

Quarterly report

January-March 23

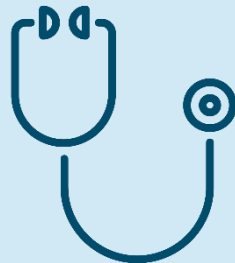
Heard from **905** people about their views and experiences



We were commissioned to do a project on peoples experiences of Palliative and End of Life Care



Published our GP websites report



Produced a briefing to share the findings of our project on the Cost of living crisis and access to healthcare



Had a South Yorkshire Healthwatch away day for staff and volunteers to meet, and learn from each other.



Launched the first round of Long Covid Grants, designed to help communities speak up about their experiences



1. Introduction

This quarter has been a busy one - it's always a challenge to focus on finishing work from the current year, alongside the planning process to help us decide and set our priorities for a new work plan. It's important to us that the priorities we pick are ones which matter to people in Sheffield, so hearing people's views on what the Healthwatch focus should be is a key part of the decision-making process - and this takes time.

Alongside getting out and about to hear people's views on the Healthwatch priorities, we started work this quarter to hear people's views on the NHS South Yorkshire forward plan. We were able to make best use of some of our visits to some groups, to help inform both those pieces of work; we had conversations about what mattered to people in relation to health and wellbeing, and what they would like to see improved in terms of health and care services.

After a substantial piece of work undertaken by staff and volunteers to audit GP websites in Sheffield, we were pleased to publish our report on this in early January. It set out a clear picture of inequity of digital access to services across Sheffield. NHS South Yorkshire has responded with a commitment to commission support for practices to develop and improve their websites.

We also published a briefing on the impact of the cost of living crisis on people's access to healthcare, based on the work done by the medical student on placement with us at the end of last quarter. Mina returned as a volunteer to turn the information she had gathered into a shareable report, which has now been taken to a wide range of relevant meetings and discussions in the city.

Finally, in January, we were pleased to be able to bring together Healthwatch Staff and volunteers for an away day at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park. It was a chance to find out more about each other's work, and think about how we might work together more in the future. We officially signed the Collaboration Agreement which we had been working on over the past year.

2. Enquiries, Information and Advice

Members of the public can tell us about their experiences of health and social care services in the Sheffield region so that we can then share their views and opinions with decision makers. We also offer specific information and advice about their care. Giving information about health and social care services is one of our statutory duties.

Enquiries we receive may include finding out about people's rights to treatment, what services may be available to them, or how to raise a concern about a negative experience they have had. We help people to find the right information as well as signposting them to further support if needed. Sometimes we can help people with their question immediately, whilst other situations may be more complex and may involve supporting the individual for a longer period of time.

Between January and March 2023, we received **106** enquiries relating to people's experiences of health and social care services. The people we heard from reached out to us through our website, email, and by telephone. Prominent themes have continued this quarter and we have continued to hear from those who have struggled to get through to their GP via phone to access both routine and urgent care appointments. People are still being held in long queuing systems and have often been told no appointments were available. Furthermore, we have continued to hear from those who have been unable to access NHS dentistry. We were pleased, however, this quarter to discover a very small number of practices taking on new NHS patients and have been able to signpost people to this provision.

Feedback was shared in relation to community pharmacies and we heard about some medications being out of stock. Patients told us they have had to phone around other pharmacies to try and locate items in stock and have had to sometimes travel further to pick their medication up. People also expressed concerns related to mental health services, this was mainly linked to issues with communication and experiencing long delays when trying to access services. We heard about calls being unanswered or requests for call-backs not being followed through, people said they often felt forgotten about or left.



Case Studies

Access to NHS Dentistry

***Anika** had been trying to find a dentist for the last 3 years, she just kept being added to different practices' waiting lists. Anika checked the NHS website regularly and discovered most practices said they were accepting NHS patients but when she called they never were. She didn't even know if she was actually added to some of the waiting lists as when she called to find out the wait times she was surprised to be re-added to the list again. Anika had a lot of dental issues which were causing significant pain, and impacting her daily activities, Anika stated she was getting desperate, as she couldn't afford to pay for private treatment, she applied for a credit card to help with the costs but was unsuccessful. Anika also had 3 children who hadn't seen a dentist for a long time and needed routine check-ups.

