

“Well, well, well”

What matters to your health
and wellbeing?



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Introduction

“What’s one practical thing that would improve your health or wellbeing locally?”

In Spring 2025, we asked the public that very question.

Through community visits and online conversations, we’ve been listening to what matters most to people and how services can better meet the needs of our diverse population.

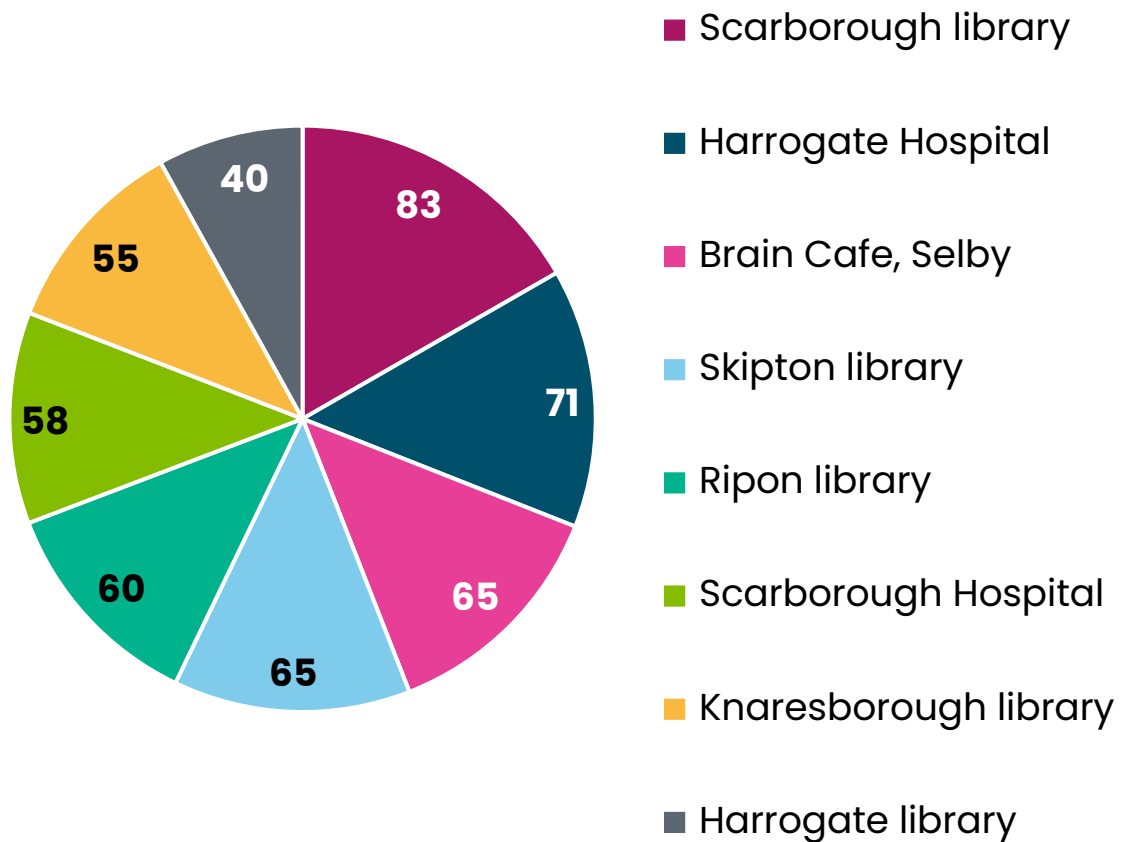
We asked people to tick the sentence that resonated with them the most, when it comes to improving their care.

The options were as follows:

1. Motivation and someone to help me stay healthy.
2. More money to buy healthy food or cover costs like equipment or fitness classes.
3. Access to online tools or health apps and help to use them.
4. Support with life stresses (e.g. money, housing, family) so I can focus on my health.
5. Access to green spaces, nature or a healthy environment.
6. Clear information about what to do and where to get help.
7. More time or flexible appointment times around work and life.
8. Transport help (including costs).
9. Services closer to where I live.
10. A friendly face and feeling listened to.
11. Other.

