

# Being healthy:

## Ideas and reflections from Selby



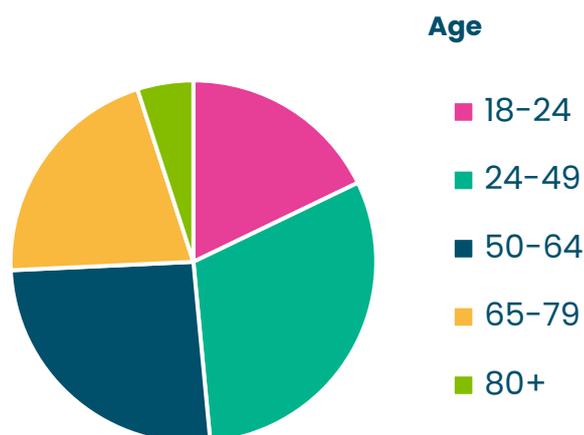
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## Introduction

To gather the views of people in the district of Selby, Healthwatch North Yorkshire worked with Up For Yorkshire (formerly [Selby District AVS](#)). Together, our objective was to get a broad understanding of people’s views of good health, their experience of keeping themselves healthy and their interactions with health services. We particularly wanted to understand what people felt could help support them to be healthier. Things like supporting family, taking part in daily activities, being able to cope with and enjoy life, and being independent.

To do this, we devised a survey, based on a similar exercise carried out in Scarborough in 2021<sup>1</sup>. The Selby survey ran from May 2022 – January 2023.

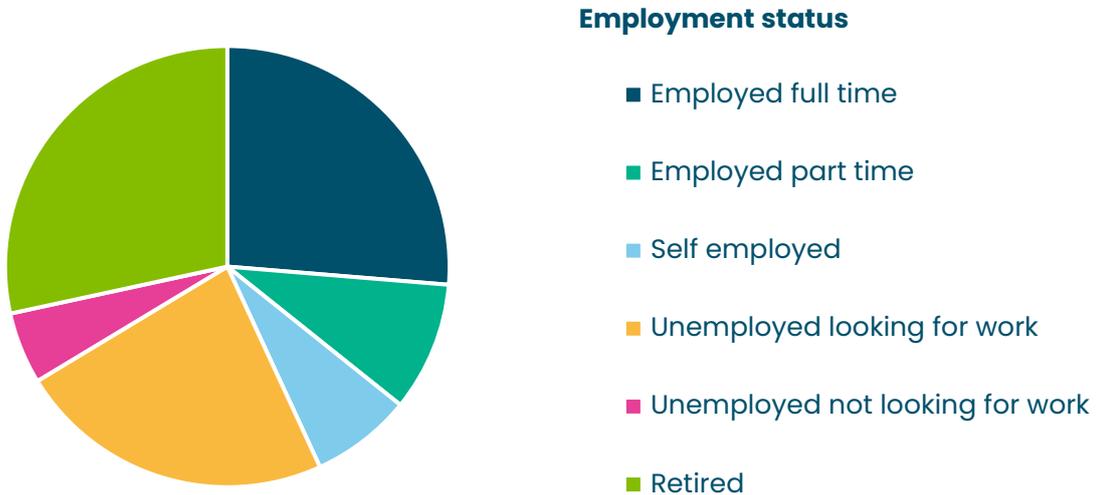
We received 135 valid responses to our survey. To contextualise the sample, most respondents (60%) lived in one of 25 villages outside Selby, the remaining 40% lived in the town. 58% were female and 37% male (1.5% were non-binary, 1.5% were gender fluid and 1.5% would rather not say). All respondents were over 18 years of age, and most were under 80 (see graph below) and the majority (96%) were White British. 13% identified as carers, 22% considered themselves to have a disability and 43% said they had a long-term condition.



