



Patient Experiences of the Sussex Surgical Centre

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healthwatch
East Sussex

Patient Experiences of Sussex Surgical Centre

East Sussex Healthcare Trust (ESHT) received £22.5 million from NHS England's Elective Recovery Plan with additional funding coming from NHS Sussex to construct a new elective surgery hub. The Sussex Surgical Centre opened in September 2025 and is located at Eastbourne District General Hospital. It offers state-of-the-art care for day surgery patients across all ESHT surgical specialties.

The Centre features four operating theatres, comprehensive pre-assessment, admission, and recovery areas and will deliver around 7,000 planned procedures each year. Operating ten hours a day, five days a week, patients are able to undergo their procedure and return home to recover the same day.

The creation of this new facility has increased local capacity for same-day elective surgery, and also freed up existing theatres to carry out complex procedures. Healthwatch East Sussex worked together with ESHT to arrange a visit to the site and gather feedback from patients on their experience of this new facility.

What did we do?

Healthwatch volunteers visited the Sussex Surgical Centre on 11th February 2026 to undertake an environmental audit.

ESHT staff delivered 125 surveys into the discharge packs of patients following their surgery.

What were our aims?

- To undertake an accessibility audit of the Sussex Surgical Centre, and identify any areas for improvement.
- To gather feedback from 30 patients on their experience of the Sussex Surgical Centre, including their referral, journey to the site, and experiences of care.
- To collate the data recorded into a report and make recommendations to ESHT on any actions to improve the patient experience of the environment and of patient care.

Patient Survey

Healthwatch East Sussex liaised with East Sussex Healthcare Trust (ESHT) on the development of a patient survey to gather feedback on patient experiences of the Sussex Surgical Centre. It was agreed that this was the most appropriate way to obtain feedback from patients undergoing a same day procedure.

The patient survey covered the following aspects of their experience:

- Patient information
- Travelling to and from the Sussex Surgical Centre
- Reception
- Inside the Sussex Surgical Centre
- Discharge
- Evaluation

ESHT staff delivered an initial batch of 50 patient surveys into patient discharge packs, and further batch of 75 surveys with a closing date of 10th May 2026. Healthwatch received 25 completed surveys by post, and 5 completed electronic surveys. All surveys were completed by patients with lived experience of the Sussex Surgical Centre.

Patient Information				
Patients were asked to rate the patient information they received before their visit to the Sussex Surgical Centre				
	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
How to get to the Sussex Surgical Centre	76.67%	10.00%	10.00%	3.33%
	23	3	3	1
What would happen on the day	76.67%	16.67%	3.33%	3.33%
	23	5	1	1
How to prepare for your procedure	76.67%	23.33%		
	23	7		
What you needed to bring with you	73.33%	20.00%	3.33%	3.33%
	22	6	1	1
Support available to help you attend the Surgical Centre	73.33%	16.67%	10.00%	
	22	5	3	

