

Public Services - information and access

In December 2021 the [Community Voices Group](#) researched how people get information about and gain access to public services. The purpose of this research was to provide feedback to NHS Sussex and Brighton and Hove City Council and support improvements in communication and information delivery by better understanding of the barriers experienced by people from minoritized communities particularly those with language needs.

Two SIS Bilingual Community Researchers interviewed 5 Chinese speakers and 4 Portuguese speakers via phone and video conferencing.

What public services have you and do you need to access?

100% had accessed health services

22% had accessed the benefits system via job centre plus

66% had accessed council services such as housing, council tax, social care 44% had accessed education

33% had accessed police

How do you access information about these services?

There were differences between Chinese and Portuguese speaking respondents.

Chinese

- Most of the Chinese respondents used their community contacts (family, friends, social media) to find out about services.
- One had got information through SIS with an interpreter directing them to our Drop-In service.
- One respondent had seen translated leaflets from the organisations.

Portuguese

- People had used the internet to get information. Two participants are very satisfied with their GP and hospital appointments and always have interpreters. The other two have some complaints about lack of interpreters or treatment by GPs or lack of resolution of medical problems.
- One participant wanted to find information on English courses. She didn't know how to access information online so she travelled by train to visit colleges in Eastbourne and Lewes who then told her about Met college in Brighton.
- The UK Government website in English is seen as an accurate source of information on Covid regulations. One participant was classified as vulnerable during the pandemic and she said she was very well informed during Covid as she received vulnerable letters.
- Access to social services and housing was by being referred by professionals or through SIS. One participant complained about being on a waiting list for a long time for housing and felt

ignored by the Council. He doesn't think they want to help him, even though they say they do.

Has their information been tested for accuracy? One participant shared her experience about COVID vaccination. In August she saw a translated poster in WeChat group (Chinese version of WhatsApp) which was

about the NHS Covid Mobile Vaccination Unit coming into community. She finally got her first COVID vaccination by following the instructions.

Portuguese speakers felt that the UK Government website should have accurate information.

How would you like to receive information from public services? What would make this easier and clearer?

100% of respondents said that translated information would be ideal in particular that official websites should be translated

They were also keen that leaflets, letters and emails be translated when the services know (because of use of interpreters) that they aren't English speakers. It was frustrating not to receive correspondence in a first language.

The Portuguese speakers stressed how important it was to have interpreters at appointments so that these requests can be made.

If public services want to consult with members of your cultural / language community, who should they approach?

The Chinese speakers all mentioned Community Groups and leaders but the Portuguese speakers reported having very little contact with other Portuguese speakers and didn't attend any community groups.

Community group chats are really key to reaching the Chinese community and play a really important role bringing together over 300 people with different education background, some of whom already live in the UK or in Brighton & Hove area for decades. This is the main forum where information is shared about schools, council services, government policy etc..

A Brazilian respondent suggested a community WhatsApp group and recommended a Facebook group. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/173906749484320/?ref=share> (Brazilians in Brighton)