

Being healthy:  
Ideas and reflections from Scarborough



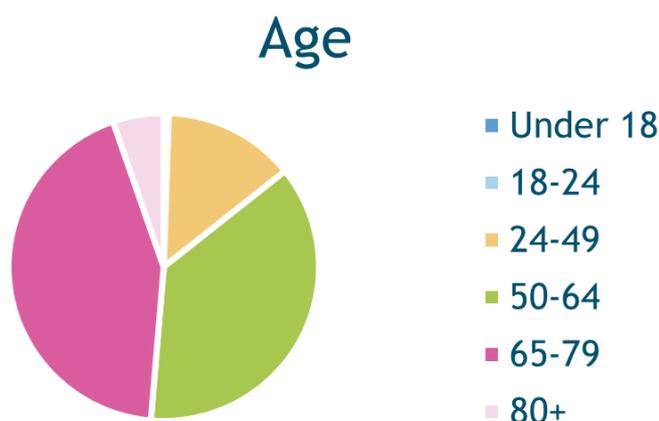
## Introduction

To get the views of people in Scarborough, Healthwatch North Yorkshire worked with SeeCHANGE, part of the [Healthier Communities Together](#) programme which is funded by The National Lottery Community Fund and The King's Fund. SeeCHANGE brings together a broad coalition of voluntary and community sector organisations, business representatives and the statutory sector who are committed to boosting the health and wellbeing of people living in Scarborough. It aims to do this by working with the community to co-design a way to bring people with good ideas together with the people who can bring those ideas to life.

Together, we wanted to get a broad view 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 and be able to do those things that they identified as the benefits of good health. Things like supporting family, taking part in daily activities, being able to cope with and enjoy life and being independent.

We carried out a range of activities to get the feedback and views of Scarborough people. Our engagement consisted of a survey, focus groups and engagement events at a local football match, the University campus and a GP surgery.

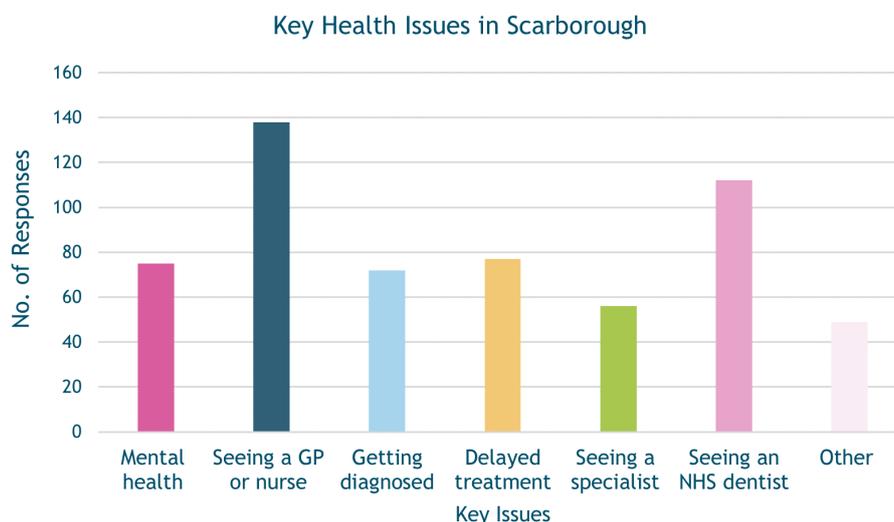
We received 220 valid responses to our survey. To contextualise the sample, 62% were female and 35% male (1% were non-binary and 2% would rather not say). A large proportion of respondents were aged between 50-79, as shown below. 95% were White British and the majority did not identify as a carer or as having a disability. However, over half said they had a long term condition (58%).



The responses from the survey as well as feedback received from the proactive engagement events are summarised below.

## Key Health Issues in Scarborough

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



### GP services

The issues about seeing a GP or nurse mostly centred around access and appointments, with people expressing frustrations with long phone queues when trying to book an appointment. The topic of misdiagnosis due to phone appointments and the problems with phone appointments for those who have hearing problems were also raised. However, for many, the quality of care received once they obtained an appointment was good. For more information on this topic, see our recent Pulse Briefing on GP appointments<sup>1</sup>.

