



October-December 2023

About us

About Healthwatch Wiltshire

Healthwatch Wiltshire is your local health and social care champion. As an independent statutory body, we have the power to make sure NHS leaders and other decision makers listen to local feedback and improve standards of care. We also help people to find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.

Our priorities

For 2023/24 are:

Hospital discharge and care at home/virtual wards

- Hearing the views of people who have been discharged from hospital with an NHS@Home (virtual ward) package, and how this is working for them.

Children and young people's wellbeing

- Finding out what young people are concerned about and what local support they would like.

Mental health and autism

- Our joint project with Wiltshire Service Users' Network to find out what autistic people, and their carers and families, think of local mental health services.

Access to GP services

- Continuing our work to see how practices are adapting and changing since the pandemic.

Highlights

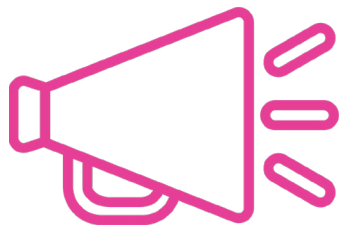
Published 2 reports



Published a You Said, We Did on hospital complaints



Attended 4 events to hear people's experiences of care



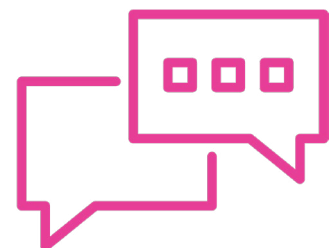
Ran a survey on prescription ordering



Hosted a support and development day for our volunteers

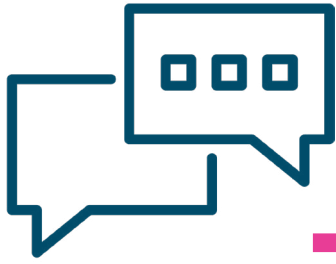


Heard from young people at Warminster School



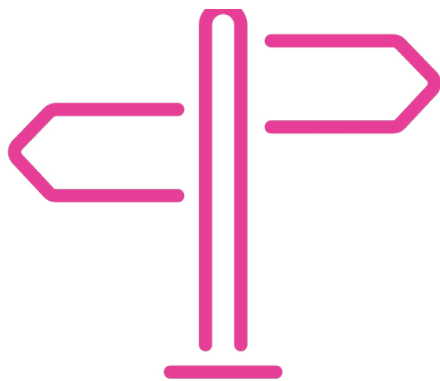
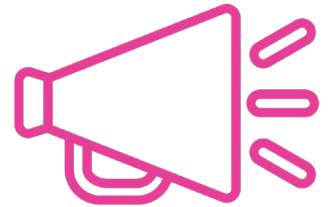
Talking and listening

Due to contract changes, stats are from October and November 2023 only



422 people shared their experience of services with us

We attended **77** meetings, forums and events



68 contacts were given information and signposted through our Helpdesk Hub Team...

...with an average call time of **20** minutes

26 volunteers were involved...

