

Quarterly Report: July – September 2019/20

Introduction

Healthwatch Northumberland is the independent champion for people who use health and social care services. We are a listening organisation working across Northumberland, interested in what people like about services and what can be improved. We act on what people are saying, sharing their views with those who have the power to make change happen. We also help people find the information they need about services in their area and record this as 'signposting'.

People who use health and social care services tell Healthwatch Northumberland about their experiences throughout the year. This report shares a summary of the feedback collected from July to September 2019. The next report will cover October to December 2019.

This quarter we received feedback and enquiries from:

- Telephone calls, emails and social media (52¹%)
- Postal Surveys and Feedback forms (5%)
- Talking to people at local engagement events (43%)

Areas of Focus

We are open to all feedback about health and social care services. Responses to our Annual Survey helped us to identify three specific Areas of focus which we are prioritising in 2019/20:

1. General Practitioner Services (GP Services)
2. Mental Health Services, including dementia care
3. Access to Services

Aims

The report aims to increase understanding of:

- Who Healthwatch Northumberland is hearing from
- What people are saying

¹ All percentages have been rounded up or down to nearest whole number

- The general sentiment of comments
- What people are experiencing
 - What is working well?
 - Where there are areas for improvement?

Feedback

Between July and September 2019, we received 58 of feedback through talking to people at local engagement events, telephone calls, emails, our website, surveys and feedback forms, and other sources. Alongside this, we signposted 38 people to services², 19 of which have already been counted in the afore mentioned feedback. Altogether we had 80 different recordable interactions this quarter³ (an improvement compared to last quarter where we had 58). We received sixteen more individual pieces of feedback from patients and carers this quarter than last quarter.

This report explores who Healthwatch Northumberland is hearing from across the county, presenting a summary of general respondent demographic information. Demographic information shared includes location, gender, age, and whether the respondent is sharing their own health and social care experience or speaking on behalf of a friend or relative.

The general sentiment of comments is also examined, with specific reference to the service type (e.g. primary care, secondary care, mental health, social care), as well as whether the feedback relates specifically to quality of care or access to services. Service category, for instance whether the comment refers to a GP surgery or acute care, is also explored alongside the sentiment of feedback. A list of services mentioned in comments has also been shared.

Who is Healthwatch Northumberland hearing from?

Healthwatch Northumberland has collected and anonymised demographic information where consent has been given. The following presents a general summary of who Healthwatch Northumberland is hearing from.

² Signposting has not been included in analysis apart from in communication methods of respondents on Page 1, and in the 'signposting' section of the report on Page 10

³ A total of three interactions were between Healthwatch Northumberland and other professional groups. These interactions have been omitted from analysis as they have not been recorded consistently.

Location:

In total between July - September 2019, we collected feedback from respondents from 15 different Northumberland postcode areas⁴, accounting for 53% of all responses this quarter (31 people). A total of 43% of respondents gave no postcode. Below Table 1 shows the number of responses Healthwatch Northumberland received from residents in different Local Area Councils this quarter:

Table 1. Frequency of known responses across Local Area Councils in Northumberland, Q2 2019/20

Local Area Council	Number
Ashington and Blyth	2
Cramlington and Bedlington	2
North Northumberland	9
Tynedale	18

Tynedale had the most known responses of any Local Area Council, with 18 responses from this area. Haltwhistle had the most known responses of all wards (with 11 known responses), followed by Hexham East, South Tynedale, and Bamburgh (with three responses respectively). All the known most heard from wards are different from last quarter and this is a positive indication that we hear from different people.

There has been a slight reduction in responses from Cramlington and Bedlington, where between April - June 19/20 there were six, and this quarter there have only been two. Known responses from Ashington and Blyth have been consistent with last quarter, with only two responses this quarter and one last quarter. Healthwatch Northumberland want to hear from the South East/Central of the county more closely and we organised and attended seven events in the Ashington and Blyth area in September alone, which an estimated 133 people attended⁵. This was in the hope of engaging with people and promoting our conference held in Blyth on Wednesday 16th October this year.

