



Your healthcare experiences

Humber and North Yorkshire

healthwatch

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Background

This is a summary of the feedback that local Healthwatch across North Yorkshire, York, Kingston Upon Hull, East Riding of Yorkshire, North East Lincolnshire, and North Lincolnshire heard from people.

We listened to people at events, through phone calls, emails, letters and our [online feedback form](#).

The report is split into the four key areas:

- GP (General Practitioner) access
- Mental health
- Hospital care
- Dentistry



GP access

Access to GPs remains one of the key areas that people are talking to us about. People see GPs as the front door to the wider health and care service, and many feel let down when they can't access their GP in a way that works for them. When people can get an appointment at their GP practice, they are often happy with the quality of care, the fundamental issue is access.

Booking appointments

Many people told us of difficulties booking appointments at their GP practice, facing issues such as having to call on the same day and experiencing long phone queues or being disconnected without the option to wait.

In terms of booking an appointment online, people have talked to us about not understanding how to do this, there being multiple options for booking causing confusion and online systems not being consistently available to people.

6 **“I was at number three in the phone queue for two hours.** My wife phoned up while I was still on the phone, and she got through in two minutes. I then waited for a doctor to phone back. They sent me straight to hospital (accident and emergency). On a different occasion, the phone line cut off five times. This is not an isolated incident.”

- Story shared with Healthwatch North Yorkshire





“I was number 100 in the queue to make an appointment. When I finally got through, I was offered appointments everywhere but my surgery! I

managed to get an appointment for 16:00. It is now 16:42.

I still have not been seen! Twice now I have asked the receptionist and been told they're behind. Is every single doctor in the surgery is behind?”



- **Story shared with Healthwatch Hull**

Triage

Triage is used to decide the order of treatment of patients.

People expressed confusion and discomfort with triage questions asked by reception staff and online booking systems. They dislike giving detailed information to receptionists who then determine their appointment or health professional.



“Receptionists not medically trained, then reporting incorrect information I gave back to the doctor. This

causes many delays for treatment that is urgently needed because of severe pain, this adds to the distress of having other serious illness.”



- **Story shared with Healthwatch North Yorkshire**

Variation between practices

A key theme that has emerged is the inconsistent practice among surgeries. Some can efficiently see patients in person, while others struggle with communication, appointment booking, and access to additional support. There are positive experiences of patients receiving necessary support from their GP, but for countless others, this remains a challenge, revealing significant disparities within the system.



“Very professional well organized, caring and patient.

They are always willing to try to accommodate my difficulties. This includes every aspect of the of the surgery operations. There is an encouraging, even cheerful quality from reception onwards.”



- **Story shared with Healthwatch Hull**

Healthwatch reports on primary care

Primary care services provide the first point of contact in the healthcare system, acting as the ‘front door’ of the NHS. Primary care includes general practice, community pharmacy, dental, and opticians.

[GP website health check-up \(Healthwatch North Yorkshire\)](#)

Healthwatch North Yorkshire carried out a health check on all 84 GP websites in North Yorkshire to explore how easy to use, up to date and accessible the websites are.

Mental health

Mental health is another key area we receive feedback about. Themes often centre around access, waiting times, crisis support and young people's mental health.

Long waiting times for support

One of the key themes raised were the long waiting lists people face which can be several months long. Difficulties accessing support has also meant some people have resorted to paying for private treatment where they can afford it.

People also told us about the challenges of different referral criteria making some services difficult to access and resulting in people not being eligible for any service and 'falling through the gaps'. Others talked about being passed around different services and not getting the support that they needed.



"I've been on a waiting list for the community mental health team for over a year now for ratification for medication for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. It's hard work and unnecessary – and another year to wait."



– **Story shared with Healthwatch York**

Young people's mental health

We are hearing about significant issues around a lack of support for young people with their mental health. The long waiting lists to be seen by child and adolescent mental health services was the key issue raised. Concerns around the transition from child to adult mental health services was also mentioned.

Many people have also talked about the challenges of getting support as an autistic person and the issues around being passed between services and not being able to get support for their mental health. People told us that having a diagnosis of autism impacted on their ability to access mental health support and has excluded them from services. Staff can appear unwilling or unable to support people with a dual diagnosis of mental illness and neurodiverse conditions.



“My child has been waiting for child and adolescent mental health services assessment since 2021.

In April 2023 we were told his file had been lost. Three weeks later I was told it had been found, but we are still waiting to be seen (January 2024) as my child's mental health spirals and no one will confirm we're at the appropriate place in the queue (joined in 2021, not when the file was rediscovered) or how much longer we will have to wait.”



- Story shared with Healthwatch North Yorkshire

Crisis line issues

A lack of support for people in mental health crisis continues to be an issue that we are hearing about. People have told us about long waits and not getting the support they need when they need it. Some people said although it all took a long time the care was good once they got through.



