

Hygiene Poverty Update

On Barnsley residents across the Borough

December 2023



Contents

About Healthwatch Barnsley	3
Project background	4
What we did	6
How representative were the people we spoke to	7
Key findings	9
- Hygiene poverty	9
- Financial situation	10
- Cost of living	11
- Health and wellbeing.....	12
- Our observations	13
Next steps	14
Appendix 1	15

About Healthwatch Barnsley

Healthwatch Barnsley is your local health and social care champion. From Penistone to Goldthorpe and everywhere in between, we make sure NHS leaders and other decision makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care.

If you recently visited your GP or local hospital, or used any health and social care services in Barnsley we want to hear from you. Whether you've had a good or bad experience we can use your feedback to improve services for everyone and we have the power to make NHS leaders and other care providers listen to what you say.

We're completely independent and impartial and anything you say is confidential. We also offer information and advice to help you get the support you need. Our service is free, simple to use and can make a real difference to people in Barnsley and beyond.

Find out more about us on our website www.healthwatchbarnsley.org.uk



Our vision

- **A world where we can all get the health and care we need**



Our mission

- **To make sure people's experiences help make health and care better**



Our values

- **Listening to people and making sure their voices are heard**
- **Including everyone in the conversation – especially those who don't always have their voice heard**
- **Analysing different people's experiences to learn how to improve care**
- **Acting on feedback and driving change**
- **Partnering with care providers, Government, and the voluntary sector serving as the public's independent advocate**

Project background

Healthwatch Barnsley wanted to look at the cost of living crisis and what impact it was having on Barnsley residents in relation to their general health and wellbeing. During Hygiene Poverty Awareness week in October 2022 we held an event in Barnsley Market where residents were given a bag of hygiene products in return for completing a short survey.

From this survey we discovered that **36%** of residents had gone without hygiene or sanitary products in the past due to financial pressures, this figure increased to **55%** if we just looked at the Dearne. We wanted to find out more about the rest of the borough and with help from Barnsley Council via the UK Shared Prosperity Fund we were able to facilitate/attend **24 different events** around the borough during January to March 2023 where we handed out **506 hygiene packs**.

Part of the project was also to engage with local services to ask for donations of hygiene products which we could use to assist our project. We received a fantastic response and supplied 24 donation boxes to local venues which we then collected at the end of March. We would like to pass on our appreciation to the following services who made donations

- BMBC South Area Team
- Recovery Steps/Humankind
- Exodus Project
- Stroke UK
- DWP – Barnsley Jobcentre
- BHF – Link Works
- Kendray Hospital (SWYFT)
- Samaritans
- BOS (Brook Office Supplies)
- BMBC Housing and Energy Team

- Alhambra Shopping Centre
- Reds in the Community
- Wombwell Clinic (SWYFT)
- Lundwood Health Centre (SWYFT)
- Hilder House (NHS South Yorkshire ICB)
- BMBC North East Area Team
- Redferns Junior Football Club
- Worsbrough Labour Party
- Beacon South Yorkshire

We were able to use these donations to highlight Hygiene Poverty Awareness week and repeat our previous event. We were able to use the same survey and this report looks at the results from that survey to see if there has been any changes during the past year.

During October 2022 the annual rate of inflation reached 11.1% which was a 41 year high before easing in subsequent months and October 2023 saw the lowest annual rate of inflation in 2 years at 4.6%

(Source Commons Library, UK Parliament)

What we did

We held an event in Barnsley Market which mirrored previous events where residents were given a bag of hygiene products in return for completing a short survey.

139 residents completed the survey on the day, the results of which are contained in this report.

Do you know what hygiene poverty is?

Living on a low income limits our options and leaves us having to make tough decisions on whether to pay the rent, heat, eat or keep clean.

Earlier this year just over a third of Barnsley residents that we spoke to, told us they had just enough income to cover the basic necessities and little left for anything else. Have things improved? Or have they gotten worse?

