

Experiences of health and social care in Sheffield

Key insights from June– July 2025

Over the course of June and July 2025, 241 individuals shared their experiences of health and social care services across Sheffield. During this period, we heard many positive stories about good care and treatment received across a wide range of services. However, there were also examples of not so great experiences. This included difficulties accessing referrals to secondary care, poor communication between hospitals and GP practices, long waiting lists for some services and issues with interpreter support.

GP services

Throughout June and July 2025, 97 people shared their experiences of 30 different GP practices across the city. Of these, (76) praised their surgeries, particularly highlighting friendly and helpful staff, as well as the clear and helpful explanations they had received about their care and treatment. Numerous patients felt listened to during appointments and felt well supported by staff. Where people shared less positive feedback, access to appointments and struggles to get through on the phone was the most commonly raised issue.

We also heard from people who had experienced issues when trying to access referrals to secondary care. This included referrals for pain investigations, diagnostic scans, and other health concerns. Some patients felt their symptoms were not being taken seriously by their GPs, which left them feeling dismissed or ignored. A number of patients were considering making formal complaints to ensure their voices were heard.

In addition, some patients reported that they had experienced issues around the Right to Choose process. Some people were told to research different providers without any guidance or direction, leaving them unsure of where to start. Others reported due to a lack of clear explanation, they thought they had been referred to a Right to Choose provider, to later discover this wasn't the case. We also heard of instances where requests had been dismissed or ignored. Patients have called for clearer explanations of the Right to Choose process, and for GPs to provide reliable information or direct them to trusted sources.



"The GP was very nice and thorough, and explained different options for my issue. Really pleased with the practice."



"It seems that when you ask for a referral to another hospital as you wish a less invasive procedure, you are ignored putting your life at risk."

Some patients contacted us as they were concerned they were missing out on their annual or regular health check-ups as they hadn't been invited when expected. They felt this was due to the increased pressures their GP surgeries were facing and were worried that this could put their health at risk.



Hospital Care

30 patients, family members and carers shared their experiences of hospital care with 43% (13 people) describing effective and caring treatment in a wide range of areas, including cardiology, ECG services, Weston Park, ophthalmology and the Bev Stokes Unit.

A large proportion of the concerns we heard about related to the lengthy waiting times patients had experienced in A&E and the quality of care they had received as an in/out patient.

Another common issue we've heard about recently is delays in communication between hospitals and GP practices. Largely this has centred around scan or test results, or requests to change medication. In some cases, patients said they had to contact the hospital themselves because their GP practice couldn't get the information needed despite repeated attempts.

We have been hearing from people living with chronic pain. Many have been referred to different services that have not been able to help, or, when referred to a suitable service, they have faced long waits to access it. In particular, people were concerned about the lengthy waits for the pain clinic, which supports patients with persistent pain that has not been effectively managed by other available treatments. These delays and unhelpful referrals have left many struggling and has affected their daily life and emotional wellbeing.

Osteoporosis patients shared they often face long waits for bone density scans which can delay important treatment decisions. Some have reported switching to different hospitals with shorter waiting times as a result. People also raised concerns that the current five-year gap between scans may not reflect changes in their condition and felt that this was too long to wait. In addition, patients said waiting 9–12 months to receive their scan results was too long as the delay could affect timely changes to their treatment.

"I can't thank everyone enough for their care and support!"

"The care is fabulous let down only by admin/correspondence."

"There is poor digital communication between Sheffield Hospitals and GP practices."

"Physio eventually referred me to pain clinic again with a long waiting list."

"Waiting times for bone density scans and results are so long that decisions about ongoing care cannot be made."

Sheffield Walk in Centre

We heard that some patients who ask for assistance with triage forms at the Walk-in Centre may not always receive the support they need. In one case, a patient said they were refused help and instead directed to an area of the waiting room to fill in the form by themselves. Another patient offered assistance which the individual accepted, but they were worried about having to share their personal information with a stranger.



Adult Social Care

People spoke about their experiences with the Sheffield Future Options team. After being assessed as requiring support, some said they were left without help. They wanted information and guidance on areas such as direct payments, hiring personal assistants, and related tasks such as dealing with HMRC, getting insurance, and writing employment contracts. Some found this process difficult and overwhelming and reported they had been left to do this alone with no follow-up from staff to check in on their progress or wellbeing.

"Social care managers seem to leave, go MIA or assume that I am coping as they don't hear from me."

Interpreter support

Feedback was shared relating to concerns about interpreter support. Some patients told us they had experienced difficulties accessing an interpreter in both primary and secondary care settings. In other cases, an interpreter had been provided but they did not speak the correct language or dialect needed. In addition, some people shared they felt that their interpreter's spoken English was not always clear enough and felt that this could lead to misunderstandings affecting the quality of their care.



