



# News & views

Spring 2023

Hello. We are your local health and social care champion.



## Improving health and social care together



**Welcome to our latest newsletter, bringing you up to date with our work as the independent champion for people using health and social care services in North Yorkshire.**

Thank you to all those people who regularly share their experiences and feedback with us at our engagement events, focus groups, surveys and by phone or email. We continue to hear from a wide variety of people from across the county, from Scarborough to Selby, Richmond to Ryedale, and beyond. Over the last six months we've heard from over 1,000 people. All the feedback that we receive is used to help us influence and work with our health and social care partners to help bring about service changes and improvements. Issues such as a shortage of NHS dentists, access to GP services and delays in hospital treatment remain areas of concern for the public.

We have recently been working across North Yorkshire to hear from people about their experiences of accessing mental health services – to understand the challenges, what's working well, and what can be improved. We've had a great response and have heard from over 360 people across many different communities including veterans, older people, neuro diverse people, carers and the farming community. The findings from this engagement will help to shape the development and delivery of new models of care for people living with a mental health condition and people with a severe mental illness.

The issues facing our NHS and social care system remain priority topics for our politicians and national Government and these have been compounded by the cost of living crisis, workforce shortages, national strikes, alongside increased waiting times for people accessing hospital and GP appointments. We have heard that the cost of living crisis has impacted on every aspect of people's lives, from people having to reduce the amount of energy used, reducing the food that they buy, and limiting the amount of social activities that people undertake. All of this has negatively impacted on people's health and wellbeing.

The support that we receive from our volunteers is incredible and we couldn't achieve what we do today without their support – so thank you to everyone who has volunteered for us. As well as our 'enter and view' programme, our volunteers have supported our projects and research, helped at our outdoor events, and represented us at health and social care meetings. They have played a key role in the running of Healthwatch North Yorkshire.

## Meet our trustee chair, Lee

I'm Lee, the chair of our board of trustees here at Healthwatch North Yorkshire. I was proud to take on the role last summer and can testify to the excellence of our board and staff.

I began my career in teaching, followed by 30 years working for the NHS in public health and commissioning roles across England, including Leeds and Sheffield. This was followed by 10 years in senior management in local government in South Yorkshire and North Derbyshire. I'm also on the board of Healthwatch England, our national health and social care champion.

At Healthwatch North Yorkshire we have been working on our future plans and priorities, taking into account what you've told us matters to you (via feedback and events), as well as what is in the public interest and work we have already done that we feel needs further insight. You can find out about our key projects on our website ('have your say').

We recently had a great time out with our wonderful volunteers and heard about their work and ideas. You will have seen the several excellent reports we've produced in the last few months which have been well received. The board is ambitious and intends to continue our work influencing positive change in the NHS, care services and public wellbeing. We will be following up our research and insight with local services to ensure changes have been made in response to what people have told us.

We live in very difficult times with many people and services struggling, however it's more important than ever that the public have their say about what matters to them. I'll be doing my best to lead and support Healthwatch North Yorkshire throughout 2023 and beyond.



## Enter & view

**We're pleased to say that we have been working with care homes across North Yorkshire as part of our 'Enter and View' programme.**

We have visited care homes to hear from residents, family and friends, as well as care staff to understand their experiences of the services provided.

Our visits were undertaken by trained volunteers (authorised representatives) and have focused on understanding the quality of care provided, cleanliness of the homes, happiness of the residents, activities provided, and safety during the pandemic.

The feedback we have received to-date has been predominantly positive, and when we have identified concerns, these have been acknowledged and plans have been put in place to remedy these by the individual care provider. We will continue our enter and view programme throughout the year.

**We are interested in talking to residents of care homes, their friends & family, and staff. If you would like to invite us to visit you, or to find out more, please phone 01423 778 128.**

# Hearing your healthcare experiences

## What you told us

We were delighted to get out and about across North Yorkshire, particularly during last summer and autumn. Our team of staff and volunteers went to 22 shows, events and market stalls across the county.

A big thank you to everyone who came to talk to us and shared their experiences and thoughts. It was a real privilege to be able to meet people where they lived and at wonderful events in glorious locations.



