

Quarterly Report: April - June 2021

Introduction

Healthwatch Northumberland is the independent champion for people who use health and social care services. We are a listening organisation working across Northumberland, interested in what people like about services and what can be improved. We act on what people are saying, sharing their views with those who have the power to make change happen. We also help people find the information they need about services in their area and record this as 'signposting'.

People who use health and social care services tell us about their experiences throughout the year. This report shares a summary of the feedback collected from April - June 2021. During this period, we have continued to work in different ways due to the continuation of the Covid-19 pandemic. The next report will cover July - September 2021.

This quarter we received feedback and enquiries from:

- Telephone calls (42%)
- Emails (23%)
- Website (19%)
- Social media (12%)
- Engagement event (5%)

Areas of Focus

We are open to all feedback about health and social care services. Responses to our 2020 Annual Survey helped us to identify a specific Areas of Focus which we are prioritising in 2020/21 this includes mental health services, dementia and GP services.

Covid-19 has meant changes have been made to health and social care services. Patients and

carers' experiences and signposting requirements are likely to have been different during this time. For this reason, we have also chosen to focus on any feedback we receive which is related to covid-19 and these changes.

Aims

The report shows:

- Who Healthwatch Northumberland is hearing from
- What people are saying
 - The general sentiment of comments
- What people are experiencing
 - What is working well?
 - Where there are areas for improvement?

Feedback

Between April and June 2021, we received feedback from 63 individuals from talking to people at face-to-face engagement events, telephone calls, emails, our website, social media, and other sources. We signposted 20 of these people to services.

This report explores who we are hearing from across the county, presenting a summary of general respondent demographic information. Demographic information shared includes location, gender, age, and whether the respondent is sharing their own health and social care experience or speaking on behalf of a friend or relative.

We also look at the general sentiment of comments, with specific reference to the service type (e.g. primary care, secondary care, mental health, social care), as well as whether the feedback relates specifically to quality of care or access to services. Service category, for instance whether the comment refers to a GP surgery or acute care, is also explored alongside the sentiment of feedback. A list of services mentioned in comments has also been shared.

Who is Healthwatch Northumberland hearing from?

We have collected and anonymised demographic information where consent has been given. The following is a general summary of who we are hearing from. These figures do not include information about people who took part in our online forums.

Location:

In total between April and June 2021, we collected feedback from people in 31 different Northumberland postcode areas, accounting for 57% of all responses this quarter. 43% of those we heard from gave no postcode (although may have indicated the local area). Below Table 1 shows the number of responses we received from residents in different Local Area Councils this quarter:

Table 1. Frequency of responses across Local Area Councils in Northumberland, Q4 2020/21¹

Local Area Council	Number
Ashington and Blyth	4
Castle Morpeth	6
Cramlington and Bedlington	7
North Northumberland	7
Tynedale	7
Unknown	9

There are too few known locations of patients, carers, and families to reliably say where we are hearing from most, but this quarter's figures do suggest an even coverage of the county.

Cramlington and Bedlington, North Northumberland and Tynedale are the areas we heard from the most this quarter, last quarter it was North Northumberland.

Table 2, below, shows the total number of responses across Local Area Councils for the full year of 2020-2021 which shows that there are two areas that are 'cold spots'(that is, an area we hear from less often): Castle Morpeth and Cramlington and Bedlington. We will focus engagement and communications on these two areas in 2021-2022. However, note that North Northumberland was consistently a cold spot until Q4, so this area will be monitored to ensure it continues to be heard.

¹ Excludes online forum participants

Table 2. Frequency of responses across Local Area Councils in Northumberland, Q1-Q4 2020/21²

Local Area Council	Number
Ashington and Blyth	30
Castle Morpeth	15
Cramlington and Bedlington	8
North Northumberland	31
Tynedale	30

Age:

The majority of those we heard from did not share their age with us, and we did not ask people taking part in our online forums to give their age as these were public events. Those that did were mainly in the older age groups (shown below in Table 3).