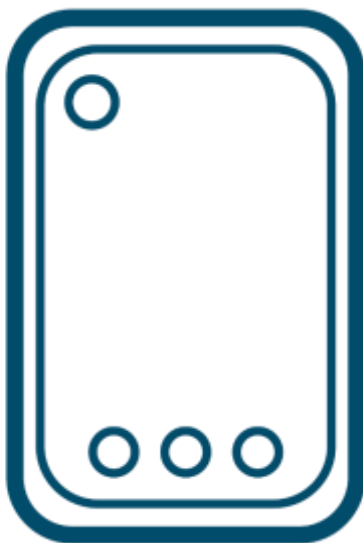
“I was in crisis from a manic episode. I rang the North Yorkshire crisis team. It took ten calls and two days for anyone to even answer the phone. When I did speak

to someone, they could not have been any more helpful.

The care I received as an outpatient, was very good but I don't think it should take days and multiple calls to get help in a crisis.”



- **Story shared with Healthwatch North Yorkshire**



Not enough therapy sessions

The limited number of sessions that can be provided by NHS talking therapies was raised. People said for support to be most effective it needs to be offered longer term. Instead of only being given a limited number of sessions in which to become 'better', people would prefer to be included in decisions about the length and structure of their support.

“The therapist was very good and used a theory to explain the issues I was feeling which helped immensely.

Knowing I wasn't alone was a comfort. Unfortunately, **only entitled to six sessions** so felt I was left to cope with a situation on my own at the time but now better.”

- **Story shared with Healthwatch York**

“I have used private trauma therapy services for the last two years. The NHS cannot provide the appropriate amount of care needed. It rations therapy to six sessions (12 at most).

My complex needs cannot fit into a rationed service.

The service does not have enough therapists. Patients can only work with someone they trust.”

- **Story shared with Healthwatch North Yorkshire**

Healthwatch reports on mental health

[Breaking Point: A recent history of mental health crisis care in York \(Healthwatch York\)](#)

This work aimed to capture the views and experiences of mental health crisis care from staff, patients and carers.

[The public's experience of mental health services \(Healthwatch North Yorkshire\)](#)

The aim of the project was to undertake research to understand adults' experiences of accessing mental health and well-being services across North Yorkshire. This was a project between Healthwatch North Yorkshire and the North Yorkshire & York Mental Health Leadership Alliance, who are working to make mental health services better.



Hospital care

In hospitals, there are long wait times in A&E and for outpatient appointments, as well as issues with communication and coordination. However, many people praise the professionalism and efficiency of the staff.

Long waiting times

Long wait times in A&E, hospitals, and for appointments, scans, and procedures are major concerns raised by many. Cancelling and rescheduling of appointments is a common issue.

“My friend attended A&E with excruciating abdominal pain. She waited over **12 hours to be seen**, then another 4 hours waiting for blood tests and a scan. She was given no pain relief and sent home.



- **Story shared with Healthwatch North Yorkshire**

“**After waiting three months for the neurology 'hot clinic' after a referral from A and E my referral was declined as inappropriate.** I was not informed why and I am still waiting more than 2 weeks if asking. I had a CT and MRI in A&E suggesting I have a brain lesion and demyelination. I already have blood cancer, so my anxiety is off the wall. Due process has not been followed and I'm left in the dark. It's unacceptable.” - **Story shared with Healthwatch Hull**

Communication and coordination

Communication problems have been highlighted, including communication with patients, communication between GPs and the hospital, and communication with families and carers.

Coordination is another key theme. This includes coordination across the system, and within administration functions. There is a theme of administrative errors leading to complications in accessing treatment and longer wait times. We have heard from people who have not received appointment letters and information, and this has stopped them from accessing treatment. We have also heard that referrals are not always sent from GPs.

 “I had a cardiology phone appointment... more than 2 weeks later I enquired to find this guidance letter to my GP is **still waiting to be typed up** because of secretarial team staff shortages. The team member was very sorry for the delay (and I’m sure they are doing their best) but could not say how long it will be for the letter to be typed and sent to my GP. I think this is an unacceptable delay. The service needs more resources.” 

- **Story shared with Healthwatch York**

6 “Admin is a disaster, with one not talking to the other. I went after waiting months for a scan at my local hospital in Scarborough and was told they would be in touch if I needed to go back for further tests. 2 weeks later I got a call telling me I needed a scan and this time I had to travel to a private hospital in York. This meant a day off work a train and taxi both ways only to have the exact same scan and they had no information that I'd had a scan two weeks previously. A waste of my time, money and buckets of stress, plus it also took up a place of someone still waiting for an initial scan.”



- **Story shared with Healthwatch North Yorkshire**

Some patients are having trouble reaching hospital appointments due to distant locations and limited public transport, particularly affecting those in rural areas. Concerns were also raised about parking and traffic congestion near hospitals.

6 A person was taking his wife to the hospital and had to queue on the road outside for 20 minutes as it was total chaos. When queuing at the outpatients desk they saw an older couple in front (80+ years old) who were told **they were too late for their appointment (due to the traffic issues)** and were told to go home and get back in touch to book another appointment.