From May to October 2025, we spoke to 744 people, who told us what mattered most to them. We spoke to people in various districts in North Yorkshire.

Most feedback gathered



Our health and wellbeing is influenced by far more than medical treatment alone. Everyday factors such as time, money, transport, clear information, and access to green spaces all play a role in how people stay healthy (in body and mind).

Through our campaign, we set out to explore these real-life influences and understand what practical changes would make the biggest difference to people's health and wellbeing across North Yorkshire.

This work is part of our role as an independent champion for people using health and care services. By listening directly to residents in libraries, hospitals, community cafes and other public spaces, we wanted to ensure that those in charge of care hear what matters to those living and working in our county.

Our aim was to:

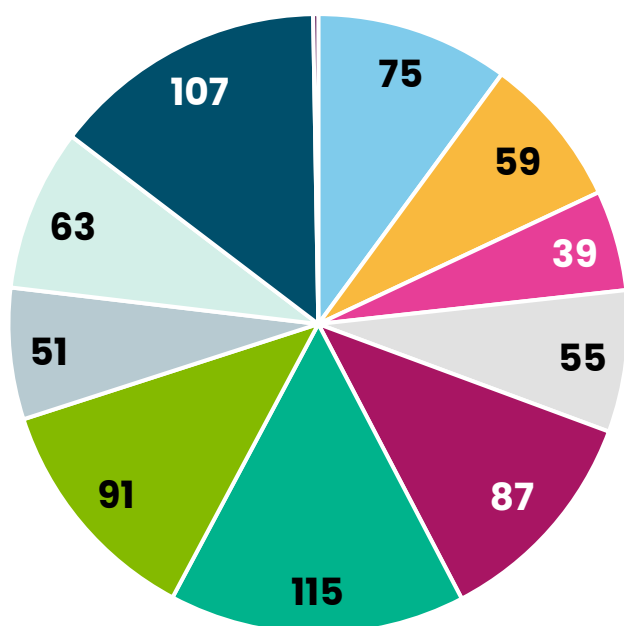
- Identify the key factors that people feel most affect their ability to stay healthy and well.
- Gather local insights about barriers and enablers to good health, particularly those that might not be visible through formal surveys or clinical data.
- Highlight differences between communities, for example between rural and urban areas, or across different service settings.
- Share practical findings with health and care partners, including the NHS, local authorities and voluntary sector organisations, to inform planning an improvement.

From the conversations we held, four clear themes emerged.

People told us they most value:

1. Clear information about what to do and where to get help.
2. A friendly face and feeling listened to.
3. More time or flexible appointment times around their work and life.
4. Access to green spaces, nature or a healthy environment.

Feedback summary



- Motivation and someone to help me stay healthy
- More money to buy healthy food or cover equipment or fitness class costs
- Access to online tools or health apps and help to use them
- Support with money, housing, family so I can focus on my health
- Access to green spaces, nature or a healthy environment
- Clear information about what to do and where to get help
- More time or flexible appointment times around work and life
- Transport help (including costs)
- Services coming closer to where I live
- A friendly face and feeling listened to

Alongside this, many people also spoke about the practical barriers that make it harder to maintain their health, such as limited transport options, the cost of living, and appointment times that don't always fit around work or family life.

