

Portsmouth & south-east Hampshire Wheelchair Users Survey

Report | June 2026

Healthwatch Portsmouth
Healthwatch Hampshire



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Executive Summary

A Healthwatch Portsmouth and Healthwatch Hampshire survey was initiated from unsolicited local feedback that we had been receiving during 2025. This prompted Healthwatch Portsmouth to reach out to the local wheelchair user community to find out if people were wanting to have their say about their local service if they were not feeling that their individual contact with their wheelchair provider was generating much improvement.

The survey format is based on recognised 'best practice' using the NHS Wheelchair Quality Framework with most questions based on themes in the national Wheelchair Alliance¹ questionnaire. Supplementary questions in the Healthwatch survey are designed to capture local experiences in greater detail.

Wheelchair services in Portsmouth and south-east Hampshire are commissioned by NHS Hampshire and Isle of Wight (ICB). Healthwatch understands that consideration is being given to future commissioning arrangements by the ICB, however, it has yet to announce its plans and decisions regarding these steps.

Purpose

This Healthwatch Portsmouth report seeks to:

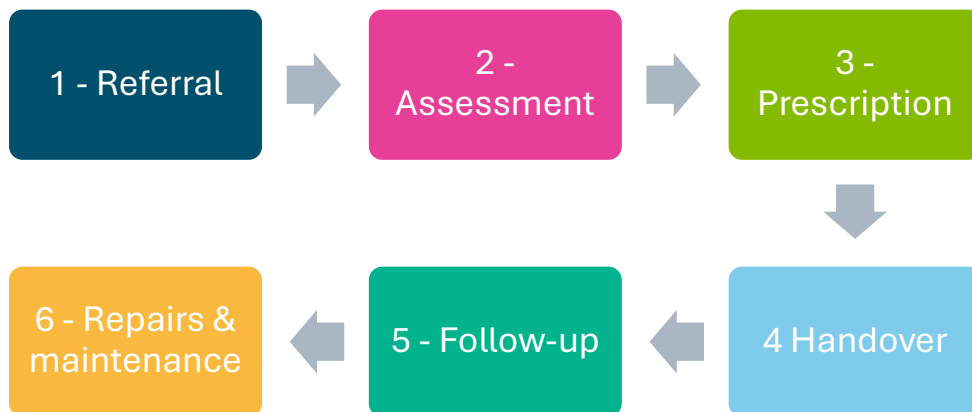
- Provide detail to help validate unsolicited feedback to Healthwatch about the NHS Wheelchair Service with standard questions;
- highlight improvement opportunities based on user feedback;
- find ways to address poor user confidence in NHS wheelchair service providers.

We report details and findings from 46 wheelchair users of which

- 30 reside in Portsmouth
- 9 in reside south-east Hampshire
- 7 either out of area or no details provided

The survey tracks **six key stages** that users typically experience when referred into NHS commissioned wheelchair services.

Six Key Stages



We understand from the ICB there are up to three NHS wheelchair providers who may operate in the Portsmouth and south-east Hampshire area. Approximately 50% of responders in this survey currently receive their wheelchair service from one commissioned NHS provider.

Our findings are prefaced by the **NHS wheelchair pathway quality Standard** for that stage.

Headline findings

- 56% of wheelchairs have been provided by one provider
- Some 'free text' accounts we received refer to unresolved service commitments of up to seven years
- A majority (70%) of respondents report poor or very poor experiences from one of the largest providers in the area
- Those with poor or very poor service experiences report 'moderate' or 'significant' negative impacts affecting their personal finances (39%), physical health (54%), and mental health (48%).
- At each stage, a majority of respondents felt their experiences of their wheelchair service were either 'very poor' or 'poor' were:

1. Referral: 61%
2. Assessment: 57%
3. Prescription: 67%
4. Handover: 63%
5. Follow-up: 70%
6. Repairs & Maintenance: 67%

Related survey finding

A recent survey of its service users (in-house) conducted by one of the largest providers in the area returned a positive satisfaction rate of 99.63% from 544 wheelchair users. Without prejudice to the methodologies employed in the design and execution of that survey, we point out that direct comparisons may be misleading.

Next Steps

Healthwatch Portsmouth and Healthwatch Hampshire consider 'very poor' service experiences to be indefensible in an NHS wheelchair service. User accounts of extreme suffering; DIY fixes to mobility equipment; failures to communicate; continued delays; unsuitable products to meet user's personal requirements are some of the reasons why **we recommend urgent and prompt review and remodelling of the NHS service contract.**

Calls to action

In our findings we identify **sixteen Healthwatch recommended action points** where we suggest improvements to meet the **NHS wheelchair pathway quality Standard** are indicated.

