



What we are hearing

Quarterly Report: April-June 2024

healthwatch
York

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Introduction

What we do

Healthwatch York is your way to influence local health and social care services – hospitals, care homes, GP surgeries, dentists, pharmacies, home care services and many others. We make sure your voices are heard by those who buy and deliver local health and care services.

Healthwatch York:

- Provides information about local services to make sure you know how to access the help you need
- Signposts you to independent complaints advocacy if you need support to complain about a service you have received
- Listens to your views about local services and makes sure these are taken into account when services are planned and delivered

Every month we hear from people across York about your experiences of local health and care services. We share what we hear anonymously with the people who buy and deliver those services.

This Report

We have put this report together based on what you have shared with us in the 3 months from 1 April to 30 June 2024. This report gives a flavour of the issues and themes this quarter.

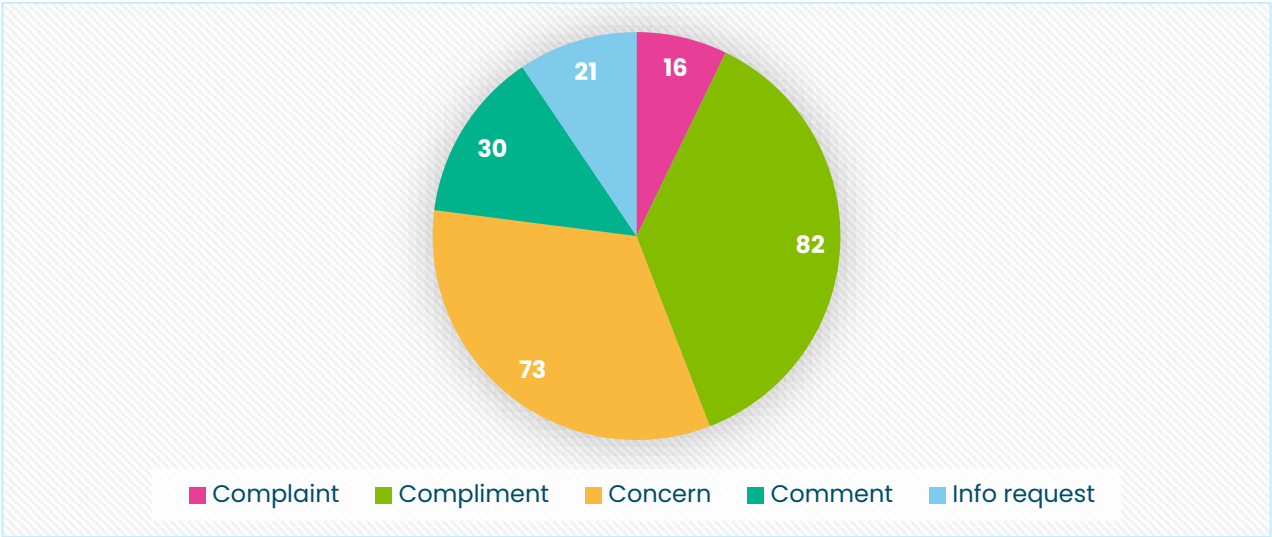
The service areas highlighted in this report are as follows:

- Hospital services
- GP services
- NHS dentistry
- Mental health services
- Cross-service feedback

