



October-December 2021



About us

About Healthwatch Wiltshire

Healthwatch Wiltshire is your local health and social care champion. As an independent statutory body, we have the power to make sure NHS leaders and other decision makers listen to local feedback and improve standards of care. We also help people to find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.

Our priorities

For 2021/22 are:

Primary care

- Gathering feedback on primary care services such as GP surgeries and dentists with a focus on access – both face to face and digital.

Mental health

- Listening to experiences of mental health services and shaping service redesign.

Children and young people

- Young Healthwatch volunteers will identify areas important to them and seek the views of children and young people.

Discharge pathways

- Hearing experiences of the discharge process from acute hospital to home.



Highlights

Heard the views of 650 people about access to GP services



Published 4 reports



Heard from over 100 GP surgery staff about their experiences



Continued to update our advice and information pages on Covid-19



Heard the experiences of more than 100 young people at Wiltshire Colleges



Talking & listening



1,094 people shared their experience of services with us

we attended **17** meetings, forums or events

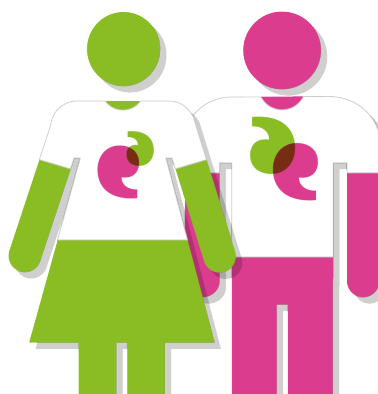


102 contacts were given information and signposted through our Helpdesk Hub Team...

...with an average call time of **24** minutes

21 volunteers were involved...

