



West Sussex: A Home for all Listening to Migrant Voices

November 2016

‘After the EU referendum one can feel that people's behaviour changed toward discrimination of foreigners. I hope that this is going to change soon so that we feel welcome again and safe in UK. Most of us work full time and pay tax to this country so we should not be treated like that’

Together we speak louder
about our health and care

healthwatch
West Sussex

Acknowledgement

Healthwatch West Sussex would like to thank the 70 families who took part in our activities and entrusted us with their personal stories. We are also very grateful to the support we received from Accord and the bi-lingual workers who helped us with our engagement.

Summary

This, along with the [video](#), offers a snapshot of the feelings of coastal migrant families towards health care in West Sussex. These were collected in July 2016, a week after the country voted for Brexit.

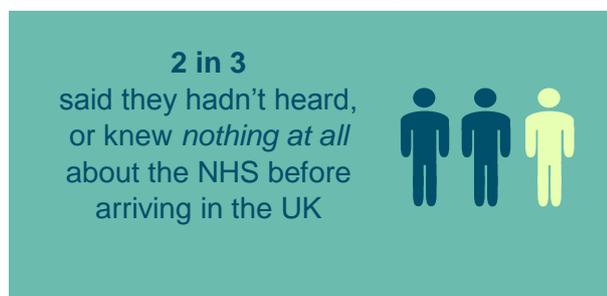


Many of the themes and comments are applicable to the wider population as well as these community and it is useful to know that this group **do not feel their access to services has been different due to their nationality.**

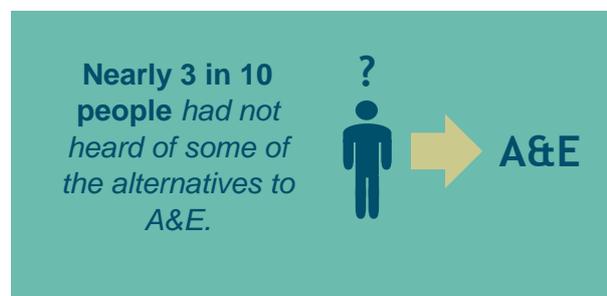
One of the most alarming themes is the feelings of hatred experienced by these Arun families, which includes **several peoples' experience of NHS employees' ill-informed comments.**

Despite initial challenges in accessing the services, the families shared a general feeling that there were positive aspects of the NHS services and all in all **experienced similar issues in accessing them as the wider population of West Sussex.**

A common concern seems to be **getting referred to a specialist**, the difficulty in this and the time it takes. In other European Economy Area (EEA) countries there are different referral routes, sometimes directly or self-referring. This is a challenge for those not used to the GP 'gatekeeper' system.



We believe this lack of consideration about healthcare, may lead to people not getting the right paperwork in place before they arrive.



This suggests more accessible/local promotion is needed.



Recommendations

There are several recommendations below which can only be achieved through tailored communication between the providers and these communities. We extend our support to help realise the changes we are recommending.

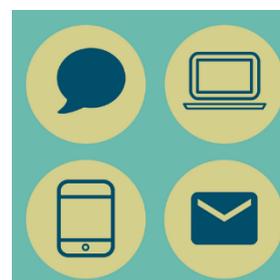
- Arun District Council, West Sussex County Council and Sussex Police to look at the specifics within this report to inform their neighbourhood strategies, and to improve the sense of safety and well-being amongst the coastal EEA communities.
- Local NHS providers to refresh their equality and diversity training for all employees with a focus on service provision to EEA migrants, to reduce the risk of people experiencing ill-informed and inappropriate conversations. This is still relevant post Brexit referendum.
- Coastal Clinical Commissioning Group to create visual local literature, uploaded as Word documents (as PDF documents do not translate through Google), to simplify where people can go and when, so people can get to the right services at the right time.
- Coastal Clinical Commissioning Group to work with Arun GP practices;



- to look at ways of communicating UK prescribing methods, to help patients understand the local system.