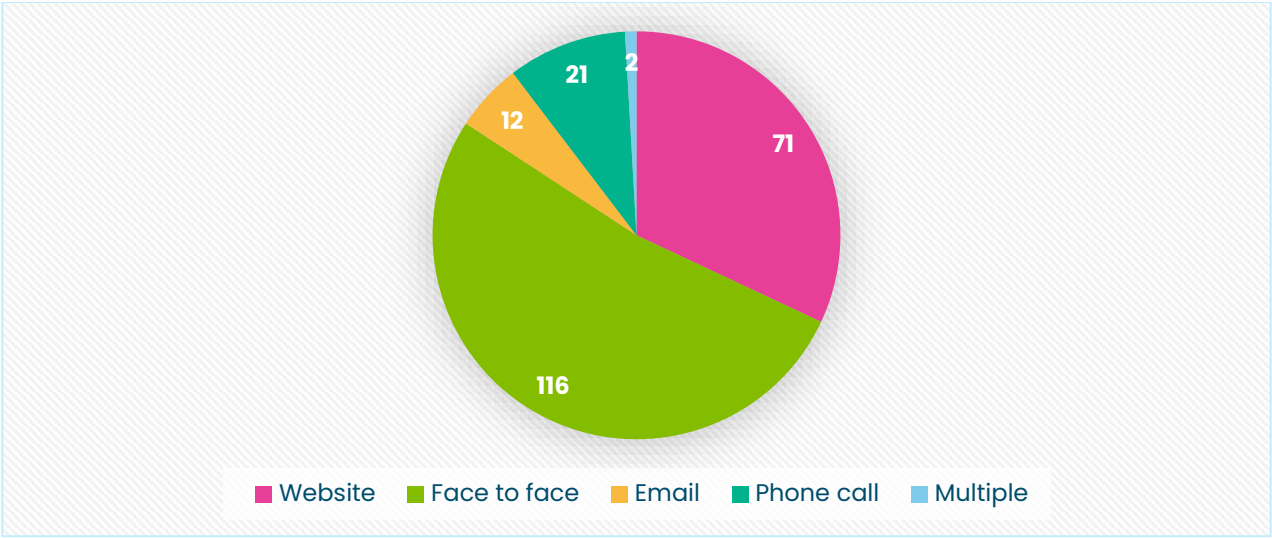
Overview of contacts received

From April to the end of June 222 people contacted us directly to ask for information / advice or share their feedback.

