

Healthwatch Quarterly Impact & Activity Report

Quarter 1: July to September 2025

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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 **50,000** times with **2,500** of you seeing our Email Bulletins



Over **10 thousand** people visited our feedback and information website – www.hwdpt.org



We have escalated or referred **126** of your complaints or concerns to the relevant organisations



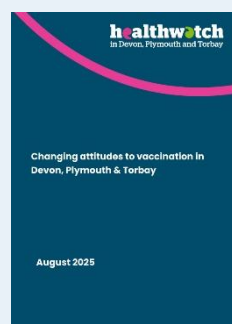
465 of you have shared your health or care feedback with us this quarter



We've helped **298** of you share your feedback or look for advice through our contact centre



We've released our new report on the **Key Factors Behind Vaccination Uptake**, available to read online by [clicking here](#)



Over **2000** people read our news & reports online via:

www.hwdpt.org/news-and-reports





Our News in Brief

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

Our New Report Highlights Key Factors Behind Declining Vaccination Uptake

We published a new report on the changing attitudes to vaccination in Devon, Plymouth & Torbay. The findings confirm a concerning trend of declining uptake among at-risk groups across the area, raising important public health questions.

The report, based on a combination of face-to-face and online surveys, was produced by Healthwatch to understand why widespread access to vaccination services is not translating into higher uptake, particularly among those most vulnerable.

Key Findings

The investigation highlights several consistent themes contributing to vaccine hesitancy and refusal:

- **Vaccine Fatigue:** A clear expression of weariness among the public regarding repeated vaccination programmes was a prominent factor in declining uptake.
- **Concerns about Side Effects:** Many respondents cited worries about potential side effects as a primary reason for refusal.
- **Mistrust of Programmes:** The report notes expressed mistrust of the vaccination programmes themselves among a segment of the population.

However, the findings also provided important positive feedback, noting high levels of procedure satisfaction and widespread praise for the healthcare staff delivering the vaccinations, indicating that issues lie primarily with public perception of the programmes rather than the service delivery experience.

The full report, including detailed observations and Healthwatch's recommendations for system partners, has been shared with NHS Devon to help inform future public health campaigns and service planning.

NHS Devon has provided a response to the report, acknowledging the findings and committing to use the insights on vaccine hesitancy to refine their future communication strategies. They confirmed that it will be integrating the report's key themes—such as addressing vaccine fatigue and concerns over side effects—into its planning for upcoming vaccination seasons.

Furthermore, NHS Devon continues to actively encourage uptake through various channels, including advice via GPs, vaccination centres, community pharmacies, and local outreach pop-up clinics. Visit <http://www.nhs.uk/flu vaccine> for more.



Our Chair Dr Kevin Dixon

"Our role as Healthwatch is to ensure that the voices and experiences of local people are heard by those who plan and deliver care. This report clearly demonstrates that the reasons for declining vaccine uptake are complex and multi-faceted, going beyond simple availability.

"We heard expressions of understandable vaccine fatigue, concerns over side effects, and, in some cases, mistrust. For vaccination programmes to be successful, health services must listen to these insights and tailor their communications and approach to address these genuine user concerns directly and transparently. We are presenting our recommendations to NHS Devon to ensure these findings lead to positive changes for the community."

Impact : [Click here](#) to read the complete report, our recommendations and NHS Devon's full response

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

New Trans & Non-Binary Report – A Healthwatch England survey of 1,393 trans and non-binary adults found that only 53% rated their GP practice as good for general care, compared to 74% in the national average. Of respondents, 40% had formally changed their gender marker on NHS records. Among these, 28% lost access to previous records, 18% were misgendered in communications, 16% experienced disrupted prescriptions, and 13% faced disruption to ongoing care. Additionally, 21% said the NHS stopped providing sex-based care such as cervical screening after their record change. [CLICK HERE for full findings on the Healthwatch website.](#)