Table 3. Number and percentage of responses across age groups in Northumberland, Q1 2021-22

	Number	%
Under 18	0	0%
18 to 24	1	2%
25 to 49	1	2%
50 to 64	5	12%
65 to 79	4	10%
80+	3	7%
Unknown	27	66%
Total	41	100%

Gender:

Of the people who told us their gender this quarter there was a higher proportion of males, accounting for 29% of all responses (12 people). This is the opposite of most quarters: usually we hear from more females than males. A total of 17% of responses were from females (7 people).

Below Figure 1 shows a breakdown of responses by gender:

² Excludes online forum participants

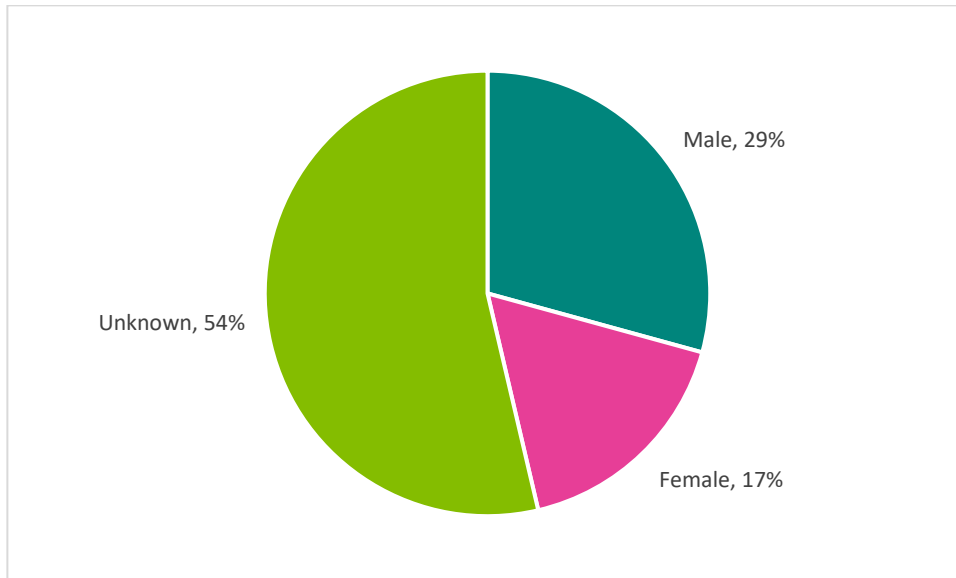


Figure 1. Frequency of responses by gender in Northumberland, Q1 2021/22

Whose experiences are we finding out about?

Most people were sharing their own individual experience of health and social care services with us (70%). This has increased since last quarter (64%) which is the second consecutive quarter we have had an increase in individual shared experiences. There was no one theme to explain this increase, unlike in the previous quarter where concerns about the Covid-vaccine rollout have been predominant.

A total of 24% of all those we heard from gave us feedback about the health and social care experiences of a relative, friend, or someone they care for.

Below is a breakdown of all respondent types, and the number and proportion of responses from these groups is shared in Table 4.

Table 4. Frequency of responses by respondent type, Q1 2021-22

	Freq	%
Individual	30	73%
Client Relative/Friend/Carer	10	24%
Advocate	0	0%
Health or social care professional	0	0%
Unrelated	1	2%
Other	0	0%
Total	41	100%

What people are saying and experiencing

Of the 41 responses³ we were asked or given feedback about 27 individual services/service providers. Please see Appendix 1 and 2 for a list of all the services/service providers mentioned.

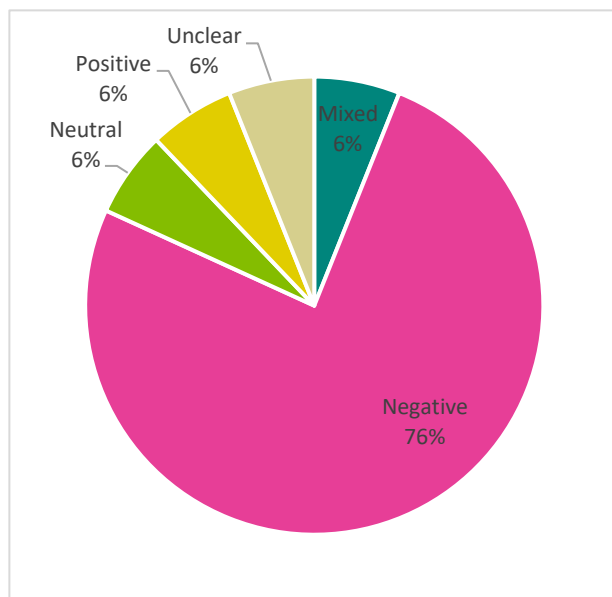


Figure 2. General sentiment of responses

The services/service providers have been categorised into service type, with the five main groups being: primary care, secondary care, mental health, social care, and urgent and emergency care. Figure 3, below, shows the service type and sentiment of responses.

