

The people's choice 2025

Listening to your voice in our key projects for 2025/26

April 2025



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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to: info@healthwatchsomerset.co.uk

You can download this publication from our website: healthwatchsomerset.co.uk

About us

Healthwatch Somerset is your local health and social care champion. We make sure NHS leaders and other decision makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve health and social care.

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

As an independent statutory body, we have the power to make sure that NHS leaders and other decision makers listen to your feedback and use it to improve standards of care. This report is an example of how your views are shared.

Healthwatch Somerset is part of a network of over 150 local Healthwatch across the country. We cover the unitary local authority area of Somerset Council.



Background

How we hear about local health and care services

Every year we collect information about how local health and social care services are working. We do this in a variety of ways, including:

- Collecting people's experiences of services through general feedback methods such as our online and our freepost forms.
- Carrying out targeted research and Enter and View visits in our annual workplan.
- Taking part in public events collecting general and targeted feedback.
- Attending public groups to give presentations about our work and using them as focus groups.



- Acting as a conduit for some organisations to signpost their service users to provide feedback.
- Attending organisational meetings and events.
- Attending governance boards and meetings.

How our key projects are decided

Using the intelligence collected over the course of 12 months, alongside wider national considerations, our Advisory Board discuss possible key projects for the next year. The Board also look at existing health and social care strategies such as the local Integrated Care System (ICS) [Health and Care Strategy](#) before shortlisting the final projects.

We exist to represent the voice of the people, and we want to ensure that the key project selections for the year are robust and accountable to those they are intended to inform. Each year we publicly share the shortlist for projects, and people are given the opportunity to vote on their two preferred subjects.

This brief report explains the methods and findings from our public investigation.

What we did

We created a public survey which included information about the vote and our work.

Alongside this, a poster with a QR (Quick Response) code and social media images were produced for promotional purposes. (See Appendix 1 for paper survey document).

The survey explained the four shortlisted projects and asked people to vote for two of their preferred subjects. People were not asked to vote in an order of preference.

There was also an option to add suggested subjects.



Cast your vote for our key projects in 2025/26

Tell us what you want us to report in the next 12 months

Call us free to vote:
0800 999 1286

Cast your votes online:
www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/PeopleVote2025/

Voting closes:
21 March 2025



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Our staff and volunteers promoted the vote through their networks, at meetings, and events they attended, including (but not limited to), the following:



What topic will you choose?
Use your voice in our work plan 2025/26!
Voting closes: 21 March 2025
healthwatch
Somerset

- An email campaign sent to over 110 contacts inviting them to participate in, and to share, the survey.
- A news article in our monthly newsletter and a page on our website.
- A poster for people to download and share.
- Meetings attended by our staff and volunteers.
- Face to face at various events between 31 January and 21 March 2025.
- Weekly posts on our social media channels.

The vote was open from Friday 31 January to Friday 21 March 2025 and could be completed on paper, online, or over the phone.

Who we spoke to

There were 122 responses to our survey from people across Somerset.

The most responses came from people in the Taunton postcode area.

Our online survey was opened by 32 people from the email campaign.

The QR code was used by 10 people to complete their vote.

We received 48 votes completed on paper forms as a result of face to face engagement. These votes were manually added by staff to the online survey results.

Four members of the Somerset Board voted.

A full breakdown of responses by post town can be seen in Appendix 2.