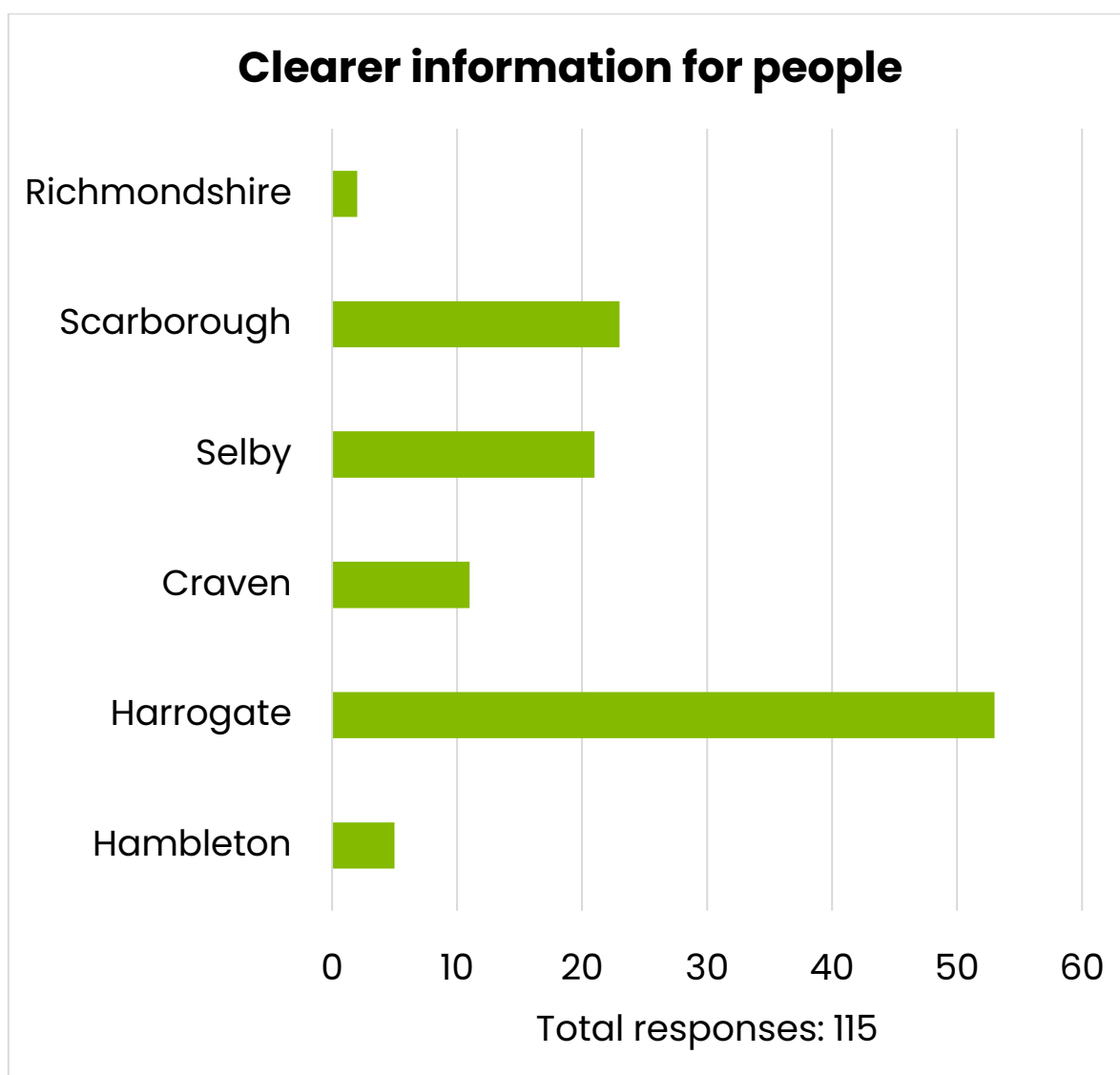
This feedback paints a consistent picture: people want health and care services that are joined-up, flexible and rooted in real-life circumstances. These insights will guide our ongoing conversations with health and care partners, helping shape future services that genuinely reflect what matter most to the people of North Yorkshire.



Knowing where to turn

Many people highlighted challenges in navigating health and care services, describing confusion when trying to access the right support. While some had found helpful guidance, others felt left on their own or passed between organisations without clear direction, particularly when seeking mental health support.

Here's how responses varied by district of North Yorkshire:



The most common thing people said they wanted was **“clear information about what to do and where to get help”**. 115 people told us they find it difficult to know which service to contact, or they end up being passed between different organisations. This left some feeling frustrated or unsure about how to manage their health.