Further conclusions

Effective and lasting improvements by a contractor should be commissioner led and supported by the service community, reflecting their needs through the co-production approach to commissioning.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the input and support in this survey from Portsmouth and south-east Hampshire wheelchair users, some of whom are members of the Portsmouth Disability Advisory Group (DAG).

Foreword

NHS England 'Wheelchair quality framework'¹ sets out the principles and standards that Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) and Providers are expected to meet in the ways they respectively **specify, monitor, improve, and deliver** wheelchair services:

“Wheelchairs provide a significant gateway to independence, wellbeing and quality of life for thousands of adults and children. They play a substantial role in facilitating social inclusion and improving life chances through work, education and activities that many people who do not need wheelchairs take for granted.

Variation in wheelchair service provision can affect the timely access to necessary equipment and services. This impacts clinical outcomes and the quality of life of people who rely on these services.

Addressing these inconsistencies is crucial to ensuring equitable access and improved outcomes for all wheelchair users”.

In addition, the Wheelchair Quality Framework references (Annex A: the Care Quality Commission Wheelchair pathway core principles):

- **Safe**
- **Effective**
- **Positive experience – responsive, personalised and caring**
- **Well-led**
- **Sustainably resourced**
- **Equitable**

against which ICBs and Providers must be able to demonstrate evidence of assessment, provision and repair.

¹ [NHS England » Wheelchair quality framework](#)

Background

Prior to this survey, **Healthwatch Portsmouth (HWP) and Healthwatch Hampshire (HWH)** had received unsolicited feedback from wheelchair users in Portsmouth and south-east Hampshire. This prompted Healthwatch Portsmouth to reach out to the local wheelchair user community to find out if people were wanting to have their say about their local service, if they were not feeling that their individual contact with their wheelchair provider was generating much improvement.

Accounts from members of the HIVE Portsmouth Disability Advisory Group (DAG) also gave concern. People with diverse mobility challenges and needs, who depend on safe and comfortable equipment to support their daily independence, reported major frustrations in receiving equipment and timely, responsive support from their service provider.

Wheelchair services in Portsmouth and south-east Hampshire are commissioned by NHS Hampshire and Isle of Wight (ICB). Future commissioning and procurement plans for wheelchair services have not been confirmed at the time of this report.

Improvement Planning

HWP has worked with local wheelchair user groups and HIOW ICB to amplify the issues that service users told us they were having with their providers. We have been encouraging commissioners and providers to make meaningful service improvements, based on feedback received, prior to an announcement by the ICB of its service re-procurement plans.

Related survey finding

A recent survey of its service users (in-house) conducted by one of the largest providers in the area returned a positive satisfaction rate of 99.63% from 544 wheelchair users. Without prejudice to the methodologies employed in the design and execution of that survey, superficial comparisons may be misleading.

Healthwatch Portsmouth Survey

Five factors have prompted HWP to undertake a survey of wheelchair users now in Portsmouth and south-east Hampshire.

1. While unsolicited feedback provides background information, this may not be representative without further data.
2. Using common / standardised questions, compares feedback from a larger cohort of service users.
3. By highlighting concerns to confirm the need for service improvements already underway and build users' confidence in commissioned wheelchair services.
4. To inform planning for the ICB's 'NHS Hampshire and IoW wheelchair service'.
5. To understand differences in service user feedback reported in this survey and comparative reported satisfaction levels.

Survey Approach

1. Healthwatch Portsmouth is commissioned as **the independent champion and voice of people who use NHS and Social Care services** within the Local Authority area (Postcodes PO1 – PO6). The ICB has confirmed that currently, there are three providers of NHS wheelchair services to residents from Portsmouth and surrounding Local Authority areas (Gosport, Fareham, Havant, and part of East Hampshire).
2. Because this survey covers Portsmouth plus parts of the area covered by Healthwatch Hampshire (HWH), both HWH and the ICB were consulted on our plans to deliver a single survey across Portsmouth & south-east Hampshire.
3. We have based this Healthwatch Portsmouth survey on recommended 'best practice' using the NHS Wheelchair Quality Framework which had a survey developed on its behalf by the national Wheelchair Alliance².
4. We have collaborated with the DAG, co-producing changes to the core, Wheelchair Alliance's survey, building on local, lived experiences and knowledge. We are grateful to DAG members who reviewed survey drafts, ensured 'plain English' and user-friendly tone as well as suggesting further questions to reflect users' lived experience.