Join Healthwatch Barnsley for our Hygiene Poverty Event and tell us if anything has changed for you.

There will be plenty of advice and support from us and other Barnsley services plus a free hygiene pack in return for completing our short survey.



Come and chat to us

Date: Friday 6th October

Time: 9 am to 2 pm

Where: Barnsley Market Atrium,
towards the back entrance, near the escalator

healthwatch
Barnsley



How representative were the people we spoke to?



We spoke to **139** residents of which **34** were **male** and **97** were **female** the remaining **8** **preferred not to say**.

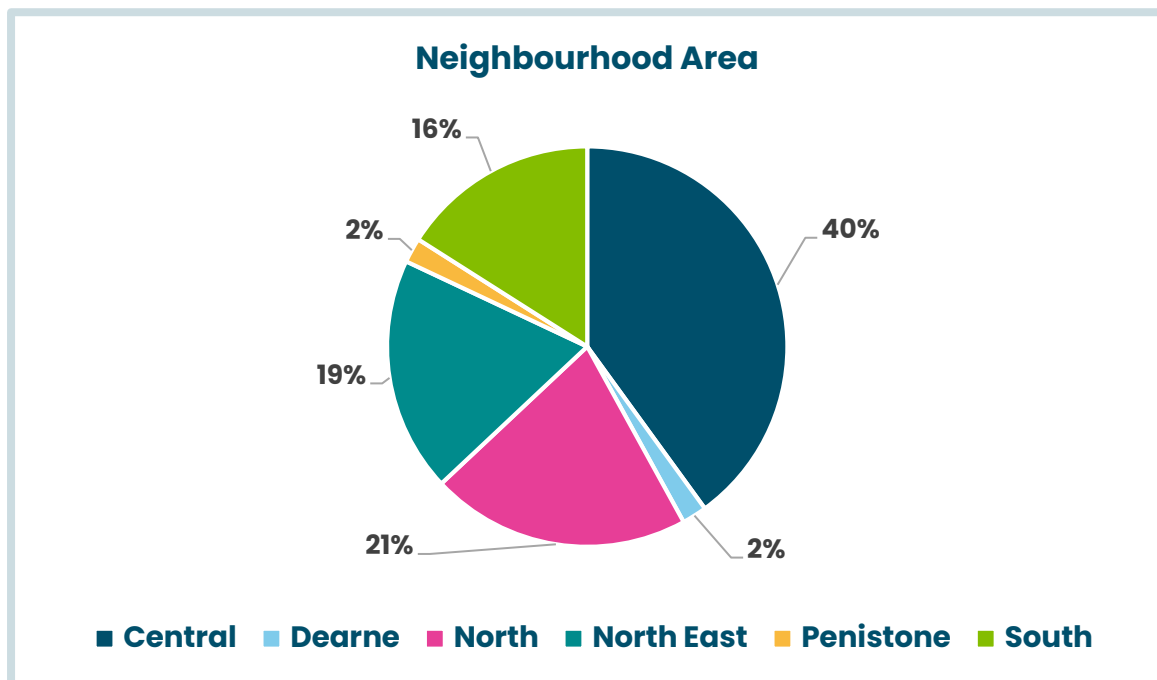
51% of the people we spoke to (75) told us that they had a **disability** and **63%** (87 people) told us they had a **long term condition**.