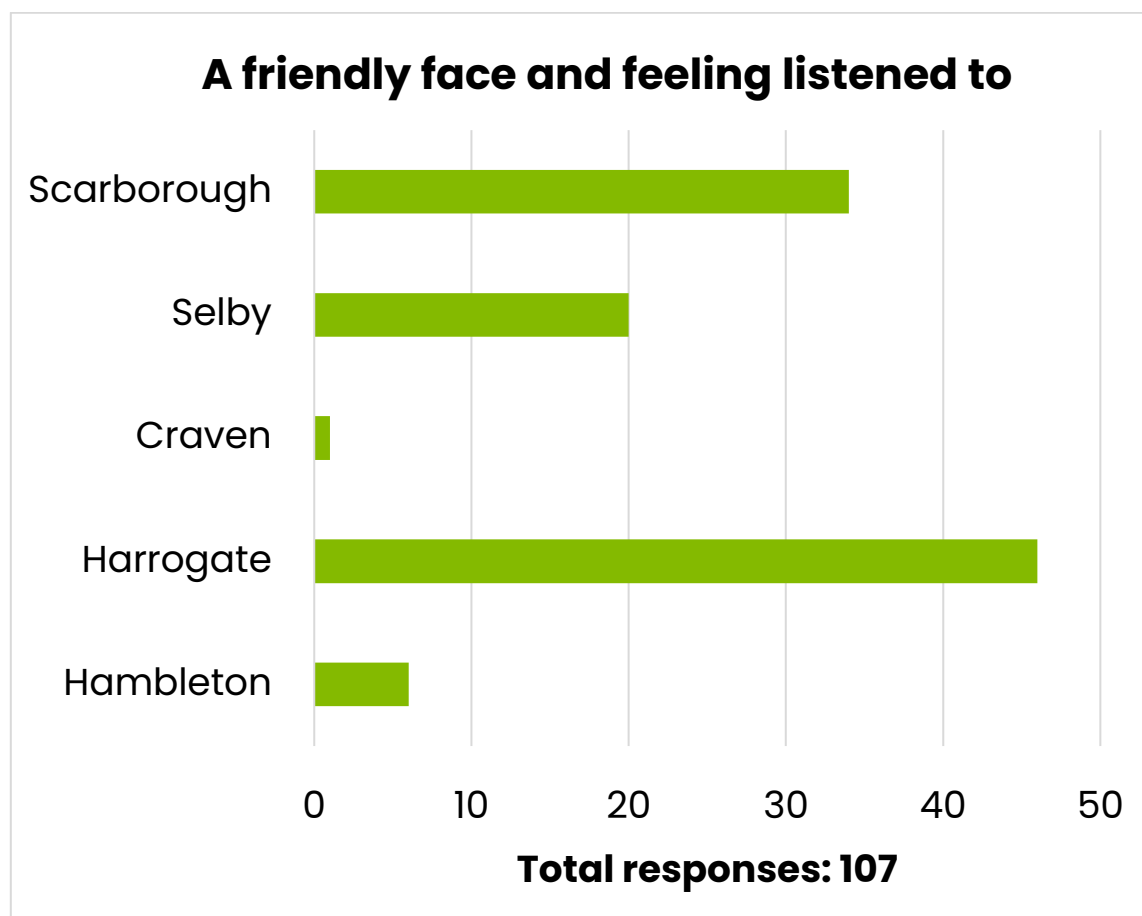
People told us that they would find it beneficial to have **“more one-to-one support or guidance”** from healthcare professionals. This was particularly evident for those who wanted to know where to go to access mental health services, with one person at Harrogate Library telling us that they wish they had **“better information about where to get help with mental health issues”**.

People said that having simple, clear advice, in places they already go like libraries, GP surgeries or community centres, would make a real difference.



Being listened to and supported

People across North Yorkshire spoke about the importance of being understood as whole individuals, with needs shaped by their circumstances, communities and daily lives. Their experiences highlighted that wellbeing depends not only on access to service, but also on the wider determinants of health, such as housing, social connection, transport and financial stability.