Healthwatch Launch Campaign to Protect Independent Public Voice – The Local Healthwatch Network has announced the launch of a new campaign to advocate for the preservation of an independent public voice in health and care – which includes the launch of a national Government petition to review their decision to abolish local independent services that speak up for the public. Healthwatch in Devon, Plymouth & Torbay have joined this campaign, and we remain committed to championing the needs of our diverse communities to ensure local voices are heard in health and care decisions. [Click here to find out more](#)

Men would come forward for prostate cancer screening – New research from Healthwatch England reveals strong public support for a national prostate cancer screening programme, suggesting the NHS would be “pushing at an open door” if one were introduced. Overall, 79% of men said they would attend a screening appointment, rising to 81% among Black men, who face double the risk of prostate cancer. Healthwatch is urging policymakers to consider men's views alongside clinical and economic evidence when deciding on future screening plans. They also call for clear national guidance for GPs and the public on PSA testing rights for asymptomatic men aged 50+, to reduce confusion and distress. [More details are available by clicking here.](#)

Impact : Breaking down NHS waiting lists to tackle inequalities

Healthwatch England, using feedback from people across the country – including Devon, Plymouth, and Torbay – successfully campaigned for NHS England to publish demographic breakdowns of waiting list data to tackle health inequalities. Their research showed that women, ethnic minorities, disabled people, and those in deprived areas often faced longer waits and poorer experiences. As a result, NHS England began publishing data by age, sex, ethnicity, and deprivation for the first time over the summer. Healthwatch now continues to campaign for further expansion to include disability and caring responsibilities.

[More details are available on the Healthwatch website by clicking 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, Dawlish, Ottery St Mary and Exeter Hospitals
- Tavistock Memory Café
- Libraries in Princetown, Holsworthy, Okehampton, Newton Abbot & Tavistock
- North Tawton Community Wellbeing Information Fayre
- Exeter Cancer/SMI Workshops with Health Innovations South West

healthwatch Plymouth

- Derriford Hospital Drop-in
- Plymouth Royal Eye Infirmary
- Care Home Lay Visiting
- Foulston Park Wellbeing Hub in Devonport

healthwatch Torbay

- Torbay Hospital Drop-Ins.
- Paignton Community Hub & Paignton Library.
- Baton of Hope Suicide Awareness Event
- Torbay Citizens Assembly Health 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



Citizens Assembly: Health Focus

In September Healthwatch Torbay hosted the Torbay Citizens Assembly Open Meeting. It successfully brought together residents and health leaders at Paignton Library to focus on local health and wellbeing. The aim was to gain a deeper understanding of Assembly Members' approach to keeping themselves healthy now and in the future.

Five speakers, including our Chair Dr Kevin Dixon and Public Health Consultants, presented on strategic shifts such as moving care into communities, the South Devon Healthy Ageing Partnership, and leveraging digital tools like the NHS App. The presentations underscored the urgent challenges facing coastal areas, advocating for prevention and resilience.

Two workshops gathered valuable feedback. Workshop 1 identified four core areas for wellbeing: Physical Activity (e.g., walking, swimming, gardening), Social Connections (volunteering, classes), Mental Agility, and Creativity.

Workshop 2 provided detailed suggestions for providers across key themes. These included making face-to-face GP consultations a priority, standardising access across surgeries, improving public transport links (specifically direct buses to Exeter Hospital), and delivering clearer, non-vague communication. The suggestions highlighted the need for integrated hospital and GP systems and a desire for feedback on how member views influence decisions.

