

# Listening Survey Report

May 2023



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# Introduction

Healthwatch Bedford Borough is the local, independent voice for the public in health and social care services. One of the ways that we fulfil our role is to carry out focused projects each year and develop our annual workplan based upon public priorities.

We decided to focus on priority areas for the year ahead to help us better understand where we can build upon and improve our service.



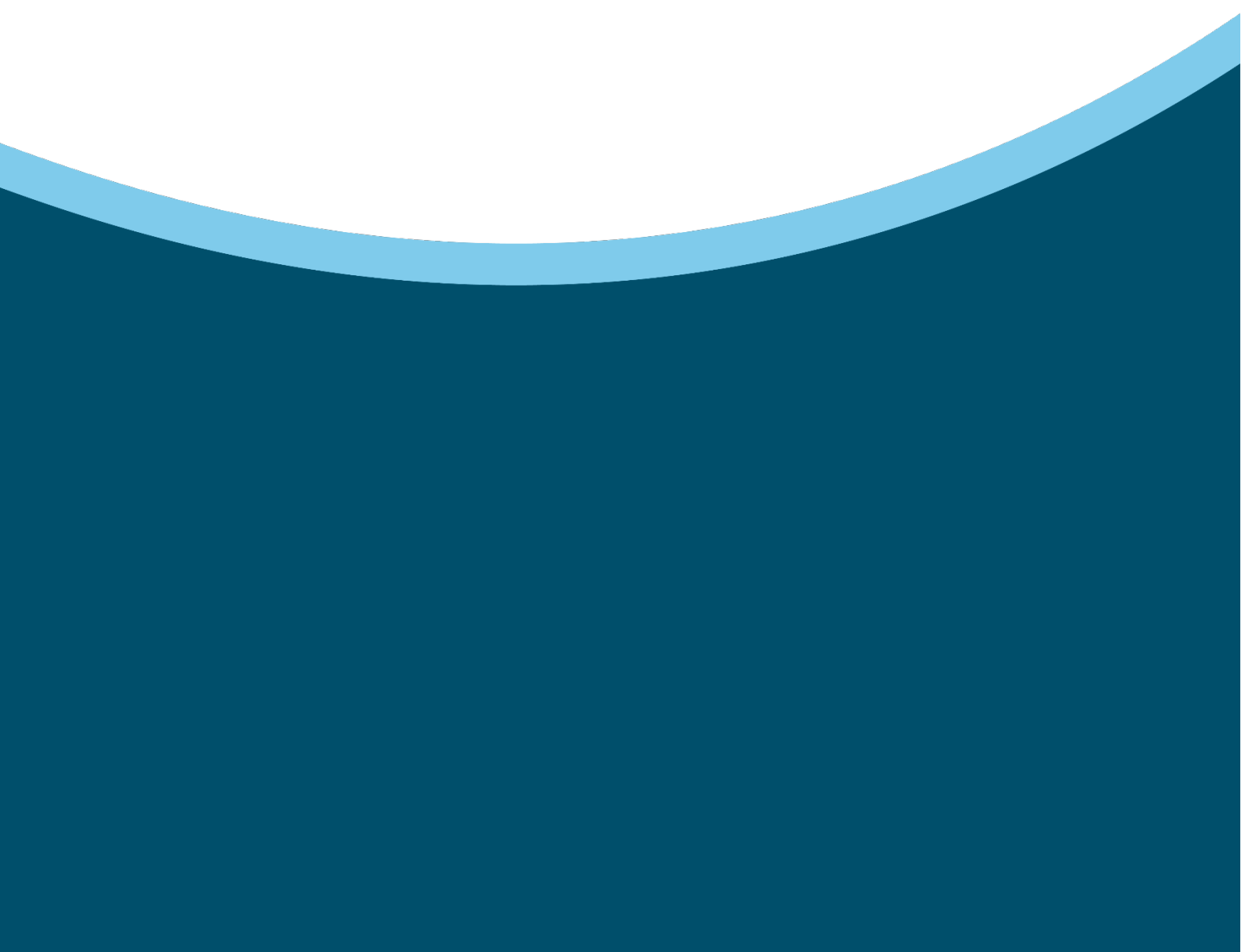


# What we did

We gathered feedback from the people of Bedford Borough about their thoughts on what Healthwatch Bedford Borough's work priorities for the year ahead should be. We created a survey that was made available online, as well as carrying out 9 listening events at the following:

- **Harpur Shopping Centre**
- **Multiple sessions at Bedfordshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust**
- **Bedford Sixth Form College**
- **Quaker Meeting House**
- **St Andrews Church**
- **Sri Guru Ravidass Sabha (SGRS Temple)**


The survey was then analysed to provide soft statistics on the feedback from the public and open-text comments have been analysed using thematic analysis to provide common themes.

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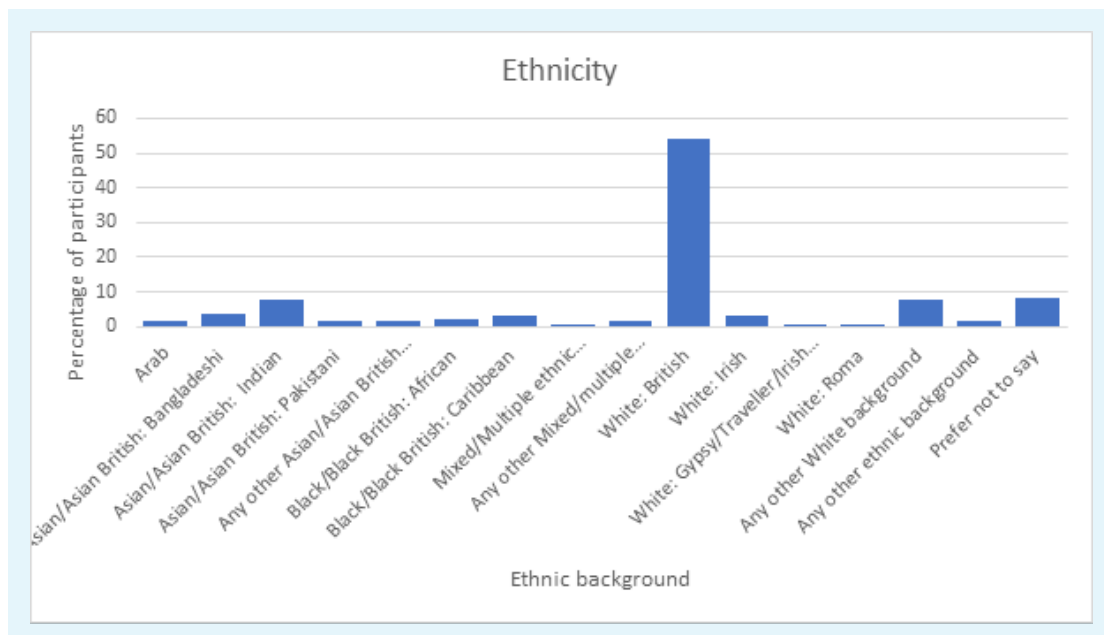
# Who took part?

Members of the public and stakeholders across Bedford Borough took part via various listening events or by completing online surveys during a period of several weeks at the start of 2023.

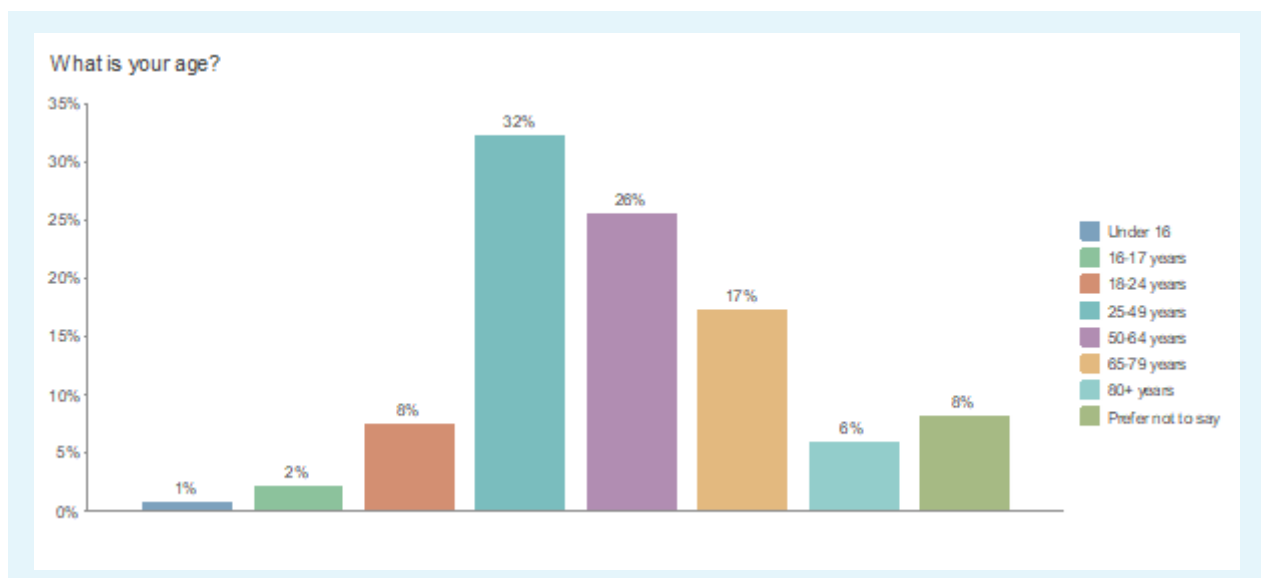
There were **135** responses to the survey in total. We asked people who took part to tell us a little about themselves. People had the option not to provide information if they so wished.



# Data Analysis



When asked about their ethnic backgrounds or identity, **54%** of people said that they were White: British; **7.6%** said that they were Asian/British Asian: Indian; and **7.6%** were

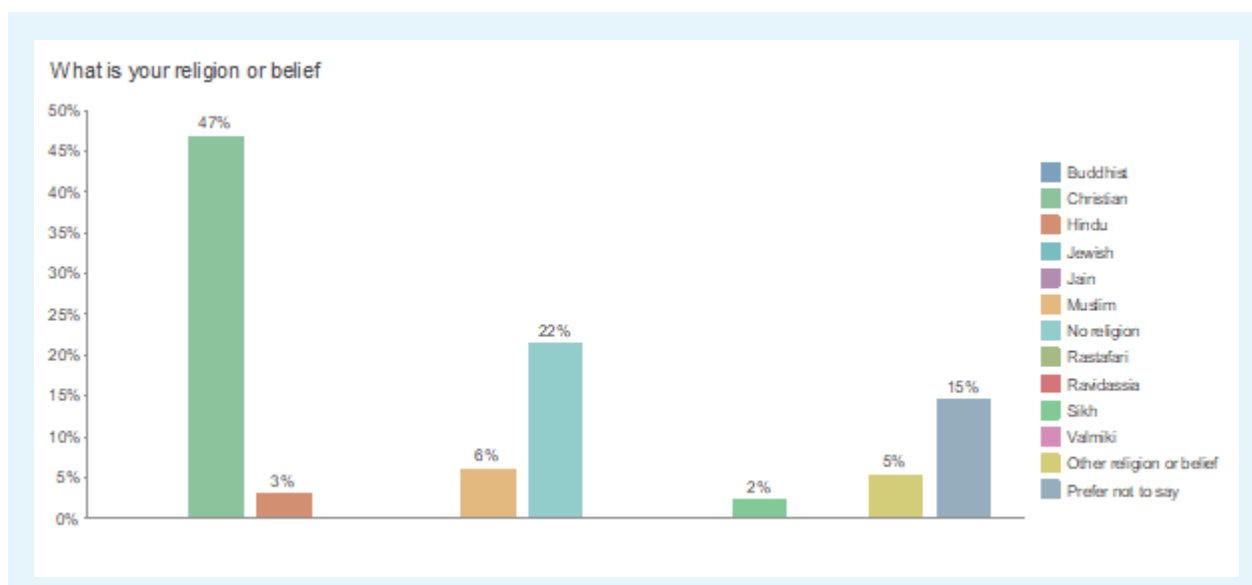


from any other ethnic background. Other ethnic identities made up the total figure and were represented in much smaller numbers.

People aged 25–49 made up the largest group of people responding to the survey with **32%** of people saying that they were in that age group. **26%** were aged 50–64 years and **17%** were aged 65–79 years. 11% were aged under 25 years and **6%** were aged 80 and above.

**70%** of people who took part in the survey identified as women and **21%** as men. **1%** said that they identified as non-binary. **2%** of people taking part said that their gender identity was different to the one they had been assigned at birth.

**76%** of people said that they identified as heterosexual; **4%** as asexual and **2%** as lesbian or a gay woman.



**47%** of people said that their religion or belief was Christian; **6%** of participants were Muslim; **3%** were Hindu and **2%** were Sikh, **5%** were another religion or belief, **22%** said that they had no religion and **15%** preferred not to say.

**3%** of people were either pregnant or had given birth in the last 12 months.

**24%** of people said that they considered themselves to have a disability and **63%** said that they did not.

**44%** said that they considered themselves to have a long-term condition and **43%** said that they did not.

**25%** of people said that they were carers for family members or friends.

# Findings

To start with, people were asked what projects or areas of health and social care they thought Healthwatch Bedford Borough should concentrate on during the forthcoming year.

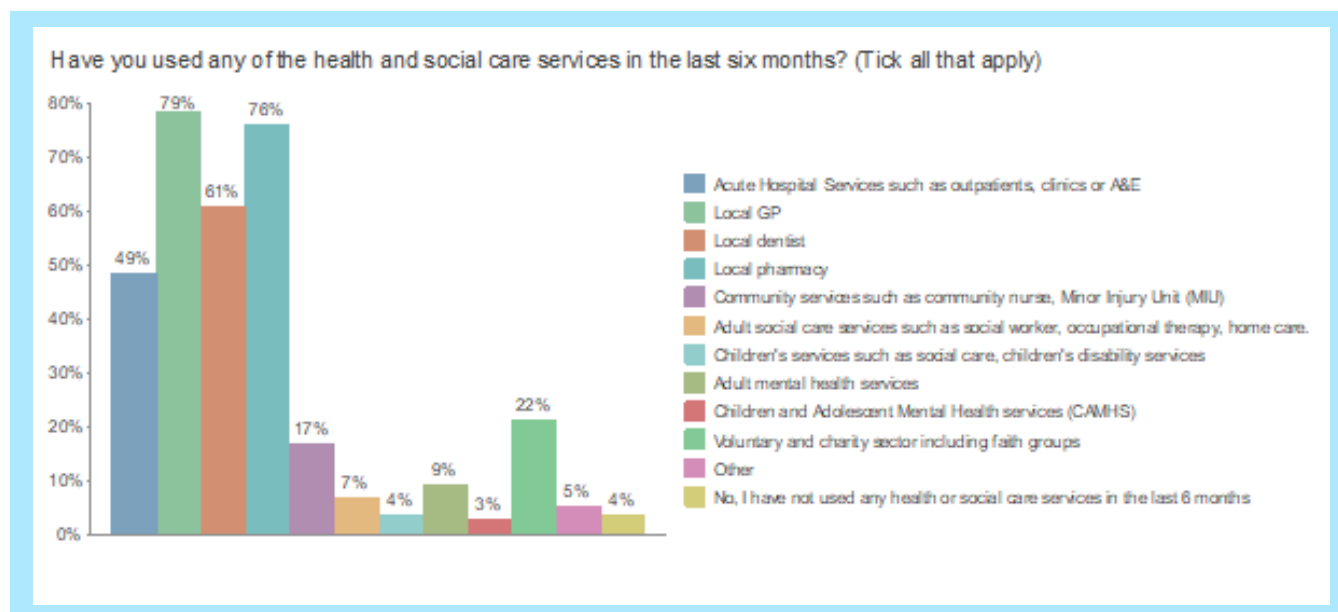
The top five themes from the feedback were:

- Access to GP services including digital access.
- Access to dental care including access to NHS dentists.
- Access to mental health services.
- Adult social care including access to information and signposting.
- Waiting times or waiting lists for healthcare services.



