

Patient Experience Report Outpatient Services

February 2023



Accessible Formats

This report is also available in Welsh.

If you would like this publication in an alternative format and/or language, please contact us.

You can download an electronic copy from our website:

<https://swanseabaychc.nhs.wales/>

Or ask for a copy by contacting our office. Contact details can be found on page 42.

Contents

About Swansea Bay CHC	4
Background & Introduction	5
What we did	6
Who we are hearing from	7
What we heard	9 – 36
🕒 Key findings	13 - 14
🕒 Additional feedback	
○ Positive patient experiences	15
○ Negative patient experiences	19
○ People’s suggestions for improvement	34
Learning from what we heard	36
Our recommendations	38
What next?	40
Thanks	41
Feedback	41
Contact details	42

About Swansea Bay Community Health Council (CHC)

Swansea Bay CHC is the independent watchdog of the National Health Service (NHS) within Neath Port Talbot and Swansea. We encourage and support people to have a voice in the design and delivery of healthcare for their families and local communities.

Swansea Bay CHC works with the NHS, inspection, and regulatory bodies. We provide an important link between those who plan and deliver NHS services, those who inspect and regulate them and those who use them.

We have adapted our engagement methods with the public and patients, collecting feedback in a variety of ways. This includes traditional methods such as by telephone, completion of hard copy surveys and listening to people at local events. Virtual methods include our website, emails, e-surveys, social media, and videoconferencing using apps such as Zoom, Teams and Skype and through virtual events. We continue to hear from people through enquiries and our complaints advocacy service.

We continue to hear from people through enquiries and our complaints advocacy service. Swansea Bay CHC represents the “patient and public” voice in Neath Port Talbot and Swansea.

Background and Introduction

As part of our Annual Plan for 2022/2023, we chose to look at people's experiences of outpatient services in addition to inpatient experience.

Through our survey we collected patients' experiences of their most recent outpatient appointment within the Swansea Bay Health Board area.

The survey included questions on waiting times for appointments, type of appointment (e.g. face-to-face, telephone/virtual appointments, delays, experience of contacting the department by telephone, whether they'd received enough information in advance of their appointment, during and after and finding the clinic/department on site. People were then invited to share their overall patient experience.

Patient feedback was mixed and grouped into the following themes, with some overlap between positive and negative themes.

Positive themes	Negative themes
☺ Care and treatment	☹ Care and treatment
☺ Staff attitude	☹ Staff attitude
☺ Efficiency in clinic	☹ Wait times in clinic
☺ Virtual appointments	☹ Travel to appointments
☺ Provision of information	☹ Feeling rushed
☺ Meeting patient needs	☹ Time waiting for results
☺ Feeling listened to	☹ Follow-up appointments

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☺ Not feeling rushed ☺ Explanation of Treatment or Diagnosis ☺ Follow-On Contact ☺ Appointment information ☺ Rushed appointments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☺ Communication ☺ Referral for first appointment waiting times ☺ Finding the clinic on-site ☺ Cancellations and cancellations at short notice ☺ Making contact ☺ Parking ☺ Feeling unsafe – covid measures
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People’s comments are spread throughout the report in purple boxes and where we have been able to, we have stated which service areas the feedback relates to.

What we did

Between April 2022 and February 2023, we collected feedback from people about a recent outpatient appointment.

We continued to collect feedback by using our social media platforms, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, to advertise our survey and promote a range of other methods for people to share their experiences. Increases in Covid infections in the community at various points throughout the year, affected our ability to carry out visits to departments, to speak directly with patients and to circulate hard copies our survey in hospital departments and within clinics in the community.

Details of our survey was shared with various stakeholders and local groups, including:

- ☺ Council for Voluntary Service (Neath Port Talbot & Swansea)
- ☺ Local Area Coordinators
- ☺ Swansea co-producers
- ☺ Local community groups, including Covid-19 support groups
- ☺ Seldom heard groups
- ☺ Local and national charities
- ☺ Swansea Bay University Health Board

Feedback continues to be received via our enquiries and complaints advocacy service, through local community networks, community representatives and groups, and monitoring of health board activities, including feedback and complaints.

Who are we hearing from?

Page 8 and 9 provides a snapshot of the people who shared their views and experiences with us through our local survey.

You can find out from our [Equality Plan](#) what we are doing to hear from different groups of people so that we can better represent the diversity of the communities we serve. You can find our Equality Plan on our website: <https://swanseabaychc.nhs.wales/about-us/our-governance/governance-documents/equality-plan-2021-2022-pdf/>

63 people shared their views and experiences in English although our survey was also available in Welsh and Easy Read



Of those people that answered our 'monitoring equalities' questions:

78% described themselves as a woman/girl, 23% man/boy

Around 83% said their ethnic group was White (Welsh, English, Scottish, Northern Irish, British, White other)

49% told us they were Christian (including Church of England, Catholic, Protestant, and other Christian denominations) while 30% told us they did not have a religion. 6% told us they were Atheist.