The event successfully captured practical, actionable feedback for decision-makers. A video recording of the day is available here: [Video of the Torbay Citizens Assembly Open Meeting.](#)



Healthwatch Feedback

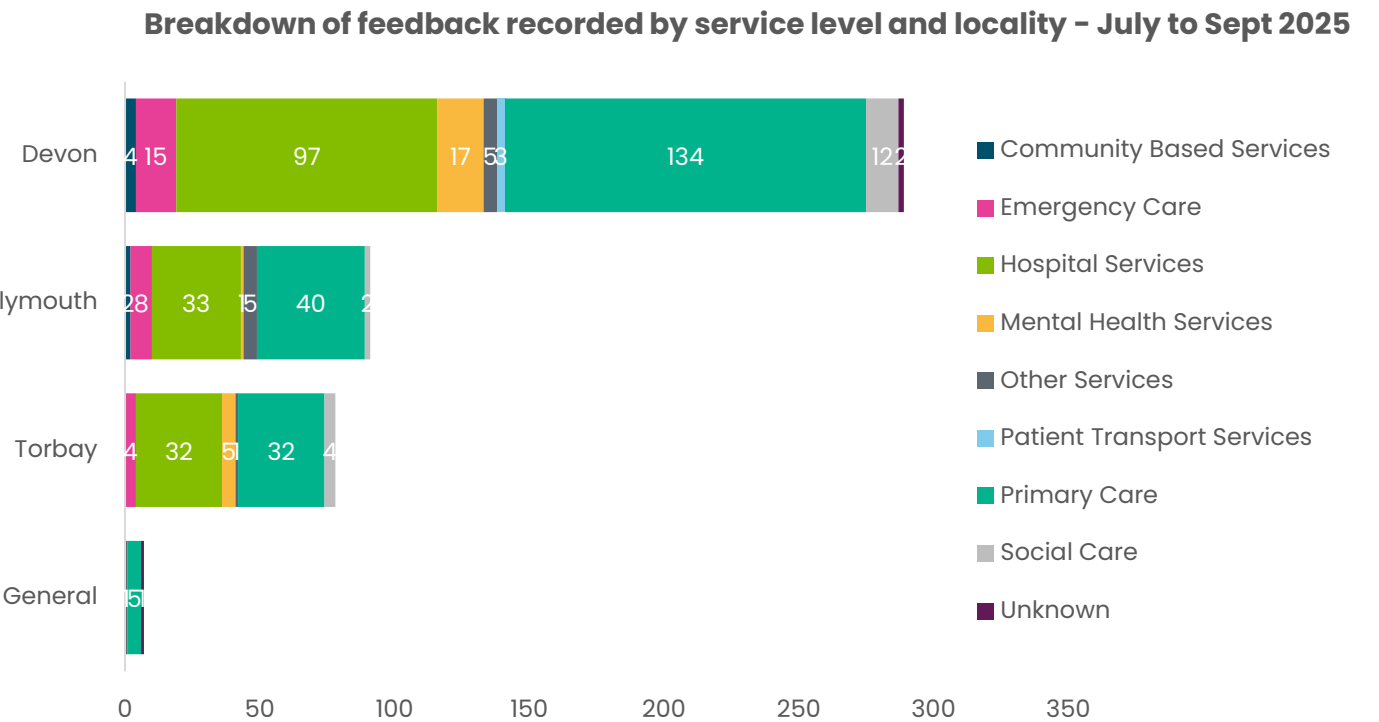
Where we gathered your experiences from in the past three months

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

465 people contacted Healthwatch to share their experiences of health and social care services in Devon, Plymouth and Torbay. 289 were about services in Devon, 91 about Plymouth services and 78 about Torbay service. 7 experiences were either general about services across the whole of Devon, Plymouth, and Torbay, or their location was unknown.

32 of these experiences were shared with us at HWDPT through our online Have Your Say form, 298 were handled by our contact centre and 135 experiences were captured through online or community engagement.

Source of Feedback shared with HWDPT and Type of Service



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

Feedback about Primary Care Services

211 experiences (45.4% of overall feedback) were about primary care services, of those:

- 133 experiences related to GP Services
- 61 experiences related to Dental Services
- 10 experiences related to Out of Hours Services
- 6 experiences related to Pharmacy Services
- 1 experience related to Opticians Services.

