healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees

Working together with the NENC Healthwatch Network

You Told Us:

Q1 2026 - 2027

April - June 2026

You told us: Q1 2026 - 2027

The quarter in numbers

We engaged with...

415

members of the public.

We heard from...

118

people about their experiences of health and care

We reached...

2,132

people through our social media and newsletter

We experienced...

2,659

people visiting our website

We had the most feedback about...

- GP Services
- Hospital Care
- Dental
- Pharmacy & Prescriptions
- Mental Health
- Accessibility & Communication

GP Services

People continue to tell us that getting a GP appointment remains one of their biggest concerns. Long telephone queues, difficulties obtaining face-to-face appointments and increasing use of online systems continue to frustrate patients. Whilst some practices were praised for timely access and continuity of care, experiences remain inconsistent across the borough.

Groups affected:

- Older people
- Carers
- Working-age adults
- People with long-term conditions

> **'It overtakes your life trying to get an appointment.'**

Hospital Care

People shared concerns about cancelled appointments, delayed follow-up, long waits for specialist services and poor communication between departments. We also heard examples of excellent care, particularly where staff provided reassurance, continuity and clear communication throughout treatment.

Groups affected:

- Older people
- Carers
- People with long-term conditions

> **'One department has no idea what the other department has done.'**

Mental Health

People continue to report difficulties accessing mental health support, particularly for young people. Community groups highlighted increasing concerns about waiting times, crisis support and the impact delays are having on families. We also heard positive feedback about local support groups helping to reduce isolation while people wait for professional support.

Groups affected:

- Young people
- Families
- Working-age adults

> **‘I dreaded the thought of going through the NHS pathway, so I tried to help myself.’**

Pharmacy & Prescriptions

Most pharmacy feedback was positive, but we heard concerns about medication availability, delays between GP practices and pharmacies, and difficulties obtaining repeat prescriptions. Several people also highlighted confusion about who was responsible when issues occurred.

Groups affected:

- Older people
- Carers
- People with long-term conditions

Accessibility & Communication

People with sight loss, Deaf residents and digitally excluded residents continue to face barriers accessing services. Visual-only systems, digital check-in processes and a lack of accessible information continue to create challenges for some of our most vulnerable communities.

Groups affected:

- Disabled people
- Deaf residents
- Older people
- People with visual impairments

> **‘If you're almost blind, how are you meant to know when it's your turn?’**

Dental

Access to NHS dentistry remains a significant issue, particularly for refugees, asylum seekers and people who have lost access to NHS provision following practices moving private. Many people told us they do not know where to turn when they need urgent dental care.

Groups affected:

- Older people
- Families
- Refugees and asylum seekers

Other Themes

People continue to tell us that digital services should provide more choice, not fewer options. We heard repeated concerns that important services are becoming increasingly difficult to access without digital skills, devices or confidence.

At the same time, community support groups continue to play a vital role in reducing isolation and helping people navigate complex systems.

Groups affected:

- Carers
- Older people
- People with limited digital access
- Marginalised communities

‘People continue to tell us that digital services should provide more choice, not fewer options.’

Stay up-to-date with our activities

Our monthly newsletter keeps you in the loop with where we've been and where we're heading next, plus the latest news on events, campaigns, and projects across Stockton-on-Tees.

It's the best way to stay up-to-date with our work, see how your feedback is making a difference and get involved in upcoming activities.

Read or sign up here.

[Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees Newsletter Registration]

Did you know?

Over 430 people receive our monthly newsletter to keep up to date with our work and local health and care news.

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JULY 2026 NEWS UPDATE

Welcome to our July newsletter!

We are well into summer and we have been out and about across the Stockton borough at events and meetings.

In this edition, we're delighted to share our latest report on the views and experiences of GP reception staff across the region on working on the frontline of primary care.

We are also proud to include an article from Drink & Drug News from our Board member, Liam Knowles.

Plus the usual round-up of community events and drop-ins with our engagement team. Scroll down for more details...

Best wishes

Natasha, Janet, Lynn and Kathryn

We are listening

Your voice matters and we want to hear it.

There are multiple ways you can share your thoughts with us:

Call: 0300 180 0660
Email: info@healthwatchstocktononteees.co.uk

Whether it's a general experience or a specific enquiry, we're here to help.

If you'd like to leave feedback about a specific service (like your GP Practice, care home or hospital) the best place to do that is on our website:

www.healthwatchstocktononteees.co.uk

About this publication:

Word on the Street is a quarterly snapshot of themes and patterns emerging from conversations with local people. It brings together lived experience shared with Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees to help partners understand what people are encountering across the local health and care system.

This publication is intended as an insight and intelligence-sharing tool, not a report making recommendations or seeking formal responses from individual services. Feedback is anonymised and presented at a thematic level to highlight system-wide issues and support collective discussion and improvement.

Disclaimer:

All findings in our reports are based on the lived experiences shared with Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees. Our aim is to highlight challenges within local health and care services and support meaningful improvements.

Before publication, all feedback was shared with the relevant services to provide an opportunity for response. Any updates included reflect the collaborative work undertaken to improve outcomes for local people.

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