see a doctor. One said she felt "more and more like a virtual patient". Generally, however, the GP service in Witney was praised and many spoke highly of the Covid vaccination process, often their only contact with the NHS in the last 2 years.
- **JR, general:** "great but felt down-at-heel"; "parking is a nightmare", "I can't fault our experience"
- **Churchill:** generally very positive experiences; "felt well-treated 10/10"
- **Ambulance/ED:** ambulance crew fantastic but long wait in pain in corridor from 7 p.m. to 6 a.m. before admission. Many others reported positive/'fantastic' experiences despite pressure on staff
- **Witney Community Hospital:** generally loved but sometimes poor communication with JR. Poor communication also reported within JR; another "fantastic care at the Linfoot Ward"
- **ENT:** logistic delays on day of operation
- **Orthopaedics:** very positive experiences "first rate", "first class hand surgery"; "new hip: marvellous"
- **Physio:** long delays in treatment, felt it seemed "less well-organized ref appointments"
- **Maternity:** let out of hospital after caesarean section without medication; "everyone seemed in a rush, felt high risk post-delivery"
- **Social services:** "Lambeth Social Services good, get nothing like this in Oxford"
- **Eye Hospital:** cataracts done "got what wanted, didn't have to wait", "very impressed"; another said "long wait"

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