-**Story shared with Healthwatch York**

Positive feedback about staff

People have told us that despite increased pressures staff are caring, attentive and do all they can to provide excellent care. People have told us how important it is that staff show compassion, that they listen to the person and their carers/families and have time to support people through their treatment/appointment.



“Every member of staff on the journey has been brilliant!

Thank you to the paramedics, healthcare assistants, volunteer tea makers, meals services, staff nurses, advanced clinical practitioners. Thank you, York Hospital A&E, ward 39, surgery team!” -



- **Story shared with Healthwatch York**

Healthwatch report on hospital care

[Urgent care \(Healthwatch York & Healthwatch North Yorkshire\)](#)

We spoke with people about their experiences at four urgent treatment centres – York, Scarborough, Selby and Malton.



Dentistry

The issue of access to NHS dentists has been raised across all Healthwatch, including for both adults and children. People have told us that they are unable to register with an NHS dentist.

Waiting lists

The main concern with dentistry feedback is the struggle to register with an NHS dentist. Many face obstacles in getting on a waiting list, and those who do often experience uncertainty about the length of the wait. Some are told it could be years.



“I am on a military posting with my serving husband. I moved to Catterick Garrison. It's a **five-year wait to see an NHS dentist.**” – **Story shared with Healthwatch**

North Yorkshire



Shockingly, some people have even resorted to pulling out their own teeth due to being unable to register with an NHS dentist.



“Since lockdown I have not managed to get an appointment at all. **I have pulled out four of my own teeth and number five is getting to stage it's going to come out.** It's a total disgrace. I can't even have my broken lower denture repaired or replaced. So, I won't go out anymore.” – **Story shared with Healthwatch York**



People paying for private dental care

Some people said that when they try to register with an NHS dentist, they are told there is no availability, but they could be seen as a private patient. However, many cannot afford this.

“I’m 73 and need all my teeth out. I rang round but no-one would accept me. I was told if I wanted treatment quickly, **they could treat me privately.** I told them I am a pensioner and receive pension credit. It’s the mental impact as well as the disappointment that is affecting me.”

– **Story shared with Healthwatch York**

“Sad to be in the almost deserted waiting room several times over the past year listening to the excellent receptionists explaining to patients that they didn’t have any NHS dentists but they could pay first for an emergency appointment and then for treatment involving hundreds of pounds. **How many can afford that?**”

– **Story shared with Healthwatch Hull**

Key Healthwatch reports

Below is a list of other local Healthwatch reports that have been produced over the past year.

[It's time to talk continence \(Healthwatch North Yorkshire\)](#)

Healthwatch wanted to hear people's experiences of accessing continence services and living with bladder and bowel issues to better understand how it affects physical and mental health, what provisions there are (and aren't), and what else is needed to make improvements.

[Rural health inequalities \(Healthwatch North Yorkshire\)](#)

For this project we worked with the Institute for Social Justice at York St. John University to explore the relationship between in-land rurality and people's experiences of accessing and using local healthcare services, including GPs, dentists, pharmacies, or hospital care.

[The public's experience: Medequip services in North Yorkshire \(Healthwatch North Yorkshire\)](#)

Healthwatch North Yorkshire were asked by Medequip, who supply equipment and aids on behalf of the NHS and North Yorkshire Council to help people live more independently at home (longer-term) and after returning from hospital. The aim was to help get feedback from people who have accessed and used their services as part of work to make things better for people.

[Mothers' reflections on community postnatal care \(Healthwatch North Yorkshire\)](#)

Healthwatch wanted to understand what the availability and quality of care is like from mothers and identify the areas where services can be improved, as well as champion what is working well.

[Independent evaluation of the pilot pathway for adult attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and autism \(Healthwatch York\)](#)

In response to public concern, Healthwatch York undertook an independent review of the attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and autism assessment pathway for adults (a pilot). Feedback came through a Healthwatch survey, GP survey and conversations with York residents and health professionals. They gathered the views of those who have completed the profiler, and those involved in supporting people through the pathway.

[Community pharmacy \(Healthwatch York\)](#)

Healthwatch were contacted by Community Pharmacy North Yorkshire to seek feedback about people's experiences of local pharmacies across York and North Yorkshire. The aim was to establish a baseline regarding public perception of pharmacy services across North Yorkshire and York, with a view to repeating the survey in future years to see what impact new initiatives and services have on people's views.

[Financial Hardship \(Healthwatch Hull\)](#)

The aim of the project was to highlight the effects of the cost-of-living crisis on the public and capture their experience when accessing health & care support throughout this period.

[Hull Royal Infirmary's 'Big Push' \(Healthwatch Hull & Healthwatch East Riding\)](#)

This report looks at the experiences of patients who have used the maternity service as well as healthcare staff and managers.

[Community Mental Health Report \(Healthwatch Lincolnshire\)](#)

With the aim of gaining greater insight into peoples' experiences of community mental health services in Lincolnshire, Healthwatch Lincolnshire launched two surveys. One was for services users (both adults and children). The second survey was for healthcare professionals.





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