A close second was the need for a friendly face and feeling listened to. 107 people said that good health starts with being treated as an individual, not just a **“case”** or number. They valued kindness, empathy and continuity – **“seeing the same doctor”** or having someone who takes time to understand their situation.

One person at Scarborough Hospital told us that this is particularly important **“for mental health service to do their job right, show more empathy and listen to patients”**.

Additionally, another person highlighted what a huge difference having one doctor allocated to their family, as this would increase personalised care and trust.

One theme that was common throughout all districts was that many don't feel adequately listened to and supported by their GP surgeries due to the increase in digital appointments.

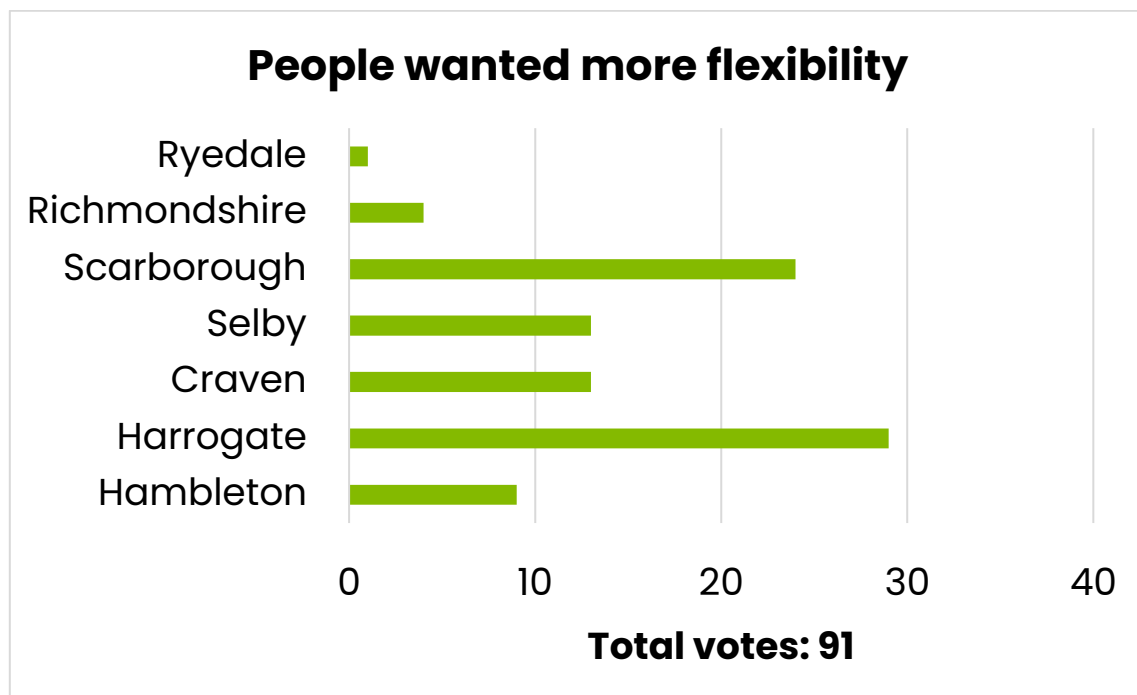
Many people called for **“more face-to-face appointments”** with the same GP, noting that this would give them more faith in the system.

Simply, **“having someone to talk to about my situation”** was a regular theme told to us, particularly by those that we spoke to at a Harrogate Carer's group.

This feedback highlights how important personal connections are for wellbeing, and how much people appreciate a caring, human approach.

Making care more flexible

Many people highlighted the difficulty of fitting healthcare around work, family and other responsibilities, with traditional appointment times often proving a barrier. While some people have access to care when needed, those that spoke to us reported frustrations or disengagement, emphasising the importance of flexible, accessible options to maintain their health.



