

Healthwatch Quarterly Impact Report

Quarter 3: October to December 2023

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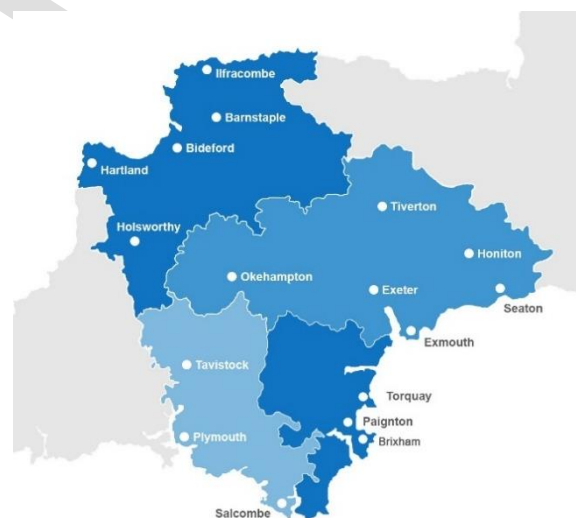
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About Us

Healthwatch in Devon, Plymouth and Torbay (HWDPT) are your local health and social care champions.

We're here to speak up for the 1.2 million people in Devon, Plymouth and Torbay, making sure NHS leaders and other decision makers hear their voices and use their feedback to improve care. We can also help them find reliable, trustworthy information and advice.

We offer dedicated walk-in centres in Torbay and Plymouth, and in wider Devon 'Healthwatch Champions' are located at Citizens Advice offices based throughout the county to carry out Healthwatch core functions.



About this report

This report details our key activities for the last quarter, including how we have engaged with the public, a summary of the feedback we have collected, our reports, recommendations and any outcomes or impact made.



Quarter at a glance

We've met **hundreds** of local people at community events across Devon, Plymouth & Torbay



Social media users have seen our posts over **100,000** times with **5,000** of you seeing our Email Bulletins



163 people have reviewed services on our feedback websites



We've escalated **104** of your complaints or concerns to those in charge



463 of you have shared your health or care feedback with us this quarter



We've helped **138** of you looking for advice on other organisations



We've produced **2** reports on local Emergency Departments and Pharmacy services



We analysed feedback from **224** people who took part in focused engagement activities we helped independently facilitate





Our News in Brief

A snapshot of some of our main activities during the past three months

Emergency Departments in Devon

In the Spring and Summer of 2023 we were commissioned by NHS Devon to visit Emergency Departments (EDs) across Devon's four Acute Hospital sites to speak to patients to better understand what informed and influenced their decision to attend ED. 511 people conversed with HWDPT during 34 visits at various times and days, which included daytime, evenings and weekends.

This work follows an initial piece of engagement work with people attending EDs in Devon undertaken in 2021 that started NHS Devon's look into patients journeys.

Brief summary of themes gathered from patients by HWDPT:

- **Awareness** – patients had very high levels of awareness of the other NHS services available.
- **GP services** – many patients indicated they would have preferred to be seen by their GP rather than ED but were unable to book an appointment.
- **Multiple services** – the majority of patients tried to access their GP first before being referred to ED by other services such as NHS 111 or MIU/UTC.
- **Emergency Departments** – the majority of patients felt that ED was the correct choice for their treatment.
- **NHS 111** – the majority of patients that used NHS 111 were referred to ED.
- **Delays** – there was no clear indication that the delays in waiting times for ongoing treatment or surgery is significantly impacting ED numbers.
- **Minor Injury Unit /Urgent Treatment Centre** – more than half of those accessing an MIU/UTC were referred to ED because the services needed were not available in the community (e.g. CT scan, x-ray, blood tests, etc.).
- **Location** – the majority of patients accessed the ED closest to their home.
- **Access** – some patients highlighted the issues of accessing services, and ED, in rural areas.
- **Information screens** – there is evidence to suggest inconsistent information in EDs about other services and waiting times between sites.
- **Waiting Rooms** – waiting rooms appeared busier due to large numbers of those accompanying the patient (e.g. relatives, children, friends).



Impact : NHS Devon welcome the findings of the report and will be sharing it with our trusts and Urgent and Emergency Care Boards and building the findings and recommendations into their winter plans. The report has also been presented at the NHS Devon Primary Care Commissioning Committee and the South West Clinical Senate to help them to make the best possible decisions about health and care provision in the South West. **The full report is available to read via:**

<https://cdn.whitebearplatform.com/hwdevon/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/30093656/Final-HWDPT-ED-report-v22.pdf>



Healthwatch Network News

A snapshot of some of our national partner Healthwatch England's news, briefings and reports during the past three months

About Healthwatch England

Healthwatch was established under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 on a national and local level. Healthwatch England (HWE) are a statutory committee of the independent regulator the Care Quality Commission (CQC). HWE escalate local Healthwatch concerns to CQC and provide advice to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, NHS England and local authorities. There are 152 independent local Healthwatch set up across each local authority in England.

Healthwatch England Key Reports and Briefings This Quarter

The public's perspective: The state of health & social care – HWE released a report examining ten key areas of care, including GPs, dentists, hospitals, and social care. It is based on more than 65 thousand experiences recorded from all local Healthwatch organisations across the country – including from HWDPT. It also includes recommendations and potential solutions for the NHSE, commissioners and service providers. Key findings from Healthwatch England:

- People who are more financially comfortable were much more likely to be able to access free or discounted private GP appointments through their work than those who were less financially comfortable.
- People in better jobs/financial positions were much more likely to access health-related workplace perks and healthy living perks.
- Some, particularly young people, were advised to consider paying for private care by NHS staff.