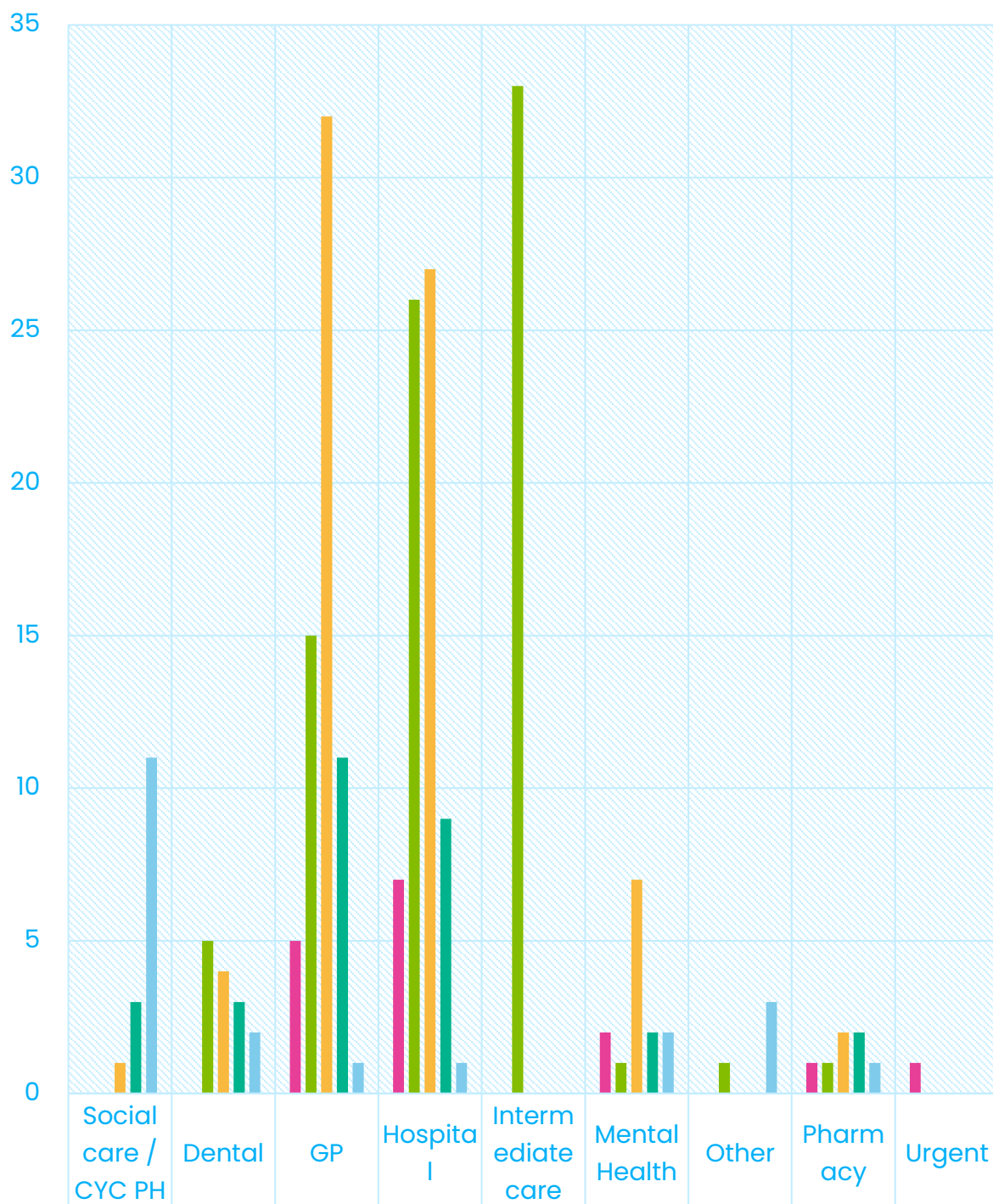
Type of feedback received



Contacted by



Feedback received by type and area of care





Complaint Compliment Concern Comment Request for info

Key themes by area of care

Hospital

We received 26 compliments about excellent care at hospital.

 I had an appointment for a skin cancer removal. I had to be at the hospital for 7.30am and had my operation at 11.30am. I can't fault the staff. There was no pain even when my head was stapled (and the same for the staple removal.) I was offered drinks, a place to lie down, and was very well looked after.



“Worried, but staff were fantastic.”

Woman had her baby in hospital. She knew that the baby would be taken by social services as soon as she left the hospital. She had worried that the staff would judge her but they were fantastic. They gave her hand and footprints of her son, teddy bears and a book with photos of him. They also made sure she had as much time with him as possible before he was taken away.

Themes from compliments included:

- Praise for staff delivering compassionate care and ‘going the extra mile’ for those they are looking after.
- Reassurance received from thorough examinations and tests.
- Being seen promptly despite expectations of long waiting times.

We also received 7 complaints and 27 concerns, 9 comments and 1 information request. Within these the key themes were:

- Long waiting times even for urgent health concerns.
- Inefficient use of resources.
- Communication problems including between services.
- Experiences of stigma and discrimination.
- Failures to make reasonable adjustments for people who need them.

Personal Story: “Told I’d be seen quickly.”



Phoned GP at 3.45pm. I had been in bed three days chesty, coughing, headache. Have pacemaker and non-Hodgkin FL (follicular lymphoma) and just finished chemotherapy. She asked if I could get to another surgery further away by 5pm. Said I was in bed and felt so unwell that I would not have time to get there before 5pm. The GP read my notes and told me they would phone the Cancer Care Centre to see what could be done. They phoned back and told me that I had been triaged for bloods to be taken in A&E and I would be seen quickly. I had a thick dressing gown so went like that. Arrived at A&E to be told there was a long waiting list, there must have been over 100 people waiting. Coughing, spluttering, vomiting. I sat by the door as my immune system is compromised. I was called in after one and a half hours, asked by a Sister my name, address and why I was there. Told to go and sit back down, a doctor will call me in. At three and a half hours I was called in and introduced to the triage nurse. I told them I had been triaged by Oncology for some bloods to be taken. Her answer was Oncology cannot triage in A&E. My husband asked how long would it be, she replied you have to see the Doctor and that is about 10-11 hours from arrival. I burst out crying and said I should not be in this situation with my lower immune system. My husband brought me home as I was distraught. I did write a letter... and never got a reply.



Shared via email

Personal Story: “Organisation can’t be run on complaints, they need to learn from experience and adjust practice accordingly.”