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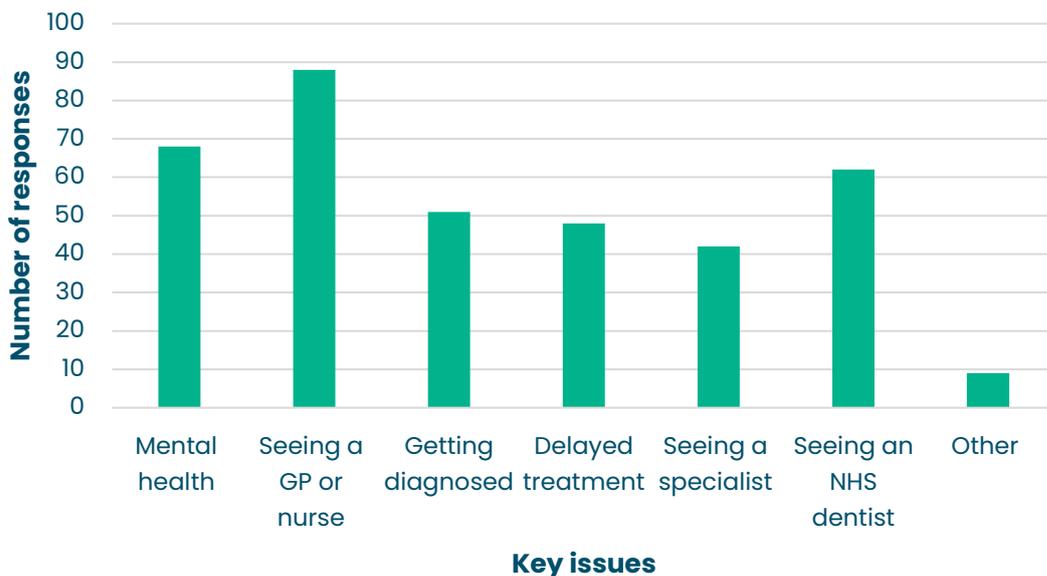
<sup>1</sup> [Healthwatch North Yorkshire Scarborough Report Jan 2022.pdf](#)

We also asked about employment status. 35% were employed full or part time, 7% were self-employed, 28% were unemployed and 28% retired as outlined below.



## What are the key health issues in Selby?

We asked respondents to identify what they believe to be the current top issues for accessing and using health services in Selby. Of the six areas listed, **seeing a GP or nurse** was the top issue, followed by **mental health support** and **seeing an NHS dentist**.



These responses were similar to those from our survey in Scarborough in 2021 where seeing a GP or nurse was the top issue, followed by seeing an NHS dentist. Mental health support came fourth in the Scarborough list of key issues, just after delayed treatment.

### **GP services**

The issues about seeing a GP or nurse mostly centred on access, appointments and delayed diagnoses. People expressed their frustration about the time it takes to see someone face-to-face. One issue mentioned was the increasing local population due to new housing, especially in Sherburn in Elmet, without an equivalent increase in healthcare professionals at the local GP practice or the number of local GP practices. However, for many, the quality of care received once they obtained an appointment was good. For more information on this topic, see our Pulse Briefing on GP appointments<sup>2</sup>.

“It's taken seven months so far to get a diagnosis. My doctors are fantastic.”

“I have had amazing experiences from the NHS in life threatening events. However, I have had poor experiences for non-urgent problems. This is worrying – a small problem could quickly become serious.”

“GPs are reluctant to refer or take seriously issues on women's health. A separate issue is waiting list times to be seen and the new system where most hospital and GP appointments are by phone.”

### **Mental health services**

Many respondents highlighted poor mental health services and felt that Selby is very poorly served from the NHS and local charities. One of the key issues raised was the very long waiting times to access support which means some people access private treatment where they can afford it,

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<sup>2</sup> [Healthwatch North Yorkshire December GP Pulse Briefing 2021](#)

which only acts to increase health inequalities across communities. Others mentioned not knowing where to go for support or what is on offer in Selby.

“Mental health accessibility is terrible, especially for children. Friends’ children told unless they are suicidal there’s not much help available.”

“In terms of affordable/free health support for mental health issues, I’ve found it a struggle to find or afford. Being a young person, it is a confusion of knowing where I can go to in Selby. I know of more services in York than Selby when it comes to mental health support for younger people as that is what is recommended online.”