- to understand that the need for 'proof of address' may limit peoples' access to a GP, and look at what can be done to help those who cannot provide this, to reduce the risk of inappropriate use of A&Es and enable people to access primary care.

- Coastal Clinical Commissioning Group to provide information on GP registration to local employment agencies, and employers, to enable people to understand how to access primary care.
- Providers of counselling, mental health services and local voluntary organisations to look at whether their services offers adequate support to people who do not have English as their first language, with a view to maximising the health/care benefits for the individual.
- South East Coast Ambulance NHS Foundation Trust, to review how call-handlers support people who are struggling to communicate or answer health questions, with the aim of reducing the distress people may experience when language becomes a barrier in conveying the urgency of their situation.





Setting the scene

Healthwatch West Sussex must engage with local people, paying particular attention to those who are seldom heard.

We committed in our 2016 Activity Plan to listening to EEA migrant workers, who make up a large percentage of the county's Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) population. We sought to speak to people who have chosen to come to work and live in the Arun District, by working collaboratively with a local language school provider. We were able to speak to families who have been in West Sussex for a short while, and others who have been here much longer. All are 'settled', in that they have decided to stay at least for the time being, to raise their families in West Sussex.



Although the County has recently published a [BAME needs assessment](#) we felt our target audience had not been specifically covered within this work, certainly not in the way we planned to engage with them. Our work focussed on those with young children. The findings of previous research was considered before embarking on this work, and stakeholders were consulted.

The project listening event was organised before the referendum date was set and the event ended up taking place one week after the referendum vote on Brexit. We feel this is important to note, as it not only influenced the way families were feeling but has subsequently put this given this report context. At this time, there does not appear to be a clear understanding of what this will mean for the significant number of EEA people living in West Sussex in the longer term. Given this uncertainty it is important for Healthwatch to look at the response from local providers to this population, whose long term status is still very much up in the air.

Our Methodology

Working in partnership with Accord, an organisation which runs native language Saturday schools, Healthwatch West Sussex hosted an end of term party. This took place at the Flying Fortress (a children's play centre in Arundel) on 9 July 2016.



So we could have meaningful conversations with people our engagement team were supported by bi-lingual workers. We ran three simultaneous and informal breakout sessions with parents, while the children played in the centre. These activities had been designed in conjunction with a range of external stakeholders. They included video-stories, a tablecloth exercise, a survey and a wall exercise. All stimulated debate.

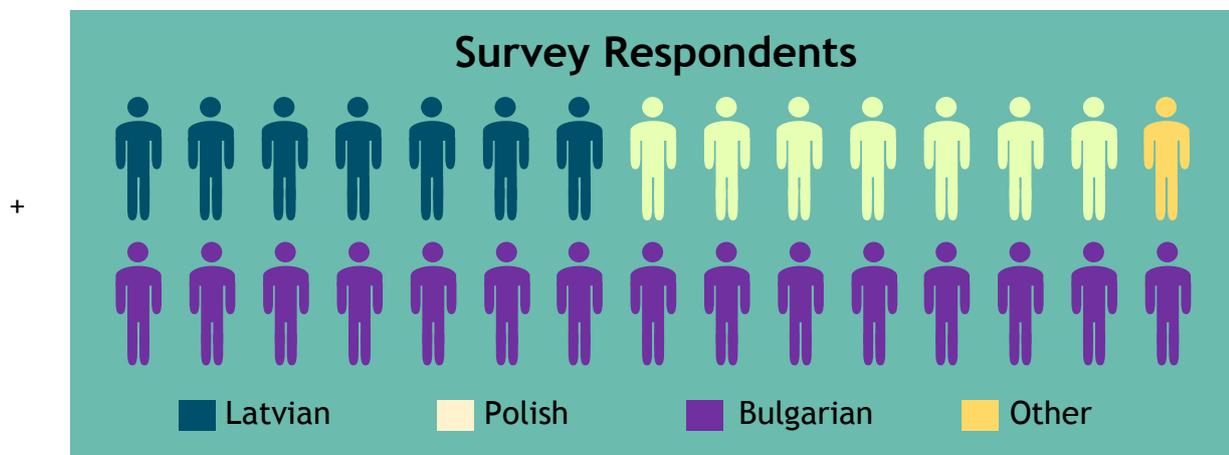


We were delighted to be able to talk to over 70 families through the Accord schools, and around 60 adults came to the event (representing about 35 families) with some families bringing both parents, with most having two children between the ages of 0-12yrs. It was good to be able to include the views of working age fathers. There is an accompanying video of the event.

