

**How accessible do people who are
deaf and hard of hearing find
health and social care services in
Telford and Wrekin?**



Contents

1. Executive Summary	3
2. Recommendations	4
3. Introduction	5
4. Results.....	6
1.1 How accessible do you find the following services in Telford and Wrekin? .	6
1.2 What would improve the accessibility of local health and social care services in Telford and Wrekin?.....	8
1.3 Select the services that have asked you about your communication and information needs in the past 6 months.	9
Acknowledgements	10

About Healthwatch Telford and Wrekin

Healthwatch Telford & Wrekin is an independent champion for local people who use health and social care services and we are supported by Healthwatch England in exercising our statutory powers to empower people to have their voice heard about the delivery of those services. We listen to what people like about services and what could be improved. We then share those views with those who have the power to make change happen. We also help people to find the information they need about services in Telford & Wrekin.

Our Mission

“To make health and social care services better for the people of Telford & Wrekin“

Our Aims

- Enable people to easily access the right services through effective signposting, information and advice.
- Influence and help shape the planning and delivery of health and social care through using intelligence and insights from people’s experiences.
- Be a local watchdog challenging local services and decisions to ensure the public voice has been heard and taken to account.
- To be able to achieve our mission and our aims it is vitally important that people speak to us about the issues that matter most to them. Speaking to us about your experiences of any NHS or social care service will help make them better for you, your friends and your family.

1. Executive Summary

Healthwatch Telford and Wrekin are invested in ensuring that people from all areas of our community can access and use their local health and social care services. This study aimed to address how people who are deaf or hard of hearing find the accessibility of health and social care services in Telford and Wrekin. Whilst in general they are considered accessible; the preventative and support services are not being delivered in a way that meets their needs. There appears to be a correlation between services that ask their users what their information and communication needs are and those that are viewed as accessible, suggesting that compliance with the Accessible Information Standard encourages delivery of accessible services.

Small incremental changes were suggested by respondents as ways to improve the accessibility of local health and social care services. These included the use of email, text messaging, assistive listening services and longer appointments. Respondents also suggested training for providers in communication with those who are deaf and hard of hearing.

It appears that there is some variability in how those who are deaf or hard of hearing view the accessibility of health and social care services in Telford and Wrekin. However, no services were indicated to be accessible by all respondents. This suggests that there may be additional individual factors at play. By asking people about their information and communication needs, the accessibility of local health and social care services can begin to improve the experiences of their users.

2. Recommendations

- Health and care support services were viewed as less accessible than more commonly used services such as hospital and GP practices. It is important to understand why these services are not offering a better standard of care for those who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- It is clear what services can do to support those who are deaf or hard of hearing in accessing services. We recommend that local services increase the accessibility offer, for example longer appointments, which will support all clients, patients and carers.
- We recommend that health and social care staff are provided with training in how to communicate better with people who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- It is important that local health and social care services are monitored by commissioners on their awareness and responsibility in implementing the Accessible Information Standard. Perhaps by recognising those services that are successful it would encourage others to follow.