Age range categories:

41% were aged 60 – 75

22% were aged 45 – 65

19% were aged 75+

13% were aged 26 – 44

2% were aged 18 & under

Around 81% identified as heterosexual, 2% identified as Bisexual and 2% as Gay.

Many told us they had a long-standing condition, such as:

- A physical condition – 19%
- A long-standing illness – 29%
- Mental Health Condition – 5%
- Blindness or partially sighted – 2%
- Deaf or a severe hearing impairment – 2%

21% told us they had carer responsibilities

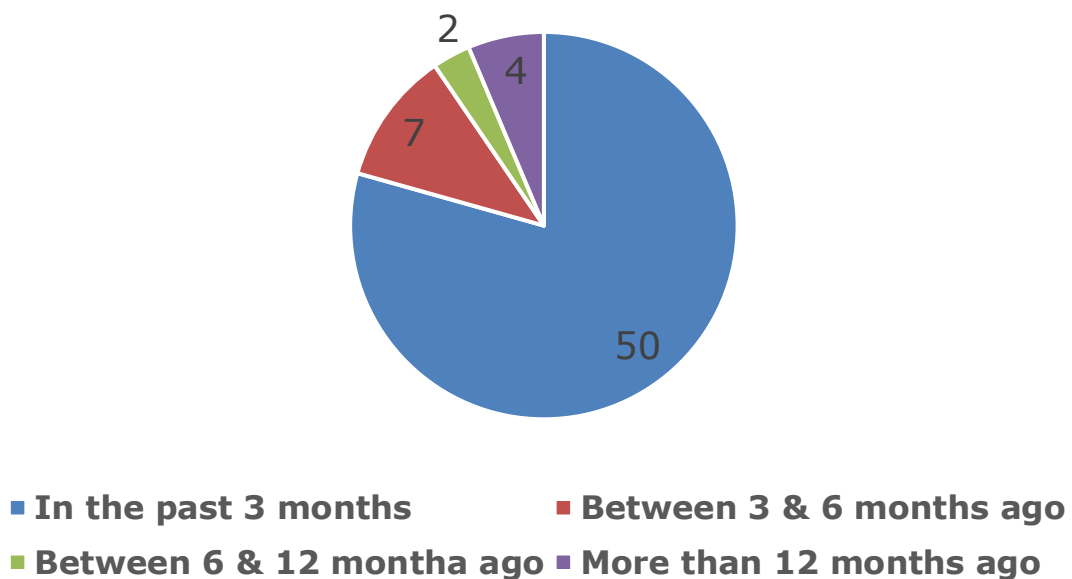
2% said they were either pregnant or had been pregnant in the last 12 months

What we heard

63 people shared their experience with us, with 53 sharing their own personal experience. 10 people responded on behalf of someone else.

41 people were from Swansea and 18 from Neath and Port Talbot. 4 people told us they lived in other Health Board areas, including Powys and Hywel Dada, but attended an appointment in Swansea Bay.

How long ago did your most recent outpatient appointment take place?



Most people (50, 79%) told us their most recent appointment took place within the last 3 months.

How did your appointment take place?

Most people (57, 90%) told us they attended their outpatient appointment in person



4 people attended a remote or virtual consultation.

Of those that attended a remote or virtual consultation:



2 stated it was better for them

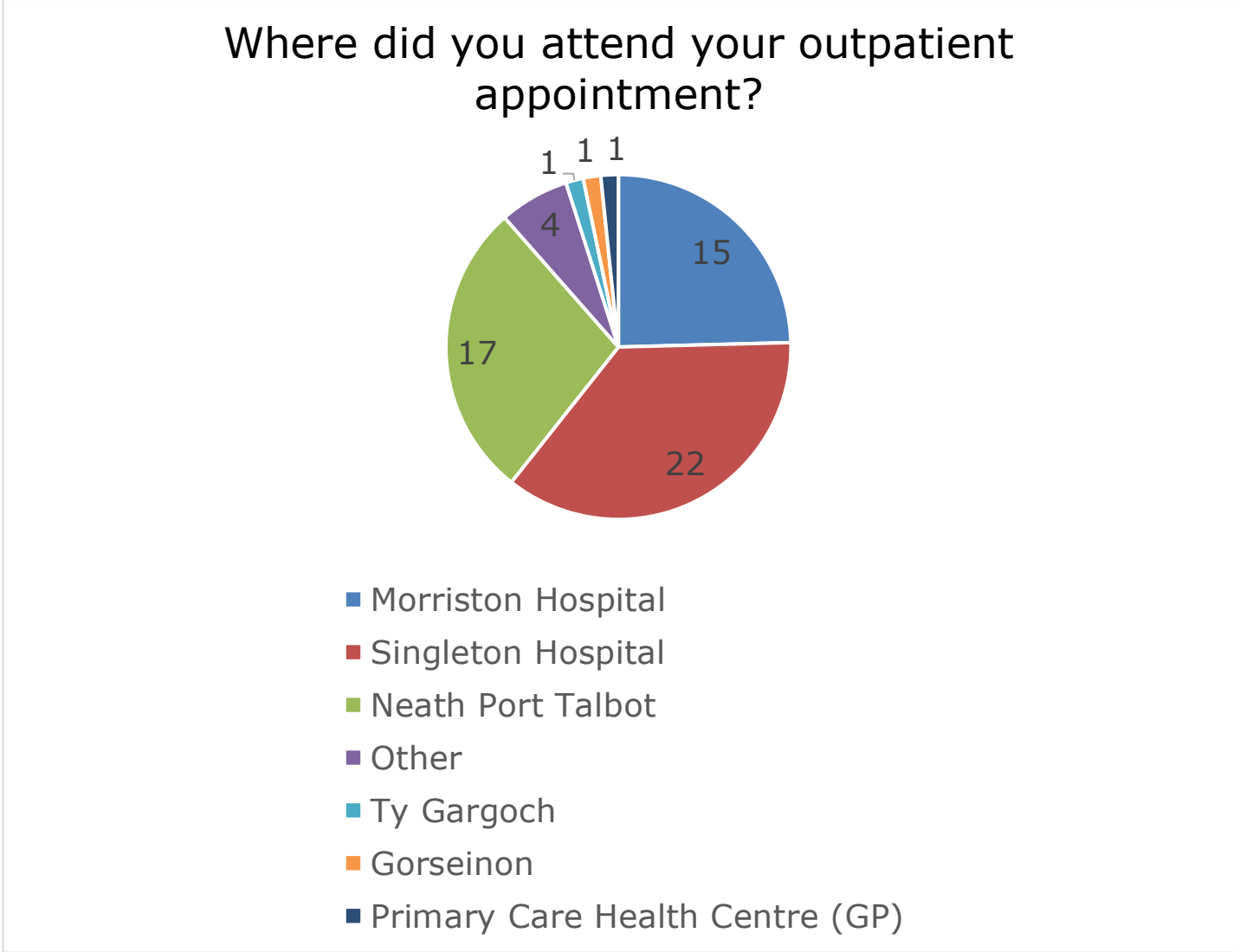


1 said it was ok



1 told us it was worse for them.

Further patient feedback about remote/virtual appointments can be found on page 18.



The majority of people (86%) attended their outpatient appointment at one of the 3 main hospital sites in Swansea Bay; Neath Port Talbot (17), Morriston (15) & Singleton (22).

The table on page 12 show the outpatient service areas patients provided feedback about in this report. 4 people did not tell us which service area they attended.

Service	Total responses
Adult Mental Health	1
Audiology (Ears)	2
Blood tests	2
Burns and plastics	1
Cardiology (Heart)	6
Children's outpatients	1
Dermatology Services	5
Gastroenterology (Stomach Services)	1
Gynaecology (Women's Health)	2
Neurology	2
Neuropsychology service e.g., brain injury, stroke services	1
Nutrition and dietetics	1
Oncology (Cancer Service)	3
Ophthalmology (Eyes)	5
Orthoptics (treatment of defective eye movements and co-ordination)	1
Paediatric / Children's Services	2
Physiotherapy / Musculoskeletal (MSK) / Orthopaedic Fracture Clinic	3
Pre-assessment (pre-surgical health checks)	1
Renal services (Kidneys, dialysis)	2
Rheumatology	4
Specialist Rehabilitation Centre (postural, mobility and pressure care)	1
Urology (Bladder)	1
Unknown	11
Total	59

Key Findings:

Cancellations

4 patients (around 6%) of patients said their appointment had been cancelled once or more than once prior to their appointment taking place.

1 told us were notified of the cancellation 1 month before their appointment was due to take place, 2 were notified the week before and 1 person said they were notified on the day their appointment was due to take place.

Information

Around a third (23, 37%) of patients felt they were provided with enough information from the NHS while waiting for their appointment, such as treatment details, timelines and delays.

Waiting times to be seen

Just under half of people (46%) told us they had been waiting less than 5 months for an appointment.

9 people told us they had been waiting longer than 12 months.

15 people told us their appointment was a review appointment (a follow-up) rather than an initial referral.

Finding the clinic on site

54 people who attended an appointment in person told us they found it easy to find the clinic. 3 people told us they found it difficult.

Contacting the Outpatient department by telephone

23 people told us they had experience of contacting the clinic/department by telephone. Of these:

- 16 said it was easy to do
- 6 said it was difficult

At the appointment - Care and treatment

43 people told us they were happy with the care and treatment they received at their appointment.