Age Range	Number of people	Percentage
16-17 years	7	5%
18-24 years	5	4%
25-49 years	20	14%
50-64 years	41	30%
65-79 years	52	37%
80+ years	6	4%
Prefer not to say	8	6%

Ethnicity	Number of people	Percentage
Arab	1	1%
Black/Black British: African	1	1%
White British/English/Northern Irish/Scottish/Welsh	133	95%
White: any other white background	1	1%
Prefer not to say	3	2%

Employment Status	Number of people	Percentage
Carer to a member of the household with additional needs	9	6%
Retired	56	41%
Student	6	4%
Stay at home parent	6	4%
Unemployed looking for work	3	2%
Unemployed unable to work due to illness or disability	27	19%
Volunteer	3	2%
Working Full time	9	7%
Working Part time	14	10%
Other	7	5%

Question - What area of Barnsley do you live in (106 people responded)



There was really low representation in both Dearne and Penistone areas which is disappointing but further evidences other pieces of work where we have discovered people from the Dearne do not travel to into the town centre for services. Penistone could be described more affluent and self-contained, and people don't travel into Barnsley for shopping on a regular basis.

The following number of people identified with these statements

Statement	Number of people
I belong to the LGBTQ+ Community	5
I don't have a support network (friends or family)	9
I consider myself to be neuro-diverse (e.g Autism, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Tourette's etc)	10
I am a veteran (been in the armed forces)	3
I live in a rural isolated setting	2
I have experienced domestic abuse (violence, psychological or financial)	12
I am an ex-offender	1

Key Findings



We replicated the survey which we used at the beginning of the year so we could make a comparison to see if anything had changed.

Hygiene poverty

Our first question asked **“Have you ever had to go without essential hygiene or sanitary products?”**

45% of people answered **“Yes”**, which is an **increase of over 10%** on the previous survey.

Next we ask **“Where on the list of priorities does buying hygiene products sit?”**

	Jan-Mar 2023 survey	Oct 2023 survey
Essential (must buy)	62%	63%
Medium (minimum spend)	31%	31%
Not essential (not a priority)	6.5%	6%
Prefer not to say	0.5%	-

As you can see from the above table these results are almost duplicated in both surveys, showing that hygiene products are still an essential part of the shopping budget for two thirds of our population.

The final question in this section asked if people thought the cost of hygiene products had increased over the last year. In the first surveys **94.5%** of people agreed they had seen an increase, this increased to **97%** in our latest survey.

Financial situation

We asked people “Which of the following best describes your financial situation?”.