“I’m a therapist; I have patients coming to me (privately) because they can’t access what they need through IAPT. As a group, therapists are propping up the health service and getting referrals from patients who should be seen by psychologists/psychiatrists.”

## **NHS dentists**

Difficulties registering with an NHS dentist is an ongoing national issue. Many respondents stated that they have been trying to register with an NHS dentist for years with no success. For more information on this topic, see our dentistry report published in August 2021<sup>3</sup>.

“As for a dentist... what NHS, dentist I don’t think Selby has any NHS dentists anymore. I am a diabetic and have teeth going rotten in my head because I cannot access a dentist and as a diabetic this can cause significant issues for me.”

“I haven’t been able to get on a dentist list in eight years.”

## **Access to healthcare**

We asked people if they felt their access to healthcare services was affected by who they are. The majority (60%) who answered said no. However, other people felt that access to health services is affected by who

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<sup>3</sup> [NHS Dentistry in North Yorkshire: 1-Year Review of Public Feedback](#)

they are. The most common reason given was age, particularly (but not exclusively) older age.

“I feel that at least one of the GPs in my practice dismisses certain things as something that should be expected as one gets older. For example, I was diagnosed a couple of years ago with PMR and since that time I have been on steroids to mitigate against the symptoms. It was a locum GP who achieved this diagnosis. I believe that any other GP in the practice would not have persisted but would have just put my symptoms down to 'old age'.”

“When my mother was ill and needing A&E, she was left 11 hours before she was assessed by a doctor, by which point she was almost dead. She seemed to be triaged by age.”

“Definitely as an older person [I] really struggle to get help.”

“When my heart rate was high, the comment I received was 'I would be worried if you were older'.”

Other things that people mentioned which they felt affected their access to services or treatment include being a previous drug user, being a care leaver, physical or mental health conditions, being transgender or having body dysmorphia and women’s health issues.

“Because I am a care leaver, my health condition, my ability to speak, my age and past mental health are all reasons why I have been denied care/treatment or assumptions have been made about me.”

“I suffer from gender dysphoria, and it certainly feels like the government wants to keep me down.”

“Trans people are treated unfairly by a healthcare system that discriminates against them and purposely keeps care from them.”

“Being a woman gets secondary service, especially being post-menopausal.”

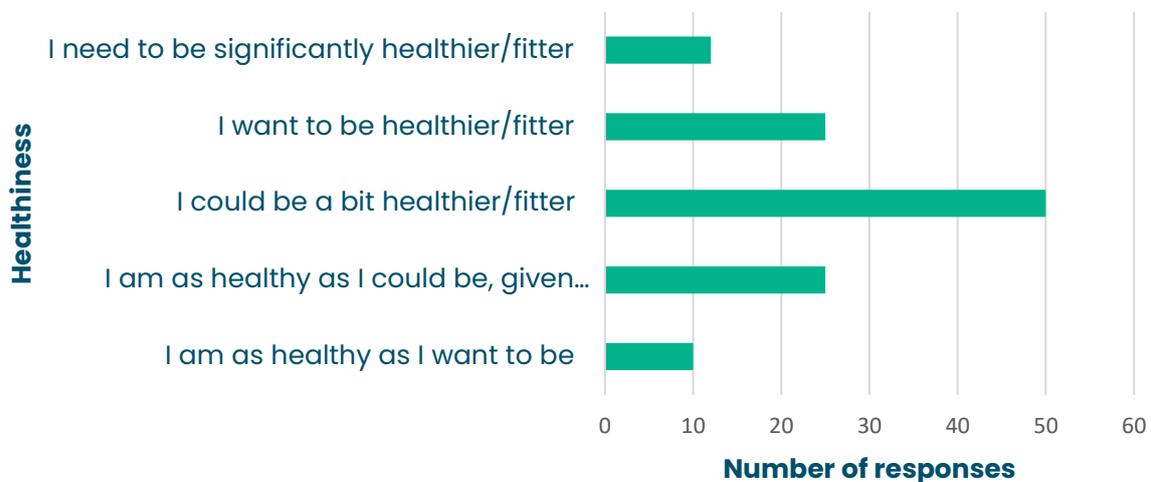
“Concerns as a young woman not always taken seriously. GPs (often older men) have been dismissive.”