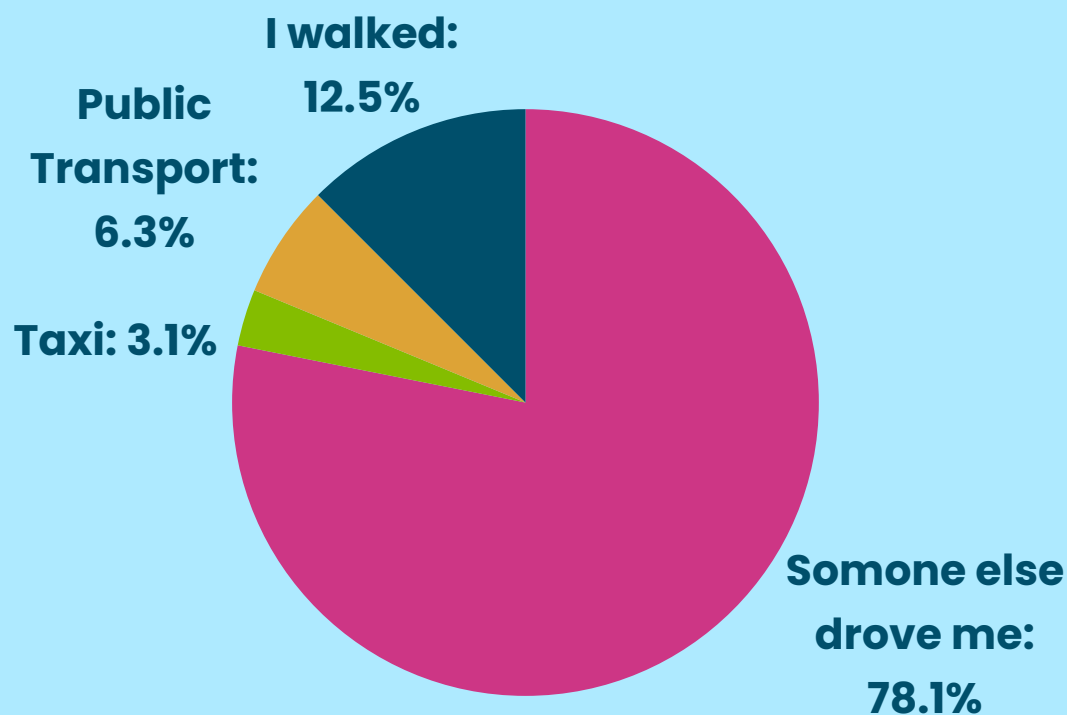
Patient Survey

Patients were largely happy with the information they received prior to their procedure.

- One patient suggested it would be helpful to have information on the parking available next to the Sussex Surgical Centre.
- One patient reported they brought a dressing gown and slippers, as per their instructions, but this was not necessary.

Travelling to and from the Sussex Surgical Centre

Patients were asked how they travelled to the Sussex Surgical Centre



Whilst the majority of patients are driven by someone else to their procedure at the Sussex Surgical Centre, some people walked to their appointment or used public transport and taxis.

- Two patients commented that it was helpful to have a bus stop directly outside the hospital.
- One patient noted that she walked to her appointment and was then picked up by her husband after surgery.

Patient Survey

Travelling to and from the Sussex Surgical Centre

Patients were asked how easy it was to get to and from the Centre

	Very easy	Easy	Neither	Difficult	Very difficult
Travelling to the Surgical Centre	83.33% 25	13.33% 4	3.33% 1		
Finding the Surgical Centre	73.33% 22	16.67% 5	6.67% 2	3.33% 1	
Getting into the Surgical Centre	80.00% 24	10.00% 3	10.00% 3		
Getting to your transport home	80.00% 24	10.00% 3	10.00% 3		

"All the entrances to the hospital are confusing. The surgical centre is behind the hospital and quite hidden from view. It deserves far better signage for the important work it carries out."

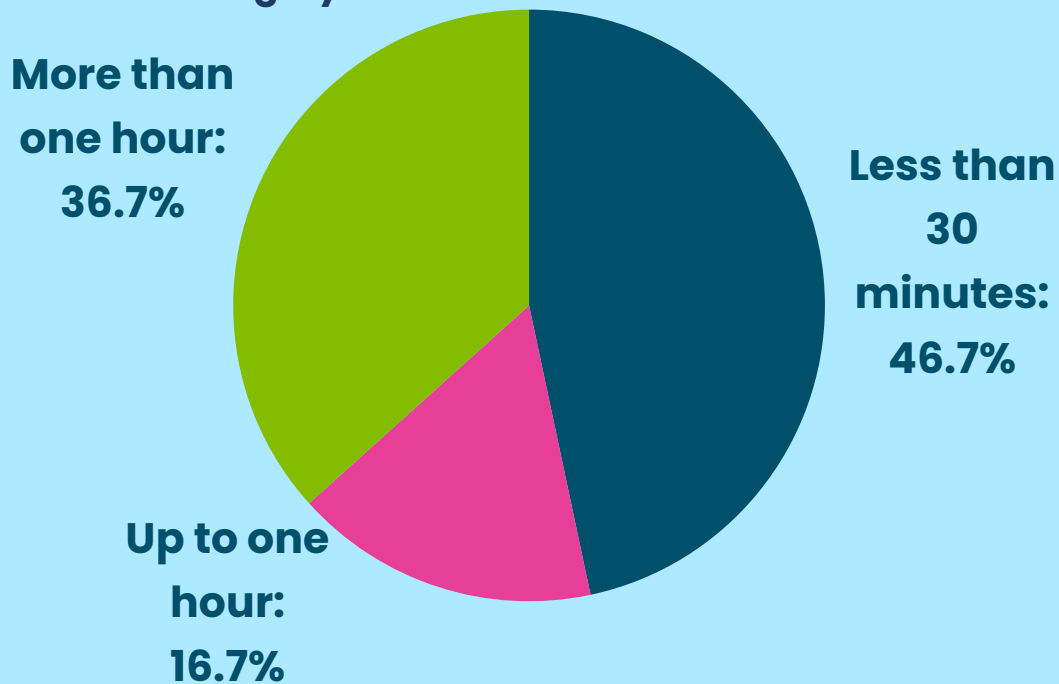
"My husband was able to pull up at the front door and wait for me. I was assisted out to the car "

"My partner came to collect me at approximately 4.15pm after the phone call to say I could go home. Unfortunately, there was no one on reception for him to tell that he had arrived. I could not be taken off the ward until he was there."