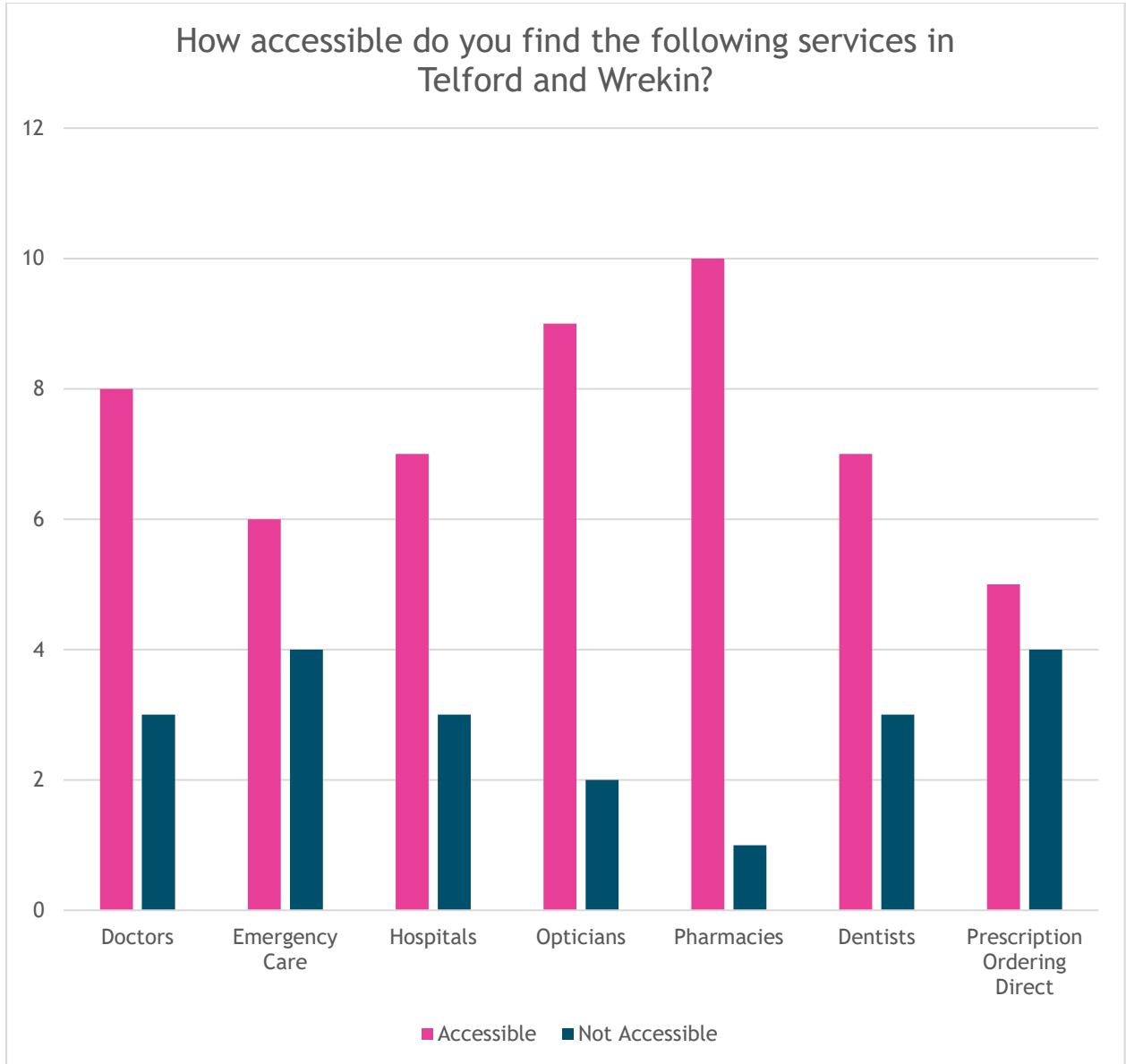
3. Introduction

During 2017 and 2018 we began receiving feedback from people who are deaf or hard of hearing about their experiences accessing local health and social care providers. Over Deaf Awareness Week 2018 we designed and shared a survey to gather their views. With input from local groups and individuals the questions covered how accessible providers were and what might make them more accessible. We used the Accessible Information Standard to design several questions. This standard, whilst not mandatory, ensures that services provide for the individual needs of their users by involving them in how they are communicated with.

This report encompasses feedback from 13 respondents and so is not a representative sample. There were 6 female and 7 male and their ages ranged from 18-24 years old to 80+. All identified as white or white British and the majority were heterosexual (3 preferred not to say). Whilst 2 did not identify as deaf or hard of hearing their responses were included as their experiences were considered relevant to the survey.