As we had targeted three Saturday Schools, participants were equally divided amongst the three nationalities with slightly more Bulgarian families. The Bulgarian families were all newer to the UK.

The Survey

The survey was not designed to be representative but to gain a better understanding of the experiences of these families.



Many responses mirrored the insight we have from other residents, so we have highlighted where we believe there is key learning to be gained when working/support EEA communities.

What do people have to say about primary care?

Everyone had registered with a GP and the majority were registered in Littlehampton, Bognor Regis or surrounding areas.

80% of other replies had something positive to say, for example *“I had heard of well-organized healthcare of excellent standard”* or had the understanding that if you paid for health insurance you could get access to services/specialists.

There were two negative comments: *“I knew that the service was free of charge and that the GPs were not as good as the Polish ones.”* and *“That the system was not very good”*.

Appointments were at the top of everyone’s list when asked about GPs. This is similar to what we hear from the general population.



Just over half said they would recommend their GP practice to others.

These negative comments (echoed in our video) could reflect the private/public market for health, with EEA members being able to pay for additional health services.

The responses to the question of what would make a visit to a GP easier, suggest that people from EEA communities are unaware of the workforce issues and lack of qualified GPs (see appendix A).

Misunderstanding about NHS medicines management. If people are used to privatised medical treatment in their own country, they would be unfamiliar with the UK system of approved drugs. More could be done to explain why drugs are prescribed by the doctor prescribing.

What do people say about urgent care?

It is thought that approximately 35% (e.g. 350 per thousand of the population) visited A&E departments in 2013/14 although the rates differ for different age groups (source NHS England).

Just over half of the people at our event answered that they had been to A&E in the last year. So it would seem these families have quite a high attendance rate at A&E but this may also reflect the fact they have young children. Of these people, just over half had chosen to go to A&E themselves, rather than being directed by a health services.

18 people responded with a reason for visiting A&E. 10 of the reasons suggest a need to visit an urgent treatment centre or A&E. 8 of the remaining reasons suggest other services may have been more suitable, assuming they were available (see appendix b).

We ask if people had heard of *Out of Hours*, *111*, *Minor Injuries Units*, *Walk-in Clinics*, and nearly 3 in 10 people had not heard of any of these services.

What people said they liked and disliked about living in West Sussex

What people liked about living in West Sussex makes for happy reading. Most people commented on the beaches and landscape but they also commented about the systems in place. People said they felt safe and secure and with the UK being a well ordered and rule abiding place. (See appendix c.)

West Sussex - people are friendly, schools are good, it's safe.

Sadly, the reasons people dislike living in West Sussex make for very unhappy reading and something we should all reflect on.

One in four people felt discriminated against or had been a victim of hate within the community



To be judged -even by some NHS staff

Peoples' Experiences

On the day, we invited people to share stories about their experiences of the NHS, some of these we captured on camera. You can hear directly from people by watching our video [here](#).

The headlines from the video (in addition to that recorded elsewhere in this report);

When people don't speak English as their first language, they struggle to use telephone booking services.

This becomes more of an issue when they need to use an emergency service such as 999.

During a 999 call (and a 111 call), the caller is expected to answer a number of complicated questions which we heard are tricky for those with limited English, especially during a time of stress and emergency.

Dentists are not effective, and people are happier to visit dentists when they go home for a holiday.

One of the attendees runs employment agency for EEA workers, and commented that most of their workers are not registered with a GP. (Please note: at the event were families and this was not the case - reflecting the settled nature of the group).

