



What you told us

Trends in feedback
July to December 2025

healthwatch
Northumberland

Introduction

Healthwatch Northumberland is the independent champion for people who use health and social care services. We are a listening organisation working across Northumberland, interested in what people like about services and what can be improved.

We act on what people are saying, sharing their views with those who have the power to make change happen. We also help people find the information they need about services in their area and record this as ‘signposting’.

Feedback

Between July and December 2025, we received detailed feedback and/or requests for information from 310 individuals from talking to people at face-to-face events, telephone calls, emails, website queries, social media and other sources. This was less than the previous six months (we heard from 417 people between January to June 2025) and less than the same period last year (388 people between July and December 2024).

The feedback we have received has been dominated by GP services, comprising just over a third (34%) of the feedback received in July to December 2025. This is up from the previous six months – 25% in January to June 2025.

The next most raised service was hospitals – outpatients (excluding Audiology) which featured in 15% of feedback received, up considerably from the previous six-month period when it only featured in 4% of feedback received in January to June 2025.

After that, the next most raised services were all of a similar proportion of the total feedback received: hospital – inpatients (8% of total feedback received), Audiology (8%), and dentists (4%). The table below gives a comparison of the top five services we heard about during July to December 2025.

	July to December 2025	January to June 2025
GP services	34%	25%
Hospital – outpatients (excluding Audiology)	15%	4%
Hospital – inpatients	8%	3%
Audiology services	8%	5%
Dentists	4%	4%

Table 1: Percentage of total feedback received in 6 monthly period

Signposting/requests for information

In July to December 2025, we signposted 84 people to different organisations for support, which is 27% of the total detailed feedback received. This is a notable increase in the proportion of overall feedback received (71 people, 17% of overall feedback in January to June 2025). Unlike the previous six months, where there were no clear themes, there were three subject matters that got several requests each for information/ signposting enquiries:

- 1. Making a complaint (10% of the total requests for information)**
- 2. Mental health support (8%)**
- 3. Finding an NHS dentist (7%)**

The remaining signposting requests were very varied in the subject matters asked about.

Geographical spread

Between July and December 2025, we heard most from Tynedale, as shown in figure 1 below.

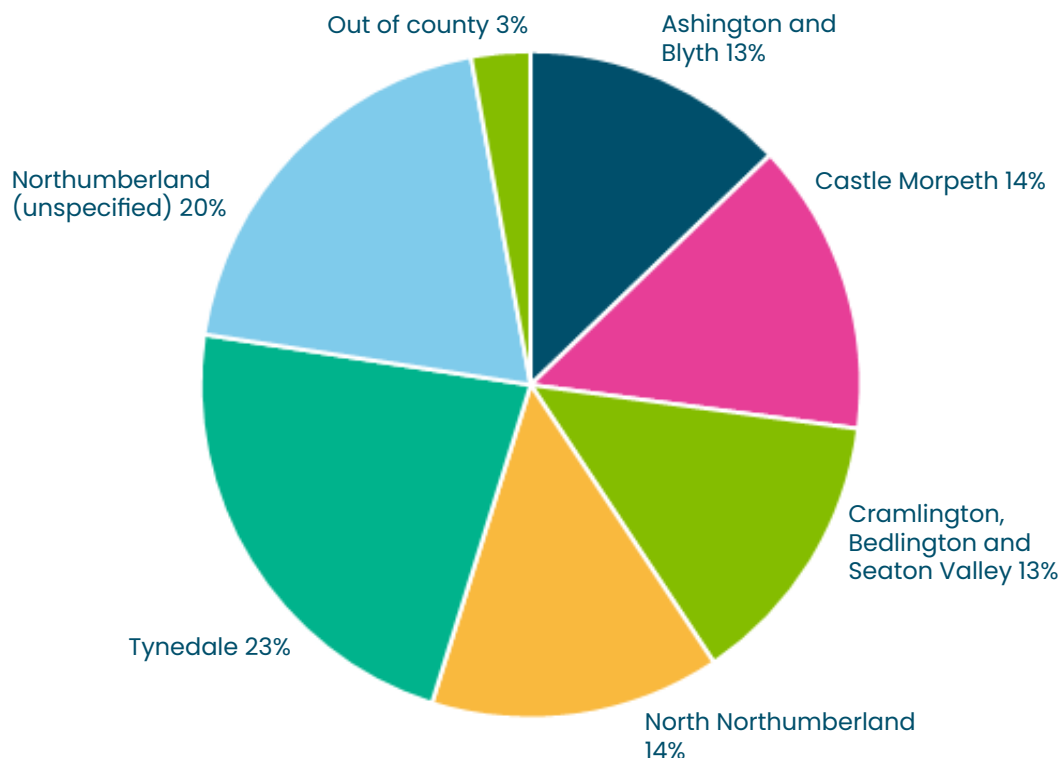


Figure 1. Where we heard from people across the county

The second highest proportion of respondents were from feedback forwarded to us from Healthwatch England's website, shown as Northumberland (unspecified). Unfortunately, we get no more location detail from Healthwatch England other than they are Northumberland residents.

