

Quarterly Report: July – September 2021

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 us about their experiences throughout the year. This report shares a summary of the feedback collected from July to September 2021. During this period, we have continued to work in different ways due to the continuation of the Covid-19 pandemic. The next report will cover October to December 2021.

This quarter we received feedback and enquiries from:

- Telephone calls (39%)
- Emails (23%)
- Post (3%)
- Website (8%)
- Social media (3%)
- Engagement event (21%)
- Meeting (2%)

Areas of Focus

We are open to all feedback about health and social care services. Responses to our 2020 Annual Survey helped us to identify a specific Areas of Focus which we prioritised in 2020/21; this included

mental health services, dementia and GP services.

During this quarter we conducted our annual survey and from the 619 responses we received we determined that our priorities to focus on for the coming year are GPs, dentists, support to live independently/care at home and dementia services. (Note that the responses from the Annual Survey have not been included in the quarter's data analysis.)

Aims

The report shows:

- Who Healthwatch Northumberland is hearing from
- What people are saying
 - The general sentiment of comments
- What people are experiencing
 - What is working well?
 - Where there are areas for improvement?

Feedback

Between July and September 2021, we received feedback from 85 individuals from talking to people at face-to-face engagement events, telephone calls, emails, our website, social media, and other sources. We signposted 35 of these people to services. (Both these figures are an increase on the previous quarter which had feedback from 63 individuals and signposted 20 people.)

Ten of these responses were late returns of the Annual Survey questionnaire.

This report explores who we are 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.

We also look at the general sentiment of comments, 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?

We have collected and anonymised demographic information where consent has been given. The following is a general summary of who we are hearing from. These figures do not include information about people who took part in our online forums.

Location:

In total between July and September 2021, we collected feedback from people in 45 different Northumberland postcode areas, accounting for 53% of all responses this quarter. 47% of those we heard from gave no postcode (although may have indicated the local area). This proportion is broadly similar to the previous quarter's, where 57% of people gave their postcode and 43% did not, but we have heard from far more Northumberland postcode areas this quarter as last quarter we only heard from 31.

Figure 1, below, shows the number and proportion of responses we received from residents in different Local Area Councils this quarter:

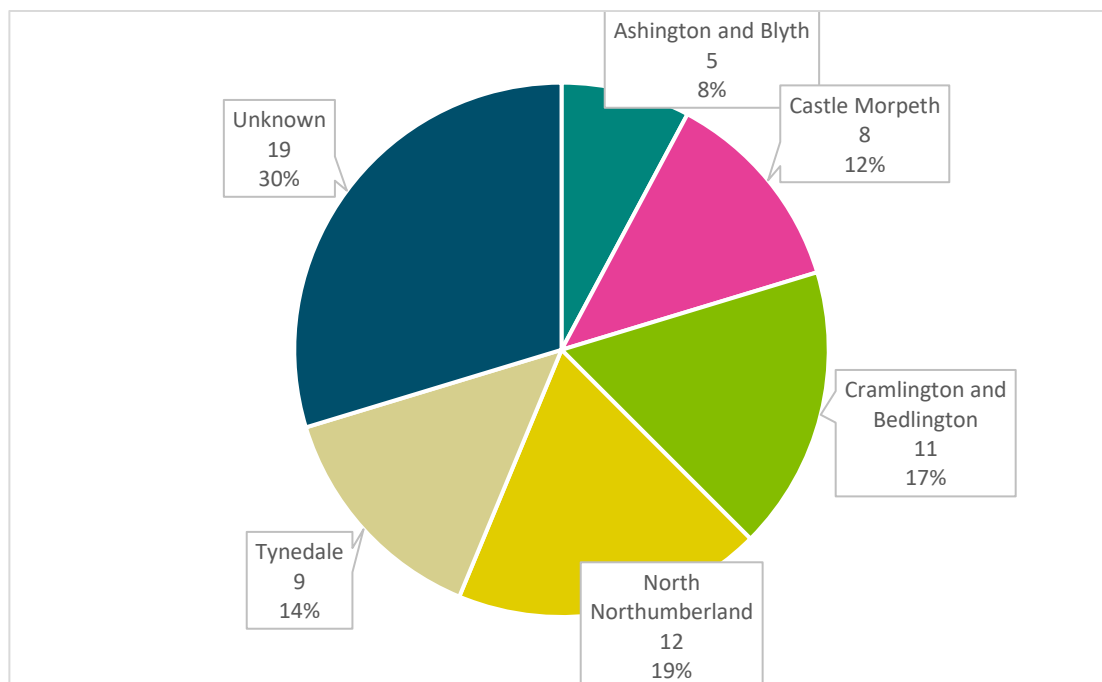


Figure 1. Number and percentage of responses by Local Area Council, Q2, 2021-2022

North Northumberland is the area we heard from the most this quarter. Last quarter it was Cramlington and Bedlington, North Northumberland and Tynedale.