***Imran** called us to say he was struggling to access NHS dentistry, he is a student and can't afford private treatment. He had previously had emergency treatment - a root canal, but this was only a temporary fix so was needing further treatment. He had contacted over 100 practices in Sheffield and the surrounding areas but nobody would see him. Imran told us if he didn't get the treatment he needed he would lose his tooth. He contacted 111 but was told he could not access any help due to the situation not being classed as an emergency

**names have been changed*

3. Website

Between January and March 2023 our website had 1802 visitors - a small increase on last quarter - and 6016 page views.

Our most popular news pages were those inviting people to [shape our priorities for 2023-25](#) and providing information about our [upcoming Long Covid community grants scheme](#).

Our most popular report was the [GP website health check](#) - an analysis of 74 GP websites across Sheffield.

4. CQC / Sharing intelligence

CQC: This quarter we have shared one piece of intelligence with the CQC

Healthwatch England: Previously we routinely shared anonymised data from enquires and feedback with Healthwatch England via our CRM system, and also by sending them our monthly roundup. This quarter our CRM system was decommissioned and we have been working with Healthwatch England to set up data sharing on their new digital platform, which will be doing on a monthly basis in the future. This connection with Healthwatch England helps us influence policy at a national level.

What have we been hearing?: This quarter we have shared three roundup reports with statutory partners, commissioners and service providers to highlight the issues that people are talking to us about. These are picked up in different ways, and have become a regular item for discussion at the Health and Wellbeing Board.

NHS dentistry: In January we submitted evidence to the government select committee inquiry - this was a summary of the issues which people have shared with us about their experiences of seeking NHS dental care in Sheffield.

Sheffield Teaching Hospital Quality Objectives: This quarter we shared information about patient experiences to help the hospital decide what the focus should be for the next year's set of quality objectives.

5. Young and Student Healthwatch

In our last quarterly report we talked about the medical student on placement with us (Mina), who did a piece of work on the cost of living and access to healthcare - this project was not exclusively young people, but we heard from a number of students about their experiences . During this quarter, Mina returned to work with us as a volunteer to develop a briefing on the work that she had done. See the reports section for more on this.

6. Community Partnerships

The Community Partnership programme is a way for us to connect with voluntary sector organisations, working together to raise the voices of the people they support. We now have 12 [community partners](#), who help link us to a range of communities.

We produce regular newsletters for our community partners, but there is no fixed approach for the way the partnership works; we work flexibly to find ways that we can support each other in helping people have their say about health and social care services in Sheffield. This quarter, we asked our community partners what they thought Healthwatch should focus on during 2023-25, to help us in setting our priorities for the workplan.

7. #SpeakUp Grants

2022-23 projects

This year, five organisations received #SpeakUp funding:

- [Sheffield ME & Fibromyalgia Group](#): This project involves asking the group's network of members about their experiences of care related to ME/Fibromyalgia, in order to gain further understanding of the barriers people face.
- [Sheffield Foyer](#): A project with young residents of the Foyer to talk about sexual health - this focusses on understanding experiences and barriers to accessing sexual health services, as well as providing information on sexual health.

- [United Women's Affiliation](#): Working with women who do not have English as a first language, this project aims to understand their experiences of accessing health services and providing information on health and wellbeing.
- [Sheffcare](#): A project focussing on talking to care home residents and their families about their experiences with COVID-19 lockdowns and visiting restrictions.
- [Champion in Achieving Better Health in Sheffield \(CABS\)](#): This project involves speaking with South Asian taxi drivers to hear about their health needs and what the barriers are for them to access and achieve better health outcomes.

This quarter we finished writing the reports for the work from Sheffield Foyer, United Women's Affiliation and Sheffcare - these are just waiting for final sign off and will be published early next quarter. We will also be launching a new round of #SpeakUp Grants for activities to take place over the summer.

8. Projects, Involvement and Engagement

Maternity Outreach Project

We have been continuing our interviews about maternity services with women from Black, Asian and Minoritised ethnic groups. This work will be concluded next quarter.