**1,800 conversations across all of our events, 2700 across all feedback combined**

### The main topic areas they spoke to us about were:

- **GPs** – both getting an appointment and seeing someone face to face (GP, nurse etc). Feedback was mixed about GP practices with some getting wholehearted praise, some getting mixed reviews and others where challenges and issues were clear.
- **Getting an NHS dentist** – this reflects the difficulties we hear from people regularly.
- **Mental health services** – this was particularly an issue for people in Selby district and the North York Moors.
- **Travel** – In rural areas, the distance to hospital and services was raised as a concern.
- **Hospital services** – there was mixed feedback about hospital services with some examples of excellent care and others where people did not feel supported or effectively treated. The biggest issue raised about was delayed treatment.
- **Care** – people raised concerns about family members getting care at home or finding a care home near to friends and family. This information was part of our care staff crisis report.

One of the great things about getting out and about was sharing information about what we do. It was great to hear so many people being positive about the role of a Healthwatch and agreeing to spread the word.

# Listening to Craven experiences

Healthwatch North Yorkshire is part of Craven Communities Together, a partnership which brings together statutory and voluntary organisations working together to improve services and support.

This year we have been involved in some projects listening to local people's views on health services and support.

One of these was a survey circulated in spring and summer last year. Evidence suggests that people living in deeply rural areas experience delays in accessing health and care services, resulting in poorer health outcomes. So, our survey aimed to find out if this is the case in Craven and hoped to understand any reasons for delays.

More than 500 people responded and the resulting report outlined three key issues that people feel are preventing them from using health services and support or made it more difficult for them to access.

1. Time taken to get to appointments / inconvenient appointment times
2. Transport
3. Wanting a face to face appointment or to see the same person

As a result a group of local organisations, including the NHS and County Council, are working together to find solutions or ideas to help address the transport issue. Work is ongoing and is exploring how technology can help bring health services to people as well as how to support people to get to health appointments where transport is an issue.

Craven was also the focus for a week of 'Listen In' events organised by the Bradford District and Craven Health and Care Partnership. Healthwatch North Yorkshire helped to gather feedback from local people about health services to feed into a report tabled at the Partnership's meeting in Skipton in December. The report also reflected the survey responses and other feedback from local people.

All of the information is now being used to help determine priorities and plans for health services across the district and beyond.

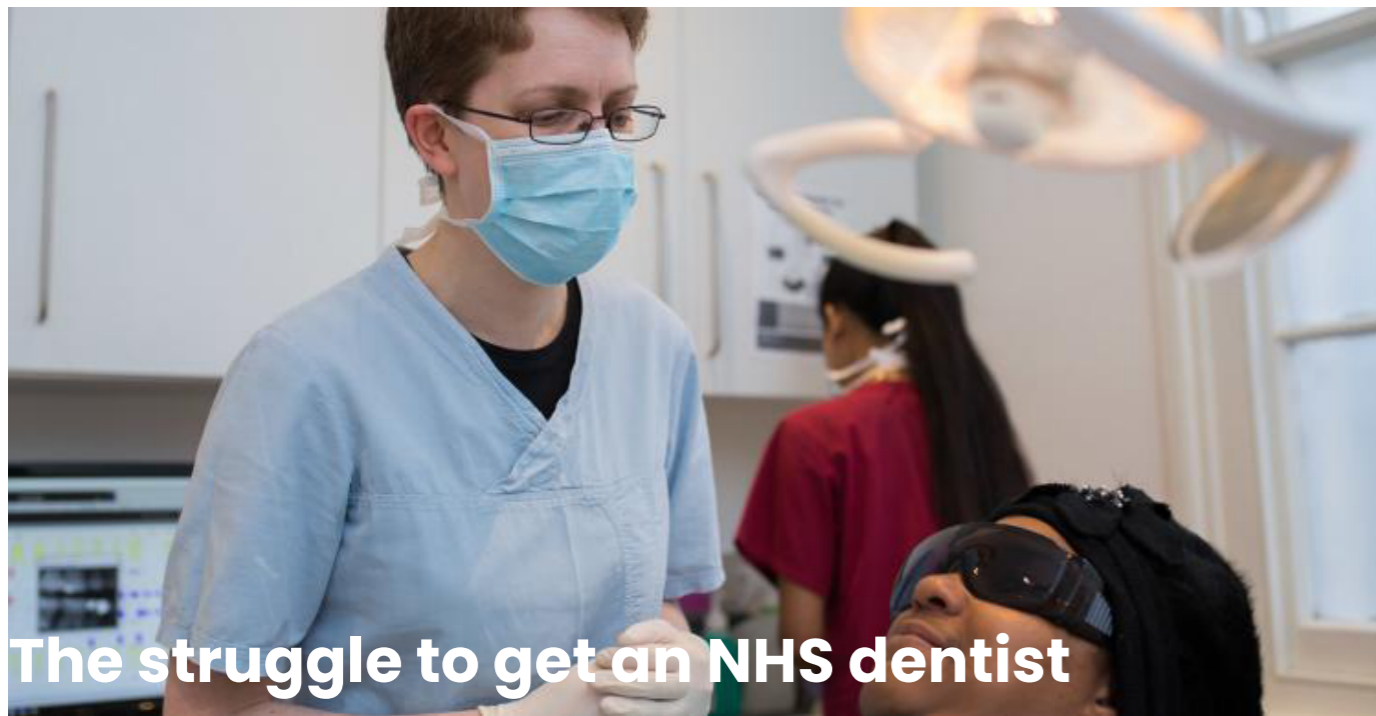
So, a big thank you to everyone who filled in a survey, spoke to us or took part in one of the 'Listen In' events. Your voices were heard and will continue to be heard as plans and projects develop.