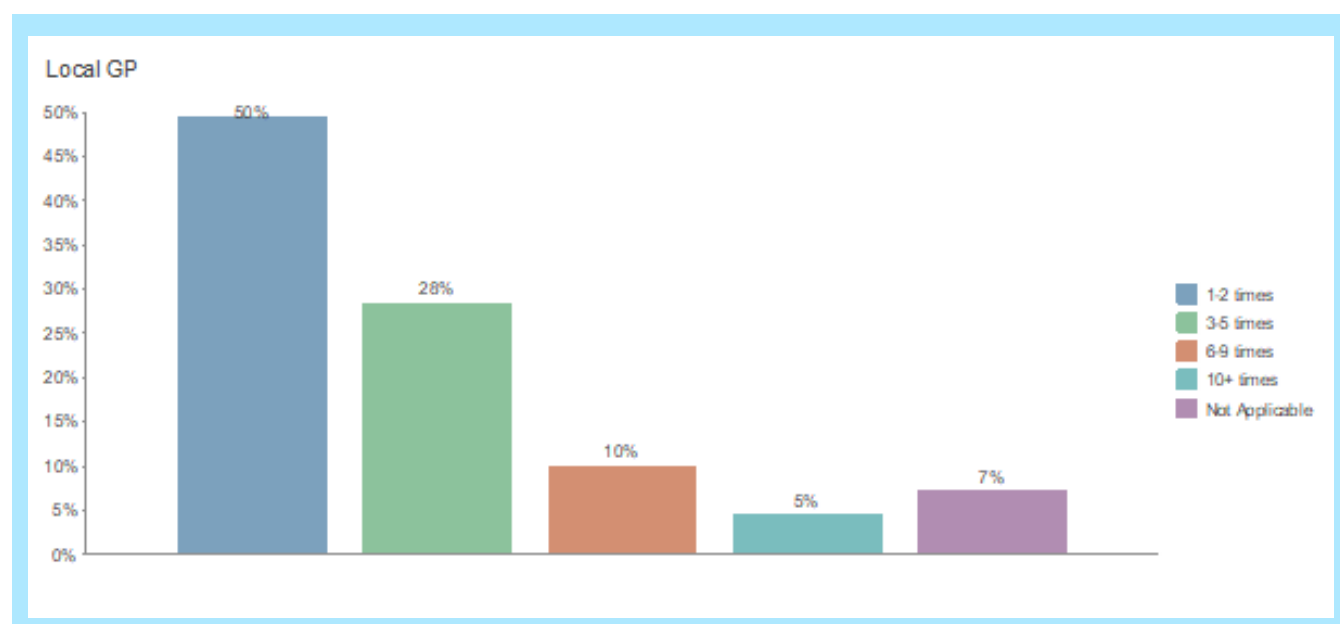


We asked people which services they had used within the past six months. They were asked to indicate all the services that they had used, therefore, the total is more than 100%.



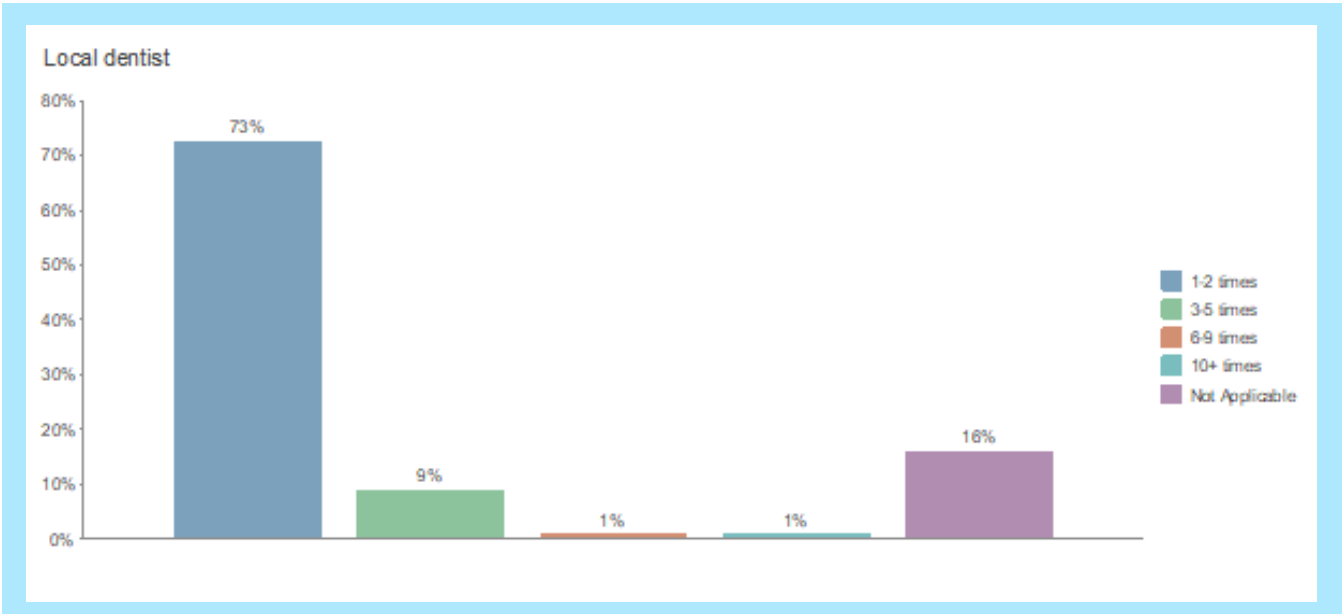
**79%** of people who answered the question said that they had used their local GP; **76%** had used a local pharmacy; and **61%** had used a local dentist. **3%** of people answering the question said that they had used CAMHS; and **4%** had used children's services such as social care. **5%** said that they had used other services. These included the Child Development Centre in Kempston and the Putnoe Walk-in Centre. **4%** said that they had not used any services at all.

We asked people how often they had used a range of services in the past six months. Of those who answered the question, **50%** said that they had used hospital services once or twice in the past six months; **13%** said that they had used the

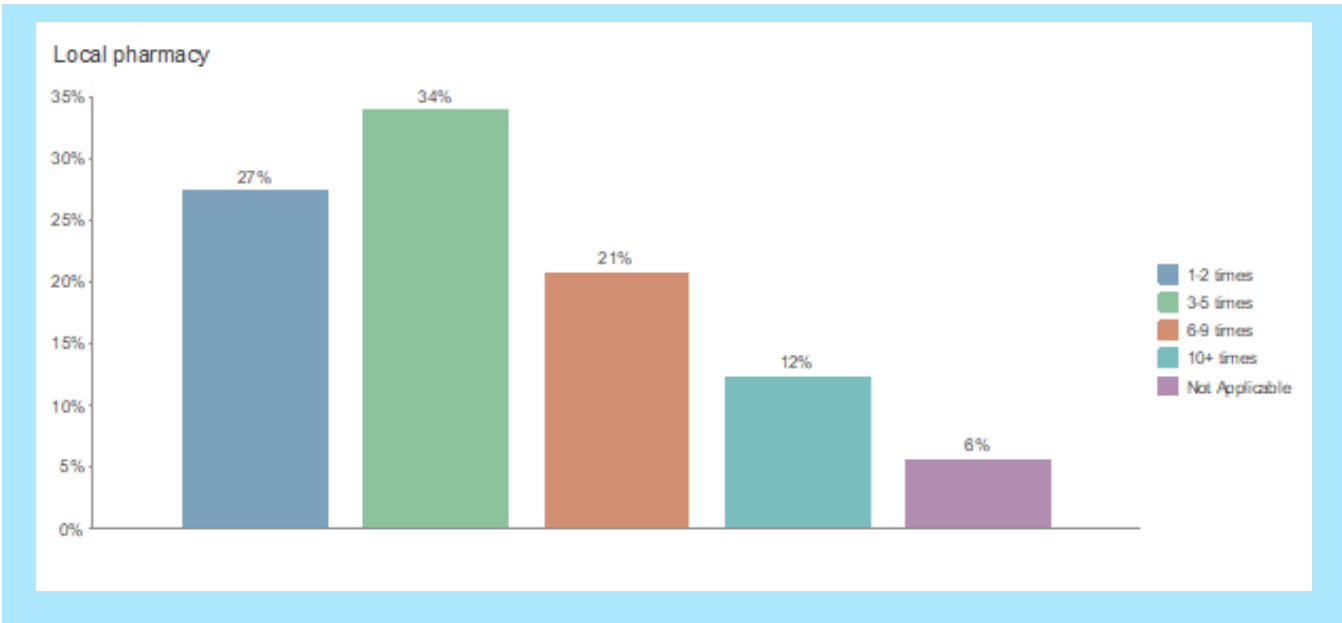


hospital 3-5 times; **8%** that they had used it 6-9 times and **4%** said that they had used it 10 or more times.

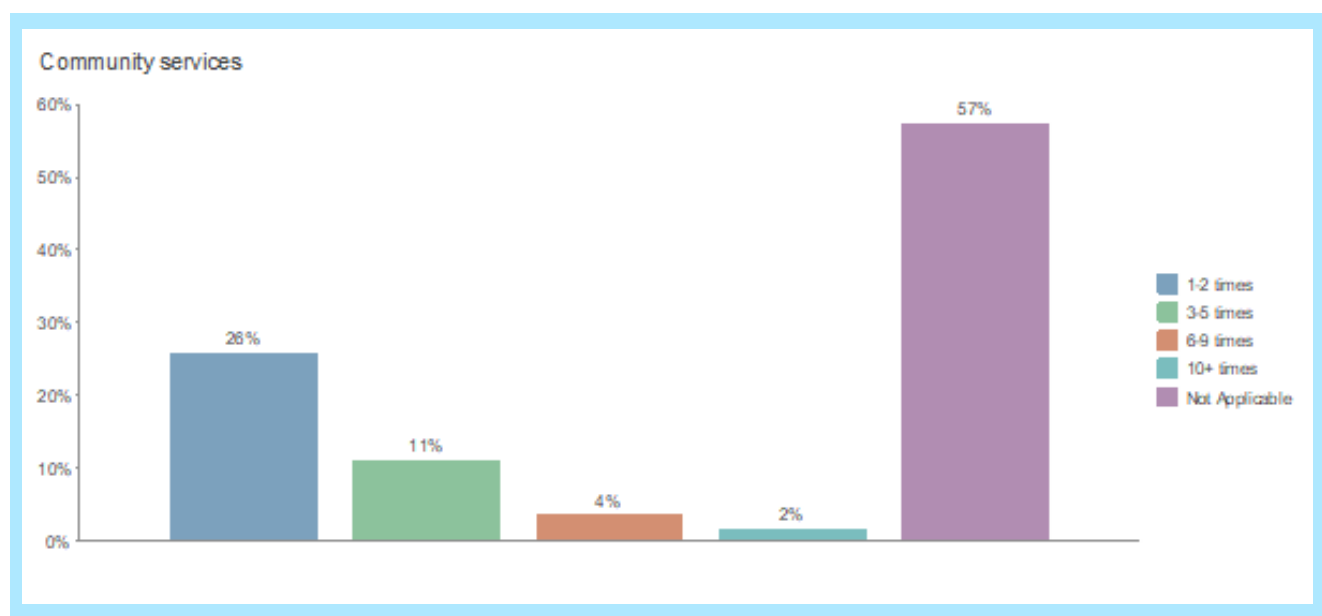
**50%** of people said that they had used their local GP once or twice in the past six months; **28%** said that they had used their GP 3-5 times; **10%** said they had used their GP 6-9 times and **5%** said that they had used their local GP 10 or more times.



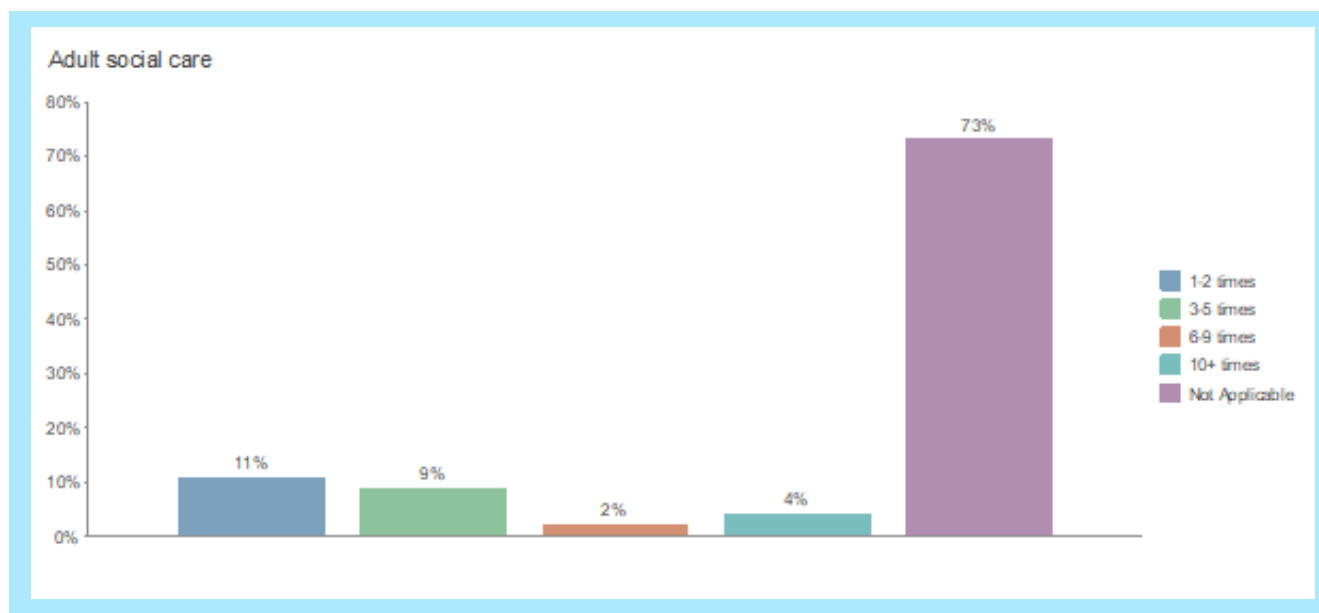
**73%** of people who answered the question said that they had used a local dentist once or twice in the past six months; **9%** said that they had used a local dentist 3-5 times; **1%** that they had used a dentist 6-9 times and **1%** that they had used a dentist 10 or more times.



