

Healthwatch Quarterly Impact & Activity Report

Quarter 4: January to March 2026

healthwatch
in Devon, Plymouth and Torbay

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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 achieved.

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 nearly **20,000** times with almost **2,500** people seeing our Email Bulletins



Over **10,000** people visited our dedicated website - www.hwdpt.org



We have escalated or referred **115** of your complaints or concerns to the relevant organisations



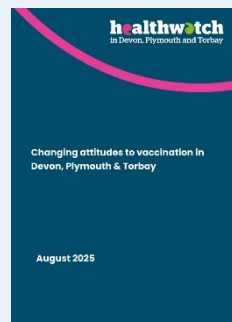
429 of you have shared your health or care feedback with us this quarter



We've helped **382** of you share your feedback or look for advice through our contact centre



We've released **a new report** on digital healthcare access in Devon, available online by [clicking here](#)



Over **2,000** 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

Understanding Digital Healthcare Access in Devon, Plymouth and Torbay

We have published a new insight report exploring how people across Devon, Plymouth and Torbay access healthcare through digital systems, including GP online services, hospital portals and the NHS App.

The report brings together local NHS data, system mapping, Healthwatch feedback (2020–2025) and real-life case studies to show how digital healthcare works in practice. It highlights both the benefits of digital access and the growing complexity patients face when navigating multiple platforms, communication routes and services.



Click above to see some related public case studies

Key findings:

- Multiple platforms create complexity – patients may need to use several apps and systems across GP and hospital care.
- Communication is fragmented – information is shared via SMS, apps, emails and letters, leading to confusion or missed updates.
- Access varies by location – different systems are used by different GP practices and trusts.
- Systems don't always join up – patients may need to repeat information or manage multiple accounts.
- Digital exclusion remains a risk – some people face barriers due to access, skills or confidence.

The report also highlights that the system is still evolving. Current tools are often used for specific functions, and the planned Devon-wide Electronic Patient Record from 2026 aims to support a more joined-up approach, including wider use of the MY CARE portal.

Recommendations include:

- Simplifying and aligning digital access across services
- Improving clarity on which platforms to use
- Strengthening communication and consistency
- Maintaining accessible non-digital options
- Supporting people at risk of digital exclusion.

Impact : The findings have been shared with NHS and system partners to support ongoing improvements to digital access and patient experience. [Click here](#) to read the report or [click here](#) to watch a short film featuring public case studies from the report.



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

Women's priorities for health services

To mark International Women's Day, Healthwatch England shared new findings on what women want from health services, as the Government refreshes the Women's Health Strategy for England. Based on polling and 32 local reports, the insight shows 15% of women feel they are rarely listened to in appointments. While 72% of men feel listened to most of the time, this falls to 63% for women. Among those satisfied with their last appointment, 74% felt listened to. In the past two years, 60% of women used at least one women's health service. Women say the most important factors are being listened to, trained professionals, joined-up services such as health hubs, and flexible appointments. **The findings highlight ongoing inequalities and will be shared with Government to inform the refreshed strategy and future service development: Read the report by [clicking here](#).**

The Public's Perspective: health and social care in England

Healthwatch England has published a new report based on 390,000 experiences shared between October 2023 and September 2025. It highlights ongoing challenges across NHS and social care. Access remains a major issue, with people struggling to get GP, dental, mental health and hospital appointments. Inequalities persist, and long waits continue to affect wellbeing. While digital services can help, they risk excluding people without access or skills. Poor administration and communication also undermine experience. The report raises concern about a growing two-tier system, with 16% of people using private care in the past year. **These findings provide evidence to inform national policy and future reforms, including the NHS 10 Year Health Plan. [Read it by clicking here](#)**

Impact : Speaking up for better care

Healthwatch England's annual report shows the impact of listening to people's experiences and using this insight to improve care. It highlights how public feedback shaped work during 2024/25 and influenced national thinking, including elective care reform. The report sets out six principles for the future, including being locally driven, reaching all communities, valuing lived experience, and strengthening transparency and accountability. It also comes at a time of change, following plans to transfer Healthwatch functions, and stresses the need to retain a strong, independent public voice. **Real stories, such as long waits for specialist care, show the human impact and have helped drive improvements to communication, referral tracking and expected standards. [Read more 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 attend events and meetings in Devon, Plymouth and Torbay, capturing experiences of local health and social care along the way.