Read more: www.healthwatch.co.uk/public-perspective

Strengthening primary & community care services – HWE released a research briefing on how people's experiences can be used to support the development of a long-term vision for the NHS to strengthen these services. They have analysed the experiences people shared with them – including us at HWDPT – of the NHS's 'front door' and identified what is working well and which areas patients want to see improved. Healthwatch think these solutions can not only help inform a future vision for primary care, but also drive efficiencies across the whole system. Some of the key barriers to accessing care are consistent across a range of primary and community services:

1. **Appointment availability.** Across all the services on which we reviewed our data we found the lack of appointment availability to be a key barrier to access.
2. **Contacting services.** Whether it be by phone or online, we repeatedly heard that both primary and community services can be hard to contact, and therefore hard to access.
3. **Opening hours.** Many services' hours of operation are not conducive to being universally accessible.
4. **Remote methods.** Services are increasingly offering people the option to access services remotely, but many people find this neither accessible nor desirable.
5. **Access costs.** Accessing services is not necessarily free. We hear about the cost of transport to services as being a significant barrier for some people. The cost of making repeated calls or spending significant time waiting on the phone to services can also be a barrier.

Read more: www.healthwatch.co.uk/report/2023-10-30/strengthening-primary-and-community-care-services

Impact : What we do with these reports and briefings

HWDPT contribute real local public feedback to all of HWE's reports and briefings. We share these with key stakeholders, including health and social care providers & commissioners, the Devon Integrated Care Partnership Board, our local authorities, Local Care Partnerships and the voluntary, community or social enterprise (VCSE) sector. In some cases, we will ask for a response to these reports and their recommendations from the relevant provider or commissioner.



Our Engagement Activity

Some ways we have engaged with our communities to gather feedback

The last three months have seen us take our information stands out into the community and attended events in Newton Abbot, Salterton, Okehampton, Exeter, St Budeaux, Plymouth and Torbay, capturing experiences of local health and social care along the way.

Some selected events where we have been raising awareness of HWDPT, gathering feedback and taking the opportunity to discuss and share issues or experience included:



Our Winter Wellbeing Event at Paignton Library & Paignton Community Hub in December (above), where Teresa & Jan from the NHS were offering free COVID jabs to those eligible. (right)



healthwatch Devon

- Cost of Living Events in Newton Abbot and Cristow, Teign Valley
- Greendale Vaccination Centre, Salterton
- West Devon CVS
- H.O.P.E. programme Event
- Okehampton Community Wellbeing Day
- Carers Rights Day

healthwatch Plymouth

- National PLACE Programme for UHP, Livewell SW and Practice Plus Group
- Supporting Plymouth LCP to engage local communities and groups.
- William Sutton Memorial Hall, St Budeaux
- Male Carer's Group
- Carers Rights Day

healthwatch Torbay

- Torbay Healthy Homes for Wellbeing event
- Winter Wellbeing Event at Paignton Library
- Pop up event at Brixham Hospital
- The Windmill Centre in Torquay
- Torbay Health & Wellbeing Network meeting
- Carers Rights Day

We also analysed feedback from **224** people who took part in focused engagement activities that we helped to independently facilitate, which included guided conversations on the impact of providing unpaid care at home on carers wellbeing and feelings of isolation. The information gathered will be used anonymously to help us and carers groups in Devon, Plymouth and Torbay explore the links between:

- Carers mental /physical health and wellbeing and number of hours unpaid care provided.
- How long a carer had been providing this role (longevity)
- Type of care role provided e.g. physical caring, supportive caring, dementia/cognition caring or mixture.

This information will allow leading carers services providers to develop support for carers, develop a risk scale for carers to help medical professionals identify when a carer may be reaching a tipping point, to identify gaps in service provisions and communications and to identify research gaps for future engagement/research.

Coming up next quarter : we are planning to attend many more outreach locations in Devon, Plymouth & Torbay, keeping you updated via our eBulletin and three local websites:
www.healthwatchdevon.co.uk www.healthwatchplymouth.co.uk www.healthwatchtorbay.org.uk