...and volunteered over **332** hours

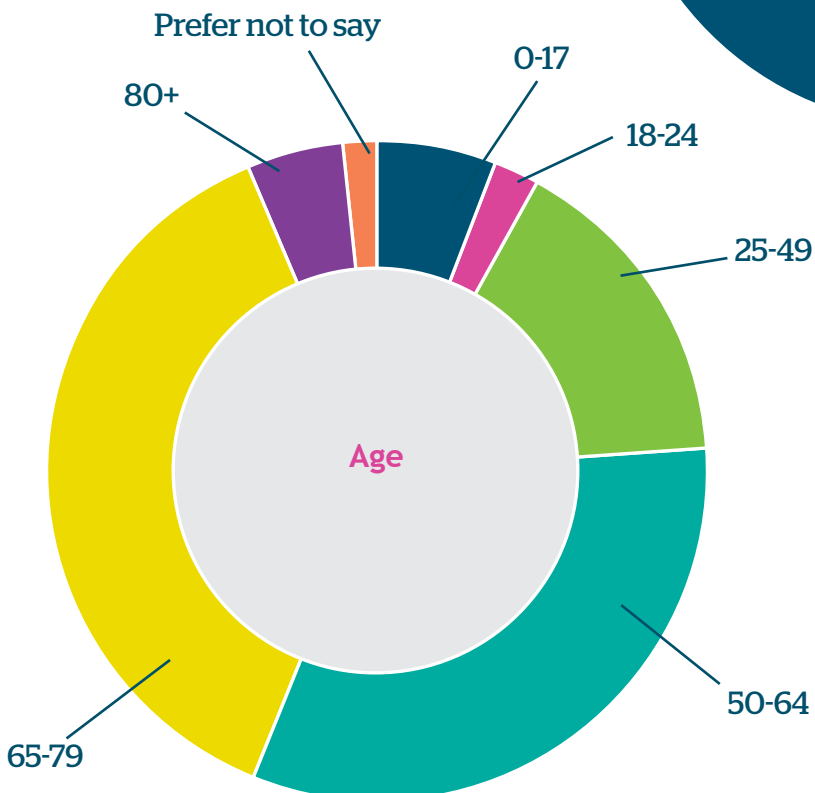
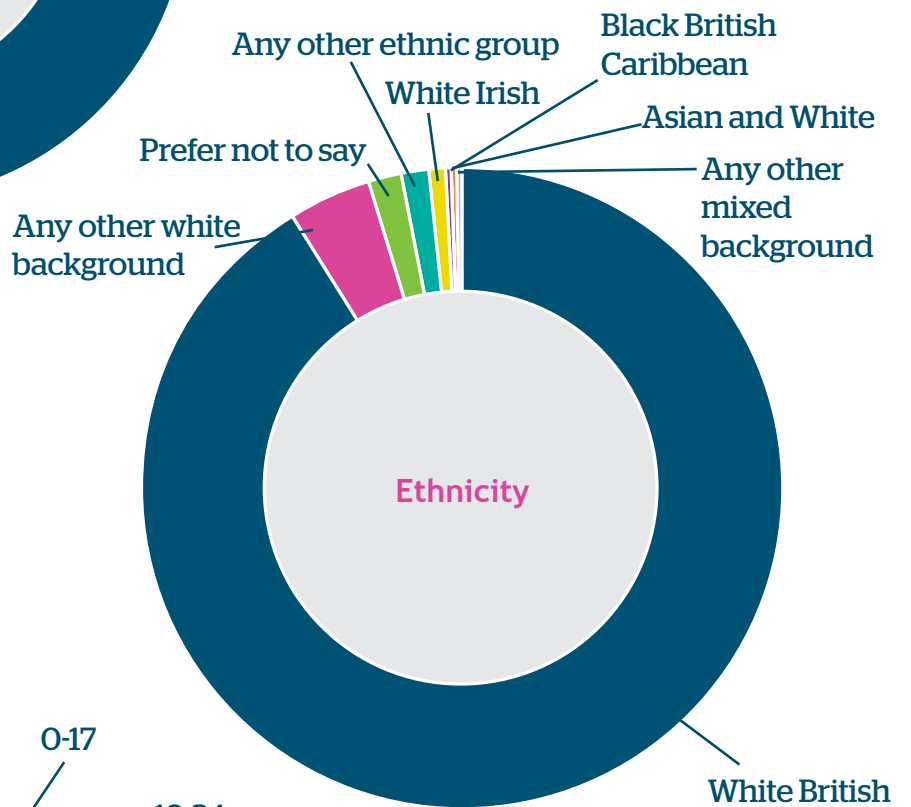
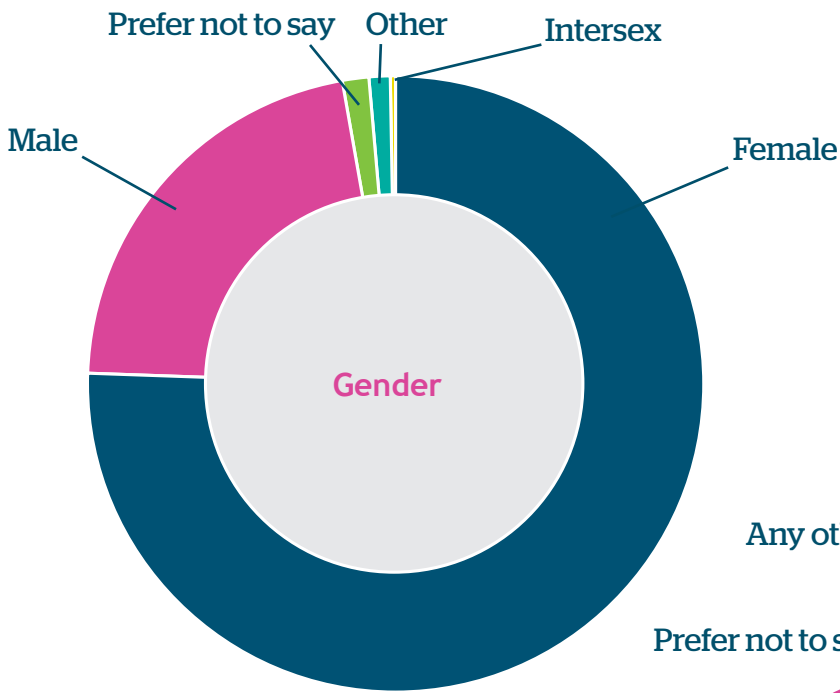


267 social media posts...