Understanding the experiences of older people from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups

At the beginning of 2023, we funded two organisations to work with us on engagement activities with their clients for the Age UK Sheffield project. Our engagement officer worked with these two organisations to design and deliver these sessions, which we attended alongside their staff and volunteers.

Sadacca held a consultation exercise at their older people's lunch club where a small team of staff and volunteers interviewed 12 people.

Roshni (Asian Women's Centre) organised a focus group of 17 women from Highfields, Sharrow, Darnall and Tinsley. The group was facilitated by our engagement officer and two interpreters (Bengali and Urdu).

Both events were lively and people were engaged, they have produced excellent information about the experiences of the group. We will be writing a report on this in the next quarter.

Long Covid

The Long Covid project continues to work on the activities set out in its plan, shaped by the Theory of Change which was developed by the steering group. This quarter, activity has included supporting engagement between Long Covid services and community organisations - there have been three information sessions delivered at community events. The project has also facilitated patient representation at the Long Covid Programme Board and taken part in the Long Covid Patient Journey Workshop facilitated by the Long Covid Hub.

The project Steering group has continued to meet monthly - the next step (driven by this group) is the creation of a Long Covid Network; the first meeting of the sub-group will be in April. This sub-group has agreed to manage the membership and set the agenda for the network.

The first stage of Long Covid Community Grants Programme was launched in March with high levels of interest from a wide range of community groups; 31 different community organisations signed up to attend the event and received information about the grants programme. 24 of these attended the event which included a long Covid information session delivered by the Long Covid Hub as well as a workshop to share ideas about activities to undertake using the grants. This first round of grants are for £1000 each, to enable organisations to do a small piece of work capturing the experiences of people in their community. We hope to learn more about what people understand about Long Covid, and what their experiences are of living with the condition. There is a particular focus on the experiences of people from black, Asian, and minoritised ethnic groups, as well as those from a lower socio-economic background.

In March, our Long Covid project Officer delivered an information session at the Community Champions event - there was great engagement and discussion with 25 community champions. These volunteers will be using the information they received to help them when they are having conversations about health with people in their community.

Finally, the project has conducted 3 in depth interviews in this quarter.

Integrated Care Board - Forward Plan

South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) want to hear from people in South Yorkshire to help them write their 'joint forward plan' - setting out how the NHS in South Yorkshire will work over the next 5 years.

Healthwatch in South Yorkshire have been commissioned to help with this work, by talking to groups and communities in each of our areas about what matters to them. We have been working on this since the end of February and will be continuing this until May. The information is shared with the ICB as we get it. There is also a survey for this work which can be accessed [here](#) .

Healthwatch Sheffield Priorities 2023-25

During this quarter we have been doing work to help us make a decision on our priorities for the next two years. As well as looking at what people have already told us throughout the year, we ran a survey and visited groups to hear their views. We also ran three public meetings (two online and one in person). We will decide this year's priorities based on:

- The topics people tell us are important to them
- Feedback we've been hearing over the previous year
- Changes that are happening in the health & care system
- Opportunities to make the biggest impact for local people

Our Strategic Advisory Group will help us to make a final decision about our priorities. We'll publish our workplan next quarter so people know what we are focussing on.

End of Life Care

This quarter we were commissioned by the Integrated Care Board (Sheffield) to do a piece of work on End of Life Care. This is to support the development of a system wide strategy for End of Life Care, and to inform the commissioning of services which is now the responsibility of the ICB. For this piece of work we will be supporting the design and distribution of a survey, as well as doing interviews and focus groups to hear more in depth stories of people's experiences.

9. Reports

What have we been hearing?

This quarter we published two of our monthly intelligence briefings - from [December-January](#) and from [February](#). These briefings highlight key themes from our enquiries and other intelligence sources, and are shared with local decision-makers and service providers so they can hear timely feedback from Sheffield residents.

In these briefings we shared some ongoing themes - such as accessing NHS dentistry. We have also shared feedback about telephone GP appointments, mental health services, hospital and maternity care and more.