Patient Survey

Reception

Patients were asked how long they waiting in reception before their assessment and surgery.



"Assessment was within half an hour, surgery within 2 hours. My wife was welcomed as an important part of my surgery and recovery."

"I waited up to one hour of my assessment, but 4 hours for my surgery. The waiting room chairs are uncomfortable for long waits."

"The appointment time was changed from 7.30am to 12.00 noon but wasn't carried out until 4pm. First in and last to leave at 7.30pm!"

Patient Survey

Reception

Patients were asked about the support they received before their procedure.

	Yes	No	Can't remember
Have enough time to read and complete any paperwork	100% 30		
Have an opportunity to ask questions	100% 30		
Have support to complete paperwork	70.00% 21	26.67% 8	3.33% 1

The patient survey did not distinguish between those who needed support to complete paperwork, and those who did not. The feedback suggests that patients did feel supported before their procedures.

Inside the Sussex Surgical Centre

Patients were asked how they felt during their treatment at the Sussex Surgical Centre

	All of the time	Most of the time	Some of the time	Never
Feel comfortable	96.67% 29	3.33% 1		
Feel listened to	93.33% 28	6.67% 2		
Feel cared for and safe	96.67% 29	3.33% 1		

Patient Survey

Many patients commented on how they felt during their treatment inside the Sussex Surgical Centre.

"Excellent care from start to finish by every member of staff. Well done and thank you."

"Every member of the team were helpful, cheerful, knowledgeable, and efficient."

"The overall team from start to finish were absolutely stunning. Thank you so much "

"Everyone I met during my visit was wonderful. They are a credit to the NHS"

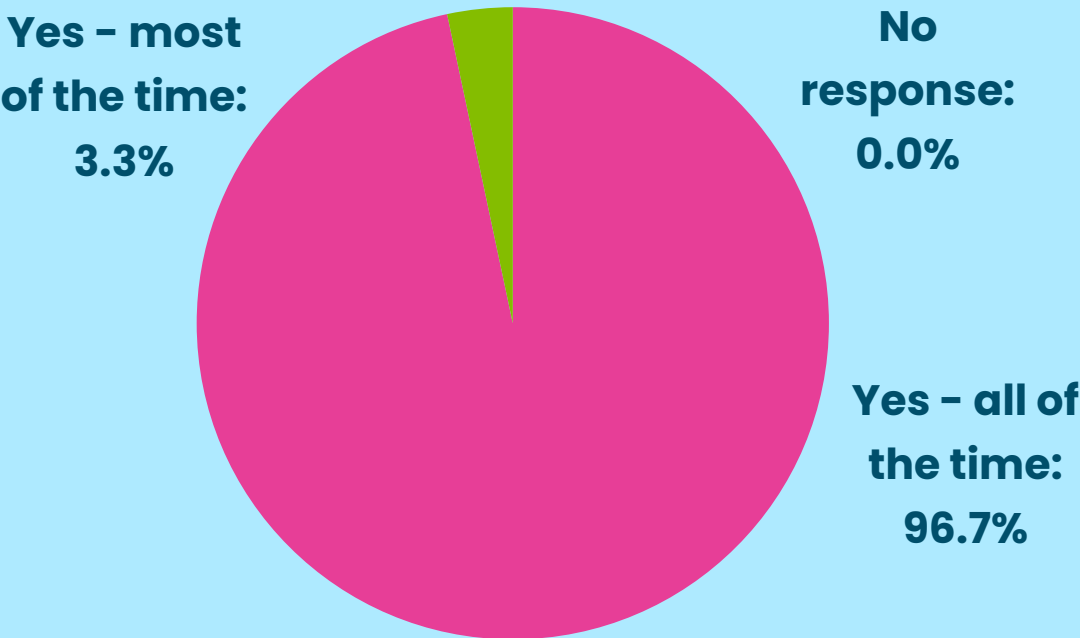
"Wow! What a team! From all those in theatre to recovery I was so well looked after. "

"I did feel a bit lost waiting 5 hours in reception. I did not know what was happening and when I would go for my operation. "

Patient Survey

Inside the Sussex Surgical Centre

Patients were asked if they felt the Sussex Surgical Centre met their individual needs.