## The importance of health

Just under two thirds (61%) of people said that having good health is the most important or one of the most important things to them. Just under a third (31%), said they think about it among other things and only 8% of respondents said either they had other priorities or good health isn’t a priority for them.

Around 70% of respondents said they could be a bit or a lot healthier or fitter and 28% said they were as fit and healthy as they can be given the circumstances or are as healthy as they want to be.

**How would you describe your health?**



## What is good health and wellbeing?

Participants were asked what good health and well-being means to them and from the responses received six main themes emerged:

### 1. The ability to carry out daily tasks with ease and live a full life

Many respondents felt good health and well-being means being able to successfully carry out daily tasks and live life to the full.

“Being able to function well, fulfil responsibilities and feel happy, satisfied and in control of emotions.”

“Being able to get out and about. Living independently.”

“Positive physical and mental health to enable me to live a full life.”

## **2. Being happy and enjoying life**

An important aspect of good health and well-being for many respondents was simply being happy and able to enjoy life.

“I’m content with life, healthy and happy.”

“Being fit and capable of enjoying life at my age.”

“My body and mind are functioning so I can perform activities to get the best out of my life.”

## **3. Looking after yourself**

Many people talked about the importance of eating well, exercising, and looking after yourself to maintain good health.

“Taking good care of my body by being physically active, maintaining a good weight/diet, avoiding harmful substances/chemicals, and maintaining personal and oral hygiene.”

“Stress free, healthy diets, less eating junk food and more exercise.”

“Having a balanced diet, regular exercise and to be in a positive state of mind.”

## **4. Not being restricted by illness or disease**

Being free from illness or disease was an important part of good health and well-being for many, meaning they can be independent and live life without any restrictions.

“Being able to live an active fulfilling life without pain or fear.”

“Not being ill and staying healthy enough to do all the things I enjoy.”

“Being free from disease and mentally and physically well.”

## 5. Confidence in health and care services

Several respondents highlighted the importance of having an effective healthcare system that is easily accessible if needed.

“Mental and physical wellness, facilitated by access to good healthcare, social prescribing, space for physical activity etc.”

“Medical conditions well managed with appropriate support.”

“Being able to access GPs and when referred to consultants. To see them at Selby Hospital not having to travel to York all the time. Also, being accessing locally set up activities/classes of various interests.”

## 6. Being able to care for others and spend quality time with them

A few respondents expressed the importance of good health so they can look after those who depend on them or enjoy time with family and friends.

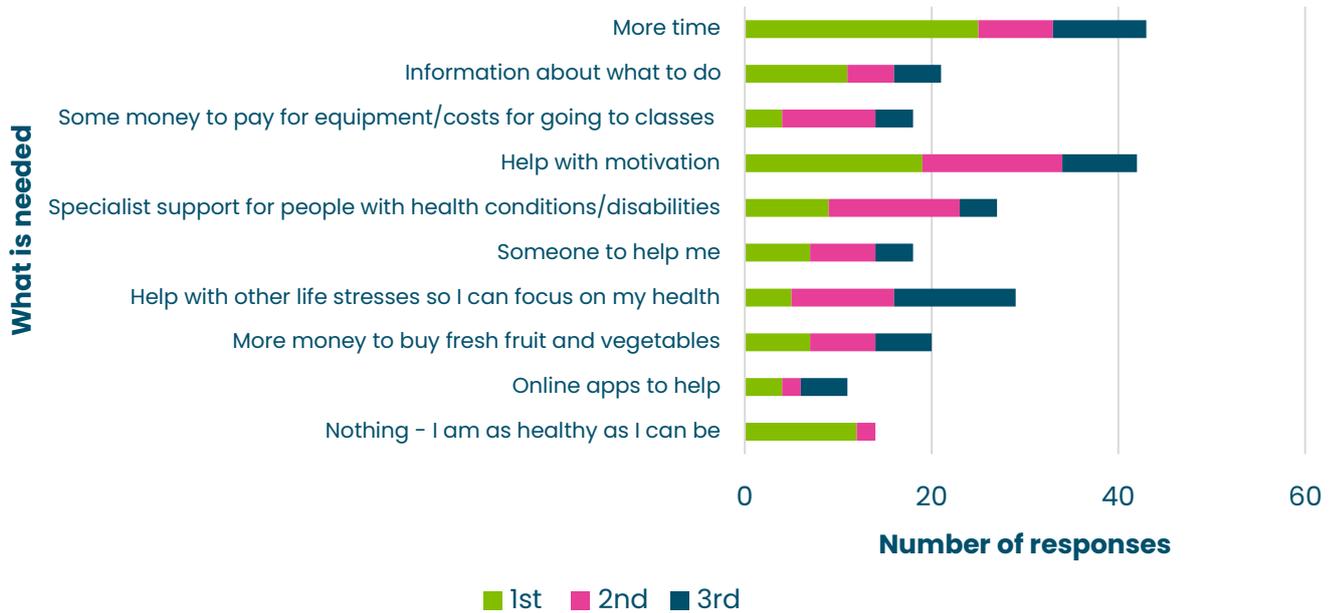
“If I am fit and well it is easier to take care of my wife who is more unwell than me.”