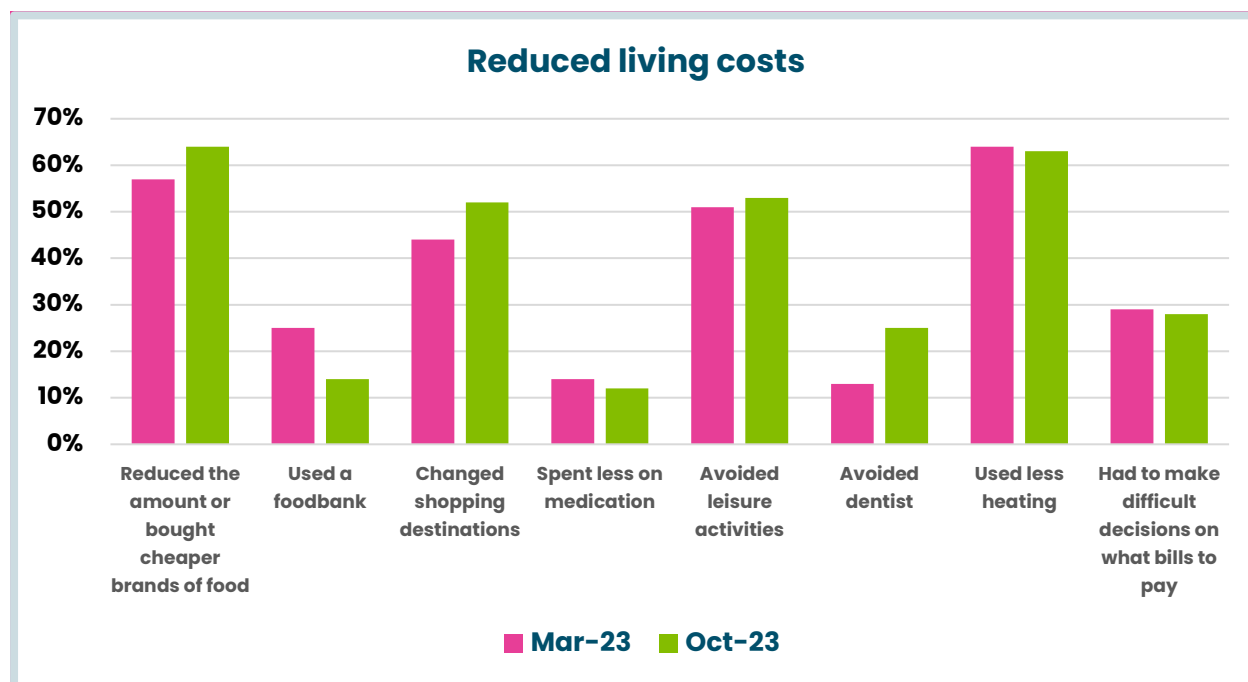


	Jan-Mar 2023 Survey	October 2023 survey
I have more than enough money for basic necessities and a lot spare that I can save or spend on extras or leisure	7.5%	9%
I have more than enough money for basic necessities and a little spare that I can save or spend on extras or leisure	30%	17%
I have just enough money for basic necessities and little else	36%	45%
I don't have enough money for basic necessities and sometimes or often run out of money	21.5%	22%
Prefer not to say	5%	6%

Although the top and bottom end of the scale remain largely the same over the period of time there has been a marked decrease in the number of people who said at the beginning of the year that they had more than enough to cover basic necessities and a little spare. These people now seem to have dropped into the next category statement that says they have just enough money for basic necessities and little else, proving that more people are being effected by the increased cost of living as time goes on.

Cost of living

We asked people what measures they had taken (if any) to reduce their living costs. They were invited to tick as many measures as they related to, however **11** people chose not to answer this question



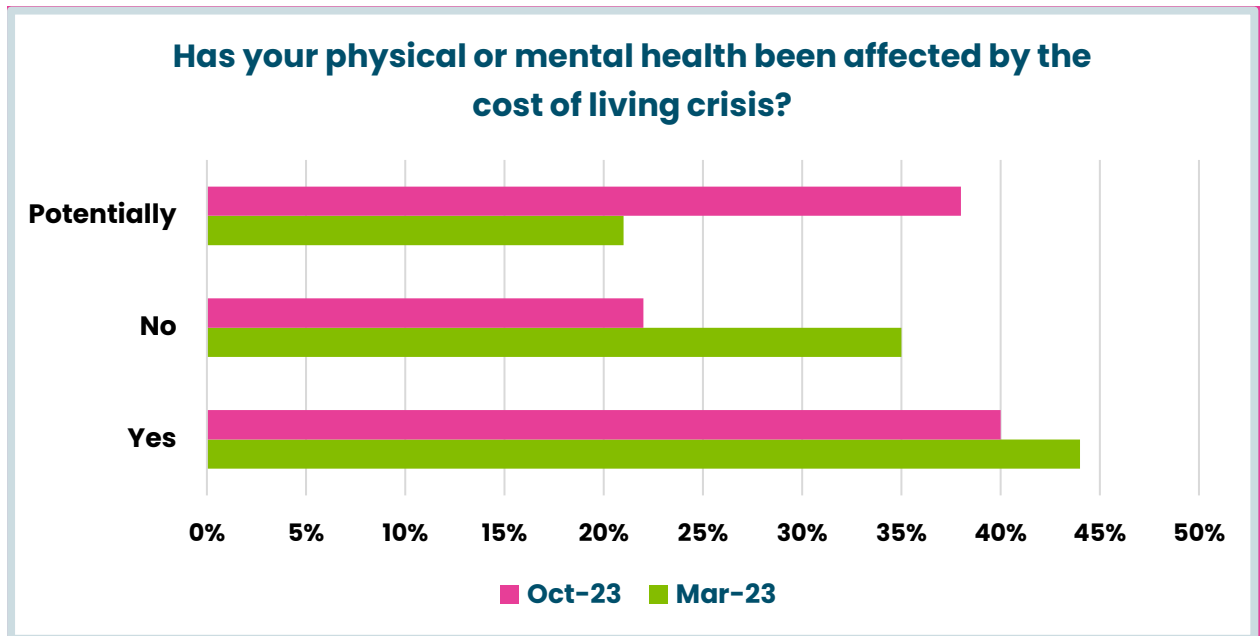
There have been slight changes with more people reducing the amount of food they buy or buying cheaper brands and also people changing shopping destinations. This can be tied back to more people start to feel the pinch as reflected in the current financial situations.