Healthwatch Assist Network News

Key activities from our Healthwatch Assist Network this quarter

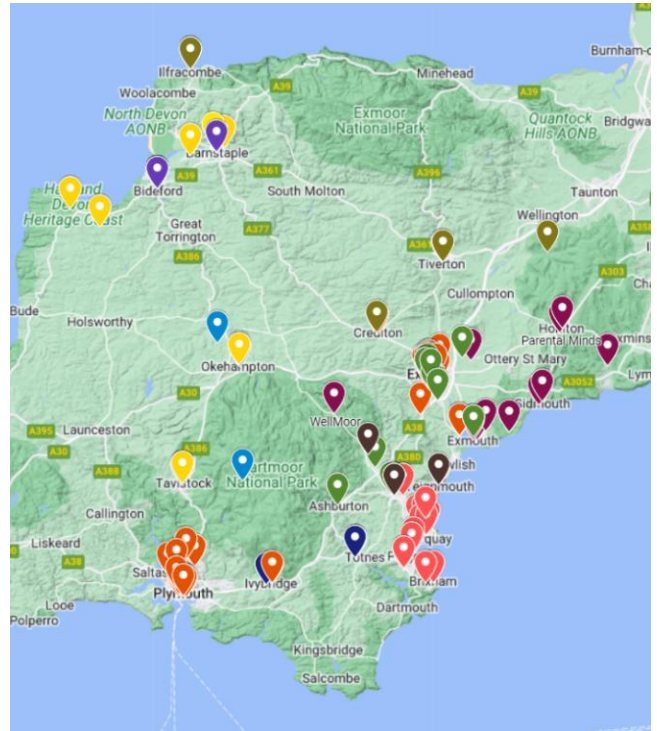
About the HW Assist Network

Our Healthwatch Assist Network allows us to build links with communities in Devon, Plymouth and Torbay so we can gather information about the health and care services they use. This information is fed back into the community and shared with key healthcare decision makers who can learn from good practice and make improvements to local services.

HW Assist Network News

We currently have nearly **150 Healthwatch Assist Network members**, including local support groups, school councils, parent groups, committees and sports groups. Last quarter we had **9 new members** join the Network. These included:

- Age Concern Crediton
- Dawlish Gardens Trust
- DWP – Armed Forces Champions
- Esteem Team
- Exeter Community Energy
- Involve Mid Devon
- Intercom Trust
- Northam Care Trust
- Westbank



Pictured above, the map shows the locations of our Healthwatch Assist Network members across Devon, Plymouth and Torbay

In November over twenty members of the Healthwatch Devon Assist Network met up to discuss the ongoing work of Healthwatch, how we can help support local people and to raise any issues they or the the people they support had expereinedced locally. Some members shared the following health and social care concerns for the people they support:

- Access to mental health services
- Access to information
- Waiting lists for services
- Access to specialised services
- Accessing social care assessments
- Impact of rurality
- Access to GP services
- Delays in care reviews
- Digital Exclusion
- Reduction of cash-based services
- Difficulty accessing incontinence services
- Social isolation
- Lack of support services for homeless people
- Complex care pathways
- Gaps in provision
- Difficulties accessing service for people with communication needs

All the feedback gathered is shared with key healthcare decision makers who can learn from good practice and make improvements to local services.

More Details : For more information about joining us please contact Healthwatch in Devon, Plymouth and Torbay free on **0800 520 0640** or email hwassist@hwdevon-plymouth-torbay.org



Healthwatch Feedback

Where we gathered your experiences from in the past three months

Number of Experiences shared with Healthwatch in Devon, Plymouth and Torbay

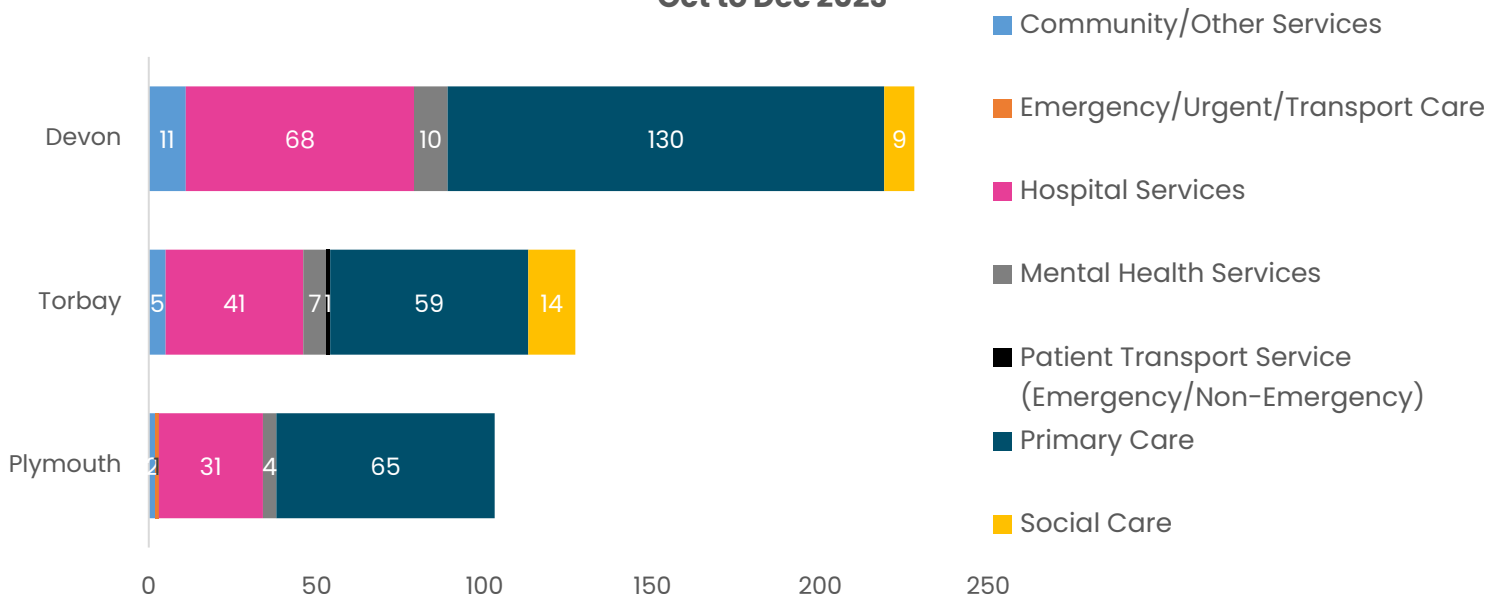
463 people contacted us directly to share their experiences of health and social care services in Devon, Plymouth and Torbay. 228 were about services in Devon, 103 about Plymouth services and 127 about Torbay services. 3 were more generic experiences about services in Devon, Plymouth and Torbay as a whole and 2 were from out of area.