I had a fall and was admitted to York Hospital. I was kept in A&E then moved to ‘majors’ after diagnosis of a fractured ankle. I was kept here for hours waiting for the orthopaedic team who found me a bed and decided to take me to the ward (15). When I got there onto the bed a staff member came and said they couldn’t accept me as I had no plan of care, so I was taken back down to majors. Besides the discomfort of the fractured ankle which had no support, I have a spinal cord injury. Eventually two staff came and put a boot on my leg then I was taken back to the ward. All this took over 12 hours and was very uncomfortable. Two days later I asked a HCA to check my boot I thought maybe there was something there as due to my spinal injury I have changed sensations in my legs. I just felt something different. When it was checked I had developed a deep tissue injury. The boot apparently had been put on wrongly, they hadn’t put a sock on and had placed the Shield next to my skin so I have lesions to the top of my foot and the DTI to my heel. I now have to go either to my GP surgery or York Hospital twice a week for dressings.... It’s causing me pain and discomfort... and costing the NHS unnecessary funding. I was asked by staff to write to the hospital and complain – I was told if I didn’t do this nothing would be done – I have written but what a way to run a service... The Orthopaedic department and podiatry staff since discharge have been wonderful.



Shared via our website

Personal Story: "NHS Equipment not wanted."



I was given some crutches for an issue. I hardly used them. Now I have recovered I took them back to the hospital, but they told me to keep them as they would just throw them away as they can't use them again. This seems an appalling waste of money and resources. The nurse who cut my bandages off also gave me the scissors as she said otherwise they would get thrown away. I can't believe this.



Shared via our website

"Waiting almost six months for an urgent neurological appointment"

Person's daughter was seen on 23 February by her GP. The GP contacted the neurology clinical lead who said to do an urgent referral. Despite that and the GP expediting the referral, the daughter's appointment is not until 6 June and her condition has already progressed with irreversible damage since the initial referral was made. The mother asked about a referral to a different hospital but was told York hospital couldn't do anything and the daughter would have to go back to their GP to ask for that. They also said that it was the same across the country which the mother knows isn't the case from talking to friends/relatives in other areas. The mother raised her concerns with PALS as a concern (to ensure a quicker resolution) but found that the investigating officer for the concern was the person from the department that she had already spoken to. Despite raising the conflict of interest, she was told that this was OK and the process.

GP Services

There were 15 compliments for GPs and GP practices.



I was discharged from hospital and told to go to my doctor regarding starting new warfarin medication. The healthcare person I saw was amazing and gave me loads of information which the hospital did not give me. She went through the diet and testing and booked me in for my next appointment. She was professional, genuinely caring and helped my anxiety with how she explained everything.



“Can’t praise them enough”

Woman can’t praise Priory Medical enough. After her mother moved to that practice, they have been excellent. The GP has visited her mother at home as have the urgent care paramedics (via the GP.) As a result the GP has been in regular touch to check how things are and seems concerned and caring.

We also received 5 complaints, 32 concerns, and 11 comments. Within these the key themes are:

- Difficulties making appointments, particularly for people who don’t have digital access.
- Long waiting times to be seen.
- Poor communication, including not hearing about routine healthcare, lack of clarity on services being offered, and people feeling their concerns are not being listened to.
- Unhappiness at having to travel across York to be seen rather than getting local appointments.

Personal Story: "Haven't heard from my GP."



I'm nearly 69... haven't heard from a GP in six years.... I should have at least been contacted regarding routine vaccinations.



"Disappointed."

Person is disappointed that the GP practice hasn't been in touch with them after they were discharged from hospital after two serious bone fractures. The GP has also offered physiotherapy by phone, but the person can't see how helpful this can be when physiotherapy should be in person.

Their closest surgery is only open to local patients in the morning. However, the surgery is now open from 12 noon until 4pm to deal with the overload from other surgeries. They want to know why it isn't always open all day and why local people can't get afternoon appointments there and are often sent to a different surgery for appointments, including blood tests.

"Too young for peri-menopause."

Woman had an issue and rang the GP practice in tears. The receptionist just said they had to fill out a form. She feels she is peri-menopausal as she has the right symptoms. She has tried to contact her GP practice five times and the only response she's had is that she is too young. Another time she was offered depression medication without being seen or listened to. Instead they asked their breast nurse (who they'd seen regarding a cancer diagnosis.) The nurse arranged a blood test which showed she is peri-menopausal. But she can't get any feedback from her GP.