² The Wheelchair Quality Framework (www.england.nhs.uk/publication/wheelchair-quality-framework/).

Survey limitations

Data showing current activity volumes of people using NHS commissioned wheelchair services in Portsmouth and south-east Hampshire could indicate a statistically representative threshold to base our survey findings on. Although ICB commissioners were approached to provide activity volumes, our request could not be fulfilled due to commercial sensitivities.

Despite promoting the survey through online channels and paper fliers³ the survey attracted 46 wheelchair user responses but without overall activity volume data to compare this response rate, it is not possible to confirm that this can provide representative, rather than indicative feedback about experiences from wheelchair users in Portsmouth and south-east Hampshire. We therefore caution that findings are treated as indicative.

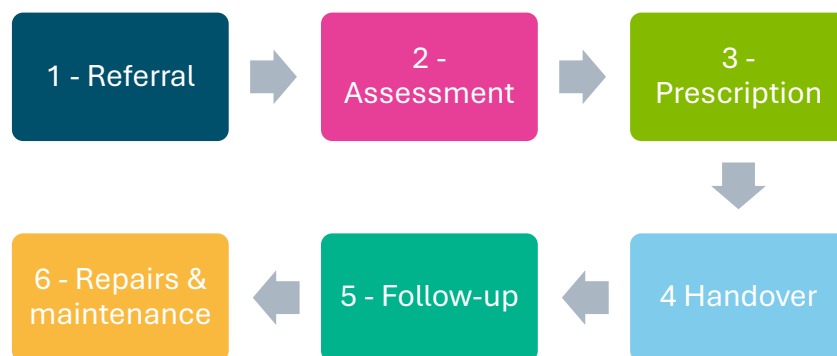
Survey Publication and Promotion

The survey was produced in a paper version and online (SmartSurvey⁴) via HWP's website. Paper copy returns were later loaded onto SmartSurvey and analysed together with online responses. Respondents were not asked to provide personal details; therefore, responses are anonymous.

The survey was promoted and ran throughout April and May 2026.

Wheelchair Alliance Survey

Based upon the NHS Wheelchair Quality Framework and The Wheelchair Alliance questionnaire, this survey follows the six stages in a typical wheelchair user's journey:



Three additional questions to those in our survey invited free text answers:

³ HWP's and HWH's social media; HIVE Portsmouth social media; Portsmouth Wheelchair Access Group's Facebook page; and promoted at community events

⁴ [Online Survey Software and Questionnaire Tool - SmartSurvey](#)

1. What's your wheelchair's supplier's name
2. How many hours do you use your wheelchair daily?
3. What's your overall experience of your wheelchair service?

To prevent identity breaches and maintain confidentiality, answers to question 36 (free text) are not included in this report but have been rated using four sentiment types (positive, negative, mixed, unclear) and summarised numerically.

Respondents' Demographic Details

Number of responses	46 (100%)
Respondents living in postcodes PO1 – PO6	32 (70%)
Respondents living in south-east Hampshire	9 (20%)
Respondents aged under 18	3 (6.67%)
NHS funded users	30 (67%)
Personal Wheelchair Budget (electric, manual, children's other) – see p23	15 (33%)
Largest reported provider (customers)	24 (56%)
Current customers of other wheelchair services ⁵	22 (48%)

⁵ Customers comments in the Free Text section mention having previously been users of the largest provider but then later transferred to other provider sources for mobility equipment.

Results

Results are presented and formatted by the SmartSurvey analytical tool.

Stage 1. Referral and Triage

1. Did you know who to contact and where to go for help about getting a wheelchair referral?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		58.70%	27
2	Unsure		13.04%	6
3	No		28.26%	13
			answered	46
			skipped	0

2. Were you told that your referral had been received and would be looked at soon?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		41.30%	19
2	Unsure		26.09%	12
3	No		32.61%	15
			answered	46
			skipped	0

3. Did you feel sure the service would ask for more information if they needed it?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		47.83%	22
2	No		52.17%	24
			answered	46
			skipped	0

4. Did you feel kept up to date during the referral process?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total

4. Did you feel kept up to date during the referral process?

1	Yes		19.57%	9
2	Unsure		8.70%	4
3	No		71.74%	33
			answered	46
			skipped	0

5. Overall, how was your experience of the referral process?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Very poor		32.61%	15
2	Poor		28.26%	13
3	Satisfactory		19.57%	9
4	Good		17.39%	8
5	Excellent		2.17%	1
			answered	46
			skipped	0

