

# Community Surveys - combined report on 4 local surveys

## Introduction and methodology

Late in 2019 we invited bids from non-profit organisations in Swindon for a small amount of funding to undertake a survey with their contacts or members. These were likely to be people from whom we were otherwise less likely to hear.

Five organisations<sup>1</sup> were selected by our Advisory Group and a standard survey was developed with the groups' involvement. It was adjusted slightly for each to acknowledge the specific differences of organisations' remits.

Four were asked to survey up to 100 participants between April and June 2020. One small activity group undertook to survey its 25 members. Covid-19 intervened and this had an impact on organisations' ability to reach their targets within the initial time-frame agreed. Two groups each completed 100 surveys. One group completed 50 surveys. The activity group had to suspend its activities and 11 surveys were completed by its members. One group pulled out when it became clear that their participants were not responding to requests to complete the survey during the pandemic.

This report combines the key findings and issues from the 263 surveys completed between May and December 2020. Unlike much research undertaken during the period, this did not focus entirely on people's experience of the pandemic. The individual reports contain the detail: [Parkinson's UK Swindon & District](#), [The Harbour Project](#), [Swindon SEND Families Voice](#) and [Swindon Interactive Arts Service \(SWIAS\)](#).

## Key findings

- There is concern about the post COVID-19 backlog of waiting lists, referrals and appointments.
- People's experiences of the same service varies greatly - from much appreciation (for example, about the special dental service) to extreme frustration. SEND Families Voice believe this shows the services aren't providing a consistent enough service.
- SEND Families Voice observed that the survey did not bring up any surprises. "One thing positive about Swindon is that we seem to know where it isn't working well a lot of the time..."
- There is frustration at the length of time it takes to make appointments and see clinicians and have SEND assessments undertaken.
- Amongst families with children with SEND, there is concern about access to carer support and respite.

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<sup>1</sup> The organisations were Parkinson's UK Swindon & District, Swindon & Gloucestershire Mind, The Harbour Project, Swindon SEND Families Voice and Swindon Interactive Arts Service (SWIAS).

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- Mental health services for young people should be a priority - especially TaMHS and CAMHS.
- There is limited knowledge in some groups about Swindon Local Offer and about services available.
- Few participants make GP appointments online. There needs to be more communication about and support to register for online access to primary care services, appointments and prescription renewal. We intend to undertake some work on digital access and understanding of the systems during 2021/22.
- Access to health and care services needs to be maintained for people who have limited or no personal use of online services.
- There is general concern at the length of time people have to wait to get a GP appointment and/or see the clinician of their choice.
- There is frustration at the inability to book, say, three months ahead for a regular blood test or jab.
- Language and interpretation is the number one issue for people whose first language is not English.
- Navigation of health services is a challenge for people new to the country.
- Although not expressed in the survey results, the absence of day services during the Covid-19 period will have been a challenge for those previously attending them.
- Voluntary and community organisations like those undertaking these surveys are essential as part of the support system.

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## Who participated?

263 people completed surveys between 19 March (just before the first Covid 19 lockdown) and 9 December (during the second lockdown)

- Respondents were self-selected contacts of the individual organisations undertaking the surveys with us.
- All Swindon GP practices were represented in the responses
- A small number attend GP practices outside Swindon as not all the organisations limit their membership to Swindon residents.

One person was not registered with a GP practice as they were “waiting for an HC2 certificate”. This is not a pre-requisite in order [to register with a GP practice](#) though delay in issuing or re-issuing HC2 certificates has been a regular problem for visitors to The Harbour Project.