Mental Health services

We received 1 compliment about excellent care.


"The Hub is good."

Member of the person's family has been to the Hub in York for support with mental health and found it very helpful. They were seen immediately and given appropriate support.

We also received 2 complaints and 7 concerns. Within these the key themes were:

- Poor support for young people, including a lack of beds for young people with complex health needs, leading to admissions to York Hospital and others being sent out of area.
- No or poor communication following referrals for support.
- Long waits for support, leaving some feeling they have to go private even though this leads them to struggle financially.
- Concerns about staff attitudes towards those needing help, impacting on care from assessment and diagnosis through to care in hospital and towards people looking for crisis support.

Personal Story: "No contact from Community Mental Health Team."

 *Suffering from post-natal depression and GP had referred to CMHT, and I expected them to make contact within two weeks. Eight months later GP called me to see how I was getting on with CMHT but I hadn't heard from them. I later had a telephone consultation and they said I needed to be referred to IAPT. I then didn't hear from IAPT and assumed I had just got lost in the system, but 14 months later out of the blue I received a call from them asking if I had received any care.*

Shared in person



“Upsetting response from Crisis line.”

Person phoned the crisis line after taking quite a lot of tablets. When they explained the person answering the call replied “why haven’t you taken more then?” Later they made a complaint and received an apology, but it was really upsetting at a difficult time.

“Very poor support from school and services.”

Person's son is now out of school. They are neurodiverse and have severe anxiety. The school has not been helpful and neither has TEWV. The person is trying to find other support to help their son and them.

“Awful experience.”

Person's daughter is 15 and has complex issues including mental health issues and they are autistic. The problems have been building for a long time and they are in touch with CAMHS. It was clear the young person was going to need a hospital admission for the past four months, but nothing was put in place. Now the young person has been sectioned and is in York Hospital on a children's ward with young children as there is no appropriate mental health bed available. All the healthcare professionals say there is nothing they can do to help as my daughter is not in the right place and she isn't. Mother said: 'I am astonished that TEWV only started looking for a bed for her when she was sectioned even they knew this was going to happen for months'.

Dentistry

We received 5 compliments about dental care.

 I have recently joined the practice and was welcomed by the lovely and friendly staff. I felt at ease and comfortable from the moment I stepped in and finally after years of trying to figure out my dental problems a lovely dentist made sense of it all. I finally felt heard and it all made sense. After years of referring from here to there we have a plan and I can see already things improving. I could not thank the team enough.



We received 4 concerns, but no complaints. We also received 2 information requests and 3 comments. These mainly related to help to find an NHS dentist in York.

Within these the key themes are:

- Lack of NHS dentistry in the city, and access problems for particularly vulnerable groups.
- People struggling to meet increasing costs of dental care.
- Challenges for families in finding affordable treatment for the whole family.
- Practices removing people from their patient lists without warning.
- Access problems for wheelchair users.

Personal Story: "What am I supposed to do now?"



My dentist has just announced that she is 'going private.' The cost is £17 a month, then you pay for treatment on top. How can a pensioner afford this, on top of all the other cost of living rises?



So..... what am I supposed to do now?

Shared via our website.

"Returned to Ukraine for treatment."

Person was supporting a Ukrainian in their house. The Ukrainian returned to Ukraine for dental treatment and to get some specific blood pressure medication as neither dentist nor GP in York could help them.

"Can't find a dentist."

Person can't find an NHS dentist in York. She has managed to get her children an NHS dentist but she is having to pay for her treatment. She is on benefits and asked if the dentist could arrange for her to be refunded for the costs via the government. But they said they don't do that.

Cross service feedback

People shared a number of stories that reflected experiences across more than one service area.

“Offered a six-eight week appointment for suicidal daughter.”