From the answers given during the survey there appears to be a reduction in the number of people using foodbanks – this maybe a function of the demographics of the respondents to the survey.

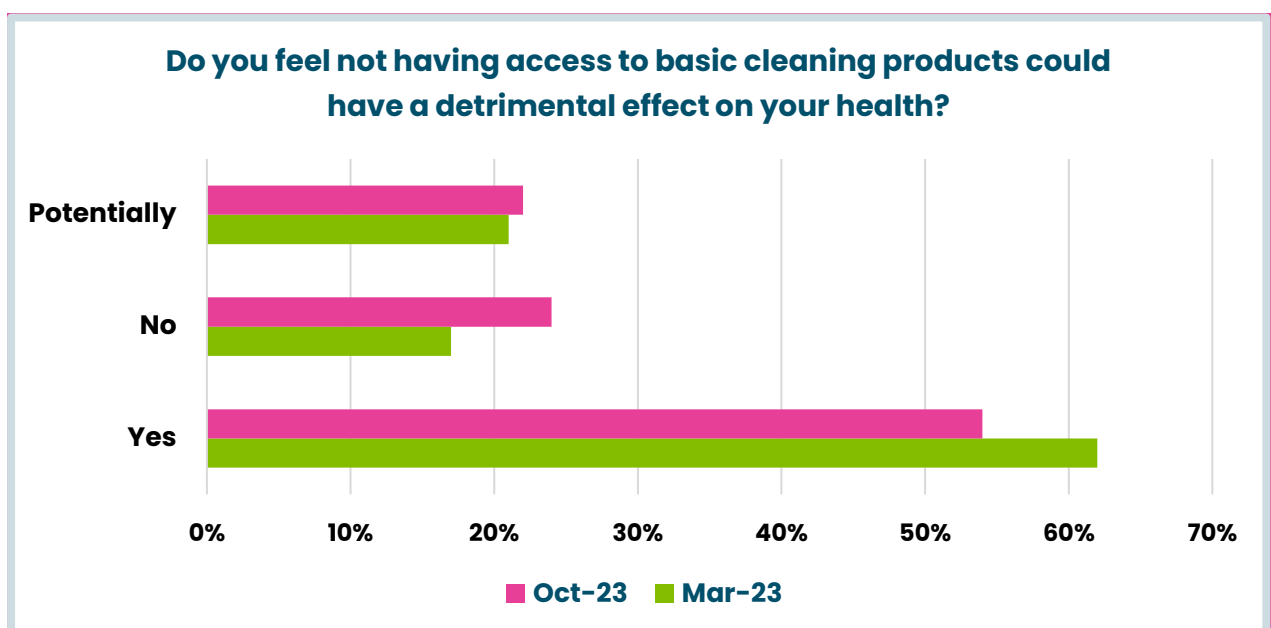
There is also a marked increase (**12%**) of people avoiding dentists to keep living costs down which supports of findings in our Dental Services Report <https://www.healthwatchbarnsley.org.uk/report/2023-09-25/dental-services-barnsley-report-august-2023>

Health and Wellbeing

Our final section of the survey asked about the effect of the cost of living crisis on people's mental health and wellbeing



There does seem to be a significant shift in people's mental health and wellbeing over the last six months. In the Jan - March 2023 survey **35%** of people told us they hadn't been affected by the cost of living crisis, this had now reduced **to 22%** and the thinking is now they could have potentially been affected. Again this corroborates what people were telling us about their financial situation in question 4.