Stage 2. Assessment

6. Did you have enough information and time to get ready for your assessment?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		50.00%	23
2	Unsure		17.39%	8
3	No		32.61%	15
			answered	46
			skipped	0

7. Did you feel listened to and involved in an assessment that looked at your needs and your carer's needs?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		23.91%	11
2	Unsure		17.39%	8

7. Did you feel listened to and involved in an assessment that looked at your needs and your carer's needs?

3	No		58.70%	27
			answered	46
			skipped	0

8. Did you feel your knowledge about your own health and needs was respected?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		34.78%	16
2	Unsure		28.26%	13
3	No		36.96%	17
			answered	46
			skipped	0

9. Did you feel you could have someone with you for support during the assessment if you wanted?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		73.91%	34
2	Unsure		8.70%	4
3	No		17.39%	8
			answered	46
			skipped	0

10. Overall, how would you describe your experience of your assessment?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Very poor		32.61%	15
2	Poor		23.91%	11
3	Satisfactory		19.57%	9
4	Good		19.57%	9
5	Excellent		4.35%	2
			answered	46
			skipped	0

Stage 3. Prescription

11. Were you told about all the options to meet your needs?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		26.09%	12
2	Unsure		13.04%	6
3	No		60.87%	28
			answered	46
			skipped	0

12. If so, did you feel supported to choose what was right for you?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		20.00%	9
2	Unsure		17.78%	8
3	No		62.22%	28
			answered	45
			skipped	1

13. Did you understand personal wheelchair budgets and the different options, including when they can be reviewed?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		30.43%	14
2	Unsure		4.35%	2
3	No		65.22%	30
			answered	46
			skipped	0

14. Did you feel confident the equipment would meet your needs?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		32.61%	15

14. Did you feel confident the equipment would meet your needs?				
2	Unsure		15.22%	7
3	No		52.17%	24
			answered	46
			skipped	0

15. Were you told how long it would take to get your equipment and who to contact if you had questions or needed support?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		41.30%	19
2	Unsure		6.52%	3
3	No		52.17%	24
			answered	46
			skipped	0

16. Overall, how would you describe your experience at this stage?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Very poor		39.13%	18
2	Poor		28.26%	13
3	Satisfactory		17.39%	8
4	Good		13.04%	6
5	Excellent		2.17%	1
			answered	46
			skipped	0

Stage 4. Handover

17. Did you feel your wheelchair and equipment would be given to you at a suitable time and place?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		43.48%	20
2	Unsure		23.91%	11
3	No		32.61%	15

17. Did you feel your wheelchair and equipment would be given to you at a suitable time and place?

	answered	46
	skipped	0

18. Were you kept informed about the delivery of your wheelchair or any replacement parts?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		26.09%	12
2	Unsure		6.52%	3
3	No		67.39%	31
			answered	46
			skipped	0

19. Did you understand how to use and look after your wheelchair, and how to get repairs if needed?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		52.17%	24
2	Unsure		13.04%	6
3	No		34.78%	16
			answered	46
			skipped	0

20. Did you have enough time and support to learn how to use your wheelchair, including training if needed?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		39.13%	18
2	Unsure		13.04%	6
3	No		47.83%	22
			answered	46
			skipped	0

21. Overall, how would you rate your experience of handover by your service provider?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Very poor		36.96%	17
2	Poor		26.09%	12
3	Satisfactory		15.22%	7
4	Good		17.39%	8
5	Excellent		4.35%	2
			answered	46
			skipped	0

Stage 5. Follow-up

22. Did you have information you could easily access about how to ask for follow-up support?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		34.78%	16
2	Unsure		6.52%	3
3	No		58.70%	27
			answered	46
			skipped	0

23. Did you get clear information about any review, what would happen, and when it would take place?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		19.57%	9
2	Unsure		8.70%	4
3	No		71.74%	33
			answered	46
			skipped	0

24. Do you know who to contact if you have concerns at any point?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		58.70%	27

24. Do you know who to contact if you have concerns at any point?				
2	Unsure		6.52%	3
3	No		34.78%	16
			answered	46
			skipped	0

25. Were you given a chance to share your feedback about your experience?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		28.26%	13
2	Unsure		15.22%	7
3	No		56.52%	26
			answered	46
			skipped	0