163 of these experiences were shared with us at HWDPT through one of our three online rate and review feedback centres, 231 were handled by our contact centre and 69 experiences were captured through online or community engagement.

Source of Feedback shared with HWDPT and Type of Service

Breakdown of feedback recorded by service level and locality

Oct to Dec 2023



Of these shared experiences gathered across Devon, Plymouth and Torbay, the most commonly discussed theme was **Primary Care Services**. 254 (55% of overall feedback) were about primary care services, of those:

- 147 people (58%) shared their experiences of GP Services
- 59 people (23%) shared their experiences of Dental Services and
- 46 people (18%) shared their experiences of Pharmacy Services.



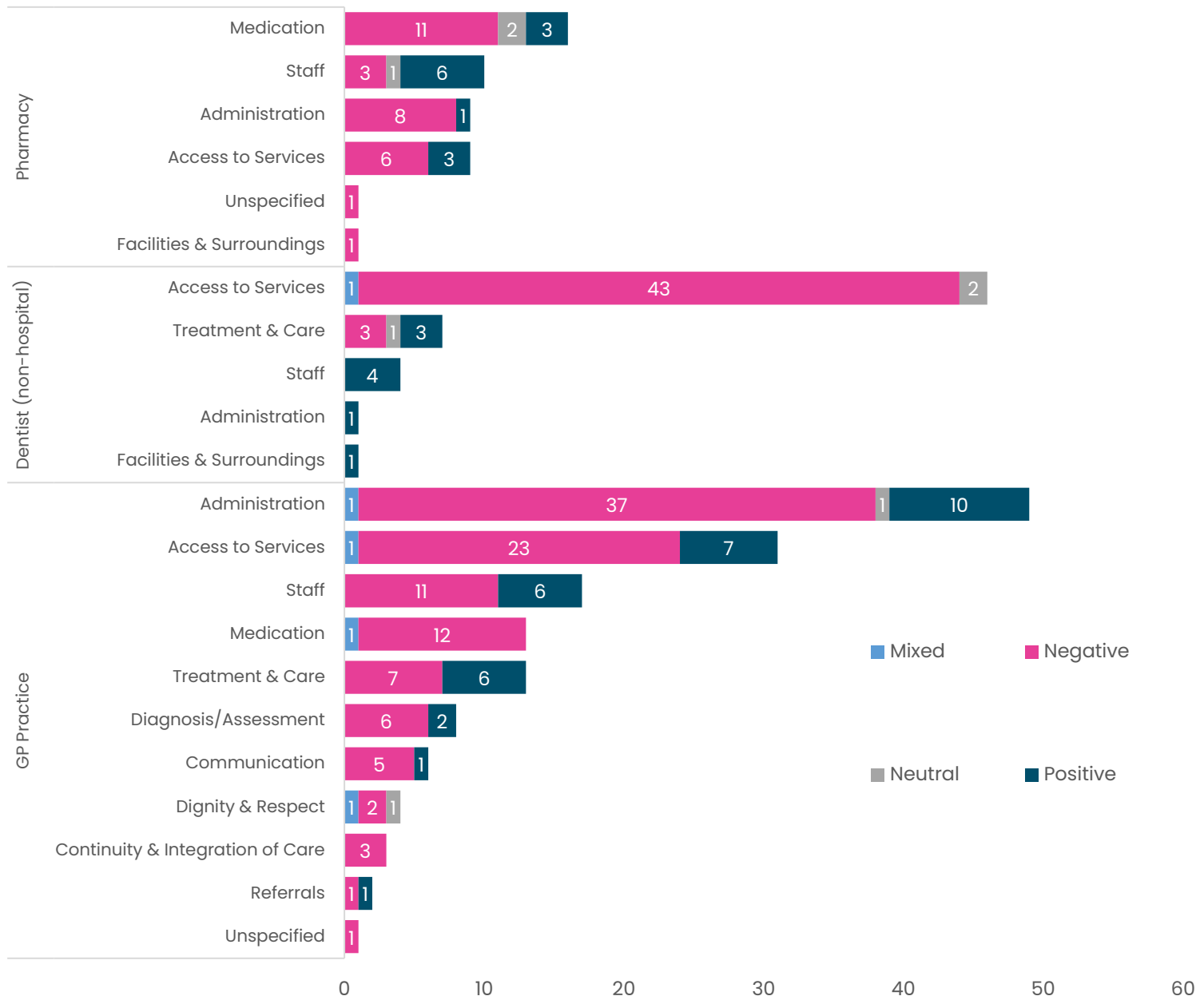
Healthwatch Feedback

What you have been telling us about the care you have received locally

Themes & Sentiment of Primary Care Feedback shared with HWDPT

The most common themes in relation to Primary Care Services were **Administration, Access to Services, Medication** and **Staff / Staffing Levels**. The table below shows how the public felt about the Primary Care Services they told us about across each of Devon, Plymouth and Torbay, separated by type of service for the past three months:

Summary of themes - Primary Care Services feedback



Themes & Sentiment of Hospital Services Feedback shared with HWDPT

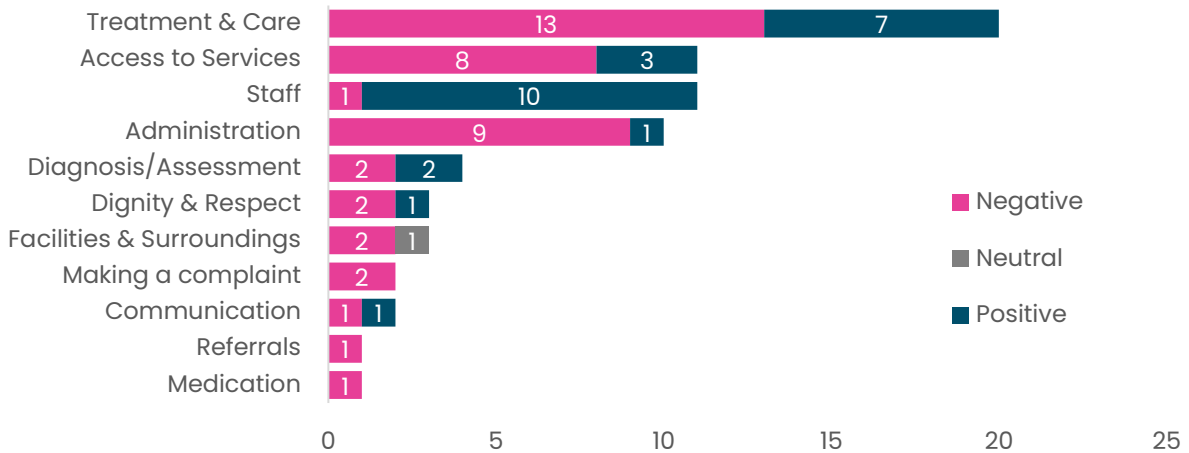


Of these shared experiences gathered across Devon, Plymouth and Torbay, the second most commonly discussed theme was **Hospital Services**. 140 experiences (30% of overall feedback) shared with us were about Hospital Services, of those:

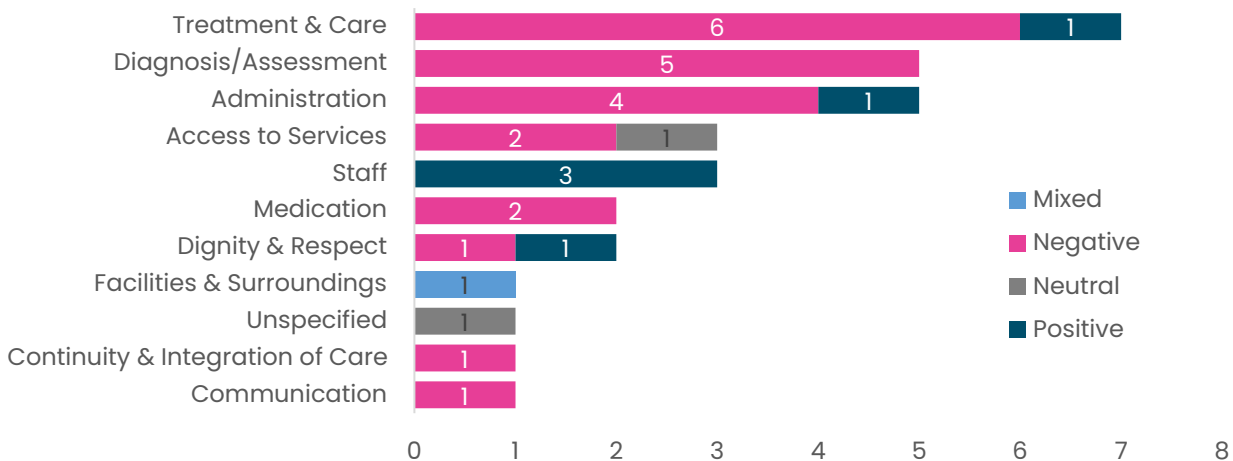
- 68 people (49%) shared their experiences of Hospital Services in Devon
- 31 people (22%) shared their experiences of Hospital Services in Plymouth and
- 41 people (29%) shared their experiences of Hospital Services in Torbay

The most common themes in relation to Hospital Services were **Quality of Treatment and Care, Access to Services, Administration, Staff and Assessments / Diagnosis**. The tables below show how the public felt about the Hospital Services they told us about across each of Devon, Plymouth and Torbay, separated by type of service for the past three months:

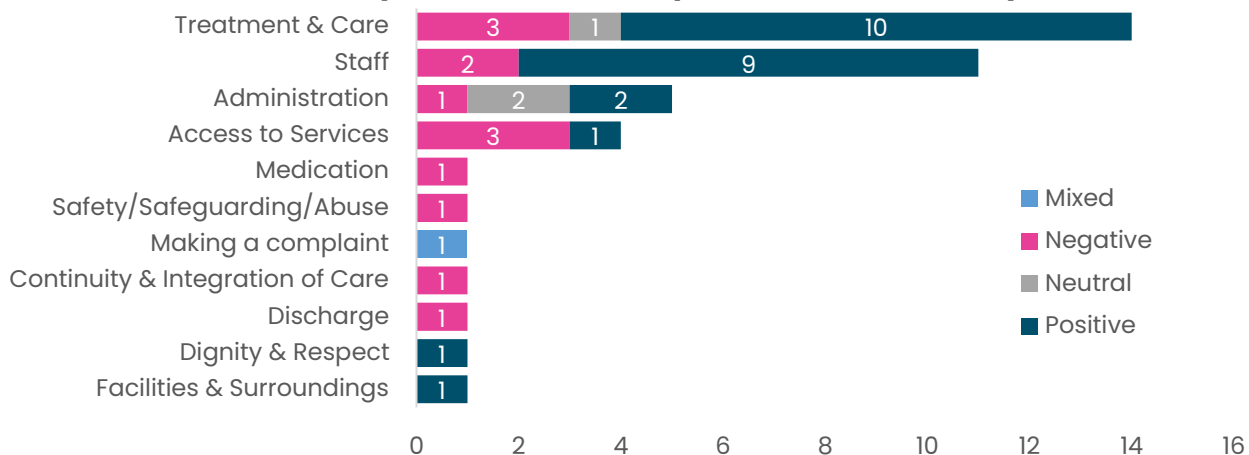
Summary of Feedback – Hospital Services in Devon



Summary of Feedback – Hospital Services in Plymouth



Summary of Feedback – Hospital Services in Torbay





Healthwatch Feedback

Your experiences of local health and social care in your words

The following pages shows some of your experiences across Devon, Plymouth and Torbay related to the three most discussed themes on the previous pages – **Access to Services**, **Treatment & Care** and **Administration**.

Access to Services

Positive Feedback

“Compared with other GPs in Torbay this surgery is able to offer you appointments quickly. I always use the online system and someone gets back to me within the day. The only annoying thing is the online system is often shut down by midday as they’ve reached capacity – this poses accessibility issues for someone who works shifts. And given the surgery has said they’ve moving over entirely to this online system, it’s something that needs considering.” **GP Service, Torbay**

Negative Feedback

“Joined this practice after leaving forces but having lived here for 20 years before. Quality of treatment and staff always high but seriously affected by lack of NHS dentists and poor planning. Dentists retired and no proactive replacement plan. In place meant practice now in the general pool for mythical new NHS dentists. Total lottery as to whether you still have NHS care. If “your” dentist retired then your access to NHS care disappeared with no transparency on who and why some patients got back into NHS cover. It’s a national failing by poor provision for NHS dentists and privatisation by stealth but this proactive could be more open about how it allocates it’s meagre NHS cover.” **Dental Practice, Devon**

Treatment and Care

Positive Feedback

“I have been with [this surgery] for some time and they provide a great service despite obvious understaffing issues at times and immense demand on their services. They always get back to you if you have any issues.” **GP Service, Plymouth**

Negative Feedback

“Long delay in A&E (8hrs as no beds and critical incident raised by hospital). Triage nurse was agency and missed my stroke symptoms and passed them off as migraine- this caused a further delay in diagnosis and treatment. MAU was terrible – migraine diagnosis continued, 48 hrs of no food, drink or meds! Finally placed on excellent ward, but due to missed diagnosis early on I was unable to have a lumbar puncture within 14 day window and I therefore took a hospital bed for 7days extra (no body commuting the extra delay for lumbar puncture). Only when I wrote to the ward stating that I was going to self-discharge did I get discharged by the hospital (on day 14).” **Hospital Services, Plymouth**



Administration

Positive Feedback

"I live in rural community and find the online (or app) prescription delivery service, to your door, offered through Lloyds works extremely well. It can take 30 seconds to reorder a medicine and have it delivered to you very quickly. As I live rurally and transport is not always simple I think this is a fantastic service."

Pharmacy Service, Devon

Negative Feedback

"If you need an appointment you are either waiting on the phone forever - and when you try to use the online system it never seems to work. Its very hard work just to get someone to talk to you. However once you've got an appointment the surgery is generally good. The other issue I've got with the surgery is they keep mixing up my notes with another patients - they keep ringing and telling me I'm due a vaccination and I keep having to explain they've got my notes mixed up with someone else again. This is worrying."

GP Service, Torbay

Case Study

John, 81 and his wife have health issues. John has experienced a long wait for a mental health assessment for his wife. John came to us because he was concerned that he does not receive consistent help from GP and struggles to get an appointment with named Doctor. He is unable to walk very far, uses sticks and walking frame. John's house is partially adapted with stair lift and shower has a seat and handrails, but he can't do much around the home. John's wife does most things, however she is struggling with memory and losing a lot of weight. The GP last said they were unable to treat her unless a mental health assessment is completed, but they had been waiting a while.



What we did

Our Healthwatch Champion advised John to contact his GP surgery to ask them to follow up on the mental health assessment for his wife and to make a blood test for himself. He was also advised that he has the right to ask for a consistent approach with a named Doctor and if he is unhappy to ask to speak to the Practice Manager to discuss his concerns. The Healthwatch Champion talked through the process for raising a complaint and advised that if he needed more help, they could help him to write a letter. John was also provided with the contact details for Care Direct for him to contact them to have an assessment of his social care needs. John felt he had been listened to during the call and appreciated a follow up to talk things through.

Impact : Making Sure Your Voice is Heard

We regularly share and report all of your feedback and our intelligence with key stakeholders, including health and social care providers & commissioners, the Devon Integrated Care Partnership Board, our local authorities, Local Care Partnerships and the voluntary, community or social enterprise (VCSE) sector. We also share our data with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and Healthwatch England (HWE) to help address health and care issues at a national level.