Discharge

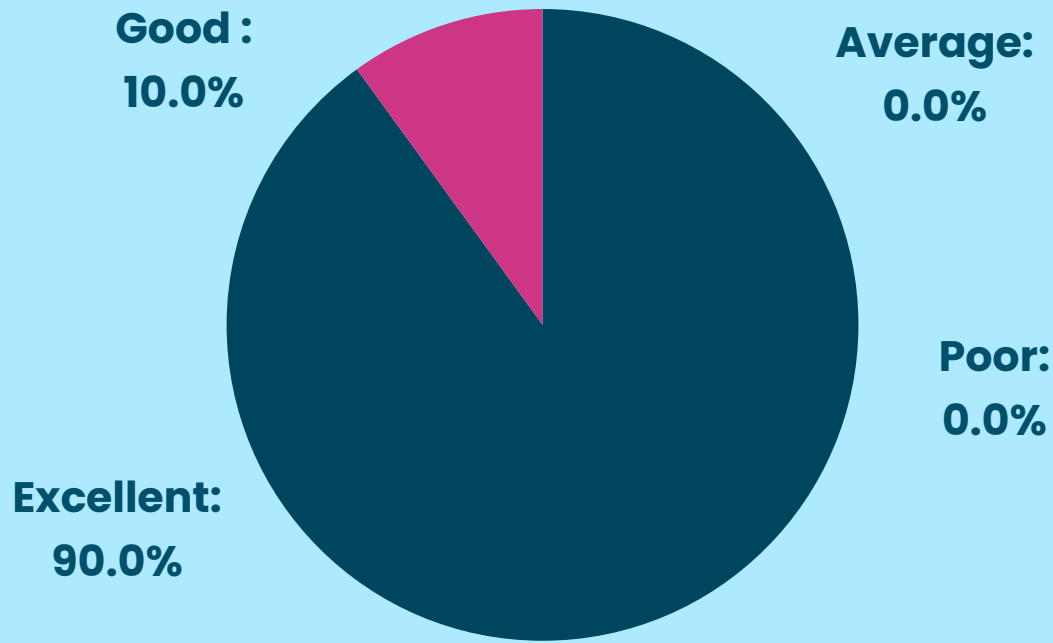
Patients were asked about staff support before they left the Sussex Surgical Centre.

	Yes	No	Can't remember
Explain what would happen next	100%		
Answer any questions you had (if applicable)	100%		
Tell you who to contact if you needed help	96.67% 29	3.33% 1	

Patient Survey

Evaluation

Patients were asked to rate their overall experience of the Sussex Surgical Centre



Patients were asked what was good about their experience.

"My whole experience from the initial test that highlighted an issue has been excellent. Communication has been good, appointments booked quickly, and means I've had less time to worry about things. All staff I've encountered have been kind, personable and very human. Thank you"

"I was made comfortable and calm as this was my first time under general anaesthetic. So greatly appreciated."

"One big thing: care drop off and collect is a big improvement compared to the main hospital. Brilliant. Easy to get in and out of the car from the Surgical Centre and can park easily."

Patient Survey

Evaluation

"The centre was state of the art, clean and well equipped. The staff were all kind and professional but listened to me. My care was excellent. Eastbourne is lucky to have such a great unit available to them and reduce waiting times."

Patients were asked what could be improved.

"It would have been helpful to have address and postcode for the location."

"Very difficult to find anything to say apart from the uncomfortable chairs if you are waiting hours for your surgery, but I understand the need for them being cleaned after."

"WiFi was impossible, ordering a taxi was not possible without stepping outside."

"Sticking to the schedule for the treatments as the appointment was changed to the afternoon. I particularly asked to be seen early to fit in with recovery and return transport. As it turned out I was changed to last and then had little time to recover from bleeding before leaving"

"I did feel a bit lost between assessment and my operation - waiting in reception for 5 hours. I did not know what was happening. Maybe someone could have popped out to advise / reassure me what was happening. Otherwise it was excellent."

Environmental Audit

Healthwatch East Sussex liaised with East Sussex Healthcare Trust (ESHT) on the development of an environmental audit tool for Healthwatch volunteers to observe the patient environment.

The audit tool was informed by the NHS England [Fifteen Steps Challenge](#), including additional questions from the NHS England [Patient-Led Assessments of the Care Environment \(PLACE\)](#) and Healthwatch previous accessibility audits of [Eastbourne GP surgeries](#).

Healthwatch staff consulted representatives from the Sanctuary Café in Eastbourne, and East Sussex Vision Support on the observation of patients who may have additional needs.

Two pairs of Healthwatch volunteers and staff visited the Sussex Surgical Centre on 11th February 2026 to make observations.

External Audit of Sussex Surgical Centre

Signage: There was no signage from the main road or hospital entrance to identify the Sussex Surgical Centre building at the time of the audit.

Main Car Park: The patient journey from the main public car park around the front of the hospital to the Sussex Surgical Centre needs to be reviewed.

Patients walk past an ongoing work area around the back of ambulances. There was a drainage problem to the left of the Urgent Treatment Centre. The path past Radiology is wide enough for a wheelchair but has confusing tactile areas. Patients using the path to the Surgical Centre have to detour approximately 100 feet from a road junction to drop down curbs.

