

You Told Us

September 2024



You told us...

Based on September 2024, we've analysed the feedback we received to get an overview of the most common themes within health and social care in Westmorland and Furness. By encouraging people to share their experiences, it informs our future focus of engagement as well as highlighting any issues that we may need to escalate directly to the provider.

We also offer information and signposting if people need further support or want to make a complaint.



140

People were signposted to further assistance and help



We engaged with 700 people 276 members of the public, patients and charity sector

We reached 2245 people through our social media and newsletter



We had the most feedback about...



- **Caring, kindness, respect and dignity**
 - **Accessibility and reasonable adjustments**
 - **Quality of treatment**
-

You told us...

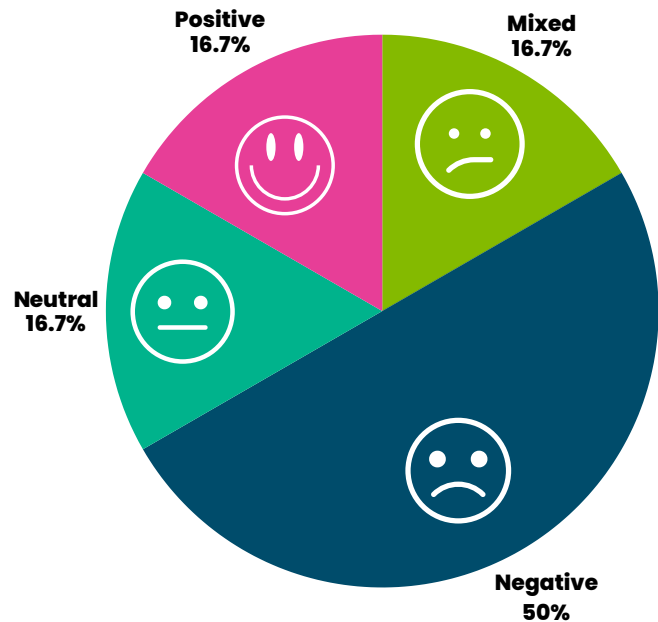
- Parking and transport
- Quality of treatment
- Other



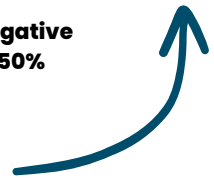
- Accessibility and reasonable adjustments
- Parking and transport
- Quality of treatment



- Accessibility and reasonable adjustments
- Health inequality



Feedback sentiment



- Access to services
- Booking appointments
- Cancellation
- Caring, kindness, respect and dignity

- Communication with patients; treatment explanation; verbal advice

- Consent, choice, user involvement and being listened to



Test results not communicated

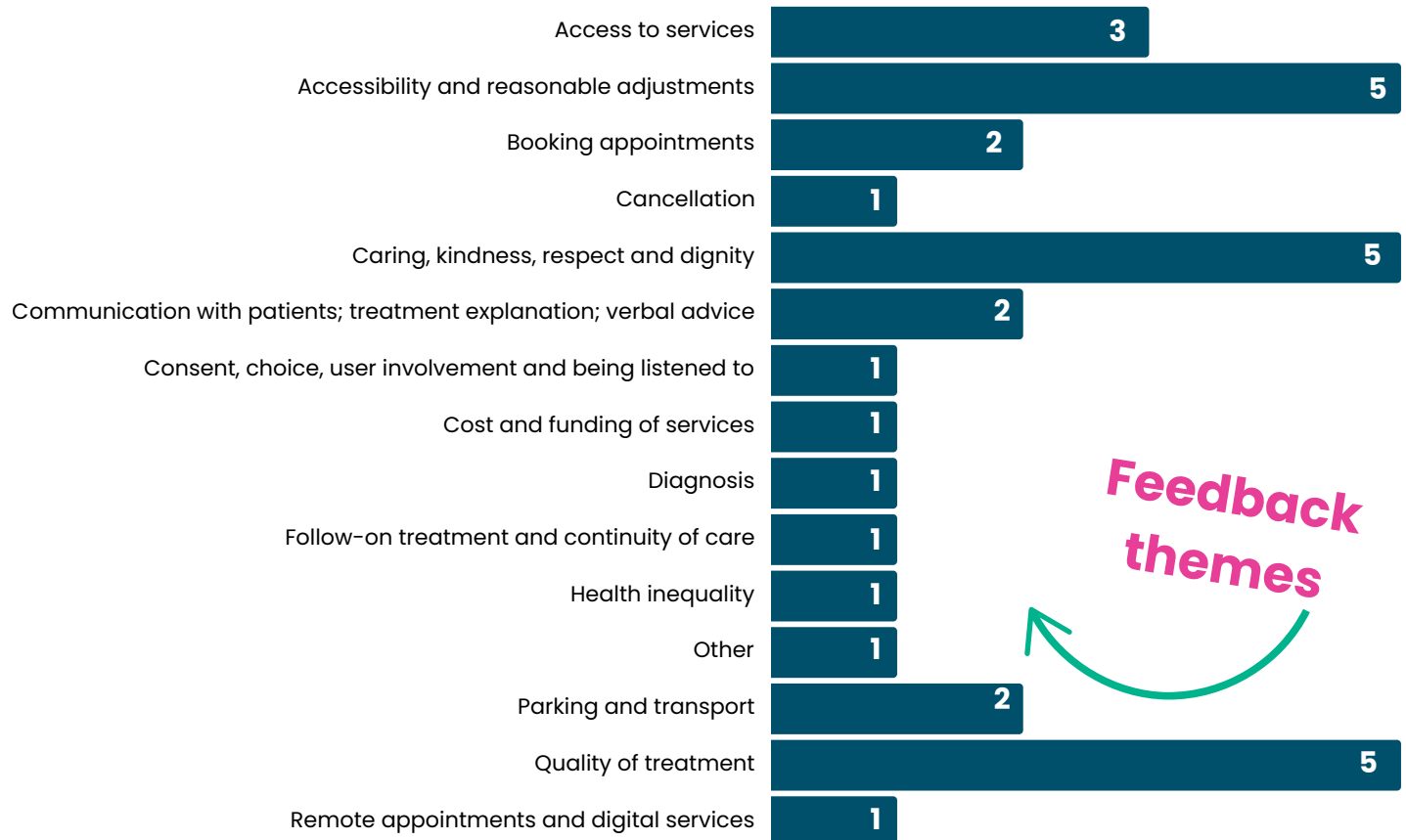
The results of my partner's heart tests were not communicated to them. They are waiting for a bladder operation and have been left suffering while the test results were just left sitting on their patient record. I did try to find out but their surgery sent me a 'tiff' image of one of the tests. As I don't have software to open it, nor am I a cardiologist, how can I understand the result? I have to wait a week to speak to a GP.

