

# Healthwatch Quarterly Impact & Activity Report

**Quarter 1: April to June 2025**

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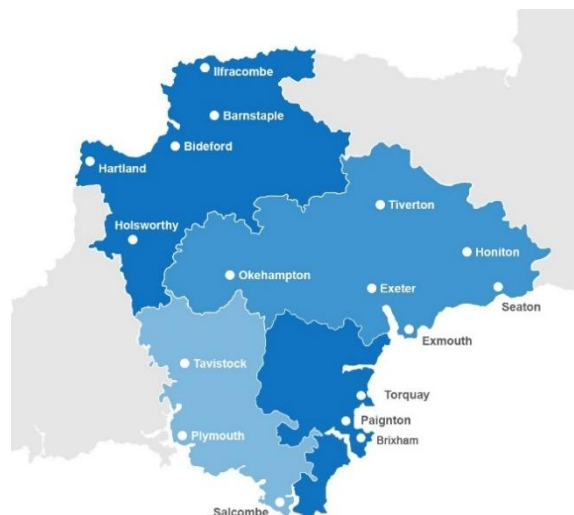
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## About Us

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



**Over 21 thousand** people visited our feedback and information website – [www.hwdpt.org](http://www.hwdpt.org)



We have escalated or referred **110** of your complaints or concerns to the relevant organisations



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



We've helped **290** of you share your feedback or look for advice through our contact centre



We've released our **2024-25 Annual Report**, available to read online by [clicking here](#)



Nearly **1,800** people read our reports online via:



[www.hwdpt.org/news-and-reports](http://www.hwdpt.org/news-and-reports)



# Our News in Brief

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

## We release our latest impactful Annual Report

This quarter we released our 2024–25 Annual Report, highlighting a year of impactful community engagement, meaningful partnerships, and people-driven improvements to local health and care services.

With a mission to amplify public voices and ensure care reflects the lived experiences of local residents, we supported **5,764** individuals this year and gathered feedback from over **1,500** people, making real changes in the process.

The new report highlights how we published 11 key reports in 2024–25, addressing topics from pharmacy closures to the challenges faced by unpaid carers. **Key outcomes and impact detailed in the report include:**

- Our Unpaid Carers Report, based on the experiences of 240 carers, led to new dementia training locally and informed a national Parliamentary Inquiry into Adult Social Care Reform.
- Co-designing a new and improved complaints process with University Hospitals Plymouth based on real patient experiences—now a model for other NHS Trusts.
- We worked closely with NHS Devon on the 10-Year Health Plan, gathering 3,500 pieces of feedback through surveys, workshops, and community events. This feedback is now shaping the Government's health priorities both locally and nationally.
- Public Health Devon used Healthwatch-run focus group feedback to develop a health needs assessment that looks at the social, emotional and mental wellbeing needs of adults with autism or ADHD.
- In Plymouth, patient feedback led to improved safety measures at the new Royal Eye Infirmary, including the installation of a pedestrian crossing.
- Meanwhile in Torbay, we collaborated on a Cardiovascular Disease prevention project that delivered free blood pressure checks to the public—helping identify early-stage risks and reduce pressure on GPs.

The work of 22 dedicated volunteers underpinned our outreach and research. From gathering community stories to promoting digital health access, volunteers played a critical role in making care more responsive and inclusive. Junior Healthwatch Reporters also engaged children and young people in conversations about the NHS's future.



**Our Chair Dr Kevin Dixon**

*"We're proud to have delivered tangible improvements this year by putting your voices front and centre. From shaping national strategy to making local services safer and more inclusive, we remain committed to championing community voices every step of the way."*

*Our new Annual Report emphasises the power of co-design, collaborative working, and evidence-led advocacy to improve care. It shows the hard work and dedication of the Healthwatch volunteers and staff and why listening to patients is so important.*

*I want to thank everyone who has supported Healthwatch in our ultimate goal to improve health and care for us all."*

**Impact :** There are more outcomes and impact -including case studies and stakeholder quotes - in our Annual Report, available online [by clicking here](#).





## Review on Patient Safety Published with Healthwatch set to Disband

The latest Review of Patient Safety Across the Health and Care Landscape, commissioned by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and run by Dr Penny Dash, has been published.

The report, which examined six key organisations involved in promoting and safeguarding patient safety – including Healthwatch England and Local Healthwatch – calls for a more strategic, streamlined and accountable approach to delivering safe and high-quality care across the NHS and social care sectors.

The review highlights the increasing complexity of the current safety landscape and makes strong recommendations to reduce duplication, prioritise user experience, and put patients and service users at the centre of decision-making.

Of particular note is the proposal to essentially disband and restructure local Healthwatch as it currently exists and merge its functions within integrated care boards (ICBs) and Local Authorities – a move intended to better coordinate patient and community voices in healthcare service planning and design.

