

What we heard about health and social care

January to March 2025

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Introduction

Healthwatch asks and listens to your healthcare experiences

At Healthwatch North Yorkshire, we listen to what matters most to people using NHS and social care services. Every piece of feedback helps us understand what's working well, where improvements are needed, and how services can better meet your needs.

Every month, we gather feedback from people who contact us directly, share their views at events, or post through Care Opinion – a website where patients can talk about their experiences of care. These stories give us a snapshot of how services are working across the county.

This report shares what we heard between January and March 2025. During this period, 184 people shared their feedback with us through our phone line, website, email, or in person. It's important to note that this doesn't include comments gathered through project surveys, focus groups or our visits to care homes (known as [**enter and view**](#) visits).

The feedback we receive each month varies but there is often feedback about GP services ("the doctors"), hospital care, social care, dentistry, and mental health services.

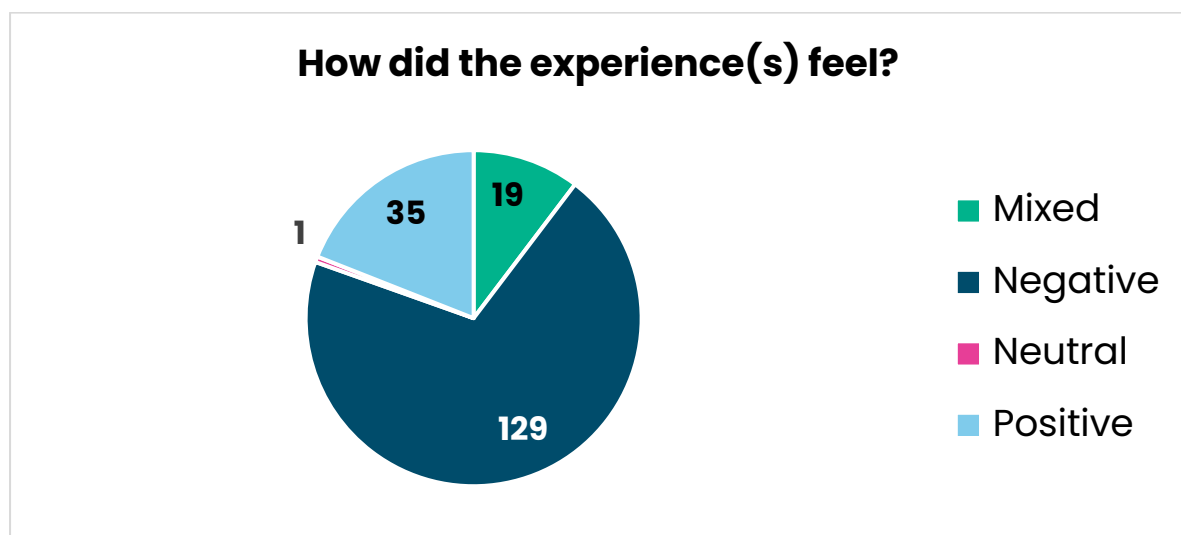


What did people tell us?

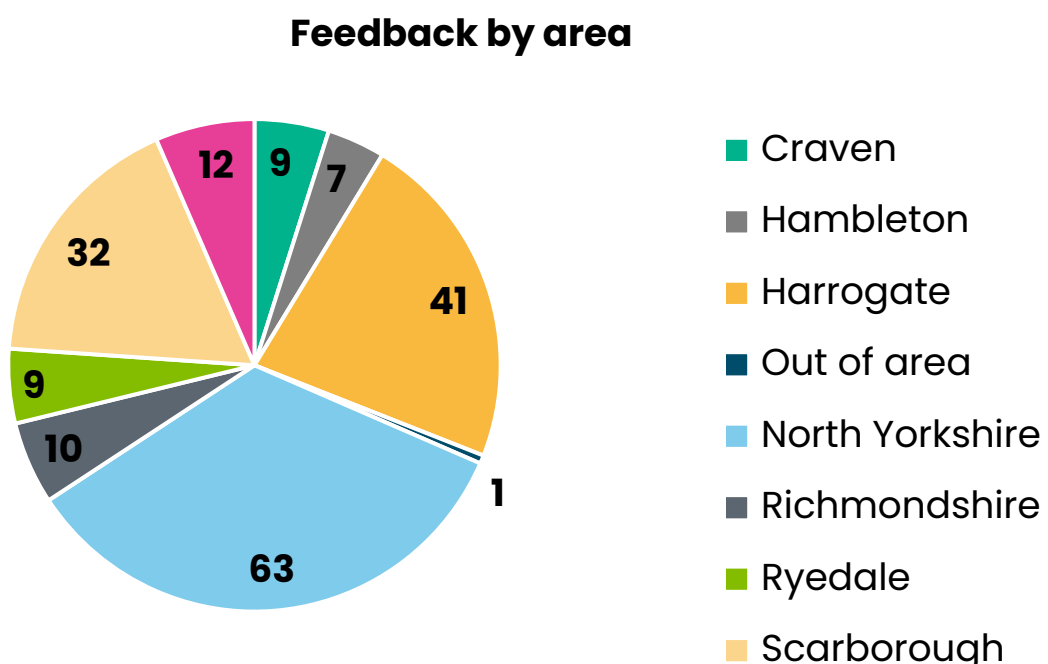
Most of the feedback we heard was about GP services, hospital care, dentistry, and A&E. Here's how the numbers break down:

