

What we've heard during 2022/23

Summary of feedback Healthwatch North Tyneside have received from North Tyneside residents over the past 12 months.

June 2023



Talk to Us

At Healthwatch North Tyneside, we collect general feedback from local people on their experiences of health and social care services. Residents can talk to us and share their experiences in several ways:



From April 22 to March 23



Common Themes We Identified

Here are some of the common themes in the views and feedback residents shared with us. We know that different services have their own ways of working. We also see that a specific service can work really well for one person, and another person might feel they have had a terrible experience with the service. By hearing from lots of different people common issues become clear.



Quality of care is high – Generally people tell us that they value the quality of care and score this highly when they are able to receive it.

Staff are doing their best – People appreciate pressures on staff and for the most part think that staff are doing a very good job. There are some amazing examples of staff going above and beyond to provide support.

Access to information – People tell us they often struggle to know what support is available and how to access it. They want high quality information available online and in writing as well as being able to talk to someone if they need to.

Waiting, delays and cancellations are an issue – We heard that a lot of people are facing delays. In our annual survey, 50% of respondents told us that their treatment or care had been affected by delays, cancellations or other problems with access. Waiting times are a real concern within some specialisms and services. We are getting a picture of real challenges within particular services.

Connected and integrated services – people tell us that more can be done to connect up support between different health and/or care services so that their care, and their family/carer's situation, is seen holistically. This includes sharing information, assessments and referral systems.

Choice is important – We are increasingly hearing that people want to have a choice in the way they interact with services (face to face, online and over the phone). They will choose what they think is the most appropriate method of contact for them depending on their confidence, ability, access to technology and the issue being dealt with. For many people, convenience is a major factor in how they access services, balancing work, family commitments and their own resources etc.

Cost of living is impacting on health and wellbeing – Whilst many people have told us that cost of living has had limited impact, others have shared very difficult stories about cutting their heating; becoming virtually housebound because they cannot afford to participate in activities; cancelling gym memberships and not being able to afford swimming and other wellbeing activities; struggling to access nutritious/high quality food and major impacts on stress and mental health.

Transport continues to be a concern for many – Cost of living impacts and affordability has been highlighted as well as the reliability of and access to public transport. Travel to hospitals has been a particular problem, but we also hear of difficulties in accessing more local services (GP, pharmacy etc).

Some people are paying for private treatment because of delays – Several people have told us that they have paid for private treatment at NHS and private facilities, due to waiting times and delays.

People say they think services are getting worse – Over 50% of respondents to our annual survey told us they felt services last year were worse than the previous year. It seems many people expect services not to work well and are resigned to poorer quality than they would like. When we talk to people, national news stories have an impact on their views.



Feedback on Specific Services

GPs

- We hear more about GPs than any other service
- There was a very mixed response about getting appointments, with many people telling us they had no issues getting an appointment when they need one, whereas others struggled to be seen in a timely manner. Despite the delays, people were generally happy with the service once they were seen.
- We see that each GP practice operates differently, and their approaches work better for some people than others. This includes appointment booking systems. We hear a lot about delays in answering phones.
- People really want to be able to choose the type of appointment they have – face to face, phone or video. People say they often know what support they need and can make this choice.
- Some people really like to access services online (including getting test results, booking appointments and ordering prescriptions). Other people feel excluded or forced by doing this online.

Hospitals

- Long waiting lists for operations and cancellations of appointments were an issue and people asked for improved communication regarding next steps and follow-up.
- People generally felt that waiting times were satisfactory while in the hospital but waiting areas could be improved, with access to sensory rooms.
- Residents felt hospital parking charges were too high and spaces were often not available while others raised issues of limited public transport and difficulties in travelling to hospitals.

Urgent and Emergency Care

- People felt waiting times in all areas of urgent and emergency care were excessive and could benefit from a better triage system.
- Transport options for patients were limited, especially out of hours.
- NHS111 was generally reliable, however, some users felt the scripts could be too long with too many unnecessary questions and inaccurate signposting, which caused delays.