It shows there is a greater number of negative comments and feedback for all service types.

Positive:

Patient has had both phone and face-to-face appointments with GP at Cramlington Village Surgery. Despite Covid restrictions they have never felt unable to access help and thinks the surgery has worked well to meet the needs of patients while working under difficult conditions. While phone appointments were used as the main method during the pandemic, face-to-face ones were also available if needed with a 'hot room' system to keep staff and patients safe. The patient has been with the surgery for almost 9 years and is very impressed with their level of care, their efficiency and standard of service from all staff.
Patient, Cramlington.

Mixed:

A relative who spoke to us at an Annual Survey outreach event told us that visiting their elderly parent who has dementia in their care home during lockdown was not possible. Now visit restrictions eased slightly the parent doesn't know who she is. The relative recognises that it must also be difficult for working staff and appreciates their good work. However, she now has to take day off work to visit.
Relative, Tynedale

Negative:

The partner of a serving prisoner called as she and her partner are unhappy at the way that the prison healthcare service is managing his long-term blood condition. When at home he has weekly blood tests and fortnightly transfusions. These have not been happening. He has had one hospital visit and his blood count was lower than required. The partner says she is getting nowhere trying to talk to the prison or healthcare staff and feels she is being dismissed and seen as disruptive.
Relative, North Northumberland

³ Responses related to 'signposting only' have been excluded from this section of the report. Likewise, discussions from the online forums have been excluded from this section of the report