- **70%** of feedback was negative
- **19%** was positive
- The rest was mixed or neutral

People also spoke to us about pharmacy services, NHS 111, mental health support, and social care – including care homes and care at home.



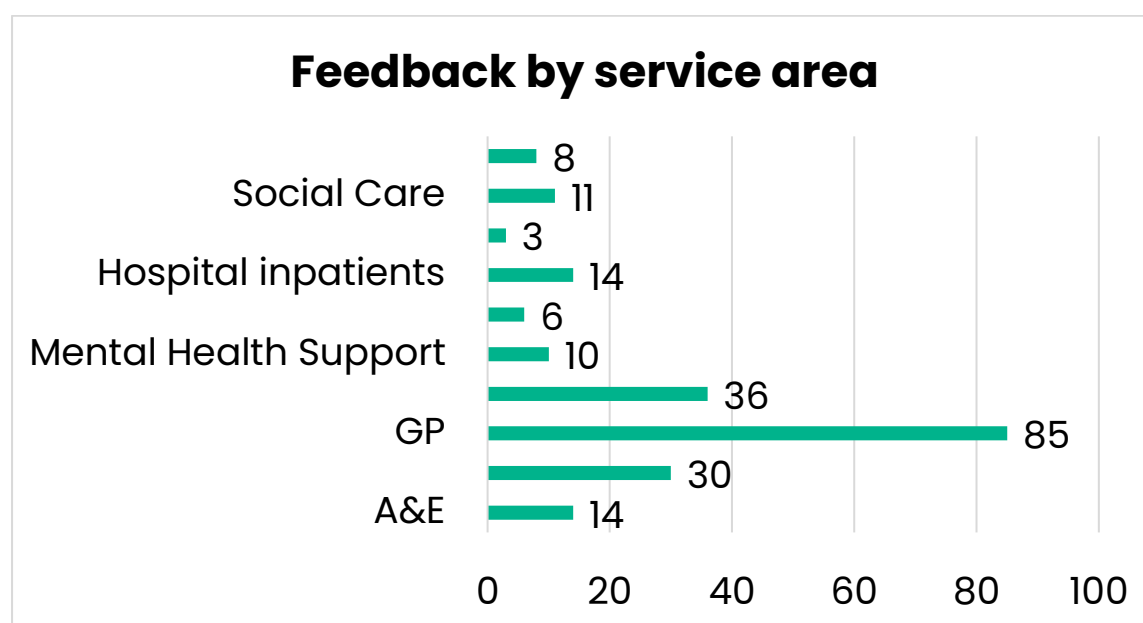
There was a spread of feedback from across the different areas.



Top areas of feedback on health and social care

Which healthcare areas received the most comments from people?

1. GP services **(39%)**
2. Hospital care **(22%)**¹
3. Dentistry **(14%)**
4. Accident and emergency services **(14%)**²



In addition to those mentioned above, we also received feedback about pharmacies, social care (such as care homes and care at home), NHS 111 and mental health support services.

¹ Hospital care includes outpatient appointments and inpatient care.

² Accident and emergency, including minor injury units.

Feedback about GP services

Patients value kindness and clarity—but many face barriers accessing GP services

People shared a wide range of experiences. Of the feedback we received:

- **58%** was negative
- **26%** was positive
- **16%** was mixed

The most common issue raised was communication. People told us they want to feel informed and involved in decisions about their care – and that clear, timely, and compassionate communication is key.