Age:

Just under half our respondents did not share their age with us (41%). Of those that did, there appeared to be fewer respondents from younger age groups, which is consistent with what was reported in previous quarters. Most known responses were from patients and carers aged between

⁴ Postcodes only counted by postcode prefix, the number of postcode prefixes may be greater than 15

⁵ For a full breakdown of events attended this quarter see Appendix 3

65-79 (shown below in Table 2).

Table 2. Number and percentage of responses across different age groups in Northumberland, Q2 2019-20

	Number	Percentage
Under 18	1	2%
19-24	0	0%
25-49	3	5%
50-64	3	5%
65-79	9	16%
80+	8	14%
Unknown	34	59%

Gender:

Consistent with last quarter, a total of 62% of respondents shared their gender with us (36 people). Of those that did there was a higher proportion of female respondents, accounting for 41% of all responses (24 people). A total of 21% of responses were from males (12 people). These figures are remarkably consistent with the previous two quarters' analysis. Below Figure 1 shows a breakdown of responses by gender:

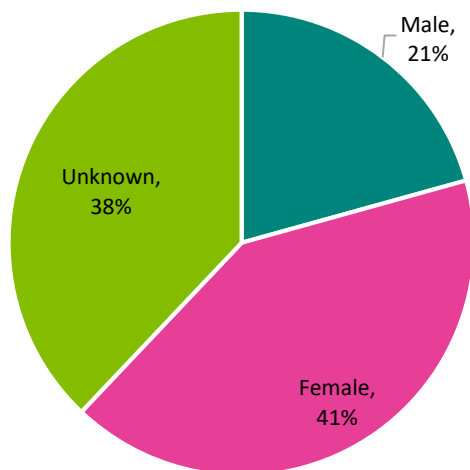


Figure 1. Frequency of responses by gender in Northumberland, Q2 2019/20

Whose experiences are we finding out about?

The majority of respondents were sharing their own individual experience of health and social care with us, with 76% of all respondents in this category. Just under 20% of all respondents gave us feedback about the health and social care experiences of a relative, friend, or someone they care for (11 people).

Below a breakdown of all respondent types, and the number and proportion of responses from these groups is shared in Table 4:

Table 4. Frequency of responses by respondent type, Q2 2019-20

Who is feedback from?	Number	Percentage
Individual	44	76%
Client Relative/Friend/Carer	11	19%
Advocate	2	3%
Other	1	2%

What people are saying and experiencing

Of the 58 total responses⁶, respondents told us about 35 individual services/service providers. Many respondents shared their experiences of using more than one service in their comments and many services were mentioned more than once, bringing the total frequency of services mentioned to 62. Please see Appendix 1 and 2 for a list of all the services/service providers mentioned.

The responses were categorised into four sentiment groups positive, negative, neutral, and mixed. The majority of comments received were negative, with 61% of responses reflecting this sentiment (38 sentiments). This reflects a slight decrease in negative sentiments from last quarter. The proportion of positive comments also decreased on last quarter, with 13% of all sentiments falling within this category (8 sentiments). There was an increase in comments with mixed or neutral sentiment with 11 sentiments and 5 sentiments falling in these categories respectively. People may be more likely to report negative experiences, than if something is going well. In the blue boxes a series of positive, mixed, and



Positive:

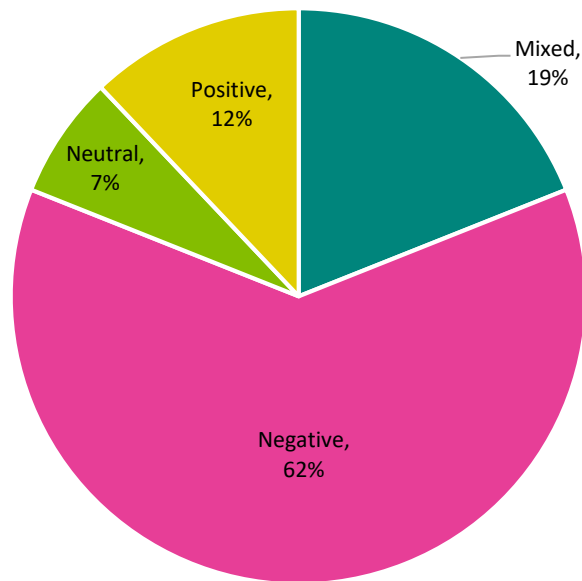
"I have much to praise JMAPS and be very thankful for their help. I [...] have developed a pain in the neck which [...] there was little more that the doctor can do for me. Then [...] my pain was much more intense, and [...] a friend suggested JMAPS. When I telephoned them I got an immediate answer, and an appointment the same day for the physiotherapist! What I was told to do has made such a difference to me. I can now sleep without pain every night and the pain during the day is much reduced to there being no pain. A thousand thanks"
Patient, North Northumberland.

Mixed:

"Patient had thyroid issue so had a blood test at the GP. Was told to come back for appointment but could not access [one] for three weeks [...] receptionist did not understand that thyroid problems can be urgent [...] Managed to get a new appointment on a day when a different receptionist was available"
Engagement Officer, Healthwatch Northumberland about a patient in Tynedale

⁶ Responses related to 'signposting only' have been excluded from this section of the report

neutral comments are some examples of what people across Northumberland have told us this quarter⁷:



Neutral:

“Spoke to [group]. Patient asked for assistance from HWN to make a GP appointment. HWN called GP to make appointment on behalf of patient. Patient felt unable due to anxiety. Thanked for help in getting appointment.”
Engagement Officer, Healthwatch Northumberland about a patient in Ashington and Blyth

Positive:

“Good that limits are put on car parking and television (charges) at Cramlington. Have been to four different hospitals in past eighteen months. Better than other hospitals.”
Engagement Officer, Healthwatch Northumberland recording on behalf of a patient in Tynedale.

Figure 2. General Sentiment of respondents

The services/service providers have been categorised into service type, with the five main groups being: primary care, secondary care, mental health, social care, and urgent and emergency care. If the service/service provider does not fit in one of these categories it has been marked ‘other’.

Below, Figure 3, shows the service type and sentiment of responses:

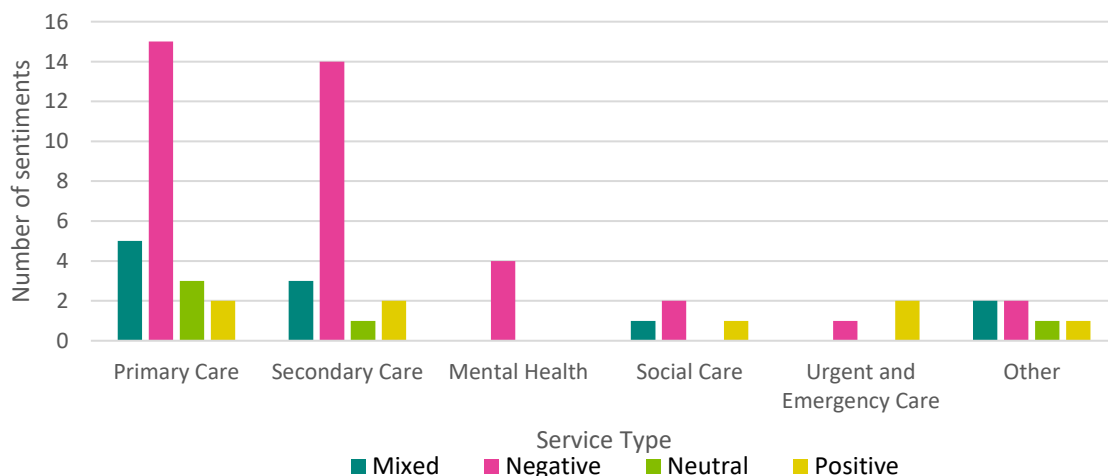


Figure 3. Service Type and Sentiment of responses⁸

⁷ Quotes with negative sentiment are presented later in the report. Where quotes are taken from ‘Engagement Officer’ these refer to a single piece of feedback a patient or carer has made, and is a quote from the Engagement Officer who recorded the feedback rather than the patient or carer. Often this is the case with phone enquiries.