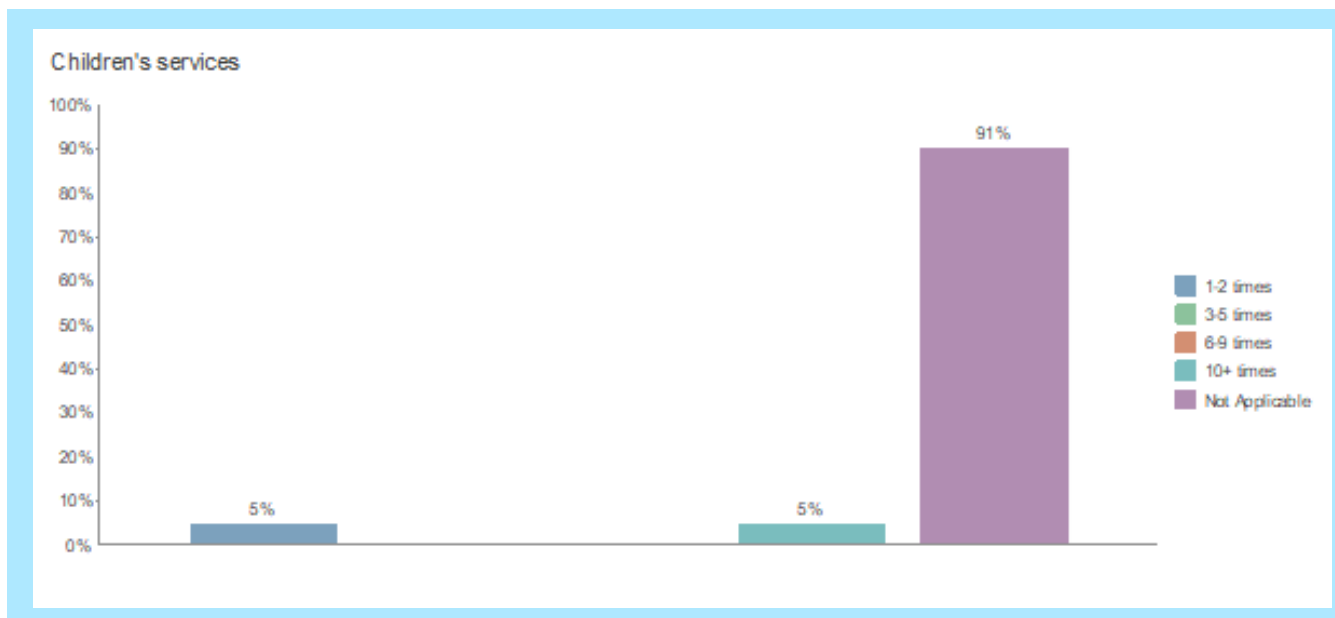
**26%** of people said that they had used community-based health services once or twice in the past six months; **11%** said that they had used it 3-5 times; **4%** that they had used it 6-9 times and **2%** said that they had used community services 10 or more times.



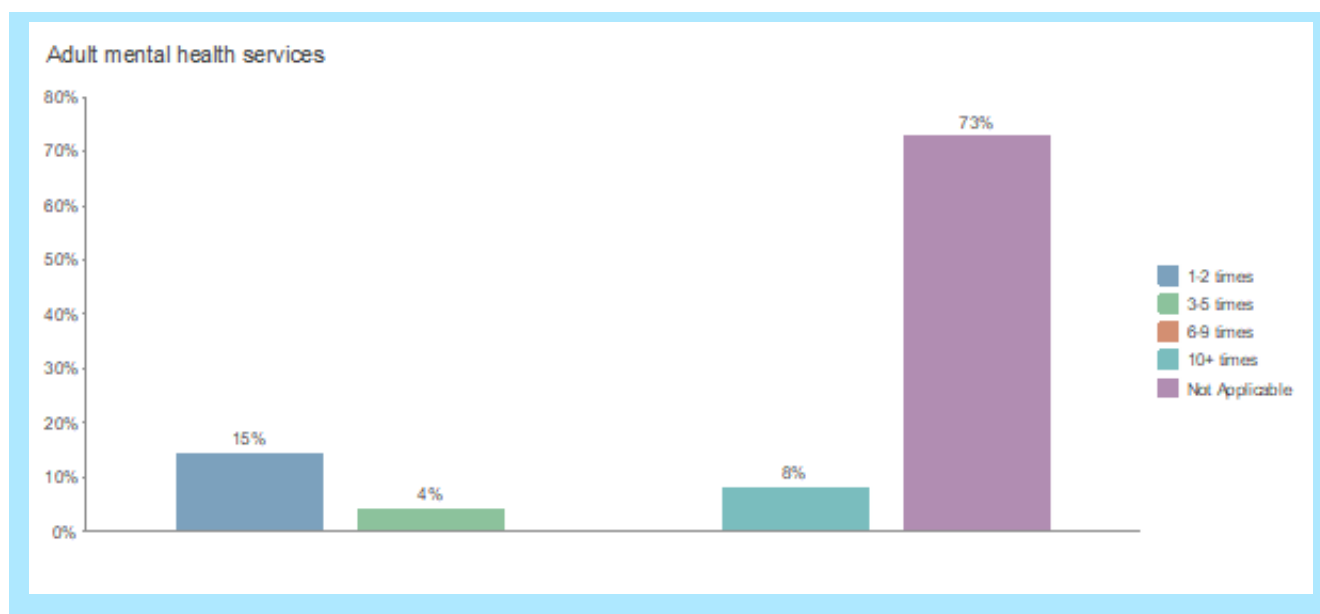
**11%** of people said that they had used adult social care once or twice in the past six months; **9%** said that they had used it 3-5 times in the last six months; **2%** said that they had used it 6-9 times and **4%** said that they had used adult social care 10 or more times.



**5%** of people said that they had used children's services once or twice in the past six months and **5%** said that they had used children's services 10 or more times.



15 of people said that they had used adult mental health services once or twice in the past six months; **4%** said that they had used them 3-5 times and **8%** said that they had used adult mental health services 10 or more times.

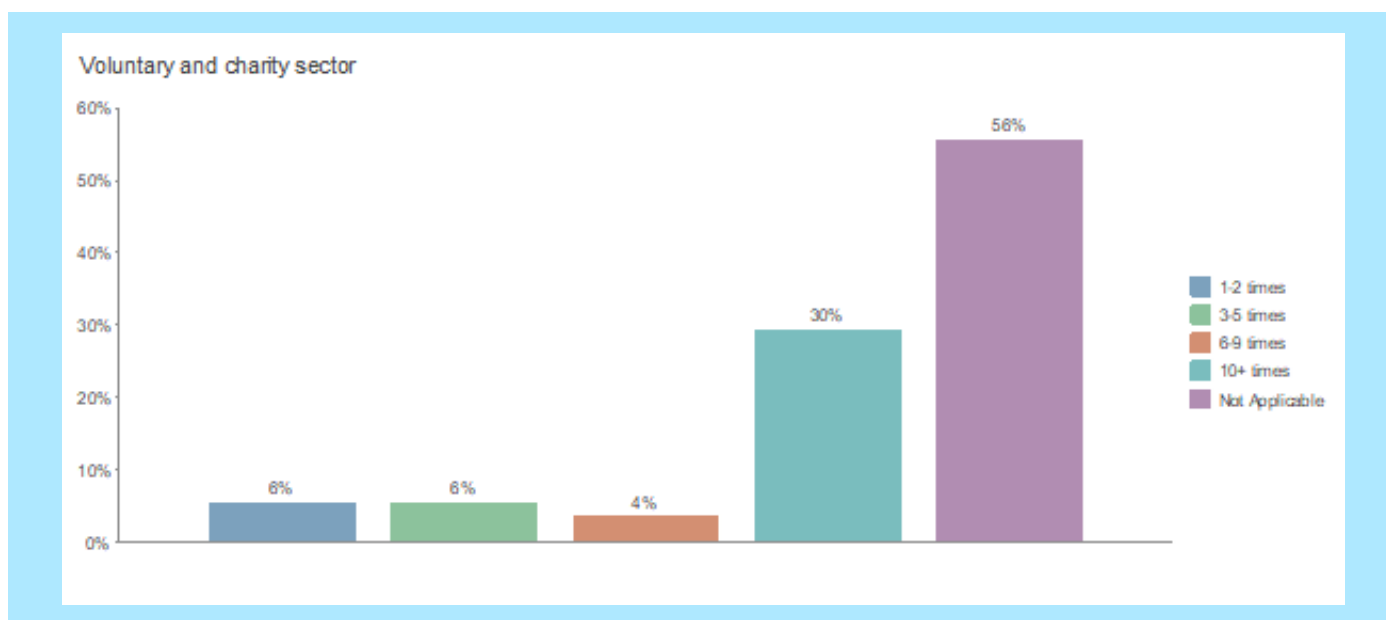


**11%** of people said that they had used CAMHS once or twice in the past six months.

**6%** of people had used services from the voluntary and charity sector once or twice in the past six months; **6%** said that they had used these services 3-5



times; **4%** said they used the services 6–9 times and **30%** said that they had used the services 10 or more times.

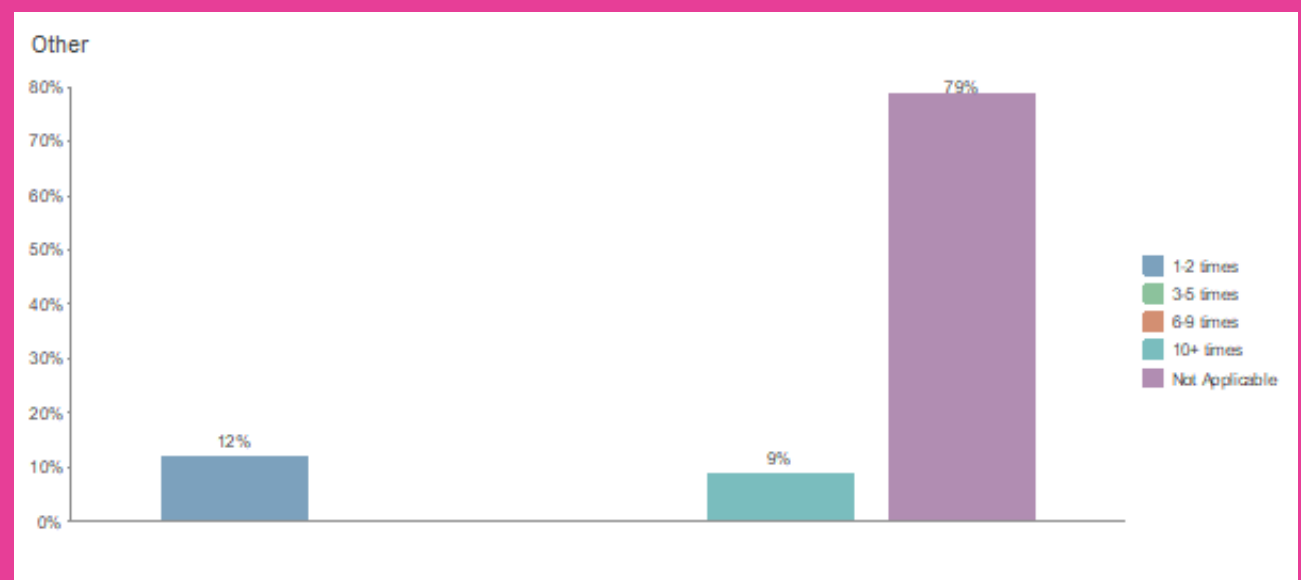
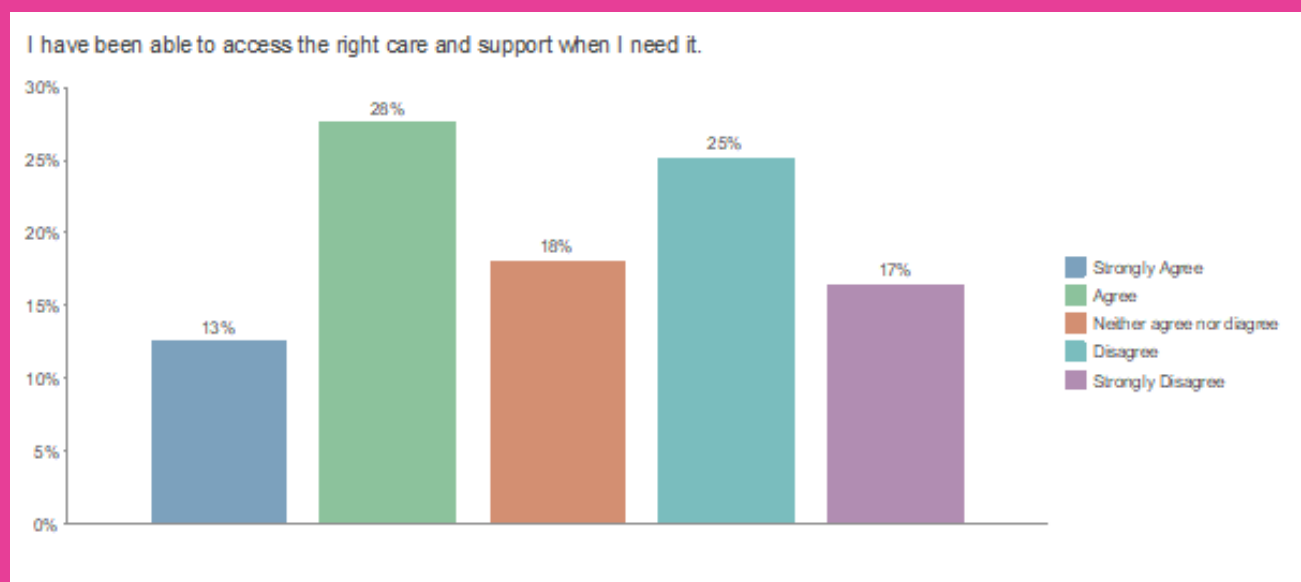
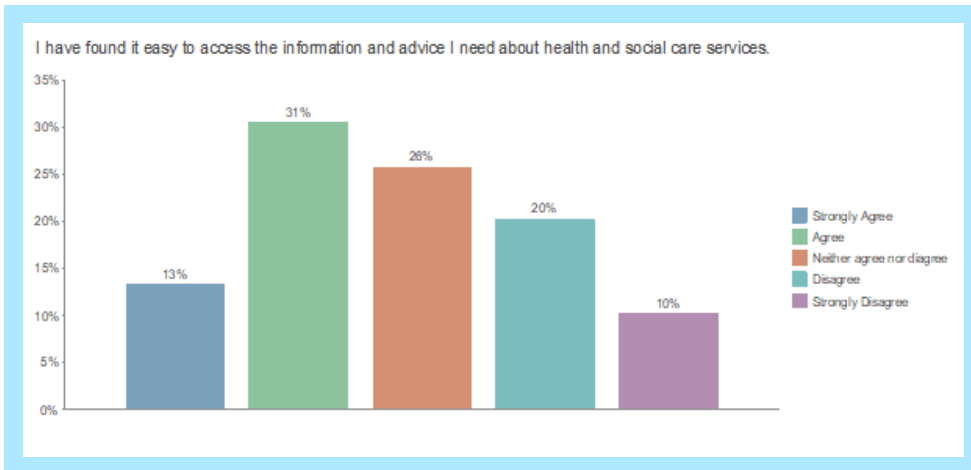


**12%** of people said that they had used other services once or twice in the past six months and **9%** said that they had used other services 10 or more times.

