



What we heard – January 2025:

In January, we spoke to **78** people regarding their experiences with health and social care services in Rotherham. This information was gathered from in-person engagement, events and telephone/email enquiries. We spoke to people from a variety of backgrounds and ages. You can view our most spoken about topics and services below (including Rotherham Hospital, GP, Dentistry, Mental health and pharmacy services). All feedback is fed back to services at various opportunities throughout the month to highlight any areas that need to be improved to help the patient experience.

About us:

We are the independent champion for people who use health and social care services in Rotherham. We are here to make sure that those running services put people at the heart of care.

Our sole purpose is to understand the needs, experiences and concerns of people who use health and social care services and to speak out on their behalf. We focus on ensuring that people's worries and concerns about current services are addressed and work to get services right for the future.

Hospital feedback:

We spoke to **11** people in January regarding their hospital care in Rotherham. All the feedback we've had this month has been negative and mostly centres around poor communication.

We have also had some specific feedback from the Deaf Community about the extra challenges they are facing:

- "I was recently an inpatient and the nursing staff tried really hard to communicate with me...with hand gestures or writing things down. Most of the doctors I came into contact with refused to write"
- "You can call 999 BSL which is a good service and the ambulance staff/paramedics are great and as soon as you reach A&E, there is nothing! I sat



for hours in A&E and missed being called through because I didn't hear my name being called"

- "As a community we feel we're getting left behind and forgotten about. Other groups of people get their needs met, such as translated documents, interpreters for different languages, allowances at hospital visiting times but we just don't feel like a priority"
- "What is happening when deaf people have an emergency eg a stroke and end up needing to stay in hospital? There isn't a BSL interpreter on the wards! Staff are trying but we're only just getting by"
- "We still aren't having interpreters at our appointments"

General Negative Comments:

- "I was given a phone appointment from the hospital for 9.30am on 23rd December, confirmed on my NHS app. No one called me"
- "My care feels disjointed and poorly communicated"
- I received an appointment for my [hip replacement] pre-op and the operations scheduler called me to arrange this. During the final part of the call, she told me which entrance to go in for the pre-op. I had to go up several steps to get to the appropriate entrance, looked to the side of me and this was next to the main entrance where I could have avoided these steps. I'm not happy at the lack of thought and care and poor communication"
- "I have several health issues and receive my medical care from different consultants in different hospitals. I feel that communication between services is poor and I do a lot of phoning up and chasing up things including a recent referral from my GP which had got lost"
- "I had a stroke recently and I'm losing weight. A dietician at the hospital is concerned about it but doesn't want to prescribe the "shakes/food" to help me put weight on and my GP isn't being helpful either. I feel like no one cares about me"
- "I was referred by my GP for an urgent Dermatology appointment...I had to wait 9 months they said for an urgent referral. I finally had the appointment yesterday and was immediately told I needed to be seen by surgery.... I was again asked to go home and wait for another appointment...what if it is cancer? Nobody could reassure me of what it potentially is"

GP Services:

We spoke to **22** people about GP services this month and heard from registered patients from several practices. We have had some positive feedback about some GP surgeries, where patients receive an excellent service. However, we continue to hear about problems getting appointments and how not everyone feels they receive a good standard of care. We have additionally heard this month from other service providers who deal with GP practices who have told us about registration documents going missing when people are trying to register and delays in health records being transferred when patients change GP practices.



General Positive Comments:

- “We have heard good reports regarding a practice from a young person and a staff member. No issue getting appointments and staff are caring, providing a good overall experience. They provide a good standard of mental health knowledge and support”
- “My Health Centre is now using a call back service which seems to work well. The practice has improved in the last few months”
- “The mental health support I've had at my practice is excellent! [My doctor] is so good. She is kind, she listens to me, I get plenty of time with her and never feel rushed. I can always get in to see her too”
- “My GP contacted me to have a blood test and I did that yesterday. Today they've called me up to say I have a severe vitamin D deficiency and anaemic too. The staff are really friendly and kind to me and my multiple health conditions. They booked an appointment that was convenient to me and reassured me it's not too serious”
- “My GP is doing a fantastic job booking BSL interpreters!”

