



Healthwatch 100: Autumn/Winter survey 2023

January 2024

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About Healthwatch Trafford and Healthwatch 100

Healthwatch Trafford is your local health and social care champion. If you use GPs and hospitals, dentists, pharmacies, care homes or other publicly funded support services in your area, we want to hear about your experiences. 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 can also help you to find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.

The Trafford Healthwatch 100 aims to get as many local people as possible to sign up and give their views on topics to do with health and social care via regular surveys. We want to gain as much information as possible so that we can direct our work to the issues that matter.

Details for signing up can be found at healthwatchtrafford.co.uk/the100/.

About this project

The aim of this project was to investigate a change over a 12-month period of Trafford residents' experiences using general health and social care services and to find out whether findings from our previous report have had a positive impact on such experiences. To do this, we launched a survey which would provide us with findings comparable to a similar survey launched in 2022

(www.healthwatchtrafford.co.uk/report/2023-01-24/healthwatch-100-autumn-winter-survey-2022).

We pass on our warmest thanks to members of the public who took part and volunteers who have supported this project.

This report begins with an outline of when the Autumn/Winter 2023 survey was launched and what we did. Key findings are presented including the top five most regularly mentioned services and comment on the overarching trends of findings before an infographic presenting the groups of individuals who responded to the survey. The services areas we heard about are then outlined with detail on overall ratings of these areas and comments provided by respondents.

Throughout this report, comparison is made to the 2022 version and towards the end three overall themes are identified which include high quality care, waiting times and communication.

What we did

We launched the survey (see appendix for survey questions) in October 2023 which remained live until January 2024. It was sent to our Healthwatch 100 subscriber list and promoted on our website and social media pages. We also visited local groups, events and attended meetings with local partners during this time where we shared the survey.

Key Findings

The five services we heard most about in the survey were:

- GP services
- Pharmacies
- Mental health services
- Hospital outpatients' appointments
- Dentists

This was similar to responses from the 2022 survey which had a high rate of feedback regarding GP services, hospital services and dentists.

As before, it is important to note the positive comments regarding the high quality of care received by a considerable proportion of respondents in relation to all services they told us about.

Who responded to our survey?



Most people who responded identified as women (61%).
30% identified as male, 3% as non-binary, and 6% chose not to respond

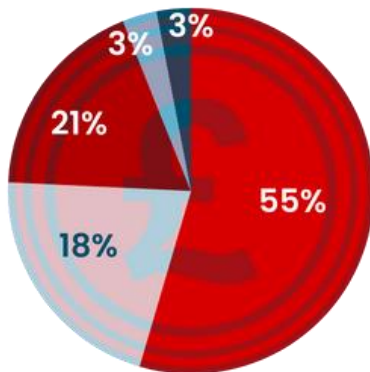
88% of people who took part identified as straight/heterosexual
6% identified as bisexual
6% did not answer



52% of respondents were aged 65-79
30% were 50-64
9% were 25-49
6% were 18-24
3% were 16-17



When asked about finances: 55% of respondents had more than enough for necessities, and disposable income; 18% had just enough for basic necessities; 3% of people said they didn't have enough for necessities and sometimes ran out of money; 3% did not provide an answer, and 21% did not know or preferred not to say.



7 of 33 respondents said they had a disability, and **10** said they had a long-term condition.

8 of 33 told us they were a carer for someone else.



3% of people selected 'other' and 3% did not respond.

What we heard

This section first presents the proportions of mentions respondents made to each service area, with a comparison between 2022 and 2023 data. Following this, findings are presented relating to each service area included in the survey. Respondents had the opportunity to provide feedback on as many services as they wished and 58% gave feedback on more than one service. Each section is structured by first presenting a table showing overall rating of the service then highlighting any particular aspects of the service which were discussed. The final section groups together the least mentioned services and highlight key findings from those.

Comments are presented as closely to how we received them as possible, therefore some punctuation and spelling errors may remain in the text.

In the interest of readability, we have at times edited clear typing errors and removed personal information and names. We may also remove sections of quotes for clarity where several points are being made. These changes are marked using square [...] brackets.

Service Areas

The table below shows the proportions of mentions respondents gave to each of the service areas both in 2022 and 2023.

Service	2022 (%)	2023 (%)
GP services	36.63	66.67
Pharmacies	11.63	27.27
Hospital outpatients' appointments	12.79	24.24
Mental health support	4.07	24.24
Dentists	12.21	18.18
Accident and emergency/minor injury units	5.23	15.15

Ambulances and paramedics	4.07	12.12
Social care e.g. care homes and home care	2.33	12.12
Adaptations	0.58	12.12
Hospital inpatient (day treatment or overnight)	5.81	9.09
NHS 111	4.07	6.06
Other issue/service	0.58	3.03

Similar to 2022, and following a wider trend more generally for Healthwatch Trafford, GP services were the most common service mentioned in the 2023 survey. Notably, although dentistry was joint second most common in 2022 and was then said to have been a close second in terms of services heard about more generally, for the 2023 survey, a much lower proportion of respondents mentioned this type of service. Significantly, in the 2023 survey the proportion of respondents mentioning Mental Health Services increased by a large amount; taking it from joint seventh most mentioned in 2022 to joint third in 2023.