This person also commented that living in a share home without a tenancy agreement impacts on people's ability to provide an address - a required for registering with most GPs.

More information needs to be given out to those arriving.

Some people would prefer to go to private Polish clinics (travelling as far as Southampton/London) as they think they get a better result than from a local GP. Issues with antibiotics were mentioned.

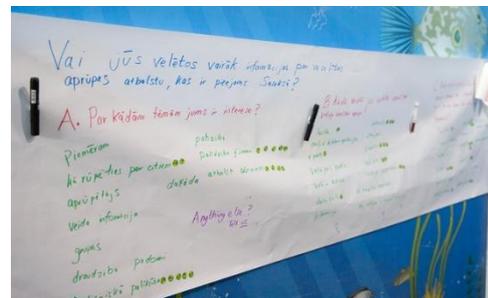
Some did not want to be filmed so they shared their stories on paper (see appendix D.)



Using the voluntary sector for support

We were asked to explore with people their understanding and use of other services (primarily from the voluntary sector).

People were asked to mark on a translated wall chart what services they used or knew about. We also asked people to tell us the best way these services could communicate with them. The bilingual workers explained the exercise but people were largely uninterested in contributing to the questions. We do not know, at this stage, if this was simply that people were not interested in the exercise, or they did not know about the services and what we were referring to.



Those that answered indicated that they knew of public sector services such as local hospitals and children and families centres, but they did not know of many voluntary sector organisations except the large national ones (who have national advertising campaigns) such as Macmillan. They did not indicate they knew any of the smaller local voluntary sector organisations. Part of the reason for this may be a lack of need to know (being relatively healthy working-aged people).

However, we know from speaking to people that all the usual social media channels, as well as more traditional methods are ways of communicating with people from EEA communities. A flyer or poster being a good way of giving out information was mentioned on a number of occasions, showing the popularity of this traditional method.

To comment further on this exercise would be misleading.



What would make a visit to a GP easier?

Getting appointments

- ✓ I think, at the moment it's really easy to get to doctor, because you just need to make a call and that is all.
- ✓ It's already easy and child friendly environment.
- ✓ I can mostly see a GP when I need to
- More flexible system for making appointments. Clear information how to get to a specialist.
- Raised by a number of respondents - More GPs, surgeries and enough appointments. Appointments should be all day.
- The system for making appointments should be improved.
- My recent experience shows that it is very difficult to get an appointment for a GP because there are no available ones.
- Maybe the surgeries should have a limit of patients they care for, so that we don't have to wait.
- Be able to have a phone call appointment.
- If I could get appointment to next day, not the same day morning I need to call them- that mean that I need take time off my work even I don't know if I will get appointment. (Similar responses given).
- The opportunity to visit the GP straight away rather than wait for days and get worse.
- If an appointment could be booked for the next day or in two days' time. Having said that, in Bersted Green the appointments work pretty well.
- Shorter waiting time and seeing the same doctor every time I go. Sometimes a longer appointment is required (more than 10 minutes.)
- If I could see the doctor, when I actually have an appointment booked. Sometimes I have to wait more than an hour.
- Better public transport as there is no direct bus from my home to the surgery. It is a 30 minute walk or 2 buses. This is not easy with a young child especially when the child is unwell. The only alternative is a taxi which is expensive 10 pounds round trip.

The reported issues with appointments echoes what we have heard in other work.



Would what improve the way the GP surgery supports you?

- If service is quicker and the doctors could prescribe better medications, not only the ones that are produced by the pharmaceutical companies they work with.
- Total change of the system for making an appointment. GPs should be easy of access as well as the different doctors.
- It would be better if we have the opportunity to make an appointment for a convenient day and time for us rather than having to make the appointment for the day only.
- Staff that are able to communicate in more languages.
- Making the access to specialists easier. (Similar responses given).
- Investigate things more than just prescribing pain killers.
- The patient should have one GP who would be familiar with patient and his medical history -not a different doctor every time.
- To make it easier to change to a different surgery.
- Make more tests, like blood tests and so on.
- The GP's and nurses should listen more to the patients or patients' parents.
- More staff taking calls in the morning, when the line is very busy - we have to re-dial many times before we get through.



