



Rye Listening Tour

Engagement Activity Report

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healthwatch
East Sussex

Healthwatch East Sussex Rye Listening Tour 2023

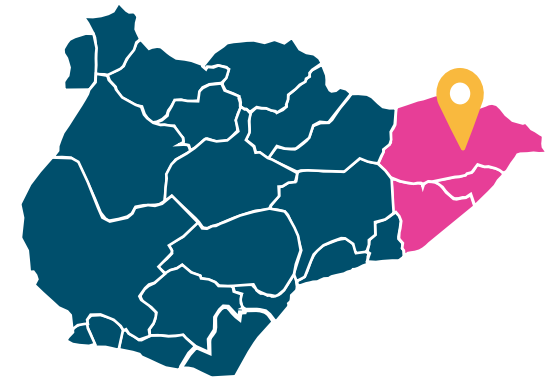
Healthwatch East Sussex (HWES) gathers people's views of health and social care services in East Sussex and makes sure they are heard by the people in charge. Each year we focus on one area of East Sussex to engage with local people and understand their communities in more detail. For 2023, our Listening Tour wanted to hear from people in Rye and the surrounding villages.

Our aims were to:

- Raise the profile of Healthwatch amongst the public, community groups and service providers.
- Use the feedback gained to understand local issues and seek positive developments in health and care services.
- Gain a wide range of feedback from all parts of society to relay to the local health and care system and Healthwatch England.
- Target specific groups to discover their barriers to health and care.

We also wanted to explore:

- Transport and how people access healthcare appointments, taking into account the rural setting.
- Isolation and the impact of living in rural communities.
- The financial impact of rural living.
- How crossing borders may impact on access to health and care.



Engagement Activity

As part of our Listening Tour, we delivered engagement activity across Rye and the surrounding villages to talk to local people about their views and experiences of health and social care services including:

- **6 Pop-up Stands** at – Rye Festival of the Land and Sea, Rye Hospital, Rye Harbour Nature Reserve, Rye Market, Rye Train Station, and Winchelsea Co-op.
- **2 Focus Groups** at – Little Gate Farm and Bartholomew Care Home.
- **3 Activity visits for 1-to-1 conversations** at – Camber Memorial Hall Tea and Cake Drop In, Fairlight Drop In Social Hub and Peasmarsh Lunch Club.
- **1 Networking Event** with representatives from 13 Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise organisations at Tilling Green Community Centre
- **1 Public Survey** which ran from the 11th September to the 15th October for people to complete at events and online.

This report outlines our key findings from these engagement activities and our next steps.

For our overview report with our conclusions and recommendations from across the whole of the Listening Tour please visit our website www.healthwatcheastsussex.co.uk or get in contact via: 0333 101 4008 or enquiries@healthwatcheastsussex.co.uk

Pop-up Stands

As part of our approach to 'meet people where they are' we attended 6 community events and locations with pop-up stands to talk to people about their experiences of health and care.

As well as sharing our Listening Tour survey we also used captured people's views and experiences through 1-2-1 discussion, used a sticker chart to engage people and shared information about HWES and the services we offer.

Key Findings:

During our pop-up stand activity, we heard about a range of experiences including:

- **The impact of having to travel to appointments from rural areas**, with some people raising the challenges associated with accessing patient transport and others being reliant on friends and family to get them to essential appointments due to a lack of local public transport links.
- **People paying for private GP services** due to long waiting times and difficulties in getting appointments.
- **Delays in test results and limited communication** resulting in patients having to spend time often chasing multiple services, leading to confusion and frustration.
- **Multiple issues were raised with phone systems across services**, with:
 - Lengthy phone queues to access GP appointments.
 - Audiology services only being contactable by phone.
 - People being contact by phone even though they are unable to communicate over the phone resulting in things being lost during conversations.
 - No call back times being allocated to phone appointments leaving people waiting by the phone all day.
- **People feeling overwhelmed with too much information** following a diagnosis, making it difficult to find the key information they really needed.



