

# You Told Us

Jan – March 2026



# You told us...

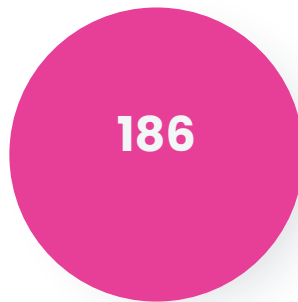
From January to March 2026, we reviewed the feedback gathered from individuals across County Durham to identify key trends in health and social care. These shared experiences not only help shape our future engagement priorities but also enable us to pinpoint concerns that may require direct escalation to service providers.

We engaged with...



members of the public, patients and charity sector

We heard from...



people about their experiences of health and care

We reached...



people through our social media and newsletter

## We had the most feedback about...

Services



General Practice



Dentistry



Community Mental Health Team

Themes



Access to services

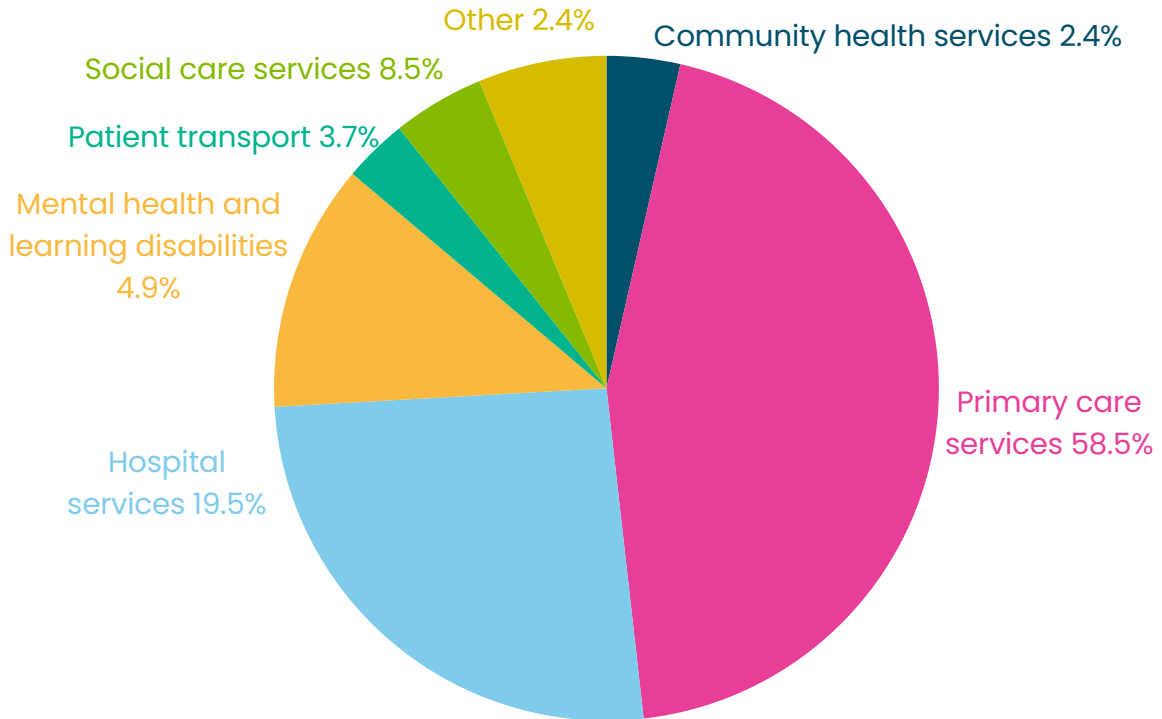


Caring, kindness, respect and dignity

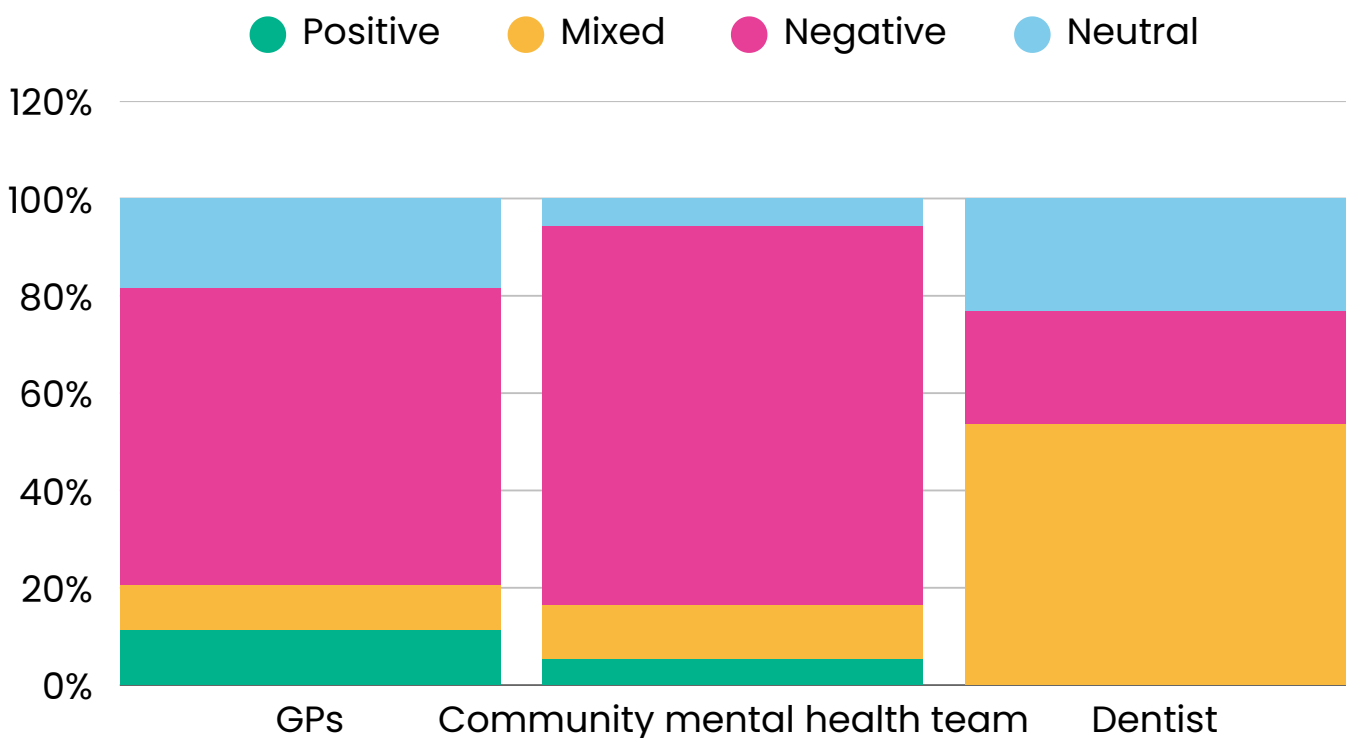


Quality of treatment

# Most common services you used

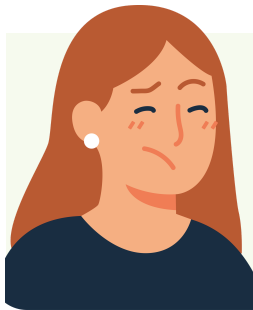
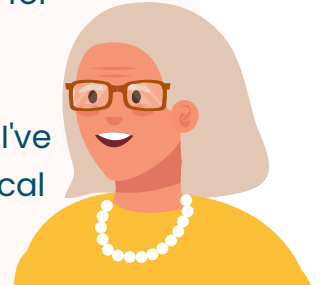


Patients gave us the most feedback about GP, community mental health teams and dentists, and this is how they feel (%)



# You told us...

As an adult my current GP has been incredible and supported my right to choose referral after being on a NHS pathway waiting list for 3 years only to be told it hadn't moved at all and was still 3 years (suggesting it was a lot longer than 3 years). She asked for the information that was needed and the process was very smooth. I've since sent an email to personally thank this GP (Southdene Medical Centre).



At my local hospital (University Hospital North Durham), many changes have been made to the parking arrangements that it has now become a joke.

A patient contacted the surgery via telephone as she felt unwell and was triaged and told she could have an appointment with a nurse practitioner. She explained what was the matter and that she had flu type symptoms and that her throat was swollen and she thought she could do with some antibiotics. The nurse would not prescribe her them and she left. The following day she said that she was getting worse so she rang 111 and they advised that she go to her local pharmacy (they did not examine her) and told her she needs to go to see her GP. The following day she had an appointment with her consultant who said straight away that she needs to see a GP, she had a planned endoscopy later on in the week and they said that if she was not feeling any better they would not be able to do the procedure. She again called her GP and said told them that she had been on the phone nearly all week and was having a procedure that needed to take place, she needed some antibiotics. She got an appointment with what she thought was a GP when she went in it was a nurse, to that she broke down in tears. The nurse was very sympathetic and gave her some antibiotics and in a couple of days she was feeling better and her procedure at the hospital went ahead



# You told us...

In January/February of 2026, I had an extremely painful wisdom tooth which had chipped in part. It was a Friday when it started to get very bad and by Sunday I was taking strong painkiller medication not prescribed to me, beyond the dose frequency that it was safe to take, just to try to get some sleep and get through my shifts at work. I couldn't afford to take the time off even if it was an option to have taken the time off work for this.