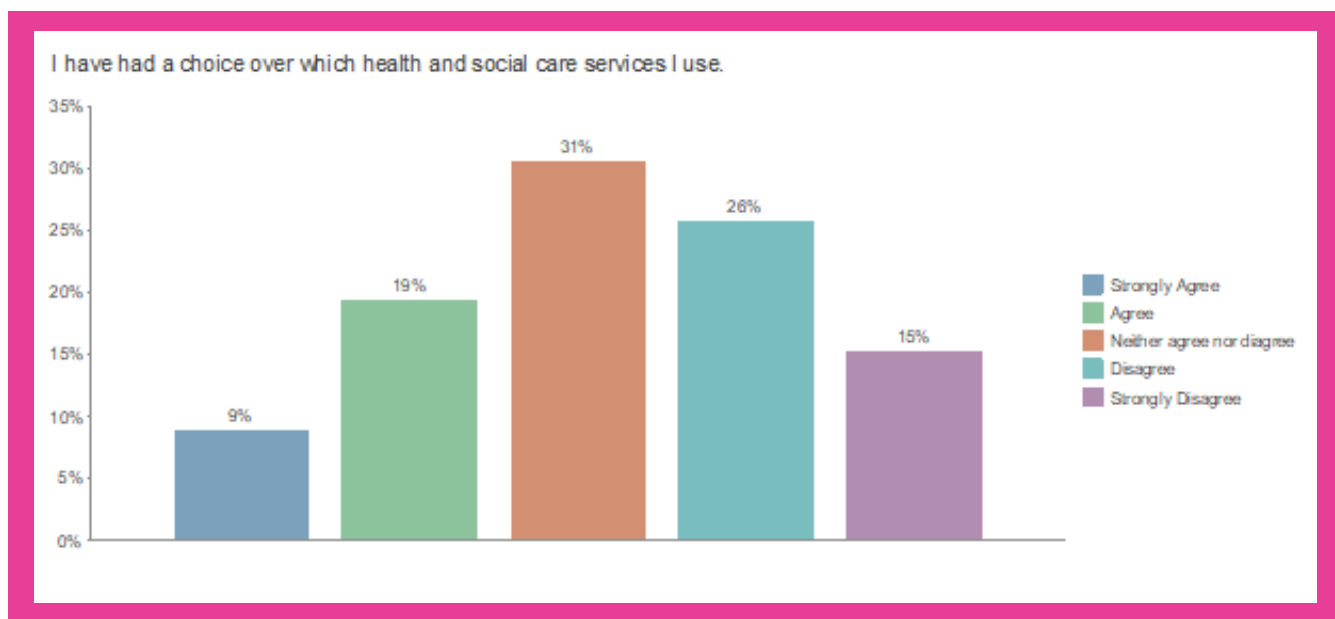


We asked people tell us how much they agreed with a series of statements in relation to the services that they have used in the past six months.

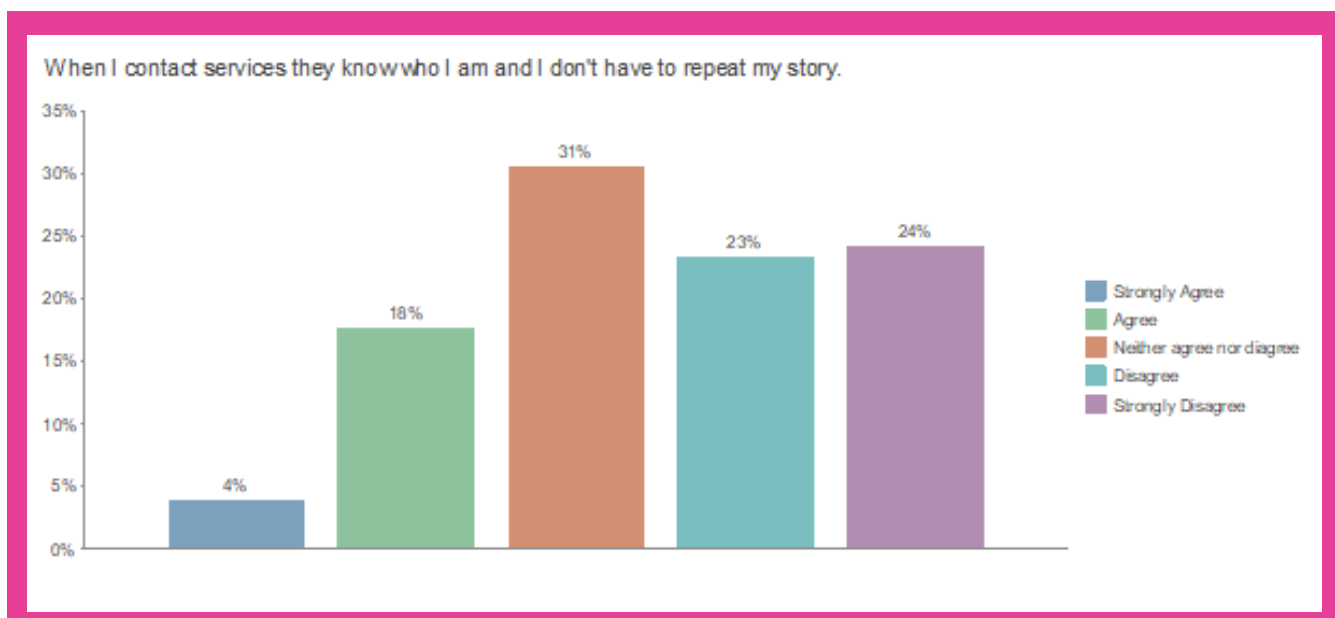
**44%** of people said that they either strongly agreed or agreed that they found it easy to access the information and advice that they needed about health and social care services. **30%** said that they either disagreed or strongly disagreed and **26%** gave a neutral answer.



**41%** of people either strongly agreed or agreed that they had been able to access the right care and support when they needed it. **42%** of people either disagreed or strongly disagreed and **18%** gave a neutral answer.



**28%** of people either strongly agreed or agreed that they had a choice over which health and social care services they use. **41%** of people either disagreed or strongly disagreed that they had a choice and **31%** gave a neutral answer.



**22%** of people either strongly agreed or agreed that services knew who they were, and they did not have to repeat their story when they contacted them. **47%** either disagreed or strongly disagreed and **31%** gave a neutral answer.

**We asked people to comment on their answers if they wished to. The answers that they gave have been arranged into themes.**

People spoke about their use of pharmacists and the comments were broadly positive.

**"I have found the chemist to be most helpful."**

**"I usually see the local pharmacist before contacting the surgery."**

A lack of continuity was mentioned by some people, with them saying that they had to repeat their story when they saw practitioners.

**"As we no longer have a named GP, I have to repeat my history whenever I see them which can be frustrating."**

**"You sometimes have to repeat your whole history to consultants or healthcare staff rather than them read your notes beforehand."**

There were comments about access to GP appointments.

**"It is difficult to get to see a GP or get an appointment."**

Others spoke about how they would prefer to have an appointment face-to-face rather than by telephone.

**"I would like to have face-to-face with GP not telephone."**

However, this was not the case for everyone who commented, with one person saying that their telephone appointments had been '**satisfactory.**'

Two people spoke about their GP practice closing, with one saying that they had seen:

**"a marked change in gaining access to services for the worse."**

And another saying:

**"My GP got closed down and I got sent somewhere else. No consultation. "**

There were a limited number of comments about social care, but one person told how they had needed to go to the Ombudsman in order to get their care funded. They said that they:

**"Have had to fight social services to get the care funding needed."**

And that they had been:

**"Able to do the research on the Care Act and human rights."**

Another commented that there:

**"Is nothing appropriate locally for respite care for young adults."**

Access to dental care was also commented upon.

**"I couldn't get an emergency dentist. It was like going from pillar to post. They said contact this dentist. Dentist says there are no appointments. Horrible experience."**

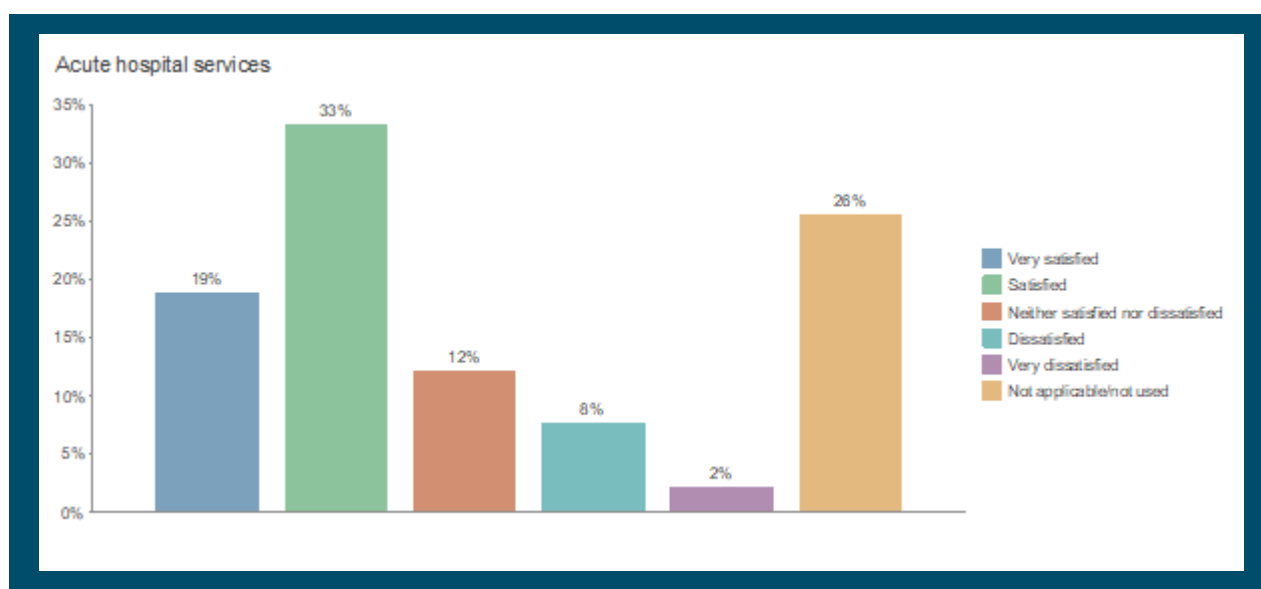
**"I needed urgent dental care. Was hard to get support and rang around many different places to try and get urgent help."**

Two people spoke about there being language barriers within services.

**“My first language is Romanian. I have struggled with English letters for maternity.”**

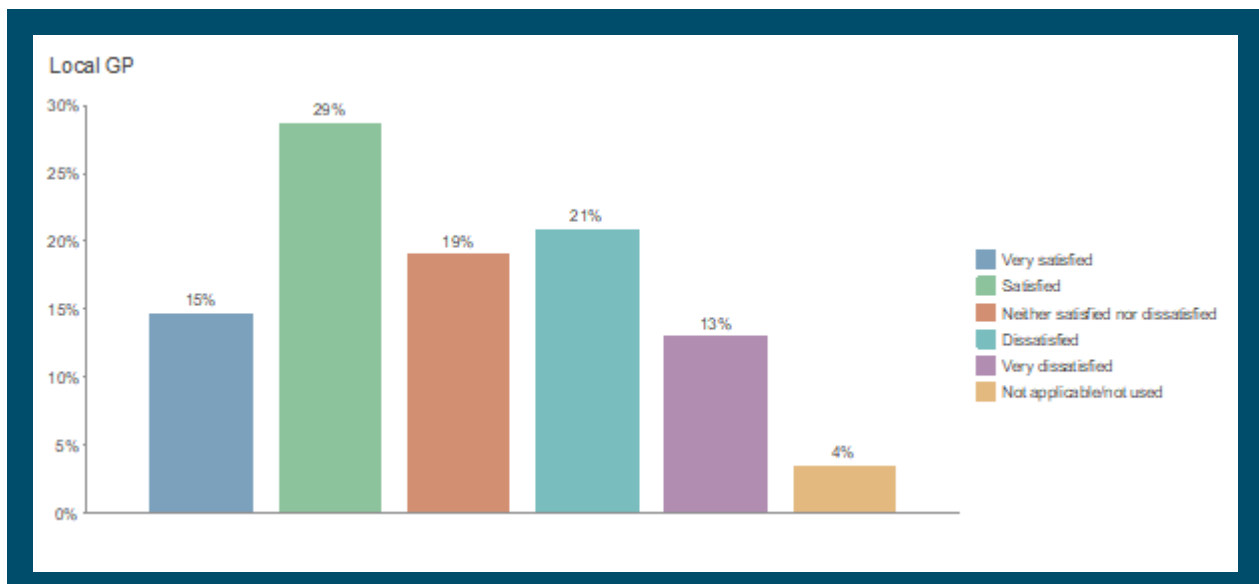
**“It is so difficult when my first language is not English.”**

**We asked people to rate their experiences of using services in the last six months.**

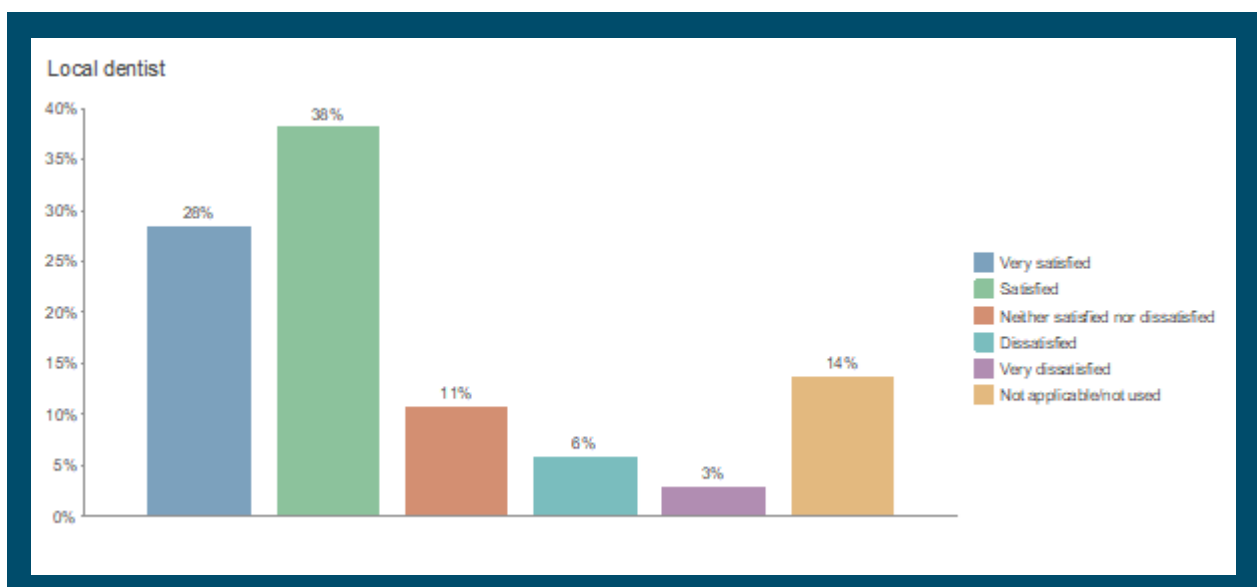


**42%** of people were either very satisfied or satisfied with acute hospital services; **10%** of people said that they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with acute hospital services; **12%** gave a neutral answer and **26%** said that they had not used acute hospital services.