Dentists

- There are ongoing issues with a lack of NHS dentists taking on new patients, as well as access to appointments generally. Some residents reported being removed from their NHS practice lists without notice.
- Where people can get appointments, they would like more availability outside working hours, but generally found the parking facilities and text reminders convenient.
- Residents would like to see the cost of private treatment and NHS payment tiers reduced.

Mental Health

- NHS and voluntary sector counselling was highly regarded, although there were reported gaps with peer support and general support with the root causes of mental health issues.
- Talking Therapies, CAMHS, psychiatric care and alternative therapies were highlighted for having long waiting lists and adults and children generally struggle to get a diagnosis. Young people also face a general lack of support outside of schools and CAMHS and an over reliance on medicalisation.
- While many people highlighted difficulties with accessing mental health services, there was some praise for the Community Treatment Team and self referral to Talking Therapies can work well.

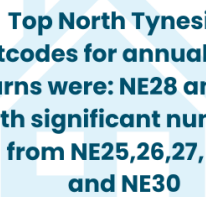
Pharmacies

- People shared that they could easily access services and rated them highly, but there was some concerns about lack of privacy and the likely closure of some pharmacies.
- Feedback praised the availability of text reminders but wanted the convenience of more out of hours opening.
- Pharmacy users expressed added value in extra services such as vaccinations and prescriptions direct from their GP, however stock shortages, communication issues and waiting times could be problematic.

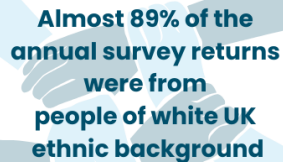
We also heard from residents on several other areas of health and care that mattered to them. Here are some highlights from their feedback:

In **Maternity and Child Health** it's important to have continuity of care in maternity, health visiting and services for children with additional needs. Some families feel 'forgotten about.' This feeling was shared by **Autistic Adults**, who highlighted an ongoing lack of support and delays in diagnostic services. Those who spoke to us about **Sexual Health services** would like online and walk-in appointments and a more comforting environment for distressed patients. We also received a relatively smaller, but still important, amount of feedback on **Audiology, Screening, Opticians, Drug & Alcohol and Social Care** services.

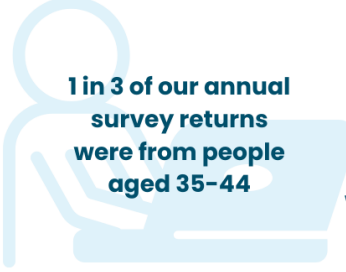
Who we Heard From




Top North Tyneside postcodes for annual survey returns were: NE28 and NE12, with significant numbers from NE25,26,27, 29 and NE30



Almost 89% of the annual survey returns were from people of white UK ethnic background



1 in 3 of our annual survey returns were from people aged 35-44



Three quarters of the annual survey returns were from women

What we do with this Feedback



- We provide direct feedback to individual services, showing what residents and service users have said about their service and other similar services.
- We share trends and analysis with key decision makers, including NHS and social care commissioners.
- We highlight possible solutions to problems based on what we have heard from local people.
- We formally report to North Tyneside's Health and Wellbeing Board every 6 months to highlight resident's issues.
- We share highlights with the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board to influence decisions across the region.
- We share our anonymised information and reports with Healthwatch England to help influence decisions Nationally.
- We use what people have told us to identify key issues we should focus our work programme for the next year – you can see our priorities for 2023/24 at www.hwnt.co.uk

Our research projects in 2022-2023

During this year, we have also published detailed reports on the following issues that people raised with us in the previous year. You can access these at www.healthwatchnorthtyneside.co.uk/reports

- Breast screening
- Digital inclusion
- Health inequalities
- Pharmacy
- Outpatient appointments
- Carers - adults and young carers





healthwatch
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