“Being able to perform work tasks, enjoy leisure and social activities and life in general without any issues or barriers.”

“Being stress free to enjoy and appreciate everything and everyone around me.”

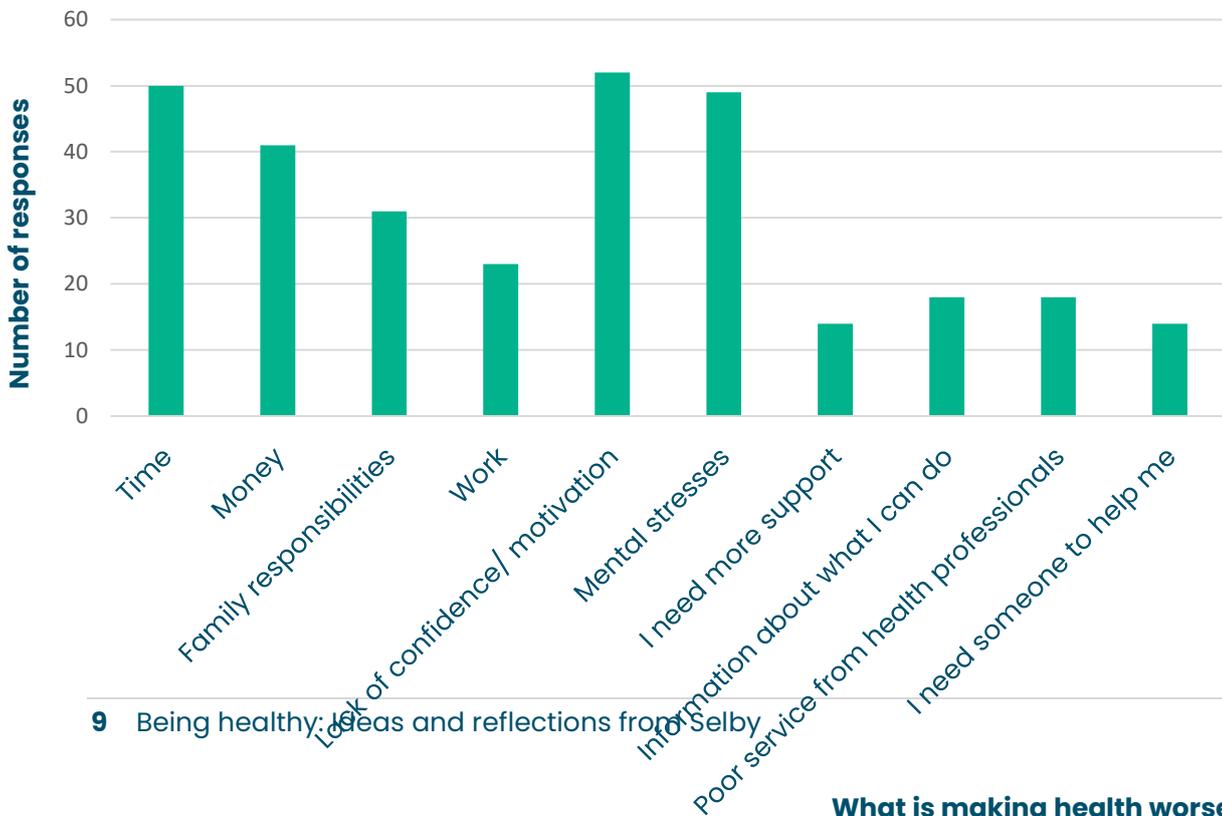
## What is needed to be healthier?

