

Experiences of health and social care in Sheffield

Key insights from August–September 2025

Between August and September, we gathered insights from 107 people using health and social care services across Sheffield. Fewer experiences were shared this period which was largely due to less stories being submitted to Care Opinion. Despite this, several cross-cutting themes emerged, particularly around long waiting times for some services and disparities in access to certain treatments.

GP services

Throughout August and September 2025, 28 people shared their experiences of 19 different GP practices across the city. Of these, 5 patients praised their surgeries, particularly highlighting the quality of care and treatment they had received. Where people shared less positive feedback, access to appointments remained the most commonly raised issue.

Some people contacted us about the difficulties they had experienced when trying to access the Mounjaro injection, which is a brand of medicine that can be used for weight management. Although these patients met the prescribing criteria, they were unable to access the injection due to their GPs waiting for clinical guidance from South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (SYICB). Patients noted Sheffield appeared to be behind other parts of the country which has left some people having to fund the injection themselves. This was often at a cost they couldn't really afford and without the same monitoring as provided through the NHS.

Patients told us they sometimes found it hard to access certain medications they felt would support their health and thought this was due to reasons such as GP clinical confidence or lack of guidance. Due to not being able to access medications such as HRT, they were instead referred to specialist services but often faced long waits and insufficient interim support in the meantime.

We heard patients were not always informed that fasting was required when being referred for certain blood tests at phlebotomy sites. Some had travelled long distances for their appointment, but were turned away and had to rebook the test causing frustration.



"GP properly listened made me feel justified in asking for help."

"Although I meet NICE guidelines criteria the process for prescribing in Sheffield is not rolled out yet."

"(...) referred me to hrt clinic at hospital which I am still waiting 15 months later."



Hospital Care

24 patients, family members and carers shared their experiences of hospital care with 29% (7 people) describing effective and caring treatment in areas including breast screening, ophthalmology, ultrasound, neurology and A&E.

Some patients were unhappy that Sheffield Teaching Hospitals usually provide just one hearing aid for patients who have received a diagnosis of severe hearing loss in both ears. One patient explained they had waited several months for an initial appointment and for ear moulds to be made, but felt the process had been a waste of time. After speaking with their GP, they were informed two hearing aids could be supplied under Chesterfield services so chose to transfer their care there instead.

We heard reports of surgery being cancelled just days before it was due to take place. In some cases, this was because earlier patient tests or scans were no longer recent enough. Patients felt this was down to the long waits they had experienced and they should have been contacted sooner to repeat their tests. One patient also stated they had not met a specialist consultant until their surgery consent appointment, which they felt was unsettling and unhelpful.

Other patients raised concerns about the long waits they had experienced for outpatient appointments with some waiting much longer than expected. The [My Planned Care](#) website provides information on current NHS waiting times and notes that these vary depending on the urgency of each case. However, some patients said an expected 12-week wait had stretched to six months, and they still had not received any updates.

We are still hearing about administrative issues with patient letters. Some patients reported receiving the same appointment letter multiple times and were concerned about the printing and postage costs.

Long Covid Hub

Views were shared about the Long Covid Hub. Some stated the hub had helped them better understand and manage their condition but others felt they hadn't received enough medical support. Patients also felt that the service was reducing in size or scope and were worried about a lack of clear communication and consultation with patients about any changes. This left some feeling uncertain about what support would be available in the future.



"The staff were very efficient, friendly and understanding."

"It's a postcode lottery."

"I found it astounding that this hadn't been checked until days before surgery (...) The (...) agreed that the unit is chaotic."



"The long covid hub has downsized significantly with seemingly no patient consultation."

Children and young people's access to healthcare

We heard from parents who were concerned about the long waiting times their children faced for Autism or ADHD assessments and other support at Ryegate. Some had sought advice about the Right to Choose but were worried if their child was prescribed medication, a shared care agreement might be refused meaning they may have to pay for prescriptions privately.

We also heard reports linked to the long waiting times for CAMHS. In other cases where children and young people had accessed the service, some parents and carers felt the support their child had received was unhelpful or did not meet their needs. We also heard that CAMHS may refuse support to young people who are using substances, leaving a gap in care. To address this, people would like broader support being available in services such as [The Corner](#), delivered by a range of healthcare professionals that can offer a combination of support including mental health and clinical substance support.

In addition, we heard from parents and carers who had contacted the NHS 111 service for advice. In some cases, they were told they would receive a call back in a couple of hours, but sometimes the call came more than six hours later. People said they would much prefer to be given a realistic estimate of how long the call back might take to help manage expectation.