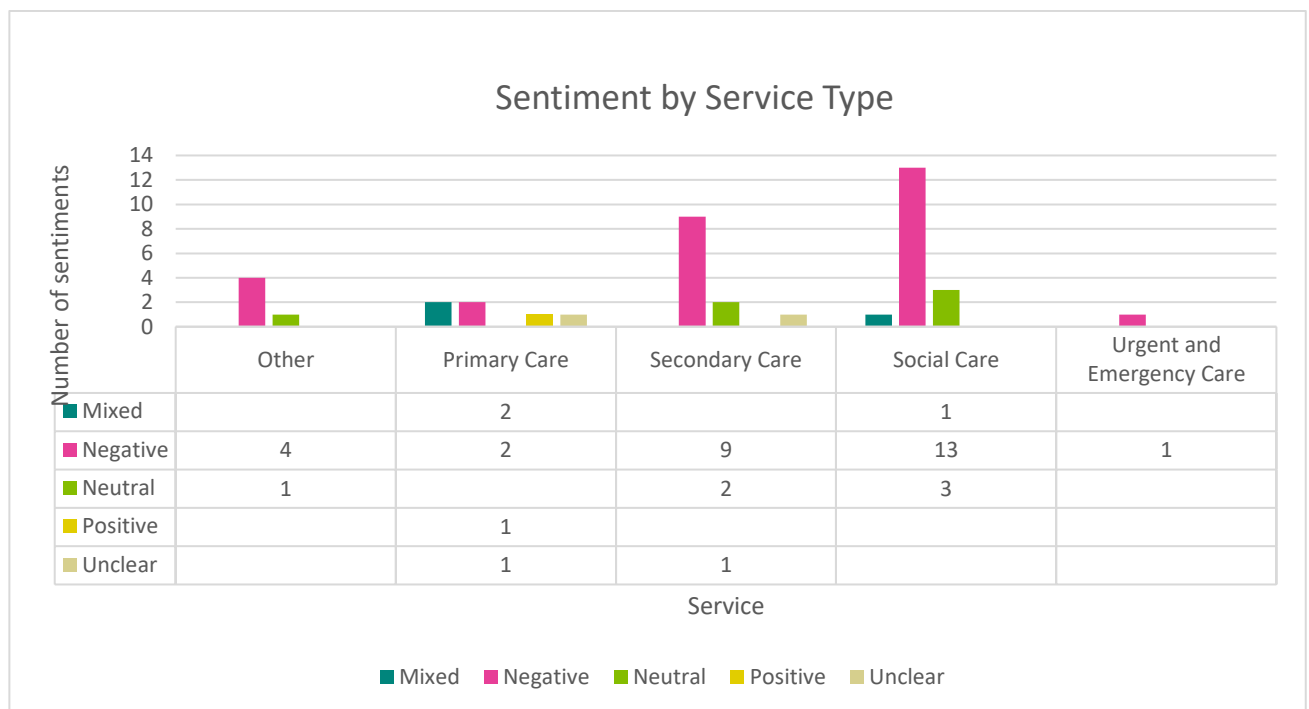


Figure 3. Service Type and Sentiment of responses

Table 5, below, indicates most comments were about social care services (55% of all comments, 18 total comments).

Table 5. Frequency and percentage of responses by Service Type

Service Type	Frequency	Percentage
Primary Care	4	12%
Secondary Care	7	21%
Mental health	0	0%
Social Care	18	55%
Other	2	6%
Unknown	0	0%
Urgent and Emergency Care	2	6%

Covid-19

After the previous quarter’s increase in comments around Covid-19, the proportion of Covid-related comments had fallen back to a level last seen in 2020. Between April and June 2021 under half of comments received (41%, 17 comments) were related to the Covid-19 pandemic in some way, which is much less than the previous quarter’s proportion (Q4, 2020-2021: 70%, 39

comments). This quarter’s result is a more on a par with the concerns raised in Q3 2020-21 (45%, 20 comments). The large number of concerns raised by the Covid-19 vaccination programme in the last quarter seemed to have reduced as the vaccination rollout has been so successful. Most of the negative comments are directed at GP services as shown in Figure 4, below.