In the previous quarterly report we had identified that over the full year of 2020-2021 there were two areas that were 'cold spots' (that is, an area we hear from less often): Castle Morpeth and Cramlington and Bedlington. Consequently, we said we would focus engagement and communications on these two areas in 2021-2022. We started this focus with a mailshot campaign within parts of Castle Morpeth and Cramlington for the Annual Survey which had the dual purpose of both generating proportionately more Annual Survey responses from these two areas than elsewhere in the county, as well as raising our profile. It is too early to say whether this mailshot has had an impact on general response rates from Castle Morpeth and the Cramlington and Bedlington areas yet.

Age:

The majority of those we heard from did not share their age with us, and we did not ask people taking part in our online forums to give their age as these were public events. Those that did were mainly in the older age groups (shown below in Figure 2). We heard from nobody aged 16-24 years

old but did hear from four people aged 15 or under. This year's Annual Survey has identified that we do not hear enough from young adults (i.e. under 25 year olds) so in forthcoming quarters we will focus on this age group to raise the participation levels.

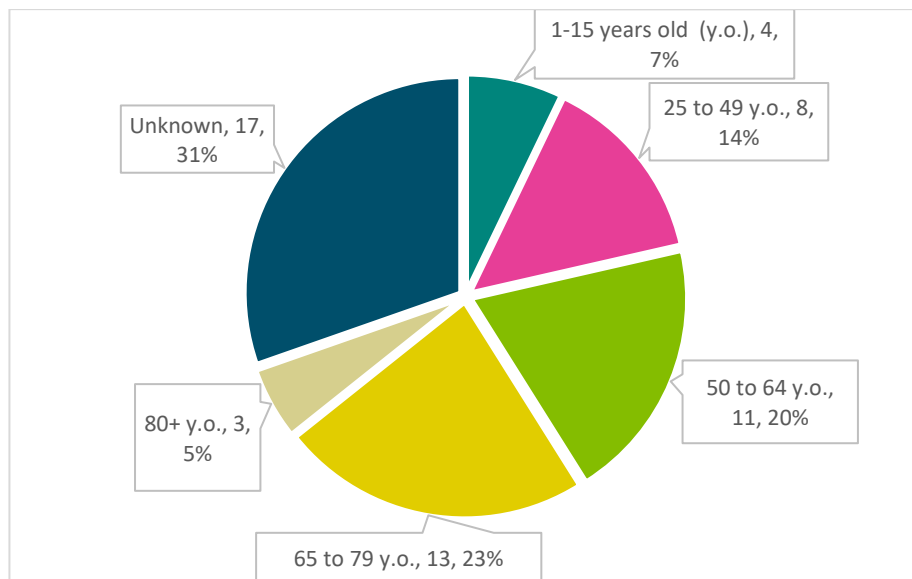


Figure 2. Number and percentage of responses across age groups in Northumberland, Q2 2021-22. There were no responses from 16-24 year olds.

Gender:

After last quarter's unusual breakdown of more males contacting us than females (Male: 29%; Female: 17%; Unknown: 54%), this quarter has reverted to type with the majority of responses being from females (55%). Figure 3, below, shows a breakdown of responses by gender:

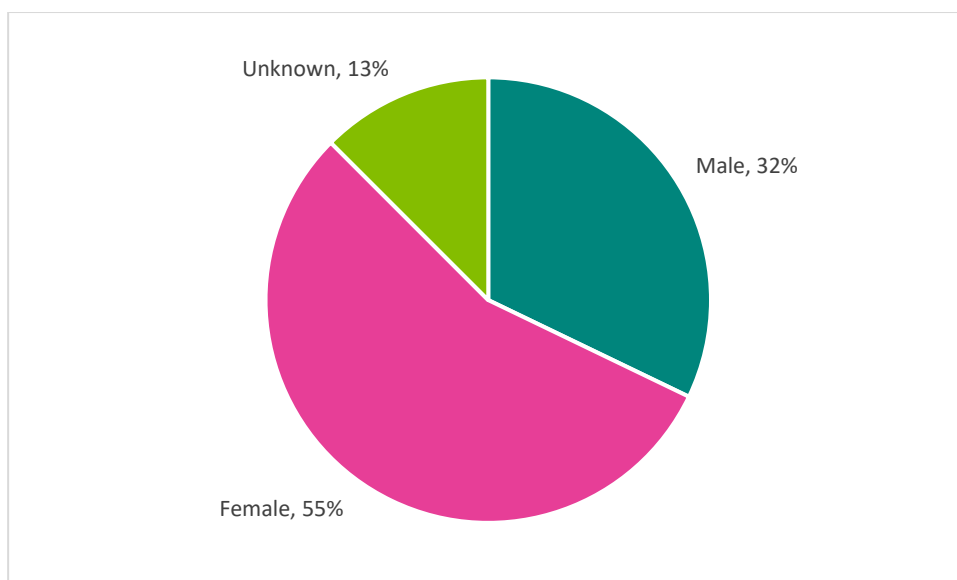


Figure 3. Frequency of responses by gender in Northumberland, Q2 2021/22

Whose experiences are we finding out about?

Most people were sharing their own individual experience of health and social care services with us (61%). This has decreased since last quarter (73%) but is higher than the equivalent quarter last year (Q2, 2020-21: 59%).

A total of 39% of all those we heard from gave us feedback about the health and social care experiences of a relative, friend, or someone they care for.

What people are saying and experiencing

Of the 56 responses¹ we were asked or given feedback about 33 individual services/service providers. Please see Appendix 1 and 2 for a list of all the services/service providers mentioned.

Figure 4, below, shows the breakdown by sentiment of the responses.

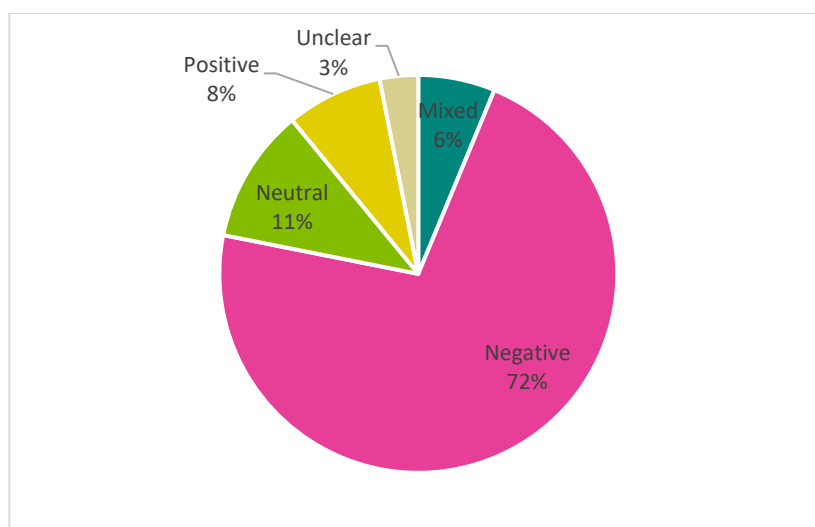


Figure 4. General sentiment of responses, Q2 2021/22

¹ Responses related to 'signposting only' have been excluded from this section of the report. Likewise, discussions from the online forums have been excluded from this section of the report as have data from the Annual Survey.

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.

Figure 5, below, shows the service type and sentiment of responses.

It shows there is a greater number of negative comments and feedback for all service types except Urgent and Emergency Care which has a 'Mixed' comment.

Positive:

Feedback given at drop-in event. A retired gentleman is happy with GP access currently. He doesn't contact GP a great deal but does get face-to-face appointment when required (following telephone triage). He sees different GPs most times, which is fine, although in an ideal world would be able to see the same one; however, this doesn't seem to affect treatment.

Patient, Cramlington

Neutral:

A gentleman spoke to us at drop-in event to explain that he rarely contacts his GP but last time he did, following a minor health complaint, he first completed an eConsult. This was okay, but did mention in the form that he is deaf, so prefers face-to-face consultation, as he relies on lip reading. However, the GP contacted him by telephone instead. Not ideal, but as this did not affect his treatment, he was not unhappy about this.