26. Overall, how would you describe your follow-up experience?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Very poor		43.48%	20
2	Poor		26.09%	12
3	Satisfactory		15.22%	7
4	Good		13.04%	6
5	Excellent		2.17%	1
			answered	46
			skipped	0

Stage 6. Repairs and maintenance

27. Did you get information you could easily access about how to maintain and repair your wheelchair (and any other equipment), including who to contact, when, and how?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		34.78%	16
2	Unsure		13.04%	6
3	No		52.17%	24
			answered	46

27. Did you get information you could easily access about how to maintain and repair your wheelchair (and any other equipment), including who to contact, when, and how?

skipped	0
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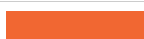
28. Are you confident that repair and maintenance appointments will be at a time and place that its you?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		21.74%	10
2	No		78.26%	36
			answered	46
			skipped	0

29. Were you kept informed about the progress of your wheelchair repair or any replacement parts?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		15.22%	7
2	Unsure		17.39%	8
3	No		67.39%	31
			answered	46
			skipped	0

30. Did you have the support you needed while your wheelchair was being repaired?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		26.09%	12
2	Unsure		21.74%	10
3	No		52.17%	24
			answered	46
			skipped	0

31. Do you know who to contact in an emergency?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		47.83%	22

31. Do you know who to contact in an emergency?

2	No		52.17%	24
			answered	46
			skipped	0

32. Overall, how would you describe your experience of repairs, replacement parts, and maintenance?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Very poor		36.96%	17
2	Poor		30.43%	14
3	Satisfactory		17.39%	8
4	Good		8.70%	4
5	Excellent		6.52%	3
			answered	46
			skipped	0

Further questions

33. What type of wheelchair you use? (Please leave if you are using a private wheelchair service)

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Electric - NHS funded		22.22%	10
2	Electric - Wheelchair budget		6.67%	3
3	Manual - NHS funded		33.33%	15
4	Manual - Wheelchair budget		11.11%	5
5	Children's - NHS funded		8.89%	4
6	Children's - Wheelchair budget		4.44%	2
7	Other - NHS funded		2.22%	1
8	Other - Wheelchair budget		11.11%	5
			answered	45

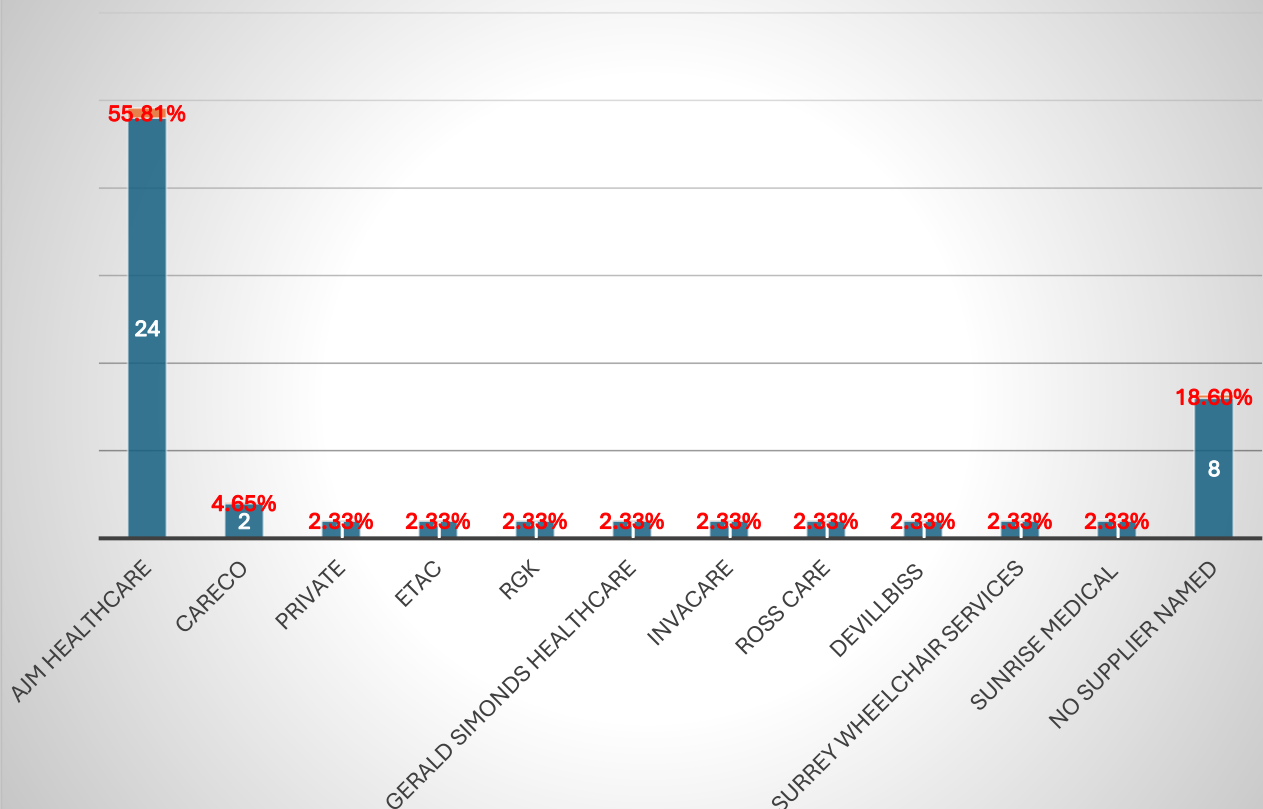
33. What type of wheelchair you use? (Please leave if you are using a private wheelchair service)