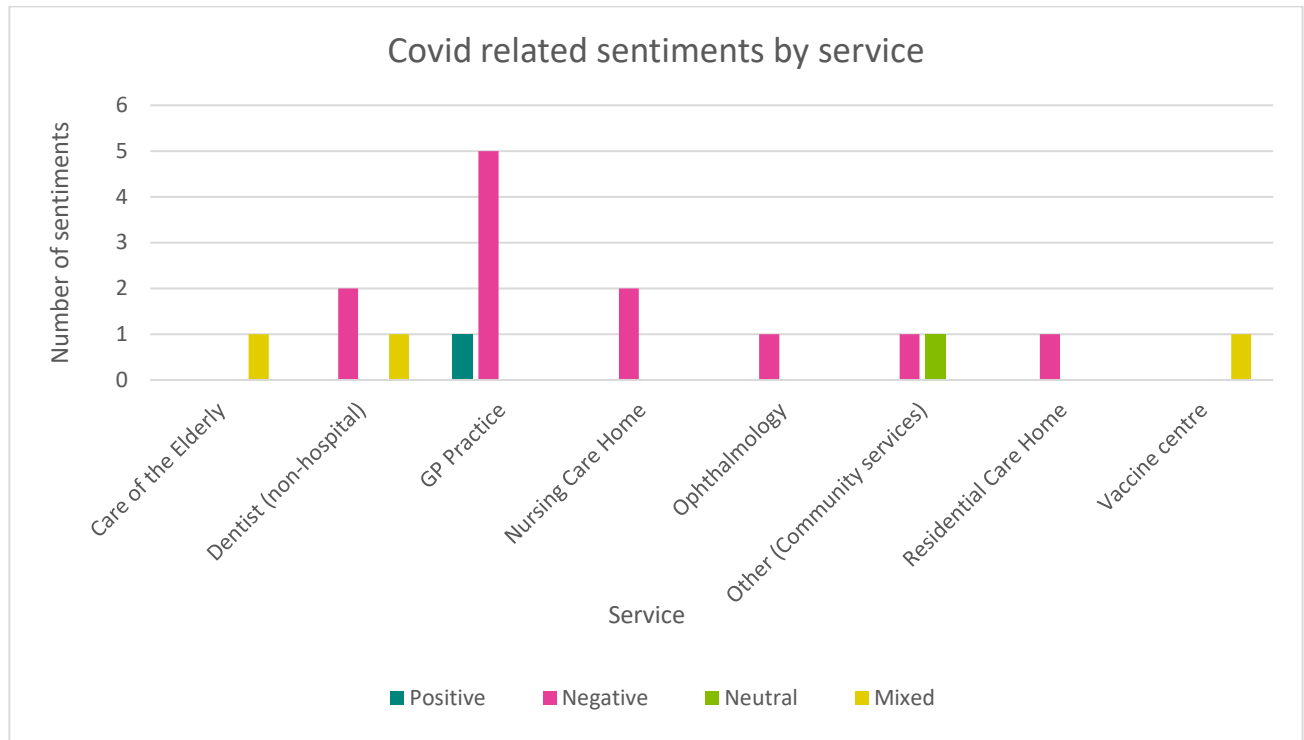


Figure 4. Service and Covid-related Sentiments of Responses

Covid-19: what people told us:

- *We received a query from a patient and his wife who moved to the village four weeks ago and are registered with the village Medical Centre. Had their 1st dose of the Pfizer vaccine where they used to live and are due 2nd dose by this Thursday. The Medical Centre is saying they can't do it as they don't have the Pfizer one available. Patient has tried calling 119 who passed him on to national NHS and they told him to contact his local organiser and that his GP is obliged to provide a vaccine before the 2nd dose deadline. He has contacted practice but no feedback yet.*

Also tried to book online and was told he isn't eligible. Patient is happy to travel if necessary but is very worried about the deadline and feels 'passed around'.

- *A retired gentleman with a chronic lung condition living in rural Tynedale contacted us to say, "I cannot get any answer from my local doctors' surgery why I have never been put on the vulnerable list for Covid-19. Also had my first vaccine over twelve weeks ago at [a neighbouring] surgery and still no contact for my second vaccine."*

Access and Quality

This quarter comments have been divided more equally between issues about ‘Access to Services’ (55%) and ‘Quality of Services’ (45%) which is standard for most quarters, compared to the feedback from last quarter, where the majority of issues were to do with ‘Access to Services’ (73%). Again, with the successful rollout of the Covid-19 vaccination programme, most of the negative comments about primary care and secondary care relate to Access to Services (see Figure 4).

Figure 3 is best compared alongside Figure 5 (shown below), which show whether comments are related to quality or access and their relevant sentiment.