Reasons that may have needed a visit to an Urgent Treatment Centre or A&E:

- Two emergency conditions: My daughter had appendicitis and my husband had atrial fibrillation and kidney failure.
- My five year old felt nauseous after having a fall at school.
- It was accident at work. Did bang my head with metal bar.
- frequent stomach pains
- I supported my staff when they had accidents
- back injury
- I was involved in a car crash and developed headaches and back pain afterwards
- The baby had a high temperature.
- complications from chemotherapy treatment
- My daughters face was partially paralyzed.

8 out of 18 that could have used another service?

- Really high temperature.
- child being unwell- high temperature that wouldn't go down(it was a weekend)
- I was bringing my youngest daughter to hospital, because it was really late and her ears were hurting very bad.
- feeling unwell, high blood pressure
- I had a skin problem (infection).
- My two year old developed a limp after a virus.
- My daughter fell off a scooter and sprained her ankle.
- I had problems with my stomach.



What I like:

- Well organized Council, authorities, different ways of support, moral and financial.
- Excellent system for paying bills
- Lack of administrative procedures and easy access to all institutions.
- There are laws and rules in England and everyone follows them. (Similar responses given).
- Diversity.
- My family feels safe, there is a good system and rules that are followed by everyone despite their social status. (Similar responses given).
- If I have a health issue I know where to find help.
- You don't have to queue.
- It's very easy to buy a car, there is no need of a third person (a notary) involved in the buying/selling.
- Pretty much everything.
- I like the child friendly environment.
- Atmosphere of welcome, nice and friendly people, ability to work, support from local authorities if needed
- People are given opportunity for development.
- Businesses are very easy to register.
- Everyday life is easy. If you have a job you can afford everything without a problem.
- Equal treatment of all in need.
- I like that organisations like local government and NHS ask for my opinion.

What I don't like:

- NHS and the doctors.
- There should be clear information how to get to a doctor.
- After the results from the EU referendum we can feel some discriminative behaviour to the East Europeans. Most of us work full time and pay tax to this country so we should not be treated like that. . I hope that this is going to change soon so that we feel welcome again and safe in UK (Similar responses given).
- Some people are very hostile which suggests they don't like foreign people(especially less educated people)
- Bognor Regis are very hostile towards other nationalities. I avoid going to the town centre in Bognor Regis. Luckily I don't live there.
- I do not like the fact that Council taxes are very high. It will be better if they reduce them. (Similar responses given).



- Acceptance of each other for who we all are regardless of background.
- To not be judged-even by some NHS staff.
- NHS-clumsy system and the loss of communication between hospitals. Computerized system for all examinations would be better. (Similar responses given).
- There should be more private practices connected with the health system and after the process of treatment the patient should be given their money back.
- More parking for free next to hospitals.
- Lack of flexibility from the Primary School
- More fun park for children and free activities for them, pre and afterschool clubs
- Maybe the system of acknowledging foreign diplomas in UK. There are very good specialists who have all kinds of unqualified jobs because the system in UK either does not acknowledge their diplomas or the process of acknowledgement is very slow and long that needs a number of documents that cost money and nerves.
- Lately the politicians use racist propaganda to manipulate ordinary people who know nothing of politics. This attitude makes all immigrants angry. 90% of the immigrants work very hard. They do not deserve to be treated like that.
- I don't like the fact that one is not allowed to rent a house with less bedrooms than the number of people who are to live in it.
- Public transport is expensive - discounts for parents with children at schools.