All localities had GP services as their top issue as shown in Table 2. The second most mentioned service was generally hospital – outpatients.

Ashington and Blyth	Percentage of responses for each locality
GP Services	38%
Hospital – inpatients	8%
Hospital – A&E	8%
Castle Morpeth	
GP services	36%
Audiology	18%
Care home	9%
Hospital – outpatients	9%
Cramlington, Bedlington and Seaton Valley	
GP services	36%
Hospital – outpatients	14%
Hospital – inpatient	11%
Pharmacy	11%
North Northumberland	
GP services	34%
Hospital – outpatients	19%
Audiology	13%
Tynedale	
GP services	25%
Hospital – outpatients	18%
Pharmacy	6%
Northumberland (unspecified)	
GP services	37%
Hospital – outpatients	18%
Hospital – inpatients	12%

Table 2. Services we heard about most by locality

Trends

In the six-month period of July to December 2025 the percentage of positive comments rose from 15% in July to 18% in December and the percentage of negative comments fell from 36% to 32% over the same period. However, the underlying linear trend lines show the proportion of negative comments increasing and the proportion of positive comments decreasing.

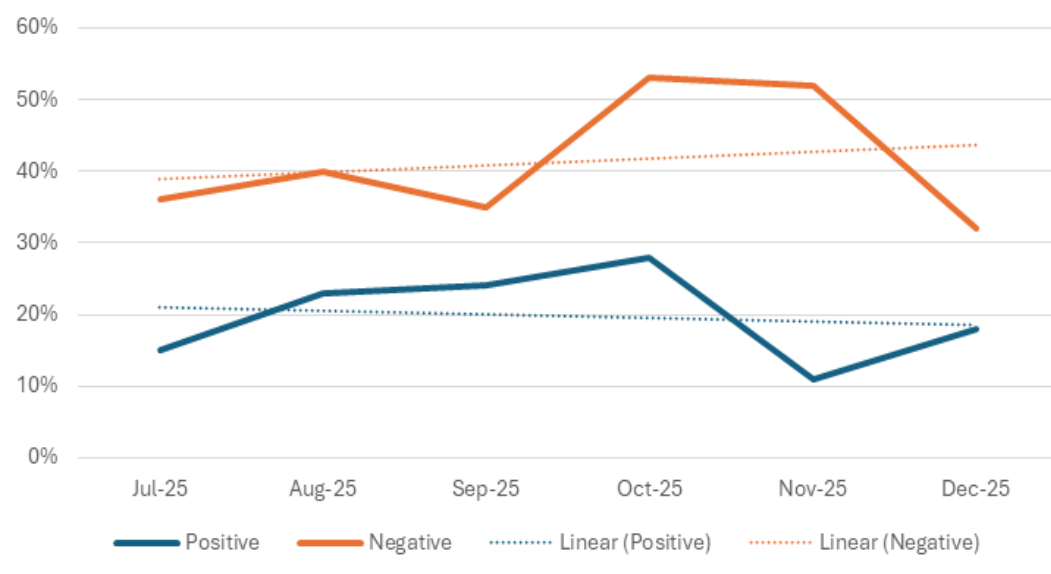


Figure 2. How people were feeling July to December 2025

This continues the trend we have seen over the past year since July 2024 which shows an overall improvement in the Northumberland residents' perception of services, as shown in Figure 3 below.