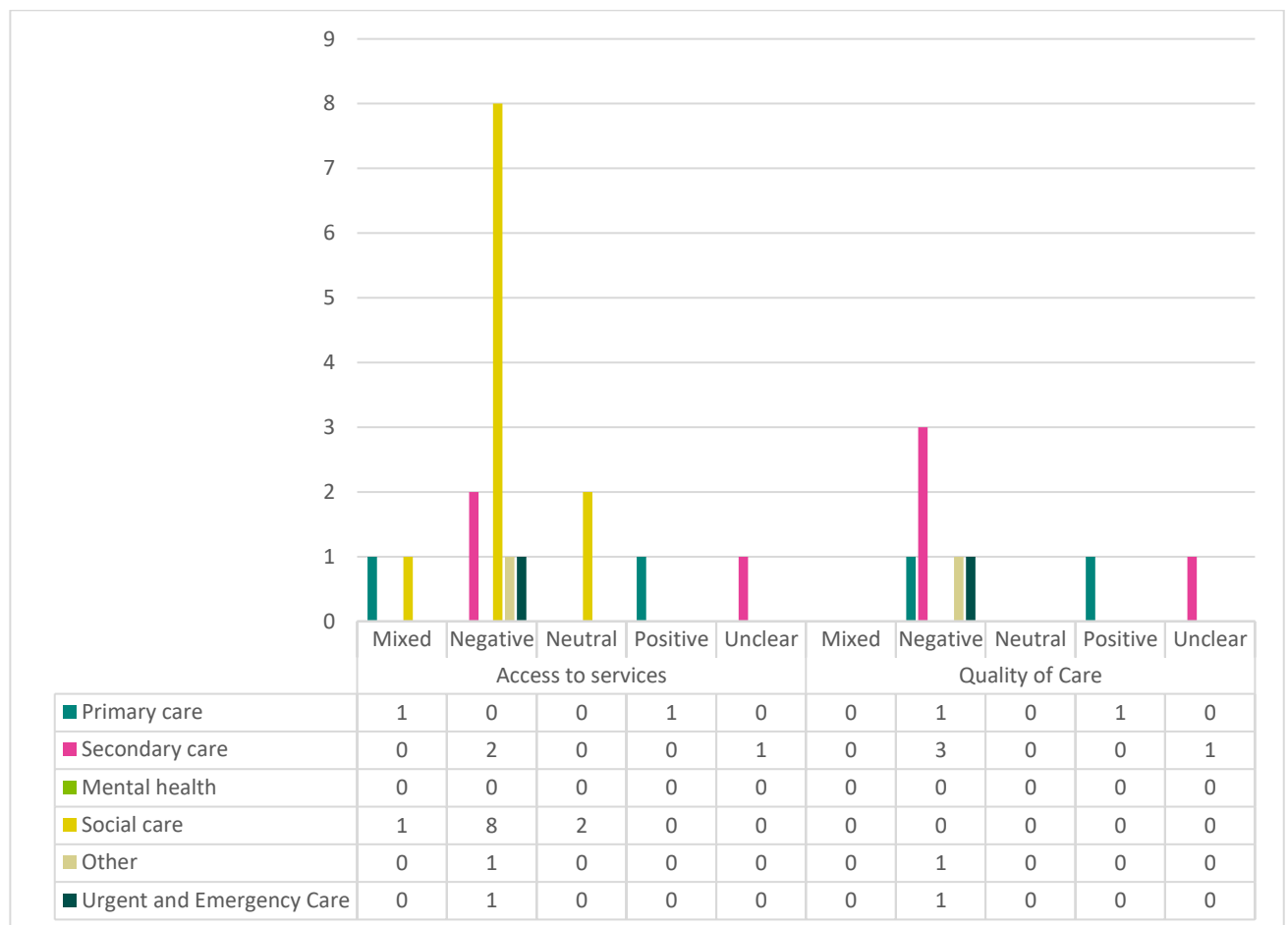


Figure 5. Frequency of responses related to Quality of Care and Access to Services

Signposting

In total we signposted or gave information to 20 people who contacted us with an enquiry which is a slight increase from last quarter (18 people). Some people were signposted to more than one service. Table 6, below, shows the services Healthwatch Northumberland signposted people to this quarter. In previous quarters most of our signposting has been to voluntary sector organisations, although last quarter was unusual in signposting to the statutory sector the most. This quarter we signposted to health services the most.

Table 6. List of services Healthwatch Northumberland signposted people to, Q1 2021/22

Service Name	Service Type	Number of times signposted to	Signposted to in Jan-Mar 21?
Adapt North East	Voluntary sector	1	No
Bridge street Dental practice, Morpeth	Health	1	No
CQC	Statutory sector	1	No
Gateshead PALS	Health	1	No
Healthwatch Northumberland	Statutory sector	1	No
ICAN	Voluntary sector	1	Yes
Independent Complaints Advocacy	Voluntary sector	4	Yes
Information Commissioners Office	Statutory sector	1	Yes
Lintonville Medical Practice	Health	1	No
NDAS	Voluntary sector	1	No
NHS 119	Health	1	Yes
NHS England	Health	1	No
North of Tyne PALS	Health	3	Yes
North Tyne Local Pharmaceutical Committee	Health	1	No
Northumberland Independent Advocacy Services	Voluntary sector	2	No
Northumberland Recovery College	Statutory sector	1	No
The Rothbury Practice	Health	1	No

Online Forums

As part of our engagement work we have held online forums so that we can continue to find out about people's experiences of health and social care services without speaking with people face to face. Between April and June, we ran three forums and a summary of the feedback we collected through these forums has been included below.

