

Experiences of health and social care in Sheffield

Key insights from Aug- Sept 2026

Between August and September 2026, we gathered insights from 286 people who had used health and social care services across Sheffield. Cross-cutting themes of positive experiences of care were shared across a range of services, including caring and friendly staff, positive communication as well as people feeling listened to and supported. However, access to services remained a key concern, particularly difficulties getting GP appointments and home visits, access to NHS dentistry and long waits for specialist care. We also heard mixed experiences of care homes and home care services.

GP services

Between August and September, 83 people shared their experiences of more than 30 GP practices across the city. Of these, 41 people (49%) shared positive feedback about their GP surgery, highlighting polite and friendly staff, good quality care and treatment, timely access to support and feeling listened to.

Difficulties accessing GP appointments remained the main theme within the less positive feedback with 18 people raising concerns. Patients reported difficulties getting through by telephone, long waits for appointments, and difficulties using online systems. We also heard from patients without smartphones or internet access whose GP practices use AI telephone systems. Despite repeatedly asking to speak with a member of staff, the AI system would not put them through and instead sent an appointment booking link to their phone. As they could not access the link, they had to visit their GP practice in person to book an appointment.

Concerns were also raised about access to GP home visits, with some patients stating they found it difficult to arrange a home visit when they felt one was needed. Instead, they were sometimes offered a telephone consultation or advised to contact NHS 111 which they felt was not appropriate in meeting their needs.

Patients also told us they often saw different doctors at appointments and would value greater continuity of care where possible. Some patients said they would like to be informed when new GPs joined the surgery. It was suggested displaying photos and names of GPs in practice waiting areas would be helpful.



"My GP Surgery offers a compassionate, comprehensive and timely support."

"I am disappointed that so many tasks are online now. I am in my 80s and feel no longer relevant or visible."

"I called the GP, and they said they could not come out and told me to ring the paramedics."

"Every time you go you see a different doctor and you keep having to repeat yourself."

Experiences of menstrual health, menopause and endometriosis care

We heard mixed experiences of accessing support for menstrual health, endometriosis and menopause within primary and secondary care. While some patients described positive experiences and were able to access appropriate treatment and referrals, others raised concerns about the level of knowledge and support available, particularly within primary care. Some people felt their symptoms were not always taken seriously and described feeling dismissed. Others were offered treatments that were not effective before they received appropriate support. We also heard about long waits to access specialist care.

"Health professionals need more training on menopause as so many of them that I spoke to didn't seem to know much about menopause and how to support the patients especially the GPs."



Hospital care

A total of 85 patients, family members and carers shared their experiences of hospital care. Of these, 35 people (41%) shared positive feedback about the quality of care and treatment they received, as well as the caring and supportive approach of staff across a range of services, including Orthopaedics, A&E, Charles Clifford, Oncology, Huntsman, Radiology, Cardiology, Hadfield 6, Theatre and ENT. Hospital volunteers were also praised for helping patients and visitors find their way around the hospital.

"They take good care of me and the doctors and nurses there are great."

Much of the less positive feedback focused on the quality of care patients received, including access to treatments and continuity of care. We also heard concerns about administrative errors, such as a patient being invited for surgery they had already had. Other concerns included long waiting times for scan results, outpatient appointments and treatment in A&E.

"The standard of care is brilliant, but the problem is the waiting time."

Mixed feedback was shared about patient experiences of the Stroke Pathway Assessment and Rehabilitation Centre (SPARC) at Beech Hill. Some people found the rehabilitation helpful, including mindfulness sessions, physio and support from individual staff members. Others felt there were limited opportunities to take part in rehabilitation activities and that staff were sometimes too busy to provide support. Some people said they had to proactively ask about the rehabilitation and support available, rather than this information being provided. Concerns were also raised about whether the unit could adequately meet the needs of people with complex medical conditions.

"My CT scan results took 6 weeks to come back, this was a horribly anxious time waiting."

"Staff were lovely but the unit wasn't set up to deal with care needs like (...) had."