General Negative Comments:

- “I have tried to book an appointment with my medical centre but was told a doctor will ring me. I [told them I was] hard of hearing and can't use the phone easily and want face to face. The receptionist then said I can't see one until the end of February. How do other people manage to get in to see doctors from other practices without the difficulties me and my wife have to deal with?”
- “Twice I booked appointments through the receptionist for early times like 8am. [The doctor] phoned me just before the appointment time saying we don't do

appointments at that time. I said i didn't

book it it was the receptionist, but I had to rebook it for another time"

- "I feel judged because of my situation. I don't feel listened to properly and feel like I'm treated very differently to other people"
- "At our GP surgery there is a screen which shows your name when it's time for your appointment but it also says your name too. That's great, but sometimes the sound doesn't work, so if you're visually impaired, you wouldn't know to make your way to your appointment"
- "Our family GP upset us recently. My Grandson had a couple of different problems. We'd made a normal appointment but the first issue was dealt with within a minute. When we asked about another symptom, we were told we had to make a further appointment, but there would have been time to discuss this! Very annoying and he's a child, there needs to be some flexibility!"
- "I am having trouble contacting my GP to make an appointment"
- "At Christmas time I needed to reorder my medication and it wouldn't let me on the app. I contacted my GP surgery who said I needed a medication review and I couldn't order until after that. I had a medication review 1 month ago and 3 months ago. Why has it charged when it's usually 6 monthly? This wasn't answered and I was sent an appointment for a medication review in 1 month's time and I was allowed to order my medication. Why do the surgery not text me for a medication review, they used to?"
- "I have been ringing the GP every day for over a week to get an appointment but can't get one and keeps being told they don't do emergency appointments"
- "I can't access my GP record. Receptionist not at all helpful, can't get past her. Not full records on NHS app"
- "GP's shouldn't need an incentive to help us - they should want to provide the best service for us anyway!" (Deaf community)
- "I was promised a referral for some mental health support in the hope I'd receive a mental health worker. This was mentioned last year and nothing has happened"
- "My GP practice is rubbish, they're no good so I'm registering with a different practice and hopefully I'll get the care I need there. I have been asking for bereavement support from my GP for a while now and I'm still waiting 4 years down the line!"
- "In terms of care, the way I feel is that you go and see someone about something, normally a GP, and you're left confused and haven't a clue what is to happen next. This is our health and it can be terrifying"

Pharmacies:

We heard from **6** people about pharmacy services in Rotherham during January. There are issues being reported around prescriptions being delayed but also poor communication between GP surgeries and pharmacies.



- “I have experienced several delays with my regular medication. My pharmacy only allows you 2 days to collect your prescription and then it can be issued to someone else. I changed my pharmacy because of this”
- “There are always delays getting my anti-psychotic meds. I get them prescribed weekly and they are never there on time. Why can't these be issued for a month at a time?”
- “There seems to be issues between the GP surgeries and pharmacies when it comes to issuing some prescriptions. The GP blames the pharmacy for it not being ready and the pharmacy blames the GP's for not sending the prescription through. The process needs tightening up”
- “Since Covid I have been trying to arrange to have my prescriptions delivered to my home, but I have been unsuccessful. I moved pharmacies but it's been the same issue there. They never leave a message for me to say that the prescription is ready for collecting. I have mobility issues and I'm elderly”
- “My prescription is never at the pharmacy on time but this is the doctor's error not the pharmacy. The doctors don't send it through on time”
- “The pharmacist tried to pressure me to change the form of medication I have from tablets to capsules. I've explained again and again that my consultant insisted this stay as tablets and that is why it clearly states it on my repeat sheet. I must have explained this no less than six times. They give me capsules and I have to take it back”

Mental health services:

We heard from **16** people this month about mental health services. There were some general comments about mental health services but also some concerns around the Crisis support service and the support provided by them. We also heard about a lack of communication between CAMHS and patients on waiting lists that has led to one resident not knowing what pathway they were now on.



- “I was offered Talking Therapies but it wasn't for me and when I missed an appointment, I was taken off the list”