### Recommendations include :

- Creating a stronger National Quality Board to lead a strategic, evidence-based approach.
- Disbanding Healthwatch in its current form, with its core feedback gathering and user engagement functions redistributed across ICBs, local authorities, and a new Directorate for Patient Experience within DHSC.
- Moving the Patient Safety Commissioner's functions to more appropriate bodies (e.g. MHRA).
- Streamlining investigations and embedding responsibility for safety within providers and commissioners.
- Enhancing the role of data, AI, and governance in driving improvement.

The Government has accepted all recommendations and will pass legislation to enable it 'when time allows'. The Full Report can be read [by clicking here](#).

## What This Means for Healthwatch in Devon, Plymouth and Torbay

For us, this review underscores the critical importance of listening to and amplifying the voices of local people. While we welcome the opportunity for greater integration with local NHS and care systems, we remain committed to ensuring that any changes strengthen – rather than dilute – our independence and effectiveness.

We will be actively engaging with partners across Devon, Plymouth and Torbay to ensure that the proposed reforms deliver on their promise to put people at the heart of health and care services.

As Healthwatch – as it currently exists – is being disbanded, with its key functions integrated into other organisations, we will also seek clarity on how any restructuring will affect our operations, funding, and accountability. This includes our staff, volunteers, and trustees.

While these changes will happen over time, the law has not yet been changed. Until legislation is passed, the DHSC will advise local authorities to continue commissioning local Healthwatch services.

We will therefore continue to champion the needs and concerns of our diverse local communities and ensure the voices of people in Devon, Plymouth and Torbay are heard where health and care decisions are made.

**We will keep you updated as more details become available. In the meantime, thank you for the messages of support we've received from people across the NHS, local councils, voluntary organisations, and the public.**

# 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

**ADHD Diagnosis Report** – highlights the profound impact ADHD has on adults' lives, affecting work, wellbeing, and daily tasks. Diagnosis is often life-changing, but long NHS wait times are pushing many to seek private care, creating inequality. Hidden referral delays and lack of interim support are common, and many hesitate to seek help or disclose ADHD at work. Recommendations include moving assessments to community care, updating NICE guidelines, improving support during wait times, collecting better data, and enhancing workplace support through awareness and adjustments. [Click here to download the Healthwatch report in full](#)

**People's experiences of using opticians** – this report reveals that extra costs at opticians deter low-income individuals from accessing eye care. Of 2,568 people surveyed, 14% had avoided care due to cost, and those offered paid add-ons were twice as likely to skip care. Financially struggling individuals were far more likely to avoid opticians. Despite 84% being eligible for free tests, fear of unexpected costs remains a barrier. Recommendations include reviewing NHS eye care support for low-income groups, launching targeted communications, and providing clear guidelines for opticians to support patients without discouraging them from seeking care. [Click here to download the Healthwatch report in full](#)

**Deal reached to provide extra funding for pharmacies** – The Department of Health and Social Care has agreed to provide an extra £617 million over two years for pharmacy services, bringing total NHS pharmacy funding in England to £3.073 billion for 2025–26. Key areas include continued support for the Pharmacy First programme, free emergency contraception at all NHS pharmacies, and greater flexibility for pharmacies to adjust their opening hours. Healthwatch England welcomes the investment, noting its potential to improve access to care and ease pressure on GP services. [Their research](#) has shown how the public have been affected by temporary and full-time closures of pharmacies.

## Impact : Protections on NHS letter delivery agreed

Healthwatch England, in collaboration with Royal Mail, the NHS, and patient groups, has sent an open letter to Ofcom urging improved postal protections for NHS patients. Key measures include a new NHS-specific Royal Mail barcode to ensure timely delivery—even during disruptions—and a briefing to help NHS organisations better use Royal Mail services for delivering patient letters efficiently. **To read the open letter, [please click here](#).**





# Our Engagement Activity

## Some of the ways we have engaged with our communities this quarter

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

Selected events where we have been raising awareness of Healthwatch, gathering feedback and taking the opportunity to discuss & share issues or experiences include:

### healthwatch Devon

- North Devon and Exeter Hospitals
- Drop-in sessions at Buckfastleigh Foodbank, Newton Abbot library and Buckfastleigh Memory Café.
- Barnstaple Lifestyle & Wellbeing Fair
- Exeter PRIDE festival.

### healthwatch Plymouth

- Derriford Hospital Drop-in
- St Budeaux & Barne Barton Library
- Care Home Lay Visiting
- Other outreach events.

### healthwatch Torbay

- Torbay Hospital Drop-Ins.
- Paignton Community Hub & Paignton Library.
- Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm (AAA) event
- NHS Business Services Authority event.

**Coming up next quarter :** we are planning to attend many more outreach locations in Devon, Plymouth & Torbay, keeping you updated via our eBulletin and local website: [www.hwdpt.org](http://www.hwdpt.org)



## "Something Someone Told Me" Care Home Lay Visiting Project

Here at Healthwatch we engage with the local community effectively and give the residents of Devon, Plymouth and Torbay a stronger voice to influence and challenge how health and social care services are provided for them.