Feedback was also shared about a skeleton that is displayed in the waiting area of the Radiology Department, Northern General Hospital. We were told its presence had caused distress for some people with terminal illnesses and a request was made for it to be removed.



Feedback relating to care homes

Thirteen people shared mixed experiences of care homes. We heard of positive experiences, including friendly staff and good quality food, whilst others raised concerns about the quality of care they had received. Views were also shared about the activities provided; some residents enjoyed the range of activities on offer, whilst other people felt there could be more opportunities for physical activity to help them stay mobile. Other concerns raised included broken lifts, noisy environments and low staffing levels. We also heard concerns about the use of agency staff, with some people feeling that they did not always receive the same level of support as they did from the regular care home staff.

"Staff at care home are excellent, very kind, and caring but very busy and stretched."

"There are activities to do but want to be able to move more."



Home care support

Five people shared their experiences of home care staff. Some raised concerns about staff training and knowledge, particularly when supporting people with their day to day needs. This included concerns that both regular and agency staff did not always know how to prepare basic meals or check whether people were eating enough. We also heard concerns about dementia awareness, with feedback that staff did not always understand how dementia can affect a person's daily needs or how best to support them.

"It's not care it's just ticking a box to say someone has been, how could you leave a person with Alzheimer's day after day with no food."

Sheffield Health Partnership University

Eighty-three pieces of feedback related to services provided by Sheffield Health University Partnership. Of these, 73 people (88%) shared positive experiences, particularly about the quality of care they received. People described staff as caring and friendly and said they felt supported, listened to, informed and well looked after. Feedback shared related to a range of services, including Community Mental Health Teams, Sheffield Memory Service, Talking Therapies, Home Treatment Team, Gender Identity Service, Early Intervention Service,

"Today's experience was excellent, the doctor explained everything really well and with dignity."

Liaison Psychiatry, Eating Disorder Service, Specialist Community Forensic Team, Specialist Community Learning Disability Service, ME/CFS Service, Specialist Psychotherapy Service, Forest Close and Birch Avenue.

Less positive feedback mostly related to experiences with different mental health services including long waiting times or difficulties accessing care. Concerns were also shared relating to communication such as contact from care co-ordinators as well as the level of support people received from staff.

Children's hospital

Twenty-three people provided feedback about Sheffield Children's Hospital. Of these, 15 people (65%) shared positive feedback, highlighting good quality care, caring staff and good communication. Less positive feedback included long waiting times to access Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and Ryegate, alongside concerns about cancelled hospital appointments. We also heard about access to medication. One parent reported that they received no response from Ryegate when requesting medication usually provided by the service, so they had to contact their child's GP instead.

NHS Dentistry

During this period, eight people shared feedback about their NHS dentist, with seven people sharing positive feedback about the care and treatment they received. A further nine people told us they had experienced difficulties finding an NHS dentist. Some had contacted several dental practices but were unable to access NHS care because practices either had lengthy waiting lists or were not accepting new patients. We also heard from someone whose dentist had stopped offering NHS treatment and had moved to private care.

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 ten practices across the city were able to offer appointments to new adult NHS patients. This was a slight increase compared to eight practices from our previous call round.

"All the staff were very caring. The information we were given was excellent."



"Well looked after staff were all very nice and kind."

"Excellent but we had a 5 year wait for the appointment."



"He was patient with me, explained everything. Took his time."



Our Community Insights highlights the groups and services we visit each week across Sheffield. During this period, we published our blog relating to our visit to SACHMA (Sheffield African Caribbean Mental Health Association). You can read more about our Community Insights blogs [here](#).



Impact from our last briefing (June – July 2026)

South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (SYICB), Sheffield Teaching Hospitals (STH) and Sheffield Health Partnership University have responded to our [last briefing](#) outlining how they plan to address areas for improvement.