2 people said they were partly satisfied

5 were not satisfied.

Additional feedback

The use of qualitative questions gave respondents the opportunity to provide in-depth answers which helped us better identify good practice and areas of improvement within services.

Positive Outpatient experiences

47 people shared examples of their outpatient experience they felt were positive. Their feedback has been grouped in to themes.

Efficient Service

Some people praised the speed of the referral process.

"I went to my have my eyes tested and found out I have genetic eye condition; I was referred to singleton eye clinic and in 7 days had appointment. I can't fault the treatment I am having"

"The appointment and the operation was great. In no time I was in and out"

"CT staff were very helpful in changing the day of my appointment as advised by my Renal Consultant, to a weekday so I could be transferred to Renal Unit for further treatment after my CT scan. Phoned at home very promptly with an alternative appointment"

"Contacted the secretary and was given an appointment for the following week"

"I was seen within a week of initial problem which I thought was very very quick"

Excellent care and treatment

"The consultant has since discharged my daughter from the service, but the care we've received to date has been wonderful. My daughter felt comfortable attending appointments and the consultant was very good at encouraging discussions with her, showing an interest in her hobbies"

"I have received exceptional care and treatment at the ophthalmology depart at Singleton Hospital for an eye conditioning which affected my sight, the treatment and care received has been outstanding. I can't speak highly enough about consultants, nurses and all support staff"

One person wanted to thank the Oncology team at Singleton Hospital for the high level of care and treatment received following a breast cancer diagnosis.

"The whole experience of breast cancer was frightening but at every point through the treatment I felt like I was in safe hands. A lot of negative press around recently about the NHS but I have to say that I received the best treatment. At every step I felt I was given all the facts and information about my treatment. Miss Dillon and all the nurses have been exceptional in their care, concern and support over the last 5 months. I received my final radiotherapy treatment and I have been given a positive outcome. Thanks to all the staff at Singleton hospital. I can't praise you highly enough"

Staff Attitude

Many patients spoke highly of the staff across different outpatient departments.

"All the staff in the CT scan department were friendly, helpful and polite"

"I can't speak highly enough about consultants, nurses and all support staff"

"The ultrasound technician was brilliant. Polite, friendly, informative, reassuring, and considerate"

"Excellent service by all the staff. Very caring towards the patients"

"Reception staff - was polite and friendly and so were the HCA's who did my ECG and my blood pressure".

"The staff were absolutely amazing at Morriston Outpatients"

Being listened to

Some patients told us that doctors and other staff made enough time for them and took time to listen

"Seen initially by a younger doctor who was extremely attentive and listened to everything my son and I said"

"Staff were all friendly and helpful and happy to give me any information and answer any questions that I had"

"The doctor I saw was very helpful, answered all my questions, and took time to explain things to me"

Explanation of Treatment or Diagnosis

We heard how patients valued treatment explanations and details about their condition.

"Thorough examination. Fully explained cause and effect of injury and treatment options"

"In this appointment I was given more information than usual and the consultant seemed to have more time for me"

"The Doctor was very thorough, he explained everything in detail"

Virtual/remote appointments

Two people who attended a virtual appointment told us that this method was faster and more convenient, avoiding the need to travel and find a parking space on site.

"I didn't need to travel which can be awkward with being self-employed. I usually have to wait for hours as my in-person appointment is always very late. I don't need to be examined so there's no need to be there in person. It was a lot quicker; everything was on time which I think is also better for the NHS as in person appointments can be reserved for those who really need them"

"It was a routine annual follow up. I appreciated not having to attend the hospital and stress about parking, and wait around in the OP clinic for my appointment"

General outpatient environment

Compliments were also made by one patient attending a neurology appointment about the outpatient facility at Morrisotn Hospital.

“Such a wonderful setting, easy check in and well signed, a state-of-the-art building”

Follow-up information

1 patient was happy to have been provided with information realting to future action and treatment.

“Follow up arrangements and treatment plan discussed”

Negative outpatient experiences

There was some cross over with positive and negative themes, highlighting that patient experience is inconsistent.

36 people shared examples of experiences that were less positive. Themes have been grouped as follows:

Waiting times – referral to first appointment

One person felt that the initial waiting time following a referral to oncology services was too long.

“Time to be seen for the first time is too long”

Travel to appointments

2 people shared their frustrations over distances to and from appointments and concerns over public transport.