122 Votes



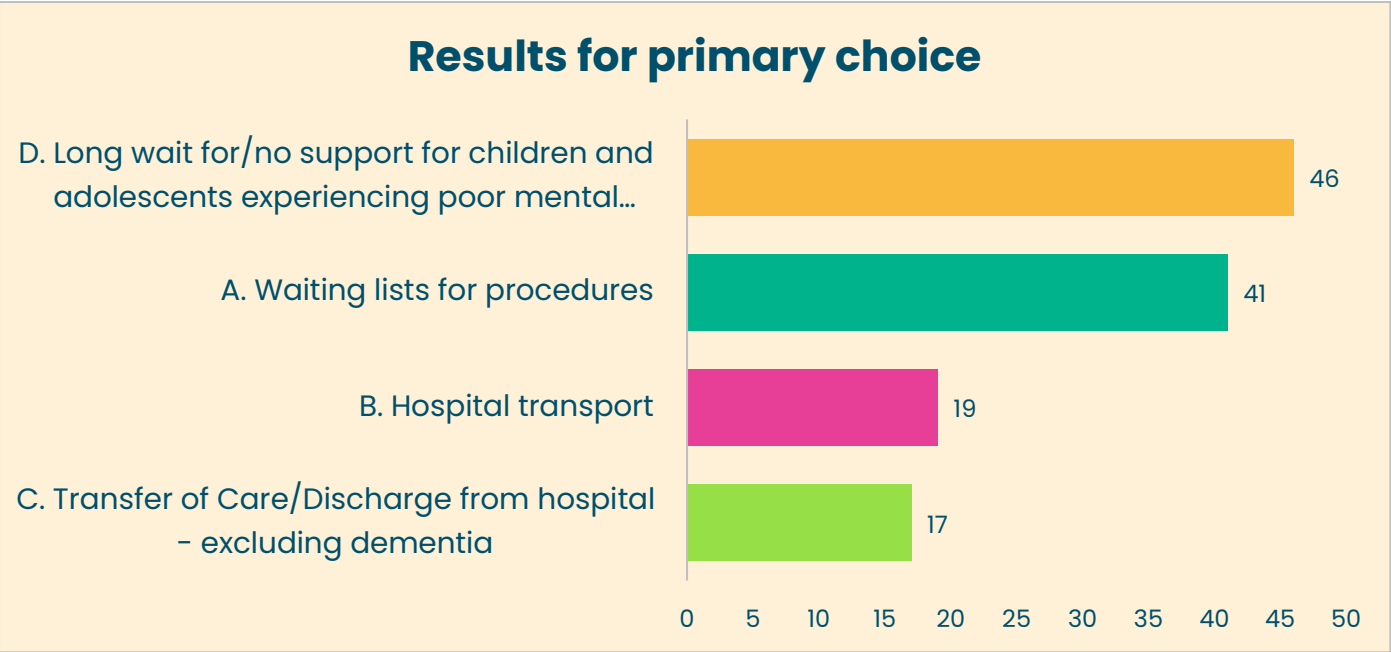
10 QR Scans



What people told us

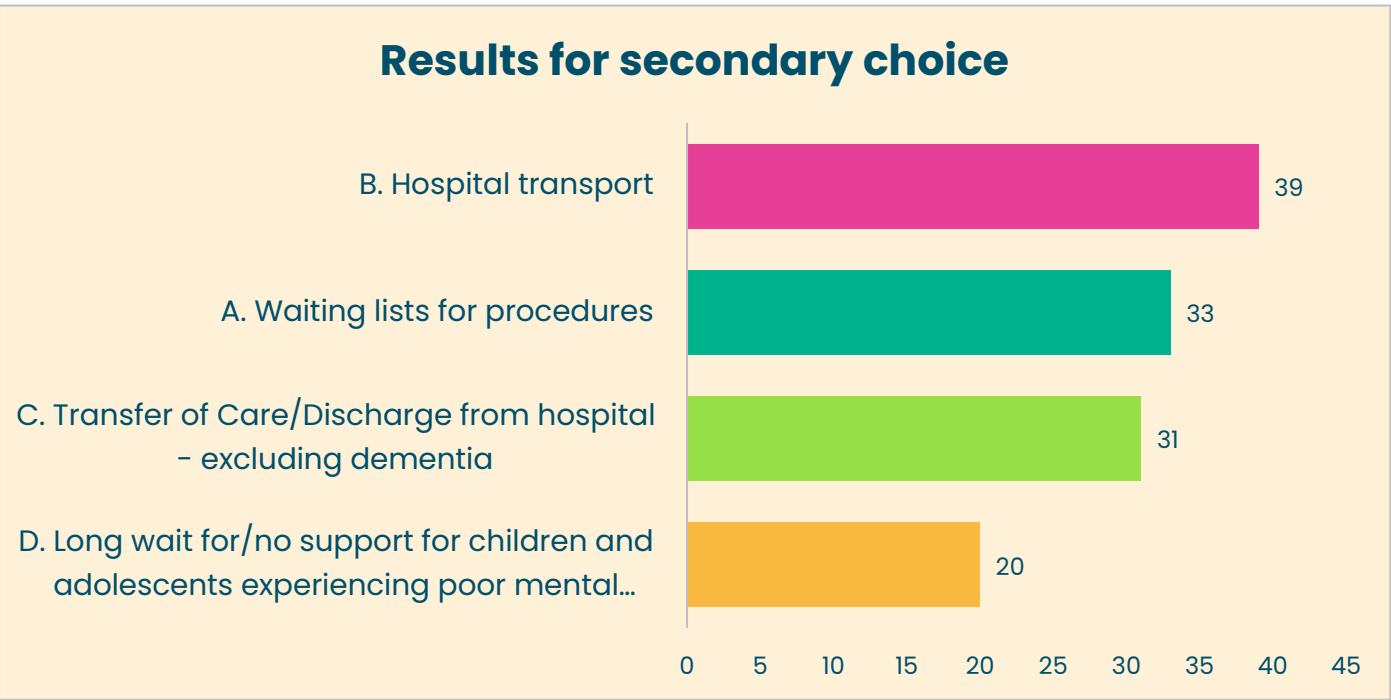
Primary choice

The most popular first choice was long waits/no support for children and adolescents experiencing poor mental health with 46 votes.



