

Experiences of health and social care in Sheffield

Key insights from February – March 2025

Between February– March 2025, 346 individuals shared their experiences of health and social care services across Sheffield. Overall feedback was largely positive, especially about the care from GP practices and ambulance staff. However, people had mixed views about how well services made reasonable adjustments for patients with disabilities or additional needs. We also heard concerns linked to long wait times for blood testing and from patients whose regular medications had been suddenly stopped, leaving them feeling frustrated and unsupported.

GP services

During this period, 259 people shared their experiences of more than 37 GP practices across the city. Of these, nearly two thirds (167) spoke positively about the care they had received with prominent themes related to friendly staff and receiving good treatment and advice.

Where people shared less positive experiences, access to appointments remained the most commonly raised issue, with 36 individuals sharing a range of concerns. A few stated that appointments had been cancelled and, in some cases, rescheduled with male doctors despite requesting a female. We also heard of instances of when patients had booked double appointments, but were rescheduled by staff to single slots.

29 patients reported concerns linked to unprofessional communication, experienced both over the phone and in person which largely centred around reception staff. People said the interactions made them feel worse when they were already not feeling well.

We received feedback from a few individuals who felt that their GP had opted to label them with health anxiety. As a result, people said they experienced greater difficulty getting appointments and referrals to specialist care, and felt their GP didn't listen to them or take them seriously.



“Good history taken and appropriate examination carried out.”

“the tone of voice when answering the call is so unprofessional and just so rude, as I am a health care professional myself I find this unacceptable!”

“They have obviously fobbed me off as some kind of hypochondriac despite having multiple conditions over the years.”

Unequal access to services

We often hear mixed feedback when it comes to healthcare services making adjustments to support patients with disabilities or additional needs. For instance, one patient shared they were able to email their health concerns ahead of a GP appointment and access a ground floor clinic due to the absence of a lift. In contrast, another patient at the same practice reported reasonable adjustments hadn't been made, highlighting inconsistencies in care.

More broadly, we heard that some staff in GP practices and hospitals did not always have a good understanding of different disabilities which could sometimes affect the quality of support provided. Additionally, some patients with healthcare passports (used by some people who have learning disabilities, autism, or other conditions that may require extra support in healthcare settings) mentioned that if they forgot to take them to their appointment, it had a big impact on the care they received.



"The doctors were good in A&E and understood our disabilities but the reception staff need a lot more training."



Abrupt stop to prescribed medications

We heard from some patients whose prescribed long-term medication had suddenly stopped. This happened for various reasons and led to distress, frustration, and in some cases, severe pain. One patient shared that they had been on the same medication for many years, but was told the funding for their medication would stop and the treatment would need to be reassessed. We also heard of another case where a GP surgery suddenly stopped prescribing hormone replacement therapy to a trans patient citing a lack of expertise.

"The pain is really having an impact on day-to-day activity and wellbeing for the whole family."

A need for universal record sharing

A few patients stated they were frustrated about different NHS services not sharing health records leading to delays in care and impacted the quality of care they received. Many felt a joined-up, centralised system would improve coordination and care and look forward to hearing of any changes due to be announced in the NHS 10year plan.



"Brilliant in patient care from both Sheffield Northern General and Royal Hallamshire."

Hospital care

27 patients, family members and carers shared their experiences of hospital care with 48% (13 people) describing caring and effective treatment in a range of areas, including oncology, ophthalmology, GI, surgery, orthopaedics, the district nurses and A&E.

The majority of the issues raised linked to delays accessing specialist consultants, with some waiting months for referrals or follow-up appointments. Others had struggled with lengthy waiting times for surgery.

We've continued to hear reports of a very busy A&E with long waiting times. Some people suggested staff should limit the amount of people accompanying patients due to concerns that there wasn't enough seating available and it was sometimes difficult for patients to find a space.