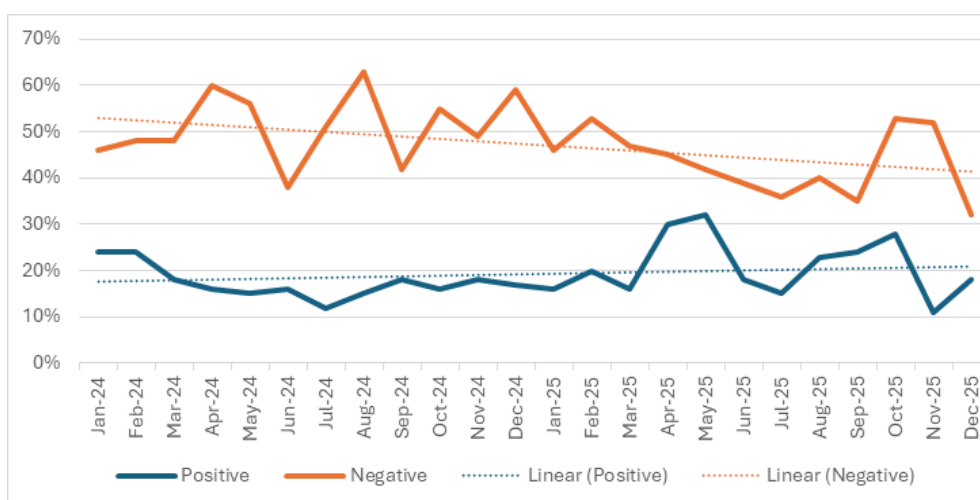


Figure 3. How people were feeling January 2024 to December 2025

The most recent six months suggests that there is a downturn in the perception of services by Northumberland residents.

Demographics

Figures 4 to 6 give the demographic breakdown of those who gave feedback on services of the past six months, with the first graph, figure 4, showing the distribution of age and sex across the county. Overall, just over 70% of respondents were female, 20% were male, 9% the sex was unknown and 1% preferred not to say. These overall figures show a similar percentage of female respondents compared to the previous six months (70% female January to June 2025) but with a noticeable decrease in the percentage of males (down from 27% in January to June 2025).

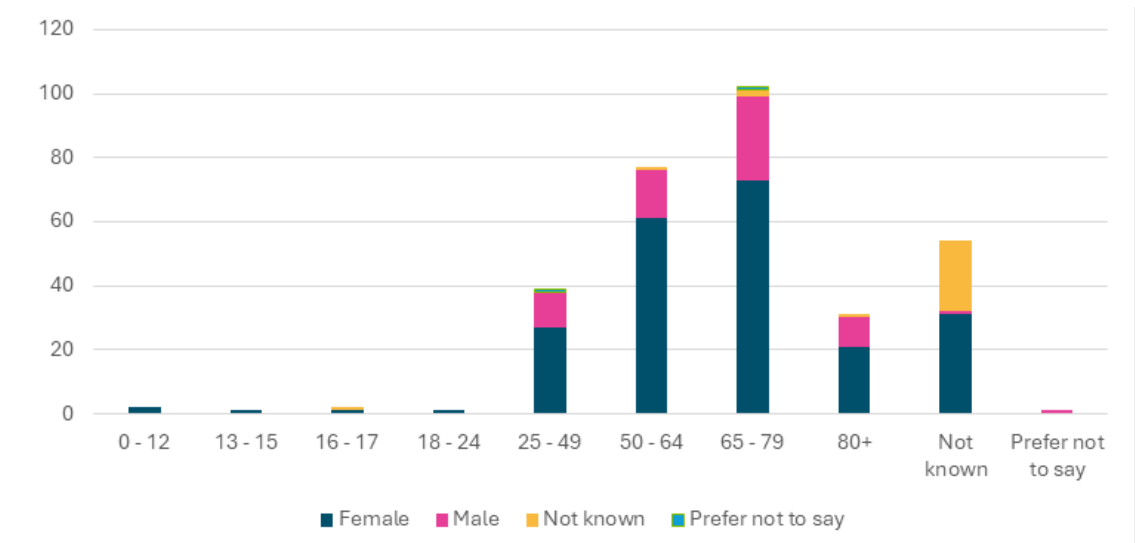


Figure 4. Age distribution by sex, July to December 2025 (n=310)