- "I have been waiting for an ADHD and autism assessment for around 3 years now. I'm concerned I will fall under adult services now I'm 18 and I've had no updates from anyone to say where my referral sits now"
- "CAMHS get a terrible name, yet there are different services that come under that umbrella. There needs to be some clarity within the community about what services fall under RDaSH and what services fall under CAMHS"
- "Mental Health support isn't great! I rely on meeting people at groups and places like this. People I've met make all the difference to how I feel"
- "What service do you call these days if someone is threatening suicide? For example, if someone is threatening to jump from a window, the crisis team are no good, as they don't provide immediate support, the ambulance service have refused in the past and the police are stepping back from attending such incidents. There seems to be a gap there!"
- "I think the Crisis service needs improving. Calls need answering quicker and more options for treatment and care following this"
- "I contacted the crisis team for help when my mental health dipped. This has happened a few times because I have ADHD and had sertraline. They contacted my GP but my GP said I couldn't have any medication and offered me nothing else. I contacted the crisis team again and they said it was up to my GP and they couldn't help me."
- "I called the Crisis team when my mental help dipped again and they said I had to go to my GP. It is impossible now they use Anima. I have changed my phone and now Anima doesn't work and the surgery staff don't help at all. When I told the crisis team my GP won't give me an appointment, they said I had to get them to give me an appointment and there is nothing they can do for me"
- "I recently tried Talking Therapies but this didn't suit me and I told the therapist I needed to stop the sessions. My doctor was made aware of this and I have not been offered any further treatment or signposting. I've just been left"
- "Very poor mental health service across Rotherham. The crisis team don't seem to do much"
- "What service do you call if someone is threatening to take their own life? Police might come and just put people away when actually they just need the right care!"
- "Healthcare professionals might suggest to take someone to A&E if they're suicidal, but how are you supposed to get them there if they are refusing to go? there's a huge gap in services"
- "Rotherham needs 'Mental health caseworkers'. At the moment [another professional] is doing everything to help me. It's not his job to help with my mental health...[but] I wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for him"

- “There should be much more prevention work on mental health related issues which will mean less of a need to react to poor mental health in people”
- “I would like support from someone that understands mental health but that can support me in different aspects of my life. I’m possibly autistic and a support worker would help me deal with anxious situations and support in helping me develop an independent life”
- “I’ve been referred for an autism assessment but waiting times to be assessed are so long, so what in between now and then?”

Dentists:

We heard from **4** people this month about dentists. Along with problems finding NHS dentists, we heard really positive feedback for one dental practice who has worked in conjunction with another service to provide NHS treatment for residents referred to them.



- “I can’t get treatment at an NHS dentist. I attend a practice that does have NHS patients but I’m on a waiting list for NHS treatment with them. In the meantime I have to pay private prices”
- “I am in a lot of pain with my teeth and can't get registered with a dentist”

General comments about other local services:

We also heard feedback about some other local services this month. Concerns have been raised again about poor standards of care and communication in local care homes, including end of life care. We have heard mixed experiences regarding physiotherapy services. Positive feedback was received for the Community health services and the Long COVID service.



- “The Community Health Centre services are great. I needed a podiatry appointment and I was able to self refer and was offered a range of times for my appointment and then they said they'd leave my referral open for 6 months in case I needed another appointment in that time”
- “The physio service at the moment is really good! I was given a number to call and I was offered an appointment locally within a couple of days.”
- “I was having a lot of pain recently in my neck and shoulders and back and knew something wasn't right. I was fobbed off and sent for physio. I had requested a scan but they refused to do this. I felt really fobbed off by the physio

and made to feel like I was lying about my pain. Eventually I was sent for a scan, which showed up damage to specific areas of my spine”

- “I have concerns with care and communication and general practices at [at local care home]”
- “Very poor end of life experience - my relative is a coeliac and was given food containing gluten on two occasions [at a care home] he was at for 10 days until his death. [He] was struggling to swallow and was sleeping a lot of the time and was not offered food regularly or alternatives that he could eat (one day was not offered food, only a few sips of water and a milkshake that we asked for). Pain relief - was taken off his tablets on the Monday after a visit from the community matron (we asked her to review him) was given oral morphine as an alternative, didn't receive any pain relief till the Thursday when we saw he was in pain and so we feel he suffered unnecessarily”
- “Communication is a massive failure in social care. There are too many people to pass one message through. By the time it gets to the person who can resolve a matter the message has gotten changed. This leads to a poor outcome for the individual or individuals”
- “The social care system here is appalling, don't get me started...Social care do nothing!”
- “I wanted to have the implant fitted to prevent unwanted pregnancy and I called the number as instructed to do so & was placed on a 3 month waiting list. [Whilst waiting] I became pregnant and had to have a termination for health reasons and still my name isn't at the top of the list for contraception. My GP was no help”
- “I was referred in August 2023 by my GP to the long COVID service (Breathing space) and I'm still receiving the support and help from them”

General comments regarding the NHS:

We also heard one general comment this month regarding the NHS App.

- “NHS app - I really don't like it and find it difficult to use it. I also think there must be older people who are struggling with using these digital ways to communicate”

Want to share your own experiences with us? Get in touch:

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**Committed
to quality**

We are committed to the quality of our information. Every three years we perform an in depth audit so that we can be certain of this.

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