**Talk to us...**

**Healthwatch North Yorkshire is here to listen to your health and social care experiences.**

**Contact us via email, [admin@hwny.co.uk](mailto:admin@hwny.co.uk) or call 01423 788 128.**





## The struggle to get an NHS dentist

Dental access and oral health continue to be one of the subjects that we hear most about. Unfortunately, accessing an NHS dentist still remains a challenge, and one that affects health, wealth and happiness. However despite this there have been some successes and we're beginning to see an improvement in services.

### New practices opened

At the beginning of the year new NHS dental practices were opened in Scarborough, Whitby, Robin Hoods Bay, and Tadcaster which was a great relief to many people in those areas. Healthwatch North Yorkshire had been involved in the procurement exercise of these new services, so it was great to be able to see these new practices serving their local communities.

### Dentistry remains a priority

We have continued to champion dentistry as a priority area and have met with the dental lead for Humber & North Yorkshire NHS, as well as the dental public health consultant for North Yorkshire and York to discuss the need for radical change to the provision of service in North Yorkshire. As a result of these discussions we have been invited to join the North Yorkshire & York oral health advisory group which is leading on the development of oral health strategies.

### We voice your experiences

We're a member of the Humber & North Yorkshire Local Dental Network where we regularly present to the group the experiences of people. Issues such as not being able to access an NHS dentist, having to travel long distances to access a dentist, having to pay for private care and the impact on children's oral health all came out as problems across the region.

### Gaining insight from all dental practices

We have contributed to the planning of a new initiative across North Yorkshire where all NHS dental practices were asked to complete a survey from NHS England, to provide up-to-date information on unmet patient need and workforce capacity. This survey has provided useful insight which has been used to feed into the development of new dental services.

### We have called for more to be done

We have contributed to a new Government, Health and Social Care Committee enquiry into dentistry following a national survey that showed 90% of dental practices across the UK were not accepting new adult NHS patients. MPs will consider to what extent the current NHS dental contract disincentivises dentists from taking on new patients. They will look at what incentives can be offered by the NHS to recruit and retain dental professionals, and they explore the possible impact and role that the new integrated care systems play in dental service delivery.



## The cost of living: it's impact

It has been three years since COVID-19 first hit, and the UK is still facing another crisis. Inflation is at its highest level since the early 1980s and increasing food, fuel and energy prices mean people are struggling to pay their bills and make ends meet. This in turn is having a negative impact on many different aspects of people's lives.

To explore how this crisis is affecting the residents of North Yorkshire, we gathered experiences through surveys and conversations with individuals and support organisations.

**62% of you said you were struggling or will start to struggle as the costs continue to rise.**

There is increased strain on organisations to deliver when funding is running short there are higher running costs and increased needs to meet.