Healthwatch Plymouth is collaborating with Plymouth City Council's Social Care Quality Assurance & Improvement Team on a project called "Something Someone Told Me". This initiative aims to reintroduce a care home visiting program, which was paused during the COVID-19 pandemic, to gather feedback from residents.

The program, based on the 'My Home Life' model, uses volunteer lay representatives to talk with residents, their relatives, and care home staff. The feedback collected is focused on five key themes: maintaining identity, creating community, shared decision-making, improving health, and promoting a positive culture. The goal is to provide a comprehensive look at the experiences within local care homes.

So far there have been four lay representative care home reports produced, all available to read on our Healthwatch website via [www.hwdpt.org/news-and-reports](http://www.hwdpt.org/news-and-reports).



# Healthwatch Feedback

## Where we gathered your experiences from in the past three months

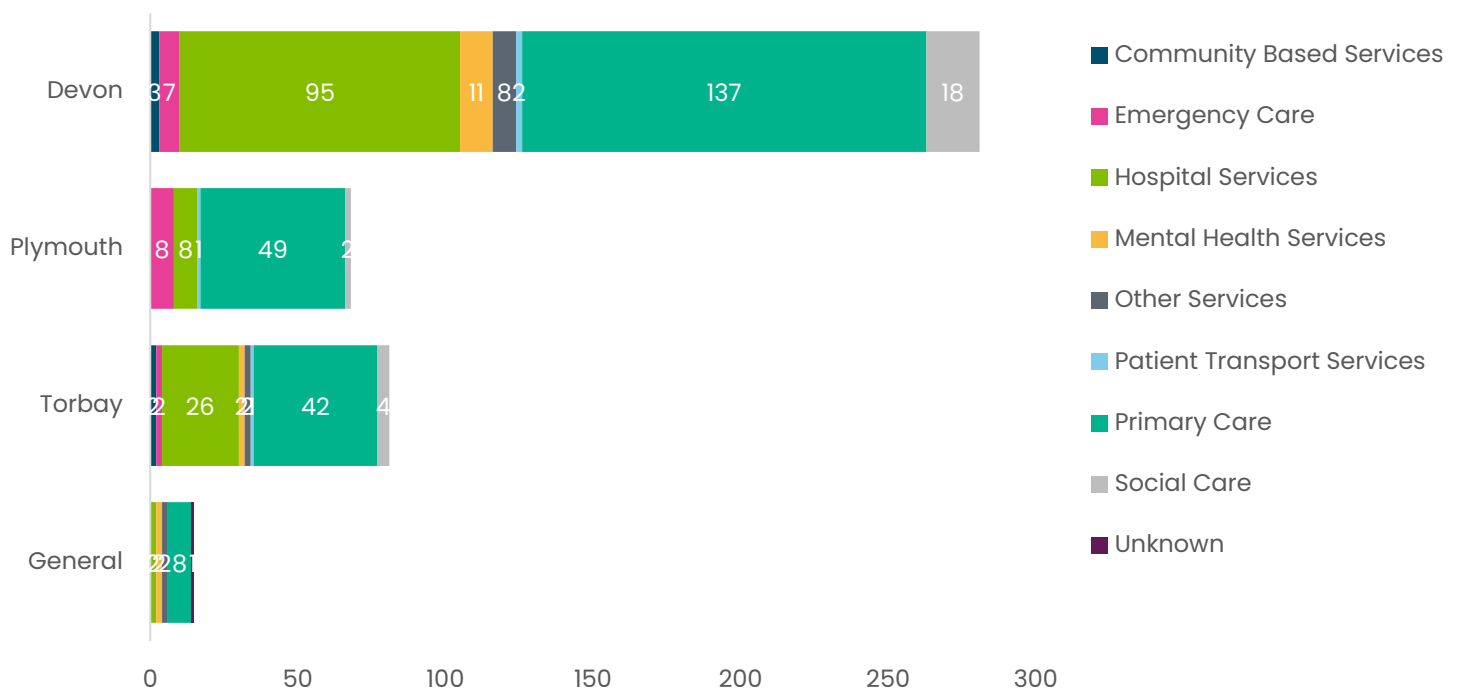
### Number of experiences shared with Healthwatch in Devon, Plymouth and Torbay

445 people contacted Healthwatch to share their experiences of health and social care services in Devon, Plymouth and Torbay. 281 were about services in Devon, 68 about Plymouth services and 81 about Torbay services. 15 experiences were either for all of Devon, Plymouth or Torbay, or their location was unknown.

41 of these experiences were shared with us at HWDPT through our online Have Your Say form, 290 were handled by our contact centre and 114 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 – April – June 2025



Of these shared experiences gathered across Devon, Plymouth and Torbay, the most commonly discussed theme was **Primary Care Services**.