Surgical Centre Car Park: The parking is confusing. There are about five parking spaces for patients, but adjacent to a sign that says NHS staff only. There is only one disabled parking bay for patients.

- It is suggested that there should be a minimum of three disabled parking bays.

Environmental Audit

External Audit of Sussex Surgical Centre

Surgical Centre Drop Off: There is a pull in bay for drop-offs and pick-ups, but there is no signage in place to indicate this. The pick-up and drop-off area is not clearly marked and was painted with double yellow lines at the time of the audit. There is no disabled parking adjacent to the entrance.

Access to the Surgical Centre: There are handrails in place to support patients down a short flight of steps to the main entrance. There is a gentle slope for people who use wheelchairs. There is no external seating outside or under cover. There is a canopy for shelter from rain.

Entrance: There are automatic sliding doors with space to open. There are mats inside the entrance doors that are non-slip in colour contrast materials.

There is no signage at eye level outside the patient entrance to the Sussex Surgical Centre. There are two signs asking patients to check in at the reception desk once inside the centre.

- It is suggested that a sign be put on the side wall beside the entrance doors at eye level.

Arrival Inside (welcoming)

First Impressions: The reception area is bright, well-lit, airy and spacious, with local artwork on the walls. The reception area is very quiet. There was no sound or music at the time of the audit.

The reception desk itself is not particularly welcoming as patients only see the black back of computer screens. It would benefit from a sign that says "Welcome to the Sussex Surgical Centre".

The staff behind the raised area of reception may not be able to see the entrance, and so may not be aware of patients with additional needs arriving. There is no way to call staff if there is no one on the reception desk.

Environmental Audit

Arrival Inside (welcoming)

Accessibility: There is a lower accessible counter height for patients who use wheelchairs, but a bin was placed in the space for wheelchair access at the time of the audit, which needs to be clear at all times.

The receptionist was not aware of a hearing loop for patients with hearing impairments, and there was no signage for one.

Patient Information: There are signs offering patients a chaperone for physical examinations, but there was no additional patient information in alternative formats at the reception desk.

There is no positive bright information signage, and the television screen for patient information was not working at the time of the audit.

- It is suggested that the television screen be used to provide more patient information or entertainment for people waiting.
- It is suggested that there is some music in reception to make it feel more welcoming for patients.

Waiting Area (caring and involving)

Communication: A Healthwatch representative observed a warm interaction between a member of staff and a patient. The nurse asked the patient how she was with a friendly approach.

Staff are very efficient with the booking in process. Staff use patient's first names and support them to navigate around the centre.

A family member supported one patient with some paperwork. Patients are supported by staff or carers to the pre-assessment area. There is a dedicated sensory recovery area for patients who have sensory needs.

Environmental Audit

Waiting Area (caring and involving)

Seating: The seating is quite stark and uncomfortable. There are no seats of different sizes. The seats are all of the same design with no arms to support transfers. The seating is generally adequate for a short period, but uncomfortable for a long wait. It is quite hard to transfer to a standing position for someone with reduced mobility.

One patient was waiting in the reception area for a long time, from approximately 8.30am to 10.20am. This was quite a long wait in the uncomfortable seating with no information to read or music to listen to.

There were several spaces for wheelchairs or assistance dogs.

Patient Information and Feedback: There was very limited information for patients, including regarding their choices. There was some signage about sipping liquids, and some signs offering the choice to have a chaperone.

There was no information about giving feedback, or how to make a complaint. There was a general lack of opportunity to give feedback after people have their procedures.

Signage and Toilets (well organized and calm)

Organisation: The Sussex Surgical Centre feels like a calm environment. It is visibly clean and uncluttered. What equipment that could be seen was stored correctly in appropriate places, apart from the bin blocking the wheelchair accessible reception desk.

Signage: The signs for reception are reasonably large, with white text on a blue background. Signs should ideally have black text on a yellow or orange background.

The signage for the toilet was above the door but did make use of imagery. The toilet doors were a visually consistent colour.

Environmental Audit

Signage and Toilets (well organized and calm)

Toilets: There are clear pictures fixed to the toilet doors.

There are colour contrasts for toilet seats, flush handles and rails in a colour that contrasts with the toilet and bathroom walls and floor in both the disabled toilet and unisex toilet.

The disabled toilet has 36-inch door and 1m turning circle for wheelchairs. It also has a logical layout, with toilet roll within reach of the toilet.

Communicating with people who have additional needs.

Patient Information : There is no visible patient information about different languages, or evidence of information in alternative formats or languages. There is a poster indicating that patients may have support from a chaperone for physical examinations.