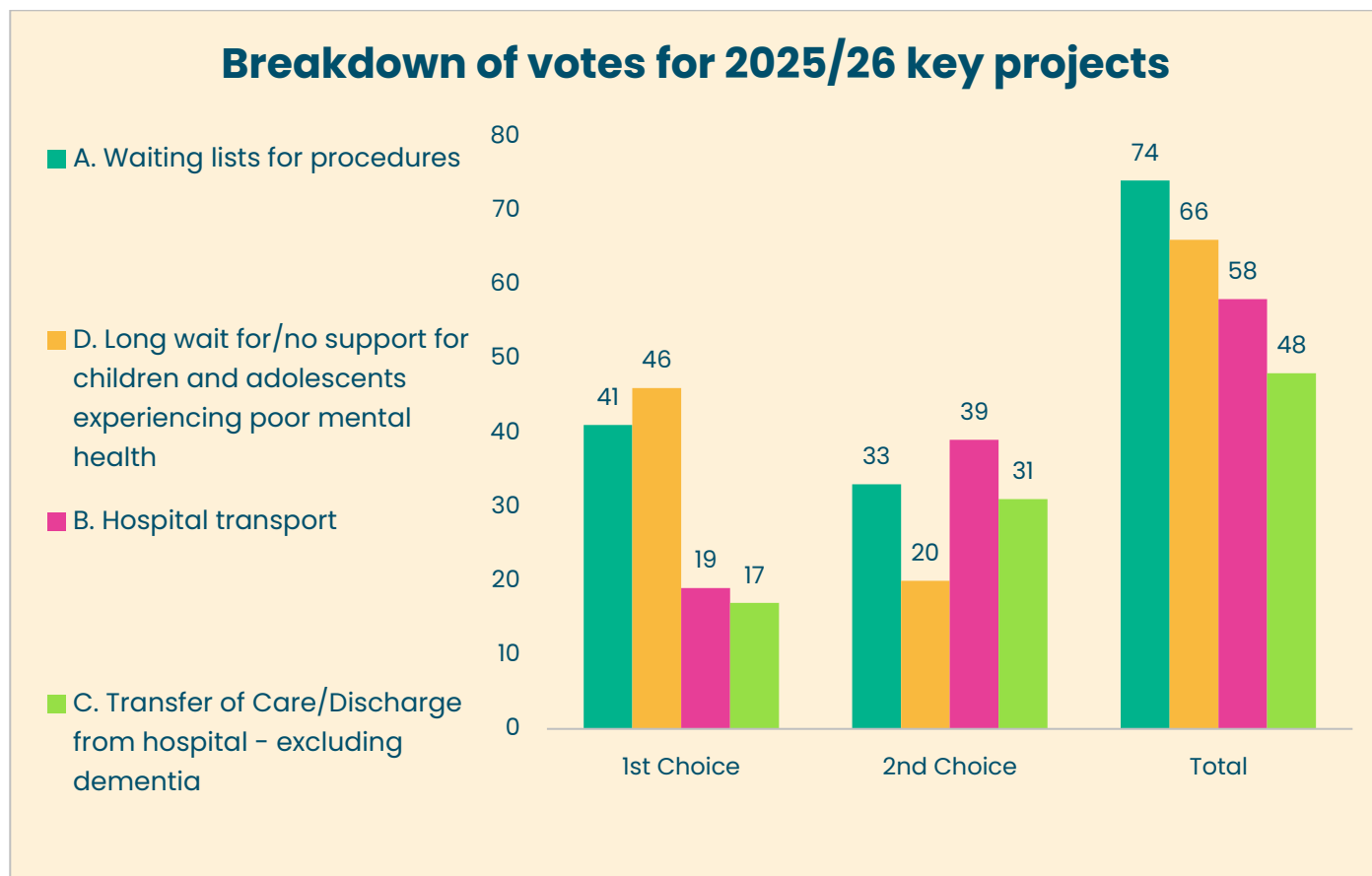
Second choice

Hospital transport received 39 votes which made it the most preferred second choice.



Total number of votes

Combining the total of votes revealed that 74, (30%), of 122 votes were for waiting lists for procedures.



Other suggestions

We asked people if they would like to suggest any other projects for us to consider, 28 people responded with a total of 35 suggestions.



Children and young people were the most common theme in suggestions. Transition from children to adult services was mentioned twice.

Concerns about dentistry, mental health, and adult social care services were other notable subjects in people's comments.



Why you can't get a doctor's appointment or NHS dentists.



Conclusion

Listening to the people's voice has given us an important understanding of what the people of Somerset would like us to focus on in 2025/26.

This year we will carry out the most voted for key project as decided by you.

Waiting lists for procedures: We will investigate how and when patients are being contacted with information while they're waiting for their medical treatments.

We have taken the decision not to commit to a second key project at this stage so that we can be flexible to the continuous changes in local and national government organisations.

We will also be holding a conference in October 2025 focussing on the [Accessible Information Standard](#) in Somerset health and care.

Thank you

We would like to thank the people of Somerset for taking part and using their voice to help shape our workplan in 2025/26.