Across all activity, engagement was positive, with good opportunities for networking, information sharing and capturing public feedback to support our ongoing work.

Selected events include:



healthwatch Devon

- North Devon District Hospital
- Cullompton Community Wellbeing & Alliance
- Libraries in Torrington, Holsworthy, Okehampton & Tavistock
- Teignbridge community support event

healthwatch Plymouth

- Derriford Hospital Drop-in
- Care Home Lay Visiting

healthwatch Torbay

- Torbay Hospital Drop-In
- Paignton Community Hub & Paignton Library.

Requests for Information (RFIs) – Outcomes

We regularly share your feedback with decision-makers or gather information from providers or commissioners based on patient feedback, this quarter we:

- **Improved access options identified for patient transport** – Following concerns about booking transport for deaf patients, we clarified that email booking is available as an alternative to phone and app-based access, helping ensure more inclusive access routes.
- **Follow-up action initiated on prescribing concerns for young children** – We raised queries about inhaler prescribing for under 5s. Further information was requested by NHS Devon to investigate at practice level, but no consent was received to progress the case.
- **Access issues for ear wax removal services raised with system partners** – We highlighted gaps in access, inconsistent GP processes and risks of inappropriate referrals. This intelligence has been shared to support wider system understanding of access barriers.
- **Evidence shared to support national and local service reviews** – We responded to requests from NHS England and Plymouth City Council, providing patient feedback on community services and transitions from children’s to adult services to inform ongoing reviews.
- **Patient experience intelligence submitted to regulator** – We compiled and shared a patient feedback report with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to support inspection of Devon Partnership Trust services.

Impact : This engagement helped inform our reports and ongoing work with system partners. **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



Healthwatch Feedback

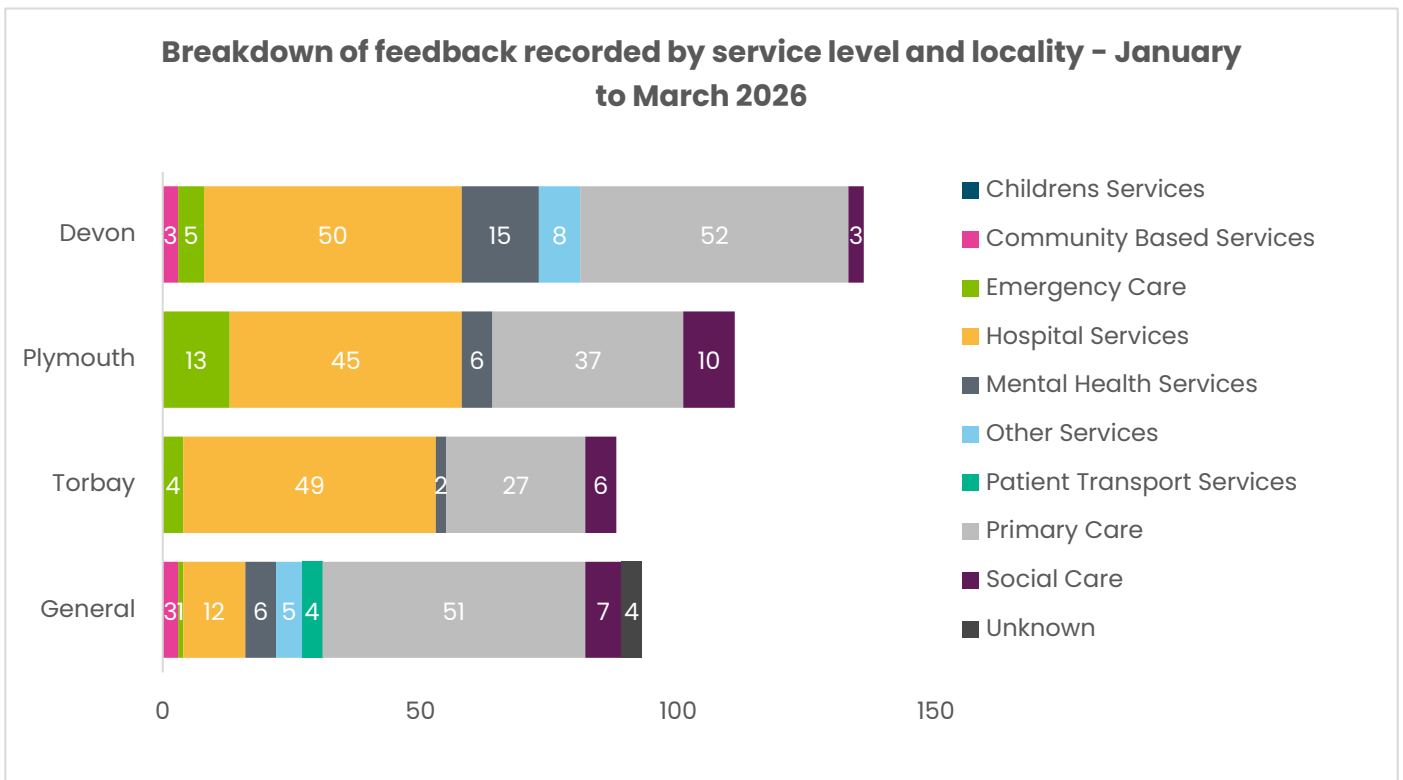
Where we gathered your experiences from in the past three months