### Feedback about Primary Care Services

236 experiences (53% of overall feedback) were about primary care services, of those:

- 127 experiences related to GP Services
- 86 experiences related to Dental Services
- 16 experiences related to Pharmacy Services and
- 6 experiences related to Out of Hours Services
- 1 experience related to Opticians Services.



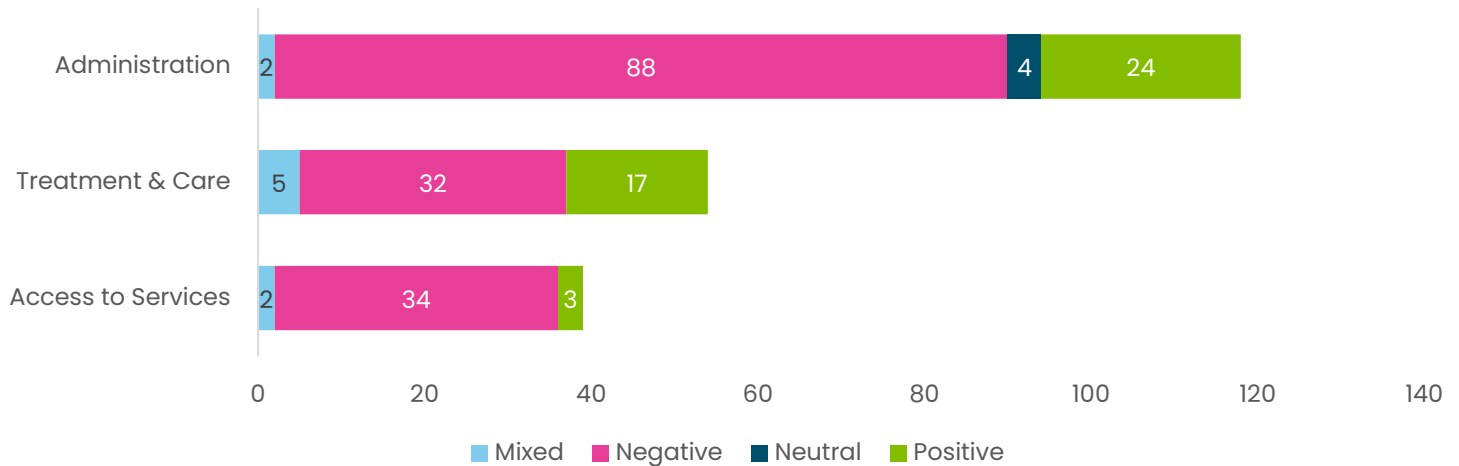


## Feedback about Primary Care Services (continued)

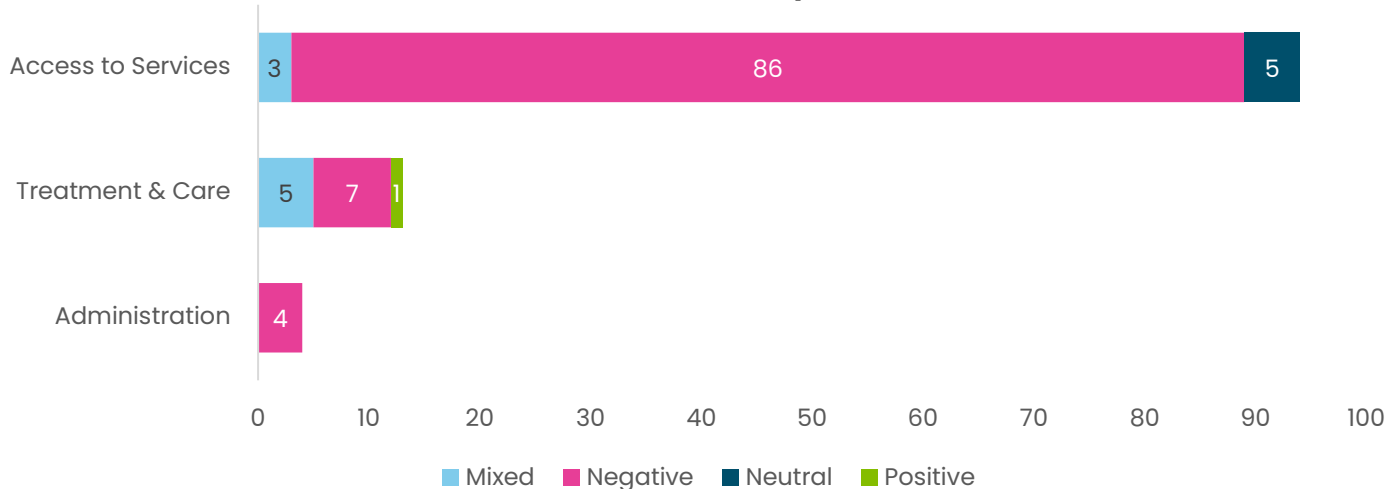
The most common themes in relation to Primary Care Services were **Access to Services**, **Administration** and **Treatment & Care**.