skipped

1

34. What's your wheelchair's supplier's name?

Wheelchair Provider



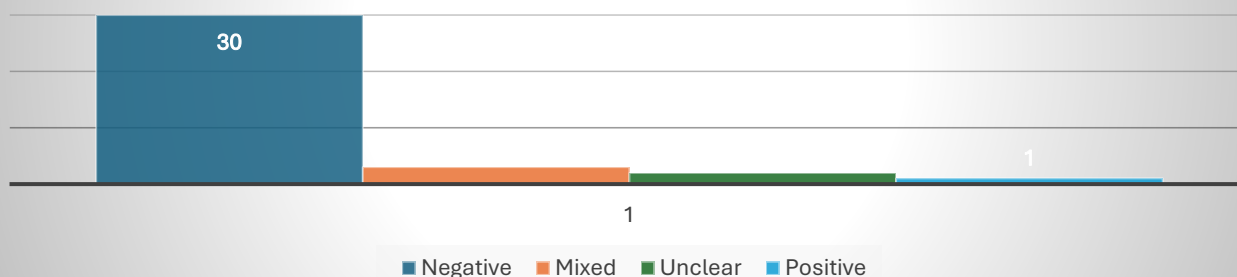
35. What's the overall experience of your wheelchair service

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Very poor		47.83%	22
2	Poor		23.91%	11

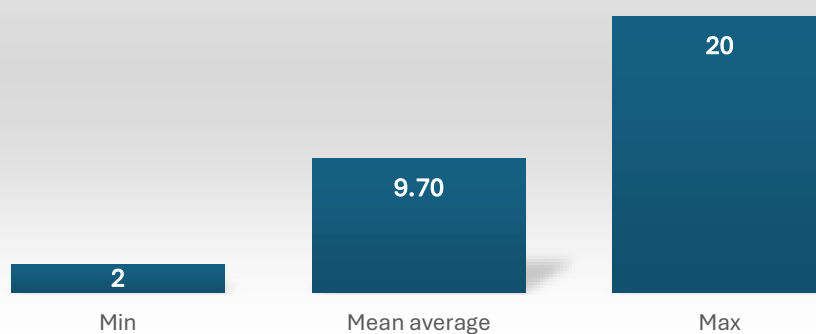
35. What's the overall experience of your wheelchair service

3	Satisfactory		17.39%	8
4	Good		8.70%	4
5	Excellent		2.17%	1
			answered	46
			skipped	0

36. Summarised free-text comments categorised by sentiment type



37. Daily Wheelchair Use - Hours per day



38. Please tell us if poor service delivery has affected you financially or your health.

	No impact	Mild	Moderately severe	Severe	Response Total
My finances					
Impact level	32.6% (15)	28.3% (13)	30.4% (14)	8.7% (4)	46
My physical health					
Impact level	17.4% (8)	28.3% (13)	26.1% (12)	28.3% (13)	46
My mental health					
Impact level	17.4% (8)	34.8% (16)	19.6% (9)	28.3% (13)	46

39. What's the first part of your postcode?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	PO1		17.39%	8
2	PO2		8.70%	4
3	PO3		0.00%	0
4	PO4		17.39%	8
5	PO5		10.87%	5
6	PO6		15.22%	7
7	Other		30.43%	14