"An hour's journey from Godrergraig to the hospital (with current petrol costs) and back for a THREE-minute appointment for a blood test when I used to be able to go to my GP practice, a 15-minute journey there and back for a 3-minute appointment for a blood test. Hardly an improvement in patient services and how many other pensioners like myself have to make the same or similar journey and that is assuming they have a car? A major error by the NHS assuming everyone has a car, I hate to think what it would mean if you had to travel by bus"

"Had an appointment for x-ray, took 2 buses to get there by 8.30"

Parking on site

People shared the difficulties they had finding parking at hospitals in the Swansea Bay Health Board area

"Always have trouble finding a parking space which makes me feel quite agitated and stressed before appointment"

"Parking bit of an issue but worse at Morriston hospital where no way I even bother taking the car"

"Drop off point always had cars parked up so had to pull over on double yellow lines to be dropped off and picked up"

Finding the Appointment On-Site

A patient stated that new referrals to the clinic may have difficulty knowing where best to park, or how to locate the department.

“Luckily, we had been before, but as a new referral, we'd struggle to find the clinic and to know where best to park”

“Outpatients 2 is poorly signposted”

One person stated that the distance to the clinic for people with decreased mobility was a problem

“Left broken at time of appointment. Clinic held on third floor. Difficult climbing up and down stairs when attending a CMATS appointment when you are going for mobility issues”

Waiting times in clinic

Several patients commented on long wait times in the clinic on the day of their appointment

“A long wait in clinic”

“Had to wait over half an hour”

“I usually have to wait hours as my appointment is always late”

Staff attitude

Despite receiving lots of positive feedback about staff relating to helpfulness and friendliness, this experience was not felt by all.

"X-ray technician not friendly at all"

One patient told us about their poor experience when spoken to by a consultant in front of other patients.

"Consultant was arrogant and showed me no respect and dignity. He came in the corridor where I was sitting with other patients and called my name. I answered and started gathering my bag and coat to go in the consultation room, when he said in front of everyone, "can you tell me what you are doing here when you have been discharged from this clinic?!" I felt humiliated and said to him that I had a few issues since my bypass and if he allowed me to come in, I would explain to him. He appeared irritated and as I started to sit down, he pointed to another chair and said, "over there". As I started to explain my concerns about my condition, he was dismissive and made me feel that I had no right to be there. I found him rude and patronising. He was impatient and kept asking, "anything else?". When I got my sheet of paper from my bag with my queries on, he was aghast. But he answered all my queries when he realised that I wanted answers.....

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Continued..

"I told him that I had hoped to see the professor that performed my operation, and he told me to email the latter next time I have questions. I think he felt I was wasting his time and he didn't understand my need to gain more understanding of my condition so I could care for myself better. He was so different to the Professor I have seen who is a gentleman and shows respect and care for his patients. I have been a nurse for 48 years and I have worked with amazing consultants, but I found this gentleman's attitude appalling. I certainly would not want to be seen by him again"

Follow-up appointments

A number of patients felt left in 'limbo' due to a lack of information relating to test results or follow-up contact.

"Did not see the consultant but someone who I did not know their work title. Follow up 3 months' time...still waiting. Prescription run out now. Also, no information given to assist in my self-treating etc. Still do not know result of blood test".

"I've waited 13 and a half weeks to find out if the lump removed was cancer or not. There's no follow up appointment just a letter to tell me the results"

"On top of the hospital form was written, "refer back to GP". Neither the hospital or GP contacted me"

Another person told us they felt that a lack of follow-up care resulted in recurring ear infections.

“Was due follow up appointment in December 2022. After having a severe infection in my right ear that needed urgent hospitalisation care in April, I attended 2 outpatient appointments. Now in my 5th month and still no follow-up appointment. Ended up at my GP last week with another ear infection. I believe if I had been called for in December (4 monthly review) then the ear would have been cleared out and this infection could have been avoided. I am also a diabetic so have to be more careful about getting infections”

One mother shared her story about various parts of her and her young son's outpatient experience, from the difficulties trying to contact the clinic by telephone, obtain a follow-up appointment. The poor experience and lack of care and treatment made her feel she had no option but to seek private health care for her son.

"Appointments always feel rushed - so much to discuss with some major possibly life-changing treatment; We'd had 3 cancelled appointments previously (Including two that had been expedited by the GP as my son's skin was so bad - but both cancelled the day before the appointment) so the wait for this appointment seemed interminable. We were supposed to have a 6 week follow up appointment recently - but 4 months later still haven't heard anything. Tried ringing dozens of times to speak to someone who manages the particular department, but just got passed from adult services to consultants to secretaries who couldn't help me. The dermatology telephone line as quoted on Singleton Hospital website page was apparently out of order (according to one of the department's secretaries) and you couldn't leave a message. I have requested at least six times to have an appointment with a dermatology nurse, not least due to my son's specialist doctor appointments being cancelled. First time we got an appointment, when we arrived, she'd booked annual leave that day so we couldn't see her; then next few times just told I couldn't see them even though they were doing face to face appointments.....

Continued on page 26...