What we did with your views

How we have used your feedback to make reports & recommendations

In addition to the Devon Emergency Departments report detailed on page 4, this quarter we took part in focussed HWDPT engagement activities that we independently facilitated, which included the following key reports:

Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing

We were called to give evidence at a recent spotlight review into Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and emotional wellbeing support, by Torbay Council. We shared concerns on behalf of parents, families and representatives of local community groups about the long waiting times for mental health support for children and young people and we emphasised the importance of the voices and experiences of young people and their families being embedded in the process for measuring impact.



Outcome

After listening to young people sharing their stories and hearing from service leaders responding to concerns, the review concluded with a list of recommendations, which rely on a multi-agency approach to making improvements to communication, signposting and access to services to support children and young in Torbay and the development of a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment on children and young people's mental health and wellbeing and that this data will be used to inform the design of services and to enable progress monitoring of the delivery and improvement of the services going forward.

Access to Dental Services in Torbay

Experiences relating to difficulties accessing dental services in Torbay (and wider Devon) were shared by Healthwatch to Torbay Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board in November. We also asked, how can Healthwatch in Torbay further help to promote key messages to the public around access to dental services? Healthwatch Torbay provided evidence which highlighted that between April and November 2023, 109 people contacted local Healthwatch because they could not access an NHS dentist. Where possible we were able to contact 77 of them to signpost them to Access Dental – NHS Devon Dental Helpline.

Outcome

As a result of discussions, NHS Leaders in Devon were recommended to produce joint communications to raise awareness of and promote access to dental provision, how to maintain good oral health and what to do if urgent dental care is required within Torbay; and that they be requested to develop communication resources for use by frontline services and supporting web content to raise awareness of how to maintain good oral health, how to access routine dentistry and what to do if urgent dental care is required within Torbay. We continue to regularly contribute feedback to the Local South West Regional Dental Network and the local Primary Care Committee.



Patient Experiences of Pharmacy Services

– What you said

Following a report released by Healthwatch England recently which found that people are experiencing serious issues when trying to get their repeat prescriptions, we decided to perform a deeper dive into the Devon area to find out more. We gathered feedback on what patients and their relatives have told us about their experiences of pharmacy services and shared a report of these findings with NHS stakeholders in Devon and made key recommendations for them.

Our report on Patient Experiences of Pharmacy Services, detailing a total of 141 experiences about Pharmacy Services across Devon, Plymouth and Torbay during an 18-month period. Issues raised by those surveyed include medication delays and supply problems that affect the prescription/repeat prescription service, patients not knowing when their medications are ready for collection, and phone calls going unanswered.



What we did

We escalated your concerns and our recommendations around pharmacy services and particularly the potential effect to Community Pharmacy Services to NHS Devon, specifically to The Primary Care Commissioning Committee, Quality and Patient Experience Committee and to The System Quality & Performance Group. We have raised the same concerns with the Devon Local Pharmaceutical Committee at an online meeting. Additional discussions continue to take place with NHS England Southwest and NHS Devon around our concerns and actions that are taking place to mitigate some of the issues affecting patients described in this report.

109 experiences shared with us (77%) were negative in sentiment and of those 82 experiences (75%) recorded related to pharmacy services in Plymouth. This prompted us to make a recommendation for University Hospital Plymouth NHS Trust to work with Healthwatch Plymouth in monitoring patient experience feedback once proposed changes to the Outpatient Pharmacy service are fully implemented.

Outcome

Following the release of our report, University Hospital Plymouth NHS Trust concluded the procurement of a new outpatient Pharmacy and promised that by April 2024, they will have moved their outpatient pharmacy to a new on-site location that will be more than triple the size of the current premises. In February 2024 they announced a new community partnership with Boots to launch a bigger, modern, and welcoming new outpatient pharmacy in Spring 2024.

NHS Devon have said it will use the outputs of this report to directly inform the development of its Pharmacy strategy, which is currently in development, enabling them to show how the experiences of patients in Devon have been used to develop and improve services for pharmacy services and patients.

Community Pharmacy Devon have said they will review all recommendations made by the report and ensure that they are considered in full as part of processes for developing and improving pharmacy services, with the providers and the commissioners in Devon.



What we did with your views

How we use the rest of your feedback and some of our work in progress

Impact : Escalations and Referrals

All public feedback we receive is logged in our secure system for further analysis. Some are serious concerns or complaints that need to be escalated further for immediate action. This quarter there have been **138** such cases.