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

429 people contacted Healthwatch to share their experiences of health and social care services in Devon, Plymouth and Torbay. 136 were about services in Devon, 111 about Plymouth services and 88 about Torbay services. 93 experiences were either general about services across the whole of Devon, Plymouth, and Torbay, or their location was unknown, 1 experience was about a service outside of Devon.

31 of these experiences were shared with us at HWDPT through our online Have Your Say form, 382 were handled by our contact centre and 16 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 was **Primary Care Services**.

Feedback about Primary Care Services

167 experiences (38.9% of overall feedback) were about primary care services, of those:

- 122 experiences related to GP Services
- 29 experiences related to Dental Services
- 11 experiences related to Out of Hours Services
- 4 experiences related to Pharmacy Services
- 1 experience related to Opticians Services

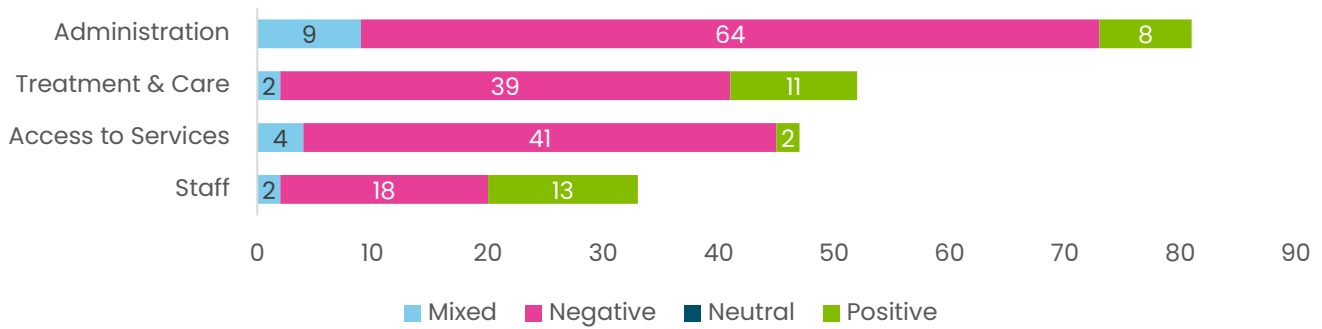


Feedback about Primary Care Services (continued)