Thank you also to all the organisational contacts and networks who helped us reach out to people and highlight the vote across the county.

Finally, we would like to thank our Advisory Board and volunteers for their ongoing support in all our work.



Appendices

Appendix 1: Paper version of the vote

Thank you for taking time to cast your vote.

Use the information on the previous page, to select your **first** choice.
Please mark one box only.

1. ☐ A. ☐ B. ☐ C. ☐ D.

Use the information on the previous page, to select your **second** choice.
Please mark one box only.

2. ☐ A. ☐ B. ☐ C. ☐ D.


Are there any other projects you might like us to consider?
Please limit this to two suggestions only.

.....

Please provide the first part of your postcode:
(This will help us to identify any trends in specific areas).

If you would like to remain informed about our work and have the latest health and care news for Somerset delivered to your inbox, please provide your email address below:
.....

You can view our privacy policy on our website at:
<https://www.healthwatchsomerset.co.uk/privacy>



Cast your vote for our key projects in 2025/26


Tell us what you want us to report in the next 12 months

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Scan me

Your vote matters

Every year, we create a work plan for the next 12 months. This plan is shaped by your feedback and what we've learned about health and care services in Somerset over the past year.

We've picked four possible projects for 2025/26 and would love your help in choosing which topic you'd like us to focus on.