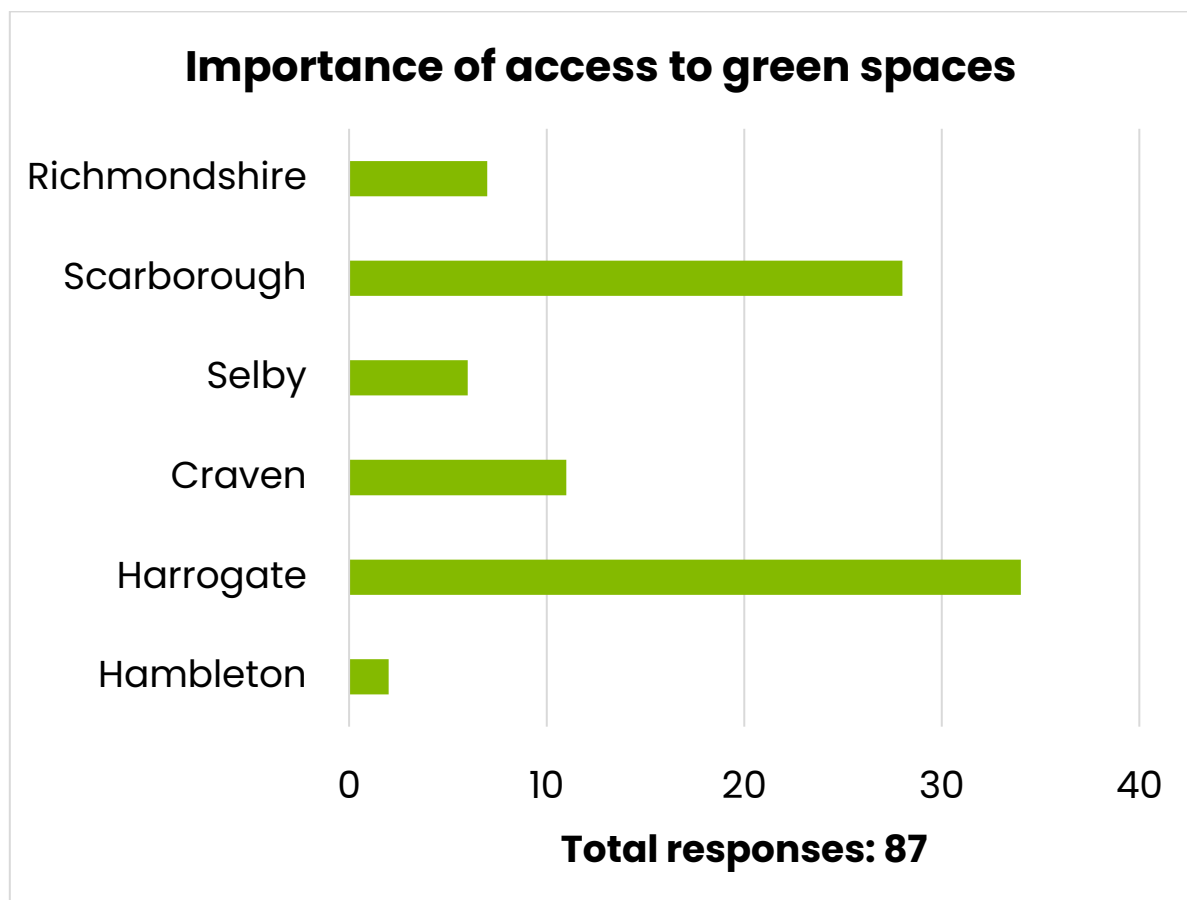
The third most chosen option was having more time or flexible appointment times around work and life. For 91 people, fitting

healthcare around jobs, childcare or other responsibilities is a real challenge. One person at Thirsk Library told us that **“more flexible appointments for working people and more flexibility in times that you can phone”** to obtain a GP appointment would make a huge difference to their access to healthcare. The lack of flexibility when trying to obtain a GP appointment have left many people in North Yorkshire stopping accessing care, with one person at the Brain Café in Selby telling us, **“I have given up on GPs now as I can never get an appointment”** and another saying that they have **“lost faith in GPs”**. People told us that being able to access appointments outside traditional hours, or having alternative ways to check in with services, would help them stay on top of their health before small issues become bigger problems.