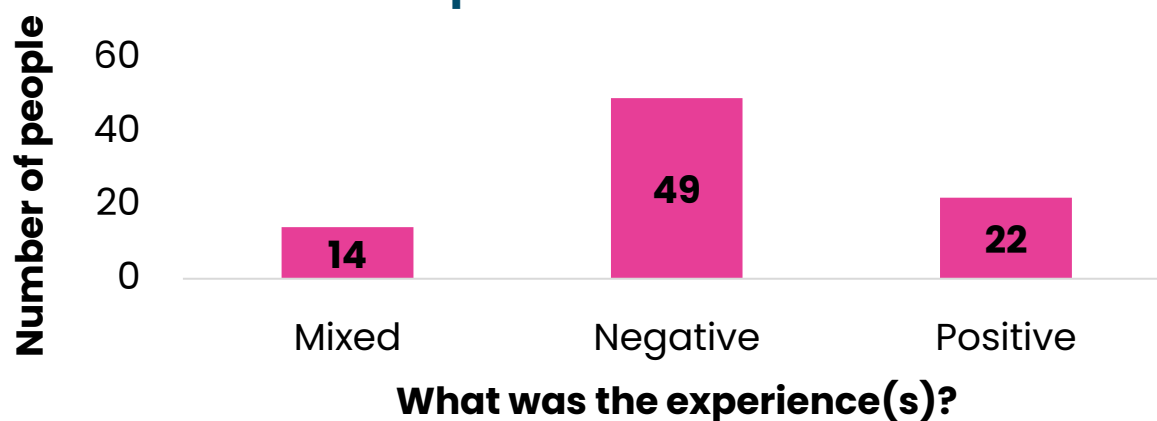
Access to appointments and long waiting times were also frequent concerns. Many of you highlighted the importance of feeling listened to, respected, and treated with dignity. Some shared how online booking systems made things easier. But for those without digital access, these same systems created barriers, leaving them feeling excluded.

On a more positive note, people who felt well cared for by their GP (General Practitioner, the official title for “the doctor”) described staff as kind, respectful and empathetic. These stories show just how much a compassionate approach can improve someone’s experience.

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Over this period, we received feedback about 64 different GP practices across North Yorkshire. The next few pages take a closer look at the practices we heard most about.

How the experience(s) with the GP practice was



We received feedback about 64 different GP practices across North Yorkshire. The practices that received the most feedback are explored in more detail on the next pages.



Fisher Medical Centre, Craven

We heard a mix of positive and negative feedback about Fisher Medical Centre.

One patient told us they were extremely grateful to their GP, whose quick decision to refer them to A&E led to the diagnosis of a potentially life-threatening condition. Their experience shows how timely, professional care can make a real difference.

Others shared concerns about delays in routine checks like blood pressure and cholesterol monitoring. In some cases, the wait was so long that people felt they had no choice but to pay for private tests.

We also heard from an Afghan family struggling to book appointments, due to both language barriers and the complexity of the online booking system. Others described the online process as “longwinded” and said it didn’t give them a fair chance to explain their symptoms properly.

Another common concern was the lack of continuity. Several people told us they missed having a regular doctor, which made it harder to build trust and feel fully supported when managing long-term health issues.

“I highly recommend this practice, and the wonderful GP I saw this week who was **patient, professional and caring**. His decision to send me to A&E helped diagnose a condition that could have been immediately life threatening without treatment. **A huge thank you.**”

“There is no regular doctor with whom to build any relationship, **no consistency and often inaccurate records**. Their online Klinik system is longwinded and doesn't address or allow accuracy when notifying symptoms.”

The Spa Surgery, Harrogate

People shared both positive and negative experiences about their care at Spa Surgery.

Several people spoke warmly about the staff, describing them as caring, responsive, and professional. One person said a routine dressing appointment led to their low mood being picked up – and they were grateful for the regular follow-up calls from their GP that followed. This highlights how small acts of attention can make a big difference to someone's wellbeing.

Other people raised concerns about systems not working smoothly. One patient, for example, struggled to get hospital-prescribed medication added to their repeat prescription, despite contacting both the hospital and their GP practice.

We also heard that the reliance on digital systems – like booking appointments online or checking in using screens – can be a barrier. This was especially true for people with visual impairments or those who find digital tech difficult to use. For some, it felt like the system wasn't built with their needs in mind.

