



What we are hearing

Quarterly Report: Jan-March 2024

healthwatch
York

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Photo by Kirsten Drew via unsplash

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 January to 31 March 2024. This report gives a flavour of the issues and themes this quarter.

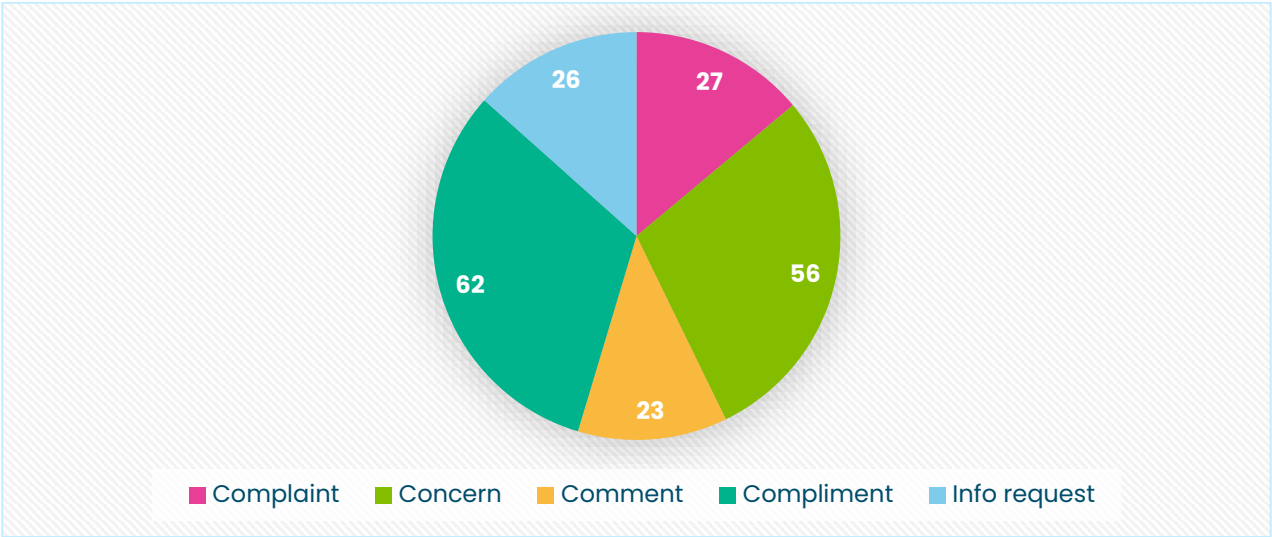
The service areas highlighted in this report are as follows:

- GP services
- Intermediate care
- NHS Dentistry
- Hospital services
- Mental Health services

