

Quarterly report to Systems Quality Group: What's important to the people of West Yorkshire?

September 2026

This quarterly report is based upon the collation of insight captured by each local Healthwatch across West Yorkshire via their enquiry, support and advocacy lines, outreach work and other listening work. It summarises key themes as well as any emerging risks and issues.

For this report, we have reviewed insight and data for the period 01 May 2026 – 31 July 2026.

Below is a summary of the themes:

Access

- We continue to hear from people who are having difficulty in getting an appointment at their local GP surgery.

"Absolutely impossible to get an appointment. After 5 mins of opening, they add an auto message to calls to say all appointments gone."

- Long telephone queues and online-only booking systems are creating barriers for some people in making an appointment with their GP.

" Seeking an appointment when either in pain or considerable discomfort and having to go through a lengthy and confusing online application, is difficult or impossible."

- We have heard from people who are unable to access an NHS dentist. We have heard that people are being told that waiting lists at some NHS dentists are years long and others are unable to be added to waiting lists due to these being closed.

"I haven't been able to find an NHS dentist for the last 10 years."

- We have heard from groups who are most and disproportionately affected by access issues, these are people with a visual impairment, those who do not speak English as a first language, have a learning disability, who are D/deaf, Refugee and migrant communities, Neurodivergent people, individuals with a mental health condition and low-income residents.

Waiting times and delays

- A common theme during the last quarter has been long waits- this has been an issue across a number of different services.

"It was a long time for a dementia patient to be out of their comfort zone."

- Some people have experienced long waiting times when presenting at A&E.

"Waited 36 hours sat in my scooter... after 36 they finally admitted me."

- We have also heard that people are having to wait long periods to access services due to long waiting lists for assessment and treatment. This has been particularly highlighted for ADHD assessments, eating disorder services, and referrals to mental health services.

"Has been waiting for an appointment 6 months later."

"I have been trying to get an appointment with the epilepsy nurse since January... they keep saying they will get back to me and then they never do."

- For some people, treatment has been delayed, with appointments for both cataract procedures and MRI scan being pushed back.

"They were told it would be about 14 weeks... It's been 8 months now."

- Some people have told us that planned procedures, such as minor surgery or maternity inductions, have been delayed and have taken place later than planned.
- People have told us that waiting times and delays in treatment have led to increased anxiety, reduced confidence in services, and worsening physical and mental health.

"It really affected her mental health."

Communication

- Communication is a common theme across all services and all areas in West Yorkshire.
- When communication is good, this has a significant impact on a person's experience of the service, helps to build trust with services and clinicians, and leads to better outcomes for people.

"Everything is explained well and information given in a way they understand in order to make choices."

"The communication is great too between carers and the family."

"Staff were honest and informative."

- Poor communication is one of the most common themes across the insight for this quarter.

"Whenever she asks for updates, they just say, 'no update, no' and nothing else."

"Different staff members are giving different opinions and different medication doses without explaining properly."

- Examples of poor communication include not providing updates on delays, conflicting information being provided, poor communication and coordination between services and a lack of follow up after treatment or appointments.

"How can services support us if they don't listen to us?"

Compassion and staff attitudes

- People have told us that staff are kind, compassionate, supportive and empathetic.

“This nurse went above and beyond in his care.”

“The doctor was extremely thorough and helpful.”

- We have heard that even when services have seemed stretched and staff are under pressure, people have had positive interactions with staff, and this has significantly improved their experience.

“I really felt heard, validated and understood.”

- Some people have told us about interactions with staff members when they have felt dismissed and that staff have been insensitive.

“I felt very judged.”

Digital inclusion and exclusion

- People have shared their positive experiences of using digital and online systems, such as PATCHs, the NHS App and online appointment systems.
- However, digital systems continue to create barriers for particular groups of people; we have heard from older people, people who have a visual impairment, people who are neurodivergent, some people who speak or read limited English and those without a smartphone or access to the internet, who have told us that digital systems are getting in the way of them accessing and engaging with some healthcare services.

"This lady said she did not have a smart phone and no idea what to do."

- There is an ongoing need for multiple access routes.

"Not everyone wants to use online option."

"Where is the patient choice?"

Focus on Services

Maternity

- We have heard mixed experiences from people who have accessed maternity services and care across West Yorkshire.
- Some people told us about the safe, personalised and compassionate support that they have received.
- Maternity staff and midwives have been praised for providing excellent neonatal unit support, strong antenatal care, helpful birth preparation services, and for being flexible around individual circumstances. This has led to some people feeling informed and supported.

"Everything was fantastic and almost exactly what we had planned."

- We have heard from others who have told us about delays, poor communication, limited postnatal support, concerns about informed consent, and barriers for partners or families.

"I feel like she isn't important, only the baby."

- Some people have told us about delays to inductions and instances where planned caesarean sections have been postponed. For some,

communication and updates during delayed treatment have been poor and a clear explanation as to why these decisions have been made is not always given.