There are increased concerns for those most vulnerable within society such as people with a long-term health condition or disability, older people, and low-income families with children. The negative health impacts that will result will only further exacerbate the winter pressures the health and care sectors are facing.

### What help is out there?

There is great work being done by district councils, support organisations and North Yorkshire County Council. They have developed a dedicated cost of living webpage that outlines the different schemes and assistance available from across the council, such as the North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund which provides emergency financial support to those unable to meet essential living costs, such as energy bills or food. It also includes details of other organisations who can help people in immediate financial crisis. This includes those who can provide professional advice on debt, help with the cost of food and heating bills, as well as details of funding schemes to help meet the cost of insulating homes. The page also contains information for families needing to access free Wi-Fi for children's schoolwork, or people looking to save money on their commute by signing up to a lift share scheme.



## Want to get involved? Become a volunteer!



**Volunteers like Natalie are at the heart of what we do across North Yorkshire. They play a vital role in helping people have their say on health and social care.**

Volunteering with Healthwatch also can help you develop skills, gain experience and make a difference to your community. There are many benefits to volunteering with your local Healthwatch, whether you want to help give a voice to people in your community or develop your professional skills in a health and social care environment.

### What can I do as a Healthwatch volunteer?

There are lots of different ways you can get involved as a Healthwatch volunteer, from speaking to people about their experiences of health and social care to using your skills to support the project you would be excited to contribute.

Here are just some of the ways you can get involved as a Healthwatch volunteer:

#### Help people in your community have their say on health and social care

Many Healthwatch volunteers spend time in the community finding out what people think of local services so that Healthwatch can raise any concerns with service providers. Our volunteers play a vital role speaking to local people about their experiences and giving them a platform to share their views and ideas for how services can improve.

#### Report on local health and care service

Some Healthwatch volunteers are trained to visit health and social care services (Enter & View visits) and report on the experiences of people using those services. You might be observing the service, gathering the views of patients, residents and staff, and contributing to reports which highlight your findings.

#### Help raise awareness of Healthwatch

As a volunteer, you could be attending community events to raise awareness of your local Healthwatch and encourage people to share their feedback on health and social care in their community.

#### Flexibility

Our volunteering roles are flexible and fit your schedule. Ideally, our volunteers would be able to make a regular commitment to the role on a weekly or monthly basis. We will always work closely to ensure your volunteering role fits with your personal and social commitments.

#### I'm interested - what next?

If you are interested in volunteering at Healthwatch North Yorkshire, or you would like to find out more, please contact Lada Rotshtein via email, [Lada.Rotshtein@hwny.co.uk](mailto:Lada.Rotshtein@hwny.co.uk) or by calling 07458 301397.

## Meet our volunteer, Lily

**How long have you been volunteering with us? What was the recruitment experience like?**

I've been volunteering since November 2022. Recruitment was really smooth and easy, I had an introductory Teams call during which I felt really welcomed and like it was definitely something that I wanted to pursue. I got sent a list of the current projects and was able to have a browse and see which ones I liked the sound of.

**What made you get involved?**

I had just finished a Masters in Public Health at the University of York and I am currently taking a gap year in order to set time aside to travel, which is a passion of mine. However, I didn't want to lose touch with the health and social care sector, and so I wanted to find some volunteering which would help me feel that I could be of use, aid me in keeping up to date with current research and issues within the field, and provide me with work experience.

I spent a lot of time searching for public health volunteering opportunities, but wasn't really finding anything that interested me or that I could fit around my current job, until I came across Healthwatch North Yorkshire. I sent them an email on their volunteering page and they got back to me really quickly.

**Is there a particular project or piece of work that you enjoyed being part of?**

So far I have been involved in the literature review of one project examining the mental healthcare needs of certain groups, and another literature review for a project investigating the prospect of including rurality as a health inequality. I have enjoyed both, though was already passionate about healthcare inequalities, and coming from a rural area I was keen to contribute to this particular project.

**Can you tell us more about your role and how you are feeling on about the projects? What are you looking forward to?**

So far I have assisted with literature reviews on two projects, but I hope to follow the project on rurality as it progresses. Having worked as a carer over summers during my undergraduate degree I'd really like to be involved with any projects focusing on the care sector.