I waited for a callback from an (NHS 111) operator after filling in an online form. Although the callback option is great, I got a callback during a very busy work shift, having to take time out of their short break to take the call, only to be told "it's not recommended that I take a medication prescribed to someone else". I had explained I was doing this out of absolute desperation due to having no other options and to be able to get through work, as it was incredibly painful and I had barely slept because of the pain, asking could she please try to see if she could book me an appointment on that day(Sunday) or even the next working day, to which I was advised "well it's very hard to get an appointment on a Sunday". She did not say she would even try to check or that she had checked, I actually doubted that she had checked at all and told me to ring the private dentist I was forced to register at the next day instead.

It left me feeling helpless and left to suffer. I am very responsible generally and try hard to avoid using services, to free them up for those who really need them, and felt that the one time I really needed the support there was a complete lack of understanding, resources and that the system and operators gave the impression of being very out of touch with the reality of these situations and the circumstances it puts people in. It often leads to worse outcomes and a crisis escalating more, rather than being able to access care for free at the point of need.



# Word on the street...

We asked our volunteers to gather information they are hearing about health and social care services whilst they are out and about. Here are some of the experiences people have shared:

**Case study** - The ICB is currently conducting a "consultation" about their proposal to stop funding certain voluntary/charitable projects including Age UK... This would mean the end of the fortnightly bereavement support group which has provided me with an emotional lifeline since my husband died, and I am extremely upset at the prospect of losing it. This one is unique around here because it is social support facilitated by a skilled and experienced bereavement practitioner, who can understand the grief experiences being expressed in the group, and offer valuable additional insights which enable each individual both to gain support, and to contribute to the support of others. We could not do this for each other without the professional input because we are all so depleted emotionally by our loss.

The other invaluable and unusual feature of this support is that it is not time-limited. We do not have to live with the constant fear of the support ending before we feel able to manage without it. This is key, because profound grief does not just end after a set period of time. Sometimes, it gets more difficult over time.

I personally feel that without it, my mental health is likely to deteriorate and I might be pushed into needing a more expensive resource, not to mention the personal stress for me. I get no other bereavement help from anywhere and I am so angry that the ICB makes so light of it.

## Summary of themes:

- Struggle to access female GP's in surgeries
- Concerns about DNACPR (do not resuscitate) forms and how to update them
- Disjointed emergency care for ongoing pain
- Gaps in the system for booking British Sign Language interpreters when appointments are made
- Disabled facilities at University Hospital North Durham A&E department
- Lack of care, dignity and communication at University Hospital North Durham A&E department

# Our engagement activities this quarter were...

## In January

- All engagement staff participated in engagement across the region to support gathering the public's views around End of Life care and planning
- Senior Engagement Officer Lynsey attended the Shildon Veteran's to speak with veterans about their experiences of health and social care
- Senior Engagement Officer Julia spoke with people at Willington Open Methodist Church for some general engagement.

## In February

Senior Engagement Officer Julia attended:

- The Durham and District Prostate Cancer Group
- Take Pride LGBT Group
- Advice in County Durham roadshow event

Senior Engagement Officer Lynsey attended:

- D/deaf, deafened and hard of hearing - Working Group
- Veterans Centre VCEC
- Bullion Hall pop up
- Wear Together engagement event



## In March

Senior Engagement Officer Lynsey attended:

- The Social Prescribing Link Worker Women's Wellbeing Event
- SPA group engagement event in Brandon
- Shildon's Veterans Hub

Senior Engagement Officer Julia attended:

- Karbon Homes/Silver Talk engagement event
- Department for Work and Pensions presentation
- And started our first Carers Support Group at Hamsteels Community Centre





# We're Listening

Your voice matters and we want to hear it.

There are multiple ways you can share your thoughts with us:

- Call us at 0300 180 0025
- Email us at [info@healthwatchcountydurham.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchcountydurham.co.uk)

Whether it's a general experience or a specific enquiry, we're here to help.

If you'd like to leave feedback about a specific service (like your GP Practice, care home or hospital) the best place to do that is on our website:

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

# Stay up-to-date with our activities

Our monthly newsletter keeps you in the loop with where we've been and where we're heading next, plus the latest news on events, campaigns, and projects across County Durham.

It's the best way to stay up-to-date with our work, see how your feedback is making a difference and get involved in upcoming activities.

Read or sign up [here](#).



the latest edition of the Healthwatch County Durham newsletter sharing a range of support and wellbeing services available across the county, from cancer awareness and training, to autism support, employer support and free debt and money advice.



**healthwatch**  
County Durham

Unit 3 Crook Business Centre  
New Road  
Crook  
DL15 8QX

0300 180 0025

[info@healthwatchcountydurham.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchcountydurham.co.uk)

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