While many people praised the hard work of staff, this feedback shows how important it is that care systems remain flexible and inclusive, and that technology doesn't get in the way of access.

"They have **very caring & professional** reception, nursing and medical staff."

"When I have had appointments at my surgery, I have been **asked to use the screen** and keypad to tell the receptionist that I have arrived for an appointment. I don't like having to key in my details on an electronic screen (that can be read by other patients). I won't use the screen because it is designed to push everyone into using it and **many can't use it.**"

Derwent Practice, Ryedale

We heard concerns about the quality and consistency of care at Derwent Practice, especially for people with ongoing or complex health needs.

One person told us about their recovery after back surgery. Their hospital aftercare was thorough, with regular wound checks and clear guidance. But when their care was handed over to the practice, they experienced a drop in consistency and communication.

Their first appointment with a GP at the practice was reassuring – but follow-up care was handled by different staff who, they said, missed signs of poor healing. This led to a serious infection, which was only picked up when they returned to hospital for advice.

The person shared their frustration at not being able to see the same GP again – the one who had originally managed their care effectively. Instead, they were passed between staff who, in their words, didn't address their concerns. This affected their recovery and made everyday life more difficult.

“The doctor that I saw originally was great and made sure that the wound was healing as it should be but after this initial consultation. I have been in the care of the nurses at the practice who missed issues with the healing process. I think this has caused **my healing process to take longer than it has needed to be.**”

Feedback about hospital care

Hospital journeys often praised for compassion—but marred by confusion and poor coordination.

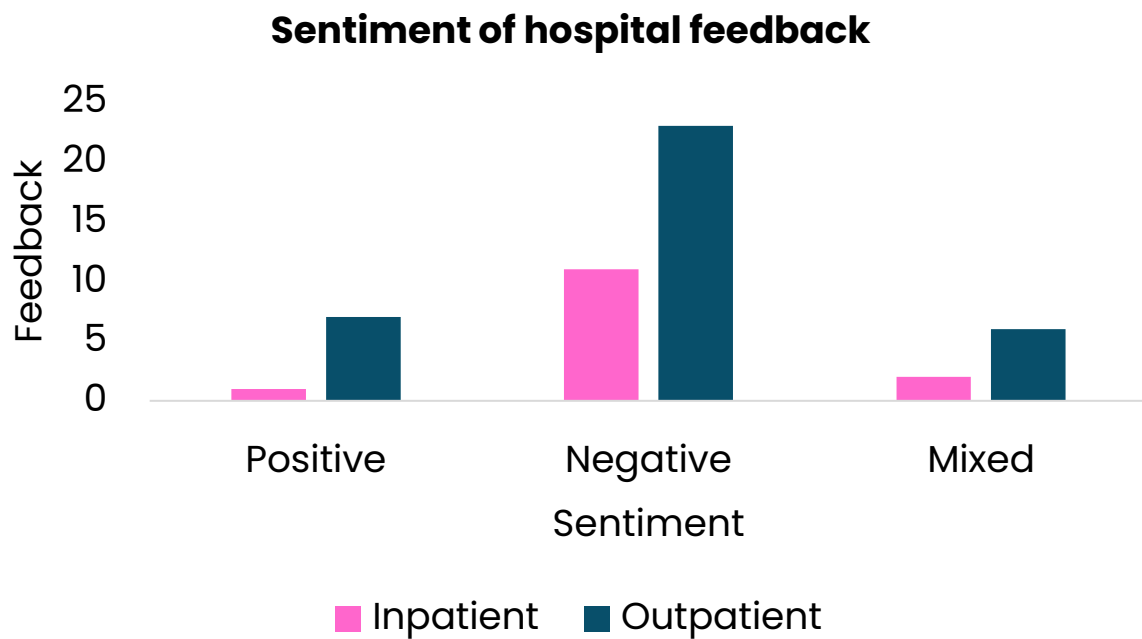
People told us about a wide range of experiences with inpatient and outpatient hospital care.

Of the feedback we received:

- **68%** was negative
- **16%** was positive
- **16%** was mixed

Where people had positive experiences, they often praised staff for their professionalism, kindness, and efficiency. But many also described challenges – particularly around poor communication, confusing discharge processes, and a lack of coordination between hospital departments.

These issues can make hospital journeys feel disjointed and leave patients feeling unsupported, especially at key moments of care.



James Cook Hospital

James Cook Hospital received the most feedback between January and March 2025 – with **77%** of it being negative.