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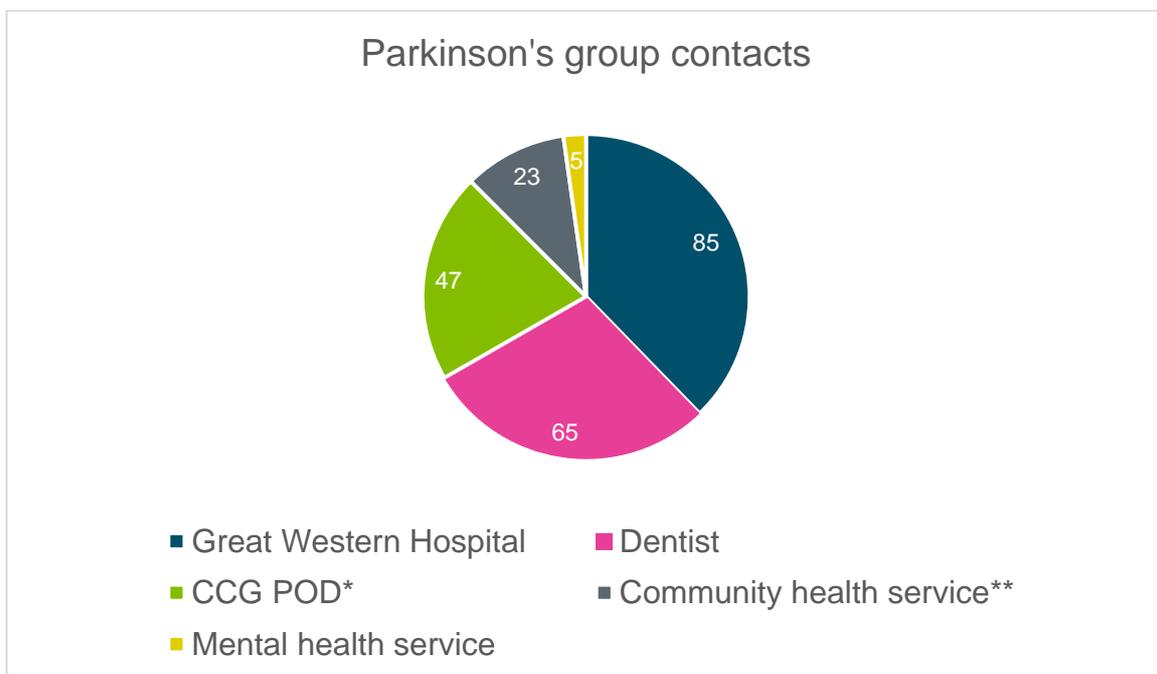
## What did we hear?

We asked how people made appointments at their GP surgery and how easy or difficult they found doing so.

219 made their appointment by telephone, 41 in person and 27 online.

76 people said they found it difficult to make an appointment

Most had experience of using various health and care services during the preceding twelve months in addition to GP surgeries.



\*Clinical commissioning group prescription ordering direct service

\*\* Swindon adult community health including podiatry and continence services

Harbour visitors had been to dentists and Great Western Hospital. Some had used mental health services.

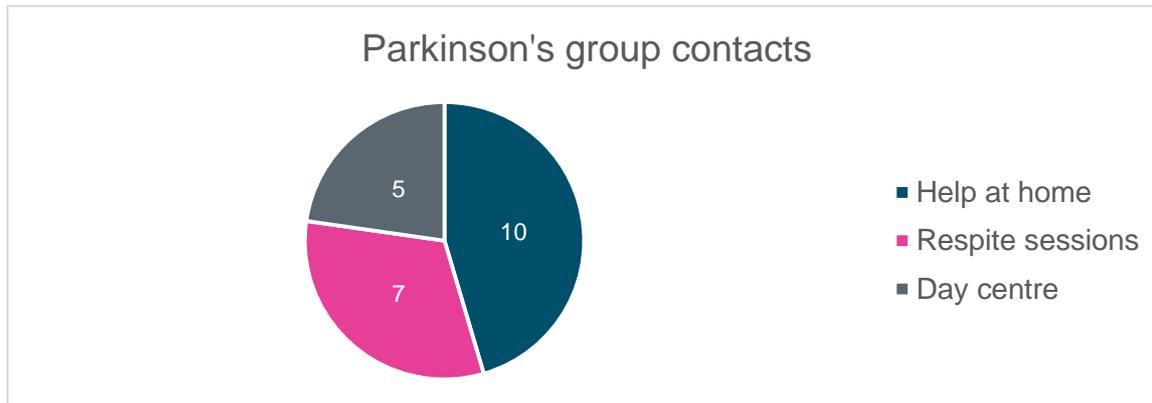
Over 75 SEND Families Voice contacts had been to a dentists and to the hospital. They also had experience of the widest range of services and had been involved with mental health services including TaMHS and CAMHS.

10 out of 11 SwIAS members had used the (specialist/access) dental service and 4 had been to the hospital.