GP Services

Question Area	Summary of Results
Ease of access	Almost 60% of respondents rated this area as 'very good' or 'good'. With remaining responses evenly split between 'neither good nor bad', 'very poor' and 'poor'.
Experience of care	Over a third of respondents rated their overall experience of GP services as 'good' and just under a third had a 'mixed experience'.

Common themes:

Ask My GP

Notably, the 2022 report stated key issues with AskmyGP. In the 2023 survey, this specific service was mentioned again three times. On two occasions, negative experiences were reported including:

“Ask my GP app next to useless due to pressure on service. I was cut off midway through submission and by then had missed chance to book an appointment.”

“Really awful I was complaining about the way I was treated on ask my gp when I was sticking up for myself and asked for antibiotics. It was turned around and they then said I was abusive. I was not abusive at all.”

One respondent reported positively that using this service allows them to “easily send any question and get answer from [their GP] on the same day”.

Although not mentioning Ask My GP specifically, a further respondent commented on online provision:

“Everything now geared towards online contact specifically early morning whether query or appointment that isn’t always available & v difficult to book face-to-face appt.”

Appointments

Face-to-face appointments are of high significance to many, evidenced by comments such as:

“Doctors, they need to start more face-to-face and stop ringing people asking questions for 5/10 minutes and then tell you that you need a face-to-face appointment. That is an absolute waste of everyone’s time, especially the Doctors who could be seeing more patients.”

Similar to findings in the 2022 survey, further difficulties with face-to-face provision are cited suggesting some found it “v difficult”, “[v]ery hard” or “nigh on impossible to get an appointment.”

One other respondent spoke highly of their GP practice saying *"it is great I manage to get appointment in the same day"*.

Quality of Care

As is also reflected in the 2022 survey findings, many respondents provided general comments in relation to their GP practice which were highly favourable. A clear appreciation is seen for the staff and a recognition that services work well despite a perception of stretched resources. This is evident in comments below:

"All of these services work very well with the little resources they receive our health service has been made a political issue. The staff who work there are wonderful hope for better at the next election"

"The GP practise I attend is one of the best I've used. Their system is excellent as are the staff."

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Pharmacies

Question Area	Summary of Results
Ease of access	Over three quarters of respondents rated this service as 'very good' with the remaining ratings all being 'good'.
Experience of care	One third of respondents cited a 'mixed experience', over half of respondents rated their care as 'good' and the remainder gave a 'neither good nor bad' rating.

Common themes:

Quality of service

Some respondents were very positive about the customer service they received at their pharmacy, stating *"the pharmacist was nice"*, *"[t]hey take time to have a chat"* and reporting *"the service has been superb"*.

Despite this, there were some issues raised such as one respondent stating:

"On more than one occasion the Pharmacy used near to where this person lives has failed to request re-order of eyedrops prescription from the

patients Surgery. This can be a major concern should eyedrops not be available when needed to be administered.”

Mental Health Services

Question Area	Summary of Results
Ease of access	Ratings of this area were majority positive with almost two thirds of responses 'very good' or 'good'.
Experience of care	This area was largely mixed with 37.5% of ratings 'neither good nor bad', 25% 'good', a further 25% poor and 12.5% 'neither good nor bad'.

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Overall care

We heard mixed experiences in this area with one respondent reporting “Staff helpful, just need more of them” and less favourably, another expressing a concern that services are “seriously lacking in supporting people.”

However, Trafford Talking Therapies was mentioned to us specifically with one respondent very complimentary of the care they had received:

“The sessions I received and am still receiving have been excellent [...] It has helped me so much and I am very grateful for a service that was tailored to my needs.”

Waiting times

One respondent reported having heard complaints from others regarding waiting times but was themselves highly satisfied:

“Although I have heard people complaining about waiting times or [...] their individual experiences have been less than satisfactory I have absolutely no complaints whatsoever.”

Hospital Outpatients

Question Area	Summary of Results
Ease of access	Responses in relation to this area were mostly positive with almost two thirds of responses

	'very good' or 'good'. However, the remaining 37.5% of responses were 'very poor'.
Experience of care	Over one third of ratings on this were 'good' and the same proportion again reported a mixed experience.

Overall positive experiences

For this topic, a few respondents gave positive comments which did not necessarily highlight specific strengths. They described their experiences as “very good”, “second to none” and said, “all went well couldn’t fault any of them”.

Waiting times and communication

These themes have been grouped together because often patients’ frustration with waiting times is evident by them not being kept up to date with information. For example:

“I was thrown off the list ... [a]fter my gp had referred me. Better would have been receiving a service”

“After several calls to see when the appointment will be a few weeks ago appointment would not be till 2024. Currently I have waited 70 weeks!”

“follow up consultation has been in some cases abysmal”

“Hospital outpatients appt not clear”

“The appointment for the procedure was done on time as arranged. Follow up I was advised by the attendant that results would be “available in 2 weeks” from the specialist. I have received no information since and having contacted the relevant assistant to the consultant was told “ results still haven’t been seen and if any problems we will contact you otherwise we will not need to advise...I find this delay very concerning.”