Accessible exercise

Some disabled people noted that accessing gyms or leisure facilities can be challenging, as the environments and equipment are not always suitable or fully accessible. They suggested that introducing a grant or equipment loan scheme to provide general or specialist exercise equipment for home use would make it easier for more disabled people to stay active.

A lack of support for dissociative identity disorder

We have been hearing that people are finding it extremely difficult to access support for dissociative identity disorder (DID) and dissociation in Sheffield, as they are considered "too complex" for local mental health services. We also heard South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (SYICB)



"The system is so broken and people are utterly apathetic."

"The waiting lists for ADHD assessment for children are estimated to be 5-8 years. This is insane."



"There is limited accessible equipment available, more should be done."



has confirmed it does not currently commission specialist therapy for dissociative disorders and is not providing additional funding leaving many people without support.

NHS Dentistry



Five people got in touch this period due to needing a dentist. One of these people shared that they had struggled to access emergency dental care through NHS 111. 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 September, we discovered just five practices across the city were able to offer appointments to new adult NHS patients.



Impact from our last briefing (June- July)

South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (SYICB) and Sheffield Teaching Hospitals (STH) have responded to our [last briefing](#) and our [April – May](#) briefing outlining how they plan to address areas for improvement. Their comments are in black.

Response from South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board

People would like to see more patient information leaflets in the Limbrick Centre and some individuals were struggling to find an NHS dentist: Thank you for the useful feedback regarding NHS dentistry. Whilst we understand access to NHS dentistry is a frustrating situation, NHS SY ICB are listening and are aware of the difficulties being experienced. Dental practices have to report whether they are accepting new NHS patients and update this at least every 90 days. This information is available on the national NHS website – www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-dentist/. We will be reminding all dental practices to keep their profiles up to date so members of the public can see this. Please be assured we are working hard at a local level with our providers and with our neighbouring ICBs, developing innovative ways to commission NHS dental services differently albeit within a limited resource. For example, over recent months we have developed a new referral pathway whereby patients who attend an urgent care appointment and who fit the criteria below are able to be referred to specific dental practices who are participating in a new programme to prioritise patients in the greatest of oral health need. This pathway is for patients who:

- have not been able to have definitive treatment or complete resolution of their presenting problem, OR

- have been identified with additional treatment needs, which if not addressed may require subsequent urgent treatment

We would hope that attending urgent dental services now, and in the future, patients would be supported further by being directed to a dental practice should they meet the criteria listed above. We have also contacted the Community Dental Service to ask for more leaflets and information on oral care and treatments to be made available for patients.

We heard about delivery issues in relation to continence supplies- Without knowing the exact supplier, we contacted a selection of suppliers that provide continence pads in Sheffield to see what the issue might be, and how it could be overcome. Fittleworth stated that they would be more than happy to offer direct support to any client that is experiencing issues with their deliveries. In particular, they can support customers in helping to set up their leave safe instructions and request extra time at the door on the DPD app. As an additional option, they also suggested that they could split heavier orders into multiple boxes to make them easier to manage. Charter Healthcare similarly highlighted that DPD do not require a signature for delivery, but will only leave the parcel if there are specific "leave safe" instructions provided. If there is no response and no leave-safe instructions, the driver will not leave the parcel and will attempt delivery again at another time. Patients have the option to request that leave-safe instructions be added to their account, which can include a requirement for a signature upon delivery. If the DPD agreed process is not followed, patients should contact Charter directly. This will be logged as a complaint and investigated. NHS SY ICB advise anyone who is having issues with their delivery of continence pads to directly contact the supplier, where we hope that a solution can be arranged.

People living with chronic pain shared they were sometimes referred to different services that were unable to help- NHS South Yorkshire ICB commissions pain management within the Musculo-Skeletal (MSK) pathway, delivered by Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (STH). Patients are referred into MSK by their GP and they are triaged by the Pain Team and directed to the most appropriate part of the service.

We are aware that there is high demand for this specialised service and that waits can be long, also that many patients will be referred here having tried other services / approaches, and that delays impact on people significantly. It's for that reason that we have commissioned other services such as [Living Well with Persistent Pain | NHS Sheffield Talking Therapies](#), so that the specialist pain clinic at STH can be focussed on people who need that level of specialist help.

Several of our Primary Care Networks offer community-based programmes for people living with chronic pain which include support for self-management and peer support, following a bio-psycho-social model of pain. Help for living with pain is also provided in primary care through services such as social prescribing, health coaching, peer support and referral through [Move Well – Move More Sheffield](#) into appropriate physical activities e.g. health walks, tailored gym sessions, seated yoga etc. We know that many people do derive benefit from this type of support, but for people who need a more medical / specialist approach, the STH service is the key provision.