4. Results

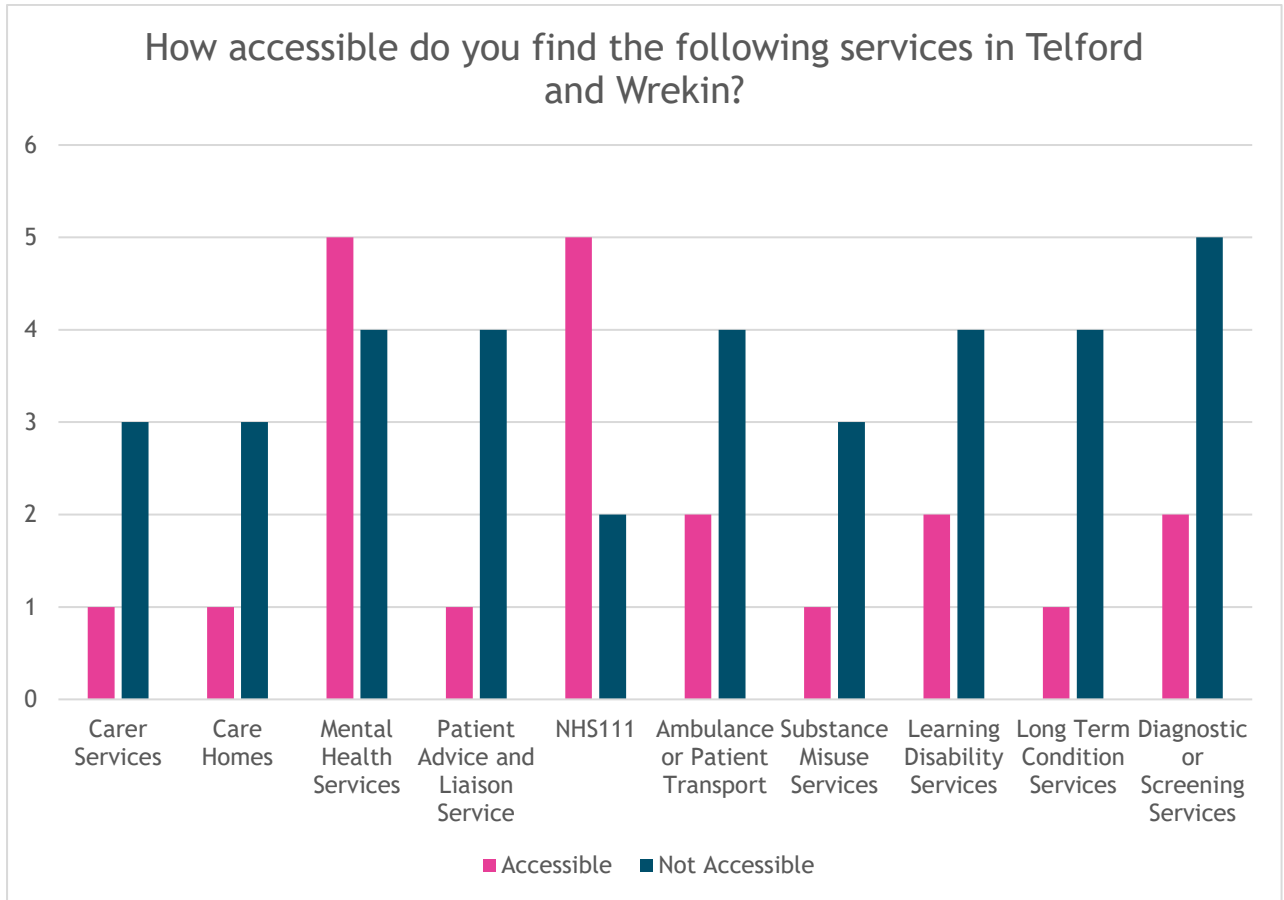
1.1 How accessible do you find the following services in Telford and Wrekin?



The more popular services, including doctors and hospitals, were found to be accessible for most respondents. Interestingly, pharmacies and opticians were viewed as very accessible.

It was decided that less used services would be addressed separately.