The charts below show how the public felt about the Primary Care Services they told us about across Devon, Plymouth and Torbay, separated by the type of service, over the past three months:

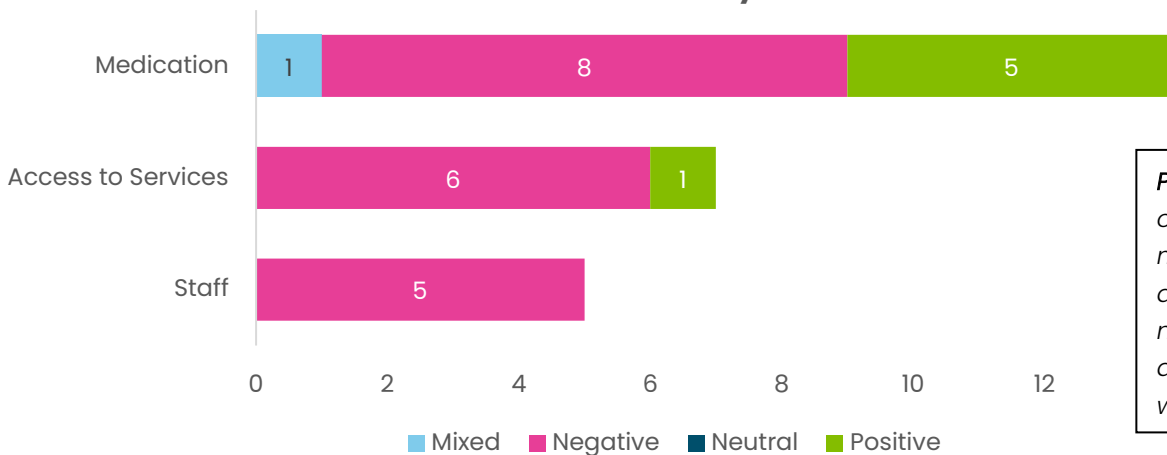
### GP Practice



### Dentist (non-hospital)



### Pharmacy



**PLEASE NOTE:** Each piece of feedback may have multiple themes, hence any disparity between number of experiences and number of themes within the charts.



## Feedback about Hospital Services

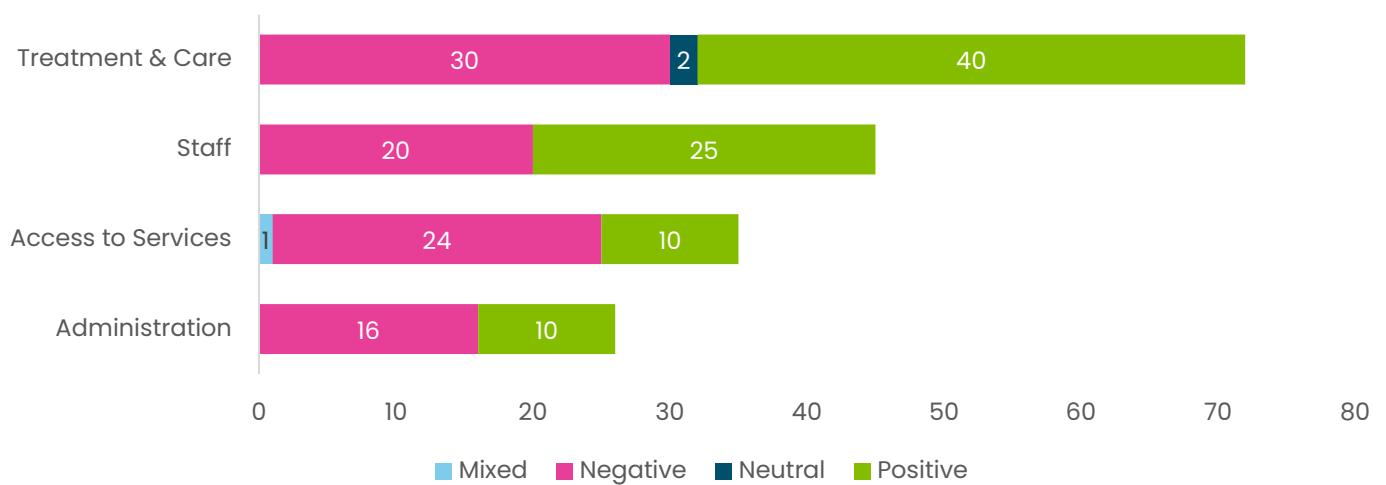
131 experiences (29.4% of overall feedback) were about hospital services. Of those:

- 95 experiences related to hospital services in Devon
- 8 experiences related to hospital services in Plymouth
- 26 experiences related to hospital services in Torbay
- 2 experiences related to hospital services whose location was unknown.