Some people had good experiences, particularly in cancer care and outpatient services, where coordination was smooth and communication strong. One patient described how their prescription was ready before they even left the hospital – a moment of clear, joined-up working.

But many others raised concerns. People told us about:

- Long waits for appointments
- Sudden cancellations with no notice
- Being passed between departments
- Struggles to get diagnoses and treatment on time

In one case, a formal complaint was the only way someone could secure the appointment they needed.

Carers also raised serious concerns. One described a medication error involving their wife, who has Alzheimer's, due to incorrect dosages being prepared on the ward.

People with long-term or complex conditions told us they didn't feel listened to. One person with fibromyalgia felt dismissed and labelled a hypochondriac. Several others said they had to organise mental health and social care support privately, as none was offered.

"By the time I saw the doctor, the on-site pharmacist had **already processed** the hospital recommendation. Twenty minutes later, I was collecting my prescription from the chemist."

"I received a letter in February telling me that **my appointment for 7th March was cancelled and changed to 10th March**. Never received appointment for 7th so it was good that I was notified that it was cancelled!"



Harrogate Hospital

We received a wide range of feedback about Harrogate Hospital. Of the responses:

- **57%** were negative
- **42%** were positive
- The rest were mixed

Many people shared positive stories about their care. Some described the service as responsive, professional, and well-organised. One family praised the end-of-life care their loved one received, calling it “exceptional” for both the patient and their family. Others valued new systems like Total Triage, which helped streamline diagnostics and treatment.

We also heard how Harrogate Hospital worked well with local GP practices such as East Parade Surgery and Yorkshire Health Service. These partnerships meant follow-up appointments, blood tests and scans happened quickly and efficiently – showing the power of joined-up care.

However, not everyone had a positive experience.

Some patients told us about delays in treatment and difficulties accessing services. One person with a long-term autoimmune condition felt repeatedly dismissed and unheard, facing years of barriers to getting the support they needed. We also heard concerns about how women’s health issues were managed, with some feeling there was a lack of understanding or empathy.

Others spoke about long waits for tests, confusion about medication side effects, and poor communication from staff – all of which left them feeling unsupported.

"I cannot fault any of the service I received anywhere and wanted to provide positive feedback about all the staff I encountered. **The medical service is the best I have ever received,** and I have lived in different regions around the country."

"Nurses were uncaring, have no concept of basic infection control or cleanliness, are unable to give you the correct medication, **ignored any requests for help**—for example, my pulse was over 160 and I was having to walk to the toilet, I could barely stand."



York Hospital

Between January and March 2025, most of the feedback we received about York Hospital was negative – **87%** – with the rest being mixed.

People shared a variety of experiences. Many praised the dedication of front-line staff – including doctors, nurses, and volunteers – who were described as caring, helpful, and compassionate. These moments of good care stood out and were deeply appreciated.

But we also heard a number of concerns, particularly around communication and long delays in treatment.

One patient told us about a difficult wait following surgery for a temporary stoma. They were told the reversal would happen in August 2024, but despite months of waiting, it wasn't until their GP stepped in in December that anything changed. They described feeling left in limbo, with no updates or support.

Others told us about long waits for specialist care – including urgent referrals to dermatology and rheumatology. Some felt dismissed or struggled to access treatment when they needed it. One family also raised concerns about the care their relative received in a dementia ward, which they felt contributed to a rapid decline in their condition.

“The staff on Ward 16, where I had my initial operation in June 2024, were amazing – **friendly, caring, helpful, compassionate and morale-boosting.**”

“Seven months have passed by since my operation and there has been no stoma reversal operation. I have been left to pass my life, day-to-day in limbo, with **no input from York Hospital** as to when I will have my stoma reversal operation.”

Scarborough Hospital

Feedback about Scarborough Hospital was largely negative in January, February and March 2025 – **88%** – but there were also some positive stories.

Some people told us about excellent care, especially in urgent and specialist services. One family member praised the swift and effective treatment their loved one received following a cancer diagnosis. Others spoke positively about the hospital's *Home from Hospital* service, which was particularly helpful for carers needing advice and support during a difficult time.

However, many people shared concerns. Communication stood out as a recurring issue. Patients and families told us they often felt left in the dark – especially during complex care journeys where more support was needed.

One parent described feeling ignored when trying to explain their child's additional needs. This lack of understanding led to an avoidable hospital re-admission. Another person said poor communication caused delays in their treatment, and several people said long waiting lists and poor follow-up made their conditions worse.