Patient, Morpeth

Negative:

Feedback given by a woman via email and telephone around communication to herself from hospital and between hospital departments/doctors.

She states that she has been sent letters first class for dates that are months away but has also had many letters sent that arrive after the actual appointment date. Whilst she has rung to confirm appointments, so hasn't missed any, this would not be the case for everyone. She also received a letter about an appointment/ review which said to call to re-arrange for telephone appointment if in vulnerable group. She did this straight away and on the day of the appointment waited for four hours for someone to call. When she contacted the hospital, she was told she should have come into the hospital as a blood test was needed. No one had checked their systems about what was agreed previously regarding telephone consultation.

Patient, Berwick

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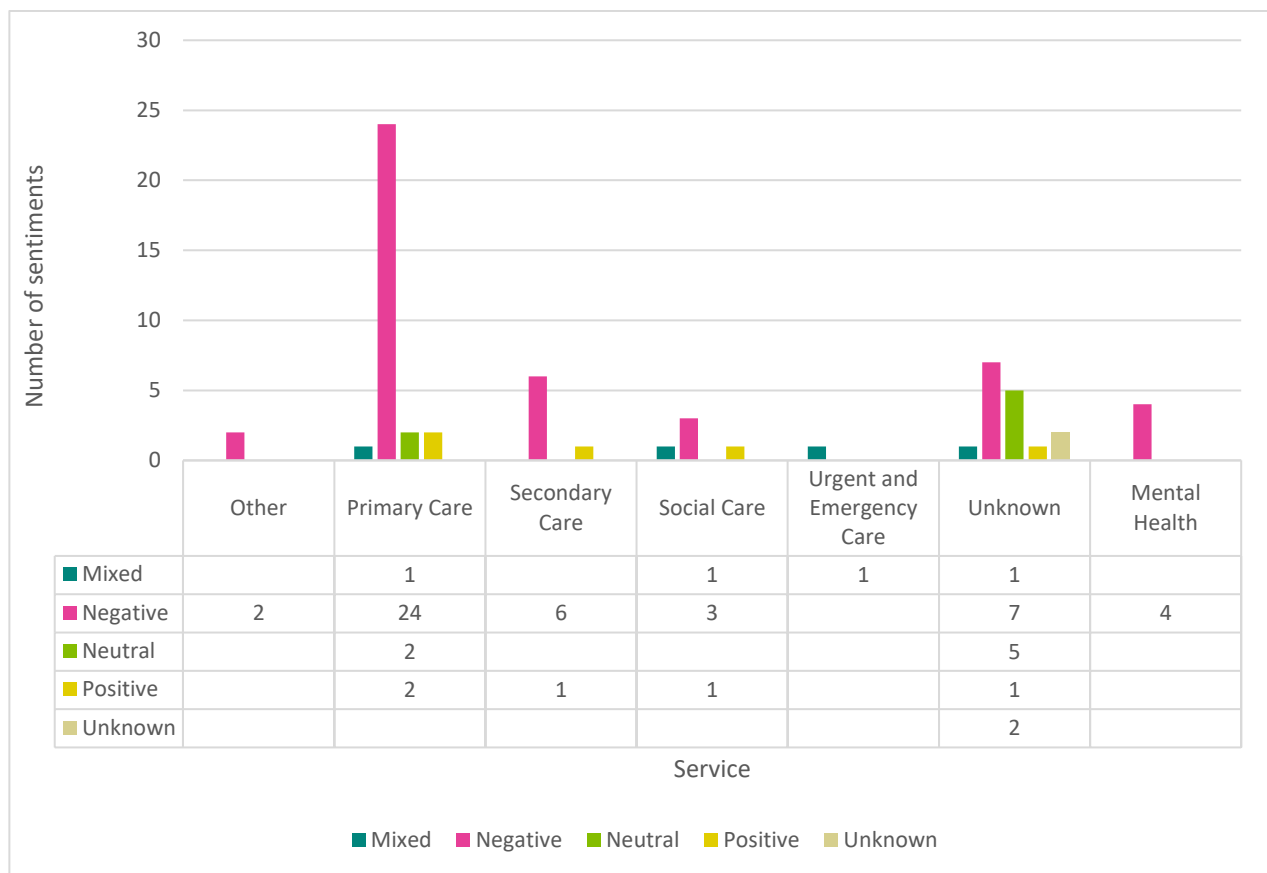


Figure 5. Service Type and Sentiment of responses, Q2 2021/22

Figure 6, below, indicates most comments were about primary care services (45% of all comments, 29 total comments). These comments are mostly about access to GPs.