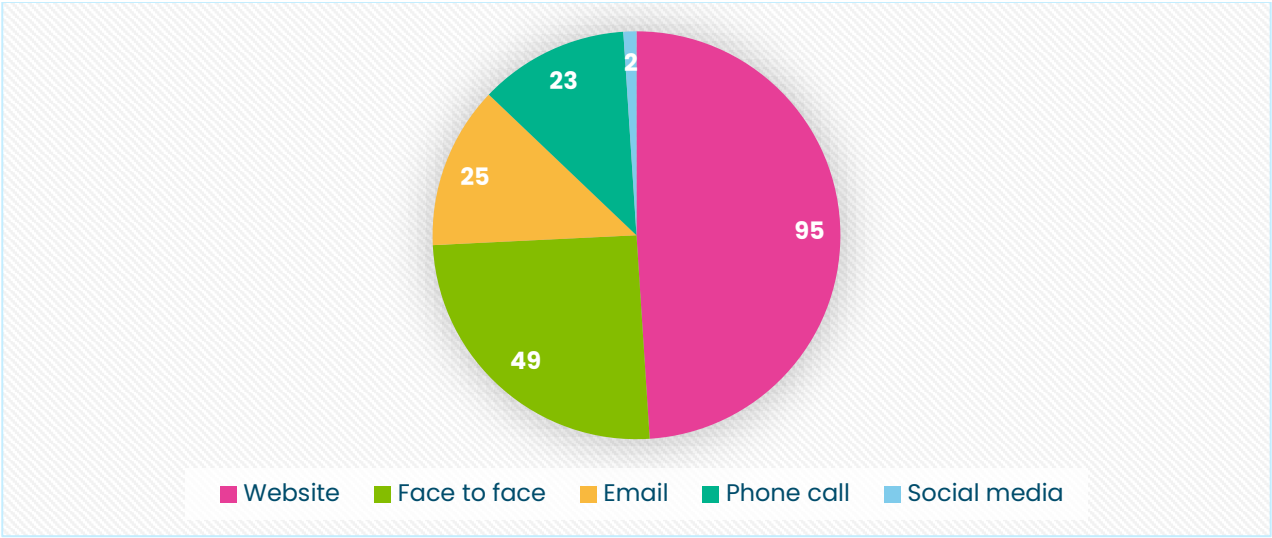
Overview of contacts received

From January to the end of March 194 people contacted us directly to ask for information / advice or share their feedback.