⁸ Where more than one service type and sentiment has been collected per record, it has been presented on the chart.

Figure 3 shows there is a greater number of negative comments and feedback for most service types, whilst below Table 5 indicates most comments were about primary (42% of all comments, 26 total comments) and secondary care (20% of all comments, 32 total comments). Most negative comments were made about primary care, closely followed by secondary care (16 and 15 comments respectively). Most of the negative comments about primary care related to prescriptions. This theme is also supported in Appendix 2 where Pharmacies are the third most popular category for negative sentiments. A summary of these comments is shared below:

**Primary Care, Negative Comments:
Medication Case Study**

Six patients got in touch with Healthwatch Northumberland about prescriptions this quarter.

Comments patients made ranged from: information on medication not being shared, changes in system of digitalising or ordering in person repeat prescriptions, and not being able to return spare medication to pharmacies.

Interestingly an additional three separate comments were made about the same pharmacy, with patients and carers reporting that their prescriptions were often not in stock and with one claiming that patients were waiting hours in the pharmacy only to find that their prescription was not available.

Healthwatch Northumberland asked the local GP practice who had a log book of difficulties their patients had had with the pharmacy in question. This matter is something Healthwatch Northumberland have raised and is ongoing.

Medication: Let's Talk

"[Patient] shared that patients are waiting in [pharmacy name and location] for over an hour before either receiving their prescription or being told the prescription isn't actually in stock. Patient commented that communication between the pharmacy and patients also seems to be poor."
Engagement officer, Healthwatch Northumberland about patient in Cramlington and Bedlington.

"The [bereaved] family tried to return the medication to the pharmacy which had issued it, as is widely advised, but pharmacy staff said they couldn't take it as they didn't have the storage space."
Engagement officer, Healthwatch Northumberland about patient in Ashington and Blyth.

"The [patient] had been told the only way her partner could get a repeat prescription was either to order the prescription online or to go into the doctors surgery to order it. The woman was quite frustrated and shared that she felt this was a "backwards step" for the surgery."
Engagement officer, Healthwatch Northumberland about patient in Cramlington and Bedlington

Other negative comments for primary care were more consistent with last quarter and related to difficulties making appointments at GP surgeries. On four separate occasions patients and carers reported feeling judged or embarrassed by professionals. In these comments patients and carers reported "feeling humiliated" as a result of misdiagnosis, being labelled as "forgetful", feeling like they are not being believed, or being told that they are "putting it on" when presenting at hospital.

There were more than 58 total sentiments expressed because some people fed back about more than one service.

The majority of negative comments about secondary care related to changes to the physiotherapy service. This theme is also supported in Appendix 2 where Physiotherapy is the second most popular category for negative sentiments. A summary of these comments is shared below:

Secondary Care, Negative Comments: Physiotherapy Case Study

Eight patients got in touch with Healthwatch Northumberland about their physiotherapy service this quarter.

Patients and carers shared a range of concerns about the service including that they did not feel informed about the changes made to the service, that they were experiencing delays to treatment, that information about the service changes were not communicated effectively. Concerns related to access to the service more than quality of care.

Most people who shared their concerns about the physiotherapy service said they would have to travel further as a result of the service changes, and that this would be difficult or costly for them.

This matter is something Healthwatch Northumberland has raised and have supported patients and carers to contact the service with.

Many reported cases have been resolved on an individual basis with both the service provider and the patient or carers' involvement.

Healthwatch Northumberland are continuing to monitor this, as we continue to receive feedback.