No explanation and no help and with just how hard it is to see a GP I didn't know where to turn. Managing severe eczema impacts a child's whole life and the rest of their family and I was really struggling. Even a phone call back would have been appreciated. All I wanted was some support for wound management but just kept being told no or to speak to the specialist doctor - but there were so many other things I needed to speak to the specialist doctor about in such a short space of time it never got dealt with. So frustrating especially when I know what brilliant support the nurses offer in my/family's experience - MS nurses and breast cancer nurses. Whilst I totally understand that covid made life incredibly difficult within the NHS, this department wasn't being well managed - the lack of central co-ordination, expedited appointments being cancelled with 1 days' notice (when I spoke to the specialist doctor why the appointments had been cancelled, she didn't know as she said she was in the office), no explanation why I and my son couldn't receive any support from dermatology nurses. The main dermatology telephone number being broken for months and no message to explain what to do instead. Phones just ringing out for 20 minutes+ before being cut off. I just can't understand why information couldn't be circulated to patients e.g., by email/ text just to let them know what was happening. We ended up having to go private which was devastating - both financially and that feeling of abandonment by the NHS of my 7-year-old"

Cancellations

Appointment cancellations were another cause of patient unhappiness, particularly when patients were not provided with a clear reason and information about what happens next.

“Referred to an orthopaedic consultant in September 2020 for a routine appointment. After an informal query by the CHC it was found that the consultant I had been waiting to see was on long term sick leave. The appointments office couldn't think for themselves to refer me onto a different consultant. Eventually I was given an appointment for the 6th of February 2023 at 9:25am. Today, 31st January 2023, I have received a letter cancelling my appointment on the 6th of February. I believe that this could be due to the nurses' strike on the 6th and 7th February. No other appointment date has been given. Lord knows when I will be seen. This is causing depression.”

Cancellations at short notice

We heard how one patient was already on their way to the appointment when they were contacted to say it had been cancelled

“My husband has had two appointments cancelled within the last three weeks. One was for Tonna Hospital (cancelled the day before) the other for the Dermatology dept at Neath/PT (cancelled 30 minutes before). We were actually on our way!”

One person shared their patient story with us about their experience attending Morriston Hospital for a CT scan. Initially, they felt that there was insufficient and inaccurate information provided to them about the preparation needed for the scan.

"I was not sent an appointment letter that I would be having a CT scan with contrast dye, I found out by phoning the department - very important for me as I have CKD 3 & now only ONE kidney. I was not told I must not eat anything three hours prior to my CT scan. I was not advised about taking my prescribed medications or that I should stop taking my Metformin before the Scan. I was not advised to be fully hydrated with clear liquids prior to my Scan. I asked about removing my glasses - the staff member said no, he didn't check if I was wearing any jewellery. I was not advised that as I am a Diabetic, I should eat a light breakfast or lunch three hours prior to the scan time"

When at the clinic, they were informed that the CT scanner within the clinic was not in use and they felt the mobile scanner which they were directed to use instead, was not suitable for their needs.

"Morriston Hospital's CT Scan Theatre inside the Hospital was not operational for my Scan -REASON - told that it needs more staff & the mobile Scan only needs TWO. I am disabled & use a walking stick to mobilise. I was accompanied by a HCA to a location outside the Hospital to a Mobile Scan vehicle. It was painful to have to walk even further"

We heard how their experience from the moment they stepped inside the mobile scanner was also not very pleasant, from the smell inside the vehicle to clinical staff speaking in their own native language in front of them.

“The Mobile CT Scan vehicle stank of curry - it was nauseating. I believe the two male staff had eaten their lunch in the vehicle. This is disgusting - the CT Scanner is supposed to be clinically clean & hygienic.

Neither of the two staff introduced themselves to me & neither wore ID Badges indicating their clinical status. I was in the vehicle with Two male CT Staff present - no female member of staff - this is unsafe practice & made me feel very vulnerable especially when the two staff were continually speaking to each other NOT in English but in the Malayalam language - spoken in the state of Kerala, India”

The patient told us she felt very anxious because of the limited English spoken by the staff performing her procedure.

“Their grasp of English was very poor, they were not able to offer reassurance because of their poor professionalism & lack of language skills.... They should not work in the CT Scan team unsupervised. I did not feel safe, and could not wait to leave”

The patient felt that the staff were very unprofessional when discussing their personal affairs with patients.

"The two staff members did not tell me their status. When I asked, one only told me in bad English that he worked in Cwmbran new hospital and he was here, "to earn extra money". Even if that were true, I felt that he was totally unprofessional in admitting this to a Patient! I felt quite anxious"

Concern was also expressed with the way the scan was carried out by staff on the day within the mobile unit.