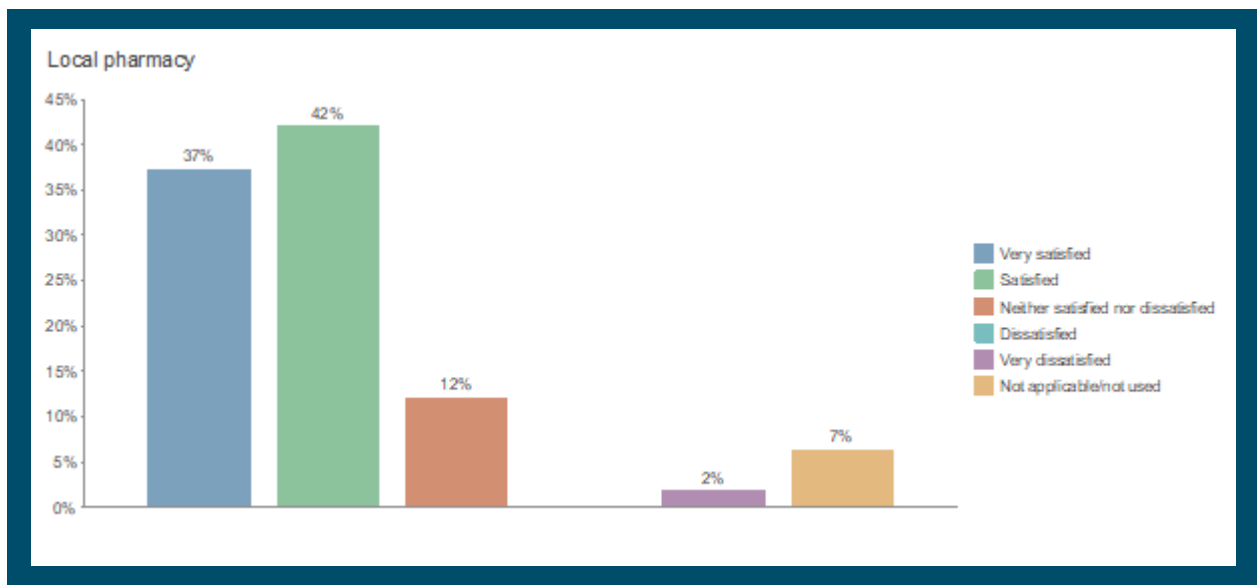




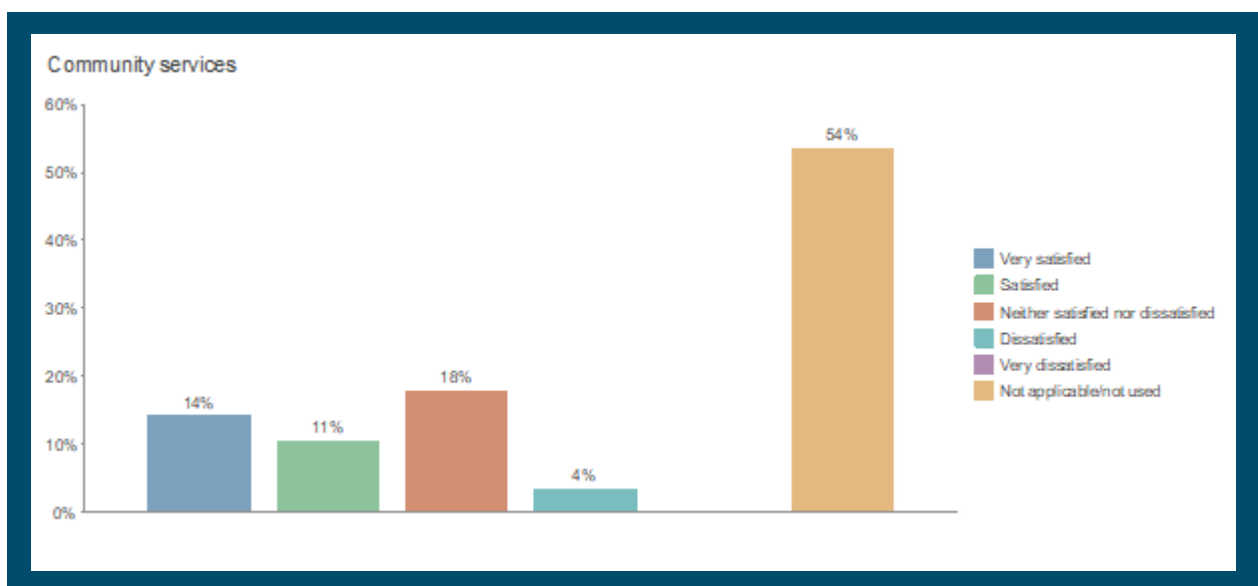
**44%** of people said that they were very satisfied or satisfied with their local GP; **17%** said that they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied and **19%** gave a neutral answer. **4%** of people said that they had not used their local GP.



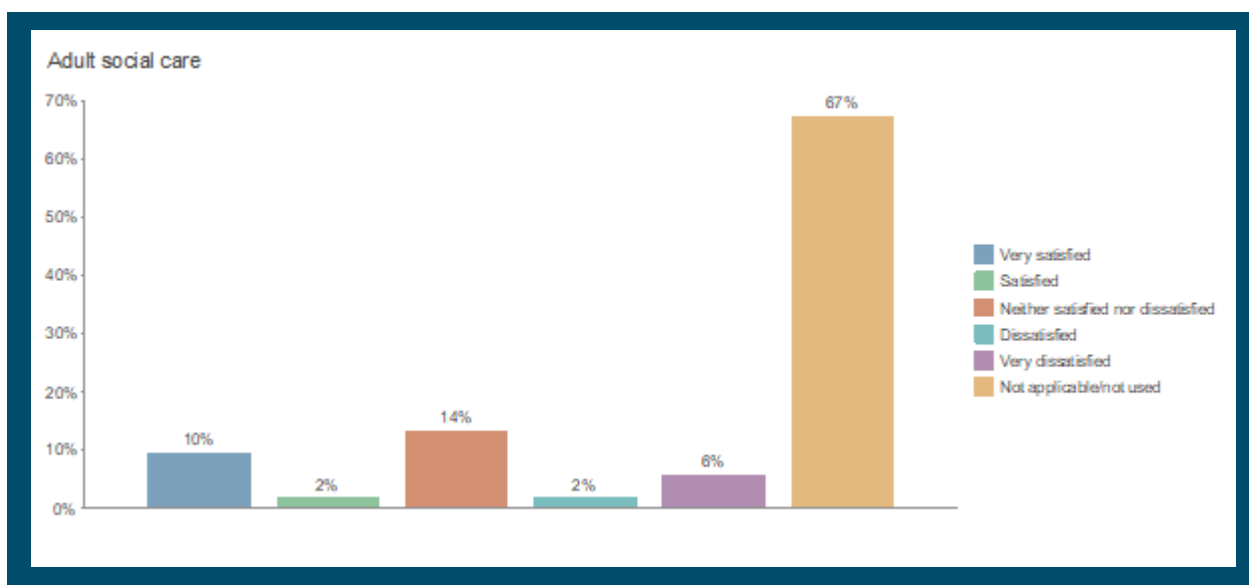
**66%** of people said that they were very satisfied or satisfied with their local dentist; **17%** were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied and **11%** gave a neutral answer. **14%** of people said that they had not used a local dentist.



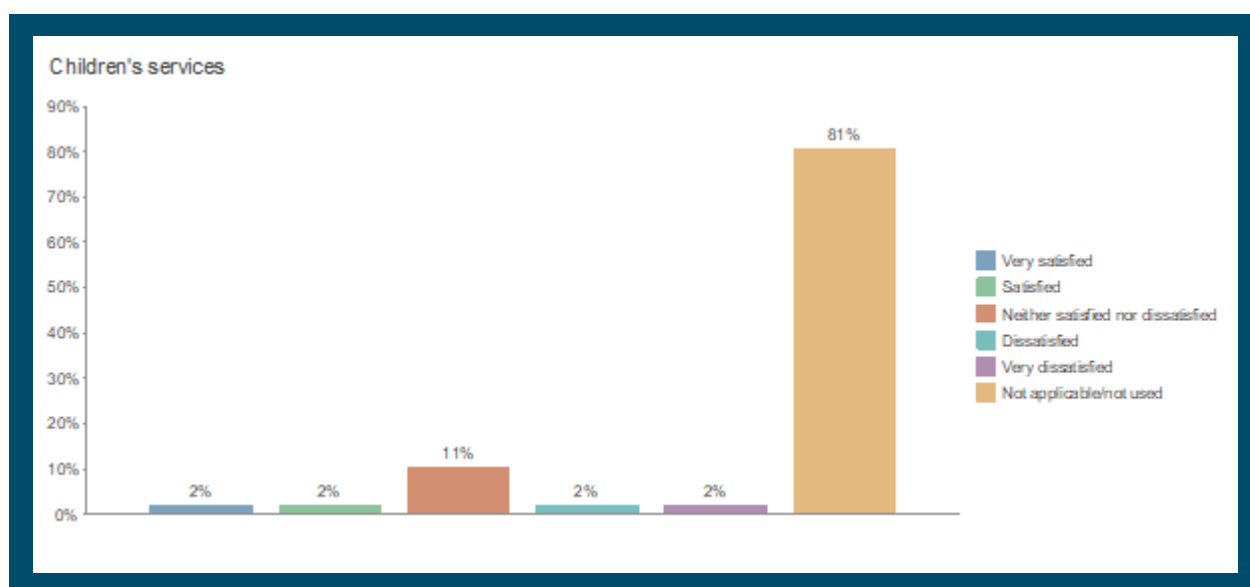
**79%** of people said that they were either very satisfied or satisfied with their experience of their local pharmacy; **2%** said that they were very dissatisfied; **12%** gave a neutral answer. **7%** of people said that they had not used a local pharmacy in the past six months.



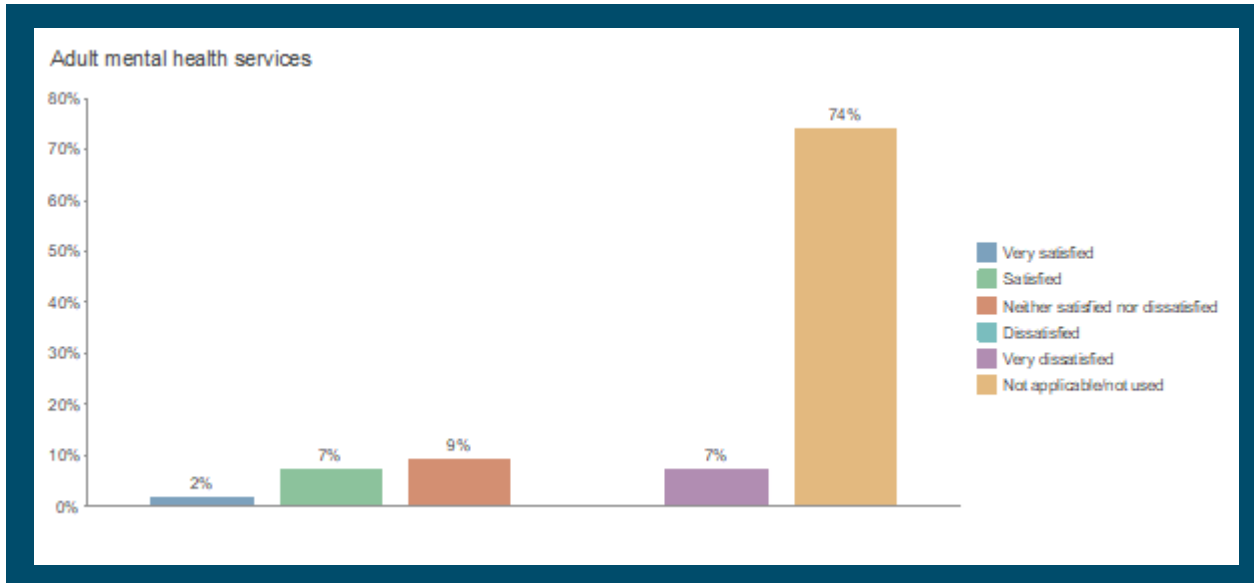
**25%** of people said that they were either very satisfied or satisfied with their experience of using community-based services; **4%** were dissatisfied and **18%** gave a neutral answer. **54%** of people had not used community services in the past six months.