When asked what three things would help them to be healthier/do the things they want to do, a large majority of respondents said they would like **more time**, closely followed by **help with motivation**.



When asked about barriers to being healthy, the top responses were **mental stresses, lack of confidence/motivation** and **time**. Money is also a factor and was mentioned by 31 people when asked if anything was affecting their health more than normal. Many of those comments referenced cost of living increases seen in 2022 and early 2023.

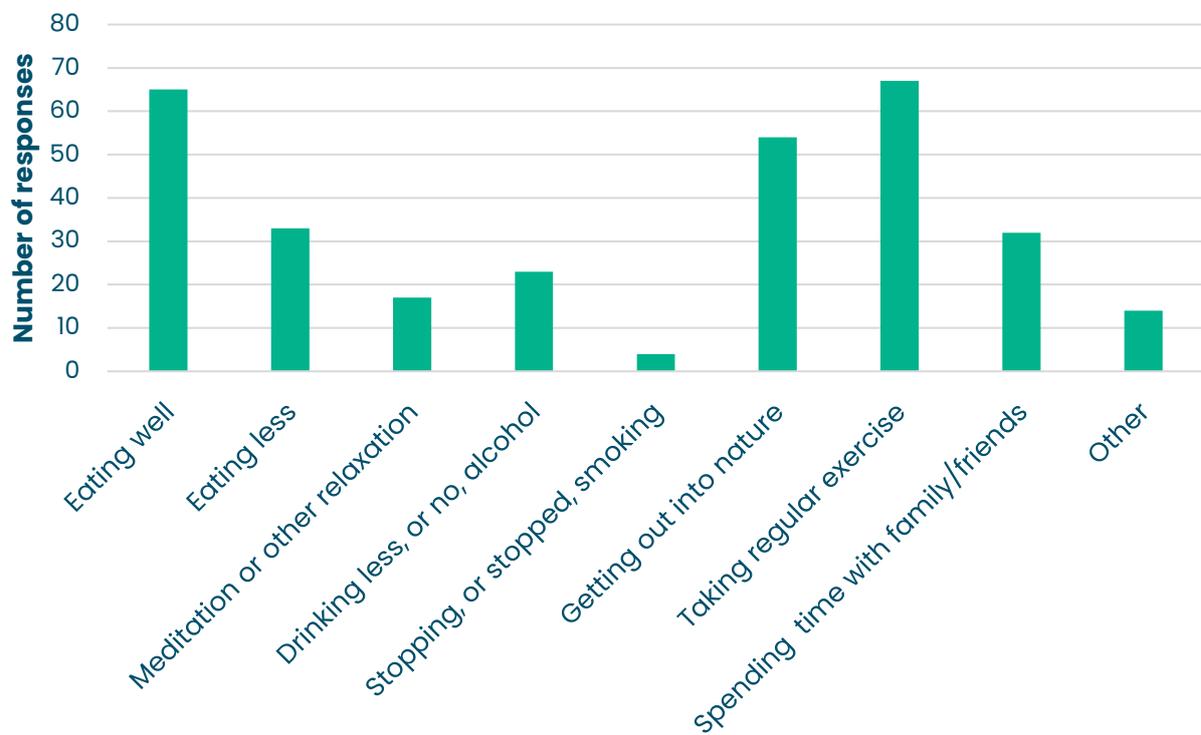
**What is making your health worse / stopping you doing what you want?**



## How people are getting healthier

It is encouraging that 80% of respondents said they are currently doing something to try to be healthier, with many trying to **do more exercise, eat well** and **get out into nature**.