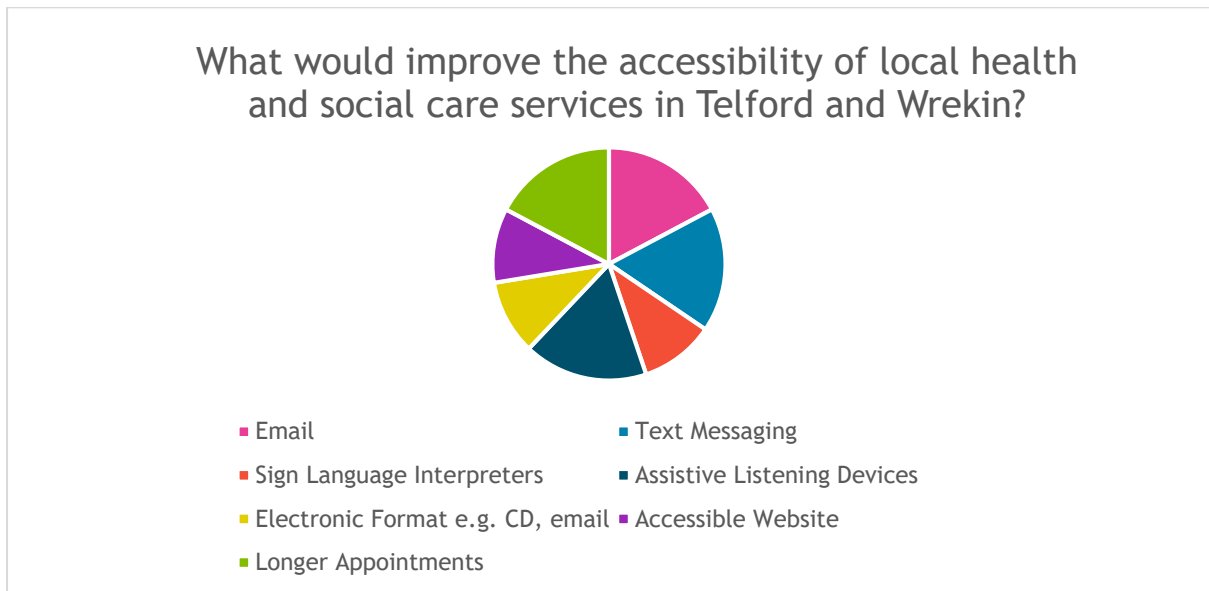
Responses ranged from 4-7.



Less used services clearly differ in accessibility, although NHS111 and Mental Health services fare a little better than other support services.