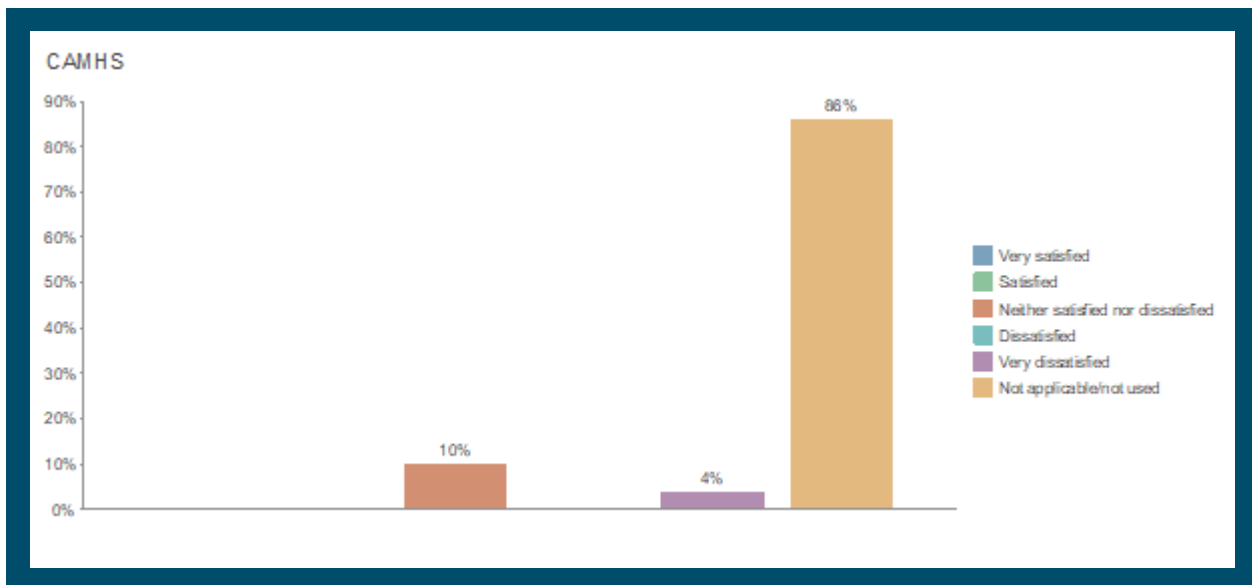
**12%** of people were very satisfied or satisfied with their experience of using adult social care; **8%** were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied; and **14%** gave a neutral answer. **67%** of people said that they had not used adult social care.



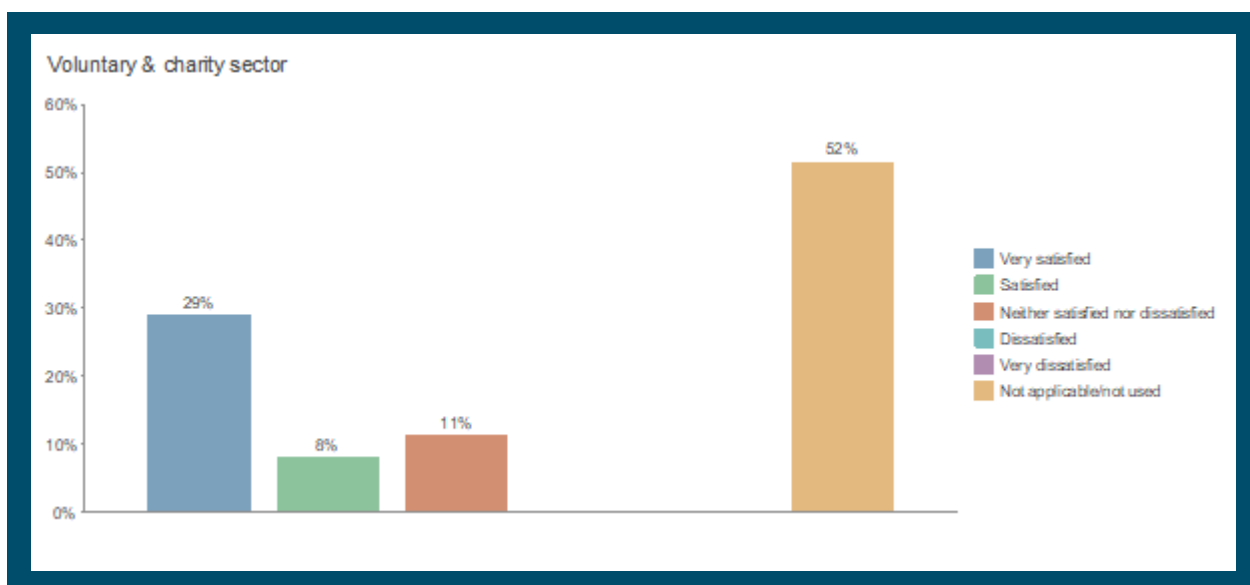
**4%** of people were either very satisfied or satisfied with children's services; **4%** were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied and **11%** gave a neutral answer. **81%** of people had not used children's services in the past 6 months.



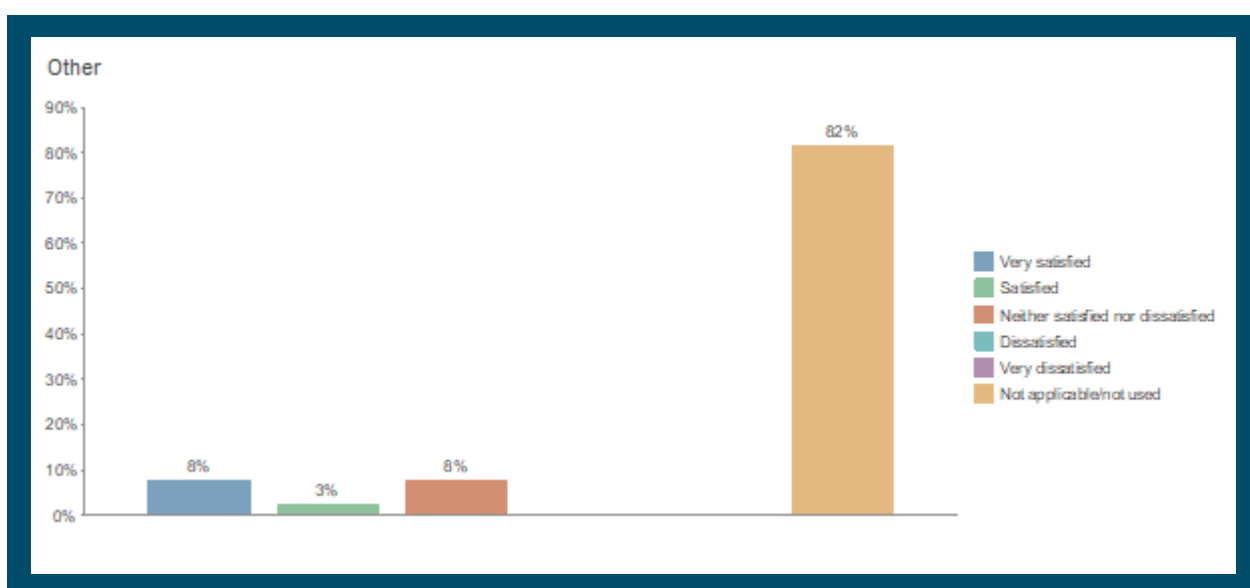
**9%** of people said that they were very satisfied or satisfied with adult mental health services; **7%** said that they were very dissatisfied and **9%** gave a neutral answer. **74%** of people said that they had not used the service.



When asked to rate CAMHS **10%** of people had a neutral answer and **4%** said that they were very dissatisfied. **86%** of people said that they had not used the service.



**37%** of people said that they were very satisfied or satisfied with their experience of using services delivered by the voluntary and charity sector; **11%** gave a neutral answer and **52%** of people said that they had not used these services.



When rating the other services that they had used, **11%** of people said that they were either very satisfied or satisfied and **8%** of people gave a neutral answer. **82%** of people said that they had not used any other services.

**We then asked people to comment on their answers if they wished to. There were a limited number of comments and the main theme related to GP Access, particularly in relation to issues getting an appointment and getting through to the surgery on the telephone. Other comments related to positive experiences of pharmacists, long**



waiting times to access secondary care, and poor communication between professionals.

People were asked to tell us about things that were going well with services. The comments that people made have been arranged into themes.

Dentistry was seen in a positive light by some of the respondents.

One person said:

**"Being able to book dental appointments"**

was something that was going well, and another said:

**"community dental services are very professional and kind"**

Some people were positive about the support that they had from the voluntary sector.

One said that a:

**"Local voluntary organisation helped me by providing a translator and signposting us to adult social care."**

Another spoke about the peer support they had benefited from for their mental health and how they had **"set it up themselves."**

Another said:

**"Using charity led/non-profit mental health services has been of great help to me this year, because I found the waiting list not too long."**

Individual practitioners in different settings were named as being the thing that was going well for people. These included nurses, doctors, and hospital staff in general.

Pharmacy services were also mentioned as things that are going well. One person said that the pharmacist that they use are:

**"Always most helpful with advice."**

Another said that they had:

**“Face-to-face consultations with [a] Pharmacist for my diabetes. ”**

When asked what they would like to change, the main theme was better access to GP appointments.

Examples of comments are:

**“To be able to see my GP and get an appointment.”**

**“GPs to make time for more appointments, whether emergency or not.”**

Others spoke about mental health services in terms of access and care. One person said that they would like:

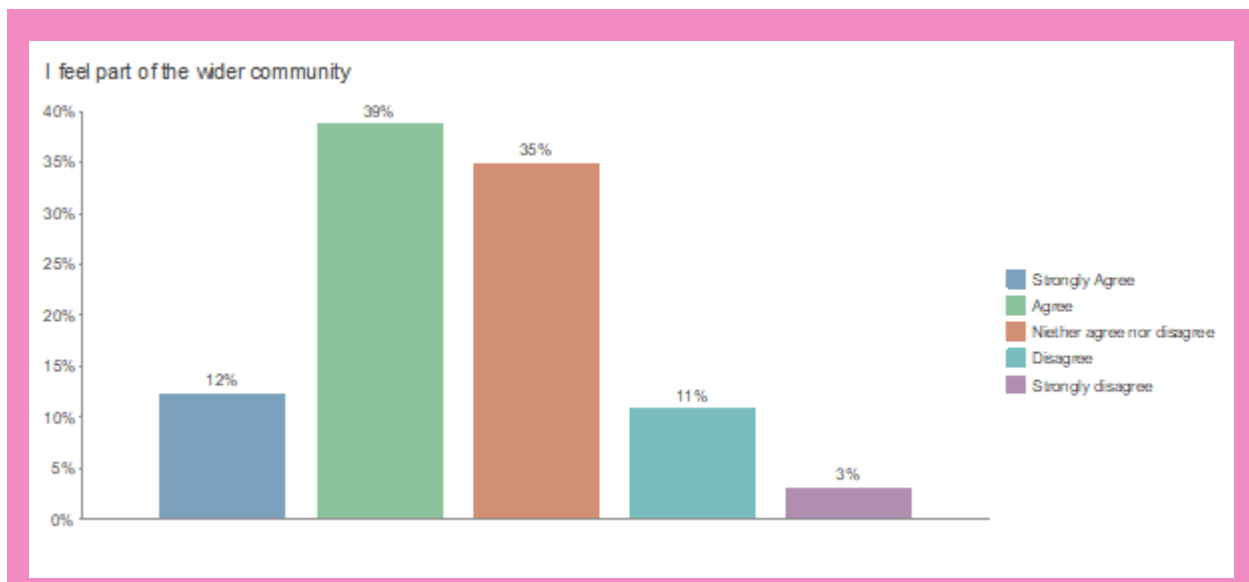
**“Better access to mental health specialists and care.”**

Another said that there needed to be improvements in services:

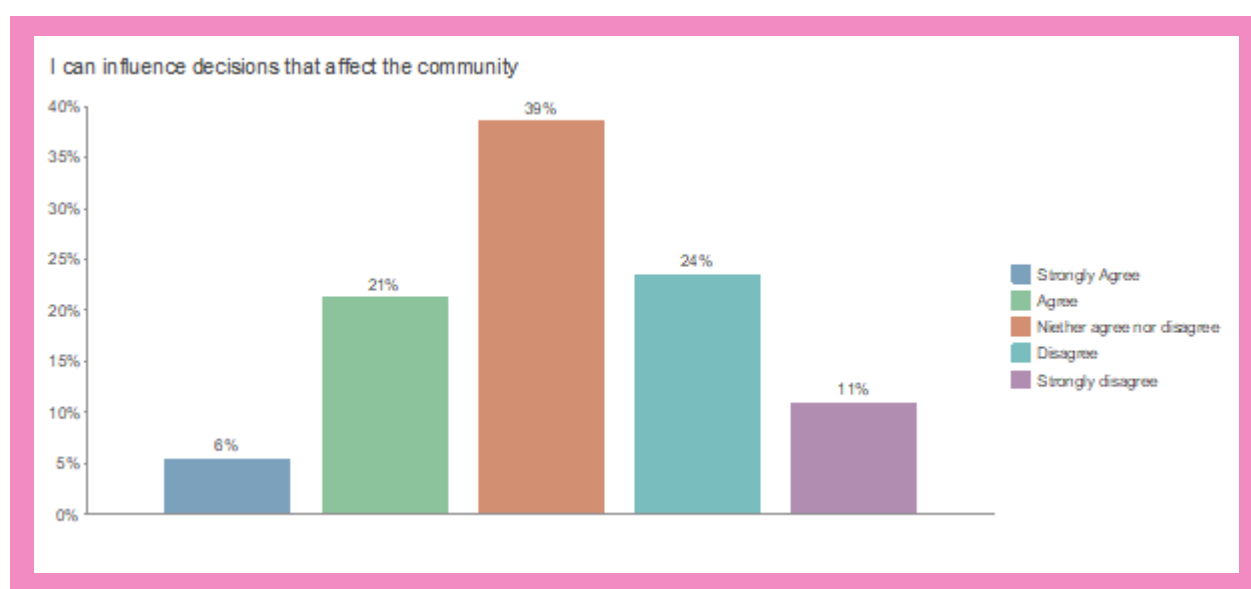
**“From the start when you start to feel unwell to going into an inpatient unit... They need to be more supportive, more empathic, more talking therapies in the beginning, instead of medication all the time.”**

People said that waiting times to access services needed to be improved but provided little other detail.