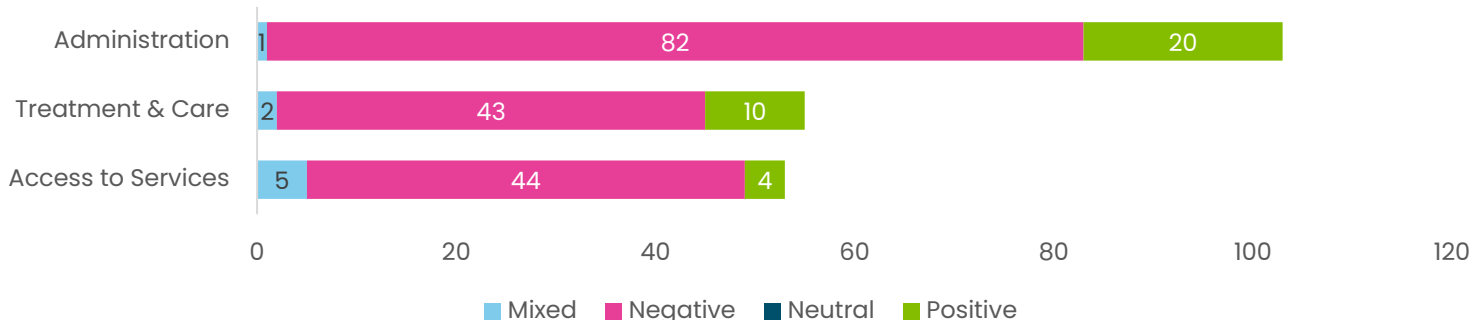


Feedback about Primary Care Services (continued)

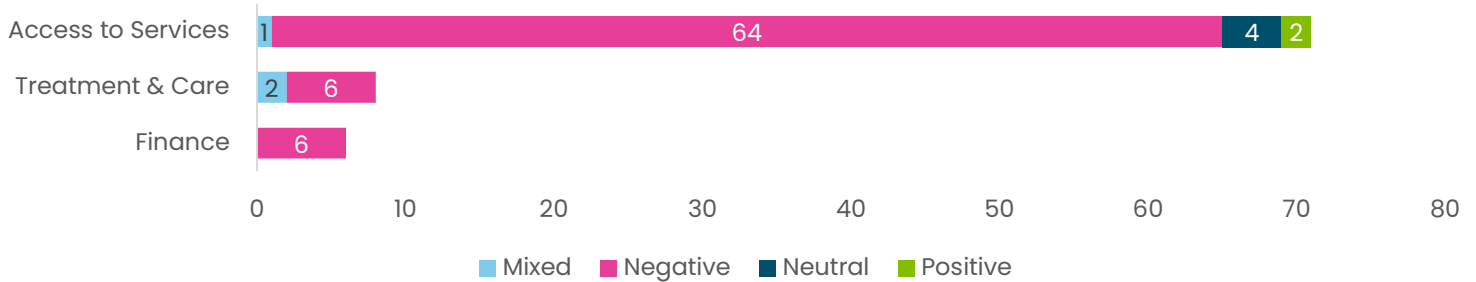
The most common themes in relation to Primary Care Services were **Access to Services**, **Administration** and **Treatment & Care**.

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:

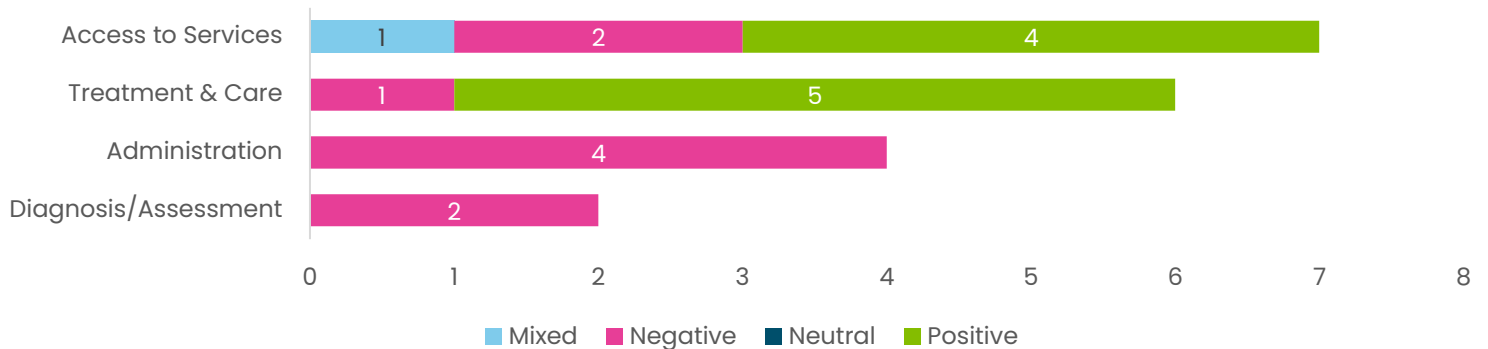
GP Practice



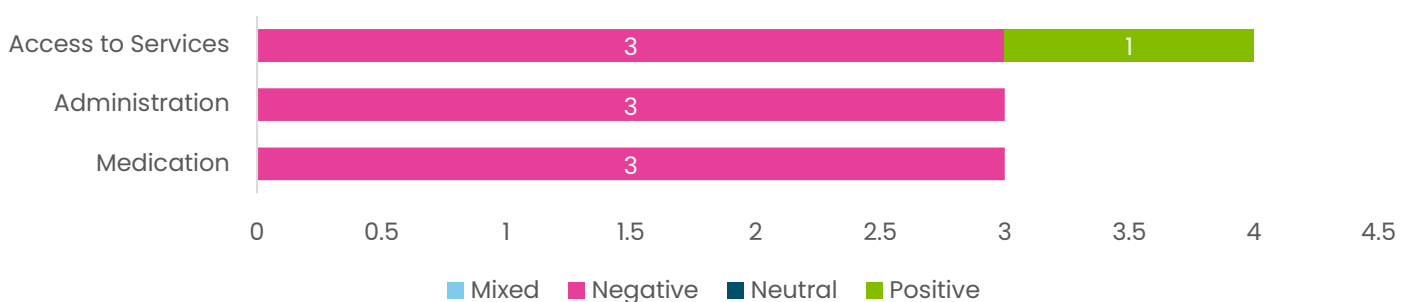
Dentist (non-hospital)



Out of Hours Services



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

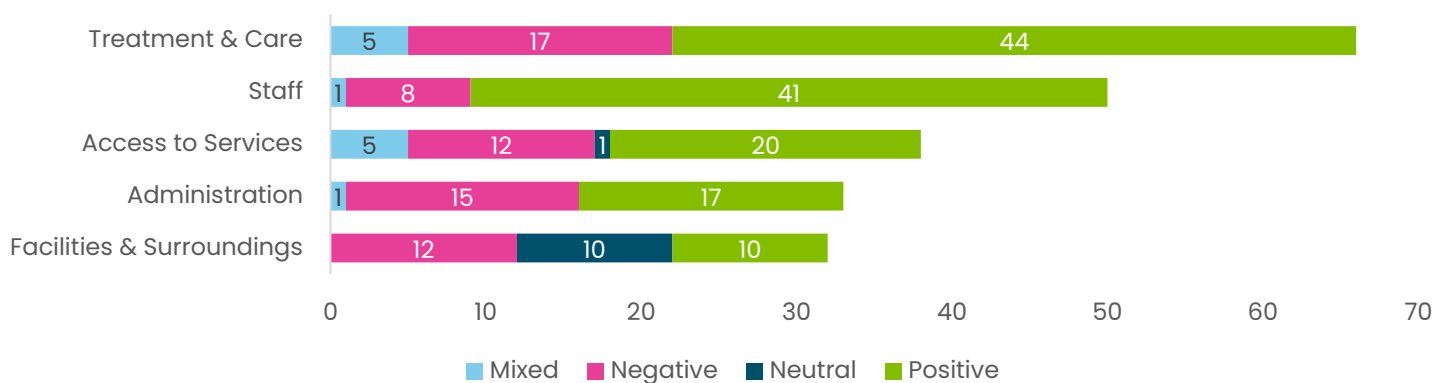
162 experiences (34.8% of overall feedback) were about hospital services. Of those:

- 97 experiences related to hospital services in Devon
- 33 experiences related to hospital services in Plymouth
- 32 experiences related to hospital services in Torbay
- 0 experiences related to hospital services whose location was unknown.

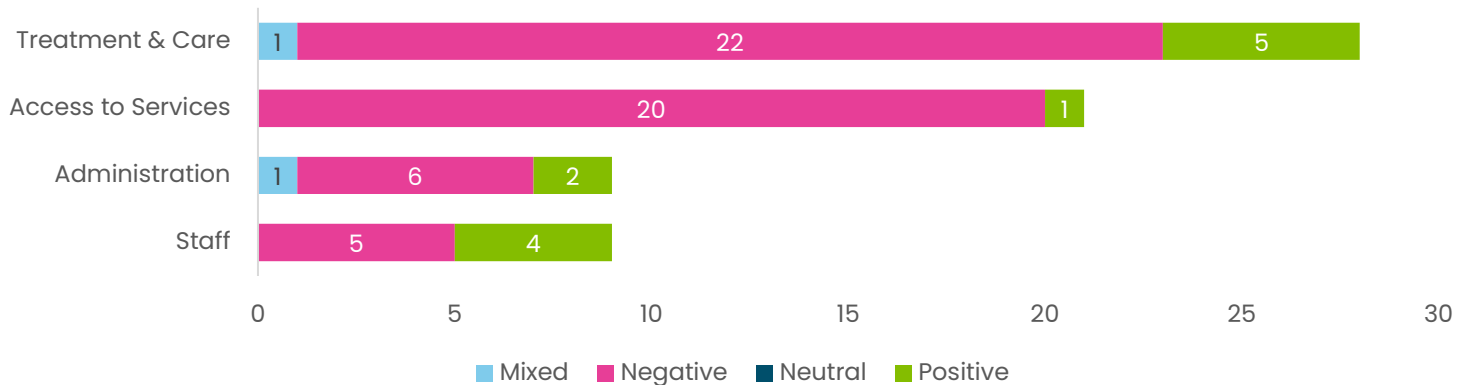
The most common themes overall in relation to Hospital Services were **Treatment & Care**, **Access to Services**, and **Staff**.

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:

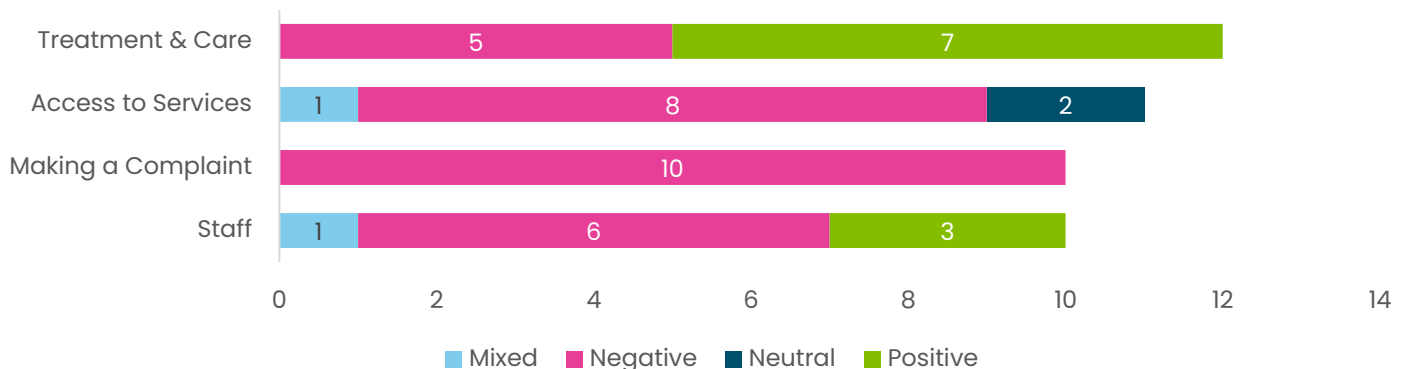
Summary of themes - Hospital Services in Devon