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People’s experience of the same service can be very varied. During the Covid-19 pandemic everyone was adjusting to new ways of working.

## Fewer people told us about the care services they had used:



Swindon Families used respite and day services. Some had Direct Payments support

## We asked people how safe they felt in the local community.

Because our surveys were being carried out by such different agencies with participants from different communities of interest, we expected considerable variation in both interpretation of the question and response to it.

49 out of 50 visitors to The Harbour Project said they felt safe.

86 out of 100 Parkinson’s respondents felt safe. Several people referred to instability because of their Parkinson’s and to the condition of footpaths and roads; several to the consideration given to them by other people aware of their condition

About 20 Swindon SEND Families Voice contacts felt unsafe

“(Ignoring the current pandemic which is terrifying) I am happy to go out and about. My lad’s behaviour can be challenging and sometimes risky, but we manage this well so overall I feel safe.”

9 out of 11 SwIAS felt safe

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Swindon Borough Council and Healthwatch have recently been trying to gauge the extent to which people understand the term “[safeguarding](#)”. Each of our surveys included the question about it.

Overall there was limited understanding of the issue and where to report a concern. Several people said they did not know.

Some people answering the question would have contacted a local agency or professional they were in touch with if they felt someone was at risk. There was little if any specific knowledge of a [single contact point to alert](#).

There was broader understanding of the term by Swindon SEND Families Voice participants

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## What could be better?

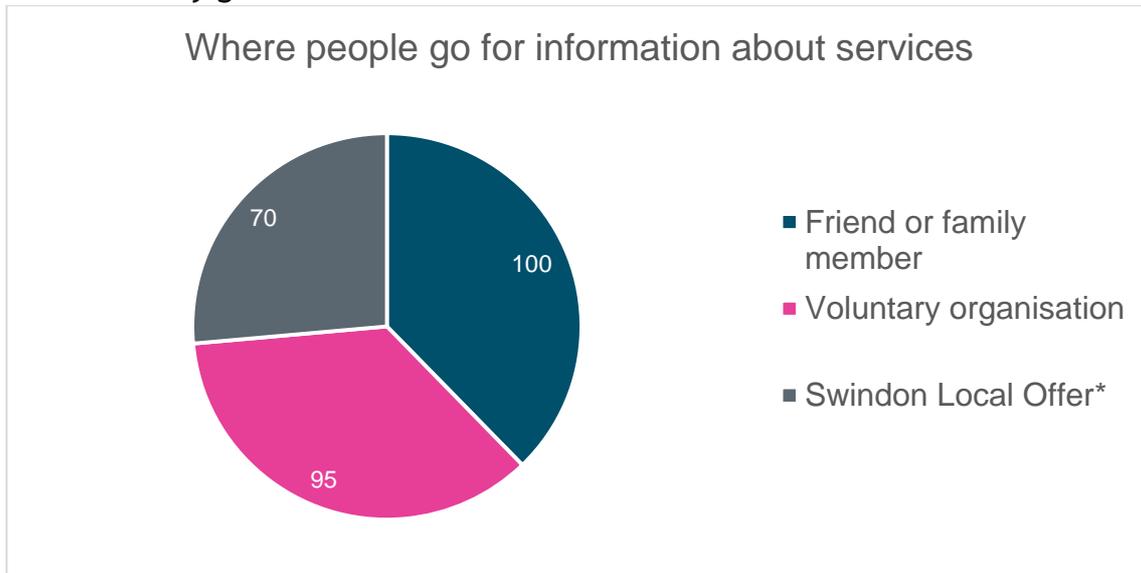
Most people have views about the improvements that could be made to health and care services they use:

- I think would very helpful if there some sort of translating for those who not speak English as I have said I have very poor English and I can't even make an appointment
- Answer the telephone quickly and speak slower so I can understand
- Shorter waiting times, more support for family carers, more co-ordination between services and more funding
- Help improve my medication in not changing the packaging or colour of tablets as this confuses me
- Service on NHS is good if you are in system. You have to fight the good fight with all your might to get into system
- Too many fob offs
- More communication

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## Where do people go for information?

We wanted to find out how familiar people are with the available sources of information about services and where they go to find out more.