Finally, the ICB is part of an exciting pilot, the Health and Growth Accelerator. One element of this is around providing enhanced support to people who are experiencing ill health and who are at risk of dropping out of employment because of this; one aspect of the programme will be focussed on people who are experiencing pain. This project will be operational later in the autumn.

Response from Sheffield Teaching Hospitals

Delays in communication between hospital and GPs- We are aware of issues related to delays in correspondence being sent to the GP following a patient encounter since the go-live of the Connect EPR and training and information are being deployed to admin staff across the organisation to ensure that the process is followed correctly to prevent any delays to receipt of letters.

Calls from 'No caller ID' numbers- We appreciate that it can be very frustrating for patients when they miss a call from the hospital due to this being made from a No Caller ID number. Where it is possible to facilitate Caller ID numbers being provided, we have these set up; for instance, calls from the Patient Booking Hub will come from individual service specific numbers, which if called back would route the caller back through to the team that called them. The organisation would like to move to a position where identifiable numbers are in use across all areas and this is something which Telecomms continue to explore.

Patients with long term conditions feeling concerns aren't fully acknowledged in urgent care- This feedback has been shared with the ED team to discuss and identify next steps. Additionally, as this is a theme we have seen feedback about, we would like to develop a task and finish group to drive improvement work in this area across ED, and would love to have patient representation on this group. If interested in being part of this work, patients can email us on sth.patientexperience@nhs.net to discuss this further.

Delays associated with dementia care- Only the memory service for patients under 65 is run by STH; the memory service for care of people over the age of 65 is provided by

SHSC. The waiting times for the STH service for under 65s is currently 22-25 weeks. The STH Admiral Nurse service is to support the transition of patients from hospital to home or a place of safety; we don't accept community referrals as that is outside of the scope of the service. The support which is available to all patients diagnosed with Dementia is provided by Age UK, which Sheffield City Council commissions to provide this support. All diagnosed cases should be referred to Age UK.

Long waiting times in A&E department- We've put a considerable focus upon ambulance handover times and have seen a significant improvement since this work began. This not only means the patients in A&E receive more timely care but also means the ambulances can get to the next 999 call a lot sooner. We've also worked on our medical staff rota to better match our available Drs with the times in the day when our patients are waiting the longest.

Long waits to access services and scan results in MSK- Waiting times are currently much longer than we would like, and we are sorry for the impact that this has on patients waiting to be seen. We are working hard to reduce waiting times as quickly as possible so patients are able to access our care by actively reviewing our pathways and exploring ways in which we can better coordinate our service. For patients referred to our Fracture Risk Assessment Service, the wait time for a bone density scan varies depending upon the clinical urgency. For the highest clinical priority (urgent) patients, the wait for a DXA scan is less than 6 weeks, however, we recognise that for other patients, particularly those having repeat scans, this can be significantly longer, and are not meeting the standard we want to deliver. The waiting time for a DXA scan is not expected to get any worse and we are taking action to expand our scanning capacity and we are hopeful that the position will begin improving soon.

Lack of support from staff at walk-in centre- As part of the service provided at the Walk-In Centre, there is always one patient navigator on duty. At busy times, or when additional support is required, other members of the team may step in to assist. While we do our best to provide help promptly, there may be occasions where team members are dealing with urgent matters and are unable to provide immediate assistance and may need to ask the patient to wait briefly, reach out to other team members, or request support from the on-site security guard, where appropriate.

Difficulties with interpreter support- We recognise how vital clear and accurate interpretation is in ensuring safe, high-quality care and patient confidence when accessing NHS services. We acknowledge that some patients have experienced challenges in accessing the right interpreter or have felt that the support provided has not always fully met their needs. To strengthen this, Sheffield Teaching Hospitals has recently moved to a new provider for interpreter services, *Language Empire*. This

change brings with it more robust systems to ensure the right interpreter is booked for the right language or dialect.

Continence supply delivery issues- Continence supplies are delivered to homes across Sheffield by NHS Supply Chain, and any patients who experience issues should contact the NHS directly on Home.delivery@supplychain.nhs.uk or 0800 030 4466 (Patient customer service line).

Patients wanting more information leaflets in Limbrick Centre- This feedback has been shared with the team at the Limbrick Centre who have advised that they will order and provide more patient information leaflets about oral care and the dental treatments provided in both standard and easy-read formats in the waiting area of the Limbrick Centre.

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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