Our community and environment

People across North Yorkshire highlighted the vital role of green spaces and a healthy community environment in supporting wellbeing. While some were able to enjoy outdoor activities regularly, others faced barriers such as safety concerns, poor maintenance of outdoor spaces or limited access, underscoring the importance of investing in safe, clean and accessible local spaces.



Access to green spaces and a healthy community environment was also a strong theme. 87 people told us how much getting outside, whether for a walk, gardening, or simply enjoying nature, supports their physical and mental wellbeing.

Many people told us that due to the high costs of gyms and exercise facilities, **“having more outdoor fitness equipment in green spaces that are easy to access”** would greatly improve their lifestyle and ability to keep healthy.

Two people at Catterick Library called for better maintenance of outdoor parks, **“we need more play parks. They are in poor condition around the area, and they aren’t safe”**.

Many people also told us that a **“cleaner environment”** would also make a big difference to their health, giving examples of cleaner air through reduced Co2 emissions and better water quality.

Those living in rural areas particularly valued the importance of green spaces to support their health, though some said that transport or safety concerns could limit their ability to enjoy green spaces fully.



Everyday barriers

Many people also spoke about practical barriers that make staying healthy harder. 59 people told us that financial pressures were a problem, from rising cost of healthy food to paying for gym memberships, transport or specialist equipment.

51 people also said that transport remains a major issue in parts of North Yorkshire, especially for those who rely on buses or live far from GP surgeries or hospitals. Similarly, 39 people told us that they wish there were services closer to where they live, highlighting the inaccessibility of services for those living rurally.

When asked about motivation and self-care, 75 people said that they would benefit from someone who could encourage or support them to make healthy choices, for example, through community groups, health coaches or peer support.

While many of these challenges were shared across North Yorkshire, people's experiences often varied depending on where they live.

Differences across the county

We heard from people across all parts of North Yorkshire, including Scarborough, Harrogate, Selby, Skipton, Ripon, Thirsk, Catterick and Knaresborough. The largest number of responses came from Scarborough Library (11%), followed by Harrogate Hospital (10%) and Brain Café, Selby (9%).

People in rural areas often highlighted the challenge of getting to appointments or services, while those in towns were more likely to talk about long waits and wanting more time with

professionals. Despite these differences, the same message came through everywhere: people want health and wellbeing support that is easy to understand, personal and close to home.

What people told us in their own words

In their open comments, people shared thoughtful and practical suggestions. Some called for face-to-face appointments to return, saying that online or phone contact doesn't always feel supportive. Others said they wanted more joined-up care, where services communicate with each other so that individuals don't have to repeat their story multiple times.

A recurring theme was stress, about money, work and family life and how this can make it harder to focus on health. Many people said that even small changes, like having local support groups, drop-ins, or wellbeing hubs, would help them feel more connected and in control of their wellbeing.



People's priorities

What people told us across the seven local areas of North Yorkshire

Across the county, people consistently raised certain issues such as GP access, transport, cost of living and wanting more face-to-face support. While these appear in many districts, each area also has its own distinct concerns and priorities.

The following suggestions and priorities come directly from people living across North Yorkshire. Each one reflects what residents told us would make the biggest difference to their health and wellbeing right now.

These insights were shared through face-to-face conversations, community events, time spent with people in local libraries, and through social media. Together, they highlight the real experiences, concerns and hopes of people across the county.

What we heard shows how strongly people care about their local services and the places they live in. Residents spoke about the challenges they face, the support they value most, and the changes they feel would help them live healthier and more independent lives. Many people also shared personal stories that show how important it is for services to be easy to access, consistent, and shaped around the needs of their communities.

Bringing views together gives us a clearer picture of what matters most to people in different parts of North Yorkshire. It helps us understand not only the specific issues raised in each

area but also the broader themes affecting people across the county. It also gives us a stronger foundation to show service leaders what residents want to see improved now and in the future.

Craven District

Key themes: Access to GP services, affordable fitness options, transport and cost of living.