Focus Groups

Volunteers spoke with 7 trainees and staff at **Little Gate Farm**, whose mission is to support people with a learning disability and autism into paid employment. We had an open discussion with trainees in a group setting which allowed everyone to express themselves freely and participate as much or as little as they chose. We spoke with the trainees about nutrition, going to health appointments, oral hygiene and mental health.

Key findings –

- It was clear that trainees understand what good nutrition looked like and what they should be eating, but they were often reliant on others to cook for them so had less control and ability to make good decisions.
- When visiting healthcare providers, communication wasn't always considered or effective. Often carers need to attend appointments as trainees are unable to understand or process the information at the time of the appointment. One trainee who has autism had a problem with his toe and was told by a GP to bathe it in boiled water. No clarification was given to cool the water and the instruction was taken literally, so the trainee ended up with a scalded foot.
- Overall trainees had good access to dental care and attended regular appointments.

Staff and volunteers spoke with residents in a supported accommodation home at **St Bartholomew's Court**.

Key findings –

- Transport both to medical appointments and community activities was identified as an issue; public transport is limited.
- Differences in how residents are funded meant not all residents could access social activities, which left them feeling isolated.
- Loneliness and isolation were identified as an issue for a number of the residents we spoke to.
- Concerns were raised around the way additional services were funded and it wasn't always clear what they had to pay extra for.

1-to-1 Conversations

During the Rye Listening Tour we undertook 1-to-1 conversations with groups in Fairlight, Camber and Peasmarch. We listened to their feedback on experiences of health and social care in their areas.

Key findings –

- Accessing healthcare via public transport is a concern as bus routes and timings have changed. The additional issue of over 65s being unable to use a bus pass before 9.30 means that early appointments are a problem for older people.
- In Fairlight, we were told that the pharmacy has a drop-off service at the Fairlight community centre and that you can pre-book GP appointments to see a doctor in Fairlight rather than traveling to Hastings surgeries, which has a positive impact on people's ability to access services when they need them.
- There is no GP practice site in Camber. They used to have a satellite practice next to the memorial hall (twice weekly) but since Covid this has disappeared. Patients now have to travel to Rye which isn't practical, particularly for elderly patients. This was also noted as leaving people feeling isolated and unable to access the health care they require.

“feels like doctors are no longer visible. They feel absent and not part of the service”

- Some residents told us the digitalisation of GP services was a problem – they feel that whilst it may be good from the GPs' point of view, it doesn't always help the patients and presents a barrier to accessing services. They noted they are used to 'traditional' services, such as speaking to someone on the phone and seeing a doctor face to face, and find it hard to adjust to the new system. They particularly dislike phone consultations.
- Residents said they now have to travel to Bexhill as ophthalmology is no longer available at Conquest Hospital, resulting in longer journeys.
- We heard about poor access to NHS dentistry in the area and also instances of when people have paid for private care and received poor service.
- We heard about concerns regarding a lack of minor injury unit in or near Rye, leading to longer journeys to access services elsewhere.

VCSE Partner Event

We hosted a workshop with representative from 13 organisations working in and around Rye, at Tilling Green Community Centre, to understand their and their services users' experiences of local health and care.

We discussed positive and negative health and care experiences and considered practical solutions that could be implemented to combat issues in the area.

Attendees came from a range of services, including representatives from local voluntary organisations, the NHS, local patient participation groups and the local authority.



Key experiences raised included:

- Local mental health services are not being specialised enough for adults with autism or learning difficulties.
- There are limited services locally for breast/cervical screening.
- Sexual health services are limited for those over the age of 25.
- There is a lack of sexual education for young people.
- There are a lack of adaptations to services to accommodate those who do not fall into the predominantly White-British community.