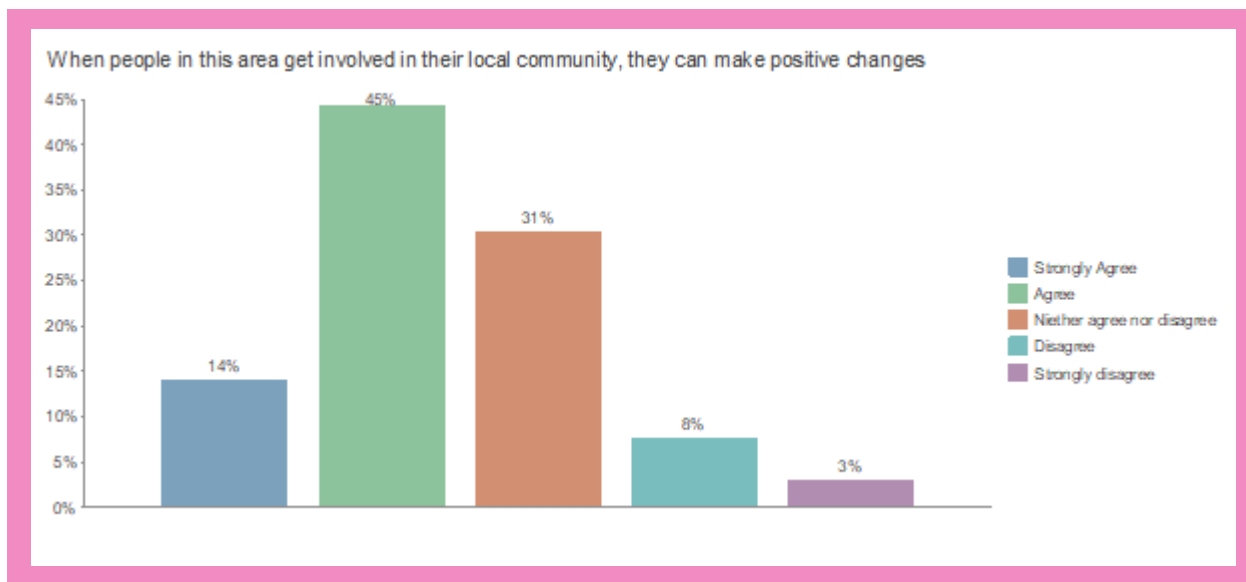
**We asked people about their perceptions of community involvement.**



**51%** of people either strongly agreed or agreed that they felt part of the wider community; **14%** of people disagreed or strongly disagreed and **35%** gave a neutral answer.



**27%** of people either strongly agreed or agreed that they can influence decisions that affect the community and **35%** of people either disagreed or strongly disagreed. **39%** of people gave a neutral answer.



**59%** of people said that they either strongly agreed or agreed that when people get involved in their local community, they can make positive changes and **11%** of people disagreed or strongly disagreed.

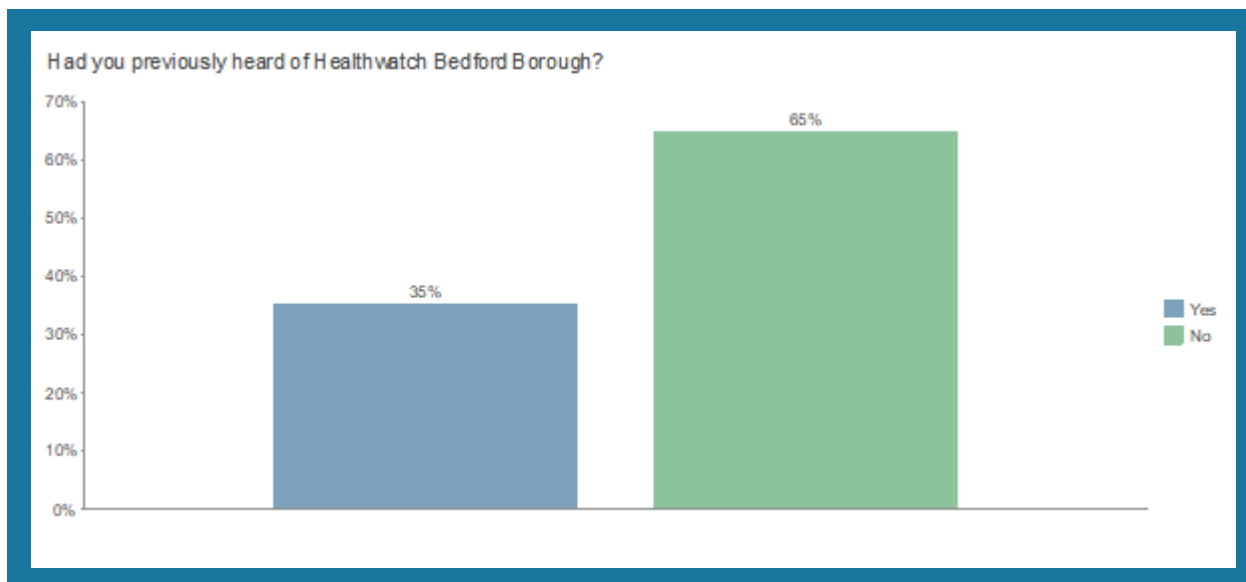
The comments made by people were largely negative about the impact that community involvement can have to change things.

Some felt that **“decisions are influenced by politics”** or that **“central government”** had the greatest influence because they were the provider of funding.

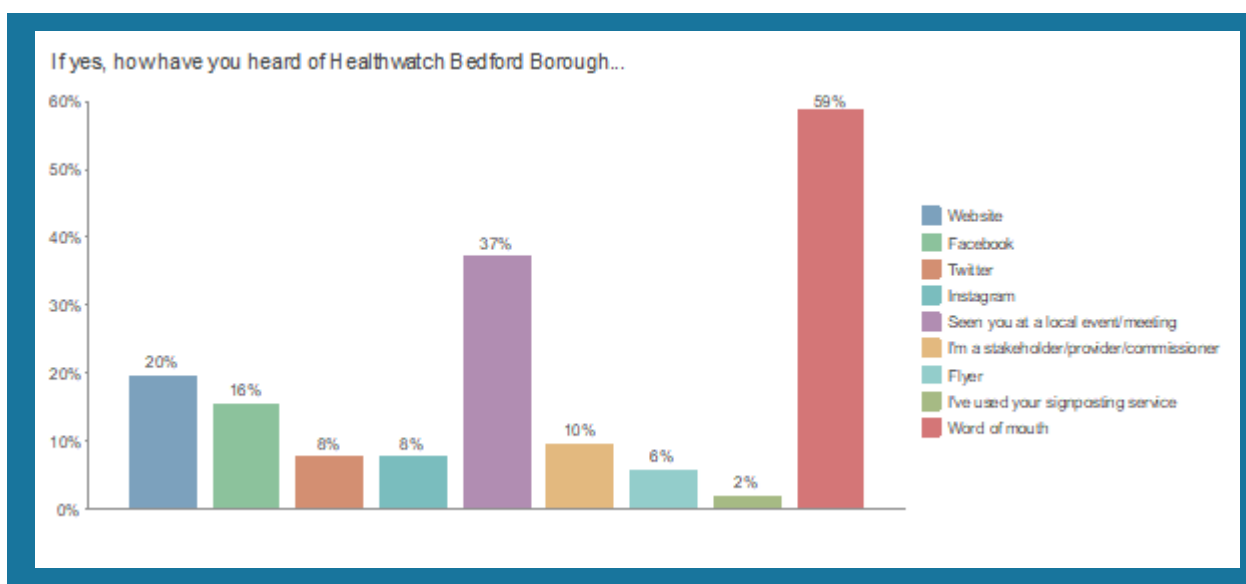
Others said that their own experience of campaigning **“has never been productive”** and that **“nothing changes.”**

Only one person felt that **“people can affect their local community.”** They said that they hoped they were **“not being naïve in believing that voting and filling in surveys and questionnaires like this can make a difference.”**

**The following is feedback on Healthwatch Bedford Borough.**

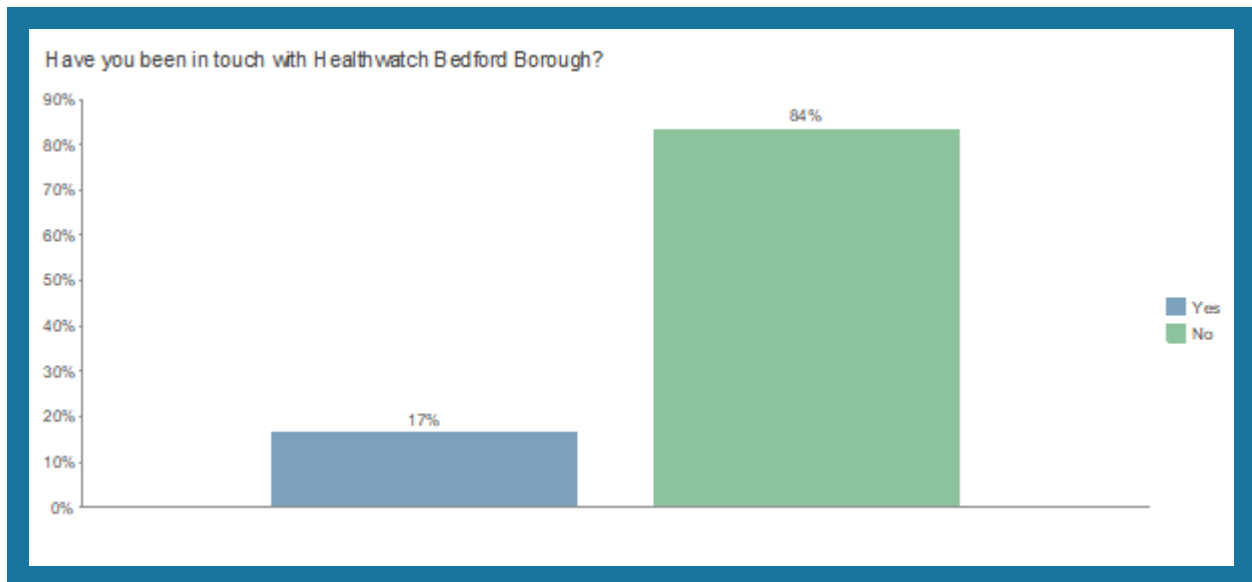


**65%** of people said that they had not previously heard of Healthwatch Bedford Borough before completing the survey and **35%** of people said that they had.

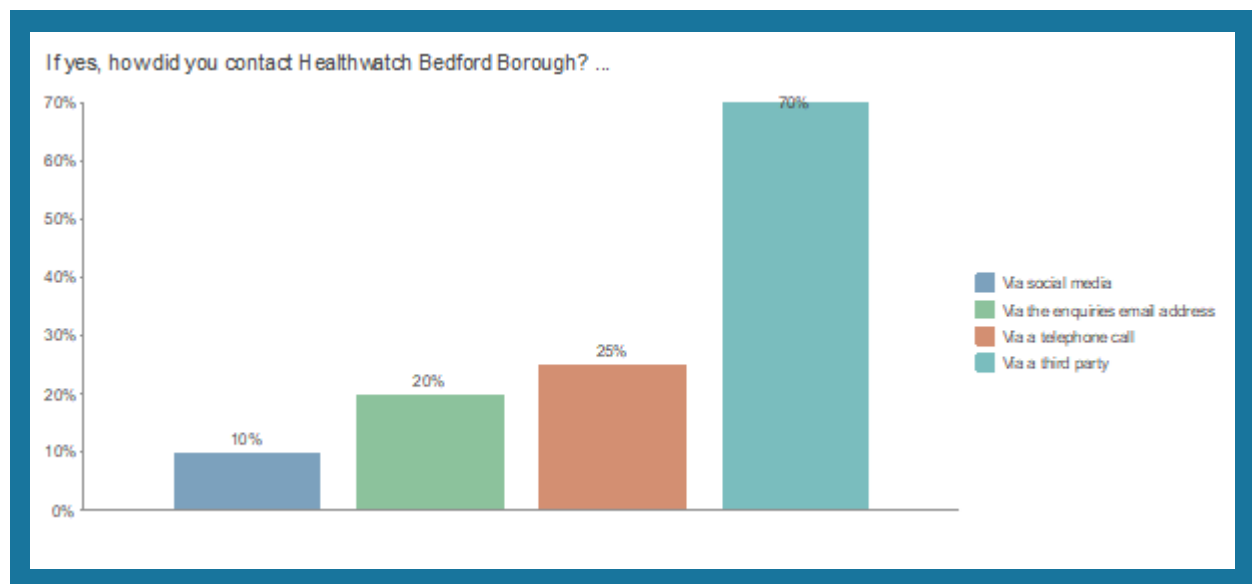


Those who said that they had heard of Healthwatch Bedford Borough before were asked how they had heard of us. They were asked to indicate all the ways that they had heard of the organisation. The highest percentage was 'word of mouth' (**59%**); followed by **37%** of people saying that they had seen Healthwatch Bedford Borough at an event or meeting.



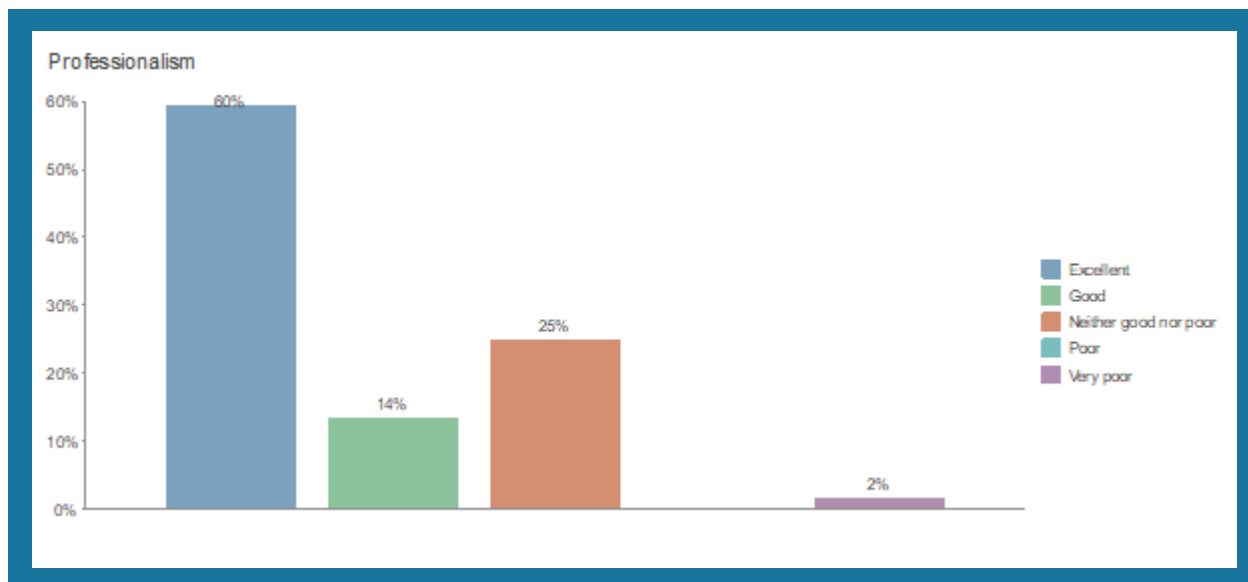


**17%** of people said that they had been in touch with Healthwatch Bedford Borough and **84%** said that they had not.

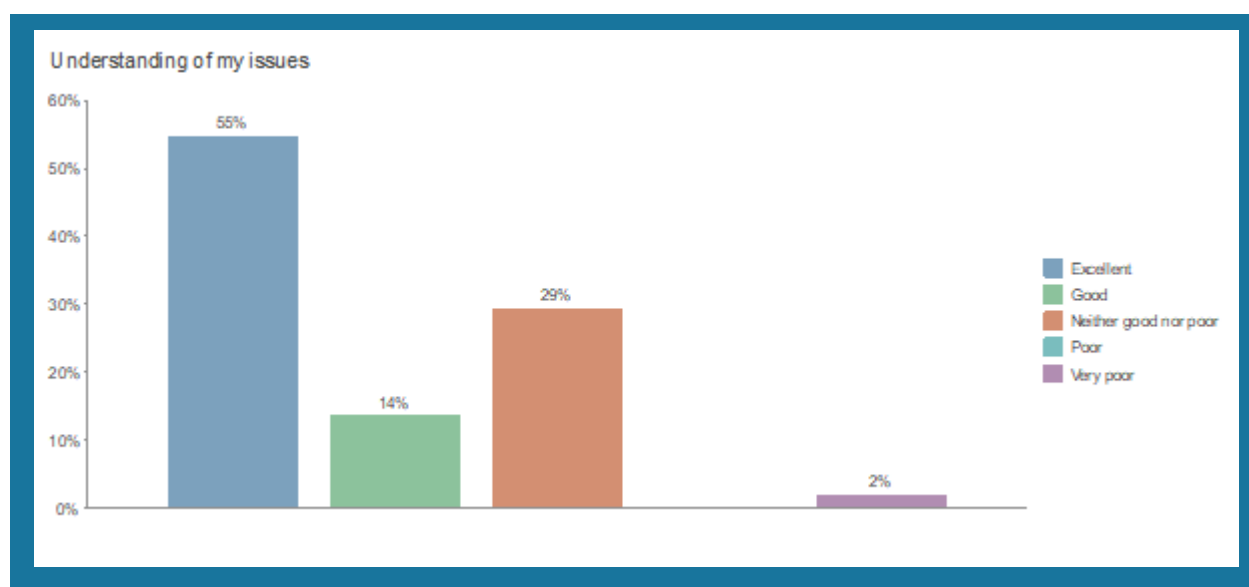


Of those people who said that they had been in touch with Healthwatch Bedford Borough, when asked about what method they had used to make contact, **70%** of people said that they had been in touch via a third party; **25%** via a telephone call; **20%** via the enquiries email address and **10%** via social media.