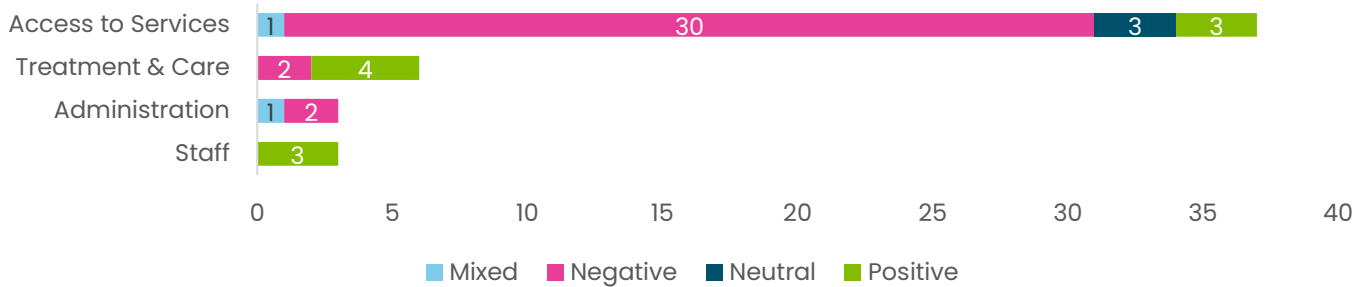
The most common themes in relation to Primary Care Services overall were **Access to Services**, **Administration**, **Treatment & Care**, and **Staff**.

The charts below show summaries of these themes and 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:

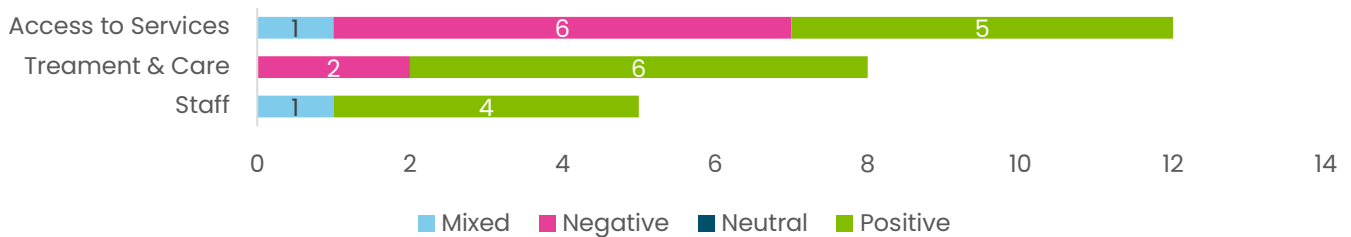
Summary of themes - GP Practice



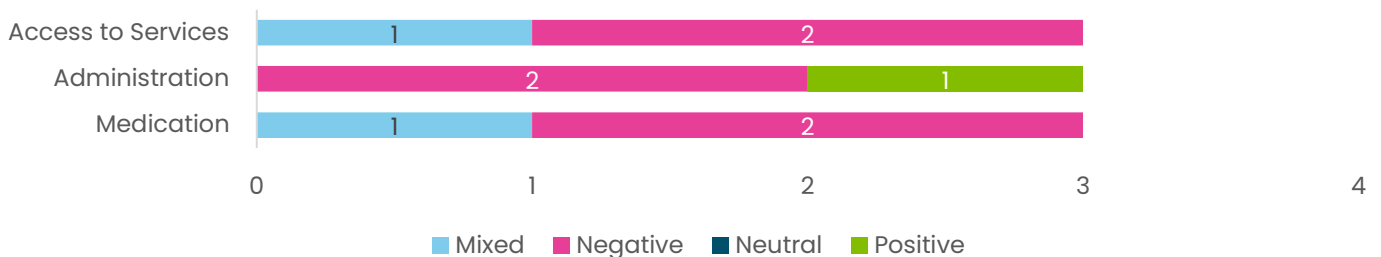
Dentist (non-hospital)