These stories show the importance of listening and keeping people informed – especially when they're already under stress.

"The staff were amazing with our little girl. We were seen quickly by a triage nurse and then an hour wait for a GP."

"Getting on a waiting list is bad enough but while you're waiting if you're condition changes, you're not allowed to get in touch with your consultant. You have to wait two to three weeks to see your own GP and explain to them and then they have to write to your consultant which **delays everything."**

Feedback about accident and emergency (A&E)

Praise for staff contrasts with concerns over long waits and communication issues in A&E.

People shared a broad mix of experiences:

- **58%** of the feedback was negative
- **25%** was positive
- **17%** was mixed

Some people praised staff for being compassionate, efficient, and reassuring – even during busy periods. But many others told us about long waits, poor communication, and a lack of support for complex needs.



York Hospital A&E

We heard a range of experiences about York Hospital's A&E department.

One person described the care they received after a fall as "excellent", highlighting the staff nurse's efficiency and compassion, even though the department was under pressure. Others echoed this, saying they felt reassured by staff who were kind and professional.

However, not everyone had a positive experience. One patient told us they waited nearly ten hours to be seen by a doctor after arriving with chest pains. Another shared their frustration after NHS 111 referred them to A&E with a dental infection – only to be turned away.

Language barriers also created difficulties. One person said they felt unsafe because communication relied on Google Translate. A bereaved parent raised serious concerns about gaps in coordination between A&E, GPs and mental health services, following the death of their daughter.

These stories paint a mixed picture. While many staff provide excellent care, others experience delays and a lack of joined-up support that can leave them feeling confused or unsafe.

"My treatment at York A&E was excellent. I was taken by ambulance after a fall and received efficient and caring care, especially from the staff nurse, despite being busy."

"I was admitted with chest pain and given a chair in a room with others. **I didn't see a doctor until 2:45 am** and wasn't discharged until 9 am."

Scarborough Hospital A&E

People raised similar worries about Scarborough Hospital's A&E.

One person described spending six hours in the department while their partner experienced chest pain – and said they were left frustrated by poor communication and disorganisation throughout their visit.

Another patient told us they were told to travel to York the next day after a long wait, only to face more delays. We also heard about the lack of seating, long queues, and a general sense of not being listened to.

"I know the staff are busy, I understand that, but **nobody listened to me which I find alarming.**"



Feedback about dentists

NHS dental care feels out of reach for many – with access, cost, and communication driving widespread frustration.

We received **30 pieces of feedback about dentistry** – and every one of them was negative.

The most pressing concern was access. Many people told us they simply can't find a dentist offering NHS care.

Some reported waiting lists of up to seven years. Long-standing NHS patients said their practices had either gone private or closed altogether, leaving them and their families without affordable options.

People who have always paid their way now feel priced out of essential treatment. There's a growing sense that NHS dental care is becoming a privilege, not a right.

Affordability and inequality were key themes. Pensioners, carers, people with disabilities, and those on low incomes said they couldn't afford private care – even when they were in pain.

Some are putting off treatment because of the cost, even when their problems are serious. This leads to worsening health, distress, and anxiety.

We also heard concerns about:

- Being charged full NHS prices for short or poor-quality appointments

- Being removed from patient lists after missing appointments due to illness or bereavement
- A lack of communication, particularly for people with additional needs
- Services not being joined-up – people said they felt passed between dentists, GPs and pharmacies, without anyone taking ownership of their care

These experiences show the urgent need for better access, clearer communication, and greater investment in NHS dental services across North Yorkshire.

“I know I will have to get treatment in the future and don’t know how I’ll manage it. **It keeps me awake at night.** I don’t know why this sort of issue isn’t in the news every day. Dental care should be a right not a privilege.”

“I’ve been a loyal NHS dentist patient all my life, never missing an appointment. The dentist has now turned private, so **we are once again left without a dentist.** I have two children who also now do not have an NHS dentist. The dentist is offering basic checkups at £100 a time. Please help!”



Feedback about mental health support

Delays, discharges, and distress – people feel failed by mental health services.

People shared serious concerns about local mental health services. Many said they felt abandoned, unsafe, and unheard.

Some told us they waited over two years for basic care, including appointments with care coordinators – even when they were in crisis. Others described being discharged from services without warning or a care plan in place and left to manage strong medications without support.