You can return your vote by posting it to:
Healthwatch Somerset
Suite 12, Wellworthys Business Centre
Parrett Way
Colley Lane
Bridgwater
TA6 5LB

Who we are

Healthwatch Somerset wants to hear about your experiences with local health and social care services. We're here to listen to the issues that are important to you. We are completely independent and unbiased, and anything you share with us is confidential.

We also provide free reliable and trustworthy information and advice. Last year, the Healthwatch network helped nearly a million people like you to have your say and get the support you need. Find out more about us on our website: www.healthwatchsomerset.co.uk



Below are our four potential projects for 2024/25. Please write your two selected projects overleaf.

Waiting lists for procedures

A. Waiting times for medical procedures are a problem across the country, but here locally, we've noticed that people are not getting clear updates about their wait times and the procedures themselves. We want to look into how and when patients are being informed while they're waiting for their medical treatments.

Hospital transport

B. Somerset's rural nature makes travelling to and from hospital appointments challenging for those unable to use standard transport. We aim to understand the experiences of people booking hospital transport and the service's communication with patients.

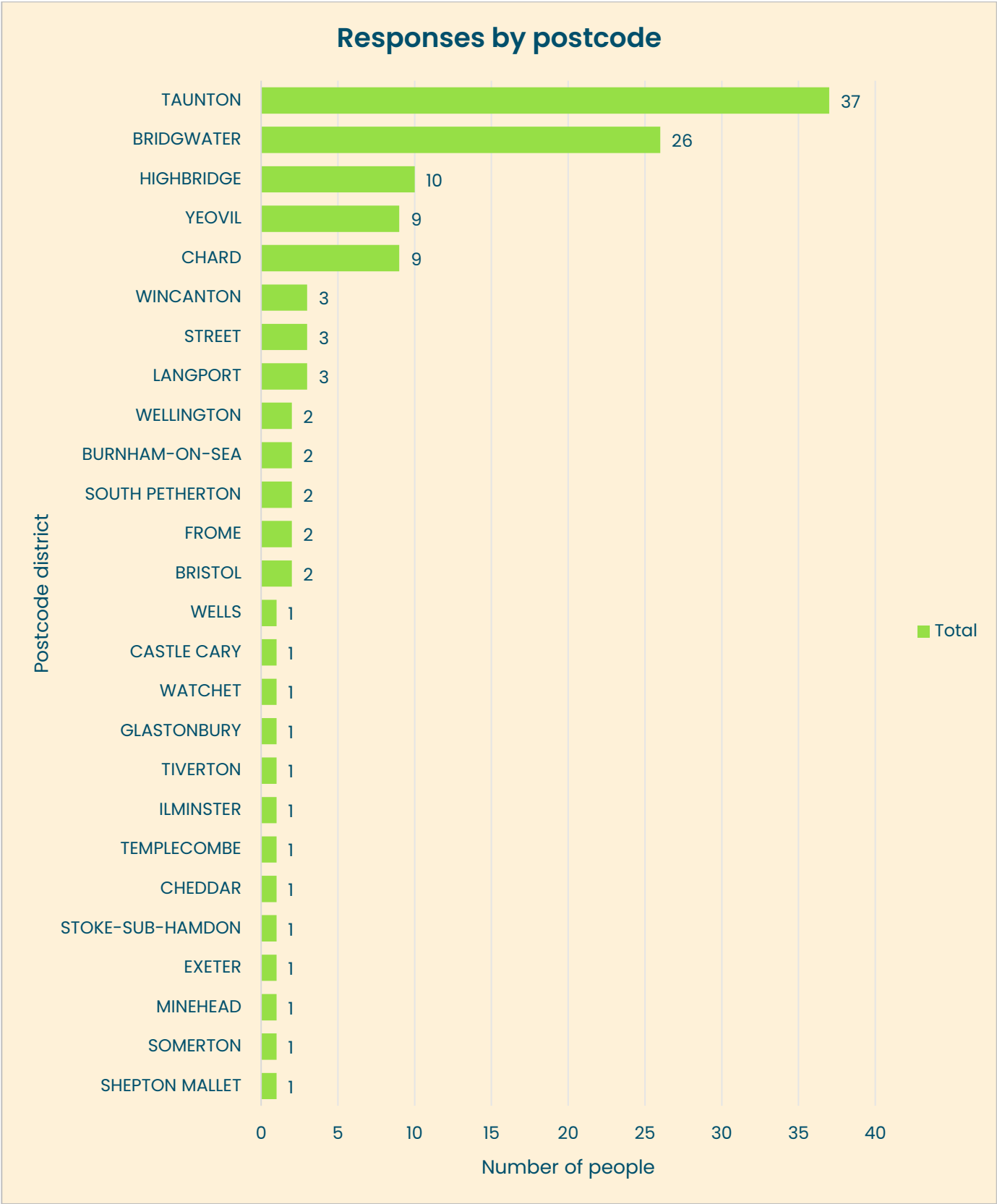
Transfer of Care/Discharge from hospital - excluding dementia