- "I have been number 33 in the queue and had to wait for 45 minutes for a reply. Other friends have been to A and E, clogging up their system, because they couldn't get through on the phone to the doctors".
- "Getting face to face appointments with GP (for an elderly hard of hearing disabled relative) - almost impossible".
- "It took me five weeks to get an appointment, but I am really happy to be here under the circumstances. Everyone I have seen has been helpful".

## 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 or have had to travel long distances to access dental services. For more information on this topic see our dentistry report published in August 2021<sup>2</sup>.

- “I moved to Scarborough in December 2019 and still to date I have been unable to register any of my family members (including my 4-year-old son) with an NHS dentist”.
- “There are no local NHS dentists available. I have to travel 20 miles over the moors to access my nearest - in Whitby”.

## Delayed treatment

Many respondents highlighted the delays to treatment they have experienced, primarily as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. For some, treatments have been delayed by a number of weeks or have been cancelled. Concerns about mental health services closely followed delayed treatment, with many highlighting the long waiting times for mental health support. For more information on this topic, see our recent Pulse Report which focussed on treatment delays<sup>3</sup>.

- “I know that with COVID things are delayed [so it is] slower [to get] appointments. Only this week my cousin had an aneurysm operation cancelled to have it explode a couple of days later. She died..... a week later her husband got a phone call to rebook her operation. That says it all”.
- “Friends are waiting for mental health support, but there is not a lot available in Scarborough and people are having to pay for private treatment where they can afford it. There have been a lot of suicides in Scarborough at the end of lockdown”.

## Services moving from Scarborough

Although not listed on the graph, a large number of respondents expressed additional concerns about the move of many clinics and departments from Scarborough to York or other hospitals with worries raised around having to travel for treatment and being unable to visit friends and family.

- “Clinics and departments being moved to York. It’s an hour’s drive and that’s on a good day. Often it takes a lot longer when there is congestion and roadworks”.
- “Why do we have to travel to York or Castlehill for a blood test or pre op or COVID test. Travel must be taken into consideration when delivering services”.

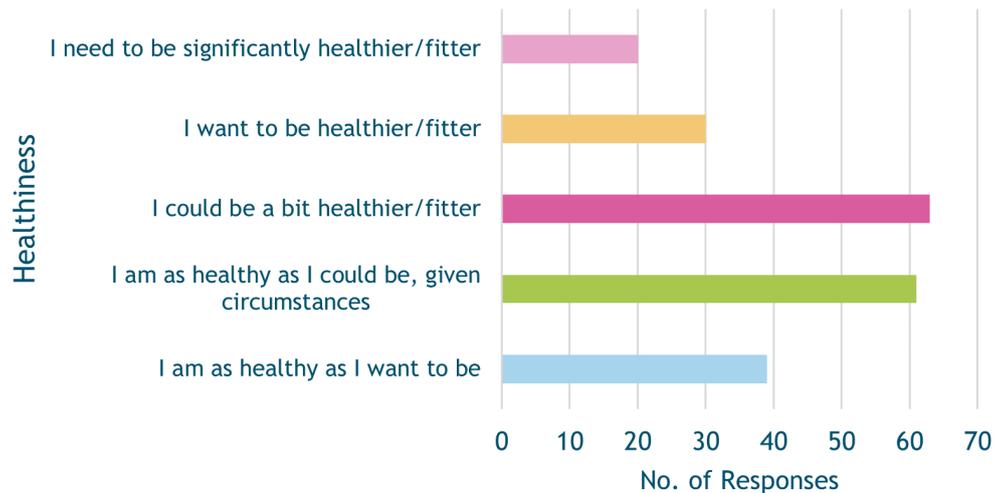
<sup>2</sup> [NHS Dentistry in North Yorkshire: 1-Year Review of Public Feedback](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Healthwatch North Yorkshire Pulse Report 2021 Final.pdf](#)

## Importance of health

Around 57% of respondents said they could be a bit healthier or fitter or were as healthy as they could be given the circumstances. A large majority (89%) said good health (both mental and physical) is the most important or one of the most important things in their life.