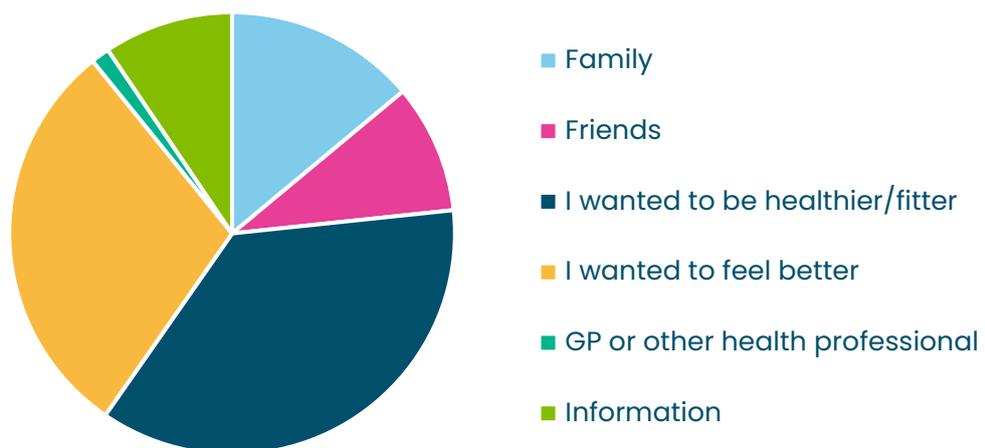
What are you doing to be healthier?



Actions taken to be healthier

What has motivated people to take action to be healthier? A large majority simply said they want to be healthier/fitter or want to feel better.

Motivation for getting healthier



"I decided to follow the NHS approach regarding calorie counting. I have, so far, been able to lose almost two stones. I do aim to walk each day, although not usually for more than 20-30 minutes."

"I saw a fat old man in the mirror. I can't do anything about the old man, but I can about the fat one!"

## Further support needed to be healthier

People are aware of the importance of having good health and well-being and would like to be healthier. To explore where further support is needed to achieve this, we asked what the NHS, council, support organisations or the voluntary sector could do to help people be healthier. The suggestions received in response to this have been split into four main themes.

### 1. Exercise

Many respondents were keen for more options for exercise, cheaper access to gyms and classes or locally led exercise groups or clubs. Family exercise options were also mentioned.

"More local activities and better access to them. Maybe subsidies for gym membership for people who are vulnerable and special classes."

"Provide sport/activity information for active seniors. Provide safe cycle routes. Provide walking routes over farmland."

"Open affordable clubs for adults only, as children have clubs through school. Clubs like gymnastics, tennis, hockey etc."

"Family exercise sessions – two young children and working full time mean opportunities are limited."

## 2. More easily accessible services

People commented on access in a range of ways. This included physical access, access to facilities for people living in rural areas and access for people who can't afford existing services.

"Rural villagers can struggle to access swimming pools/gyms etc. Lack of walkways/trails."

"Actively provide support for those with disabilities who want to engage in social activities, or help with normal daily activities such as gardening, walks etc. Keep the needs of the most vulnerable under constant review to ensure their needs are met."

"More support with weight loss as companies such as Slimming World are expensive."

"Provide more easily accessible transport."

## 3. Increase awareness of services and information on how to be healthy

Some respondents would like more information on how to be healthy or information about the services currently on offer.

"More detailed information on what foods constitute a balanced diet."

"Teach us about nutrition instead of medicine."

"Make a local store guide of a weekly healthy meal at a reasonable price."

"Ideas on how to fit exercise into a busy life. Support on knowing what health-focused groups exist. Education on diet and exercise."

"Make people more aware of how many services there are."