Summary of themes - Hospital Services in Plymouth



Summary of themes - 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.

Medication Management Concerns Resolved

Colin in Torbay, who manages a long-term mental health condition, shared concerns about the removal of medication from their repeat prescription list. This happened after they sourced an extra supply due to a national shortage, which they believe was misinterpreted as misuse. Key issues included a lack of clear communication about the prescription change, leading to patient anxiety, and an increased burden on their carer due to the GP advising two trips per week (one to request, one to collect) for weekly prescriptions. The patient also felt unjustly accused of misusing their medication.

What we did – We escalated the concerns to the Torbay GP Practice. This led the practice's lead pharmacist to contact the patient directly to discuss the situation, resolve the underlying issues, and restore effective prescription management.



Care Funds Access Reinstated

Judith in Devon was receiving 20 hours of partially-funded care and reported significant stress due to being unable to access their prepaid care card since early July. A technical password issue prevented access, and without the funds, the individual had been paying carers from their personal, unsustainable bank account. They experienced a complete lack of support and communication from the card provider, and a promised follow-up from the local authority's finance team never happened, causing rising anxiety and a fear of care disruption.

What we did – We contacted the relevant teams on the individual's behalf, confirming that their care account had been successfully transferred and was functioning correctly, allowing payments to resume. We advised the client on how to activate their new card and provided contact details for further support. We also noted that the local authority is preparing a formal complaint about the wider system outage.

