

Experiences of health and social care in Sheffield

Key insights from October– November

During October and November 2024, we gathered insights from 569 individuals accessing health and social care services across Sheffield. Highlights have included care and treatment received from various multidisciplinary teams within GP practices and the Short-Term Intervention Team (STIT). We heard mixed views around hospital care and have been busy gathering people's opinions on the NHS 10 year plan.

Accessing GP services

This period, we collected feedback from 443 individuals who visited more than 37 different GP practices across the city. Among them, 84% (373 people) shared positive stories of their encounters with various multi-disciplinary staff, such as when attending physiotherapy sessions, receiving a flu or Covid booster or having a medication review.

Some patients raised concerns about the quality of consultation they had experienced, stating some GPs had lacked knowledge and expertise. In some cases, patients said they didn't get clear or useful advice, and a few were asked for their opinion on what their diagnosis should be. People seeking support for their mental health reported being given printouts of website links instead of personalised guidance or direct help, which many said was unhelpful.

We spoke with a group of asylum seekers to hear their experiences of Anima, an online system some GP practices use for medical queries and appointment requests. We heard many people were not aware Anima existed and those that did found it difficult to use and navigate. People noted medical terms often did not translate well and some languages were not available on the system. Other people also got in touch to share their views on Anima; their main concerns related to the system's data security and feeling pressured to use Anima when it was not accessible for them.

It was reported in some cases trans people were being denied hormone replacement therapy (HRT). For instance, we heard of one instance where



"I can't praise the physiotherapist enough."

"Nurse was polite and efficient and professional."

"I have found staff are not good with people who can't make appointments online."



a patient was prescribed HRT by their GP for many years but was denied further treatment after moving to a new GP practice. The new GP stated that prescribing HRT was the responsibility of their gender clinic, despite the patient expecting continuity of care. This refusal had a significant impact on the patient's mental health and caused delay to them accessing treatment.

"GP has abruptly stopped my hormone prescriptions."

Patients told us about the delays they are experiencing when getting their repeat prescriptions, causing inconvenience and worry. In some cases, the delays happened because medical reviews were overdue, but patients were frustrated as they couldn't access an appointment. This led to some patients having to contact NHS 111 to ensure they got their medications on time.



Some patients scheduled for blood pressure measurements reported unnecessary delays and frustration, as they assumed they were waiting to see a clinician and were not informed the self-service machine was available for immediate use.

"I wasted 40 minutes of my time sitting in the waiting area. That could have been avoided if information was provided."

We are still hearing from people who are struggling to get GP appointments, with 21 people sharing concerns recently. Many said they couldn't book routine appointments in advance and had to call on the day, which doesn't work for everyone. Patients who don't use the internet feel their GP surgery is becoming even harder to access.

Hospital Care

32 patients, family members and carers shared their experiences of hospital care with 31% (10 people) describing positive experiences. Highlights related to receiving good quality care and effective treatment from a range of different departments including neurology, the eye clinic and surgery.



"All the staff were amazing and really put me at ease."

People shared their experiences of a very busy A&E department and we heard on some occasions patients and carers were queueing outside the A&E entrance. It was noted people were standing outside for considerable periods of time and there was a lack of seating or wheelchairs available. People stated if this was going to be a regular occurrence, there should be seating available and wheelchairs on hand for those who need them.

"There were queues outside of the A & E doorway."

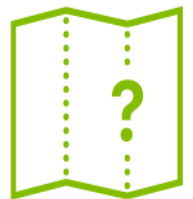
We've received feedback about the long waiting times that patients experience when they are referred to some secondary care services, with many not getting any updates on their situation. Many people report delays not just in getting their first appointment, but also in securing follow-up appointments after their initial visit.

People shared concerns about the B Road being restricted to pedestrians only, with vehicle access limited to emergency situations. As patients can't be dropped off directly at the hospital's main entrance and nearby parking is limited, attending appointments has become particularly difficult for some.

"Parking, particularly for people with disabilities at the Hallamshire, is appalling."

Lack of clear information for patients and clinicians

Patients seeking a specific brand of COVID-19 booster reported significant difficulties in obtaining information about which brands were being offered by services locally. They had previously experienced unpleasant reactions to a certain brand and wanted to avoid potential side effects. Even after contacting 119 or their own GP practice, they were still unable to get clear answers, leaving them uncertain about where to go to get their vaccine choice.



It was reported the policy for submitting Individual Funding Requests (IFR) to South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (SYICB) is unclear, leading to confusion. The policy, created in 2020 by the former Clinical Commissioning Group, does not provide clear instructions on how to make a request. This resulted in a clinician assuming a specific form was required and contacted SYICB for clarification. After a delayed response, they discovered that a form wasn't necessary and a standard letter was sufficient for this particular case. The lack of clarity caused unnecessary delays for the patient.