Kindness and respect of hospital staff

I'm in my late 80s and had to travel to Westmorland General Hospital for minor day surgery, I needed to be there for 7am which was really difficult as I'm this age, don't drive and diabetic. When I arrived I was hypoglycaemic as I didn't have time for breakfast. The staff were great and made me tea and toast, and put me down for first on the surgery list so that I wasn't hanging about. They really looked after me.

You told us...

We also heard about



This month we were out in the community across Barrow, Eden and South Lakes, hearing local peoples views of the health and social care. Some of the events and places we visited to talk to patients and the public were:

- We were invited to **Lakeland Carers' afternoon tea** in Barrow. It was a great chance to share what we do and support their clients.
- **Vision Support Barrow and District** craft group (pictured)
- Furness Third Sector Health Forum
- UHMBT Patient Experience Group
- Kendal Self-Advocacy Group



Senior Engagement Officer Lisa (middle, in pink) with members of Vision Support Barrow and District's craft group

We did...

Women's Health – The Big Conversation focus groups on maternal mental health

Women make up 51 per cent of our population but the NHS has a long way to go to ensure that health and care services are delivering for us.

We worked with North East North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (NENC ICB) to find out what matters to women and girls across our region when it comes to their health, with a survey promoted on our social media, in our newsletter and at events. This month we held two focus groups to have a deeper conversation with women who had experienced adverse maternal mental health. These conversations helped us gather additional information to the survey, which will help us understand in what way the groups we have spoken to have different views or needs.

This work took place only in Eden, as it was commissioned by the NHS ICB there. This month we also launched our women's health survey for South Lakes and Barrow so we can build a picture on these issues and needs across Westmorland and Furness. You can take part in that survey [here](#).

Please share with the women and girls aged 13 and older in your life. From these findings we will undertake future work on women's health.

Look out for our findings in early 2025.

- Earlier this year we recently carried out two Enter and View visits to maternity and neonatal wards in South Cumbria, as well as talking to new mums at baby and toddler groups across the area. Read about our work [here](#).



Jo from Together We
CIC kindly invited us
to her mums' group

We did...

Eden health and wellbeing community forum

Another great community forum took place in Penrith on Friday, 27th September. Speakers included:

- Mental health support – Richmond Fellowship
- Welcome Inn: Healthy Healing Hub – Carlisle Diocese
- Eden Place Action Groups – Westmorland and Furness Council health and wellbeing local priorities
- There were also updates from hospital trusts in north Cumbria, and North East and North Cumbria NHS Integrated Care Board.



There's always a lively discussion at our forums, and the opportunity to ask questions. We had a great turn out for such interesting and relevant presentations. We all came away with lots of ideas for future partnership working! The forum is the chance for third sector groups, members of the public and health and social care organisations to share and hear about the latest developments in local health and social care, and learn about Healthwatch's projects.

We aim to be as inclusive as possible and ensure that people can join the meeting in a way that works for them. Healthwatch's Community Forum rotates between Penrith, Carlisle and West Cumbria. Topics discussed can be local or relevant across Cumbria. Third sector groups, individuals and organisations county-wide are welcome to attend.