Some of the practical solutions suggested included:

- Having a central point which can direct people to services such as the East Sussex Community Information Service website.
- Changing the language and in turn reducing the stigma around mental health to encourage people (particularly older people) to access support.
- Not making everything digital to improve access among older people or those who are digitally excluded.
- Having more support for young people in understanding their physical and mental health.
- Having more support for healthy eating.
- Having more networking opportunities between organisations to share learnings and ideas.
- Helping GP practices improve their understanding of adjustments they can make to cater to those with learning difficulties.
- Improving transport links within the community, particularly between Rye and outside villages.

Survey

Between the 11th September and 15th October 2023 we ran a public survey to gather the health and care experiences of people in Rye and the surrounding villages. An electronic version of our survey was widely distributed through our newsletter, bulletins, social media, staff, volunteers and partner networks. We also distributed hard copies of the survey at engagement events throughout the Listening Tour. Paper versions were available, with staff on hand to complete the survey online or over the telephone.

107 responses were received by the 15th October deadline.

Our Respondents:

- Nearly three-quarters of respondents (70.1%) had not heard of Healthwatch at the time of the survey.
- The greatest proportion of respondents (43.0%) lived inside Rother District but outside Rye, with 38.3% from Rye.
- Most respondents (69.1%) were aged 65 and older, with 26.1% of working age (18–64). No responses were received from anyone aged under 18.
- 77.6% of respondents identified as White British.
- 57.9% of respondents identified as having a disability or long-term condition.
- 66.4% of respondents identified as a woman.
- 17.8% of respondents identified that they were a carer.



The poster features a background image of a harbor with wooden piers and boats. At the top right is the Healthwatch East Sussex logo. A large orange and blue curved banner across the middle contains the text 'Tell us your experiences of health and care in Rye'. Below this, the text states: 'Our 2023 Listening Tour is capturing views and experiences from people in Rye and the surrounding villages. We want to hear:' followed by three green circular icons and their corresponding questions. Further down, it says 'Survey closes on October 15th 2023' and 'Complete our survey:' with a URL. Below that, it identifies Healthwatch East Sussex as the local independent watchdog. Contact information including a website, email, and phone number is provided. A QR code is on the right. At the bottom, it mentions a free post address and a confidentiality statement.

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Tell us your experiences of health and care in Rye

Our 2023 Listening Tour is capturing views and experiences from people in Rye and the surrounding villages. We want to hear:

- Your experiences of local health and care services
- Whether local health and care services are meeting your needs?
- How you feel health, care and wellbeing support could be improved?

Survey closes on October 15th 2023

Complete our survey:
<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/RyeLT2023/>

Healthwatch East Sussex are the local independent watchdog for those using health and care service in East Sussex

www.healthwatcheastsussex.co.uk/rye-listening-tour-2023/
enquiries@healthwatcheastsussex.co.uk
0333 101 4007

You can also download and print the survey via our website and return via our freepost address (address included in the survey)

Anything you tell us will be kept in the strictest confidence and your personal details will not be shared with anyone

Survey – key findings

What respondents told us about health and care:

- Most respondents (95.3%) accessed health and care services in East Sussex, with only a very small proportion accessing them in Kent (0.9%).
- Respondents rated more health services as Excellent/Good more frequently than Satisfactory/Poor.

| | Excellent/Good | Satisfactory/Poor |
|--------------|----------------|-------------------|
| GP practices | 54.2% | 36.4% |
| Hospitals | 47.7% | 16.8% |
| NHS dentist | 38.3% | 23.4% |
| NHS 111 | 16.8% | 10.3% |
| Opticians | 46.7% | 3.7% |
| Pharmacy | 57.9% | 14.0% |
| Vax services | 57.9% | 3.7% |