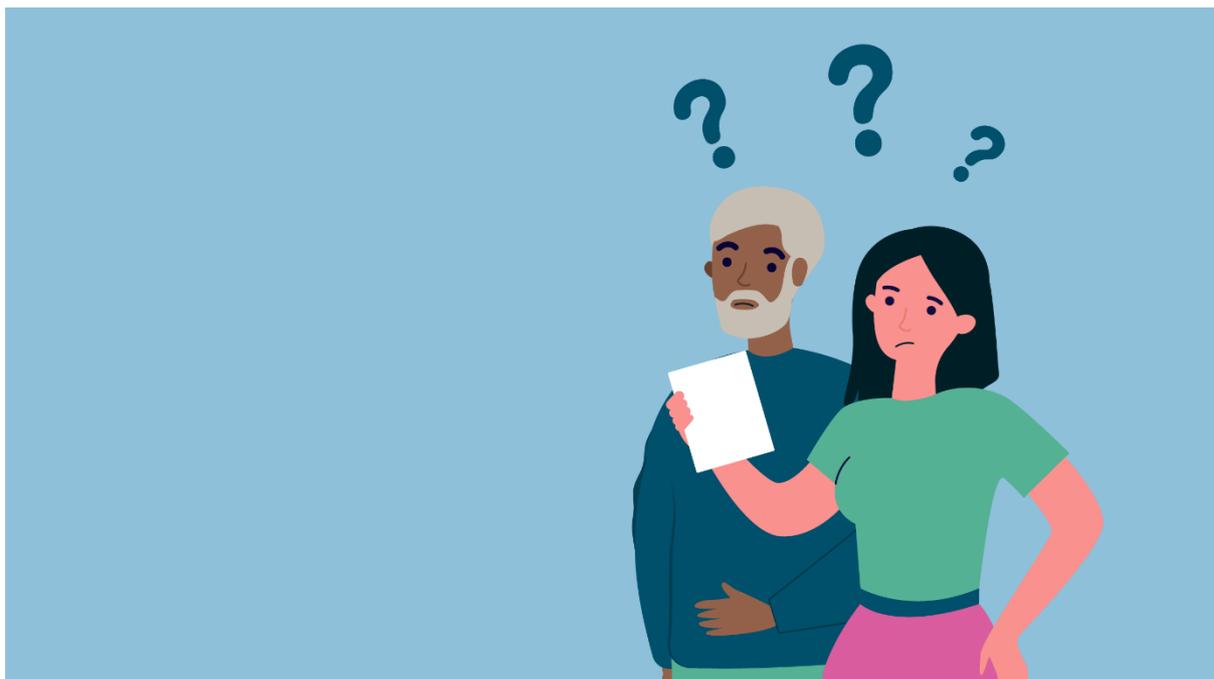
#### 4. Inclusive exercise groups

Some respondents expressed the desire to join exercise/sport groups but feel facilities or services need to more accessible or available.

*“More accessible gym programmes for those with disabilities.”*

*“I would appreciate the opportunity to participate in general wellbeing activities and alternative therapies. When recovering from cancer I attended reiki, acupuncture and reflexology sessions and aim to take at least some of these up as soon as I can. Also, I need to start swimming but as I can only do 10 minutes swimming to begin with it has been difficult to find somewhere to do that in Selby.”*

Other comments recognise the need for more healthcare professionals, particularly dentists and for NHS services to be able to respond to increasing populations in areas where there are significant new housing developments. Others mentioned help with costs to support a healthier lifestyle as well as annual health checks to be offered more generally. More support was requested, including to address loneliness and isolation as well as help with pain and chronic conditions.



## Conclusions

- Key issues: Accessing GP services, mental health services and a lack of NHS dentists were highlighted as some of the top priorities for health in Selby district.
- Some people felt discriminated against due to something about them, for example their age or gender.
- Health is important to the people of Selby. Many would like to be healthier if possible and many people are already taking action to be healthier.
- Lack of time, lack of motivation, stress and cost of living pressures are some of the main barriers to people being healthier.
- Cheaper and more accessible exercise opportunities, more facilities in rural areas and better transport to activities to support people be healthier.
- Improved NHS services and particularly more healthcare professionals and more support for people in pain or with long term conditions were also suggested as things that could help people be healthier.

**Thank you Up for Yorkshire and to the organisations across the district for sharing and circulating the survey and to everyone who responded to our questions and helped us understand the attitudes to health, well-being, and local services.**





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