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

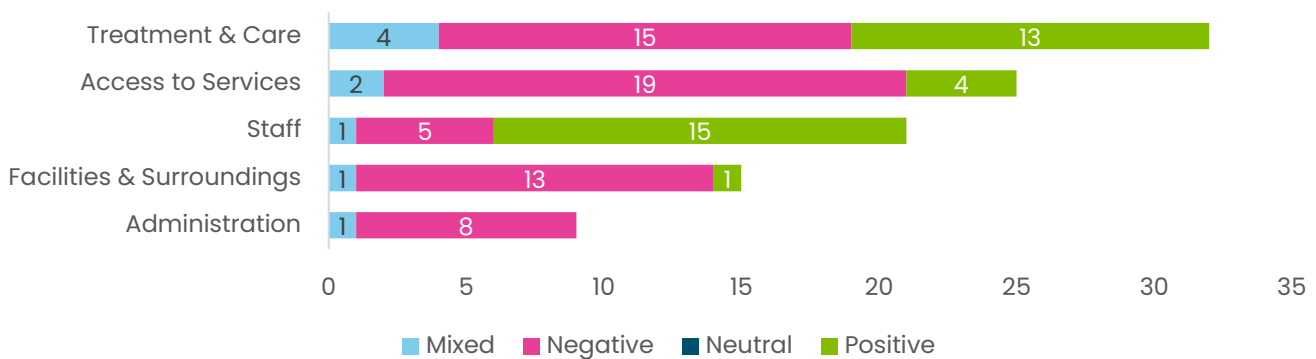
157 experiences (36.6% of overall feedback) were about hospital services. Of those:

- 50 experiences related to hospital services in Devon
- 45 experiences related to hospital services in Plymouth
- 49 experiences related to hospital services in Torbay
- 12 experiences related to hospital services whose location was unknown.

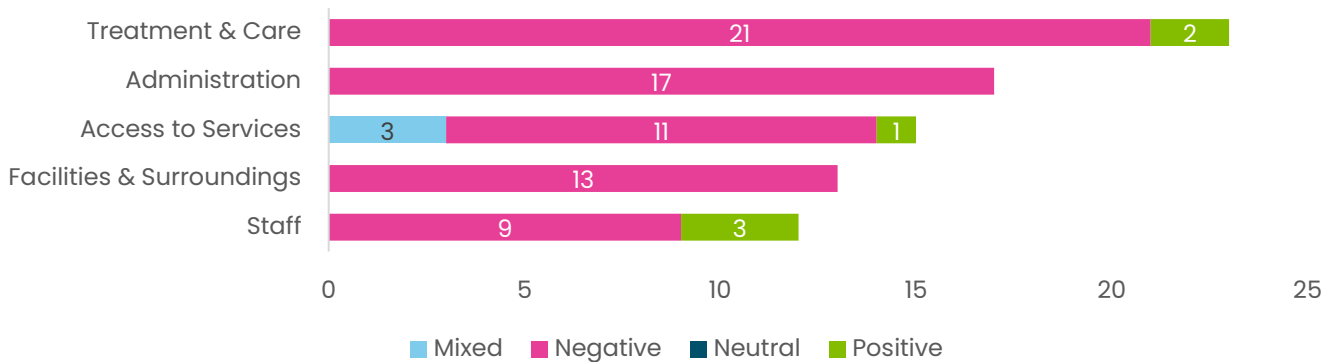
The most common themes overall in relation to Hospital Services were **Treatment & Care**, **Staff**, **Access to Services**, **Facilities & Surroundings**, and **Administration**.

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:

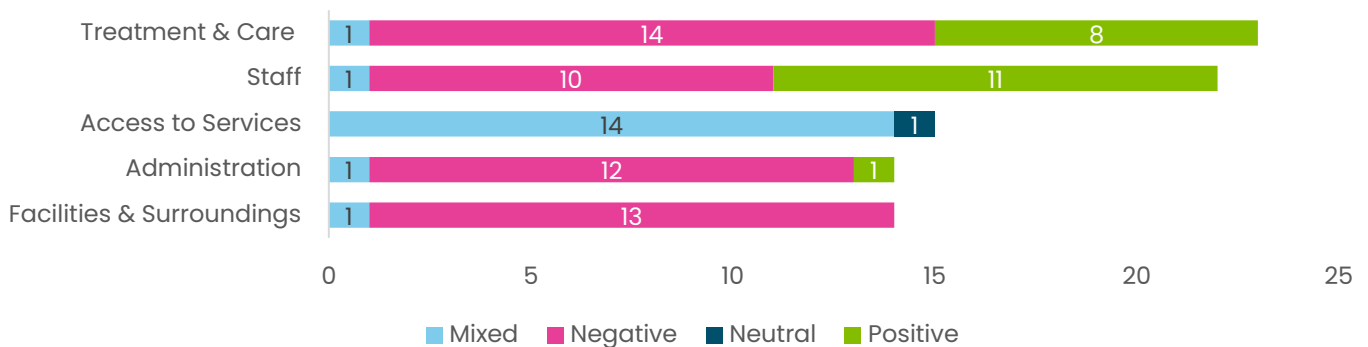
Summary of themes - Hospital Services in Devon