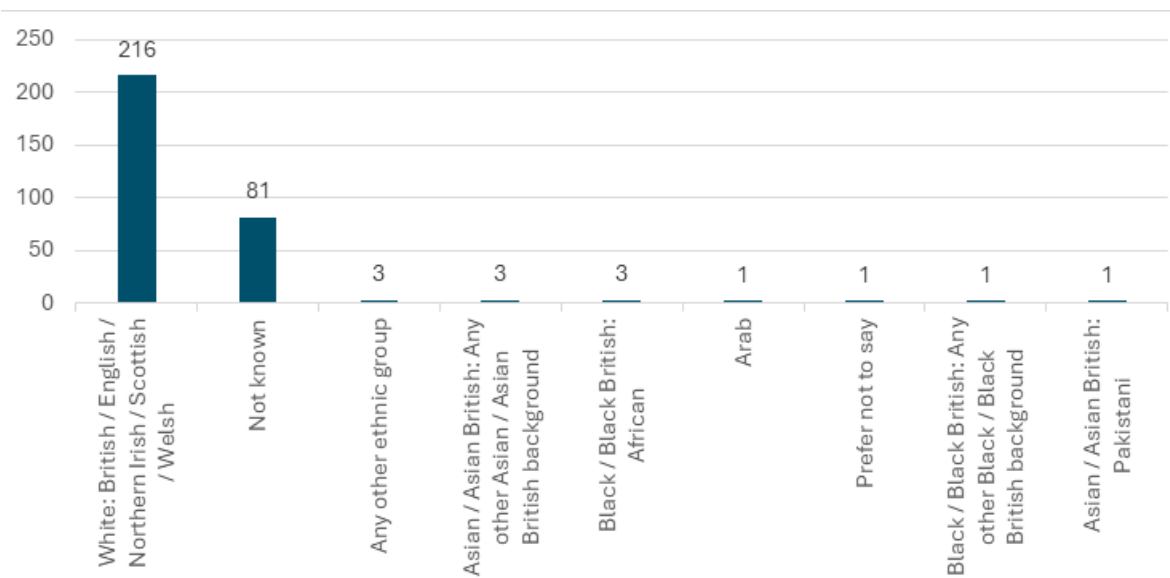


Figure 5. Ethnicity of respondents, July to December 2025 (n=310)

4% of our respondents were from non-white ethnic minorities, which is higher than the previous six months (2% January to June 2025) and also higher than the proportion of ethnic minorities in Northumberland (2.4% - 2021 census).

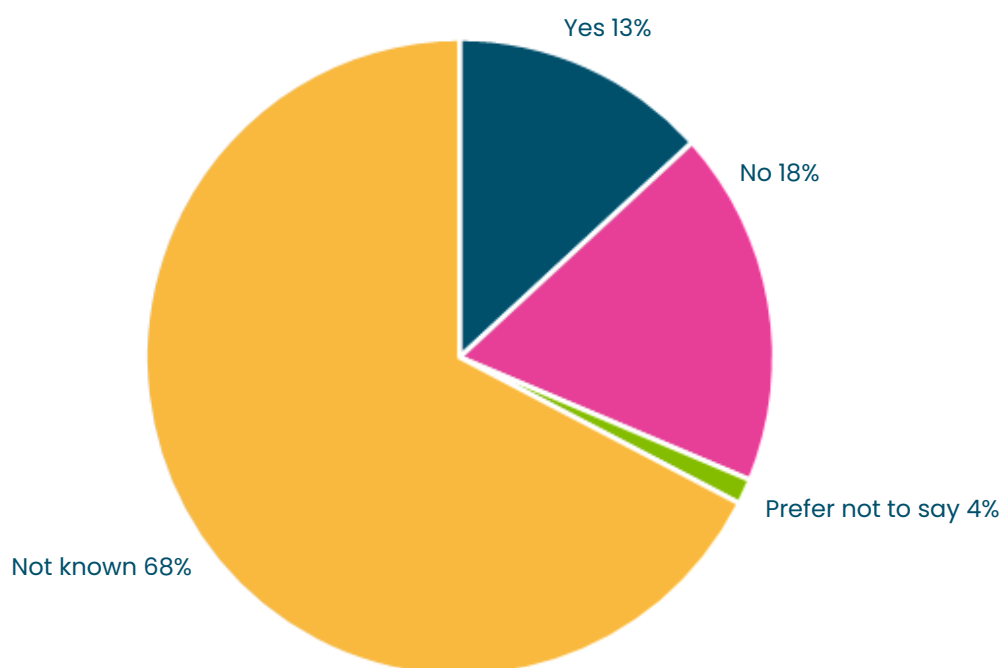


Figure 6. Do you consider yourself to have a disability? July to December 2025 (n=310)

The proportion of disabled people we heard from in the period July to December 2025 had dropped compared to the previous six months (January to June 2025 – yes 17%, no 27%, not known 52%).

Signposting and Information Service

A woman came to see us at one of our Here to Hear drop-ins and explained that she has macular degeneration. She recently stopped getting injections as she was told they would not help. She is struggling more now with sight loss and being able to manage.

We signposted her to Macular Society and gave her a leaflet and contact details for Vision Northumberland. We explained Vision Northumberland has a low vision service which can help advise about technological aids as well as support groups.

—
Ashington and Blyth resident

Levels of deprivation

We started asking respondents for their full postcode in January 2024 to cross check against the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) and determine which decile they are from.

The IMD ranks geographical areas of England with the same levels of population in order of deprivation, from the most to the least deprived. These rankings are divided into ten bands, 'deciles', and using a postcode tool a respondent's address can be given a decile score – where the first decile is the most deprived area, and the tenth decile is the least deprived area.