...and volunteered over **133** hours

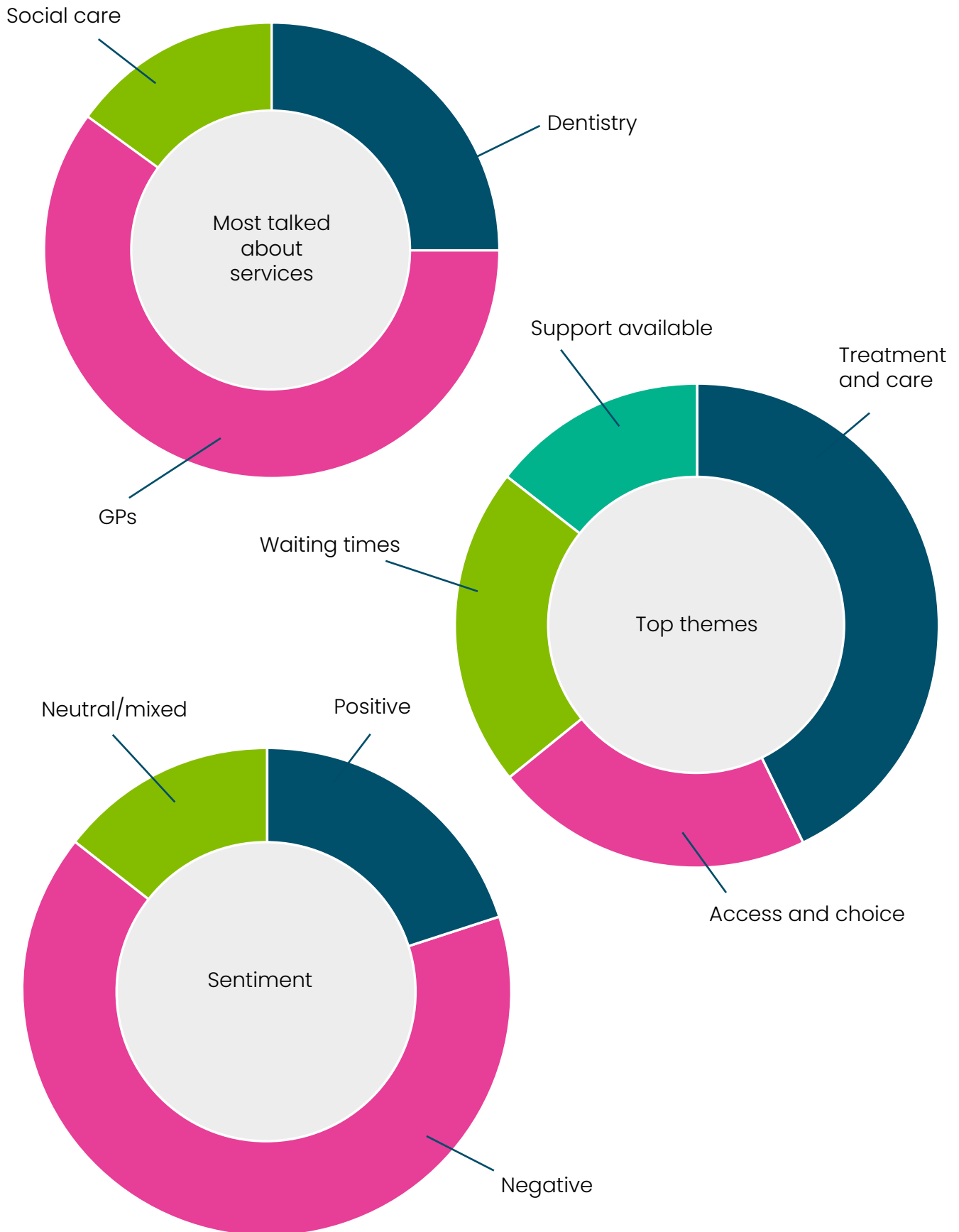


209 social media posts...

...reached **14,896** people

...and our website received **4,266** page views

Experiences you shared



Our work

Supporting our volunteers



We hosted a Volunteer Support and Development day in November, and the main topic of discussion was around how we can attract more volunteers to join us.

We had some great conversation and came up with lots of ideas of how people might like to get involved and how we can promote

Healthwatch and our roles.

As a special Christmas thank you – we also took our volunteers out for a lovely Christmas lunch. A wonderful time was had by all!

Interested in joining our volunteer team? [See our Volunteer pages for details.](#)

School sessions focus on wellbeing

In early December we visited Warminster School to continue to hear the views and experiences of children and young people, particularly around emotional wellbeing.

We shared a wellbeing session with 60 students across Years 10, 11 and Sixth Form followed by discussion around what wellbeing was to them

and what they thought about services.

Key themes that emerged were how well aware they are of things that can affect people's wellbeing and also of the warning signs that all is not well. Coping strategies were discussed, both positive and negative, and there was some useful feedback on services in Wiltshire.

Advice and support when you need it

Our website offers a range of advice and information to help you keep up to date with the latest changes in health and care.

Over the last few months we have added articles about [knowing the signs of menopause](#), and understanding [what Seasonal Affective Disorder is](#).

We've also updated our information on [where to get cost of living support](#) and

[how to stay well this winter](#).

[Registering with your GP](#) and [Where to get mental health support in Wiltshire](#) were the most visited pages – while our [Mental Health and Autism report](#) – which heard the views of autistic people and their carers and was published in October, was also in the top 10.

Visit the [advice and information section](#) on our website for more articles.

How to stay well this winter

Advice and Information – 25 October 2023

Tips to help you stay well this winter and get the care you need.



Winter conditions present an increased risk to our health, especially if you are older or have a long-term health condition such as heart or kidney disease, asthma or diabetes.





Out and about

Above, Stacey at the Carers' Expo in November and below, Christmas lunch with the volunteers



Above, volunteer Sally at the Wiltshire Parent Carer council event in November



Making a difference

Autistic people tell of their struggles to find mental health support

Autistic people, and their families and carers, have told us of their desperation and frustration at not being able to get the support they need for their mental health.

People said they felt isolated and misunderstood, falling between the gaps in services which aren't designed to meet their needs and where staff lack training and awareness to support them.

These are the stark findings of [our work hearing the experiences of autistic people](#), and their carers, who have accessed mental health services in Wiltshire in the last three years.

In a joint project with Wiltshire Service Users' Network (WSUN), which runs the Wiltshire Autism Hub, we listened to feedback from more than 50 people to understand what is good and what could be better about local services.

What did people tell us?

- Most people went to their GPs first to get help, but faced a long wait to be referred on to other services. Some said they could not get any support at all.
- Autistic people did not find services helpful. They didn't think talking therapies were suitable for them and sometimes made symptoms worse.
- Mental health staff lack training, awareness and understanding of autism. Sometimes

this has resulted in misdiagnosis and inappropriate treatment, or no support.