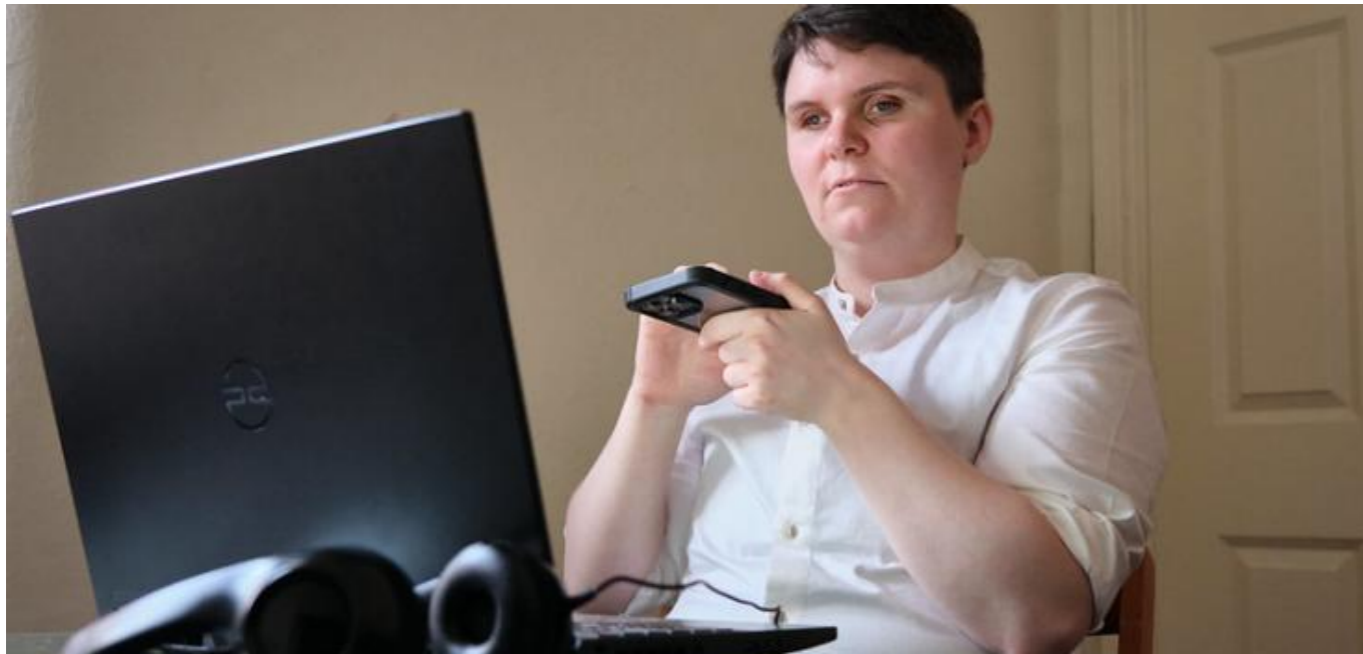
**What is your favourite thing about volunteering at Healthwatch North Yorkshire?**

Everyone I've encountered has been so welcoming to me and I know that they are always there if I have any questions or need any support, which I think has been the main thing. It's also very flexible which is great for me as my weeks are very changeable at the moment, and so with the projects that I've been working on I've been able to make my contributions whenever I have a minute.



**Find out more about our [volunteering opportunities](#)**





## Making information more accessible

**Many people are not getting information from GPs, hospitals, dentists, care providers and others in formats that meet their needs.**

### What have we done about it?

We launched our accessible information report – in partnership with Healthwatch York. It highlighted the experiences of people who need information in different formats. It linked to the Accessible Information Standard – a legal requirement that health and care organisations ask people if they need information in a different format and then provide this.

We found that two thirds of our respondents had never been asked if they needed information in a different format. 59% had to rely on someone else to read information to them if it was sent in the wrong format. People said they were frustrated with the situation and felt their independence had been taken away.

### What action is being taken?

We have been working with our local hospital trusts to improve their approach to accessible information. We are delighted that York and Scarborough NHS Trust has made accessible information a priority in its equality objectives and work has already started on improvements. For example, a new system for outpatient letters (Synertec) will automatically create large print, Easy Read and other versions based on a person's need.