Physiotherapy: Let's Talk

"I don't understand how they can improve appointments and referrals when the existing service was already excellent. I never had a problem getting an appointment. Indeed because I am my wife's carer I sometimes needed an urgent appointment. Once my GP had made the referral online I could ring [physio location] the following morning and could be fitted in the following week, no problem! Now, instead of an 8 mile round trip to [old physio location], we have the "pleasure" of a 46 mile round trip to [new physio location]. This causes my wife to suffer more pain from the travelling, so it's a retrograde step as far as we are concerned. My wife was due a follow up appointment [on passed date] but we've heard nothing from them. This has been done as underhand as can be, we the patients have had no say in this and the whole process stinks!"
Patient in North Northumberland

"[patient and patient's partner] are experiencing difficulty managing their long term muscular skeletal problems. Both of them have had changes and delays to treatment. [Patient's partner] has been advised that waiting time for an operation is over 12 months. This is causing concern and a negative impact on their mental health."
Engagement Officer, Healthwatch Northumberland, about patient in Tynedale

"[patient] is concerned that the difficulty accessing the service will discourage older people and thinks there should be a prompt to book another appointment after the session. [patient] tried to book one after her own appointment but was told to call up instead – [patient] thought this seemed unreasonable since they have a computer in front of them"
Engagement Officer, Healthwatch Northumberland about patient in North Northumberland

Other notable negative comments about secondary care included patients concerned about the loss of the Hear to Help service, and having to attend Ear, Nose, and Throat appointments elsewhere. This was also reported last quarter, and Healthwatch Northumberland are currently conducting 'Audiology: Let's Talk events' on this to find out more patient and carer views.

As a general trend there were more negative comments than positive, despite most service types receiving at least one positive comment. Consistent with last quarter there were no positive comments about mental health services/service providers but there were only four comments received about this service type (Table 5). With mental health, including dementia services, as a key area of focus for Healthwatch Northumberland, we will ensure we are listening and promoting the voice of people using mental health services across the county to allow us to explore general trends. Similarly, social care services, another key area of focus for Healthwatch Northumberland, only received 6% of all comments. We would like to hear more from patients and carers using social care services across the county. In part this will be achieved through an Enter and View exercise we are planning on delivering in a care home in February 2020.

Table 5. Frequency and percentage of responses by Service Type

Service Type	Frequency	Percentage
Primary Care	26	42%
Secondary Care	20	32%
Mental Health	4	6%
Social Care	4	6%
Urgent and Emergency Care	3	5%
Other	5	8%

Figure 3 and Table 5 are best considered alongside Figures 4a and 4b (shown below), which show whether comments are related to quality of or access to services, and what the related sentiment is.

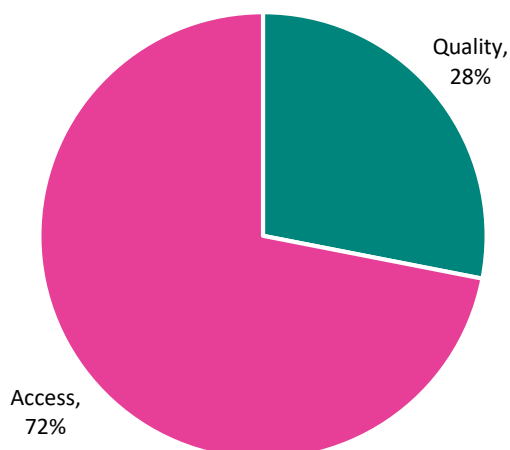


Figure 4a. Proportion of responses related to Quality of Care and Access to Services