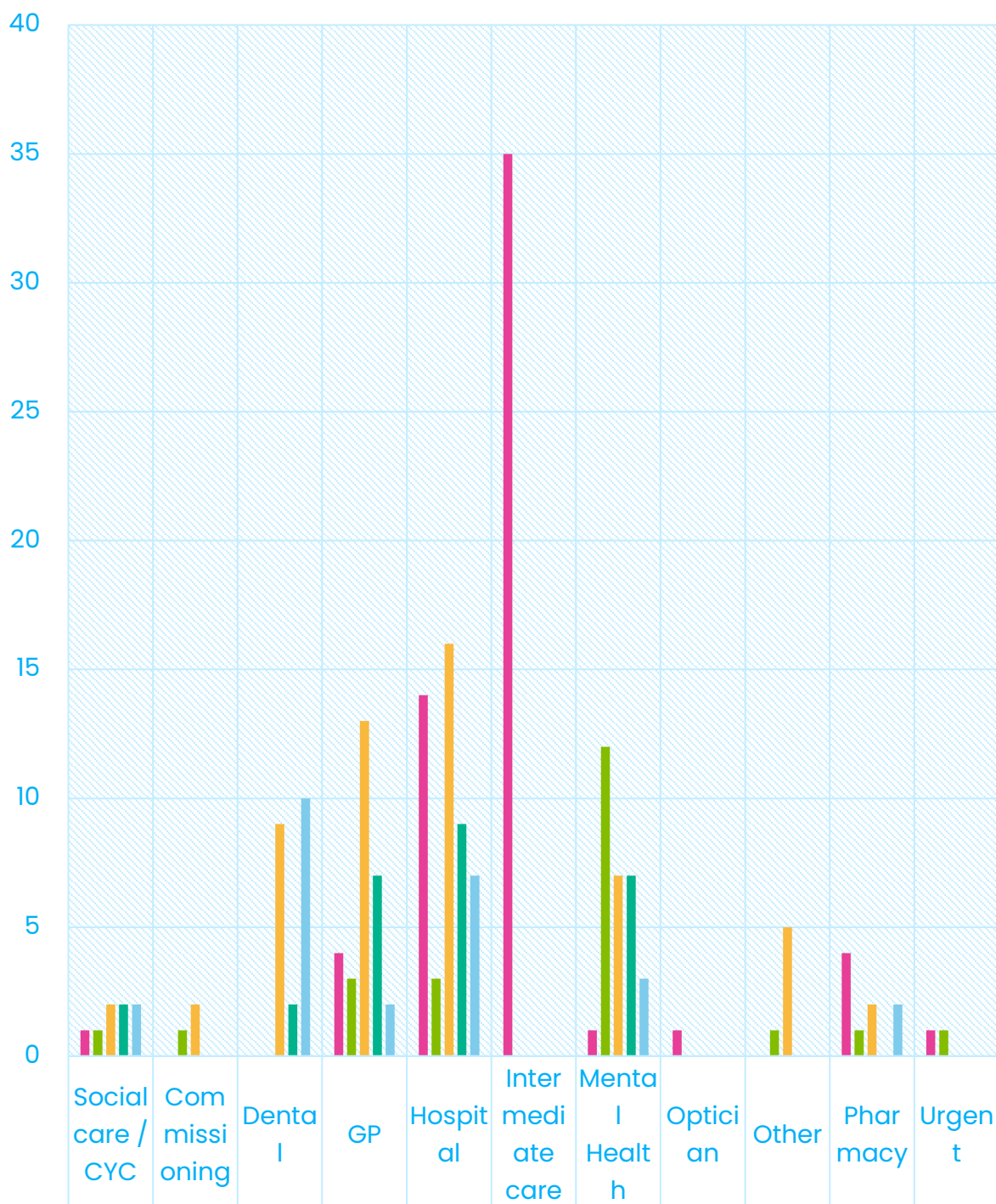
Type of feedback received



Contacted by



Feedback received by type and area of care



Compliment Comment Concern Complaint Request for info

Key themes by area of care

GP Services:

There were 4 compliments for GPs and GP practices.



I have had the same GP for almost a decade now. She has been absolutely amazing – kind, compassionate, caring and an excellent & thorough clinician. I have extremely complex health problems – she goes above and beyond to ensure that I get the care I need. It is a large group of practices with 27 doctors and many allied

healthcare professionals. The surgery's complex care team make it easier for me to get help quickly when I need it, and usually with one of the other doctors I know well if/when my own GP is not available.



We also received 13 concerns and 7 complaints. Within these the key themes are:

- Lack of regular reviews for people with long term conditions, including annual reviews and medication reviews
- Challenges in getting appointments, including urgent follow-up for people leaving hospital, accessing urgent appointments, problems with online access
- Delays to treatments and referrals and communication challenges between services; not being referred to services outside our area that are not offered in York
- Accessibility concerns, from not being able to travel to Malton for follow up appointments, to never being provided with a BSL interpreter for appointments, and wanting to access a more Autism-friendly cervical screening appointment
- Concerns that health issues are not being taken seriously

Personal Story: "Concerns about my treatment"



I contacted {name of practice} three times about a sore throat over as many weeks. The first time I called, the receptionist wouldn't even let me speak to a medical professional.... The second time... the person on the phone ... prescribed ineffective antibiotics. The third time I did manage to get an appointment... (they) just told me to carry on what I was doing and taking the antibiotics even though I told him they were making no difference....

The day after that I was in such unbearable pain I went to urgent care at the hospital where they immediately diagnosed acute tonsillitis. My condition deteriorated over weeks as a direct result of not being able to access proper advice... I also ended up having to pay £48 in prescription (charges) to treat the illness they missed due to just not listening (to women?)

This is at least the second time something like this has happened. The previous time I asked for my toddler to be seen and they wouldn't give me an appointment. When my husband called they got him straight in.

Shared via email



Personal Story: "Poor support from GP practice"



Asked for help following two years of several traumatic events and bereavements. Doctor texted me a list of charities to try even though I told him I had already been in touch with some without a positive outcome

Shared via our website



Personal Story: "Doctors were great, system needs looking at."



Getting repeated UTI's (Very enlarged prostate.) Asked for antibiotics as I recognise the symptoms. I was told to go to the surgery to be examined. Then sent to A&E. Waited several hours for bladder scan (bladder emptying ok.)

Then told to go to out of hours GP in the hospital. Waited another 2 hours. Doctor asked symptoms, tested urine and gave me antibiotics within 5 minutes. So, waited around 6 hours, in pain and feeling generally very unwell, to be given what I KNEW I needed. This caused several disciplines to spend time dealing with me when it could have all been sorted out within minutes and other patients dealt with quicker. I DO NOT blame the doctors or other staff, they were great. The system needs looking at.

Shared via our website



Intermediate Care

There were 35 compliments for York Integrated Care Team.



The people who came on a daily basis to wash and care for my dad were lovely and caring and I felt that they really cared for him and myself.