Harrogate District Foundation Trust is also reviewing its approach to accessible information and Humber Foundation Trust has implemented a project to strengthen its support.

North Yorkshire Safeguarding Adults Board is challenging members to improve provision of information in accessible formats, the York Health and Wellbeing Board is doing the same and we are working with the Humber and North Yorkshire Integrated Care System to ensure accessible information is a priority for them too.

We want to work with GP practices. Let us know if you are getting information from your GP in your preferred format, so we can work collaboratively with them to bring about change.



## The care staff shortage

**Unfilled care jobs rose by 52% in a year nationally. And more than half a million adults in England are waiting for social care assistance. It's a worrying time for staff, home carers and support organisations. Growing numbers of people are needing care and the increasing complexity of their needs, coupled with the recruitment and retention crisis, means demand is outstripping capacity.**

### So where does this leave the sector?

With many carers and social care managers citing burnout, its having a detrimental impact on the people who need care. Despite the valuable and amazing work that staff do, it's clear that more needs to be done to support them.

### So what did we do?

We undertook surveys and focus groups with the public to understand the effects that the workforce shortage was having on them. We looked at what's happening across North Yorkshire and called for immediate and significant action to deal with these issues and future-proof care services. We recommend:

#### 1. Structured reform nationally

This will help recognise the value of social care and the integral part it plays across our health system. This includes:

- Increased funding, improved staff pay-scales and training in line with the NHS.
- Additional support for social care staff such as tax relief, access to affordable housing, key worker status etc.
- Increased recognition and investment for social care as a profession and career opportunity.
- Increased support and recognition for unpaid carers.

#### 2. Our MPs act on behalf of their constituents and those working in social care

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Rt Hon Steve Barclay MP, to bring about urgent reforms to the social care system.

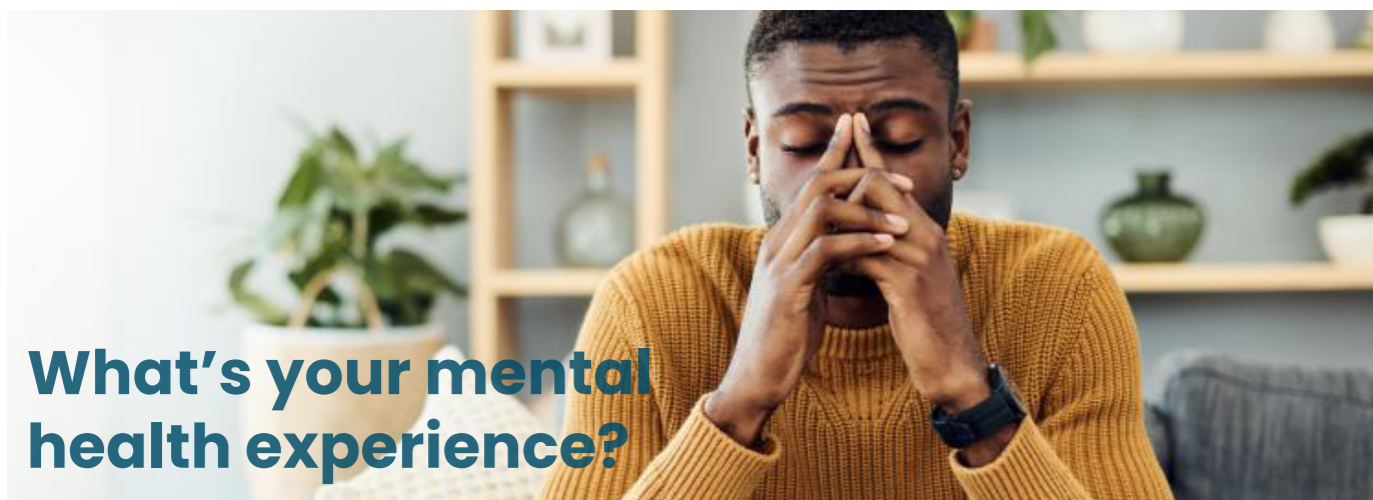
#### 3. Our commissioners and providers work collaboratively across North Yorkshire to bring about effective solutions

To involve those people delivering and receiving care, and the community, voluntary and social enterprises sector, such as the Independent Care Group.