- Thresholds for getting mental health help are very high or inappropriate for autistic people.
- Waiting times for an autism diagnosis were seen as unacceptable, with little support or guidance post diagnosis.
- Communication difficulties, coupled with a lack of flexibility from services – such as only offering phone calls rather than face to face appointments – creates a barrier for autistic people to be able to access help.



What happens next?

[Our report](#) has been presented to the Learning Disability and Autism Programme board, and is due to be shared at the THRIVE board soon where we will highlight our findings and the recommendations we've made.

The ICB have assured us that these recommendations will form part of their review of the Autism Strategy as well as the Mental Health Transformation Programme. We will continue to monitor this going forwards.



"The findings and outcomes of this mental health focused Healthwatch Wiltshire report shine a spotlight on the importance of continuing to improve access and service provision for people with autism and their families and carers in Wiltshire.

"We will ensure that their recommendations form part of our review of the Wiltshire Autism Strategy as well as the further development and implementation of our BSW ICB Learning Disabilities and Autism, and Mental Health Transformation programmes."

Gordon Muvuti, Director of Place Swindon and BSW Executive Director for Mental Health, Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire (BSW ICB)

What you told us about prescription ordering

We worked with Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire Integrated Care Board (BSW ICB) to find out which ordering service people liked to use, how easy they found the process, and how important the service was to them.

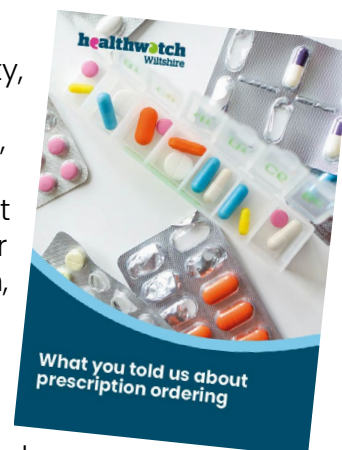
We received 380 responses to our short survey, which ran for two weeks in October. As well as an online survey, we took paper copies to several pharmacies across Wiltshire, where we talked to patients as they collected their prescriptions.

What did people tell us?

Most people told us they found ordering prescriptions easy, and used a variety of methods including SystmOnline, the NHS App and Prescription Ordering Direct.

The majority of respondents said being able to order repeat prescriptions was very important to them, but long waits for medication and shortages of preferred brands were among the concerns they raised.

Other issues included poor internet availability, or a lack of confidence in using online services, as well as a frustration at not being able to get repeat prescriptions for longer than one month, particularly when someone had a long term condition.



Stacey Sims, Healthwatch Wiltshire Manager, said: "Thanks to all who shared their experiences and their ideas to improve prescription ordering services. We make a series of recommendations in our report, and we're pleased that these have been welcomed by BSW ICB.

"We're always interested to hear what people have to say about services, so please continue to share your feedback with us, good or bad."

The feedback we received has been welcomed by BSW ICB.



"We are very grateful to everyone for taking time to either talk in person, or fill in this Healthwatch designed survey, which helps inform us on the experiences of a range of repeat prescribing methods used across BSW and how they compare.

"We will be reviewing the feedback and using it to help inform our understanding. We recognise not just the different perspectives reflected in the report, but also the differing needs of our population with some patients potentially very well served by digital solutions and others where alternative access routes are more suitable.

"We have also been listening to a broad range of stakeholders and we will now bring all of the feedback together to help inform our planning. Should anything need to be undertaken differently we will be clearly communicating in a planned and considered way.

"We would also like to acknowledge the hard work of the Healthwatch Wiltshire staff and their volunteers in bringing these views and reflections to our attention. We look forward to continuing to work with all Healthwatch groups across BSW to ensure we hear from our population about their experiences."

BSW ICB

What people said

A selection of feedback we have received this quarter.

Looking for bereavement group. Not for someone who has died, but for somebody who has been lost to Alzheimer's. In contact with Dorothy house but I haven't found what I'm looking for yet. My doctor's in BaNES but I live in Keevil - so there's a long wait for help because of county boundaries. I didn't want to move doctor's because they are so good.

If it is a long term prescription which has been seen to be appropriate it would save everyone's time (and therefore money) to dispense more in one go (GP, pharmacist, patient). Likewise it would help if multiple prescriptions were set up so you only needed to put one request in (ie everything runs out at the same time) rather than finding you need to do another request 2 weeks later for another med.

Local pharmacy which coped very creditably during the pandemic is now struggling hugely to fulfil prescriptions on time. Several times now I have been impacted by a national shortage of specific medications.

Daughter on autism pathway, age 9. Very conscious of being different, some self harm and talks about death - very frustrated. Spoken to CAMHS and social services but told 'not bad enough for our services'. Parent 'winging it' and doesn't know best way. Not yet received a diagnosis, waiting over a year for an appointment.

Excellent! Twice recently ambulances were called for my husband and can only praise the four staff involved. Thorough examinations and explanations. Very kind, patient, caring individuals! Wonderful people.

Coming up

Hearing experiences
of patients on virtual
wards

Find out more about our work at healthwatchwiltshire.co.uk



**Committed
to quality**

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

healthwatch Wiltshire

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