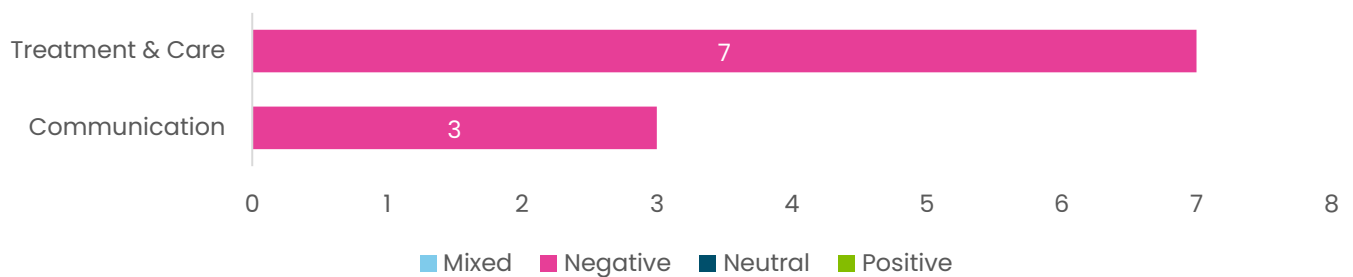
The most common themes overall in relation to Hospital Services were **Treatment & Care**, **Staff**, **Access to Services**, and **Administration**.

The charts below shows how the public felt about the Hospital Services across Devon, Plymouth and Torbay, separated by the type the theme and sentiment, over the past three months:

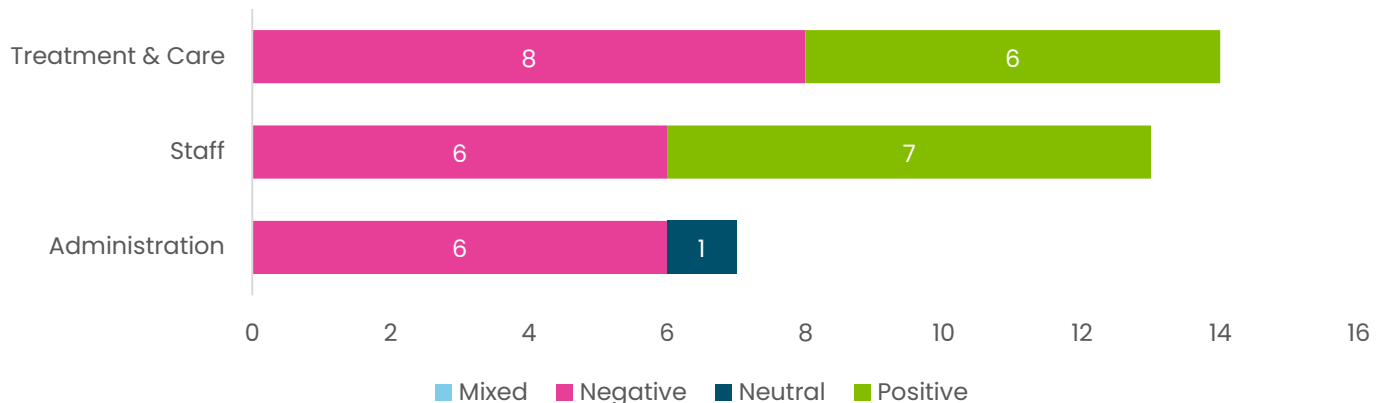
### Hospital Services in Devon



### Hospital Services in Plymouth



### Hospital Services in Torbay





# Healthwatch Case Studies

## Your experiences of local health and social care in your words

This page shows a case study this quarter from each of Devon, Plymouth and Torbay, related to the feedback analysis on the previous pages. **PLEASE NOTE:** All client's names and photographs have been replaced to protect their identities.

### Addressing Disruption to Audiology Services

*Phil from Devon contacted us to report serious disruption to audiology services following a change in providers. The individual described the new system as "incoherent and distressing," with patients left uncertain about where to access maintenance and supplies for hearing aids. Key issues included a lack of communication about the service change and where to go for support, extremely long waiting times for face-to-face reviews (up to two years), and difficulty accessing basic supplies like batteries, especially for those living outside Exeter.*

**What we did** – We escalated these concerns to NHS Devon, and the client was subsequently able to speak with someone regarding getting batteries for their hearing aid.



### Providing Information to a Cancer Patient

*Jerome is a cancer patient in Plymouth who experienced repeated difficulties contacting their GP Practice for an appointment. The patient's calls were cut off on two occasions, and they felt dismissed by reception staff. This was not the first time they had encountered such issues. Frustrated by the lack of access and poor communication, the patient decided to switch GP surgeries.*

**What we did** – We provided information on how to change GP practices and how to make a formal complaint if they wished to do so. The patient successfully changed to a different GP practice.