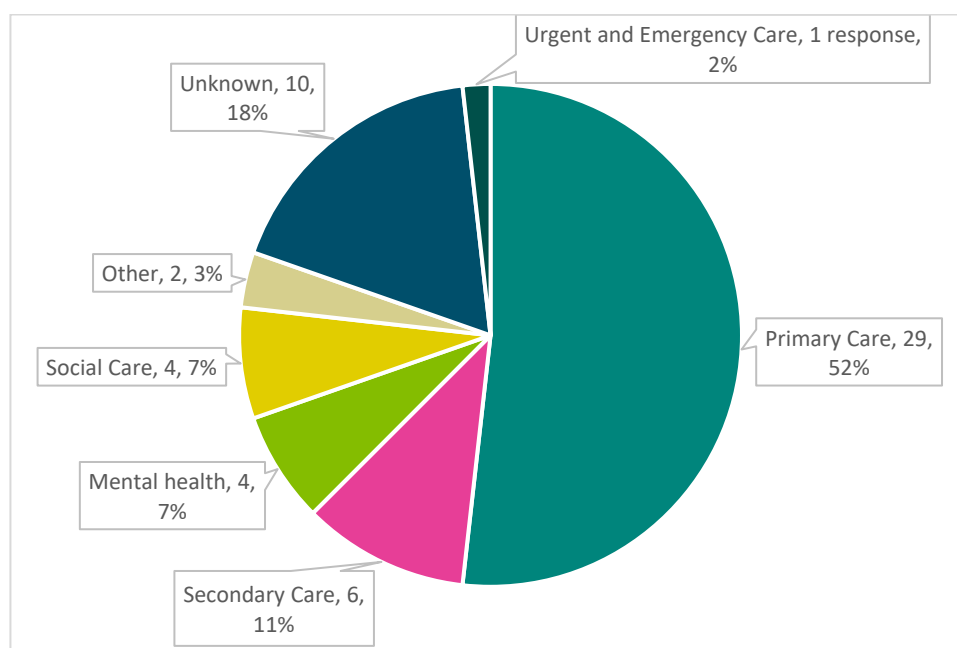


Figure 6. Frequency and percentage of responses by Service Type, Q2 2021/22

Covid-19

The concern around the pandemic is becoming less of an issue with only eight comments (14% of responses) being related to the Covid-19 pandemic in some way, which is much less than the previous two quarters' proportions (Q1, 2021-2022: 41%, 17 comments; Q4, 2020-2021: 70%, 39 comments). This reflects the successful rollout of the vaccination programme and the public's changing behaviour as restrictions have eased. It is also possible that as the quarter covers the summer months, and people were able to be outside more, this reduced people's concerns. There was a theme where three of the comments were to do with access to Covid-19 vaccinations of children under 15 years old who were more at risk. Although not at the same scale, this confusion of messaging reflects the experience with the initial vaccine rollout (see Appendix 3 of [Healthwatch Northumberland Quarterly Report Q4 2020-21](#))

Covid-19: what people told us:

- *We were contacted by a parent having difficulty accessing a Covid-19 vaccine for their 12 year old son, who is a household contact of a relative who is severely immunosuppressed. When the parent contacted their GP surgery, they were advised that the surgery did not have access to the vaccine for this age group and they couldn't use a walk-in centre because they're under 16.*
- *Parent described having difficulty accessing Covid vaccine for 12-15-year-old household contact of immunosuppressed adult. When they called GP surgery to try and arrange vaccine, they were advised that child needed to wait to be called with rest of 12-15-year-olds, despite this not having been announced at the time.*

