

Healthwatch Quarterly Impact & Activity Report

Quarter 2: July – September 2026

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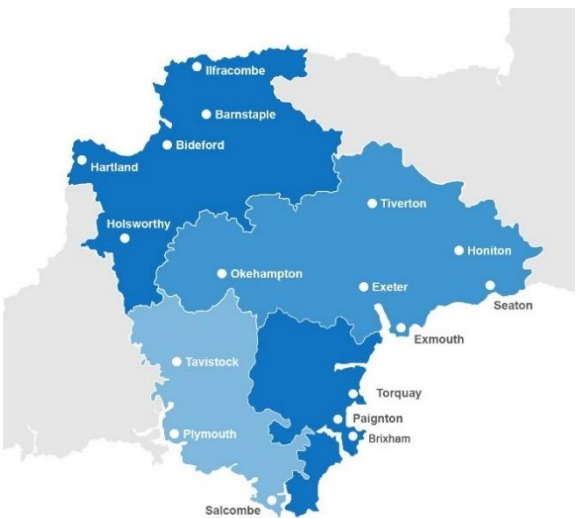
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About Healthwatch

We are the independent health and social care champion for people across Devon, Plymouth and Torbay.

We listen to your experiences, help you find trustworthy information and make sure NHS and social care decision-makers hear what is working – and what needs to improve.

This report covers July to September 2026.
It shares the main things people told us, how we used that evidence and the changes or further action that followed.



Quarter at a glance



We supported
4 NHS Devon
neighbourhood
health
engagement
days to hear
people's views about the future
of care closer to home.



We
responded to
6 requests
from the Care
Quality Commission and
Devon County Council's Health
and Adult Care Scrutiny
Committee.



We recorded
282 pieces of
health and
social care
feedback



We escalated
or referred **88**
of your
complaints or
concerns to
relevant organisations



Our Quarter in Brief

A snapshot of some of our main activities during the past 3 months

- Between July and September, we continued listening to people across Devon, Plymouth and Torbay, providing information and support, gathering feedback at community events and raising concerns with organisations responsible for care.
- We supported NHS Devon's neighbourhood health engagement, launched work on people's experiences of leaving hospital and shared evidence with scrutiny committees and the Care Quality Commission.
- We also responded to concerns about maternity services in North Devon, continued work on hospital complaints and accessibility, supported community mental health engagement and raised questions about the future of local services.

3 key things we focused on



1. Helping people shape neighbourhood health

During September, we supported NHS Devon's *Let's Talk Neighbourhood Health* engagement programme, part of its wider plans for the future of local healthcare.

Four engagement days took place in Plymouth, Tavistock, Paignton and Exeter, giving people opportunities to discuss what matters to them, including access to care, staying healthy and how services could work better together.

We helped promote the programme, supported the engagement days and offered telephone assistance for people unable to complete the online survey. Our priority was to make participation accessible and encourage people from different communities to have their say.



NHS Devon leads the engagement and is responsible for explaining how people's feedback will influence future plans. We will continue to encourage transparency about what people said and what happens next. [Click here to read more](#)

2. Listening to experiences of leaving hospital

We launched two pieces of work to better understand what happens when people leave hospital and whether they receive the support they need.

- **Torbay:** We invited people to share all experiences of leaving Torbay Hospital, including communication, involvement in decisions, medication, care arrangements and follow-up support.
- **Devon and Plymouth:** We supported national Healthwatch research into delayed or difficult hospital discharge, particularly encouraging men to share their experiences.

We promoted the surveys through community events, local networks and online communications.

Feedback will help identify where hospital discharge works well and where improvements may be needed, particularly when patients rely on several organisations to arrange their ongoing care. [Click here to read more](#)

3. Responding to maternity service changes in North Devon

Following the temporary suspension of births at North Devon District Hospital from 11 August, we monitored concerns raised by local women, families and communities.

People raised questions about travel, birth plans, emergency arrangements, continuity of care and how changes were communicated.

We provided evidence and a follow-up briefing to Devon County Council's Health and Adult Care Scrutiny Committee to support its examination of the situation.