C. During 2024 people have shared with us the difficulties they have experienced when moving from the hospital to back home. We want to listen to patients and carers tell us what they need when leaving hospital.

Long wait for/no support for children and adolescents experiencing poor mental health

D. The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in Somerset provides mental health evaluations, support for children and young people up to 18 years old and can direct you to other helpful services. We aim to explore how help is given and what procedures are in place for those who do not qualify.

Appendix 2: Chart showing responses by post town



Appendix 3: Other suggestions/comments

No.	Suggestion/Comment
1	Integration of care and NHS - promoting joint working
2	Grief, planning a good death, death cafes - all potential elements
3	Lack of communications and comprehension of basic English.
4	Women's health post menopause
5	Training for medical professionals on menopause and women's/girls' health
6	I was awaiting 2 procedures- Meteh was on waiting list two months after diagnosis. Still awaiting a procedure but there is list - hidden. Who do I ask?
7	I agree in focussing services on special hospitals. How the hell do I get there and back when I live in an area with taxis not willing to get people.
8	What happens to children and young people either a) whilst on the waiting list regarding their care and b) those you can't get support?
9	Maternity services to be provided in high quality buildings
10	Children need to be prioritised for GP appointments & not referred to pharmacy first for a range of conditions eg middle ear infections where OTC medicines can cost £10.00+ which may be unaffordable for many families
11	Exploring existing and planned links between Adult Social Care and Primary Care, including the assignment of Social Care staff to Primary Care Networks.
12	Dental care
13	CPR in Primary Schools
14	Dementia support in the community
15	Why you can't get a doctor's appointment or NHS dentists
16	Please maintain the pressure on the challenges and issues for unpaid carers, also inclusion of volunteer contributions.
17	Trying to get clients into correct services without services being dismissive. Collapse of Adult Social Care has been difficult.

18	More staff peer to help waiting times.
19	Mental health support for men/self employed
20	General health and nutrition education
21	Physiotherapy returned to Musgrove (site is difficult to access uphill from bus stop).
22	I think you should consider looking at neurodiversity in Somerset and specifically looking at the waiting times for patients to be assessed (and treated) for ADHD and Autism Spectrum Disorder.
23	Provision of social care packages for those in touch with the criminal justice system / released from prison.
24	Better transitions from <25 to adult services
25	How services connect with people experiencing homelessness and domestic abuse who may not have a fixed address or support network
26	Extra help for carers e.g. transport, parking, appointments to fit in with their caring role
27	Lack of NHS dentistry
28	Transition from child to adult services both NHS and Social care
29	Referrals - better communication so people know what is/has been done and who to contact
30	More money for mental health support services.
31	A&E waiting times.
32	Getting access to a NHS dentist (this is very important to me as I'm 41 years old and have not have an NHS Dentist for over 22 years!)
33	Alcohol and drugs being rife in Chard.
34	Men's mental health.
35	Maybe more local hospital transport especially for the elderly who are alone.

Website links in this report

Page 2	Health and Care Strategy	https://oursomerset.org.uk/about-us/our-vision/
Page 8	Accessible Information Standard	https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/accessible-information-standard-overview-20172018/

Image attributes

Cover	A group of young people posing for a photo on a pier with the sea in the background.	https://www.pexels.com/@kampus/
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