

Barriers to Access

- Despite being registered as carers, they feel they do not get prioritisation / quicker appointments. They feel the appointment system is very inflexible which makes it difficult to make an appointment around their busy schedules.
- Not all carers are comfortable with or have access to digital solutions, making in-person and phone support crucial.
- They often feel they don't have enough time to explain their issues fully, and the lack of continuity with health professionals exacerbates this. Being able to book an extended / double appointment is helpful, but not uniformly available.
- Carers feel that questions are often directed at the carer, rather than the cared for person.
- Carers who do not speak English as their first language face additional hurdles, especially when their loved ones cannot communicate effectively in English. This language barrier can lead to miscommunication and a feeling of being misunderstood or neglected.
- They feel that their role as a carer is rarely addressed which makes them feel undervalued and unsupported. They said that when both the carer and the person they care for are present, GPs only address one person, neglecting the needs of the other.
- Carers reported not receiving referral to any kind of carer support.

"I don't see the point in my GP knowing I'm a carer as I don't see any benefits. When I'm with the person that I care for the GP does not check to see if I'm okay." (Forward Carers)

Supporting Access

- Implement more flexible booking options to accommodate carers' schedules and provide quicker access for registered carers.
- Provide training for GPs and reception staff to better understand the carer role and provide appropriate support or referrals to carer services.
- Strengthen communication channels between GPs and pharmacies to prevent medication delays and provide clear guidance on medication management for carers.
- Create robust information-sharing protocols between GPs, pharmacies, and hospitals to ensure that carers are not left to navigate the system on their own. This could include sharing details about medication changes, appointments, and support services available.
- GP practices and pharmacies should collaborate closely with local carer support organisations, such as the Walsall Carers Hub, to provide a seamless support network. This could include shared resources, joint workshops, and information sessions for carers.
- Improve signposting to relevant support services, such as local carers hubs, external support groups, and mental health services.
- GP practices should have specific support and resources available for parent carers, who often have unique challenges. This could include access to child-specific healthcare resources and flexible appointment times that accommodate school schedules.
- Explore options for providing more comprehensive after-hours support, such as linking with out-of-hours services like Badger. This would help prevent unnecessary stress and anxiety.
- Organise regular feedback sessions or surveys to gather insights from carers on how services can be improved. This would ensure that the evolving needs of carers are met and that services are continually adapted based on their experiences.