Importantly, we distinguished concerns about the changes from people's actual experiences of alternative arrangements. At the time, we had not received sufficient first-hand feedback following the suspension to draw wider conclusions.

We will continue to listen to affected families and share evidence with NHS leaders and scrutiny committees. [Read our earlier coverage here](#)



What people told us

A brief summary of what we found out from your feedback last quarter

- **Accessing GP appointments and online services – Across all three areas**

People continued to describe difficulties obtaining GP appointments, navigating online forms and knowing how to contact their practice. Some reported online requests becoming unavailable or being redirected to other services.

Digital exclusion remained a concern, particularly for people without the confidence, equipment or support to use online systems independently.

- **Waiting for hospital care and follow-up – Particularly Devon and Plymouth**

Feedback about cardiology services at Derriford and the Royal Devon and Exeter hospitals highlighted waits for appointments and treatment, delays in follow-up and difficulties obtaining clear information about results or ongoing care.

These experiences reflect wider concerns about communication and continuity between appointments.

- **Access to NHS dentistry – Across Devon, Plymouth and Torbay**

People continued reporting difficulties finding NHS dental appointments, including routine and urgent treatment.

Access to affordable care remained a concern, particularly for people unable to pay for private treatment.

- **Experiences at Torbay Hospital's Emergency Department – Torbay**

Some people raised concerns about long waits, communication, comfort while waiting and arrangements when leaving hospital.

Others praised the care and treatment they received from staff, highlighting the importance of recognising positive experiences alongside concerns.

- **Getting help through NHS 111 – Across the area**

Feedback was mixed. Some people described receiving timely and effective help, while others reported difficulty accessing the support or services they needed.

- **Understanding adult social care charges – Devon**

People described confusion about financial assessments, delays, affordability and difficulties contacting the right teams.

For some, uncertainty about charges or appeals contributed to anxiety and concerns about accumulating debt.

Please note: These themes reflect feedback received by Healthwatch, not a representative survey of everyone using local services.

What we did with your views



Selected examples of how your feedback made a positive difference

Clarifying hospital appointment reminders

You told us: A patient reported being asked to write down appointment details during a telephone call with a hospital, having understood that no written confirmation would follow.

We did: We contacted the hospital to clarify how NHS patients receive appointment details and reminders.

What happened: In an early October response, the hospital confirmed that appointments should receive confirmation by letter, email or text, depending on patient preference. Text reminders are also sent where valid mobile numbers are held.

Why it matters: This gives us clearer information to share with patients and helps identify where communication may not match the hospital's stated processes.

Bringing maternity concerns to local scrutiny

You told us: Families raised concerns about the suspension of births at North Devon District Hospital, including travel, individual birth arrangements and emergency planning.

We did: We provided evidence and a detailed follow-up briefing to Devon County Council's Health and Adult Care Scrutiny Committee.

What happened: People's experiences and concerns were made available to councillors examining the temporary suspension. We also identified areas where further evidence and scrutiny would be useful.

Why it matters: Independent patient feedback helps decision-makers understand the practical questions and concerns facing affected families.

Highlighting concerns about adult social care charges

You told us: Some people found social care charging arrangements difficult to understand, particularly financial assessments, payment expectations and challenges resolving queries.

We did: We contributed Healthwatch evidence to Devon County Council's scrutiny work examining outstanding adult social care debt.

What happened: Our response highlighted the importance of clear information, timely assessments, accessible advice and communication.

Why it matters: People's experiences can help inform scrutiny of how charges are explained and managed, including opportunities to prevent avoidable debt.

Taking your experiences into formal decision-making

During the quarter, we responded to six requests for evidence, including:

- Devon County Council scrutiny work on North Devon maternity services and adult social care debt.
- Care Quality Commission requests relating to services at Derriford Hospital and Mount Stuart Hospital.
- A further CQC request concerning Nuffield Health Plymouth Hospital, where we confirmed we held no relevant feedback.

We also continued sharing public experiences through NHS and council meetings, patient experience groups and local partnership discussions.