The next Eden community forum takes place on 28th March, 2025 in Penrith. For more information or if you would like to speak, please email info@healthwatchwestfurn.co.uk or call 0300 373 2820.

We did...

Upskilling our staff and volunteers

We know the importance of investing in our staff and volunteers and there was lots of training taking place this month.

Senior Engagement Officer Lisa shared her wealth of knowledge and experience of Enter and View visits with volunteers and our colleagues at Healthwatch Cumberland. She's a great trainer! Read our latest Enter and View report [here](#).



Manager Kate went to Preston to take part in Lancashire and South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust's PLACE training, ahead of visits to their sites in South Cumbria. Kate also took part in a confidence-boosting Healthwatch England Media Training for Healthwatch Leaders session with media trainer Scott Hamilton.

The Healthwatch Westmorland and Furness team are available to talk between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday. We're here to listen to your views and experiences, and we can help you find the health and care services you are looking for.

There are multiple ways you can share your feedback with us. If you have an inquiry, or want to share your general experiences, you can call the office on 300 373 2820 or email info@healthwatchwestfurn.co.uk.

If you would like to leave feedback about a specific service, such as your GP Practice, care home or hospital the best place to do this is on our independent Feedback Centre at www.healthwatchwestfurn.co.uk



We did...

Alfred Barrow Health Centre: A case study in patient advocacy

A few months ago 'Richard', a member of the public, reached out to us about new restrictions at Alfred Barrow Health Centre, in Barrow, limiting certain mobility scooters from using the lift. This change made it difficult for Richard to attend appointments with his GP, whose surgery was on the first floor.

The Equality Act's requires health services to provide equitable access to disabled patients.

The report gathered responses from Atkinson Health Centre, Abbey Road Surgery, and other service providers, many of whom can offer home visits, telephone consultations, or ground-floor accommodations when notified in advance. HWW&F also engaged with Cumbria Health Partnership (CHP), confirming that specific mobility scooters classified for outdoor use were indeed restricted from using the lift.

Following Richard's concerns, we contacted services within the health centre to explore reasonable adjustments for patients facing similar challenges and worked constructively on a comprehensive set of recommendations aimed at promoting awareness of reasonable adjustments for patients with mobility needs, including digital flags to record these needs, information campaigns, and improved service coordination.

By amplifying Richard's story, HWW&F sparked essential changes, creating a more accessible environment for all. Read the report [here](#).

Learn more about reasonable adjustments [here](#).



Personal story

Months of pain and lack of information

'Andy' is in his mid-50s and lives in South Lakes. He was playing football when his Achilles tendon snapped. What followed was a three month period of constant pain and lack of information on how to manage it.

Please note, for anonymity purposes, names have been changed.

Initially, Andy went to a physiotherapist who recommended he see a doctor. He visited BUPA and a GP and both said it may not be repairable to its initial state again, however there was a new surgeon in Kendal who specialised in tendon surgery.



Andy was given an initial assessment and told the surgeon could possibly repair it. He was put on a waiting list and provided with an appointment six months later. Andy thinks that was reasonable.

He was booked into Kendal hospital and stayed in for two days (one night). The surgeon removed tendons from Andy's big toe and rebuilt the Achilles. What Andy didn't realise and was never told, is the impact this surgery would have on his life. His main complaint is there was no information pre-operation or post-operation on how to manage it. He literally couldn't walk for three months and needed constant support from his wife. He couldn't drive, shop, or help around the house.

He was also only offered crutches or a walker for support. Being in his 50s, he opted for the crutches and was given one hour's training but when he got home he couldn't get upstairs, so had to sleep on the sofa. He didn't feel prepared for life at home where he couldn't walk. He admits it had a massive impact on his wife and son and he felt a loss of dignity.

He started to think about the equipment he needed in the house to make life easier and Googled what others had done.

Personal story continued

While he was doing this, he came across a piece of equipment called I-Walk. This was invented in the US and fits over the leg as a splint, so freeing up the hands. Andy bought one off eBay second hand and it “changed his life”. He has tried to tell the NHS of this invention and has even spoken to the inventor himself, but the NHS were not interested in it.

In addition, the surgeon who operated was mainly based in Barrow. Andy had to rely on hospital transport, taxis, or friends to get him to appointments as he needed his cast changed every week. (He says they don't do casts in Kendal. If you break your leg, you go to Barrow.) Andy would like to see the NHS adopt different methods for treating these types of injuries, particularly the addition of a splint, and see Kendal improve its services for particular injuries such as this. He also suggests easier access to free physiotherapy would be beneficial as he found it hard to access one.



Ideally, for this type of injury, you need 12 weeks of physio. He got one day.

To find out more about NHS physiotherapy please click [here](#).

If you would like to speak to a member of the team about your own experience of using health or social care services in Westmorland and Furness (whether good or bad), please call the office on 300 373 2820 or email info@healthwatchwestfurn.co.uk. By sharing your story you will not only be helping to improve future services but we will try to find appropriate support for your own circumstances.