Our observations

It is clear to see that the cost of living crisis continues to have a negative impact on people's finances. During the early part of 2023, when asked about their financial status, **30%** of residents who took part in the survey told us that **"I have more than enough money for basic necessities and a little spare that I can save or spend on extras or leisure"**. However, this had dropped to **17%** when we did the second survey seven months later.

During that same period, we have also seen a change in how people are spending their money, with many now buying less food or choosing cheaper brands. There has also been an increase in people changing their shopping destinations, with cheaper supermarkets like Lidl and Aldi becoming more popular.

The biggest change in how people are trying to reduce their living costs is on access to dentistry; in the original survey **13%** of people questioned told us they were avoiding dentist, but this had risen to **25%** in the second survey. This trend is very worrying, as we all know regular check-ups are the key to good oral hygiene and can provide an early detection of mouth cancer.

We want to reassure people that they are not alone, and that support is available to those who are struggling with the cost of living. Healthwatch England have published information to help people to [look after their health during the cost of living crisis](#) which contains links to organisations who can offer advice, information and support.

Next Steps

Healthwatch Barnsley will continue to monitor patient and public feedback, as well as report our findings to those that plan and deliver health and social care services in Barnsley. This helps to inform service delivery and change.



Our Hygiene Poverty Project has highlighted the struggles being faced in Barnsley and other services are now offering support. Neighbourhood areas are providing hygiene packs to residents and ward councillors are involved in this work. Our Engagement Team have highlighted where residents can receive help and we regularly signpost residents to free sanitary products.

Thank you

Healthwatch Barnsley would like to thank everyone who took the time to complete the survey and give their feedback.

Want to know more about our work in the community?

[Facebook.com/HealthwatchBarnsley](https://www.facebook.com/HealthwatchBarnsley)

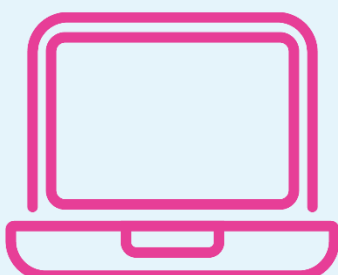
We use Facebook to engage with people in Barnsley

[@HWatchBarnsley](https://twitter.com/HWatchBarnsley)

We use Twitter to engage with services in Barnsley

[linkedin.com/in/healthwatchbarnsley/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/healthwatchbarnsley/)

We use LinkedIn to show our engagement with



Appendix 1



Here is the exact wording that people told us in their comments;

1	I have children and it's difficult to choose between food, hygiene products and bills
2	My health is suffering because of this
3	I have cut down on using the shower to save costs
4	I have to use sanitary products because of a bladder problem and I am finding it so expensive
5	As a mother of 3 young children, hygiene is essential
6	I am glad my prescriptions are free due to my age or I would never be able to afford my medication
7	I am very nervous of spending any money
8	I have 2 children with special needs and I can only use certain products which has got expensive and hard to get for them
9	Don't use shower gel, use a 3 in 1 product to cut down on costs
10	Don't buy separate products buy a 3 in 1 and a cheaper brand
11	I think that I smell all the time if I can't get a shower often
12	I am struggling as my baby has sensitive skin and these products cost so much more





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**Committed
to quality**

At Healthwatch Barnsley, we aim to provide the best service we can to our community and to make the greatest difference we can to local people.

To help us be the best we can be, every three years we undertake a comprehensive assessment of our work using a tool called the Quality Framework.

This helps us to understand what we are doing well and where we might need to improve.