We also heard from families struggling with the transition from children's mental health services (CAMHS) to adult services. Some said this change happened suddenly at age 18, regardless of whether the young person was ready to move on. Older adults, prison leavers, and people with limited mobility also face systemic barriers to care.

"That's not poor care – it's no care. What is happening? I've had 3 stays in a mental health hospital after suicide attempts and still services haven't managed my care. No wonder so many slip through the net and don't make it."

"CAMHS is absolutely awful. They are **totally failing our young people**. My children were treated disgustingly. This neglectful act meant myself and my two younger children were at risk of serious harm."

Feedback about NHS 111

Confusing advice, delays, and how people are assessed over the phone and when using NHS 111 online left many feeling misdirected and unsupported.

Feedback about NHS 111 was mostly negative. People told us about delays, confusing advice, and being sent to the wrong service – which in some cases made their situation worse.

Several people were directed to A&E unnecessarily, which led to long waits, expensive journeys, and wasted time. One person paid £45 for a taxi to York A&E after calling 111 with a dental infection, only to be turned away.

Language barriers made things even harder for some. A nurse using Google Translate left one patient feeling unsafe. Others were left bouncing between A&E, out-of-hours services, and their GP, without getting the help they needed.

Some did have helpful experiences, like a parent referred in the early hours of the morning. But even in that case, there were concerns about the lack of supervision in the children's waiting area.

People also raised concerns that NHS 111 staff may not always have the clinical training to offer safe triage, leading to avoidable A&E visits and ambulance callouts.

“People end up in urgent treatment centres and A&E that shouldn't be there. NHS 111 staff should be medically trained to offer a better triage system. They are adding to the waiting times in A&E and not helping to signpost people to the right services.”

“I had a dental infection for four weeks. NHS 111 sent me to York A&E, which cost me £45 in a taxi, and when I got there, **they said they couldn't treat me** and told me I needed a dentist.”



Feedback about social care and care homes

Experiences with care homes and social care show a system stretched—where good care isn't always guaranteed.

There were serious concerns about the quality of care in some care homes. Issues raised included poor hygiene, a lack of hydration monitoring, unsafe environments, and distress during end-of-life care.

One person said their husband's dementia needs were not being met, leading to repeated hospital visits.

Another said palliative care support came too late, adding to the stress of an already difficult time.

We also heard that making a complaint can be difficult. Some people faced unanswered emails or felt accused of being malicious. Others said they couldn't even find a complaints process on the care home's website. This can be especially distressing for people who are already vulnerable or grieving.

There were frustrations with getting support from North Yorkshire Council too. One family said they waited over two years for a care needs assessment – despite meeting the criteria. In the meantime, they had to pay privately. In another case, someone was placed in a care home far from their family, raising questions about the availability and accessibility of local options.

"My husband had a terminal cancer was very poorly when he got his diagnosis, **could have done with the palliative care team been involved from his diagnosis**, it seemed difficult to get the palliative care team involved."

"My Dad had a great experience. The therapist was kind, professional, and worked with him to create a custom-built wheelchair that perfectly met his needs."



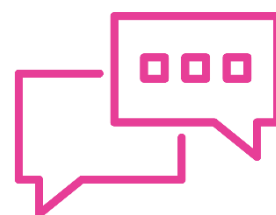
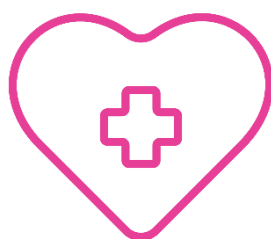
Conclusion

Access to care continues to be the biggest challenge people face – whether that’s getting a GP appointment, hospital treatment, or seeing an NHS dentist.

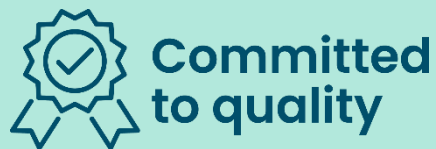
But when people do receive care, many speak positively about the support they get. Staff are often described as kind, hardworking and dedicated – even when services are under pressure.

We’re calling on providers and decision-makers to listen to what people have told us in this report. Where possible, we ask you to share the steps you’re taking – or planning – in response to the feedback.

Thank you to everyone who shared their story with us. Your voice helps shape health and care services across North Yorkshire and drives real change.



healthwatch
North Yorkshire



We are committed to the quality of our information. Every three years we perform an in-depth audit so that we can be certain of this.

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