- Very few respondents completed the questions rating experiences of social care services. The highest was 15 responses for Adult Social Care, with 12 people rating it as Excellent/Good and 3 as Satisfactory/Poor.
- The greatest proportion of respondents (38.3%) felt that health and care services had remained the same over the last 12 months based on their direct experiences. 34.6% felt they had got worse, and 7.5% felt they had got better.
- Most respondents:
 - Travelled 2 to 5 miles to their GP (50.5%)
 - Travelled 2 to 5 miles to their Dentist (37.4%)
 - Travelled 2 to 5 miles to their Optician (16.8%)
 - Travelled 11+ miles to the Hospital (37.4%)
 - Travelled 0 to 1 miles to their Pharmacy/Chemist (45.8%)

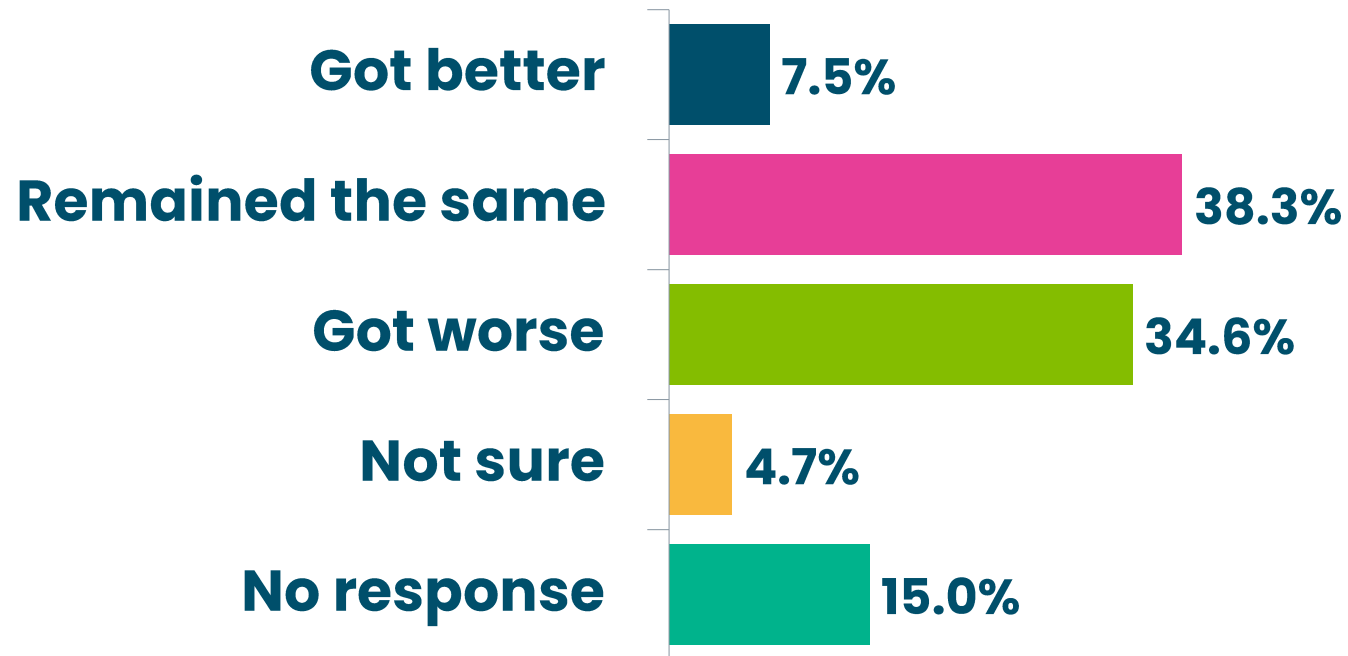
Survey – key findings

What respondents told us about health and care:

- The barrier to accessing services identified by the greatest proportion of respondents was that public transport was challenging (24.3%).
 - 23.3% of respondents had to rely on someone else for transport.
- Approximately a third of respondents (35.5) were 'quite confident' about accessing health and care services when they need them. A further 29.9% were 'unsure', 15.9% were 'not confident at all' and 13.1% were 'very confident'.
- Approximately half of the respondents (49.5%) felt their physical wellbeing has 'got a lot worse'/'got a bit worse' over the last 12 months.
- Approximately a quarter of the respondents (27.1%) felt their mental wellbeing has 'got a lot worse'/'got a bit worse' over the last 12 months.
- 14.0% of respondents rarely or never undertake physical exercise.
- 14.0% of respondents rarely or never engage in social or leisure activities.
- 20.5% of respondents rarely or never participate in community events.
- 42.1% of respondents often or sometimes feel isolated from others.
- 25.3% of respondents often or sometimes have no one to talk to.
- 33.6% of respondents often or sometimes feel lonely.
- Since the cost-of-living crisis began:
 - 37.4% of respondents were putting on more clothes to stay warm.
 - 32.7% of respondents were turning off appliances to save on costs.
 - 31.8% of respondents were not turning on their heating when they usually would.
 - 18.7% of respondents were avoiding going to the dentist to save money.

Survey – key findings

What has your direct experience of local health or care services been over the last 12 months:



Survey – what people told us

“Felt safe and respected at Conquest hospital”

“Bring back community GPs in village halls”

“Advanced nurse practitioner at GP surgery filling a vital gap for which [I] am very grateful.”

“We badly need the Dr Surgery back in Icklesham in the Hall.”

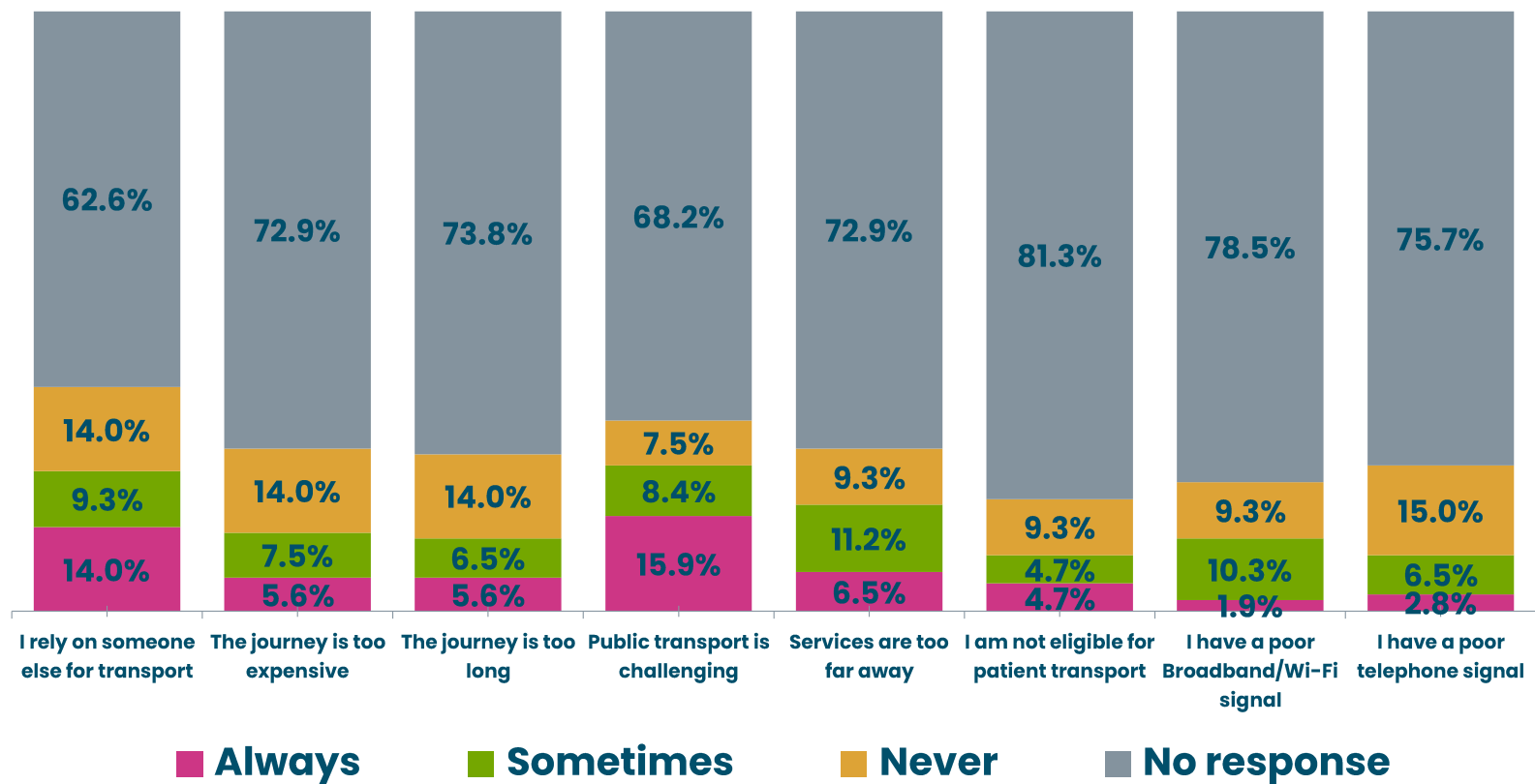
“Despite the strain on health services and those that work within them, almost every professional I have seen has been kind, friendly and professional”