### 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**

Many respondents felt good health and well-being means being able to successfully carry out daily tasks and cope with the pressures of life.

- "Good health & well-being is important so you can deal with day to day life, goals & achievements. Also if you have stress come into your life it can be dealt with better if you are in good health".
- "Being able to carry out daily living activities, remaining independent, enjoying being with family and friends".

### 2. **Confidence in the health and care services**

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

- “A healthy body and a confidence in the available healthcare and supportive social care facilities, giving peace of mind that help is available at the point of need”.
- “Having a decent healthcare service. Being able to have an NHS dentist that isn’t over 200 miles away from me!”.

### 3. **Being mentally well and connected socially**

As well as being physically well, a number of respondents emphasised the importance of mental well-being and being connected with friends, family and the wider community.

- “Being active, socialising with family, friends and the opportunity to engage in social group activities in my community”.
- “Feeling happy and connected with people”.
- “Being able to get out & about & make a contribution to the community through volunteering & befriending”.

### 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 free from disease and illness and not being anxious about the future or family”.
- “Ability to be able to care for oneself which comes from good health, meaning not having to rely on others. It is a top priority at 70 years old. Others have their own lives to get on with”.
- “Being able to do anything I want be it a 10 mile walk or a day in the garden without having to consider whether I actually can”.

### 5. **Being able to care for others**

A number of respondents expressed the importance of good health so they can look after those who depend on them, such as their partner or child.

- “It means I am able to get out and about and look after my husband”.
- “It’s important I’m healthy as my family need me!”.
- “It means that I can look after my disabled son”.

### 6. **Being happy**

An important aspect of good health and well-being for many respondents

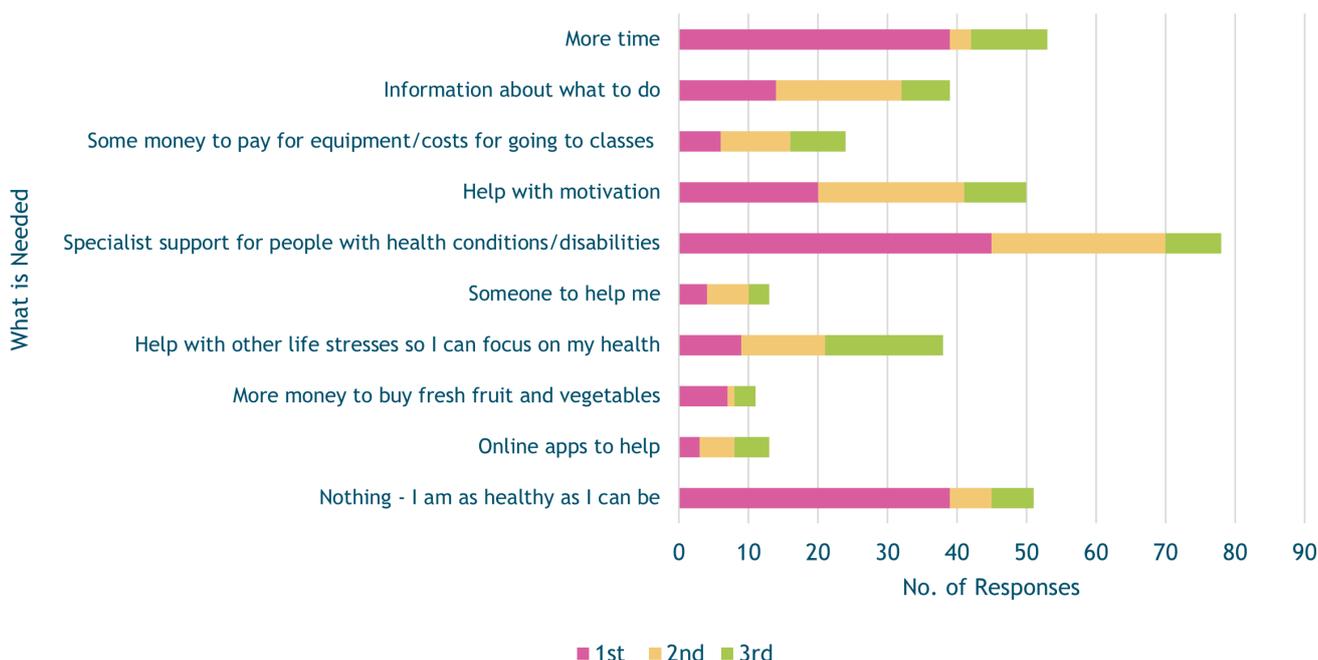
was simply being happy and able to enjoy life.