### Improving Patient Communication and Care

*A family member in Torbay contacted us about their relative's hospital stay. The patient had significant health and mobility challenges and experienced multiple issues. These included a GP surgery initially dismissing symptoms, poor staff attitudes and communication at two local hospitals. Whilst in hospital they reported a nurse shouting at the patient, inadequate clinical care, limited access to physiotherapy, inappropriate dietary provisions, and safety concerns due to an inability to use the call button.*

**What we did** – We escalated the family's concerns to the PALS team, who contacted them to help resolve their issues.



**Impact :** We regularly share all of your stories and our intelligence with key stakeholders, including health & social care providers & commissioners, the Devon Integrated Care Partnership Board, our local authorities, Local Care Partnerships and the voluntary sector. We also share our data with the Care Quality Commission and Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.



# What we did with your views

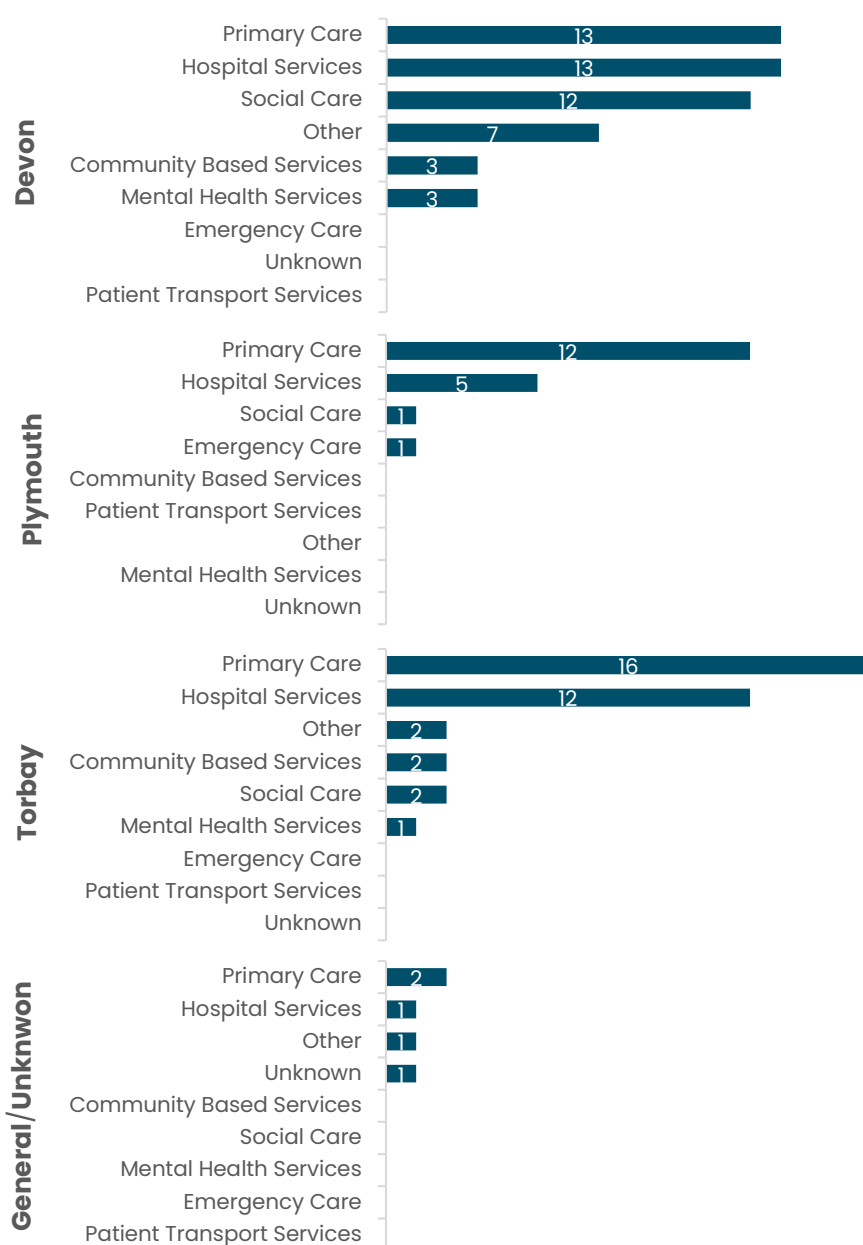
## Where we escalated your concerns and complaints

### Impact : Escalations and Referrals

All public feedback we receive is logged in our secure system for further analysis. This includes working with other local organisations to gather feedback such as Citizen's Advice, Community Trusts and Community Hubs. Some are serious concerns or complaints that need to be escalated further for immediate action. This quarter there have been **110** such cases. Of these:

- 31 were provided with advice and information by the contact centre,
- 14 were referred to a Healthwatch Champion,
- 13 were signposted/referred to PALS,
- 16 were signposted/referred to an advocacy service,
- 15 were signposted other services (community support, information services)
- 21 were signposted/ escalated to the provider.

#### Breakdown of the service level in each locality where commentator required advice, information or signposting to another service



**PLEASE NOTE:** 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, Devon Advocacy Consortium, 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 110 cases originated in Devon, Plymouth and Torbay and which type of service they referred to.