A mother used the GP online form to raise concerns about her daughter who was suicidal. The response was an appointment in six-eight weeks. The mother then tried the crisis line which was no help. Her daughter did take an overdose and the mother called 999. The ambulance team were wonderful and she felt that they were the first people willing to help. She was astounded it took a suicide attempt to get help. The ambulance staff made sure that support was in place and the right referrals were made before they left.

“Issues with getting a prescription.”

Person went to the GP and couldn't get an urgent appointment. They rang 111 and were told to talk to a pharmacist. They did and were told that they did need to see a GP so they got back in touch with the GP practice. They got an urgent appointment with a GP who prescribed them a 30mg dose of a particular drug. When the person took the prescription to the chemist linked to the GP practice they were told that that pharmacy only stocked 100mg doses so couldn't help. The person tried another pharmacy and had the same response. They went home and rang round until they found a pharmacy that could help. They were not feeling great and needed the medication and wished the GP practice could have let them know that there may be a problem with the dosage so they could have started by phoning pharmacies and saved them time and effort. The person is very happy with the staff at the GP practice, the system just needs some improvement.

“Issues with shared care agreement and lack of ADHD medication.”

Woman had an appointment with the mental health practitioner at her GP practice two years ago. They gave her two options to pursue regarding a possible ADHD diagnosis. One was a two year wait at the Tuke Centre and a face to face assessment, the other was a shorter wait and virtual assessment with Psychiatry UK still via the NHS. She chose Psychiatry UK and was diagnosed with ADHD and started medication titration seven months later.

In April 2024, Psychiatry UK contacted her GP with a shared care agreement and she was given two weeks of medication, even though the admin process for the shared care agreement can take up to 28 days. She was discharged from Psychiatry UK and access to contacts via its online portal was then restricted to customer service and the ASD service where she is waiting for an assessment. However, her GP rejected the shared care agreement saying the medication is too expensive. They referred her to the Tuke Centre to continue to get her medication. She understands there is a two year wait to be seen by the Tuke Centre. The medication has helped her significantly and allows her to complete tasks and get on with her life. Without the medication she struggles to function and can feel suicidal.

The current situation is very difficult as she doesn't know when she might get medication or who from. She has pursued Psychiatry UK who have said that they will continue the medication monthly via a nurse prescriber. But it has been very hard for her to get in touch to get things sorted out and she has spent many hours and sent many messages for something that shouldn't have happened. She feels that her access to the Psychiatry UK online system should have remained until the

shared care agreement response was clear. She also feels that her GP should not have offered the Psychiatry UK option for assessment if they weren't going to agree to a shared care agreement and she would have been better off waiting for the Tuke Centre the first time.

Things we're aware of

Through the feedback we've received recently, we are aware of:

- Mixed experiences of maternity services, with praise for many staff members but concerns about attitudes experienced from others.
- Challenges in getting the right support for young people who are neurodiverse and exploring their gender identity, including being advised to conceal elements of who they are to access support.
- Problems with accessing medications, including national stock shortages leaving people without essential medicines.
- Concern about lack of options for supporting children with complex mental health issues needing inpatient care.
- Waiting for social care support
- Support and services for people living with long Covid

We welcome your feedback on all aspects of health and care but would particularly love to hear from you about your experiences of any of these themes.

We also want to hear from young people aged 16–25 about their experiences of accessing health and care. Take our survey to share your views direct by visiting:

<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/CCYork/>

We'd also love to understand how much you know about our work, and what you think of it. Until 31 October 2024, you can complete our "Your Experiences of Healthwatch York" survey by visiting:

<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/YourExperience2024/>

Why we do this

We believe that the best health and care services put people at the heart of their work. We put this report together to help local services hear more about your experiences of health and care in our city, and can use this to help shape what they do next.

We also want to encourage more people to speak up about their experiences, whether good or bad. It is important to celebrate those providing excellent care. It is also important to highlight what could be improved – when we share what doesn't work, we provide those delivering and buying care with an opportunity to make services better.

This report also gives more insight into the work we do through our signposting, information and advice service. This service exists to:

- help people find out about services and support available to them
- provide information that can help people understand their options and make decisions about health and care
- provide a listening ear to anyone who has had a difficult experience

We hope you find this report of interest, and please get in touch if there is anything we can help you with.



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