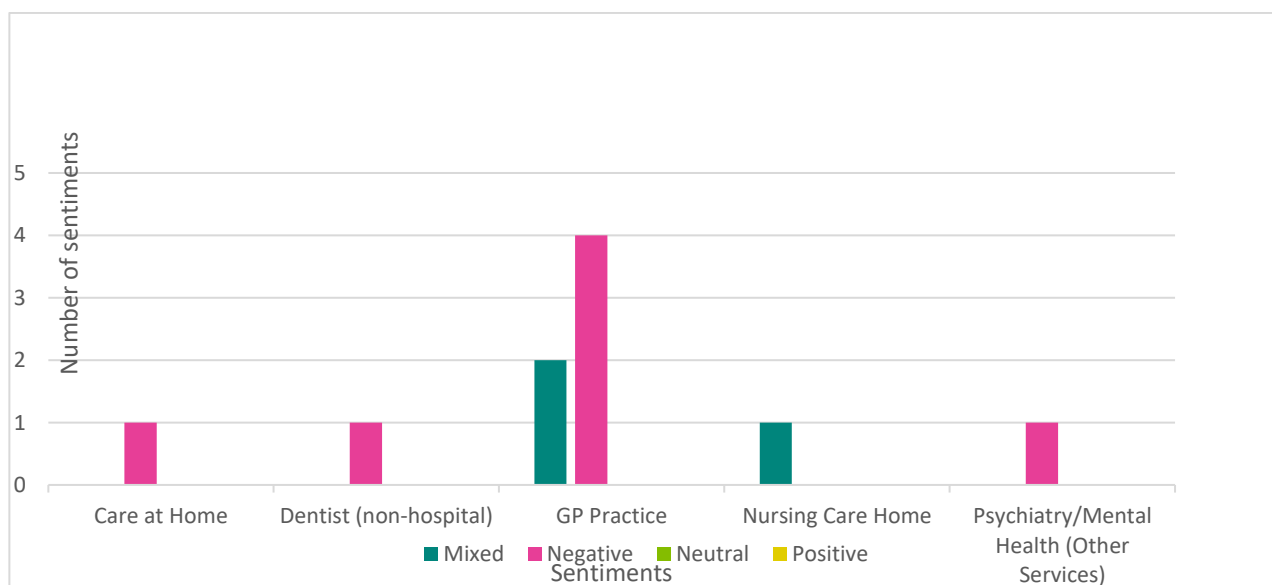


Figure 7. Service and Covid-related Sentiments of Responses, Q2 2021/22

Access and Quality

This quarter comments have been divided more equally between issues again about 'Access to Services' (46%) and 'Quality of Services' (54%) but the distribution has been reversed compared to the feedback from last quarter, where the majority of issues were to do with 'Access to Services' (55%). As in the previous quarter, most of the negative comments about primary care and secondary care relate to Access to Services (see Figure 8).

Figure 5 is best compared alongside Figure 8 (shown below), which show whether comments are related to quality or access and their relevant sentiment.