If you choose 'Other', what's the first part of your postcode? (Fill in N/A if you ticked PO1-PO6) (19)

'Other' Post Codes

PO8	3
PO9	1
PO10	1
PO12	1
PO13	1
PO14	1
PO16	1
Out of Area / Not stated	8

40. Your age range				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Under 18		6.67%	3
2	18-24		2.22%	1
3	25-49		31.11%	14
4	50-64		31.11%	14
5	65-79		26.67%	12
6	80+		2.22%	1
			answered	45
			skipped	1

Survey Findings

We have reviewed the SmartSurvey results with our findings with conclusions at each stage in the form of Healthwatch recommended **Action Points**. We preface our findings with the relevant **NHS wheelchair pathway quality Standard**.

Stage 1: Referral Stage

'This step in the pathway covers access into the NHS wheelchair service, prioritisation, assessment of level of need to assign appointment or direct issue of wheelchair'.

61% of respondents rated their experience of referral and triage as 'poor' or 'very poor'. Users reported that at the early stage of their journey, communications from the provider to customers were insufficient. This led to low confidence in the service being able to work for them.

Healthwatch recommended Action points:

It is important that NHS Service Providers:

1. Ensure that each user receives clear information about the wheelchair service with clear timescales about actions that will follow
2. Provide information in formats which are personalised to meet each user's needs
3. Undertake checks with customers, promptly providing information in the event of delays and difficulties.

Stage 2: Assessment

'This step in the pathway covers how people will have their individual needs considered in collaboration with appropriately trained personnel to define their physical, functional, environmental and lifestyle needs and preferences'.

Wheelchair assessments involve complex communications. Although half of all respondents (Q8) reported having enough information and time to prepare for their assessment, 57% of respondents had 'poor' or 'very poor' experiences of their wheelchair assessment.

Of concern, in Q9 **59% did not feel listened to and involved in their assessment** despite 74% of respondents feeling able to have someone present for support during their assessment. We recommend the use of **Co-Produced Care Plans** (including a summary statement) stating the user's strengths, goals and needs within

their daily environments. This will align the Assessment stage to NHSE and CQC practice policy under the Care Act 2014.

Healthwatch recommended Action points:

4. Assessors should allow sufficient time to balance their technical and product knowledge against the concerns, and needs of each customer.
5. Assessors receive skills training⁶ in person-centred communication. This is a core assessment skill, vital in understanding how equipment can support (or hinder) daily living, lifestyle choices, and independence.
6. Provider assessments are based on the Skills for Care **Co-Produced Care Planning model**.
7. To help ensure that patients are heard, we recommend the development of a pre-assessment checklist that is designed to capture a patients' expertise and completed by users before a first appointment⁷

Stage 3: Prescription

'This step in the pathway informs the decision on what equipment meets the person's assessed needs'.

Choosing equipment that is suited to each user's needs is vital for long term benefit and satisfaction. **67% of customers reported a 'poor' or 'very poor' experience when equipment to meet their needs was being prescribed.**

61% of customers were not made aware of all the equipment options available to them. 62% felt unsupported in choosing the right option for them.

A majority (65%) were not provided with clear and concise information about how Personal Wheelchair Budgets operate and 52% were not confident that the prescribed equipment would meet their needs (a further 15% were unsure).

N.B. A Personal Wheelchair Budget (PWB) is an NHS funding allocation designed to give patients more choice and control over the wheelchair they receive. PWBs allow patients to use the baseline funds the NHS would spend on their clinical needs to upgrade to a different chair that better fits their lifestyle.

⁶ [Person-centred approaches in health and care](#): Skills for Care

⁷ NHSE, CQC, NICE, and the EHRC champion tools to ensure patient expertise is formally captured and respected by the assessor.

52% were not told how long it would take to get their equipment (or who to contact for answers and support).

Healthwatch recommended Action points:

Assessors should be skilled in

8. Understanding the importance of respecting customers' expertise and knowledge of themselves, their abilities and their condition as being integral to good, joint decision making AND review the assessment made if there are delays post assessment of over 6 months for children and 12 months for adults.
9. Enabling customers in making informed choices based on complete information.

Stage 4: Handover

This step is when prescribed equipment is provided to the person and fitting takes place, to ensure the wheelchair fits as intended, and to assess the person's ability to use the chair safely.

For customers, receiving new equipment will inevitably have heightened levels of expectation and anxiety.