Our work across each area



A snapshot of our key recent activities in Devon, Plymouth & Torbay

Devon

- Responded to concerns about the temporary suspension of births at North Devon District Hospital and provided evidence to local scrutiny.
- Shared feedback about adult social care charges and the difficulties some people experience understanding financial assessments.
- Continued developing our report on people's experiences of the Royal Devon complaints process, including seeking a response from the Trust.
- Supported opportunities for local communities to contribute to NHS Devon's neighbourhood health engagement.
- Continued plans to develop independent care-home visiting in North and West Devon.



Plymouth

- Attended community events, including the Ageing Well Wednesday event in Plympton, where people shared concerns about GP appointments, online access and dentistry.
- Promoted our hospital discharge survey and encouraged people to share their experiences.
- Shared feedback with the Care Quality Commission to support its inspection work at Derriford Hospital.
- Continued work on independent care-home visiting and monitoring accessibility improvements at the Royal Eye Infirmary.
- Supported neighbourhood health engagement and community conversations about the future of local services.



Torbay

- Gathered feedback from a local bipolar support group to inform the development of a proposed neighbourhood mental health service.
- Promoted the Torbay Hospital discharge survey through local events and community networks, including the Brixham Festival of Good Health.
- Asked Mount Stuart Hospital to clarify its appointment reminder arrangements and shared relevant patient feedback with the Care Quality Commission.
- Supported community engagement around neighbourhood health and future services at Paignton Library.
- Published an interview between our Chair, Dr Kevin Dixon, and Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust Chief Executive Joe Teape, addressing local concerns about Torbay Hospital, cardiology, pathology and future service changes. [Watch our interview here](#)



Across all three areas

- Continued sharing our digital healthcare access findings with NHS partners.
- Supported public engagement on hospital discharge and neighbourhood health.
- Represented patient and community experience in local scrutiny, planning and service improvement.
- Continued providing independent information, advice and opportunities for people to share their experiences.



Speaking up for independent public voice

During July to September, we continued responding to national proposals to abolish Healthwatch through the Health Bill.

We remained in contact with local MPs, commissioners and partners, highlighting the importance of independent public voice, trusted local relationships and the ability to scrutinise both health and social care.

We also continued our normal work, ensuring local people could still share experiences and receive independent information and support.



STOP PRESS! – 28 OCTOBER – Healthwatch will be retained and strengthened!

Following months of uncertainty and widespread concerns, the Government has announced that it will withdraw the Health Bill provisions proposing to abolish Healthwatch England and local Healthwatch organisations.

Instead, the network will be retained and reformed, with local Healthwatch continuing to be commissioned by local authorities.

Our Chair, Dr Kevin Dixon, has welcomed the decision and thanked everyone who supported Healthwatch, including staff, volunteers, local MPs, commissioners, partners and the communities we serve.

Further details about the reforms and future funding arrangements are still to be confirmed. We remain open, independent and fully operational – and look forward to continuing our work across Devon, Plymouth and Torbay.

[Read the full announcement on our website by clicking here](#)

What we are doing next quarter – we will:

- Continue following up concerns about maternity services in North Devon and the experiences of families affected.
- Progress publication of our report on the Royal Devon complaints process.
- Analyse and share findings from our hospital discharge engagement.
- Continue reviewing accessibility and reasonable adjustments in local services.
- Support further work on neighbourhood health, community mental health and care-home visiting.
- Develop digital inclusion support, including the new health and wellbeing video consultation pod at Paignton Community Hub.
- Work with our commissioners and partners as details emerge about the Government's plans to strengthen Healthwatch.

Share your experience

Good or bad, your experience can help improve local services. You can tell us about GP, dental, hospital, mental health, community or social care services. We can also help you find reliable information and explain how to raise a concern.

- **Freephone: 0800 520 0640**
- **Email: info@hwdpt.org**
- **Website: www.hwdpt.org**

What we do with this report

We publish this report on our website, share it through our email bulletins and social media, and circulate it to organisations responsible for planning, providing and improving health and social care.

This includes NHS organisations, local councils, scrutiny committees, the Care Quality Commission, Healthwatch England and voluntary and community organisations.

The information helps highlight what is working, where people experience difficulties and where further action may be needed.

We also use the findings to help decide our own priorities and follow up concerns raised by local people.

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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.