"The CT Staff member administering the contrast dye was unable to insert a needle into my right arm, and after several failed attempts caused extensive bruising to the site. I lifted my left arm to indicate he could try to inject my left arm - he laughed ! He didn't appear to understand me. He asked me to hold the contrast dye while he walked around to the other side of me, again found it difficult to administer the needle. He administered the dye & the Scan continued. The Scan did not last as long as I had been told it would by CT Scan Dept. - I hope it was conducted safely"

We heard how the poor patient experience continued after the scan had ended.

“Immediately after, he told me I should leave. I had to ask him to help me get up off the scan bed. I told him I needed to put my shoes on and wait a little because I felt nauseous and dizzy – I suffer from Hypotension. He just seemed intent on hurrying me out. The next patient was told to come in even before I had left. I stopped her because I was still recovering and he should clean down (Covid) before she should come in. I had to walk within inches of her as I was leaving. The men clearly ignored Covid precautions. I told the men that I needed a Porter to transfer me to the Renal Unit as it was too far to walk - I have CKD 3 and Renal Anaemia”

Despite reporting these concerns to the Health Board’s PALS team last year, the patient told us they had not to date received a response.

“In May 2022, I reported my concerns to Morriston Hospital PALS - I have not been contacted nor updated, nor received any update / advice since”

Diagnosis

One person told us they attended the clinic with a relative, who was discharged from the service that day to only pass away a week later.

“The relative I attended with was told there was nothing wrong and discharged. He was dead within a week”.

Communication

Some people told us about missing information in appointment letters, repeat changes to location of appointments and confusion by both doctors and the patient over why the patient had been referred in the first place.

“Confusion over which hospital, the appointment changed between 3”

“I didn’t know why I was there. No details were given on the appointment letter. If it was a referral from my GP then it was from over a year ago”

“The doctor asked me why I was there! There appeared to be no notes made as to a recent procedure”

A smaller number of feedback was received about the following matters:

Clinic environment

"Not enough chairs outside reception"

"Signs on the dept reception desk not very clear as my appointment was earlier than the reception was opening"

Feeling unsafe – covid measures

"No-one in the department wore a mask. There were 13 patients in the waiting room and only 3 of us wore masks. I am immunocompromised so I felt very unsafe and vulnerable"

Prescription issues

"I was given a prescription and when I took it to the chemist, the chemist doubted the doctor by telling me they have prescribed me too much to take at one time. I rang the doctor and she told me it was correct so now I am left with too little medicine"

Service change

"I am absolutely disgusted that the outpatient department is going off site, a purpose-built outpatient department that suited the needs of all patients"

Patient suggestions to improve the outpatient experience

38 people offered their suggestions for improving services.

Suggestions varied but some examples included:

“Better signposting and a map for the department as I could have parked right outside”

“It would be useful to have some clear directions to the department”

“That follow up appointments are on time to avoid unnecessary and expensive treatment due to late follow-up sessions”

“Being kept informed of any delays when waiting and for staff not to think someone young doesn't have mobility issues”

“Surely the appointments office staff should refer patients onto other consultant's if the consultants who they were going to see are on long-term sick”

“Be kept up to date on waiting times. Originally told 26 weeks was actually 18 months”

“Telling the patient when to contact their GP for the results”

“To be told exactly what my diagnosis is. To have the time to be listened to and discuss my condition”

“Returning to having blood tests at my local medical centre”

Regarding the mobile CT Scan Unit – “Use the CT scan in a hygienic location, staffed by staff who can reassure you, and who you would feel would safe if something should go wrong. Make sure a female staff member is always present. Appointment letters - full advice of medications to avoid and precautions to take - there can be serious side effects for kidneys and contrast dye. Periodic checks by hospital Infection Control that mobile CT Scan staff are following COVID precautions and guidelines to maintain their own and Patient Safety”

“Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ought to respond with an update on any concern - otherwise what is its function? Simply to warn the Hospital of any prospective complaints?”

“Better communication from departments to patients”

“A telephone line that works and you can leave a message that will be acted on; and if not, at least a message saying "you can't leave a message" - it's the lack of information that is so frustrating- I had no idea whether to keep trying to call back or just to leave it”

“When appointments are repeatedly cancelled it would be appropriate for someone to check in with the patient to make sure they were ok. Specialist doctors/consultants should be made aware of the number of appointments that are being cancelled in their clinics and this information should be reviewed regularly to prevent it from happening on a regular basis - they should certainly be aware that it is happening (my son's doctor had no idea that 2 appointments had been cancelled). It is difficult to explain just how much you hang on to these appointments for some actual support and guidance when you have a sick child”

Overall experience during an outpatient appointment

68% of patients rated their experience as 'good, very good or excellent', with 14% rating their experience as 'fair'. 17% rated their overall outpatient experience as 'poor' or 'very poor'.



Learning from what we heard

Almost 3 quarters of the people who responded to our survey were positive about their outpatient experience. A number of comments related to the positive attitudes of staff within the outpatient clinics and the excellent care and treatment received.