Care Homes visiting in Northumberland:

Held 4th June 2021 with 11 attendees

People told us:

- Their experience of visiting in person had generally improved but was still far from pre-Covid 'normal' in terms of spontaneous visiting. Some found visiting to be very well organised and easy to book whilst others found it difficult to get an appointment to visit and there were inconsistencies in visiting policies across homes in Northumberland. For one, the visiting procedure only improved once a GP had completed an assessment following a deterioration in her mother's health.
- That improvements in the frequency of visiting including the ability to take their relatives out of care homes on trips had made a huge difference to their relatives', and their own, wellbeing. Booking visits a month in advance was suggested as a good way to foster positivity.
- About physical and mental decline experienced by dementia patients during restrictions in visiting and that iPads and other devices can be frightening to those with dementia.
- That whilst visiting had improved, general communication from care homes was still poor for many and staff access to digital devices to facilitate communication was still an issue for some. More communication, even a weekly email, would be welcomed.
- That they did not attend relatives' meetings organised by the care home. One attendee mentioned that pre-covid there were meetings, but others were not aware of their relatives care homes having or facilitating relatives' meetings.
- The forums were valuable to them, and they would like to continue meeting as a group. Ways of reaching new people - perhaps those who were looking into choosing a home for their relatives - were discussed, including promoting via providers directly or partner organisations who work directly with carers and older people.

A summary of our survey results from relatives and care home staff was provided to those attending the forum and a more detailed report on this as well as feedback received across all our care home forums will be published in due course.

Felton and Widdrington Engagement Sessions:

Held 9th June (5 attendees) and 17th June (6 attendees)

We assisted Felton and Widdrington surgeries with some engagement including hosting two online forums to hear feedback from patients and residents. The aim of the sessions was to obtain feedback about:

- the proposal to merge Felton and Widdrington surgeries,
- the practice's plan for a new surgery in Felton and the later permanent relocation to these premises
- the potential temporary relocation to Widdrington Surgery, should the practice need to move out of Felton before the new build is complete.

Dr Chris Waite from the practice and Pamela Phelps, Senior Head of Commissioning at NHS Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), were in attendance to provide an overview of the proposed changes and answer questions.

In broad terms, concerns were raised around the location of the surgery, transport to Widdrington and communication, amongst others, but detailed notes of both engagement sessions and any other feedback received by Healthwatch Northumberland will be written up and shared with the surgery who will submit a report to the CCG as part of the engagement process. The final report will be submitted to the Primary Care Commissioning Committee in late summer.

If you would like any further information, or have any feedback or questions about this report, please get in touch using the following contact details:

Email: timh@healthwatchnorthumberland.co.uk

Phone: 07803 427468

Appendices

Appendix 1. List of services mentioned in feedback and comments

Service name	Frequency
Age UK	1
Brockwell Medical Group	1
Brockwell pharmacy	1
Castleview Care Home	1
Cheviot Medical Group	1
Haydon Bridge & Allendale Medical Practice	1
Haydon View Residential Home	1
Lloyds Pharmacy (Hexham General Hospital)	1
Local Pharmaceutical Committee	1
Meadow Park Care Home	1
Morpeth NHS Centre	1
Netherfield House Surgery	1
NHS Business Services Authority	1
NHS England	2
North East Ambulance service	1
Northumbria Healthcare	1
Northumbria Specialist Emergency Care Hospital	1
Northumberland Recovery College	1
RVI	1
Seaton Park Medical Group	1
The Bellingham Practice	1
The Sele Medical Practice	1
The Village Surgery	1
Tweedmouth House	1
Union Brae & Norham Practice	1
Unknown	12
Wansbeck General Hospital	2
White Medical Group (Wylam)	1
Grand total	41

Appendix 2. Service category and sentiment

	Mixed	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Unclear	Grand Total
Acute Care		1				1
Ambulance Services		1				1
Care at Home		1				1
Care of the Elderly	1	1				2
Dentist (non-hospital)	1	2				3
Diabetic Medicine		1				1
GP practice		12	2	1	2	17
Hearing aid services		1				1
Hospital		1				1
Maternity		1				1
Nursing Care Home		2				2
Ophthalmology		1				1
Other (Community services)		1	1			2
Pharmacy		2	1			3
Psychiatry/Mental Health (Other Services)			1			1
Residential Care Home		1				1
Unknown			1			1
Vaccine centre	1					1
Grand Total	3	29	6	1	2	41