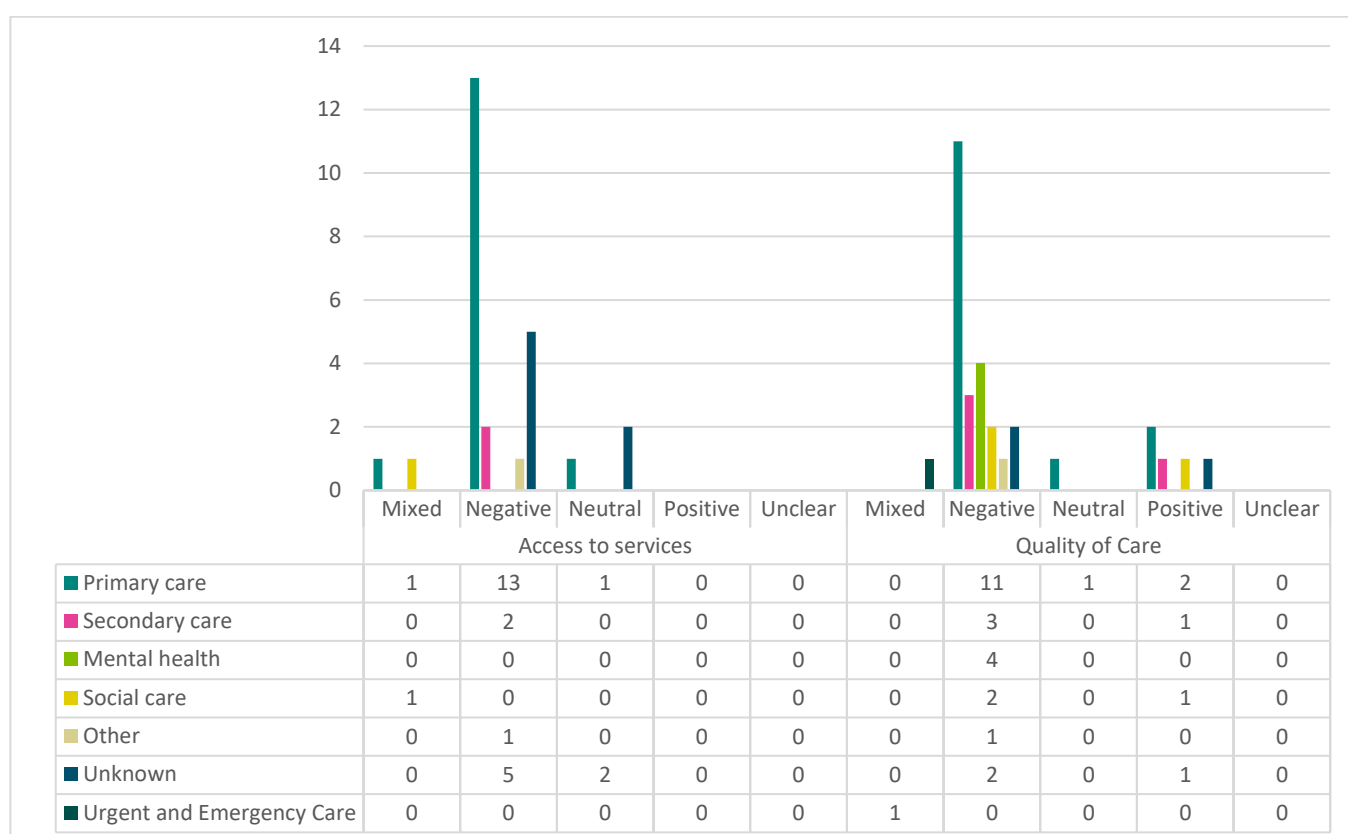


Figure 8. Frequency of responses related to Quality of Care and Access to Services, Q2 2021/22

Signposting

In total we signposted or gave information to 35 people who contacted us with an enquiry which is a big increase from last quarter (20 people). Some people were signposted to more than one

service. Table 1, below, shows the services Healthwatch Northumberland signposted people to this quarter.

Table 1. List of services Healthwatch Northumberland signposted people to, Q2 2021/22

Service Name	Service type	Number of times signposted to	Signposted to Apr-Jun?
Age UK Northumberland	Social Care	2	No
Alnwick Medical Group	Primary Care	1	No
Barchester Woodhorn Park Care Home	Social Care	1	No
Branch End Surgery	Primary Care	2	No
Careline Homecare	Social Care	1	No
CNTW	Secondary Care	2	No
Coquet Medical Group	Primary Care	2	No
Corbridge Medical Group	Primary Care	1	No
Cramlington Dental Practice	Primary Care	1	No
Felton Surgery	Primary Care	1	No
Forum Family Practice	Primary Care	1	No
GP practice (undefined)	Primary Care	1	No
Guidepost Medical Group	Primary Care	2	No
Haydon Bridge & Allendale Medical Practice	Primary Care	2	No
I Like My Smile Dental Practice (Ashington)	Primary Care	1	No
Newcastle Freeman Hospital	Secondary Care	2	No
NHS England	Other	3	Yes
North East Ambulance Service	Other	1	No
Northumbria Healthcare	Secondary Care	1	No
Northumbria Specialist Emergency Care Hospital	Urgent and Emergency Care	1	No
CNTW Crisis Team	Mental Health	1	No
Railway Medical Group	Primary Care	1	No
Rivenhall Dental Practice (Cramlington)	Primary Care	1	No
Riversdale Surgery	Primary Care	2	No
Royal Victoria Infirmary	Secondary Care	1	No
Seaton Park Medical Group	Primary Care	1	No
The Village Surgery	Primary Care	2	No
Union Brae & Norham Practice	Primary Care	3	No
Valens Medical Partnership (Wellway, Brockwell and Lintonville GP practices)	Primary Care	2	No
Wansbeck General Hospital	Secondary Care	2	No
Wellway Medical Group	Primary Care	2	No
Wentworth Grange	Social Care	1	No

Online Forums and Face-to-Face Engagement

Face-to-face engagement

In line with the lifting of most Covid-19 restriction we re-started face-to-face engagement events. Throughout late June and July, we held 13 outdoor events across the county to promote our Annual Survey to find out people's experiences of health and social care over the past 12 months and to ask what work priorities we should focus on for the coming year.