...reached **43,275** people

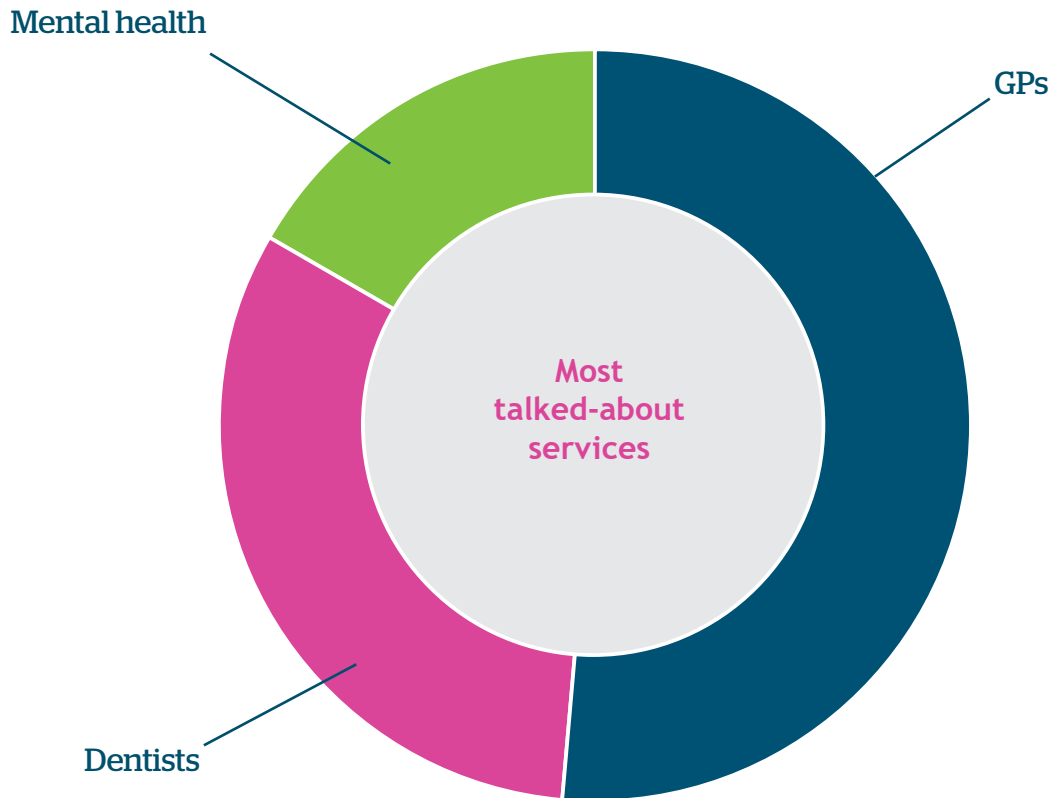
...and our website received **10,295** page views

Who shared their experience with us?



*Demographics not collected for all interactions.

What services did people speak to us about?



What were the comments about?

Service	Positive	Negative
GPs	Staff attitudes	Access
Dentists	-	Access
Mental health	-	Access



Our work

Hearing your experiences of GP services

The Covid-19 pandemic has put a huge strain on the NHS and had an impact on how we access health services.

Staff at GP practices have been working hard to deliver the vaccine programme, catch up on the backlog of treatments and respond to new ways of working such as offering video and telephone consultations and providing online consultation software such as e-consult.

We've heard that these new ways of accessing GP services have worked well for some people, allowing them to save time and get the help they need, quickly. But for others it's been more difficult, time consuming and frustrating to access support when they need it.

We ran a survey for GP surgery staff to hear their views and experiences and received over 100 responses telling us what staff think is working well and what could be improved.

Following on from the staff survey, in November we launched a public survey to hear your experiences of accessing GP services. This closed at the end of December and 650 people shared their views with us.

Thank you to all who took part. We are now analysing what we heard and will be sharing this with local leaders and the NHS so we can help them understand what is working well and what could be better, so that together we can find solutions.

Hearing from young people at Wiltshire college

In December, we were invited by Wiltshire College and University Centre to host a stand at their four campuses at Chippenham, Lackham, Trowbridge and Salisbury.

During our visits we spoke to over 100 young people about their experiences of health and care services. Most of the feedback we received related to GP services, Covid

vaccinations, and dentistry. Other services mentioned included Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), A&E, pharmacies, and counselling services.

We were really pleased to be invited and have more work lined up with Wiltshire college over the coming months to allow us to hear more from their students.