"I hope the staff know how much they are appreciated. They work incredibly hard, I'm sure like all NHS this department has its challenges, but they provide sight saving treatments which enhance patients' lives and for this they have huge respect and thanks"

Those people that attended 'virtual' appointments were mostly pleased with their experience, valuing not needing to travel and face the stress of trying to find a parking space.

Whilst we heard a number of examples of positive feedback from patients about their outpatient experience, patient experience was at

times inconsistent with our key finding being a lack of consistency in patient communication.

In the feedback we received from people with limited mobility, we heard how accessibility of the clinics and finding their way around was problematic. People also told us that there was a lack of consistent and accessible signage.

Some patients felt that some routine services, such as blood testing, should be delivered away from hospitals and closer to home.

Whilst patients were sympathetic to services under extreme pressures, they felt that delays to clinic lists on the day should be explained to them when they checked in at the clinics. Where the hospital/clinic did not keep patients informed about the reasons for delays at the clinic, their overall experience of waiting felt worse.

Repeat cancellations were another cause of frustration and concern, particularly for parents of young children reliant on services.

Some people told us they did not feel adequately informed about their results or follow-on contact.

We heard how contacting departments by telephone was challenging for some people to book, re-arrange or cancel their appointments. People felt poor telephone access was likely due to systems or staffing. We heard how voice messages left by patients were not being responded to or phone systems did not have a facility for patients to leave a message.

We also heard how sometimes appointment letters did not arrive or were missing important information about procedures and

preparation. Some letters also lacked details on how to get to the clinic.

The two patient stories shared with us in this report (pages 25 and 28) show in further detail the various challenges encountered throughout a patient's outpatient journey, including access challenges and unhappiness with procedures in clinic and the conduct of staff carrying out the test/procedure.

Recommendations

Based on the feedback shared with us in this report, we developed the following recommendations:

1. Some patients report contacting outpatient departments by telephone difficult and feel that improved telephone access to outpatient departments is needed, including improving the automated service as well as through providing clear information about how to reach relevant departments
 - a. Where voice messages are left by patients, departments need to ensure these are regularly monitored and responded to in a timely manner
 - b. Systems need to be improved to allow patients who call to rearrange or cancel their appointments
2. We heard examples of people struggling to find their way around hospitals and to locate clinics due to poor signage.
 - a. Ensure consistency when sharing information about the appointment including what it will involve and clear instructions for where the appointment takes place. This

- is particularly important for people with a Sensory/Physical Disability or Mental Health condition
- b. This should include providing additional support and clearer instructions to help people with a sensory disability find their appointment when onsite at the hospital
3. Some patients reported delays with test results or follow-up contact. We encourage the Health Board to improve the quality and consistency of information relating to test results or follow-up contact
 4. Variation was found in waiting times in clinics. Some people were frustrated over waiting times at appointments and to a lack of notification and explanation for delays while waiting. We encourage SB UHB to:
 - a. Consistently communicate patients for them to understand why clinics may be running late
 - b. Review and learn from instances where appointments run behind schedule
 5. A small number of people raised specific concerns about the way changes to their care was communicated, for example being informed their appointment was cancelled, often at short notice and with no explanation. Cancellations, especially when they are last minute, can cause inconvenience and disruption to people's lives:
 - a. When contacting patients regarding a delay or cancellation to their appointment, ensure patients are provided with a clear reason and information about what happens next

- b. Be open and honest with patients and provide a realistic timescale when they should expect to hear from services again
 - c. Consider offering further support where appropriate, to help the patient manage their condition whilst waiting for care, such as information about or access to other health and care services, or access to pain relief.
6. Despite higher numbers of people rating their overall satisfaction with services as 'good, very good or excellent', patient experience is inconsistent. Two people shared their patient story with us, with multiple negative experiences occurring throughout various stages of their outpatient experience (see pages 25 and 28). We call on the Health Board to:
- a. Review and learn from such instances where patient experience has fallen below the standards expected
 - b. Use this information to learn about what services can do better and develop so that services are excellent from start to finish

What next?

Swansea Bay Community Health Council will continue to monitor and report back on people's outpatient appointment experiences and regularly share these reports with Swansea Bay University Health Board.

Thank you






We thank everyone who took the time to share their views and experiences with us about their recent outpatient appointment.

In April 2023, the CHC will be replaced by Llais, voice in health and social care (Citizens Voice Body). The new body will reflect the views and represent the interest of people living in Wales in their health and social services.

Feedback

Swansea Bay CHC would love to hear what you think about this publication, and any suggestions about how we could have improved it, so we can use this to make our future work better.

Contact details.

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If you write to us in Welsh, we will answer in Welsh. This will not lead to a delay in responding to your correspondence.

We welcome telephone calls in Welsh.

**Swansea Bay
Community Health Council**