There is no signage regarding information in large print, or easy read information. The patient information screen in place is not currently working.

- It is suggested that there needs to be an information board with some patient information about accessing help for additional needs.

Staffing: There was always a member of staff present when Healthwatch volunteers were observing reception. The staff may not be able to see the front door when seated behind their computer screen in the main area.

Surgical Centre staff support patients with sensory or mobility needs to find their way around. Some family members wait for patients if they are only having an assessment.

Summary of Feedback

The feedback provided by the patient survey is very positive about their experiences of the Sussex Surgical Centre, with 90% rating their overall experience as excellent.

The Healthwatch volunteers who conducted the environmental audit are experienced PLACE (Patient Led Assessment of the Care Environment) volunteers with ESHT and so brought a critical eye to the patient environment of the Sussex Surgical Centre.

Their combined feedback can be summarised as follows:

Patient Information: Patients were broadly happy with the information they received prior to their procedure, but there was a suggestion this should include information on the parking next to the Sussex Surgical Centre.

Travelling to and from the Sussex Surgical Centre: Patients are largely driven by someone else to their appointment, but a significant minority use a combination of walking, taxis and public transport.

There was positive patient feedback about the parking adjacent to the Sussex Surgical Centre, and the drop-off / pick-up point outside the Centre.

Healthwatch volunteers observed that patient parking could be clearer signposted both at entrance to the hospital and in the Centre car park, which only had one disabled parking bay. The drop-off / pick-up point was not signposted at the time of the audit and had a double yellow line around it.

Healthwatch volunteers observed that the walk from the main hospital car park to the Sussex Surgical Centre outside the front of the hospital is not ideal. This suggests that patients should be advised to use the parking and drop-off point adjacent to the Centre, which has received positive feedback.

Summary of Feedback

Reception: The patient feedback on support people received in reception was positive. Whilst the majority of people reported waiting less than an hour in reception, a significant minority (36.7%) waited more than one hour, and in some cases significantly longer. Not all patients were kept informed of what was happening.

Healthwatch volunteers observed that the waiting area had a clinical feel, with limited visual patient information, and no music in reception. Volunteers and patients observed that the seating was functional for infection control, but uncomfortable for long waits where treatment was scheduled later in the day.

There is limited visible information for patients with additional communication needs, and no hearing loop in reception. Whilst patients with additional needs are identified at pre-assessment appointments, reception staff may not be able to see them arriving from behind the reception desk.

Inside the Sussex Surgical Centre: There is overwhelmingly positive patient feedback about the care and treatment people received whilst inside the Sussex Surgical Centre. Almost every patient survey respondent confirmed they felt their individual needs had been met, which is a significant achievement for ESHT staff. The patient comments on their treatment is a tribute to the staff team.

Discharge: There is very positive patient feedback about the support people received around their discharge. There was always a receptionist present during the visit by Healthwatch volunteers, but there was one report of a patient's partner arriving to pick them up after surgery and being unable to contact the recovery ward.

It would be helpful for patients to be able to call a taxi from reception to return home, as there is poor Wi-Fi signal in this area.

Evaluation: The patient survey feedback confirms a very positive evaluation of the overall patient experience, with 90% of patients rating their experience as excellent, and 10% rating their experience as good. Many patients were very grateful for the treatment they received.

Recommendations

Recommendations for East Sussex Healthcare Trust (ESHT)

1. **Patient Information** should clearly signpost patients to the parking and drop off / pick up points adjacent to the Sussex Surgical Centre rather than the main hospital car park.
2. **Sussex Surgical Centre Parking:** ESHT should consider increasing the number of patient spaces, and clearly identifying them, including up to 3 disabled parking spaces. The drop off / pick up point needs to be clearly signposted, and the double yellow lines removed.
3. **Reception:** ESHT should consider installing a sign for the Sussex Surgical Centre at eye level on the side wall beside the entrance doors. The receptionist needs to clearly see patients arriving who may have additional needs.
4. **Reception:** ESHT should consider improving the visual patient information available, including information available in other formats, the translation service, and how to leave feedback. ESHT should consider installing a hearing loop at reception.
5. **Reception:** ESHT should consider how to make the waiting time as comfortable as possible for those waiting more than one hour. This should include keeping patients informed of what's happening and ideally playing music or putting on a television with subtitles.
6. **Reception:** ESHT should consider installing a call bell system on reception so that patients or carers are able to draw attention to their arrival if reception is temporarily unstaffed. ESHT should consider installing a telephone to call a taxi from reception as the Wi-Fi in this area is very limited.