70 people completing the survey would use [Swindon Local Offer](#) “a website in Swindon for children & adults who have support needs, giving you correct information and advice at any time”

Others would use the internet.

## We asked what one thing would improve people’s health and wellbeing.

### We opened the floodgates!

- Being free of Parkinson’s featured several times, ♣ others referred to better and quicker access to hospital and physiotherapy appointments, ♣ more physical exercise, ♣ seeing the same GP each time, ♣ home improvements making access easier, ♣ more understanding by others.
- “To stay fit and strong” ♣ “To have less anxiety” ♣ “More communication from services to see what’s available” ♣ “More regular health checks. Not just one per year. Health professionals would listen to my parents more as they know when I am ill and not try hit and miss diagnosis. Then I have to go back to them again when my problem was plain and obvious in the first place” ♣ “To find a full time job to gain more confidence. I am already working voluntary and part time” ♣ “More opportunities in the community”.

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- “One?? Better child mental health services. Appropriate school placements for SEN children. For me? Not having to fight every step of the way to get my son the support he needs to cope and be happy.” ♣ “A school that really understood the implications of ASD and how to support the child. This would definitely help my child, but would also make my life much easier.” ♣ “For my son’s voice to be heard!! I feel it is a never-ending battle and that this gets lost in the process - even with bodies/professionals who should be listening as a matter of course. “There always seems to be another agenda and if it is easier to blame the parent/carer then this is usually attempted!” ♣ “For me, some time, an hour maybe on my own. So a care provider who are trained and capable of looking after them. For my sons, socialisation. My eldest is so ready to play and engage but we have very rare opportunities to do so.” ♣ “More of understanding of his anxiety as the source for behaviours and group respite activities tailored to this.” ♣ “Improve mine would be the LA doing a good job and writing timely EHCPs in accordance with the law without me fighting for support all the time. Just do the job in line with law.” ♣ “More support to meet families in similar situations. As a full time working mum this is hard.” ♣ “Being listened to by ‘professionals’.” ♣ “Someone to work with whole family.” ♣ “Better public transport from our home.” ♣ “Exercise. To lose weight for the both of us.” ♣ “Sleep for me, and my child who doesn’t sleep well.” ♣ “Not have to worry about money and respite when needed.” ♣ “Respite care, I struggle with depression and this reflects on my children.” ♣ “More respite centres. Especially if Hop skip and jump are forced to close.” ♣ “More access to extra curricula activities outside of school for child and respite facilities.” ♣ “Access to free evening childcare to allow hubby and I time together. Faster access to mental health services for my child.” ♣ One person told us “For my health I would say more local parents’ groups where parents/carers of children with disabilities can share experiences. Also talks with different health professionals where I could ask questions, learn more, understand more. Maybe an online portal as well... for parents. Especially work parents that can’t go to the talks. Or do these talks during weekends too. And to improve my little one’s health I would definitely say more special needs groups, special areas where he could develop his fine and gross motor skills, less waiting for appointments, more speech and language appointments... maybe something in a group? Maybe somewhere that parents don’t need a referral and can bring their children to develop while having fun.”
- “I have got pain in my whole body and I can’t explain that because of the language barrier.” ♣ “More healthy eating.” ♣ “To go to more celebrations, parties and group gatherings involving people from my own country and other cultures.” ♣ “I could do more sport/exercise.” ♣ “People in my apartment smoke, I don’t.”

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## Who completed the survey?

- People completing the surveys were aged between 18 and 94.
  - We asked people to identify their gender. 165 people identified as female and 99 as male.
  - All but 6 lived in Swindon postcodes
  - Other demographic information is included in the individual reports
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## Conclusions

- Working with local community organisations which carried out surveys on our behalf helped us hear from people we would not routinely have heard from.
  - We were disappointed that Mind Swindon & Gloucestershire were unable to participate with these surveys. We intend to have a focus on mental health services during 2021/22 and hope to work with Mind then.
  - Delivery of health and social care services was affected by the pandemic but the observations and comments of respondents are just as relevant as if the pandemic had not happened.
  - Ensuring the recommendations reach the planners, commissioners and providers of services remains a challenge and measuring impact is difficult.
  - Nevertheless the reports have been publicised and circulated locally and to Healthwatch England and remain a valuable source of local opinion.
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