This quarter we also began sharing information from Sheffield Community Champion volunteers in our monthly briefings, to help share the insights they gather from local people with a wider audience. Originally set up at the start of the Covid lockdown, the Community Champions operate across selected communities in Sheffield, partnering up with community organisations that support those communities. Conversations began to grow beyond Covid-19 and into other aspects of health and wellbeing, and champions now cross over a broader health spectrum, engaging in conversations, signposting to health providers and service agencies as well as providing information. The champions are volunteers who are having conversations with peers within their local area.

GP website health check

In January we published our [GP website health check](#) report. People regularly tell us that they can't get through to their GP on the phone, but also can't access the services they need - such as booking appointments - online. As a result of this feedback, we analysed 74 GP practice websites across Sheffield to understand more about the local picture.

We highlighted many examples of good practice within the report, where patients could access a range of support or information online. We did also find some issues that would impact on people's ability to access primary care. Some of our key findings were:

- Only 11 of the 74 websites allowed new patients register entirely online - most patients will have to visit the practice to fill in paperwork, which can be difficult for some people.
- 46 of the 74 websites asked patients for proof of ID/address in order to register - requiring this evidence isn't in line with NHS guidance and leaves some of our most vulnerable communities, such as homeless people or refugees, without access to a GP.
- Nearly half the websites don't have a translation tool for the site, meaning patients who don't speak English will struggle to access their services. Very few sites had any other accessibility features at all.

Our report makes several recommendations to GP practices, as well as to the Integrated Care Board (ICB) who may be able to support GP practice to improve their websites through provision of standardised information, templates, or financial support. As well as publishing the summary report, we wrote to each individual GP practice to highlight areas of good practice on their website, and elements they could improve.

In March our Chief Officer appeared on BBC Radio Sheffield to talk about the report and its findings. A GP practice manager also appeared on the show.

Using Voice for Influence



NHS South Yorkshire responded to our report by approving plans to provide practices with support to improve their websites, including the development of suggested content for surgeries to adapt and use as they wish.

The impact of the cost-of-living crisis on access to healthcare

At the end of 2022, we undertook a project to understand how the cost-of-living crisis has impacted people's health and wellbeing, as well as their access to care and support. With the help of Mina, a medical student who was with us on placement, we ran a survey, visited a range of groups, and went out and about across the city to speak to a range of people. The resulting briefing can be found [here](#).

We found that:

- People are worried about their financial futures
- People are finding certain healthcare services like eye care and dentistry harder to access
- People are struggling to afford medication costs
- People are cutting back on activities that improve their health and wellbeing
- People are struggling to afford travel costs

In further discussions with representatives from voluntary sector organisations in the city that we've since had, it seems clear that this is an issue affecting many people - Now Then magazine published an article about the findings which you can read [here](#). Staff at Voluntary Action Sheffield (our host organisation) have supported us with raising awareness of the issues in the briefing at relevant meetings in the city and the briefing has now been shared in a wide range of discussions.

As a result of this project we will be:

- Looking to develop information resources about support with health costs
- Talking with health and care providers about how they can improve the information given to people about help available

Using Voice for Influence



NHS South Yorkshire responded to our briefing by producing resources range of ways in which people can get financial support to access the care that they need. We are also talking to Sheffield Teaching Hospitals to ask for improvements to the way that they share information about help with the cost of travel to appointments.

10. Quality Accounts

In May 2022 we responded to local NHS Trust's 2021-22 Quality Accounts. This quarter the final account was published, and can be viewed online:

- [Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust](#)

This year we were invited to attend the new Sheffield Teaching Hospitals (STH) Quality Account Steering Group. This has helped us to see and comment on their progress against this year's objectives in a more timely way. We have also been able to contribute to STH's work in setting their objectives for next year.

We expect to receive draft 2022-23 Quality Accounts from the local NHS Trusts in the next quarter.