"I was pulling the cord for over an hour and nobody come to help me."

- We have also heard that decisions have sometimes felt overly clinical, information about birth choices is not always balanced and advice can be inconsistent, particularly around feeding and breastfeeding.

Mental health

- We have heard from several people who have described having to wait for extended periods for an assessment, or to access, mental health services. This is a consistent theme for eating disorder assessment and services, ADHD assessments, Talking therapy services, and CAMHS support.

"Unable to get any therapy, advocacy or support of any kind for PTSD."

"Support for eating disorders is extremely limited."

- People have shared their experiences of gaps in mental health service provision and the negative impact that this can have on their mental health, treatment and recovery. We have heard about gaps in mental health crisis support, Prison mental health care, eating disorders (in some cases with co-existing conditions).

"I feel that I have fallen through a gap in services."

- People have told us that D/deaf-accessible mental health provision is lacking, and D/deaf people's needs are not being met. A lack of accessible referral methods, BSL provision and alternative assessment options are creating barriers to D/deaf people being able to access mental health services, particularly talking therapy services.
- We have also heard that some people are required to see multiple practitioners throughout their treatment, are repeatedly asked to retell their story, communication can be poor, and care is not coordinated and joined up.

"Long periods of no contact between appointments."

Primary Care

General Practice

- For some people at some GP practices, the appointment booking systems work well with quick and effective access to appointments.
- Positive examples of GP care include people feeling supported and the care being person-centred.

"The doctor took the time to truly listen."

- We have heard from many people, though, who have shared their experiences of having difficulty obtaining appointments, long telephone queues, and online-only booking systems which have made it difficult or impossible to access a GP appointment.

"Absolutely impossible to get an appointment."

- We have heard that some people have experienced administrative problems when accessing their local GP- these have included appointment cancellations, lost referrals and delayed follow up.

"They aren't listening to me."

Dentistry

- Access to NHS dentistry remains a major pressure point, with long or closed waiting lists leaving adults and children without routine care and increasing the likelihood of more urgent or avoidable treatment later.

"Kids can get a dentist but I can't!"

- People being unable to register with an NHS dentist or being able to access appointments is forcing some people to consider private treatment at a high cost. This type of treatment is not affordable to many, and so they will go without appropriate care leading to pain. We have heard that this can have a huge impact of someone's quality of life.

"I am entirely unable to find a local high-street practice with NHS capacity."

- Groups of people, those who are deemed as most vulnerable, have shared that they have even greater difficulty in accessing care from an NHS dentist.

"Impossible to access NHS dentist."

Hospital

- Staff within hospital settings have been praised for being compassionate, skilled and supportive. People have had positive experiences, when communication has been good.

"I have received nothing but excellent care from every department."

- We have heard about positive experiences in oncology, emergency and some inpatient services.

"The treatment has been good, but none of us know what's actually going on."

- Long waiting times have consistently been reported within A&E, Diagnostic services, Surgery and Specialist clinics. These have included 6-8 hour waits in A&E, delayed operations and delayed scans.
- Poor communication is a consistent theme across hospital care. People have told us about a lack of updates, inaccurate appointment information, poor communication around discharge and conflicting advice being received.

"There seems to be a disconnect between the two hospitals and departments."

- Poor discharge planning is also a theme within inpatient care.
- We have heard about staffing shortages across hospital settings, which has impacted on the care some people have received during their inpatient stay.
- Delayed mobility support, including access to wheelchairs, continues to be an issue for some people.

Patient transport

- When patient transport is provided and clinical services coordinate this, there is positive feedback for the service people have received and people are very grateful for this.
- Many people have found the eligibility criteria for patient transport to be inconsistent.

- People have told us that they have experienced long waits for transport collection.

"Had to wait approximately five hours for patient transport to take them home."

- We have heard that journeys can sometimes be inaccessible and take much longer than usual.

"Massive issues with patient transport at the moment."

- Some vulnerable patients and their families have told us that the current patient transport provision causes difficulties for them, and relatives have been unable to accompany their family member in the transport provided, causing high levels of anxiety.

"Transport should be seen as part of the healthcare package."

Risks

- 1. People are facing barriers to accessing services and this is having a direct impact on people's health.**
- 2. Increasing waiting times have the potential to cause harm and are leading to poor experiences.**
- 3. Growing health inequalities are being driven by issues with access and digital exclusion.**
- 4. If services cannot provide support holistically, people will continue to move around a system that is unable to support their needs.**

Questions for systems Quality Group

1. What are we doing as a health and care system to address these risks? How can we be assured that we are doing enough?
2. How will these risks be managed as the WY ICB moves into its role as a Strategic Commissioner?
3. What is the role of Place Provider Partnerships in this?
4. How can we feed back to people about how their experiences are being used to shape and monitor health and care delivery?