- “Being independent and happy with my life”.
- “Enjoying life and living it to the fullest”.
- “It means feeling well and having the energy to run round with my children and enjoy life”.

## 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 **specialist support for people with health conditions/ disabilities**. This is not surprising considering the large number of respondents who identified as having a long term condition (58%). Having **more time** was another key need, closely followed by **help with motivation**. It must also be noted that a relatively large proportion of respondents believe they are as healthy as they can be.

What is Needed to be Healthier?



The question about what is needed to be healthier was not only asked in the survey but was also asked during a number of proactive engagement events in Scarborough. A few additional options were added to the list by the public we engaged with, including:

- Psychological support
- Cheaper cost for healthy food
- A healthier environment
- Preparation and cooking skills (including healthy recipes)

- Specialist support to stop smoking

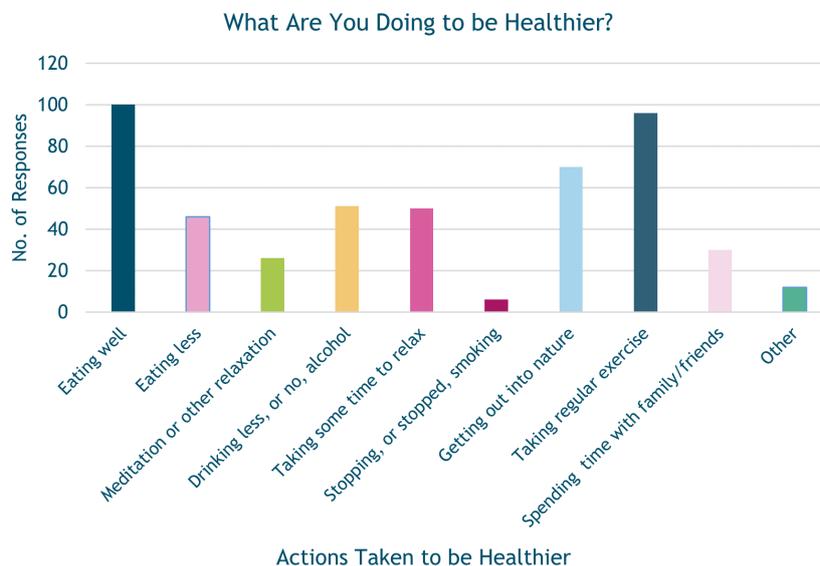
The results follow a somewhat similar pattern to the survey results, with **help with other life stresses**, **help with motivation** and **more time** being the top three chosen options.



When asked about barriers to being healthy, the top responses were **mental stresses** and **poor service from health professionals**.

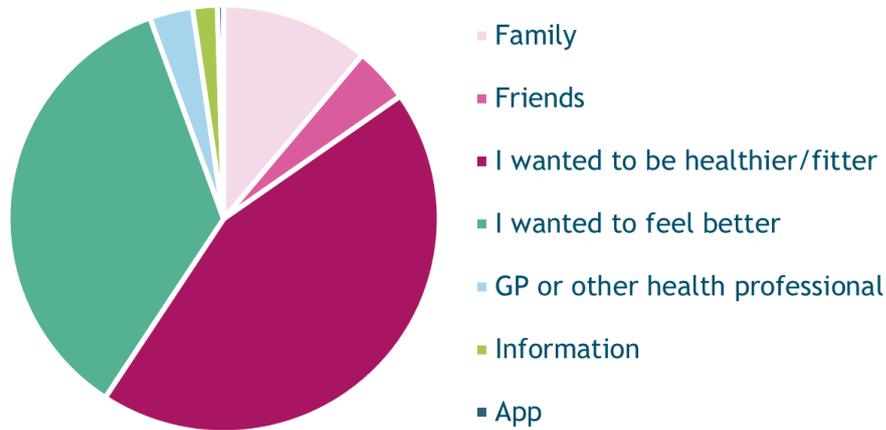
## How People Are Getting Healthier

It is encouraging that 72% of respondents said they are currently doing something to try to be healthier, with many trying to **eat well**, **do more exercise** and **get out into nature**.