11. Health & Care Public Forum (Sheffield)

The forum met 3 times this quarter, during meetings, the following work areas were discussed:

- **Diabetes Action Hub** - Discussed important considerations when involving patients and the public in influencing the work.
- **Sheffield Teaching Hospital's PROUD values** - Heard about the proposed PROUD behaviours framework and further opportunities to be involved in shaping the work.
- **Patient transport at the Northern General Hospital Site** -The group put forward what they would like to see in terms of accessible transport for the public around the hospital site, to help inform decision makers who were considering different options.
- **Compassionate Sheffield** - Received an update on this programme of work and shared some experiences around death.
- **Sheffield Children's Hospital** -The forum shared what safety and quality mean to them and what good experiences look like, to help influence the development of the hospital's Quality, Safety and Experience Strategy, and they were updated on the Clinical Strategy. They also commented on the hospital's proposed care experience and engagement approach.

Some of our forum members took part in some additional activities this quarter.

- We supported 4 forum members to become involved in the **challenge groups** in **Leading Sheffield**, a system-wide leadership development programme. They helped the groups think about how to involve patients and the public in their work to address 'wicked problems' in the system.
- Three forum members were involved in designing and delivering our presentation about **patient and public involvement** to the **Leading Sheffield** participants at the launch event.

- Forum members attended a '**Talking about Race**' workshop alongside Healthwatch Sheffield staff to help improve confidence when talking about race.

12. Local decision making

The Health and Care Bill is new legislation which has made changes to the way the NHS is organised - on 1st July new **Integrated Care Boards** (ICBs) were set up across the country in each sub-region. These boards will work with partnerships of local organisations such as voluntary sector organisations and local authorities, as part of an **Integrated Care System (ICS)**. Sheffield is now part of the **South Yorkshire ICS**.

This is important to the work of Healthwatch because our role is to influence and improve the way services are run. In the new system, some decisions about Sheffield services will be made at a South Yorkshire level - this means we need to have routes to influence decisions in this new structure.

During this quarter we have:

- Continued to work with other South Yorkshire Healthwatch to promote the importance of public involvement and citizen voice in the new structure.
- Been commissioned to do work on the
- Signed our South Yorkshire Healthwatch Collaboration Agreement, which sets out our approach to working together as local Healthwatch in South Yorkshire.
- Held an away day event to bring together staff and volunteers (including board members) from the four different areas. This will take place in January.
- Worked locally to contribute to conversations about the connections between Sheffield 'Place' and the South Yorkshire arrangements
- Started meeting regularly with Engagement and Involvement leaders at the ICB, to ensure that our work at Healthwatch is connected to work taking place at a South Yorkshire level
- Started attending the Quality, Performance and Patient Experience sub-committee of the ICB.
- Submitted a case for support to the ICB - this sets out how Healthwatch can support the work of the ICB, and what resource is needed to enable this to happen.

Healthwatch has a non-voting place on the ICB where we have the opportunity to bring insight from our work, and constructive challenge to the system in our role as a critical friend. As an interim measure, the Healthwatch Sheffield Chief Officer has taken this

place while we develop a longer term plan to ensure we can be fully effective in our work with the board.

Locally, our Chair has been attending the **Health and Care Partnership Board** meetings, and has been active in contributing to discussion around the future of how services will work together as Sheffield Place. This also links to the role that we have currently facilitating the Health and Care Public Forum, giving people and patients an opportunity to directly hear about and comment on locally developed plans (see section above).

We will continue to advocate for the importance of involving people in decision making, wherever those decisions are made.

13. Supporting services to involve people

During this quarter we have worked in partnership with services to help them plan and deliver engagement and involvement work / activities, including:

Integrated Care System

- In partnership with the other local Healthwatch, we held two online discussion groups for people in Sheffield and other areas in South Yorkshire to find out what mattered to them about their health and wellbeing. The sessions enabled people to find out about the Integrated Care System (ICS) and to discuss what the priorities should be for improving the health and care of people in South Yorkshire. This was for the development of the **ICS Strategy**.
- We helped plan and deliver a workshop which how **Voluntary Sector Organisations** can share insights and experiences of the people they support, in order to influence changes and improvements in how health services are delivered.

Mental Health Services

- **Mental health** - We contributed to mental health transformation work by attending the Primary and Community Mental Health Transformation Programme Board and the Community Mental Health Transformation Board. We also attended transformation engagement events to bring insights into the Primary Care transformation and work around person centred care.