Dentistry

We received no compliments about dental care. We received 9 concerns and 2 complaints. Within these the key themes are:

- The significant lack of NHS dentistry in the city
- Appointments being cancelled, often at short notice
- NHS dentists going private including finding out about changes via local media rather than direct communications from the practice
- Worry about the spiralling costs of private treatment and lack of viable alternatives
- People foregoing treatment due to cost
- The impact of lack of dental access on wider health and wellbeing, including disabled people, pregnant women, people with Coeliac disease (which impacts on bones), people with sleep apnea, and reports of poor self- esteem for those with visible dental issues.

We also received 10 information requests. These mainly related to help to find an NHS dentist in York, but we also heard from people wanting help to complain and being told the care they wanted was no longer available on the NHS. These people wanted to check what they were being told was accurate.

Personal Story: "Seeking an NHS dentist?"



I have severe sleep apnea and have been recommended by the hospital to go to my NHS dentist to get all my teeth in a good state and ask them to provide me with a piece of equipment to reduce my sleep apnea. I went back to the hospital and said I do not have access to an NHS dentist and privately this will cost me thousands (I have checked with a private dentist). Their response was that nothing else could be done then and so I have to live with sleep apnea now which is known for being a silent killer and I have a shortened life expectancy!

Shared via our website



Personal Story: "Trying to find an NHS dentist"



I contacted {name of dentist} last year and was told to ring them in January which I did and made an appointment for March. I received a message to say this was cancelled. I... made another appointment for April but last week this one was cancelled. I was then told to ring back in July. I haven't had a dentist since 2018 as was told they were not taking NHS patients. Through lockdown a tooth came loose and another one broke. I'm 73 and need all my teeth out. I'm terrified of the dentist and it took a lot for me to try for an appointment. I rang round but no-one would accept me. I was told if I wanted treatment quickly they could treat me privately but 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.

Shared via our website



Personal Story: "I can't access an NHS dentist and can't afford a private one"



I'm a single mum of a teen, on a Homes for Ukraine visa. I've experienced regular dental pain for a few months already. Check up result: around £1,000 for treatment of teeth and gums needed, just not affordable for me at the moment. Explored options:

- *NHS patient – tried to contact many dental clinics advised to me, but was told that the waiting list was from 2 years and longer.*
- *Financial plan from the clinic – not eligible.*
- *Was refused a credit card and overdraft from my bank also. Low credit score, no credit history, my status...*
- *Ill doesn't solve the issue. From what I understood I could get some urgent help if in terrible pain, they would do some emergency manipulations and send me to seek further help from private dentists.*
- *Going abroad – considered, but there were no affordable options found*

Issue is worsening, needs to be dealt with. The dull pain doesn't leave anymore. Afraid it will lead to a root canal issue if not or losing teeth. If I could please get notified if and when any dental clinic will be able to accept new NHS patients, that would be a great help!

Shared via email



Personal Story: “Worried about costs of dentistry”



I am a patient at {name of dentist}. I found out via social media last night (that they are no longer offering NHS dentistry to existing patients) without having received a letter from them. I appreciate they will be offering a monthly plan to cover some treatments but it's more money that I need to find from somewhere that I haven't budgeted for and I don't have a choice other than to pay it when I need to look after my teeth. I am also worried about the costs should I need any other treatment etc – I have a problem with weak enamel and ongoing issues with wisdom teeth so it is highly likely that I will need treatment outside the proposed plan. I doubt I will be able to find another NHS place in York either. Generally feeling very angry about the whole situation especially around their communication about it.

Shared via email



Hospital

We received 14 compliments about excellent care at hospital.



My 86-year-old Mam with advanced Alzheimer's is just out of surgery for hip replacement after a fall just over 24 hours ago. The NHS at its very best. Anaesthetist {name} at York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (York hospital) just called me to tell me how mam coped with the op and all well. Every member of staff on the journey has been brilliant! Thank you paramedics, healthcare assistants, volunteer tea makers, meals services, staff nurses, advanced clinical practitioners. Thank you, York Hospital A&E, ward 39, surgery team!