“Day Centre Rye Hub, provides a good meal at a reasonable price. Somewhere I can meet new people and socialise, if it wasn't for these places I would be stuck indoors lonely.”

“Pharmacy comes to village hall twice a week with patient medication”

Survey – key findings

I have missed or may miss health or appointments because



Survey – what people told us

“Need a medical hub in the Rye area as we are quite rural. Somewhere where we can get X rays, check ups, blood tests, basic treatments etc. quickly without travelling to Hastings or further.”

“The doctor used to visit Camber once a week, now they don't. Feel pushed between services.”

“Cannot find an NHS dentist in Rye area. I have to go to a practice in Lydd, Kent as a private patient.”

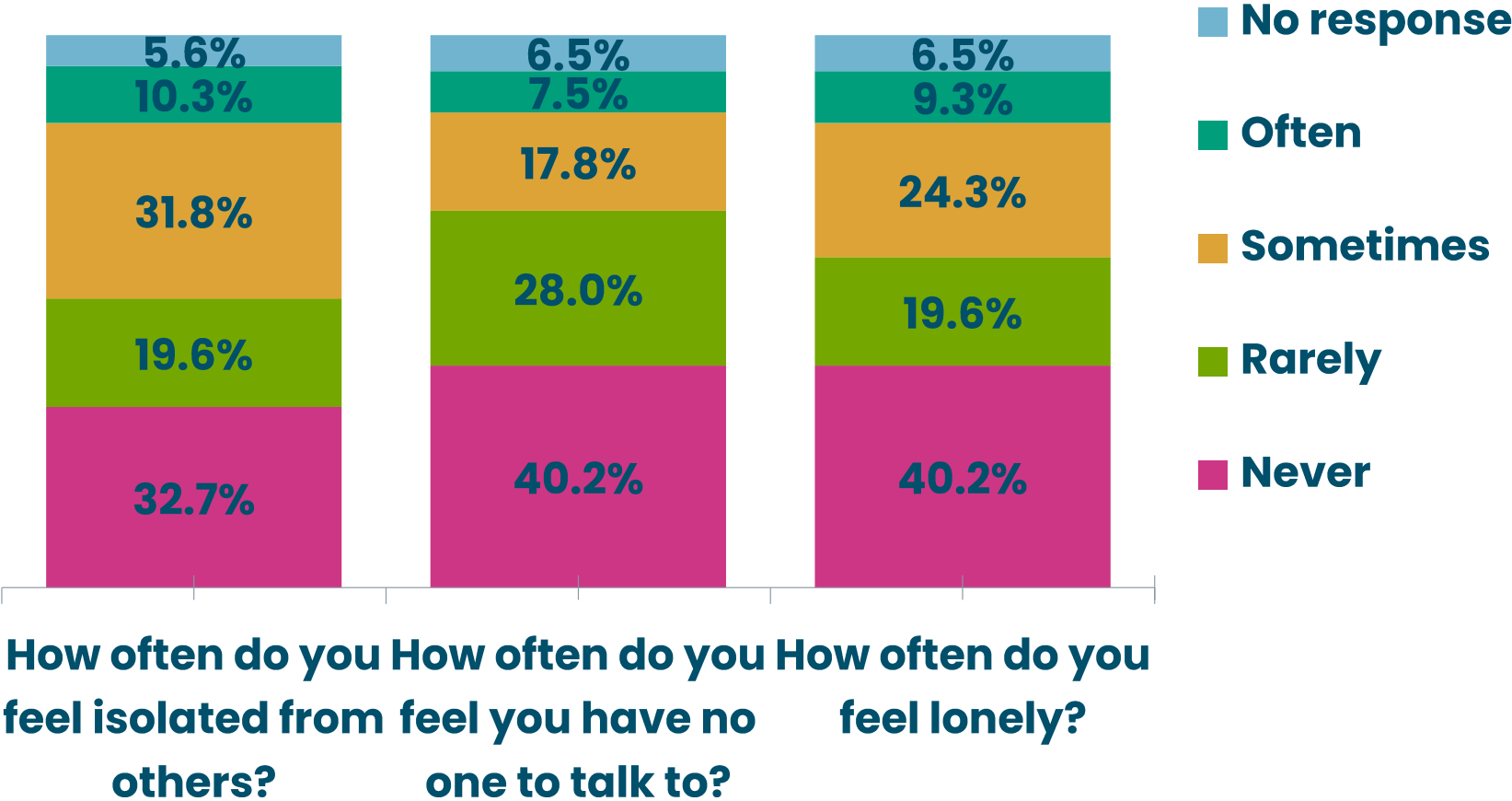
“[Need to bring] The Drs back in Icklesham it costs too much in a taxi to Rye Medical Centre.”

“A lot of services are based in Bexhill or Hastings which are far away and difficult to access by public transport.”

“More transport options to healthcare appointments”

Survey – key findings

Please tell us about your social connections:



Healthwatch East Sussex Engagement Conclusions

- People in Rye and rural Rother have many similar concerns to those shared with us by other East Sussex residents: primarily challenges in timely access to health and care appointments, especially GPs and dentists.
- Concerns about transport were raised by residents throughout our engagement activity. Due to the rural location of some areas and the distances patients and the public were having to travel, poor public transport provision and difficulty in accessing patient transport services impacts people's ability to access and health and care services.
- A lack of screening services locally was reported by residents. In particular, breast cancer screening, sexual health and cervical screening were raised as being limited, with people having to travel outside of the area to access these services.
- A shared interest in VCSE collaboration to improve health outcomes locally was expressed by partners during our engagement.
- Commonly-raised issues heard elsewhere – including concerns about accessing GP appointments via lengthy phone queues, difficulties in accessing NHS dentists and long delays to access hospital referrals – were shared by residents.
- The cost of living was noted as impacting people's physical and mental wellbeing. People told us about putting on more clothes to stay warm, turning off appliances to save on costs and avoiding going to the dentist to save money.
- A lack of services in the Camber area, particularly following the closure of the GP branch surgery run from the memorial hall has resulted in patients feeling isolated.
- Communication from service staff to patients was raised as not always being effective or considered; in particular, patients with communication and information needs raised that these weren't always acknowledged, recorded or accommodated.



For more information

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