Recommendations for Healthwatch East Sussex

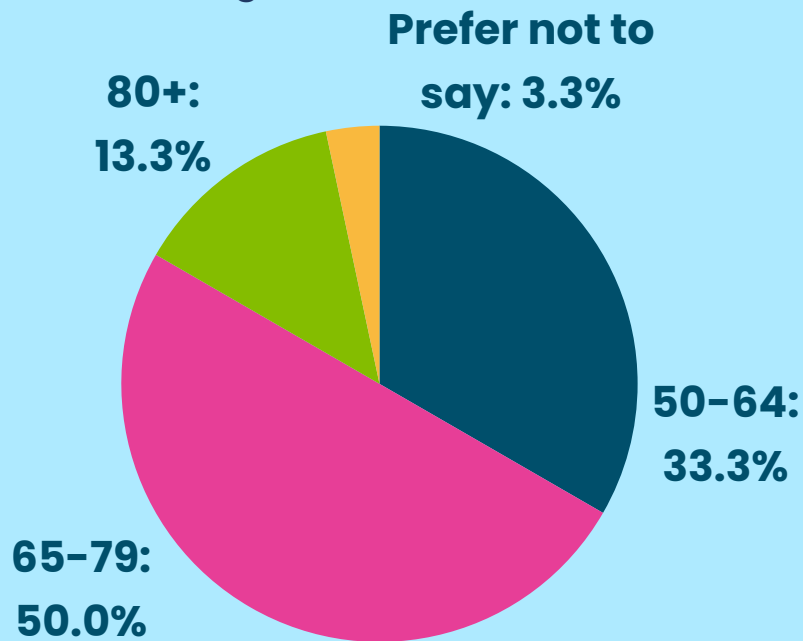
7. Healthwatch will work with ESHT to identify further opportunities to record patient feedback and observe patient experience of the care environment.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Data

All participants who completed the Patients Survey were asked to provide some information about themselves.

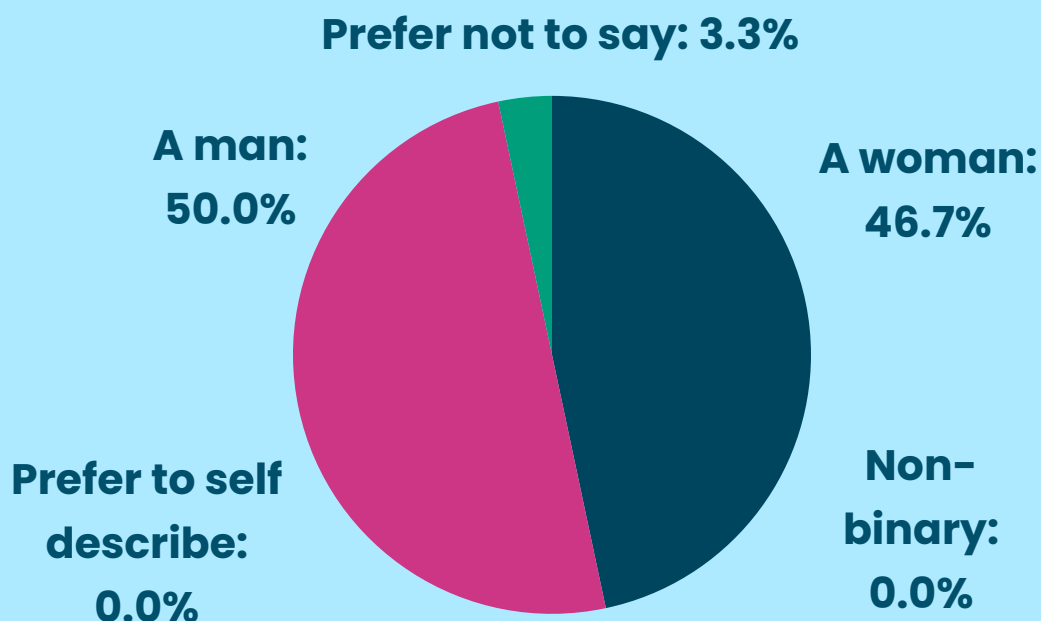
Age

Patients were asked their age.