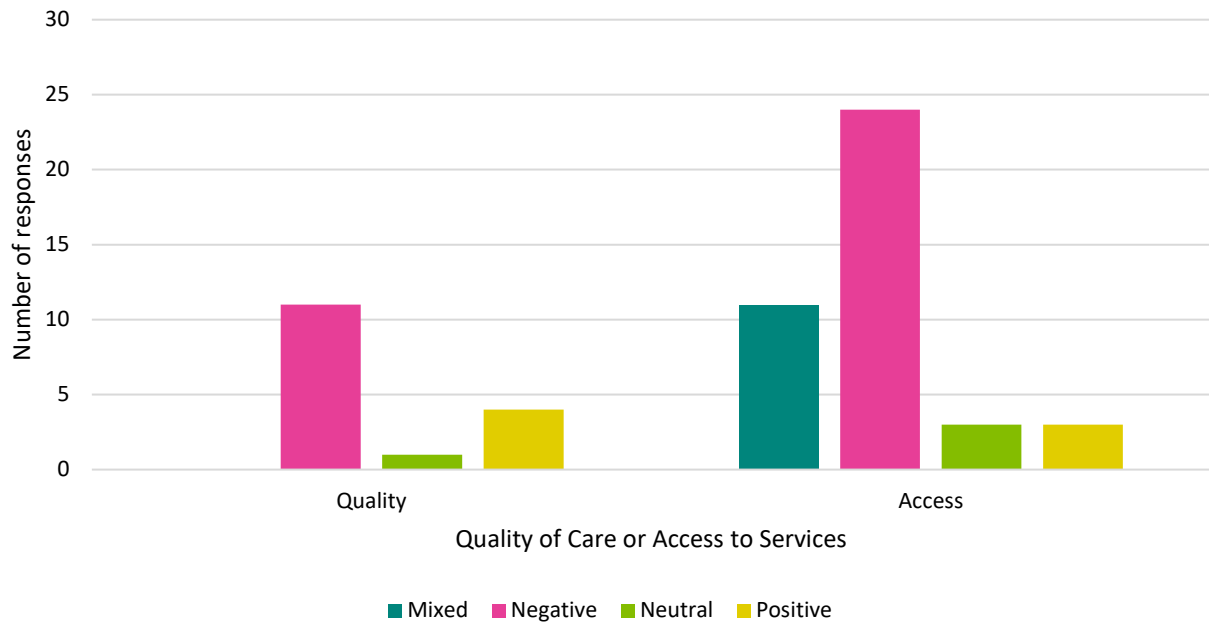


Figure 4b. Frequency of responses related to Quality of Care and Access to Services, by Sentiment

Above Figure 4a and 4b show that almost three quarters of responses Healthwatch Northumberland received were related to access to services (72%, 41 total comments) as opposed to quality of care (28%, 16 total comments). It is encouraging that the majority of negative attitudes to services/service providers (shown in Figure 3) from people across Northumberland relate to ‘systems’ more than ‘people’ or ‘care quality’. This is consistent with last quarter, and is supported by comments people made this quarter:



“A couple approached the [Healthwatch Northumberland] stand and shared their frustrations with [GP surgery name]. They had difficulties making appointments, sometimes calling a total of ten times and getting “cut off”. Couple agreed they would try to use the online system but voiced their concerns about their mother who wouldn’t able to use the online system.”

Engagement Officer, Healthwatch Northumberland about Patients in Ashington and Blyth.

“Patient receives injections for macular disease every eight weeks. Treatment is in a hospital 50 miles away and they have to arrange for family members to take her. Appointment only takes ten minutes but clinic is usually overrunning with an hour wait. [Patient] wants to know if appointment could be offered nearer to her home.”

Engagement Officer, Healthwatch Northumberland about Patient. (Healthwatch Northumberland advised that the patient should request a closer venue for their next appointment, as the service detail this as an option on their website)

“[patient and partner] have been patients in their Medical Practice for more than 20 years. They very recently moved house from a village location to a small town. In that house move, they are now outside the catchment area of the Practice. They very much want to retain their current GP and stay in the Practice. The new journey is straightforward. [They] wrote to the Practice to share with them their change of address-and a request to remain with the Practice. This was rejected by telephone. Her letter has not been responded to formally.”

Friend of patient, in Tynedale.



Access to services has already been identified by Healthwatch Northumberland as an area of focus. Healthwatch Northumberland is developing a greater awareness of what the key issues are in this area, for example the distance between where people live and where services are. This will help us to inform commissioners and service providers and support greater potential for improvement.