## How your views help shape ongoing work in the local community



We regularly share your feedback with decision-makers via meetings such as each of the Devon, Plymouth and Torbay Health & Wellbeing Boards (H&WBB), Health & Adult Social Care Overview & Scrutiny Boards (H&SC OSC), Safeguarding Adults Partnerships, Local Care Partnerships, Devon Integrated Care Partnership Board (ICB), Devon Learning Disability Partnership Board, plus local healthcare Trusts and Public Health meetings. In addition, this quarter we have provided upon request specific feedback and intelligence for the following organisations, groups or decision-making Boards:

- **Care Quality Commission (CQC)** – we received two separate requests for patient feedback on Surgery at Derriford Hospital and Exeter Nightingale Hospital. We provided CQC with multiple service user stories related to these requests.
- **Torbay Council** – we received a request for input and patient feedback into Torbay Council's new autism strategy. Our intelligence team fed back in session the data we had on autism and health services in Torbay.
- **Torbay Adult Social Care** – we received a request for any data on people with unmet needs due to protected characteristics that can be submitted with their CQC submission. We provided them with multiple service user stories and feedback related to this request.

### Our Requests for Information

An RFI (request for information) is a formal process for gathering information from providers of a service such as health care trusts or commissioners. Based on patient feedback, this quarter we made 2 requests for information related to our priorities to support our work – one was Devon-wide, and one was for Plymouth – these are detailed in brief below:

- **Pharmacy Services:** We requested information about a definitive list for Devon Pharmacies around what each pharmacy offers in terms of services aside from prescriptions such as vaccinations, what elements of community pharmacy, consultations, blood pressure monitoring etc. We wanted to use it to help our contact centre operators to ensure the correct information is passed on to the enquirer.

**Impact :** Devon LPC responded to tell us there is no one master list of the pharmacies in Devon and the services that they are signed up to, but all community pharmacies have to keep an updated profile on the nhs.uk website. They suggested that this is the best place to signpost people to if they want to check which pharmacies provide which services.

- **GP Practices/PCNs in Plymouth** – Following Healthwatch Plymouth's work with the Gifted Women Charity for women who are rebuilding their lives after substance misuse, homelessness and contact with the criminal justice system, the subsequent report identified 4 key recommendations. We have contacted GP Practices and Primary Care Networks in Plymouth to help us understand the awareness of work being undertaken around Trauma training and recognition of patients at risk of addiction.

**Impact :** We are yet to receive a response to this request but will update this section in the next quarterly impact and activities report.



# Our Current Priorities

## How your feedback shapes our local priorities in the community

All your feedback is used to inform us on the specific priorities we should be focussing on when working with local health and social care organisations. Currently our key priorities are:

1. Using technology to help people access services at home.
2. Helping people access social care services and care homes.
3. Improving and joining up services for children and young people.
4. Making sure all patients can access health services equally.
5. Helping people access mental health services for conditions like depression.
6. Helping people access GP, hospital and mental health services. GP means family doctor.
7. How cost of living affects people's health and wellbeing.

## Coming Up Next Quarter

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

### healthwatch Devon

- North Devon and Exeter Hospitals.
- Drop-in sessions at various outreach locations such as Buckfastleigh Foodbank, Newton Abbot library and Buckfastleigh & Tavistock Memory Cafés.
- Honiton, Ottery St Mary, Newton Abbot, Dawlish and Teignmouth Community Hospitals.

### healthwatch Plymouth

- Derriford Hospital Drop-ins.
- Engaging with patients at the Royal Eye Infirmary.
- Care Home Lay Visiting across the whole of Plymouth.
- Other outreach events across Plymouth and Ivybridge, including the Memory Matters Dementia Café Open Day.

### healthwatch Torbay

- Torbay Hospital Drop-Ins.
- Drop-in sessions at Paignton Community Hub.
- Vaccination Uptake survey and subsequent engagement report.
- Engaging with people on their experiences Living with MS.

## Other Healthwatch Reports or Campaigns Coming Soon

- Healthwatch England will be releasing new reports next quarter on the healthcare experiences of trans people and people's experiences with pharmacy services.
- In Devon and Torbay we will be launching a report into the experiences of people living with MS, people's views on vaccination uptake and a report into Reasonable Adjustments.
- In Plymouth we will be continuing our Care Home Lay Visiting Project. Watch out for more information on our website – [www.hwdpt.org](http://www.hwdpt.org).



## Impact : What we do with this report

We publicise this report on our website, email bulletin and various social media channels. We share it with key stakeholders, including health and social care providers & commissioners, the NHS Devon Integrated Care Partnership Board, our local authorities, Local Care Partnerships and the voluntary, community or social enterprise sector. We also share this report with the Care Quality Commission and Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level. For more information, please contact us using our contact details on the right.

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**healthwatch**  
in Devon, Plymouth and Torbay

## Our vision

A place 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.