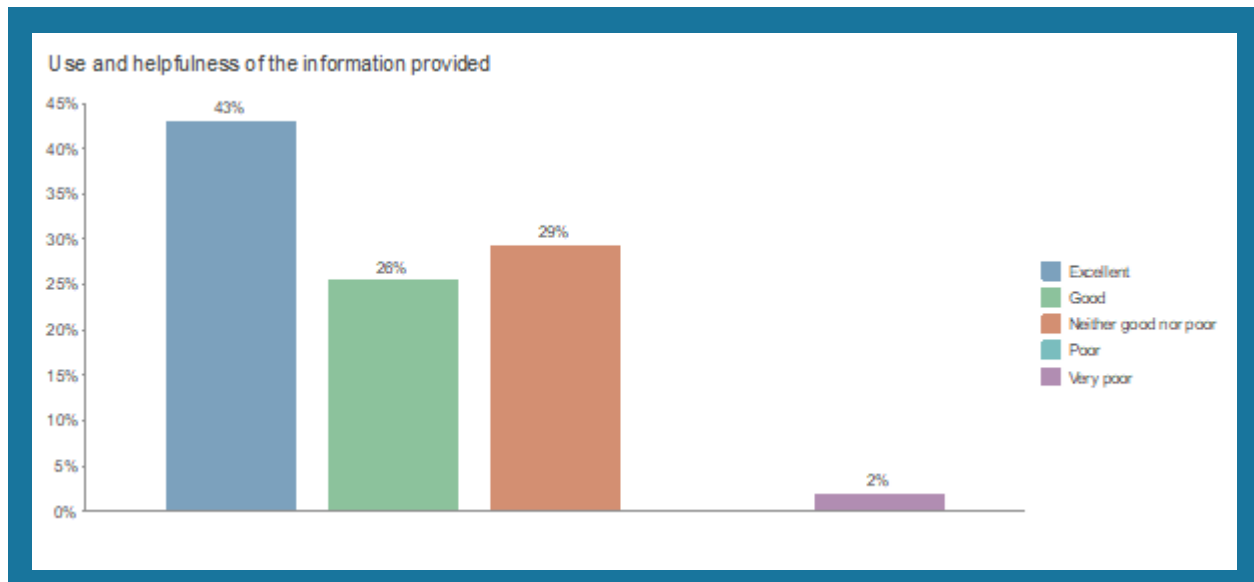
**People were asked to rate their experience of using Healthwatch Bedford Borough.**



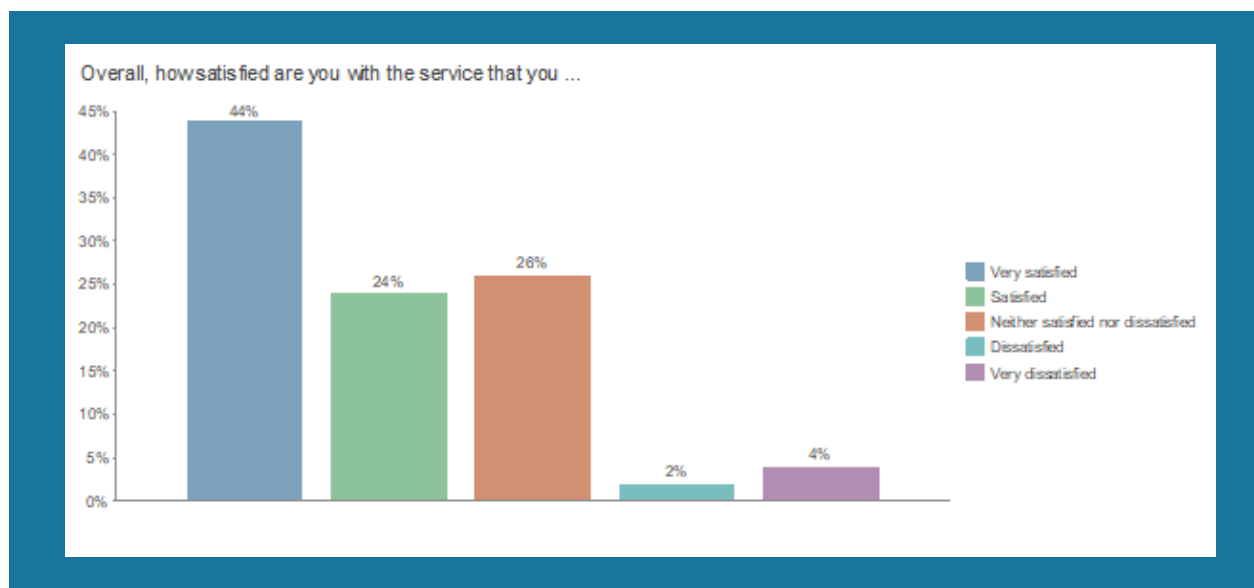
**74%** of people rated the professionalism of Healthwatch Bedford Borough as either excellent or good; **2%** rated it as very poor and **25%** gave a neutral answer.



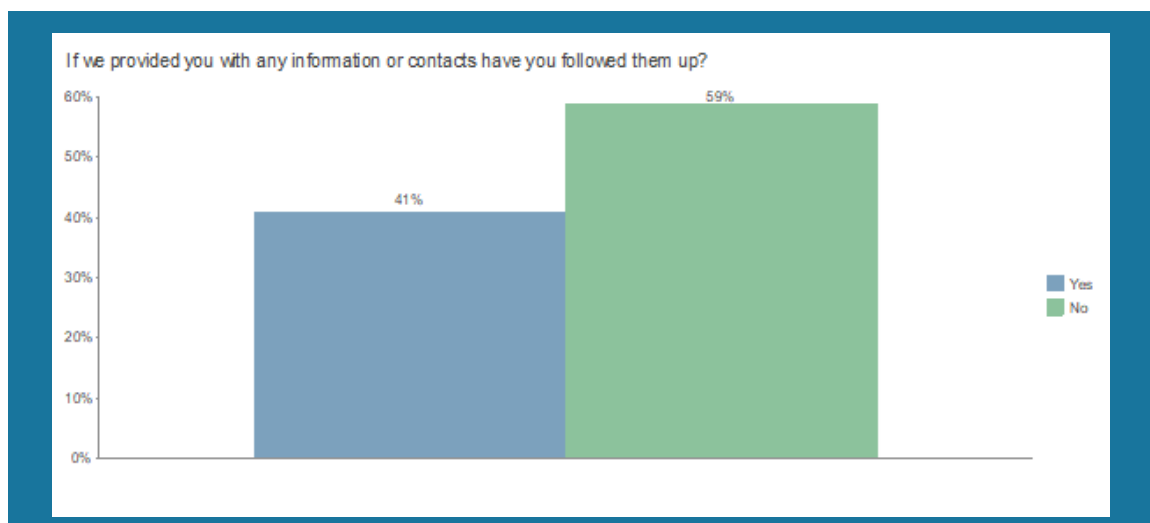
**69%** of people rated Healthwatch Bedford Borough's understanding of their issues as being excellent or good; **2%** rated it as very poor and **29%** gave a neutral answer.



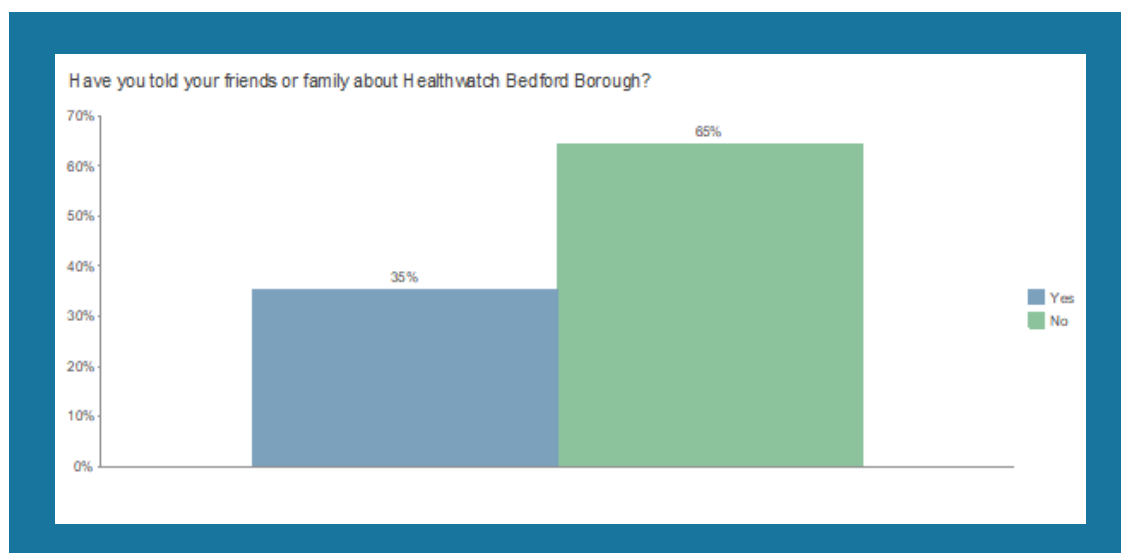
**69%** of people rated the use and helpfulness of the information provided by Healthwatch Bedford Borough as being excellent or good; **2%** rated it as being very poor and **29%** gave a neutral answer.



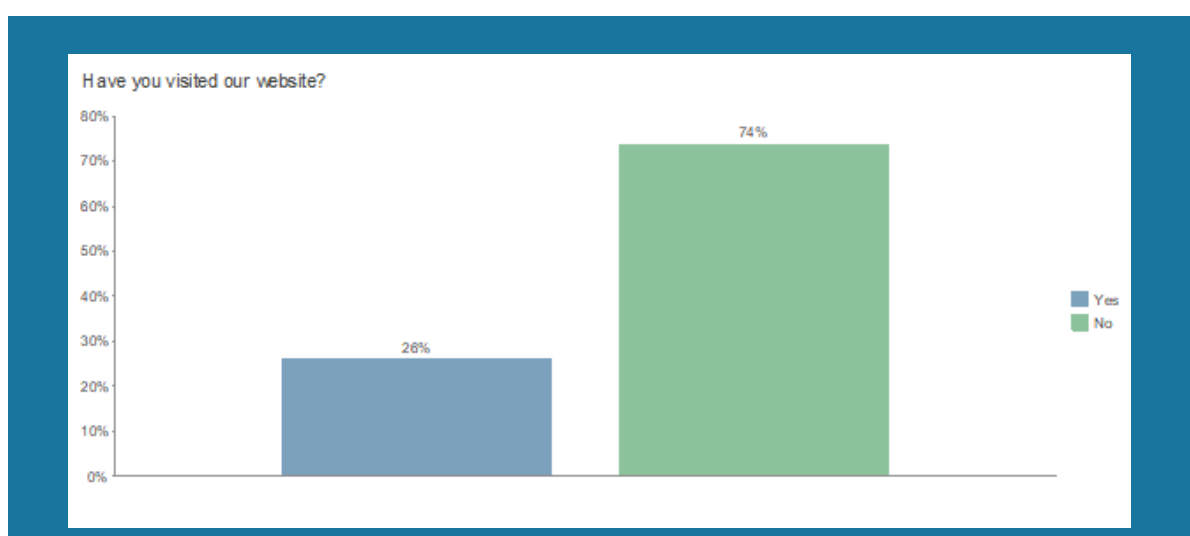
When asked to give an overall rating for the service that was received from Healthwatch Bedford Borough, **68%** of people were very satisfied or satisfied; **6%** were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied and **26%** gave a neutral answer.



**59%** of people said that they had not followed up on any contacts of information that they were given and **41%** of people said that they had.



**65%** of people said that they had not told friends or family about Healthwatch Bedford Borough and **35%** of people said that they had.



**26%** of people said that they had visited the Healthwatch Bedford Borough website and **74%** of people said that they had not.

## Our next steps

In response to these findings, we will support more effective local partnership working and ensure that we use our skills and experience to commit to undertaking the following:

- Help to facilitate conversations between commissioners, service providers and patients/the public in relation to access to service and referral issues
- Support and encourage co-production.
- Raise the profile of Healthwatch Bedford Borough by widening our outreach, engagement, and digital offer.
- Continue to act as a '*critical friend*' to the NHS and local authority
- Work with BLMK partners to look at common themes and report to necessary parties accordingly.
- Maximise the influence of the voices of people and communities to ensure that all voices are heard.
- Work with third-sector partners to encourage intelligence reporting and further collaboration.
- Set out clear standards for reporting the intelligence we receive as Healthwatch Bedford Borough.

## Key Strategic priority areas for 2023/24

Having analysed the raw data, our key areas of focus for the year will be:

- Access to NHS dentistry
- GP Access
- Young Peoples Mental Health
- Adult Social Care
- Preconception

Please see our [Work Programme 2023/24](#) for further information:

## Thank you

Healthwatch Bedford Borough would like to extend our thanks to all those participants who took the time to complete this survey.

We would also like to pay particular thanks to those providers, stakeholders and faith settings who supported this piece of work and who either shared the survey and/or granted us access for our face-to-face listening activities. Your ongoing support for the team is gratefully received.



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