Priorities:

1. Improve access to GP appointments and expand face-to-face consultations for ongoing or chronic health issues.
2. Develop affordable and accessible exercise opportunities, including fitness classes for older adults and daytime sessions that can be pre-booked.
3. Address transport challenges, especially to healthcare and leisure services, and review bus pass eligibility (earlier than 67).
4. Support healthy lifestyle initiatives, including affordable healthy food and fitness advice.
5. Invest in local leisure facilities so residents do not have to travel long distances for affordable sports options.



Hambleton District

Key themes: GP access, transport and clarity of health information.

Priorities:

1. Improve GP appointment booking systems to reduce frustration with 8am phone queues and lack of forward booking.
2. Improve continuity of care, allowing people to see the same GP or nurse consistently.
3. Expand face-to-face GP and nurse access, particularly for those uncomfortable with digital systems.
4. Provide clear, accessible information about available health and care services.
5. Enhance public and hospital transport links, including reliable options to York and James Cook hospitals.
6. Support active travel (safe walking and cycling routes) by reducing traffic speed and improving local infrastructure.



Harrogate District

Key themes: Communication, continuity of care, mental health support and environment.

Priorities:

1. Improve communication between healthcare providers and patients, including clarity on next steps in care and timely follow-up.
2. Reinforce continuity in GP care so patients aren't repeatedly retelling their history.
3. Strengthen mental health and carer support, including a central hub for advice and drop-in opportunities.
4. Ensure digital access does not exclude older or vulnerable people. Provide offline alternatives.
5. Enhance transport to and parking at Harrogate Hospital, including more disability spaces.
6. Support local healthy food options and community exercise classes, especially for older adults.



Richmondshire District

Key themes: Transport, community facilities and environmental health.

Priorities:

1. Improve public transport links between rural villages and key service centres (Leyburn, Richmond, Bedale, Masham) to enable attendance at appointments and social groups.
2. Maintain and invest in local parks and play areas, ensuring they are safe, accessible and inclusive.
3. Develop affordable and accessible leisure facilities for families and older adults.
4. Encourage healthy local food supply chains, including local farm and organic produce.



Scarborough & Ryedale District

Key themes: Mental health, GP and dental access, cost of living and social connection.

Priorities:

1. Address the difficulty of getting NHS dentist appointments, particularly for chronic conditions and post-hospital discharge.
2. Expand mental health support services, including bereavement groups, peer support and evening availability.
3. Promote affordable exercise opportunities and healthy eating support, with community-based classes after work hours.
4. Provide targeted help for carers and those balancing multiple responsibilities (work, childcare, caring).
5. Strengthen community connections, such as Brain Café-style initiatives and fitness/social groups for seniors.
6. Reduce digital exclusion by ensuring in-person options for appointments remain available.



Selby District

Key themes: Cost of living, transport, carers and access to services.

Priorities:

1. Improve affordable access to healthy food and expand community food initiative.
2. Support unpaid carers with respite, advice and mental support.
3. Increase reliable community and hospital transport, especially for rural residents and older adults.
4. Strengthen support for mental health and addiction, including peer and advocacy groups.
5. Provide clearer, more joined-up communication between local services and residents.



Conclusion

Our campaign has provided valuable insight into what matters most to people living in North Yorkshire when it comes to improving their health and wellbeing.

Across the 744 responses we collected, common themes emerged: people wanted clear guidance on where to turn for help, to feel listened to and supported, and to access care that fits around their everyday lives.

The role of local environment; green spaces, transport and services closer to home also featured strongly, alongside practical barriers like cost and daily stresses.

While priorities varied across districts, the underlying message was consistent: people value accessible, flexible and personalised support that addresses both health and the wider factors affecting wellbeing. This feedback highlights opportunities for services to adapt, ensuring they meet the real needs of the communities they serve.

Listening to these voices is not just about identifying challenges, it's about shaping solutions that are grounded in local experience and lived reality.

The themes that have been explored in this report, reflect the feedback that we have heard from May to October 2025 through our "What matters most to your health?" campaign. Thank you to the people who shared their feedback with us, your voices will help inform and shape health and care services across North Yorkshire.



**Committed
to quality**

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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