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

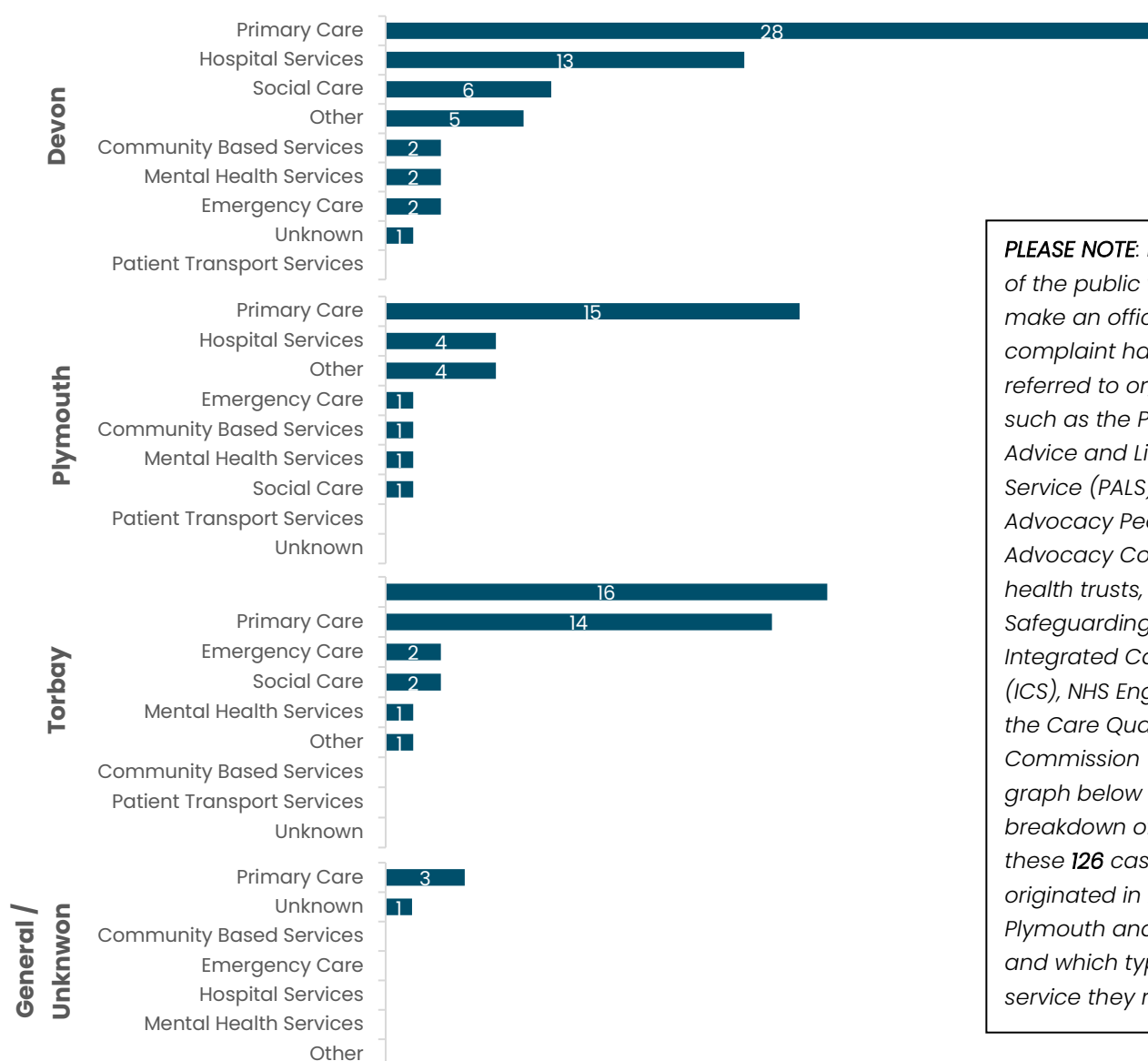
Where we escalated your concerns and complaints

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 **126** such cases. Of these:

- 32 were provided with advice and information by the contact centre,
- 17 were referred to a Healthwatch Champion,
- 14 were signposted/referred to PALS,
- 16 were signposted/referred to an advocacy service,
- 22 were signposted other services (community support, information services),
- 25 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 126 cases originated in Devon, Plymouth and Torbay and which type of service they referred to.



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

- Drop-in sessions at various outreach locations such as libraries in Newton Abbot, Tavistock, Totnes, Holsworthy, Princetown, and Okehampton.
- Teignbridge community support event.
- Okehampton Health & Wellbeing Alliance.

healthwatch Plymouth

- Derriford Hospital Drop-ins.
- Care Home Lay Visiting across the whole of Plymouth.
- Other outreach events across Plymouth and Ivybridge such as Foulston Park Wellbeing Hub in Devonport.

healthwatch Torbay

- Torbay Hospital Drop-Ins.
- Drop-in sessions at Paignton Community Hub.
- Engaging with people to gather public feedback regarding the potential impact of proposed changes to hospital cardiac service deployment in Devon.

Other Healthwatch Reports or Campaigns Coming Soon

- Healthwatch England will be releasing new reports next quarter on men's health (with a focus on prostate cancer screening), cancer care and continuing healthcare.
- Across the region, we will be examining the public's perception of digital health apps and online services to identify barriers to uptake, user benefits and difficulties.
- In Devon and Torbay we will be launching reports on the experiences of people living with MS, and Reasonable Adjustments in Torbay, South Devon and North Devon.
- In Plymouth we will be continuing our Care Home Lay Visiting Project. Watch out for more information on our website – 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.