

 mind Sheffield

**RAINBOW
MINDS**

Community Insights

healthwatch
Sheffield

May 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

On 20 May 2026, we visited [Rainbow Minds](#) at [Sheffield Mind](#)'s Wellbeing Centre. A social café for members of the LGBTQ+ community, they meet on Wednesday evenings at 5.30pm for a chat over drinks and biscuits, and to take part in a range of different activities each week.

We spoke to nine people – working-age and retired – about their experiences of health care in Sheffield, particularly in relation to mental health and LGBTQ+ inclusivity.

What we learnt

What works well?

- People enjoyed having a safe and 'non-judgemental' space like Rainbow Minds where they could socialise and connect. Long term regulars said the space felt familiar to them now and has supported them in looking after their mental health.

"It takes your mind off what you are ruminating on"

- A couple of members spoke highly of the [Hollies Medical Centre](#) for their ability to accommodate same-day appointments, as well as their quality of care. Examples included regular courtesy calls from doctors following hospital discharge as well as referrals to mental health nurses and talking therapy.
- A patient at the [University Health Service](#) appreciated being seen by the same doctor for their gender care. It has helped them build a trusting

relationship with the doctor.

- After feeling their mental health concerns were dismissed by their doctor at a previous surgery, one person told us they are now at [Sloan Medical Centre](#) where they find the staff 'really understanding'.

What could be better?

- A couple members of the group reported negative changes in attitudes from their doctors once they had disclosed their sexuality or that they were in a same-sex relationship.
- Older members of the group told us that their GPs often refused to talk about multiple health conditions in one appointment, which they found too restrictive.

"They say they can 'only deal with one problem at a time', but health concerns are holistic and can't easily be separated"

"As you get older, things overlap. You can't talk about things in isolation"

- Some people reported waits of over six weeks to hear back from a referral for [Sheffield Talking Therapies](#). In one case, someone told us they had submitted a self-referral form for the service twice in the past year and had never heard back.
- For those that had accessed Talking Therapies in recent months, they were unsure if they had benefited from the service.

"They were there for you but I didn't feel anything had changed. Just felt like they were going through the motions"

- Some found that the completing the questionnaires required to access mental health services were difficult for those whose mood and condition fluctuate frequently or who struggle to make sense of what they are experiencing. As a result, people had been signposted between services unable to satisfy the criteria for each one.

"I don't know where to go [for mental health support] now or who to get in touch with"

- People told us that the lack of sleeping facilities at the [Decisions Unit](#), as well as staff talking and laughing throughout the night, was not conducive to improving their mental health during their stay.

Ideas for improvement

- Improve education and training for healthcare professionals around LGBTQ+ inclusivity to prevent discrimination and stigma against patients.
- Better signposting to social groups at GP surgeries and on social media to increase awareness of things to do within the community. This could also be achieved through social prescribing where possible.
- Offer a wider range of services and social activities on evenings and weekends to accommodate people who work irregular shift patterns or who find mornings a barrier to engaging.

“I don’t work 9–5 so there might be something on near me but I can’t make it, which is a barrier”

“I struggle with mornings due to mental health difficulties. Mornings are a non-starter for me. Things are best when after 12pm”

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 those at Rainbow Minds for having us and for sharing 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.

Healthwatch Sheffield report

[Your Voice Counts: Experiences of trans and non-binary people using GP services in Sheffield](#)