



Community Insights

healthwatch
Sheffield

June 2026

About us

Healthwatch Sheffield

[Healthwatch Sheffield](#) gathers people's views on health and social care in Sheffield and shares them with decision makers to inform improvements. Each month we visit a range of local community groups and health services to ask people about their experiences and find out what's important to them.

What we did

In late May and early June, we visited [Ben's Centre](#), a day centre in Sheffield supporting people experiencing homelessness and substance misuse by offering warm food, clothing and referrals to key housing and support services in the area. A wound nurse also regularly attends from [Likewise](#) as well as a member of the street outreach team from [Devonshire Green Medical Centre](#).

Over two visits, we spoke to nine people. We asked about their concerns and needs in relation to accessing health and care services locally. We supported four people in signing up to a local GP, and three people onto an NHS dental waiting list. We also provided signposting to the [Sheffield Support Hub](#). Below is what we learnt from some of those we spoke to, including some reflections from staff and volunteers.

What we learnt

What works well?

- Ben's Centre is possibly the only damp centre in Sheffield, meaning people can access the service while under the influence of drugs or alcohol. People described it as a safe and calming space to spend some hours in the day, which helped provide them find a sense of routine.
- People spoke of a good rapport with the staff and volunteers on site. They felt looked out for and looked after, particularly because staff and the visiting nursing teams from Likewise and Devonshire Green Medical Centre take the time to get to know them personally and understand their

individual needs and concerns.

- Volunteering opportunities had helped some in their recovery from substance use by keeping them occupied and helping them find a purpose.

What could be better?

- One person spoke of a 13-hour wait in A&E at the Northern General having been directed there by NHS 111 due to concerns for their mental health. When seen, they felt doctors only tended to their physical symptoms and discharged them in the small hours without treating their mental health concerns.

‘[Being homeless,] they just discharged me back on the streets in the night without food or anywhere to go’

- Staff felt there is a lack of appropriate mental health support services for those with complex needs and substance addiction. They described a ‘vicious cycle’ in which many who visit Ben’s Centre try to access mental health support but are told to return only once they have successfully managed their substance addiction. However, people told us they felt substance recovery support programmes often do not demand intensive enough engagement to work for them effectively.

‘It feels like they are passing the buck’

- People commented on a lack of safe spaces to go in the evening after Ben’s Centre closes each day, which puts them at risk of harm and makes it difficult to signpost people to appropriate support during these hours.
- Many of the people we spoke to had ongoing and complex health needs but were only accessing urgent care or outreach services, with few reporting being registered with a GP. Some were unsure of their current registration status with their GP surgery having moved and not visited it in a long time, while others were no longer registered with their former GP as a result of moving into temporary accommodation across the city and into different catchment areas.
- Moving into Sheffield from neighbouring areas such as Barnsley or Rotherham can be a barrier to accessing Sheffield based support services. One person, who is living in temporary accommodation in Sheffield, told us

they had been unable to access a support worker from Sheffield City Council due to reportedly having a housing officer in Barnsley.

Ideas for improvement

- Integrate mental health and substance recovery services to support people with complex needs more holistically.
- Encourage outreach services and professionals to check the GP registration status with their clients with GP services, particularly for those with ongoing and complex health conditions, and signpost to support where appropriate.
- Provide safe spaces similar to Ben's Centre in the evenings to ensure vulnerable and homeless people can remain under a form of informal supervision with food, activities and community.
- Widen inclusive and appropriate volunteering opportunities for people who are at different stages of their recovery journey.

Next steps

Information sharing

We will share this write-up with relevant service providers and community groups. This may include, but not be limited to, any named GP practices, mental health commissioners and service providers.

Thank you

We would like to thank Ben's Centre for having us and to all those who shared their feedback and experiences with us.

Contact us

If you need information and advice about accessing health or social care services in Sheffield, or want to share feedback about your experiences of using them, please contact us using the details below.

Call: 0114 253 6688 between the hours of 09:00 – 16:30 Monday to Friday

Text: 0741 524 9657

Email: info@healthwatchsheffield.co.uk

Post: Healthwatch Sheffield, The Circle, 33 Rockingham Lane, Sheffield, S1 4FW

Links and resources

Sheffield Mental Health Guide

[Sheffield Mental Health Guide](#) is a free online directory of all the local mental health related service and support groups in Sheffield. It provides descriptions of the services and links to websites.

Sheffield urgent mental health support

Sheffield Health Partnership University's [urgent help page](#) explains the various services in Sheffield offering urgent mental health support and how to access them.