Comments were broken down by service category, which help us to look at services at a more detailed level than service type. This has been cross referenced with sentiment type (see Appendix 2 on Pages 15 and 16). Similar to last year GP practices and Ear, Nose, and Throat were the joint most highly mentioned categories for feedback, but GP practices had significantly more sentiments than Ear, Nose and Throat (19 sentiments: 6 sentiments, as opposed to 13 sentiments respectively last quarter).

Like last quarter, most of the feedback about Ear, Nose, and Throat was about the loss of the Hear to Help service. This matter will be explored in Healthwatch Northumberland’s Audiology Insight report due in December 2019. While most of the Ear, Nose and Throat sentiments were about the loss of the Hear to Help service, one was complimentary about the current audiology clinics provided by Newcastle Upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Trust:

“[patient] uses hearing aids. She praised the clinic system for maintaining the hearing aids. She prefers the new appointment system to a drop in as it is more efficient and gives her a choice about which clinic to attend.”

Engagement Officer, Healthwatch Northumberland about patient.

Most negative sentiments shared were about GP practices, and most comments, in general, were about GP practices, with 19 sentiments in total. Comments pertaining to GP practices have make up a large proportion of primary care comments we receive and therefore have largely been discussed on page eight of this report.

Every quarter Healthwatch Northumberland sends GP practices tailored feedback from patients and carers. Feedback is shared anonymously with each practice.

Signposting

In total Healthwatch Northumberland signposted 38 people who contacted us with an enquiry. Some people were signposted to more than one service. Below Table 6 shows the services Healthwatch Northumberland signposted people to this quarter:

Table 6. List of services Healthwatch Northumberland signposted people to, Q2 2019/20

Organisation signposted to	Service Type	Number of times signposted to	Signposted to in Apr-Jun 19/20
ICAN	Voluntary Sector	6	Yes
Carers Northumberland	Voluntary Sector	6	Yes
Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust	Health Trust	3	No
Onecall	Social Care	3	No
North of Tyne PALS	Health	2	Yes
Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group	Health	2	No
The Newcastle Upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Trust	Health Trust	2	No
Northumberland County Council	Local Authority	2	Yes
Boots Pharmacy	Health	1	No
Central Physiotherapy Service	Health	1	No
ESCAPE Family Support	Voluntary Sector	1	No
Healthwatch Newcastle	Healthwatch	1	No
Northumberland County Blind Association	Voluntary Sector	1	No
Tyneside and Northumberland Mind	Voluntary Sector	1	Yes
Wag and Company	Voluntary Sector	1	No
Local MP	Member of Parliament	1	No
Marine Medical Group	Health	1	No

CQC	Health	1	No
NHS England	Health	1	No
The Scoliosis Association	Voluntary Sector	1	No

Table 6 shows almost 50% of the services signposted to are voluntary sector organisations. Health services and trusts, Social Care, Local Authority, and a Member of Parliament have also been signposted to.

This report has been produced by:

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Engagement and Insight Officer

If you would like any further information, or have any feedback or questions about this report, please get in touch using the following contact details:

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Appendix

Appendix 1. List of services mentioned in feedback and comments

Services mentioned in feedback and comments in July-Sept 19/20	Mentioned in Apr-Jun 19/20
Action on Hearing Loss	Yes
Airport Security	No
Asda Pharmacy (Cowpen, Blyth)	No
Belford Medical Practice	No
Boots Pharmacy (Bedlington Station)	No
Burn Brae Medical Group	No
Collingwood Medical Group	Yes
Fairnington Centre (NTW)	Yes
General Care Home	N/A
General Services	N/A
GP - Bedlington	N/A
GP - Blyth	N/A
Greystoke Surgery	Yes
Haltwhistle Medical Group	No
Haydon Bridge & Allendale Medical Practice	No
Hexham Foodbank	No
Hexham General Hospital	No
JMAPS	No
Marine Medical Group	No
Northumberland County Council	Yes
Northumberland Specialist Emergency Care Hospital	Yes
Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust	Yes
NTW Crisis Team	Yes
NTW Northumberland Tyne & Wear NHS Trust	Yes
Railway Medical Group	No
Royal Victoria Infirmary	No
Talking Matters Northumberland	Yes
The Newcastle Upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Trust	No
The Village Surgery	No
Wellclose Medical Surgery	Yes