Visiting Wiltshire Hearing Voices Group

In November, we went along to [Wiltshire Hearing Voices Group](#), one of our Community Cash Fund winners for this year.

The group provides a safe and non-judgemental space for people with unusual sensory experiences – such as hearing, seeing, feeling, sensing and tasting things that others do not – to share experiences and coping strategies.

We spoke to the 12 people who attended

the group and they shared with us their experiences of being sectioned, admission to inpatient wards, the crisis line and early intervention team.

The overall feeling from the group was that they were not being given the help and support they needed to manage their mental health.

Find out more about the [Community Cash Fund](#) on our website.

Reaching out to the boating community

One of our team went out with the asymptomatic testing van ran by Wiltshire Council, which aims to support communities that may find it harder to access Covid-19 tests.

We went along to the Barge at Honey Street in Pewsey and were able to speak to several live-aboard boaters to hear their experiences of health and care services.

Key messages included:

- Difficulty accessing GP services without a registered address and that it would be helpful to have a card that set out their rights to NHS services
- Problems of getting to appointments due to the sparse public/bus transport connections to Swindon and other main hospital centres
- Access to dentistry
- The problems encountered when boaters were chronically ill and needing home visits.

- We also discussed the issue of mental health and isolation, particularly over the pandemic and information on mental health resources and how to access mental health services were shared.

Following on from this visit, we are now setting up Healthwatch information hubs at the Barge and other canalside venues to give more live-aboard boaters the opportunity to hear about our work and share their experiences.



Our response to Covid-19

Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, our focus has been on ensuring that people can find the information that they need easily.

Information around the Covid booster vaccine and where to get tested saw the highest number of page visits to our website during this quarter, but away from the pandemic people sought advice on where to get mental health support.

Articles added to our advice and information pages between October and December include:

- What you need to know about your Covid booster appointment.
- What is adult social care?
- What you need to know when visiting a care home.

[Visit our website](#) to find out more.





What people said

Access to GP is awful. Lots of people are complaining about getting access if you want to see the same doctor. She has mental health issues and weekly meetings with a specific doctor. She has PTSD [Post Traumatic Stress Disorder] and ongoing spinal and bladder issues so it is hopeless being shunted between different doctors. She needed diazepam but the doctor with whom she had an appointment had not read her notes and queried everything. Very poor coordination between social care, doctor and housing.

Had a breast cancer scare and was seen (by GP) within the hour. Had follow-up at hospital a week later. Subsequently had a patella bursitis and called the doctor as I was having problems. I got a face to face appointment that afternoon. They called back when they said they would and I was booked in for surgery.

I referred a client from Mere (for IAPT) [Talking Therapies] but the GP said this area was not covered.

I was given no advice or help (mental health nurse), long waiting time, was spoken to like a 2-year-old, sent away with a stack of useless leaflets.

Signposting story

A lady got in touch with us regarding her mother who has mental health issues. She was enquiring as to whether there were any local social groups or daytime activities that may be suitable for her mother to attend, as she has few friends and only sees her carers and husband.

We were able to signpost her to adult social care who could advice on daytime clubs and groups. We also sent information about Wiltshire Mind and other local organisations that may provide clubs and groups suitable for her mother to attend.



Making a difference

People with autism spectrum conditions reveal stresses of seeing a doctor

People with autism spectrum conditions say seeing a doctor is stressful, find it hard to explain their symptoms and often don't understand what they're being told about their treatment.

These are some of the key findings of our work gathering the views of people with autism and their carers about health, care and support services in Wiltshire.

In a joint project with Wiltshire Service Users' Network (WSUN), which runs the Wiltshire Autism Hub, [we listened to the experiences of more than 100 people](#) to understand what it's like to go for an appointment with a doctor or nurse, and what they think of other support that's available.

The majority of the people we spoke to felt that there's a lack of understanding about autism spectrum conditions, and of what can be done to alleviate the difficulties people experience.

Another key theme was the lack of services and groups for people with autism spectrum conditions, with most relying on support from family members.

What people told us

- We heard that an appointment with a doctor or nurse can cause considerable anxiety and stress for someone with an autism spectrum condition.