Other services

This section summarises responses from the remaining services we provided as options within the survey questions as well as those mentioned to us by respondents using the ‘other’ option. A summary table has not been provided as

in previous sections given both the variety of services mentioned as well as low numbers discussing these.

Dentist

Experiences in relation to dental services are found to be positive:

"I recently visited my Dentist (NHS) for 6 monthly check up - I have been with this dentist for many years and always tend to find them to be helpful in advise and in the way they deal with the appointment"

"Dental services in so far as regular check up and hygienist appointments have not really been a problem in my experience"

However, one respondent mentioned the on-going issue of availability, commenting "Dentists, we need more NHS so that they are available to all adults and children."

In 2022, we heard about dentistry by a much higher proportion of respondents who expressed difficulty in getting registered. A project was done by Healthwatch in Greater Manchester on this topic (www.healthwatchtrafford.co.uk/report/2021-08-16/greater-manchester-dentistry-report) and given that this is a concern across the UK, government have plans to address this (www.gov.uk/government/news/new-measures-to-improve-access-to-dental-care).

Inpatient discharge

One respondent provided rich detail on their experience as a carer supporting someone through discharge from hospital. Their account highlights concerns with *"...people being sent home without care packages put in place, putting extra strain and stress onto carers..."*

They cite poor communication to be an underlying issue with this process, finding:

"People can be told only hours in advance of a discharge or are not including in creation of care plan or package.

One stop resources never answer the phone when called. They sometimes never turn up to an allocated slot or come on a different day or time. This

is very stressful when you have other plans/responsibilities and then they do not answer your calls when you need to report an issue.

Waiting times for a d2a bed are quite long and this causes distress for patients who do not need to be in hospital but have to be kept there to wait. Having social services in the community delays support and confuses many patients and carers who are not made aware of this updated policy."

This is a topic Healthwatch Trafford are currently planning a project on – to explore further the extent to which the patient-centred intention of Discharge to Assess is experienced specifically by those discharged from hospital to residential nursing care.

Urgent and Emergency Care and NHS 111

Three respondents shared positive experiences relating to services in this area with accounts of "excellent care" in an urgent care department and "Paramedics very good and friendly", as well as a particularly good outcome following a critical situation:

"Heart attack [in September]. Used the online 111 service to describe my symptoms which were still persisting. It recommended 999 call who would advise. 999 insisted on aspirin and at the moment of finishing call the ambulance was there.

999 operative was superb, she totally persuaded me it was serious. Stent inserted 2 days later and I'm now fitter than I was before start of run."

One minor concern this respondent did raise was in relation to the lack of availability of a stent at the hospital they were treated at, leading to them being transferred via patient transport which they found to be inefficient.

Overall themes

This section summarises three key themes identified in the findings of 2023 – two of which are similar to findings in 2022.

High quality care

Throughout the findings of this report, there is a clear trend in terms of patients' high satisfaction with the care and service they receive. This is identified more specifically when considering their interactions with staff seen through descriptions such as "friendly", "superb", "excellent" and "helpful".

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Waiting Times

Lack of satisfaction with waiting times is a theme identified generally across the services discussed above both with personal and perceived experiences. For example, with GPs, this concern is evident with difficulties found using AskmyGP and accessing face-to-face appointments and with outpatient services this is evident at both referral and follow-up stages.

Communication

This relates quite closely to concerns raised with waiting times. It is important to distinguish that communication as a theme identified is more in relation to systematic or process-based concerns, rather than that of interpersonal communication between staff and patients.

Considering patient concerns highlighted with AskmyGP and the importance of and difficulty getting face-to-face appointments, it may be that clearer communication to patients about the use of AskmyGP and the benefits of different appointment types could reduce these concerns. Similarly, more research could be done to explore instances where patients feel various appointment types are needed and why.

For outpatient services communication concerns are found with experiences shared where the need to chase up either the progress of a referral from the GP or the follow up of an outpatient service they received. In this case it may be likely that clearer communication could ease the concerns of those waiting if they are kept up to date.

Closing Comments

This report shares findings from the 2023 survey launched to find out about Trafford residents' experiences using general health and social care services in the past 12-months and to compare findings to an equivalent survey conducted in 2022.

Although this project is a minimal snapshot of wider health and social care challenges across Trafford, its effectiveness is evident in that it has highlighted the three distinct themes outlined above – high quality care, waiting times and communication.

We share our thanks once again to those who shared their experiences, thoughts, and feelings.

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Appendix

Survey Questions

Please note some very minor changes were made to the questions asked in 2022 to form the 2023 survey.

1. Choose the area of care you would like to tell us about. You can select more than one.
2. Please tell us about your experience. What went well? What could have been better?
3. Does your feedback apply to a specific service? If so, please tell us which ones(s). e.g. the GP surgery name or hospital department
4. How easy was it to access the help and support you needed?
5. How would you describe your overall experience?
6. In relation to this experience, please select what best describes you:
7. Demographics questions



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