Response from South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (SYICB)

Accessing GP appointments—Patients can continue to contact their GP by any of the three access methods; telephone, in person, or online. Patients can choose the method that works best for them. If anybody does not feel confident with online methods, please continue to ring or attend in person, and a member of staff will help with the appointment process. Several Sheffield practices have offered training to patients on using the NHS App and online booking systems, which have proved popular, with some Patient Participation Groups volunteering to help run these sessions. We will suggest other practices may wish to consider a similar approach so patients who would like to gain confidence using online systems can learn in a supportive environment. If HealthWatch has any more details about the difficulties patients report using online consultation, we would welcome the feedback so that we can support practices to make systems user friendly.

Friends of Foundry community drop-in sessions— We're pleased to hear that these sessions are valued by patients of Foundry Primary Care Network. We will pass the feedback on to the PCN for their consideration.

Response from Sheffield Teaching Hospitals (STH)

Positive feedback about audiology service, including hearing aid battery supply— The Audiology team welcomed the positive feedback about increased battery supplies. Community collection points are responsible for requesting new stock when needed, and patients who find batteries unavailable should contact Audiology directly or request replacements by post using their battery card.

Access to and information about PrEP-pre-exposure prophylaxis and PEP-post-exposure prophylaxis. (Two different prescription medicines used to prevent HIV infection)-

The feedback has been shared with the PrEP lead. Staff will receive further training to ensure expiry dates are discussed with patients and patients are encouraged to check them. Sheffield currently provides 24/7 access to PEP through Sexual Health Services and Emergency Departments; expanding access through pharmacies would require national consideration.

Long waits for outpatient appointments and communication about this-

STH is implementing the new NHS Minimum Standards of Patient Experience for Elective Care, which place a strong emphasis on communication and managing patient expectations while waiting for treatment. A Trust-wide task and finish group has been established to ensure these standards are consistently met

Concerns about cleanliness-

Cleaning is carried out in line with national standards. Although temporary staffing shortages affected some areas over the summer, staffing levels are improving. Specific concerns are being reviewed through a task and finish group, with audits in A&E showing high cleaning compliance and ongoing monitoring from Infection Prevention and Control teams.

Feedback about food options for inpatients-

The Trust offers a wide range of cultural, dietary and therapeutic menu choices, including vegan, allergy-aware and specialist diets. Staff receive training on available options, and a new electronic catering system will improve access to this information as it is rolled out. Patient feedback continues to be collected through audits and new menus are always taste tested.

More information wanted before diagnostic scans-

Most MRI patients receive information when their appointment is booked and are provided with written information explaining the procedure. The MRI team plans to review patient information leaflets and consider adding clearer advice about requesting reasonable adjustments or additional support before appointments.

Response from Sheffield Health Partnership University (SHPU)

Tabernacle Group and Community Mental Health Teams-

Thank you to everyone who shared their feedback. We are sorry that some people have experienced difficulties accessing support or have not felt the care they received met their expectations. We recognise that timely, compassionate and person centred mental health care is essential. We are using feedback from people who use our services, alongside concerns, complaints and performance information, to identify where improvements

are needed. This includes work to improve access to Community Mental Health Teams, reduce waiting times and ensure people are directed to the most appropriate support. We are also working with local partners, including community and voluntary sector organisations, to strengthen access to mental health support within local communities. We will continue to monitor feedback and use this to ensure improvement work delivers more timely, accessible and person centred support.

Crisis care- Thank you to everyone who has taken the time to share this feedback. We are sorry to hear that some people did not feel supported when accessing crisis care, or felt their concerns were not fully understood or addressed. We recognise how distressing this can be when someone is experiencing a mental health crisis. We regularly review feedback from people using our crisis services, including NHS 111 Option 2 and the Decision Unit, alongside concerns, complaints and performance information. This helps us identify themes and take action to improve how quickly people can access support, the quality of their experience and whether they feel listened to and involved in decisions about their care. We will continue to monitor people's experience of crisis services, access and response times and use this learning to strengthen timely, compassionate and responsive crisis support.

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 with us through our outreach and engagement work. You can read more findings from our visits to local groups in our [Community Insights blogs](#)
- 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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