- People with autism had difficulties explaining things to health professionals and understanding what they were told about their treatment.
 - Hospital environments are particularly difficult for those with an autism spectrum condition.
 - Experiences of phone and video appointments were mixed, but the responses we received suggested these had benefits for some people.
 - Most of those with autism spectrum conditions and their carers did not feel they got enough support related to their condition.
 - Other support services were valued but we were told there was not enough of them, or enough information about them, with most relying on support from family members.

Those we spoke to have identified a range of ways to improve their experience of health and care services, and we'll be monitoring how these services are developed in the future so they can better support people with autism.

Clare O'Farrell, Director of Locality Commissioning for Wiltshire at Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group (BSW CCG), said: "The report is very timely as we are coming together with system partners as part of the Learning Disabilities and Autism Transformation Programme, and this report will ensure the views and feedback from people, and carers of people that have a diagnosis of autism, are at the forefront of future projects."

Experiences of GWH patients revealed in joint project

A joint Healthwatch project [looking at the experiences of patients using the Great Western Hospital \(GWH\)](#) in Swindon has revealed that while most people were satisfied with the care they'd received, there were areas where improvements could be made.

Working together to cover the catchment area of GWH patients, Healthwatch Wiltshire, Healthwatch Swindon and Healthwatch West Berkshire listened to the experiences of people that had used the Emergency Department (ED) and Urgent Care and four inpatient wards during July 2021. A mix of online surveys, Covid-safe face to face visits, virtual interviews, and phone calls were used to gather feedback from a total of 196 people.

What people told us

- Staffing pressures and shortages were widely recognised by patients and the impact that this had on care.
- Most people said they had first sought help from other services before attending ED or Urgent Care.
- While negative comments focused around long wait times in ED, three quarters of respondents rated the quality of treatment they'd received there as good or very good.
- Many suggested having more urgent appointments available at other services would help reduce the need to go to ED.

- Most people were satisfied with the quality of care and treatment they had received on the wards, with many praising the kindness of staff.
- A small number did not feel they had been treated with dignity and respect, didn't feel involved in their care, or felt safe.
- Food was seen as an area that could be improved, with concerns raised about special diets not being catered for.
- While the discharge process worked for some, for many there were delays and communication was raised as an issue.
- Carers reported a worse experience generally than patients themselves.



Lisa Cheek, Chief Nurse at Great Western Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, said: “The experience of patients is key to helping us improve the care we provide and my thanks go to Healthwatch for providing us with this rich body of evidence... and to those patients who gave their views as part of this process. We will use this document alongside other... feedback to make improvements.”

Mental health forum marks its first year

The Wiltshire Mental Health Open Forum was established in August 2020, and is run jointly between Healthwatch Wiltshire, mental health service users, and mental health service provider Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust (AWP).

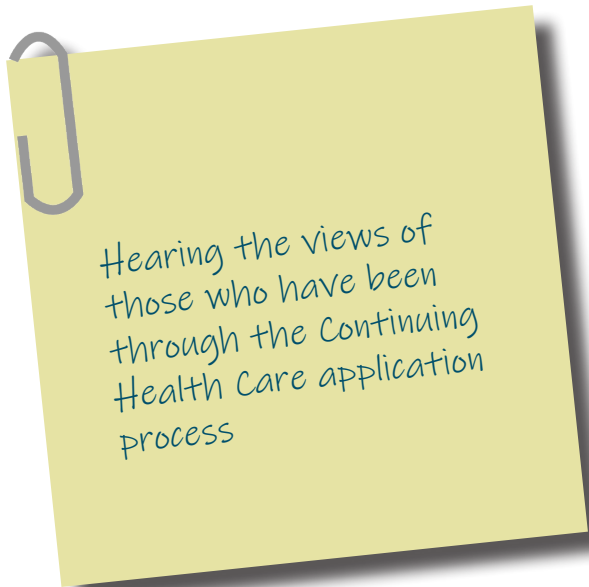
The forum, which now has more than 80 members, provides a safe space for service users, and those who support them, to speak directly to those who run mental health services, to get involved in helping to shape

the design of these services and highlight gaps in mental health support. It also provides a platform for sharing information about support available and for organisations and groups to showcase the services and activities they provide.

Among the highlights of the forum's first year was creating mental health resources lists for adults and children and young people which so far have been downloaded from our website over 400 times. [Read more in our report.](#)



Coming up



Find out more about our work at healthwatchwiltshire.co.uk

healthwatch Wiltshire

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