In terms of 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



## Further Support Needed to be Healthier

It is clear that 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. Cheaper exercise options

Many respondents were keen for cheap, locally led exercise groups to be formed and for cheaper gym memberships to be offered.

- “Offer cheaper alternatives for exercise, e.g. running groups”.
- “Provide activities you can do on your own (beat the streets etc.)”.
- “Subsidised gym memberships”.
- “Cheaper access to Health Gyms for the retired”.
- “Provide locally led exercise sessions and pain relief management sessions across Scarborough in various locations”.
- “Outdoor exercise equipment, walking groups that working people can access, signposted walking/running routes, motivational signage e.g. climbing McBean steps burns roughly xxx calories”.
- “Restore local sports centre and/or support local parks and green spaces”.
- “Provide an adult outdoor exercise area and equipment at a local park. I suggest: Manor Avenue playing fields is a central location for easy access for most adults. This would encourage adults to try and keep fit”.

## 2. **Increase awareness of services/ 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. A few respondents expressed the importance of support around healthy eating in supermarkets.

- “It would be great to get more information about healthy eating and healthy food and recipes. Supermarkets could do more and give staff training to talk to customers about healthy eating. The bigger supermarkets could put information in the vegetable and chocolate aisles. Some supermarkets gave out free fruit for children to eat while going round the supermarket with their family. They should start that again”.
- “Be more present in the community, in schools, nurseries, parents’ groups, social groups, assisted living establishments”.
- “Maybe more information through leaflets and TV campaigns etc.”.
- “Healthy eating leaflets at the library, Post Office, GP Surgery, supermarket”.

## 3. **More easily accessible services**

Having local services that are readily accessible on different days/times so more people can attend was raised as a suggestion. Suggestions around childcare being incorporated into exercise settings such as gyms was also mentioned.

- “Having services which are open outside normal working hours, i.e. evenings, weekends”.
- “Introduce ways to exercise where you can take the kids or have childcare for young children while you exercise. A nursery at the gym or swimming pool”.
- “More provision for cycling. Proper cycle lanes rather than daft ones that go a few yards and then stop. Secure parking for bikes”.
- “I think it’s really important that therapies such as art, music and exercise that are proven to help people with long term conditions and mental health problems should be available locally and publicised”.

## 4. **Inclusive exercise groups**

Some respondents expressed the desire to join exercise/sport groups but are reluctant to due to a number of reasons that make them feel excluded.

- “More choices, want to do more sport but not with others who are fit!”.
- “Provide services that support good health in a non-judgemental environment or support to participate in things that would improve health”.
- “Support for people with disabilities. Weight management service isn’t responsive to people with mental health problems or [people] who have physical disabilities that limit their mobility. So again it’s inaccessible & can cause more harm than good”.

## Conclusions

- Key issues: GP services, NHS dentists, delayed treatment and services moving away from Scarborough have been highlighted as some of the top priority issues.
- It is clear that health is important to the people of Scarborough and many would like to be healthier if possible.
- Lack of time, lack of motivation, lack of help with other life stressors and lack of specialist support for people with health conditions/ disabilities appear to be some of the main barriers to people being healthier.
- A large majority of people are already taking action to try to be healthier but would like more support regarding this, from cheaper and more inclusive exercise options to increased accessibility and awareness of services.

**Thank you to SeeCHANGE partners for sharing and circulating the information and also to everyone who responded to our questions and helped us understand the attitudes of local people to health and wellbeing as well as local services.**

# healthwatch

## North Yorkshire

**Have  
your  
say**



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