I found a lump in my breast during lockdown. I rang the GP, was first in the queue and had an appointment within two hours. When I got home, I had a message with an appointment at the hospital within two weeks. I was diagnosed at that appointment,


had a biopsy and a week later they confirmed the results. Two weeks after that I had surgery and then chemotherapy every week for 14 weeks. Everyone was superb, the nurses were kind, supportive and really great.



We also received 16 concerns and 9 complaints. Within these the key themes were:

- Long waiting times for operations, scans, outpatient appointments, specialist input, and sending follow up letters
- Post office delays in delivering letters meaning people missed out on vital information about medications
- Concerns about quality of care in complex cases
- Communication problems including communication with patients, communication between GPs and the hospital, and communication with families and carers
- Access issues including failure to provide a BSL interpreter, lack of seating options, and lack of vegan food options
- Staffing levels


Personal Story: "Delay in follow up letter following an outpatient appointment"

 I had a cardiology phone appointment... more than 2 weeks later I enquired to find his guidance letter to my GP is still waiting to be typed up because of secretarial team staff shortages. 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.

Shared via email



Personal Story: "Problems with post from hospital being delayed by Post Office"

 Late last year I was prescribed additional medication for rheumatoid arthritis. I was already taking three other medications. The medication was delivered to my home so I started taking it in addition to my other meds. Three weeks later I received a letter from the hospital which seemed to have been posted five weeks before. It arrived in a plastic bag with the contents open, which included blood monitoring forms and a guide to the new medication. The letter informed me that I should have stopped taking one of my original meds before starting the new one. When I contacted Rheumatology they responded very quickly and were able to reassure me and do now send letters electronically. I was grateful for the hospital's response but appalled by the service provided by the Post Office and the impact this could have had.

Shared in person



Mental Health services

We received 1 compliment about excellent care.



I used the online service used for therapy. 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.



We also received 16 concerns and 9 complaints. Within these the key themes were:

- Long waiting times for Adult ADHD and Autism assessment under the new pathway
- Long waiting times for diagnoses to be 'ratified' in order to receive ADHD medication for children and adults
- Long waiting times for children's mental health support and diagnoses

Personal Story: "Another year waiting"





I've been on a waiting list for the Community Mental Health Team for over a year now for ratification for medication for ADHD. Really hard work and unnecessary – another year wait apparently.



Shared in person


Personal Story: "Lack of mental health care for child"


 My child has had EBSA (emotion based schools avoidance for 5+ years now. We eventually got them autism and ADHD diagnoses at ages 9 and 11 (having tried since nursery.)... They have been displaying escalating anxiety symptoms for 6+ years, in the last 2 years including panic attacks and dissociation. They are further damaged by the evidence that nobody outside the family cares.... Now they are displaying symptoms of depression as well. They have desperately low self-esteem and despite a move to a specialist school which does not pressure them, and which they cope with if we can get them in, we are still failing to get them there 3 days out of 4. ... Their sleep has been severely disrupted for 5 years. We feel very alone. My spouse and I are struggling to care for them and work. We feel they desperately need to see a child psychiatrist, but this is not on offer and I don't even know how to find one. Does Right to Choose exist for CAMHS? Are there even any private ones? We can't find out. I am extremely worried... But they are not –that we know of – self harming, so there's no support. I can't bear to see how bad they are and it's not enough?! The GP... wouldn't refer them back to CAMHS "because nothing would happen."



Shared with Healthwatch England

Personal Story: "Mental health support offered hasn't met needs"

 I've been treated with CBT twice for moderate anxiety. Yes I agree I have anxiety but the MH team do not treat the cause. I have had a private psychologist tell me I have PTSD, but I never get past the CBT stage with the NHS. I need my past trauma dealing with!



Shared via our website

Things we're aware of

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

- Changes to the adult ADHD and Autism assessment pathway following the end of the recent pilot
- Reports of perceived differences in treatment for men and women
- Challenges in using the Badger app, the route for women to access healthcare during pregnancy
- Long waiting times for gender identity clinics

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.

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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