A minority (43%) of respondents felt their wheelchair and equipment would be provided at a suitable time and place (Q19) but **67% said they were not kept informed about the delivery date/time** of their wheelchair or replacement parts. 52% said that at handover, they understood how to get repairs if needed.

User's overall experiences of handover by their wheelchair service provider are either 'poor' (26%) or 'very poor' (37%).

This feedback should be matter for concern to suppliers, not least because of potential hazards and dangers to users and others when using unfamiliar equipment.

Healthwatch recommended Action points:

10. Service providers should ensure systematic and regular engagement with customers, prioritising their unique needs, strengths and abilities.
11. Sufficient time and support should be given to customers handover slot who may be new to using a mobility equipment and unfamiliar with new equipment.

Stage 5: Follow up

'This step encompasses planned clinical review, patient-initiated follow-up (PIFU) and capture of outcome measure'.

59% of respondents reported that they do not know who to contact if they have concerns at any time about their mobility equipment and **72% did not receive clear information about when and how they would receive a review with their equipment provider.** However, the **NHS Wheelchair Quality Framework** states "planned reviews should take place where clinically appropriate, based on individual needs, such as when there are significant postural needs or deteriorating conditions." Feedback in Q36 indicates customers may not be contacted for a period of years after receiving their wheelchair equipment.

Healthwatch recommended Action points:

12. Service providers should ensure timely and proactive engagement with customers based on their clinical needs, providing information (in formats which meet individual's needs) about longer term support.

Stage 6: Repairs and Maintenance

'This step includes regular maintenance of issued wheelchairs and repairs when wheelchairs and or associated parts are malfunctioning and or not working.'

52% of those who responded, said they did not get accessible information on how to maintain and repair their equipment or who and how to contact for help.

In the event of need, 78% were not confident that appointments offered by their provider would be at a time and place that would suit them. 52% do not know who they should contact in an emergency.

Communication on repair progress did not happen for 67% of respondents leading to potentially **major, limiting impacts for customers.**

Healthwatch recommended Action points:

13. Service providers should ensure systematic, proactive communications with customers about repairs to their equipment.
14. Service providers should prioritize and ensure rapid response protocols with customers whose daily lives are most impacted or severely restricted by loss of access to their mobility equipment

Other issues

Overall, 72% of respondents rated their experience of the NHS wheelchair service as 'poor' or 'very poor'. The impact and importance of poor service should not be underestimated. Customers told us that to either a moderate or severe degree, poor or very poor service has adversely affected their:

Personal finances (39%)

Mental health (48%)

Physical health (54%)

Healthwatch recommended Action Point:

Provider cultures should be sensitive, ideally through independent feedback, about ways that poor or very poor service can disproportionately impact the lives of people with disabilities.

Commercially sensitive information

Some information received when preparing this report may be Commercially Sensitive. This is not included within the body of this published report.

Free text comments

Comments support and reinforce survey results and findings. Sentiments expressed in answers to question 36: 'What's the overall experience of your wheelchair service' are categorised as:

Negative (65%)

Mixed (7%)

Unclear (4%)

Positive (2%)

Further Conclusions

1. Confidence in the different stages of the wheelchair journey, and in particular at the time of assessment and prescribing should involve shared decision making. This is crucial for successful long-term outcomes. Customer comments suggest some feel 'done to' by the wheelchair provider's representative at this stage.

2. Good wheelchair service practice demands that professionals are aware of an unequal power balance between the prescriber and customer. Professionals hold strong product knowledge but users – especially those who are new to having a wheelchair – may have low confidence levels, making questioning and challenges more difficult. Empowerment and mutual respect is crucial when long-term plans and decisions are made.
3. Survey findings indicate that effective and lasting improvements in the NHS Wheelchair Service in Portsmouth and south-east Hampshire must include provisions to improve the confidence of users to speak up.
4. Based on our findings, we suggest that provider accountability in delivering service improvements in the Portsmouth and south-east Hampshire wheelchair service should be commissioner led and supported with the service community.
5. Further, changes made that fail to reflect users and customers' needs and concerns without co-production being embedded in commissioning and service monitoring are more likely to fail.

Finally, we conclude that HWP and HWH survey on wheelchair service user experience amplifies concerns received through unsolicited user feedback (including feedback through social media).

We recommend urgent and prompt review of [Healthwatch recommended Action point](#) and remodelling of the NHS service contract.

Our findings indicate 16 [Healthwatch recommended Action points](#) to address the [NHS wheelchair pathway quality Standard](#).