Long Covid Board

The Long Covid Board wanted to involve someone with lived experience as a member of the board. We worked with them to think through what would be needed to get this in place, and then supported them with the recruitment of a person who wanted to take up this role.

14. Volunteers

This quarter, volunteers contributed at least **194** hours of their time to support us in our work. They helped with administrative work in our office, helped with specific project work, and represented us at committees and boards. They also took part in Health and Care Public Forum (HCP Forum) meetings and Strategic Advisory Group (SAG) meetings.

Strategic Advisory Group

Our Strategic Advisory Group (SAG) are a group of volunteers who help to oversee and steer our work. This quarter they met two times, and discussed a variety of strategic and operational topics - this included a focus on making a decision about the Healthwatch priority areas should be over the next 2 years. Some of our SAG members also regularly attend meetings on our behalf, including Health and Wellbeing Board, Sheffield Health and Care Partnership, Primary Care Commissioning, Area Prescribing Group, and the Learning Disability Partnership Board. Next quarter the group will be reviewing the meetings that Healthwatch attends, to consider whether we are in the right places to effectively champion the voice of the public and patients in Sheffield.

Volunteering highlights

This quarter 10 volunteers joined our staff team at the South Yorkshire Healthwatch away day. This was a great opportunity for some of our volunteers - who might work on different topics - to get to know one another, as well as our staff team, and the staff and volunteers from local Healthwatch in Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham.

Another aim of the day was for local Healthwatch in South Yorkshire to shape the way we work together across the region, and volunteers were able to bring their experiences of working with us into these discussions.

Volunteers who attended the away day told us they enjoyed it and felt they got a lot out of it.



15. Healthwatch Team

This quarter our Engagement and Involvement Officer **Nupur Chowdhury** left the team.

We have had two members of staff from Voluntary Action Sheffield join us on a temporary basis to do work on different projects:

Winnie Lutakome has spent time interviewing women about their experiences of maternity services - Winnie was able to use her connections within the New Beginnings Project to hear from women, many of whom were new arrivals to the UK.

Olga Gontsova has worked with us to connect with groups and talk to people about their priorities in relation to health and care. This has helped us with our work to develop our next set of priorities, and has been part of the commissioned work that we are doing for NHS South Yorkshire to inform their forward plan.

We also welcomed a new Project Support Assistant to provide support to forums and meetings that we run, with a particular focus on the Long Covid work. **Mina Clarke** has stepped into this role, having been with us on a medical student placement previously, and also volunteering with us.

16. Coming up - What next for Healthwatch Sheffield?

We will launch the next round of #SpeakUp grants for organisations to apply

We will decide and publish the priorities for our work in 2023-25

We will publish the remaining the #SpeakUp reports and share them with people who make decisions about health and care services in Sheffield

We will start work on our project for Palliative and End of Life Care

Using Voice for Influence



As well as sharing our intelligence in our written round ups, staff and volunteers regularly raise feedback and share experiences in the meetings they attend. Taking part in meetings helps us stay informed about developments in services, and enables us to promote the importance of listening to, and involving people, in shaping those developments. This quarter, we have attended the following meetings, boards and committees:

- Health and Wellbeing Board
- Lived Experience and Co-production Assurance Group (Sheffield Health and Social Care Trust)
- Integrated Care Board (NHS South Yorkshire)
- Quality, Performance, Patient Involvement and Experience Committee (NHS South Yorkshire)
- Learning Disability Partnership Board
- Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee - Sheffield City Council
- Area Prescribing Committee
- Community Mental Health Team Review
- VAS weekly network meetings
- Health and Care Strategy meeting - voluntary sector
- Sheffield Health and Care Partnership Board
- Addressing Health Inequalities - Children's Hospital
- South Yorkshire Local Dental Network
- Sheffield Teaching Hospitals Quality Report Steering Group
- Patient Engagement and Experience Committee - Sheffield Teaching Hospitals
- Strategic Care Home transformation oversight group

Representatives from other Healthwatch in South Yorkshire also attend a range of meetings on behalf of our region, giving us an opportunity to feed into other areas of work including:

- South Yorkshire Integrated Care Partnership
- South Yorkshire Mental Health / Crisis care meetings