Gender

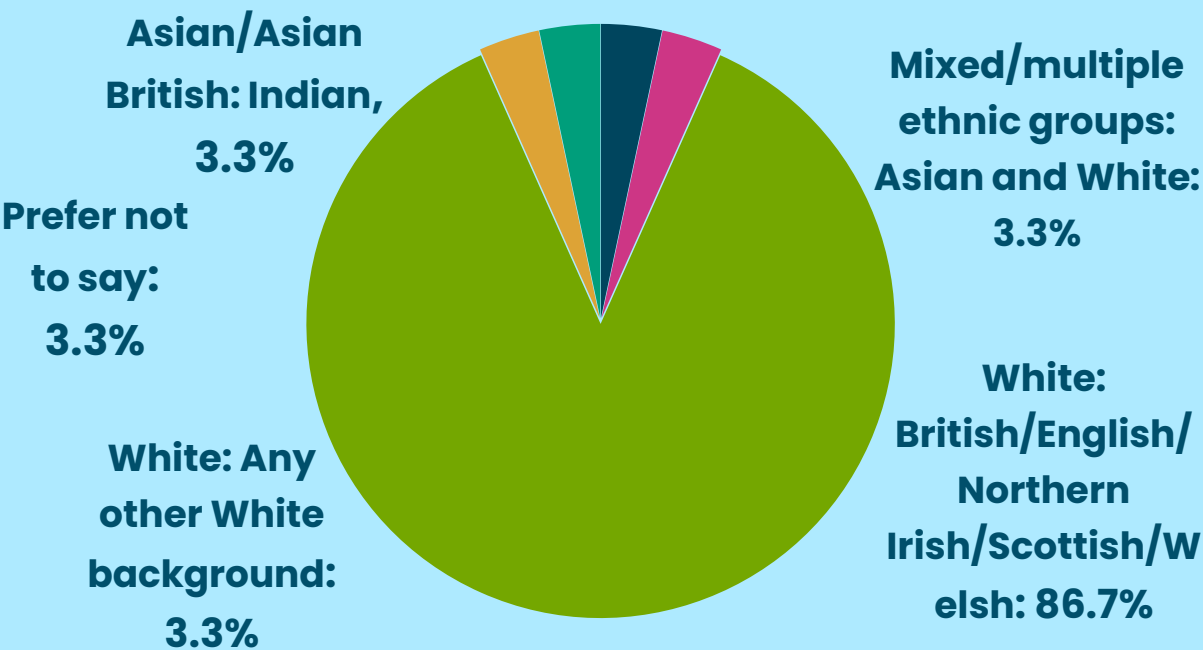
Patients were asked to identify their gender.



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Data

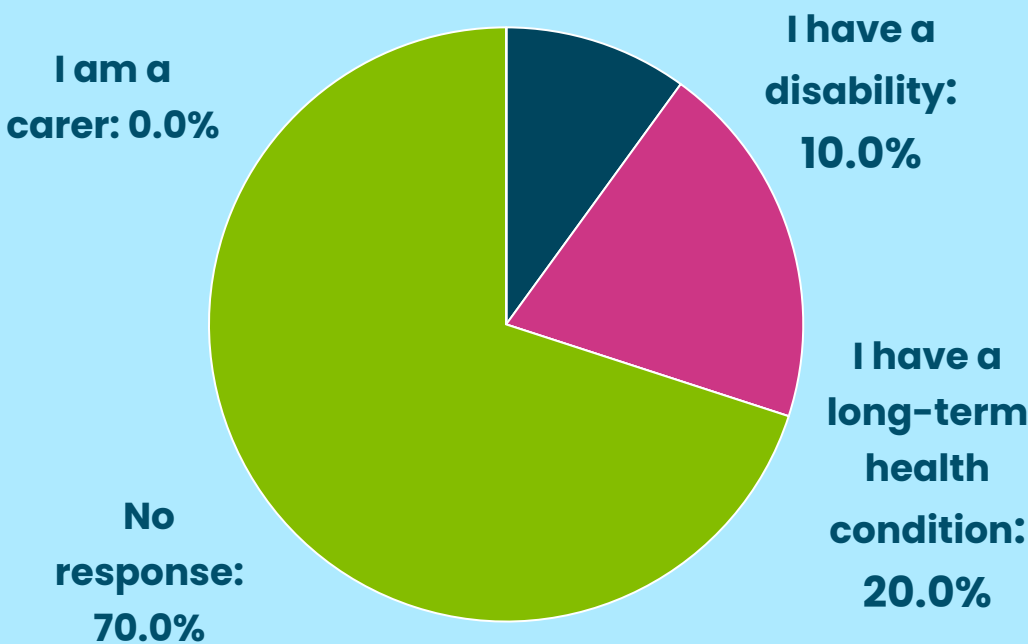
Ethnicity

Patients were asked to identify their ethnicity.



Disability, long-term condition, and caring role

Patients were asked to identify if any of the following applied to them





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East Sussex

Healthwatch East Sussex
Freepost RUGY-JESR-EEBG
Healthwatch East Sussex
Unit 31 The Old Printworks
1 Commercial Road
Eastbourne
East Sussex
BN21 3XQ

www.healthwatcheastsussex.co.uk

t: 03000 683 000

e: enquiries@healthwatcheastsussex.co.uk

X @HealthwatchES

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