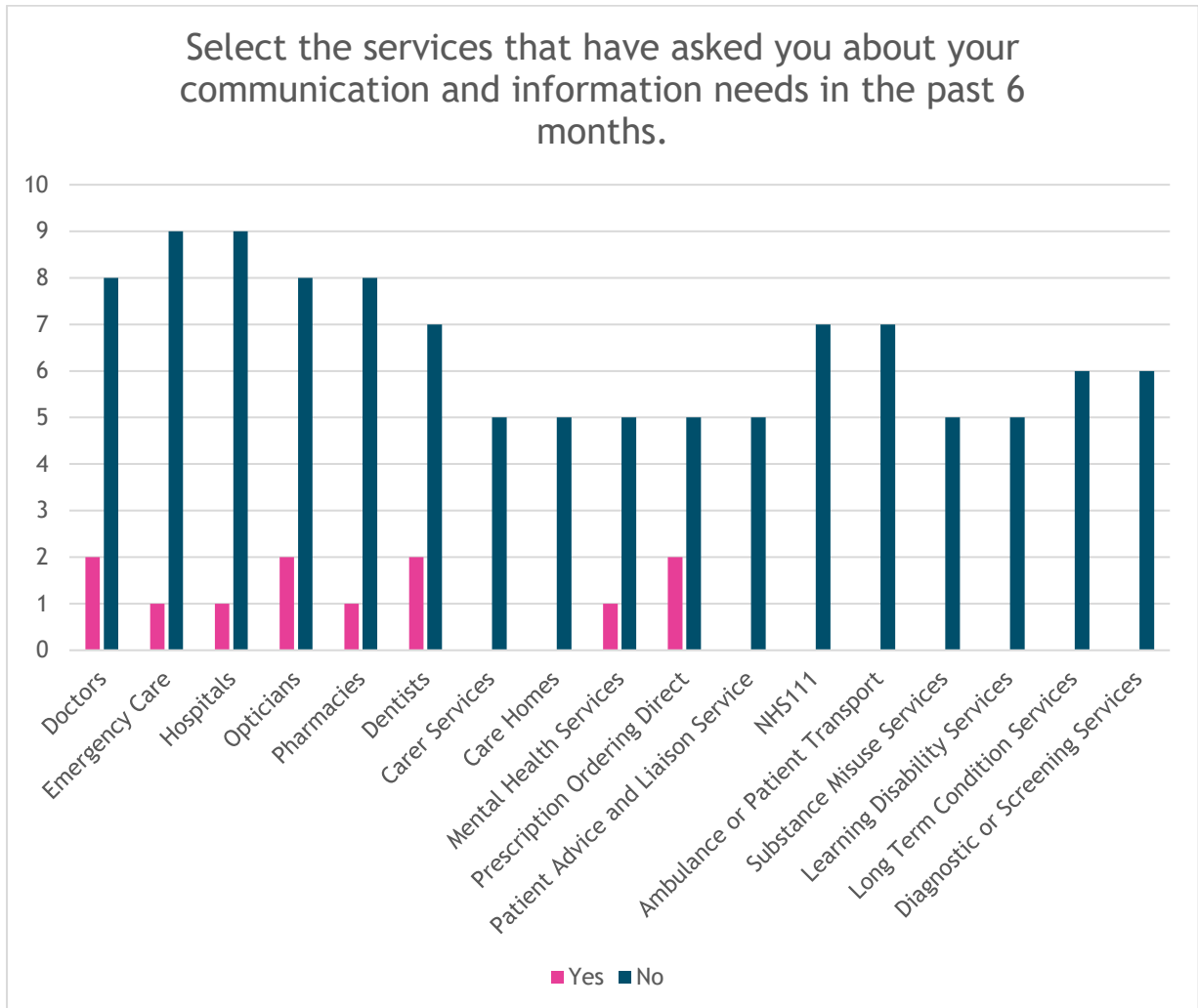
1.2 What would improve the accessibility of local health and social care services in Telford and Wrekin?

Respondents clearly felt that the addition of email, assistive listening devices and longer appointments would improve accessibility, although all areas were chosen by at least 3 respondents.



In addition, respondents were offered space to add their own suggestions. Many felt it was important for staff to be offered training in how to communicate with people who are deaf or hard of hearing and to provide options other than a telephone number.

1.3 Select the services that have asked you about your communication and information needs in the past 6 months.



Again, clearly, more commonly used services are more likely to ask users about their communication and information needs. Some participants were also asked by PODS and mental health services. However, it is significant that so few answered yes, suggesting that health and social care services are not complying to the Accessible Information Standard.

5. Conclusion

Local health and social care services can do better for people in Telford and Wrekin who are deaf or hard of hearing. Small changes to how these services are delivered can lead to big differences in people's lives. It is important to recognise that providing information to a person with a disability or sensory loss in a way that they can understand is the law for the NHS and adult social care services (i.e. the Accessible Information Standard¹). This means asking people about their communication and information needs and taking action to provide the right support. This is a new law and some health and social care services might need information and advice about how best they can comply. Individuals can help by reminding services about what they need to do whilst local commissioners can ensure that the Accessible Information Standard is embedded within the health and social care services being delivered in Telford and Wrekin.

¹ <https://www.mencap.org.uk/advice-and-support/health/accessible-information-standard>

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all our respondents for sharing their feedback about the accessibility of local health and social care services. We would also like to thank the groups and individuals who contributed to the survey, providing their experience and advice.



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