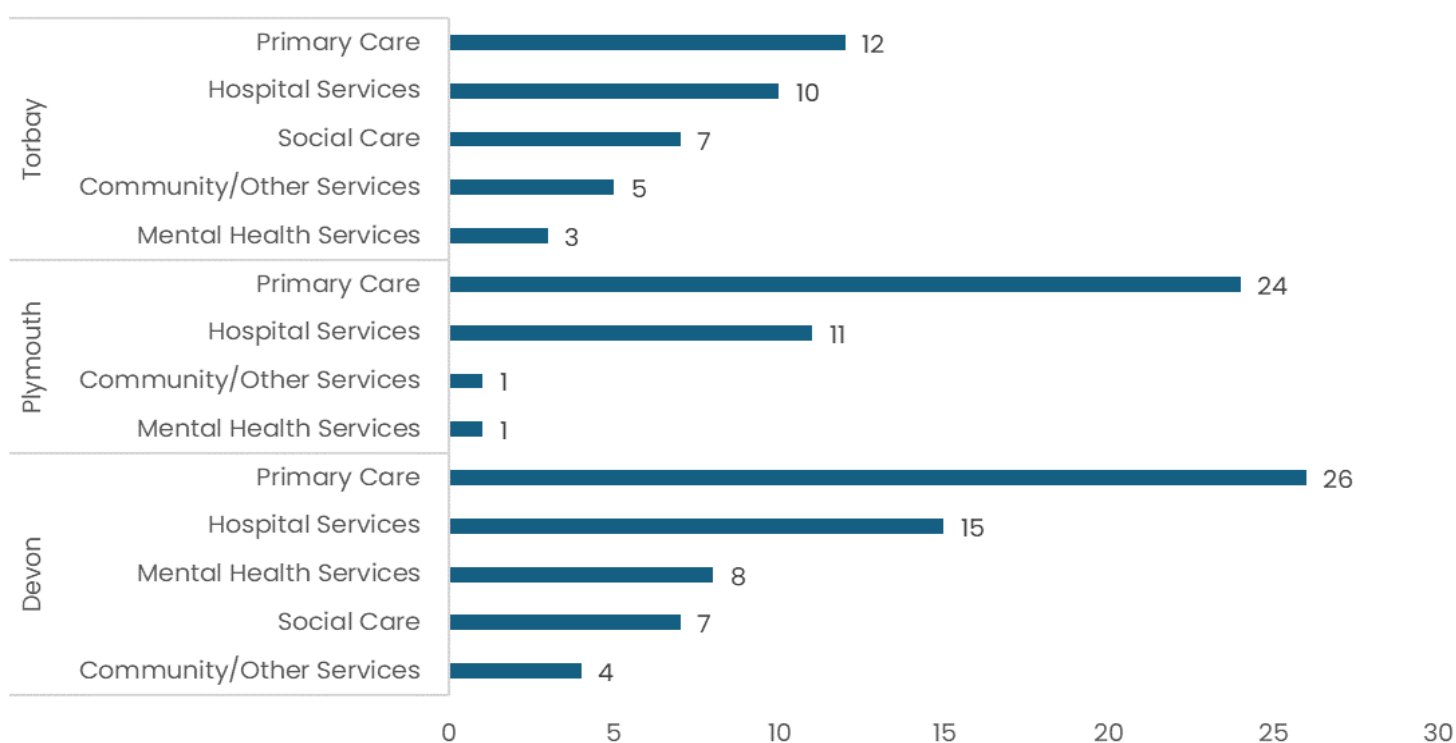
Of the **463** people who contacted us in quarter 3, **138 people** (30%) were signposted or referred on to other services for their concern / complaint to be dealt with or provided with information to enable them to resolve their query.

- 45 people were signposted or referred to the service provider (PALS or Practice Manager)
- 34 people were provided with information and advice
- 29 people were signposted or referred to Advocacy Services
- 25 people were referred to a Healthwatch Champion
- 4 people were signposted to Access Dental
- 1 experience prompted a safeguarding escalation.

Members of the public wanting to make an official complaint have been referred to organisations such as the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS), the Advocacy People, health trusts, Safeguarding, the Devon Integrated Care System (ICS), NHS England and the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

The graph below shows a breakdown of where these 138 cases originated in Devon, Plymouth and Torbay and which type of service they referred to. The total is more than 138 as some cases referred to multiple types of service at a time.

Fig 7: Breakdown of the service level in each locality where commentator required signposting, advice or information





Coming Up Next Quarter

Some of our other work set to be completed and shared next quarter

Work Happening in HWDPT Next Quarter

healthwatch Devon

- Exeter Prison Lounge Event.
- Continuing to engage with community groups and attend events across Devon to capture feedback about health and social care services.
- Healthwatch Assist Network Members Meeting

healthwatch Plymouth

- Plymouth REI Site visit.
- Meeting with community groups and attending network events across Plymouth to gather feedback and to raise awareness of the Healthwatch Assist Network.
- Healthwatch Assist Network Members Meeting

healthwatch Torbay

- Person centred and personalised care Group Meeting.
- Meeting with community groups and attending events across Torbay to gather feedback.
- Healthwatch Assist Network Members Meeting

Other HWDPT Reports Coming Soon

- Our Unpaid Carers Survey went live this quarter and by the end of December we had received **224** responses. The full report will be produced and shared in the next Impact report next quarter.
- Over **200** people have responded to our survey regarding access to NHS services for common mental health conditions in Devon, Plymouth and Torbay.
- We will be visiting Plymouth’s Royal Eye Infirmary to speak with patients and find out more about their experience with the new building, launched in October 2023.

Impact : What we do with this report

We publicise this report on our three websites, three email bulletins and various social media channels. We share this report with key stakeholders, including health and social care providers & commissioners, the Devon Integrated Care Partnership Board, our local authorities, Local Care Partnerships and the voluntary, community or social enterprise (VCSE) sector. We also share this report with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and Healthwatch England (HWE) to help address health and care issues at a national level. For more information, please contact Healthwatch in Devon, Plymouth and Torbay by calling us free on **0800 520 0640**, emailing info@HWDPT.org or visiting one of our local Healthwatch websites:

www.healthwatchdevon.co.uk

www.healthwatchplymouth.co.uk

www.healthwatchtorbay.org.uk

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Our vision

A world where we can all get the health and care we need.

Our mission

To make sure people's experiences help make health and care better.