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.

Advice and support to navigate mental health services

Julie from Plymouth contacted Healthwatch Plymouth after their teenage daughter was admitted to hospital following suicide attempts. Although a safety plan was put in place, the family reported no ongoing support after discharge and the young person was later signed off from services. As she moved into adulthood, there was no clear transition to adult mental health services, despite ongoing complex needs. Referrals led to support that was not appropriate, leaving the family unsure who was responsible for care. They contacted Healthwatch after long waits, repeated referrals and difficulty escalating concerns.



What we did – We provided advice on next steps, including how to raise concerns and access appropriate support services.

What this tells us – This case highlights gaps in continuity of care and the risks for young people when transition between children's and adult services is not well coordinated.

Support provided to raise concerns about discharge



Geoff from Torbay is in his eighties and was admitted to hospital following a fall and hip fracture. After treatment, he was transferred to a community hospital for rehabilitation. His family reported that he remained largely in bed and did not receive physiotherapy due to concerns about low blood pressure. Despite believing he could regain mobility, he was discharged to a nursing home and placed on a palliative care pathway. The family felt they were not fully involved in decisions or given access to medical information. After being unable to get a response from PALS, they contacted Healthwatch Torbay for support.

What we did – We provided advice on how to escalate concerns and access appropriate complaints routes, helping the family seek clarity on decisions made about care and rehabilitation.

What this tells us – This case highlights the need for clear discharge planning, access to rehabilitation, and meaningful involvement of families in care decisions.

Guidance provided to seek answers and follow-up care

Jenny in Devon contacted Healthwatch Devon after being referred to hospital with suspected skin cancer. They waited several weeks for a biopsy and later received a diagnosis by letter with limited information. Treatment was delivered by courier with a leaflet, but there was no follow-up from hospital services or their GP. The individual was left unsure whether treatment had been effective or what would happen next, causing anxiety and distress. They contacted Healthwatch seeking guidance on what to do.



What we did – We provided advice on how to seek further information and raise concerns with the relevant services.

What this tells us – This case highlights the importance of clear communication, follow-up and joined-up working between hospital and primary care, particularly during cancer investigations.