The experiences people shared during the event:

Fitzalan Medical Centre Littlehampton

It's good medical centre, because every time when I need appointment I do get it. Only thing is sometimes there is one doctor who all the time do everything to slow or just looks like he don't know what he is doing. Have been there couple times with this doctor with my back pains-ones he told me that my back hurts because I am too fat and year later he did take blood test for back pain-I think it's silly because none of doctors would do that. So my back now hurts for 3 or 4 years now and I don't want to go to doctor and the reason is that I will need to see that doctor again and he will do again strange things.

Bognor Health Centre

Bad experience. I was desperately asking for appointment for my daughter and doctors cancelled it 4 times. And in the end they told me that better ... I go to my country and visit doctor there, as I did.

The Strand Medical Group

In the middle of February I started coughing mostly in the evening. For 3 weeks my coughing developed into coughing fit. I went to the surgery and was prescribed a Salbutamol pump and told that there is nothing serious. My coughing did not stop. In the beginning of April I managed to get an appointment with difficulty. I was seen by a nurse only and she ordered an x-ray. I had to wait for the result for two weeks. In the beginning of May I was prescribed spirometry, which was done at the end of the month. I still have not got the result. It is 9-07-2016, six months after my first appointment at the surgery. I still have not got a diagnosis but my coughing is almost gone. I am glad that I feel much better now, but I am sad because of that clumsy and slow NHS system.

General

Disappointed about the absence of medical checks for children at crucial points like starting school etc. - like the development checks in Latvia, Russia, Ukraine, Lithuania etc. - children are checked regularly for correct posture, whether spine and legs are straight, teeth development to prevent future illness - please consider the same locally.

Mental Health

Counselling would work much better for non -English speakers if an interpreter would be offered. I used the service but struggled to open up and really talk in non-native language. Service did not work due to language difficulties.



Worthing hospital ENT Department

My daughter had a bad ear infection, so it was suggested that she needed grommets and possible adenoid removed. She had had this problem since she was a baby. Because her hearing started to get worse doctors said she would go on emergency list for operation. This happened in spring 2014. In autumn we had another appointment, then another one in at Christmas time. One day before the appointment they called me from the hospital to cancel the appointment. After a lot of conversations we had another one but nothing was decided. We were just given another appointment for the end of early next year. After that I just went and did the operation privately.

Dental Surgery at Queen Victoria Hospital

My son (4) was transferred for teeth extraction. The time of appointment was 12.30. I booked time off work (which I can't really afford). My son was not allowed any food before that etc. We travelled 45 miles and when arrived at surgery we were told that appointment were double booked and we can't be seen that day. I was very upset as value of my time and would appreciate if they called us before, earlier that day.

A&E at St Richards

I'm working in recruitment. We employ about 500 people during each year. Every year around 5 of them have different kinds of accidents, so we are using the services of A&E in Chichester. I found all the staff very nice and polite. I often offer my help as a translator, because most people I accompany, don't speak English. All of them receive professional treatment. The only negative thing is, that they have to wait 2-3 hours until they are seen. I understand that and I'm happy the Unit hasn't closed down and we don't have to travel to Portsmouth or Worthing.

Bognor Regis War Memorial Hospital

Physiotherapy - long time to wait for an appointment, when you get seen - very few times physio offered. Would love to see more different types of physio on NHS (such as massage), plus swimming etc.



Contact Details

Healthwatch West Sussex CIC is a Community Interest Company limited by guarantee and registered in England & Wales (No. 08557470) at Pokesdown Centre, 896 Christchurch Road, Pokesdown. BH7 6DL.

You can contact Healthwatch West Sussex:

Healthwatch West Sussex
Billingshurst Community Centre
Roman Way
Billingshurst
West Sussex
RH14 9QW
Phone number: 0300 012 0122

Email: helpdesk@healthwatchwestsussex.co.uk

Website: www.healthwatchwestsussex.co.uk

Healthwatch West Sussex sub-contracts to Help & Care to provide its statutory activities. The contact details are:



The Pokesdown Centre
896 Christchurch Road
Bournemouth
BH7 6DL
Phone Number: 0300 111 3303

Email: contact@helpandcare.org.uk

Website: www.helpandcare.org.uk