Appendix 2. Service category and sentiment⁹

Service Category	Mixed	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Total
Acute Care	0	0	0	3	3
Acute Care (with overnight stay)	0	1	0	0	1
Care of the Elderly	0	1	0	0	1
Community based services for people with mental health needs	0	1	0	0	1

⁹ Where more than one service type and sentiment has been collected per record, it has been presented in the table

Community healthcare and nursing services	0	1	0	0	1
Community Mental Health Team (CMHT)	0	1	0	0	1
Community Services (other)	0	1	1	0	2
Dementia	0	1	0	0	1
Dentist (non-hospital)	0	0	1	0	1
Ear, Nose and Throat	2	3	0	1	6
GP practice	4	10	3	2	19
Mental health crisis service	0	1	0	0	1
Ophthalmology	0	1	0	0	1
Orthopaedics	0	1	0	1	2
Pain Management Clinics	0	3	0	0	3
General Transport Issue	1	0	0	0	1
Pharmacy	0	4	0	0	4
Physiotherapy	2	5	1	1	9
Psychiatry/Mental Health (Other Services)	0	1	0	0	1
Radiography	0	1	0	0	1
Residential Care Home	1	0	0	0	1
Urgent care services	0	1	0	0	1
Total	10	38	6	8	

Appendix 3. Healthwatch Northumberland Engagement Events between July-September 19/20

Name of Event	Date	Reason	Local Area Council	Total Attending	Direct contact
Haltwhistle Information Morning - General Engagement	27/08/2019	General Engagement	Tynedale	15	6
Action on Hearing Loss - Meeting	01/08/2019	Meeting	Castle Morpeth	1	1
Northumberland CVA meeting	06/08/2019	Meeting	Ashington and Blyth	3	3
Carers Northumberland Meeting	06/08/2019	Meeting	Ashington and Blyth	1	1
Community Information Morning at Adapt NE	14/08/2019	General Engagement	Tynedale	40	25
Ponteland Medical Group - Audiology Let's Talk Event	12/09/2019	Audiology survey	Castle Morpeth	3	3
Blyth Leisure Centre - Conference Engagement	11/09/2019	Conference engagement	Ashington and Blyth	60	10
Blyth Library - Conference Engagement	11/09/2019	Conference engagement	Ashington and Blyth	15	3
Blyth Stroke Support Group - Conference Engagement	09/09/2019	Conference engagement	Ashington and Blyth	13	13

Network Building Meeting	10/09/2019	Contacts and Relationships	Ashington and Blyth	1	1
Queen Elizabeth High School - Volunteering Engagement	12/09/2019	Volunteering	Tynedale	50	30
PLACE Training	05/09/2019	Training	Castle Morpeth	1	1
North Northumberland Voluntary Forum	06/09/2019	Networking	North Northumberland	30	30
Sele Medical Centre PPG - Meeting	13/09/2019	Meeting	Tynedale	5	5
Lets Talk Audiology Services - Belford	10/09/2019	Audiology survey	North Northumberland	12	12
Action on Hearing Loss - Meeting	10/09/2019	Meeting	Castle Morpeth	1	1
Blyth Buffalo Centre	17/09/2019	Conference engagement	Ashington and Blyth	30	30
Changing Lives Blyth Hub	17/09/2019	Introduction to Healthwatch	Ashington and Blyth	8	8
Ashington Age Uk Northumberland	18/09/2019	Audiology survey	Ashington and Blyth	6	6
Adapt (North East) - Audiology Let's Talk Event	19/09/2019	Audiology survey	Tynedale	3	3
Board Meeting	24/09/2019	General Awareness	Tynedale	6	3