"Why is this information so difficult to obtain? "

Accessing dental care

Five people got in touch this period to seek advice on finding an NHS dentist. They had tried contacting local practices but none were able to secure an appointment. One person was unhappy with their dental care as they were concerned that they had been switched from being an NHS patient to a private patient without their consent.



Access to taxi services

A small number of people got in touch to share their frustrations of trying to access taxis as wheelchair users. One person noted during rainy weather a driver refused to exit their taxi to access the wheelchair ramp for them leaving them to try and get another taxi. Another individual reported being denied service because they didn't know the postcode to their destination even though they provided the driver with the name of the road. They were disappointed as they couldn't understand why the driver couldn't have looked up the information for them.

"They could have simply looked up the road name, but it felt like an excuse to avoid taking me."

NHS 10-year plan

We've been talking to people about the [NHS 10-year plan](#), listening to their experiences of NHS care, and getting their ideas for improvement. Many have praised NHS staff and said they have received good care when they have been able access services. Some key things people want to see in the plan include:

- Investment in staff and resources to include better pay, training, and medical equipment.
- Improved funding decision-making and accountability.
- Strengthened patient care and communication.
- Improved IT systems for better communication between NHS staff and departments reducing the need for repeated patient explanation.
- Increased appointment availability across all services.
- Improved availability for some services, such as NHS dentistry, mental health services, autism and ADHD services.
- Culturally appropriate care.
- Proactive interpreter support.
- Increased funding for hospice care.
- More availability of accessible information, such as easy-read documents.



"Dental health is not seen as human health right."

"Could do so much better with mental health services."

Short Term Intervention Team

People shared positive experiences of encounters with the Short Term Intervention Team (STIT) this period. It was reported that staff were kind and caring. One patient felt the care they had received from the team was instrumental to them making a quick recovery from their surgery.





Impact from our last briefing (Aug- Sept 2024)

Sheffield Teaching Hospitals and Sheffield Health and Social Care Trust have responded to our [last briefing](#) outlining how they plan to address areas for improvement. Their comments are in blue below.

Response from Sheffield Teaching Hospitals

Feedback relating to the loss of a specialist Hydrocephalus nurse – Following the move from Hydrocephalus support being provided by a specialist nurse to provision by the wider medical team five years ago, the neurosurgical team are planning some work to understand the needs of this cohort of patients further. As this is explored, the team will be reaching out to this patient cohort to understand what matters to Hydrocephalus patients in terms of the service provided by the team.

Feedback related to long waits for pain relief in A&E- This specific issue has been identified through our recent Urgent and Emergency Care patient survey results. In response to this, nursing staff have been trained to administer pain relief from the triage room in specific circumstances to alleviate pain whilst patients are waiting to be seen by a doctor. In addition to this, an extra nurse is working in the ambulance bay of the A&E department 12 hours of the day through winter to correctly stream patients to the most appropriate service to help reduce waiting times

Coordination of pain clinic- The pain clinic team are exploring the processes in place in other areas to understand if there are more efficient systems that they could adopt and explore improvements to comfort of chairs for patients having to wait a long time.

Response from Sheffield Health and Social Care Trust

Patients seeking medical assistance for physical health concerns often felt dismissed. Sheffield Health and Social care Trust are committed to ensuring that both mental and physical health care needs of people using our services are met. Our multi-disciplinary wards are made up of doctors and physician associates who ensure physical health remains a priority. In addition, we do want to know how well we are doing. Through team leads we continue to monitor incident reports daily, which will include any issues relating to physical health care. Learning from insight and feedback, means we can get things right for our patients. If people want to discuss this further, we would be more than happy to make contact to receive more details.

People being unable to access mental health support because of drug or alcohol addiction. The Trust recognises the complexity people can experience when living with mental health and substance misuse. Tackling this collaboratively and in partnership with other agencies is essential if we are to meet the holistic needs of all our patients. Our approach is to work with practitioners who work closely with community mental health teams to put in place systems to provide seamless care for those who experience dual diagnosis. Our approach is supported by a multidisciplinary team always ensure we sign post people to the relevant service for support.

Concerns relating to referrals for mental health support. The Trust have been working closely with primary care colleagues to improve the primary care mental health service. Working together we can further support patients through clear information, approaches to self-care, and better sign posting to services and voluntary and community sector provision. Our shared aim is to ensure people access the right support, guidance and information, whilst remaining person centred, to improve recovery outcomes and the health and well-being of those accessing GP services.

This summary of key issues is a snapshot of what we are hearing about. We want to reflect the experiences of people who share their stories with us, and we hope that it can help services, and commissioners of services, by indicating potential areas of focus. It is based on:

- Experiences that members of the public share with us through our information and advice service
- Feedback shared by voluntary sector partners who support clients in Sheffield
- Stories shared through Care Opinion

Want to share your own experience? Get in touch

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