

You Told Us

October 2025



You told us...

In October 2025, 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



Community mental health teams



District Nurses

Themes



Access

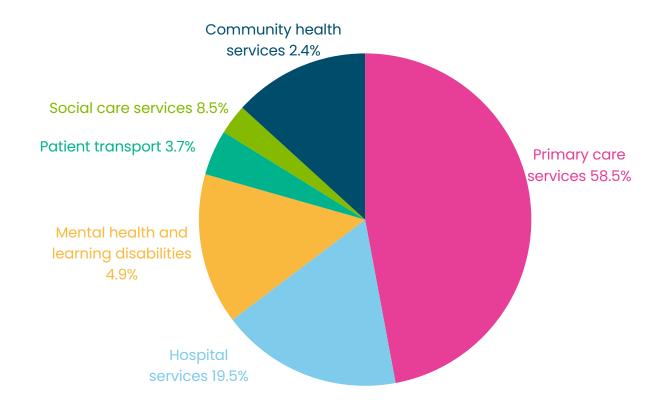


Quality of treatment

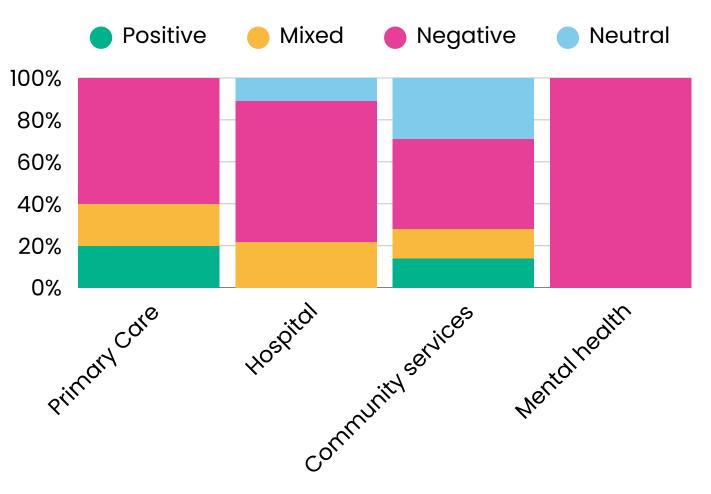


Caring, kindness respect and dignity

Most common services you used:



Patients gave us the most feedback about Primary care, hospital services, community health services and mental health and learning disabilities, and this is how they feel (%)



You told us...

I have been on co-codamol for a number of years due to 3 chronic conditions that cause me pain and discomfort. However these become less effective over time.

Six months ago my medication was changed to Tramadol and in less than two months was reduced. I went from being prescribed 256 tablets per month to 28. Three changes in two months. Each time I pick up my prescription the number of tablets have been reduced.

There has been no communication or consultation with my GP about the changes to my medication and I find it hard to obtain an appointment with the in-house Clinic Pharmacist within the GP surgery.

When I did get an appointment with the in-house pharmacist, however I found them condescending and unhelpful. They informed me that the medication cannot be put on repeat prescription due to the nature of the medication and that I have to call to put a new script before I run out each time, they have also not increased my medication to the initial dosage which means I have to submit a prescription every two weeks.

I understand the consequences and side effects of taking long term medications and I manage risk by only taking the medications when I am in severe pain, if the symptoms are well managed and under control I feel confident to adjust the dosage according or use alternative over the counter medications such as paracetamol and ibuprofen. I am acutely aware that my condition and symptoms may fluctuate, and do not wish to take high strength pain killers long term.

I am currently unable to work due to my symptoms and would like my medications sorted so I can manage my symptoms and return to work.

We have a brilliant GP practice, we are so lucky.

Doctors and nurses still come out and shout your name, just these little things make a difference. Our Doctors have been at the surgery a long time. and we have lovely friendly reception staff.

Nursing staff, also caring and all staff are so highly skilled at their jobs. The only thing I'd like is the on line appointments where you can fully explain your issues are open 6am until 10 am. I think 7am to 11am better. Just a small adjustment.

You told us...

I was called in to a lung scan during a campaign in my county. Severe arteriosclerosis was observed and reported to my GP. Less than two years previously, Sunderland Royal Hospital had reported that my heart health was good and that the echocardiogram did not indicate any arteriosclerosis, so this scan finding was a shock, made far worse by the fact that my GP practice asked a young pharmacist to ring me and tell me the news(!) She could not answer any of my questions but told me that the brittle calcium deposits could break off, travel to my heart or brain causing heart attack or stroke. I was about to leave on holiday and obviously became very anxious. I complained to a GP who said flippantly that perhaps the pharmacist knew as much about cardiology as any of the GPs. I asked her to pass on my complaint but heard nothing afterwards. I then sent an eConsult about my concerns and was given an appointment with a student GP who had no idea why I was there, as she wasn't informed about the eConsult. To her credit, she took it seriously and arranged a referral to a cardiologist for when I returned from holiday. My total cholesterol at that time was 6.7 which my GP practice had said was 'fine' when I rang for my results, but the cardiologist told me that 6.7 was high, so not 'fine' at all. I have previously had problems with two GPs who were certain that a gluten-free person could be tested for coeliacs, so I do wonder if they actually read/understand blood test results and notes about the results. I object to the way my GP practice assigns tasks to pharmacists and other staff when perhaps the GPs themselves ought to carry them out. They also completely ignore the fact that previous GPs and rheumatologists have suggested a diagnosis of fibromyalgia and they don't seem to believe that the condition exists, so brush it aside when I mention it. Fibromyalgia does exist, is accepted as a neurological disorder and can even elicit the cardiac/chest symptoms I have experienced. I therefore declined the cardiologist's offer of a coronary angiogram because the whole patient is never looked at when an ongoing condition is ignored and the brevity of GP appointments excludes meaningful dialogue.

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:

Shortage of training places for Doctors

There are concerns about lack of training places for trainee doctors. This has been reported in the press and I know trainee doctors who are very worried about not being able to get jobs as a result. I also have a friend, a consultant, who is moving to New Zealand and she is concerned that more doctors might feel compelled to look abroad for jobs.

Concerns about vapes

I have been concerned about vapes ever since the NHS started recommending them, because I think the current issues about people, including children, who have never smoked, taking up vaping were predictable. I think it was naïve of NHS advisors and managers not to make them prescription-only for people on smoking cessation programmes. We now have tobacco companies, renowned for decades for their unscrupulous and aggressive marketing and lobbying, now using all their well tested strategies to persuade adults and children to take up vaping with its nicotine addiction. I don't know how effective the legislation going through Parliament will be but there's an element of shutting the stable door too late I think.

A work colleague who works in pregnancy research was dismayed recently after attending a clinical webinar because of the mixed messages among health professionals about the safety of vapes. The presentation indicated both that vapes were useful for assisting smoking cessation and that it was not known if they were safe or not; that they should only be used as part of a smoking cessation programme but that also they were safe. The colleague was very concerned that there is this level of mixed messaging among health professionals on this key health issue.



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

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

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.



News update - November 2025



onth, we shine a light on the experiences that matter most to our commupporting families through miscarriage, to recognising unpaid carers, ng medication changes and celebrating men's health and wellbeing, the ning here for everyone.

er the latest reports, events and opportunities to get involved – and hav leard in shaping local health and care services.

healthwatch County Durham

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