Views were shared about the Centralised Pre-Operative Assessment Unit. We heard the care provided was good, however it was difficult for some patients to get to, especially for those with mobility issues awaiting surgery. The nearest car park is some distance away, with some requiring an uphill walk through a busy town centre. Additionally, we heard uneven clinic floors made some patients feel unsteady.

It was reported the stickers issued to hearing impaired patients weren't always helpful. This was due to a tendency of them falling off or blending in with similar coloured clothing making it difficult for staff to notice them. It was suggested that a lanyard would be a more effective alternative, ensuring clear visibility and better recognition by staff.

We heard the Sheffield Liver Team within the Gastroenterology department at Sheffield Teaching Hospitals does not have a dedicated dietitian or nutritionist for referrals. One patient told us they were referred to a general community dietitian and wanted to highlight the gap in specialist nutritional support for patients accessing support from the liver team.

Long waits for blood testing

We received reports that patients seeking blood tests at some GP surgeries were facing significant delays, often waiting weeks for an appointment. Patients who had opted to travel to alternative phlebotomy services, at the Hallamshire and Longley Lane, also reported experiencing long wait times sometimes of up to two hours. These delays caused frustration and inconvenience for patients in need of timely testing.

"The hospital should be able to insist on only one companion."



"I am still suffering from the experience of trying to get to the clinic."



"I also needed a blood test and will have to wait 5 weeks to have it done at the practice."

Mental health access

During this period, 14 individuals provided feedback regarding mental health support. The responses were a mix of both positive and negative sentiments. Some felt as though they had received good support whilst others reported difficulties accessing support especially from a psychiatrist or counsellor. Some individuals had sought referrals from their GP, but were unsuccessful and were prescribed antidepressant medication instead.



"All they do is offer medication to manage the issues but nothing to fix it."

Sheffield Support Hub

We heard [Sheffield Support Hub](#) who offer mental health, adult autism and ADHD support was not widely known to some people, meaning some frontline staff as well as members of the public were unaware of the service. People said it would be great to see the hub promoted more so that everyone is aware of the support on offer.

"My Support Worker has been brilliant throughout."



Praise for Yorkshire Ambulance Staff

We received positive feedback about ambulance staff providing urgent and emergency care during home visits. Patients praised their friendliness, compassionate approach, and clear communication. One patient shared that the good level of care they received helped them remain calm during a very difficult situation.

"The two paramedics that came out to see me today (...) were amazing and brilliant!!"

NHS Dentistry

We regularly contact dentists across Sheffield to get an accurate picture of which practices are accepting new NHS patients so we can signpost people to them. After we called round in March, we discovered seven practices across the city were able to offer appointments to new adult NHS patients.



Impact from our last briefing (Dec- Jan 2025)

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

Response from Sheffield Teaching Hospitals

Waiting in the discharge lounge- the discharge lounge is staffed by fully qualified nursing staff who can continue to administer medication until the patient leaves. If a patient experiences pain, the nursing team will review the patient's prescription and administer pain relief. Take home medications for patients in the discharge lounge are prioritised by the pharmacy team, to minimise delays as much as is possible.

Name badges not being worn/staff not introducing themselves - this has been raised at the Patient Experience and Engagement Group and has been asked that Matrons in all areas have been asked to ensure that staff wear name badges at all times, remind their teams of the 'Hello my name is...' campaign and ensure that posters showing a guide to the roles for the different staff uniforms are displayed where these are clearly visible to patients and visitors.

Lack of continence pads - the funding for the Continence service means that we are able to provide 3 pads per day, or 4 where daily care requires this. Nationally services are restricted to how many pads can be provided per day, with an understanding that any supplementary products will need to be purchased by the individual.

Future service delivery - STH are currently undertaking some engagement work to gather feedback from patients and the public about how they would like to be cared for in the future, to shape the development of our 10-year plan for delivery of care and would welcome responses from patients and the public to help us shape this draft plan. You can find out more information about this engagement project and share your views here: [Care 2035 - Sheffield Teaching Hospital](#) or email sth.engagement@nhs.net

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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