Continence supplies – delivery issues

Some people receiving continence supplies said delivery drivers don't always wait long enough for them to answer the door. Parcels are often left outside and because they're heavy some people struggle to bring them in. One person said in one instance they had to use their wheelchair footplates to help manoeuvre a parcel inside.



NHS Dentistry

Feedback was received about the Limbrick Centre, who provide community and special care dentistry services. People stated they would like to see more patient information leaflets in the waiting area- that they could take away if needed. This included information on oral care and dental treatments they may be receiving in both standard and easy-read formats.



Three people got in touch this period to tell us they were struggling to find an NHS dentist. One of these people needed extensive dental work but was concerned they may have had to pay for private treatment which they couldn't afford. Two further people shared positive stories about the treatments they had received at their dentist.

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 July, we discovered just four practices across the city were able to offer appointments to new adult NHS patients.



Impact from our last briefing (April- May)

South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (SYICB) and Sheffield Health and Social Care (SHSC) have responded to our [last briefing](#) outlining how they plan to address areas for improvement. Their comments are in blue.

Response from SYICB

We heard from people who felt they had been overcharged for dental treatment: *Where NHS treatment is provided, there are set bands of treatment with fixed pricing. Prices would have increased from April 2025 as there are annual updates to the NHS banding charges. NHS charges are based on the banded rate when the course of treatment is completed not when it started so if the treatment goes over two financial years the fee will be at the higher rate.*

If payments were not inline with the NHS banding structure, then it is possible that the patient received private treatment or a mix of NHS and private.

Dentists have to provide patients with a treatment plan for band 2 and Band 3 courses of treatment, or a mix of NHS and private treatments. The treatment plan outlines the proposed dental treatment and costs should be provided and patients asked to sign the plan and then be provided with a copy to keep for their records.

NHS dental charges from 1 April 2025 are:

- £27.40 for Band 1 course of treatment
- £75.30 for Band 2 course of treatment
- £326.70 for Band 3 course of treatment
- £27.40 for urgent dental treatment; however you may need further dental treatment after your urgent appointment which may have additional costs.

Patients can check if they are eligible for free or reduced cost NHS dental treatment using the NHS eligibility checker at www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/check.

If patients are not exempt from charges, they will only pay one charge for each complete course of treatment, even if they need to go to the dentist more than once to finish it. Dentists may collect this charge in instalments, e.g. initial appointment Band 1 charge £27.40 and when the Band 2 course of treatment has ended collect the difference e.g. $£75.30 - £27.40 = £47.90$

Response from SHSC

Feedback was shared about the difficulties experienced when accessing some mental health services: Thank you for sharing feedback regarding mental health access. We acknowledge that this question brings together feedback on a wide variety of sources of help across public, private and third sectors. Nevertheless, the feedback is helpful for us at SHSC to reduce wait times and to help people access accurate information and advice. The Sheffield Mental Health Guide is a useful resource for anyone seeking support: [Local support for when you're feeling low | Sheffield Mental Health Guide](#) If you feel that you or someone else needs urgent help the NHS 111 Mental Health Option is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week for all ages. This team is trained to help you get to the most appropriate source of help for your needs. All calls to our urgent and crisis service are assessed to determine advice, support, and or onward referral.

We are very sorry to hear about your experience of NHS 111. The feedback shared about experiences using the 111 service will be discussed with the service provider so they can use it to improve. SHSC works closely with our NHS 111 provider to improve the quality of experience, which includes gathering feedback from people who use the service.

[NHS Sheffield Talking Therapies](#) provides free NHS talking therapies for stress, anxiety, and depression. These services are available to anyone aged 18 or older who is

registered with a Sheffield GP. You can approach them directly online or over the phone. They will send a choose and book link to enable you to book your appointment at a day/time that is convenient for you. Waits to access Talking Therapies are not long. 99% of people accessing treatment at Sheffield Talking Therapies between January and July 2025 had their first appointment within 6 weeks of referral.

Sheffield Primary and Community Mental Health Service is available for adults living with serious mental illness in Sheffield who are not currently on the waiting list for or receiving treatment from another NHS mental health service and would like help managing symptoms. To access help from PCMH contact your GP who can arrange an initial conversation with an experienced mental health practitioner to understand your current mental health needs and make sure you can get the right help

People shared their experiences of Dementia care: Sheffield Memory service has made improvements to waiting times in the last year. By June 2025, the average waiting time for initial assessment had reduced to 30 weeks, with weekly improvements continuing. We acknowledge that continued improvement in waiting times is needed and we are committed to continue reducing waits. Guided by service user and carer feedback facilitated by our third sector partners, the Trust has improved the information available to support patients post diagnosis. In addition, through 'Triangle of Care' there are now dedicated support groups and information to ensure carers are a critical partner in delivering care. For those who can access digital tools, online support can be accessed via the Trust website

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

Online: healthwatchsheffield.co.uk

Phone: 0114 253 6688

Email: info@healthwatchsheffield.co.uk

Text: 07415 249657