#### 4. Humber & North Yorkshire and West Yorkshire (includes Craven) Integrated Care Systems prioritise improvements in the social care workforce

To increase staffing levels, retention, well-being, training, and career opportunities.





## What's your mental health experience?

Healthwatch North Yorkshire was commissioned by North Yorkshire & York Mental Health Leadership Alliance to gather the views and hear the experiences of adults accessing mental health and wellbeing services across the county (excluding Craven).

We worked with partners such as Tees Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust, North Yorkshire Council and Humber & North Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership.

### What did we do?

We heard from more than 360 people about their experiences of accessing mental health and wellbeing services across the county, via a survey, focus groups and one to one interviews.

### Who did we speak with?

We heard from a diverse range of people including carers, people from the farming community, veterans and members of the armed forces, people who are neurodiverse, and older people.

The feedback and insight that we gathered will be included in a final report published in April.

[Read more](#)



## Having your say on continence concerns

We worked with a group of organisations and volunteers to find out about people's experiences of continence services in North Yorkshire. This project included mapping existing services, hearing from people with and without continence issues and from healthcare professionals.

Our aim was to better understand the issues people are facing and to start to break the stigma of talking about wee and poo and start some continence conversations.

### What does our report highlight?

The need for more information. We all need to learn more about bladder and bowel health and what we can do now to stay healthy. People with issues need information about who can help as well as what they can do to help themselves. People with stomas and catheters need information about how to live well with these in place.



Our report reflects some local good practice and has recommendations for the NHS, North Yorkshire Council and the voluntary sector. By working together we can break down barriers, support people to talk about wee and poo and improve their bladder and bowel health.







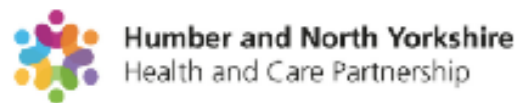
## Is rurality a health inequality?

**We are undertaking a joint project with York St John University. The project includes a survey, focus groups and a literature review.**

The aim is to understand the impact of living in a rural location on someone's access to health services and to determine if rurality should be seen as a health inequality alongside social economic issues like poor housing, ethnicity and income level.

A report will be produced in summer 2023 and we hope the project will influence health planning and strategies to include better provision to reduce the potential inequalities seen by people living in North Yorkshire's rural areas.

**What do you think? Have your say [here](#)**





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# New North Yorkshire Council



1 April 2023



On 1 April 2023, our county and district and borough councils were replaced by one – North Yorkshire Council.

The council will become the geographically largest council in England. It is being built with local at its heart and aims to be the most local, large council in the country.

By making this change now, it gives North Yorkshire Council the best possible chance to protect valued services at a time of exceptional financial pressures and high demand. Joining up services will allow the council to maximise spending power, meaning there are potential savings of between £30 million and £70 million which will then become annual savings. This money can be used to protect some of the most important local services at a critical time when everyone and every organisation is feeling the pressure. It will also be in a stronger position to work with us and other partners to get the most from every North Yorkshire pound.

Staff who currently serve residents will continue to provide the services that they deliver now. There will be one phone number and one website, making sure access to support and services will be easier whilst ending the current confusion that exists over which council does what. A main office will be retained in each former district area and will be supported in time by a further 30 local customer access points in places people go. The new council is committed to working closely with partners and communities to ensure that local priorities drive decision-making and local action via community networks, which will be independently operated but able to influence strategic decision making that affects their communities.

Visit North Yorkshire Council [website](#)



**Healthwatch North Yorkshire is your local health and social care champion. From Scarborough to Richmondshire and everywhere in between, we make sure NHS leaders and other decision makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care.**

If you've recently visited your GP, or local hospital, or used any health and care services in North Yorkshire we want to hear from you. Whether you've had a good or bad experience, we can use your feedback to improve services for everyone and we have the power to make NHS leaders and other care providers listen to what you have to say.

We're completely independent and impartial and anything you say is confidential. We also offer information and advice to help you to get the support you need. Our service is free, simple to use and can make a real difference to people in North Yorkshire.



[www.healthwatchnorthyorkshire.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchnorthyorkshire.co.uk)



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