We were able to gather the full postcode from just over 18% of those we heard from. This data shows we are hearing from all deciles with a 60-40 split of hearing from the most deprived areas (34 respondents, deciles 1 – 5) to hearing from the least deprived areas (23 respondents, deciles 6 – 10). See figure 7, below.

This is an increase in the proportion of respondents we were able to gather postcode from compared to the previous six months (just over 14% of those we heard from, January to June 2025) and an improvement in the balance of hearing from the most deprived areas and the least deprived areas (a 50-50 split for the previous six months).

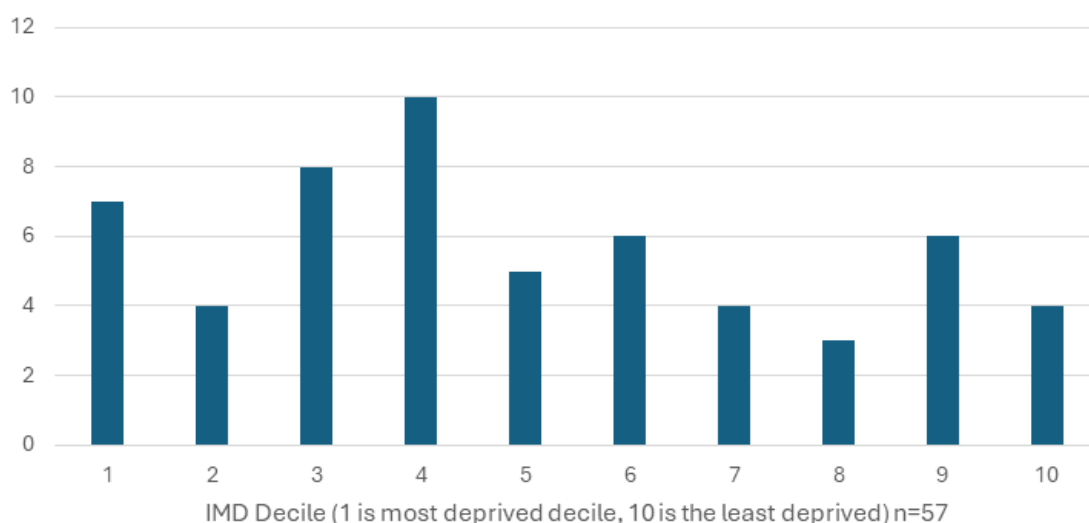


Fig. 7. Distribution of respondents by deprivation decile (July to December 2025) n=57

Signposting and Information Service

A manager from a national charity contacted us to ask how they would get support for one of their Northumberland tenants who, according to the referrer, was displaying characteristics of delusional disorder. We signposted them to the crisis team, OneCall, NHS 111 and the local branch of Mind, and sent her the link to our mental health information [webpage](#) and booklet.

Castle Morpeth resident

Summary

Between July and December 2025, we received detailed feedback and/or requests for information from 310 individuals from talking to people at face-to-face events, telephone calls, emails, website queries, social media and other sources (we heard from 417 people between January to June 2025).

The feedback has been dominated by GP services, comprising just over a third (34%) of the feedback received in July to December 2025. This is up from the previous six months – 25% in January to June 2025. This service was the most common for each locality as well. The top three services we heard about were:

- 1. GP services (34%)**
- 2. Hospitals – outpatients (excluding Audiology) (15%)**
- 3. Hospitals – inpatients and Audiology (8% each)**

In July and December 2025, we signposted 84 people to different organisations for support which is 27% of the total detailed feedback received (71 people, 17% of overall feedback in January to June 2025). There were three subject matters that got several requests each for information/ signposting enquiries:

- 1. Making a complaint (10% of the total requests for information)**
- 2. Mental health support (8%)**
- 3. Finding an NHS dentist (7%)**

Despite the downturn in the sentiments expressed in the most recent six months, the long-term trend in the public's perception of services has improved, judging from the proportion of positive to negative comments we received between January 2024 and December 2025. We will continue to monitor this to see whether this is just a blip or a change in the underlying trend.

We heard from a smaller proportion of respondents with a disability over the past six months than in the first half of 2025.

We heard from a smaller proportion of males in these past six months than we did in January to June 2025. This is a decrease from our high point (of 27% in July to December 2024) in the slow and steady improvement in the number of males we have had feedback from over the past two years. We are working to improve this.

This half-year shows that we heard from more residents from the most deprived areas than from the least deprived areas.

The number of people from ethnic minority groups we hear from has improved and now just under 4% of total respondents are from non-white ethnic minorities – almost twice the proportion of Northumberland residents.

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