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

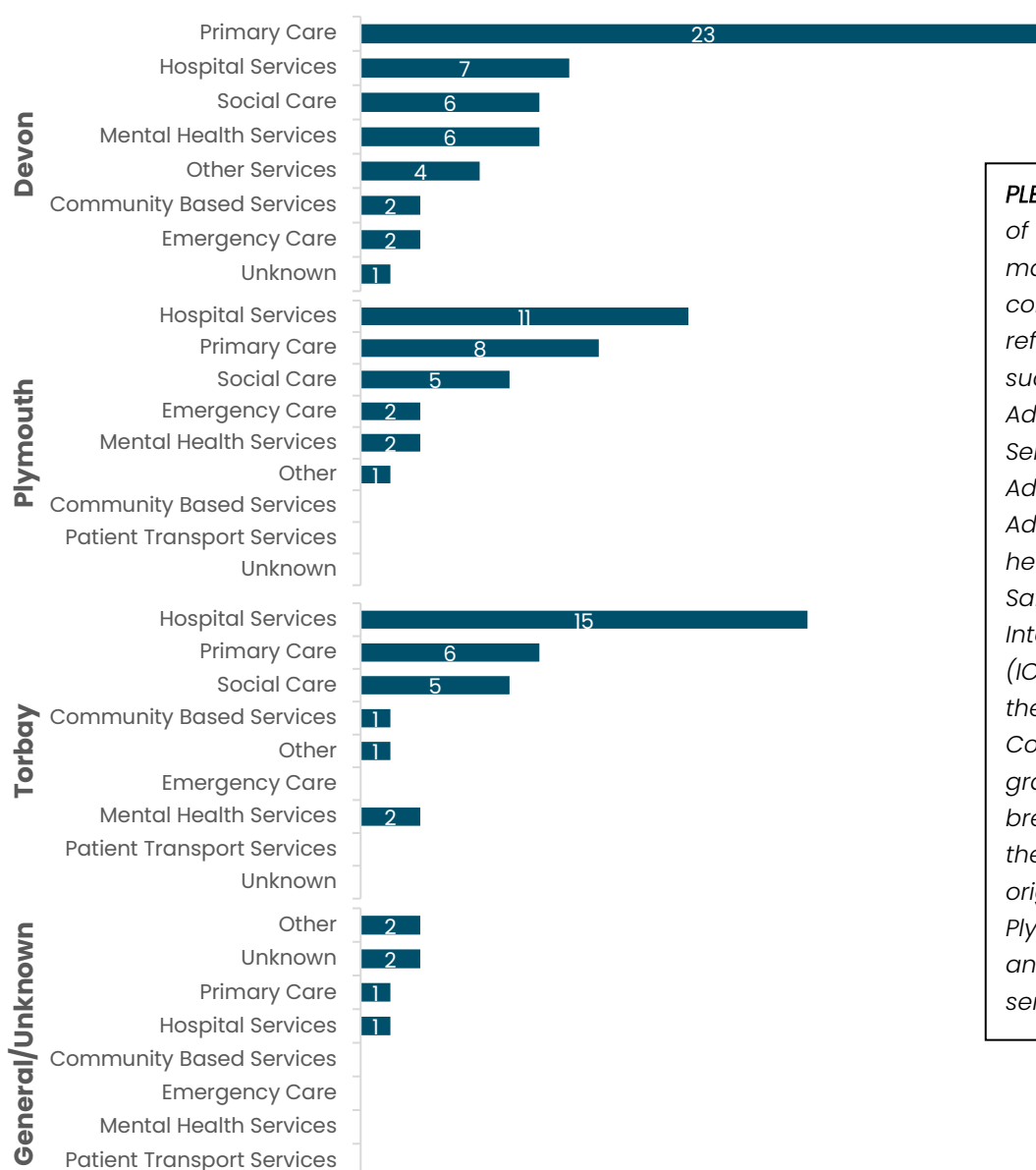
Where we escalated your concerns and complaints

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 **115** such cases. Of these:

- 39 were provided with advice and information by the contact centre,
- 27 were referred to a Healthwatch Champion,
- 7 were signposted/referred to PALS,
- 14 were signposted/referred to an advocacy service,
- 9 were signposted other services (community support, information services),
- 18 were signposted/escalated to the provider
- 1 was escalated to Adult Safeguarding.

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 115 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.
- Exploration of expanded Care Home Lay Visiting in Devon.
- Work with NHS Devon to support their five-year commissioning strategy, including events and public drop-ins.

healthwatch Plymouth

- Derriford Hospital Drop-ins.
- Care Home Lay Visiting across the whole of Plymouth.
- Further collaboration with University Hospitals Plymouth, including development of video case studies following earlier projects.

healthwatch Torbay

- Torbay Hospital Drop-Ins.
- Drop-in sessions at Paignton Community Hub.
- Rollout of a new Digital ‘POD’ at Paignton Library so digitally excluded residents can attend virtual healthcare appointments in a safe, trusted setting.

Other Healthwatch Reports or Campaigns Coming Soon

- Contributing to national awareness campaigns led by Healthwatch England, including themes such as mental health, carers and access to care
- Using awareness days to highlight local insight and patient experience across Devon, Plymouth and Torbay
- Continued delivery of core engagement activity while preparing for transition of the Healthwatch service to new statutory arrangements in April 2027.
- Updates on all forthcoming reports and campaigns will be shared via our website and e-bulletins via 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.