During this series of events, we gave out a total of 431 surveys and 178 goody bags both of which included Healthwatch Northumberland leaflets providing information about us and the services we provide, to raise our profile and encourage people to engage with us in the future. Many people we spoke to at events gave informal feedback on their experiences of health and social care or requested information on local services.

On the Saturday of the August Bank Holiday weekend, we had a stall at Northumberland Pride. This event was held in the People's Park in Ashington and helped to raise the profile of Healthwatch Northumberland within the LGBTQ+ community and encourage them to engage with us in the future.

From September we have started a programme of 'Here to Hear' drop-ins across the county including Cramlington Community Hub on the first Wednesday of the month, Haltwhistle Leisure Centre on the first Friday of the month, Berwick Voluntary Forum on the second Wednesday of the month, Blyth Buffalo Centre on the third Tuesday of the month and Northumberland County Blind Association in Morpeth on the fourth Wednesday of the month.

Now that Covid-19 restrictions have lifted we are very keen (subject to thorough risk assessments) to get back out into our community to hear people's feedback and signpost people to local services. We have received feedback from nine people in this quarter and signposted some to other local services and we hope that attendance continues to increase as promotion/word of mouth builds.

Alongside getting feedback we continue to promote our service at the drop-ins by giving out our leaflets to those who are unaware of our role, again encouraging future engagement.

Online Forums and Engagement

Given the prioritisation of our Annual Survey and face-to-face drop-ins we have facilitated less online engagement this quarter but do intend to continue with this method in future and facilitate a blended approach incorporating both online and face-to-face engagement. Alongside our face-to-face 'Here to Hear' sessions we have scheduled an online drop-in session via Zoom on the second Friday of each month and in future intend to invite guest speakers, or have themes, so attendees can receive information about local services.

This quarter we have also started a piece of work in partnership with Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group to get feedback on what Northumberland residents would like to see for end-of-life care services. We have facilitated one online focus group in this quarter of which six people attended and also helped to facilitate other face-to-face focus groups through trusted partner organisations. This research is continuing and will be reported on in due course.

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:

Email: timh@healthwatchnorthumberland.co.uk

Phone: 07803 427468

Appendices

Appendix 1. List of services mentioned in feedback and comments

Organisation name	Number of times contacted
Age UK Northumberland	1
Alnwick Medical Group	1
Branch End Surgery	2
Careline Homecare	1
CNTW	2
Coquet Medical Group	2
Corbridge Medical Group	1
Cramlington Dental Practice	1
Felton Surgery	1
Forum Family Practice	1
Guidepost Medical Group	2
Haydon Bridge & Allendale Medical Practice	1
I Like My Smile Dental Practice (Ashington)	1
Newcastle Freeman Hospital	3
NHS 119	1
NHS England	1
North East Ambulance Service	1
Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group	1
Northumbria Healthcare	1
Northumbria Specialist Emergency Care Hospital	1
CNTW Crisis Team	1
Railway Medical Group	1
Rivenhall Dental Practice (Cramlington)	1
Riversdale Surgery	2
Royal Victoria Infirmary	1
Seaton Park Medical Group	1
The Village Surgery	2
Union Brae & Norham Practice	3
Unknown	14
Valens Medical Partnership (Wellway, Brockwell and Lintonville GP practices)	2
Wansbeck General Hospital	2
Wellway Medical Group	2
Wentworth Grange	1
Grand Total	59

Appendix 2. Service category and sentiment

Service Category	Mixed	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Grand Total
Accident & Emergency	1				1
Advice and information		1			1
Ambulance Services		1			1
Cancer Services		1			1
Care at Home		3			3
Care of the Elderly				1	1
Child & Adult Mental Health Services (Other Services)		2			2
Community Mental Health Team (CMHT)		1			1
Dentist (non-hospital)		5			5
General surgery		1			1
GP practice	1	22	3	2	28
Inpatient Care		2			2
Nursing Care Home	1				1
Ophthalmology				1	1
Outpatients	1	1			2
Psychiatry/Mental Health (Other Services)		2			2
Unknown		3	2	1	6
Grand Total	4	45	5	5	59