

Healthwatch Priorities for 2017/18

What is Healthwatch?

There is a local Healthwatch in every area of England. We are the independent champion for people using local health and social care services. We listen to what people like about services and what could be improved and share their views with those with the power to make change happen. We also share them with Healthwatch England, the national body, to help improve the quality of services across the country. People can also speak to us to find information about health and social care services available locally.

Our sole purpose is to help make care better for people.

In summary - local Healthwatch is here to:

- Help people find out about local health and social care services.
- Listen to what people think of services.
- Help improve the quality of services by letting those running services and the government know what people want from care.

As of 1 April 2017 Healthwatch Middlesbrough and Healthwatch Redcar & Cleveland are working together to deliver Healthwatch activities across South Tees.

**269 people
completed the
questionnaire**

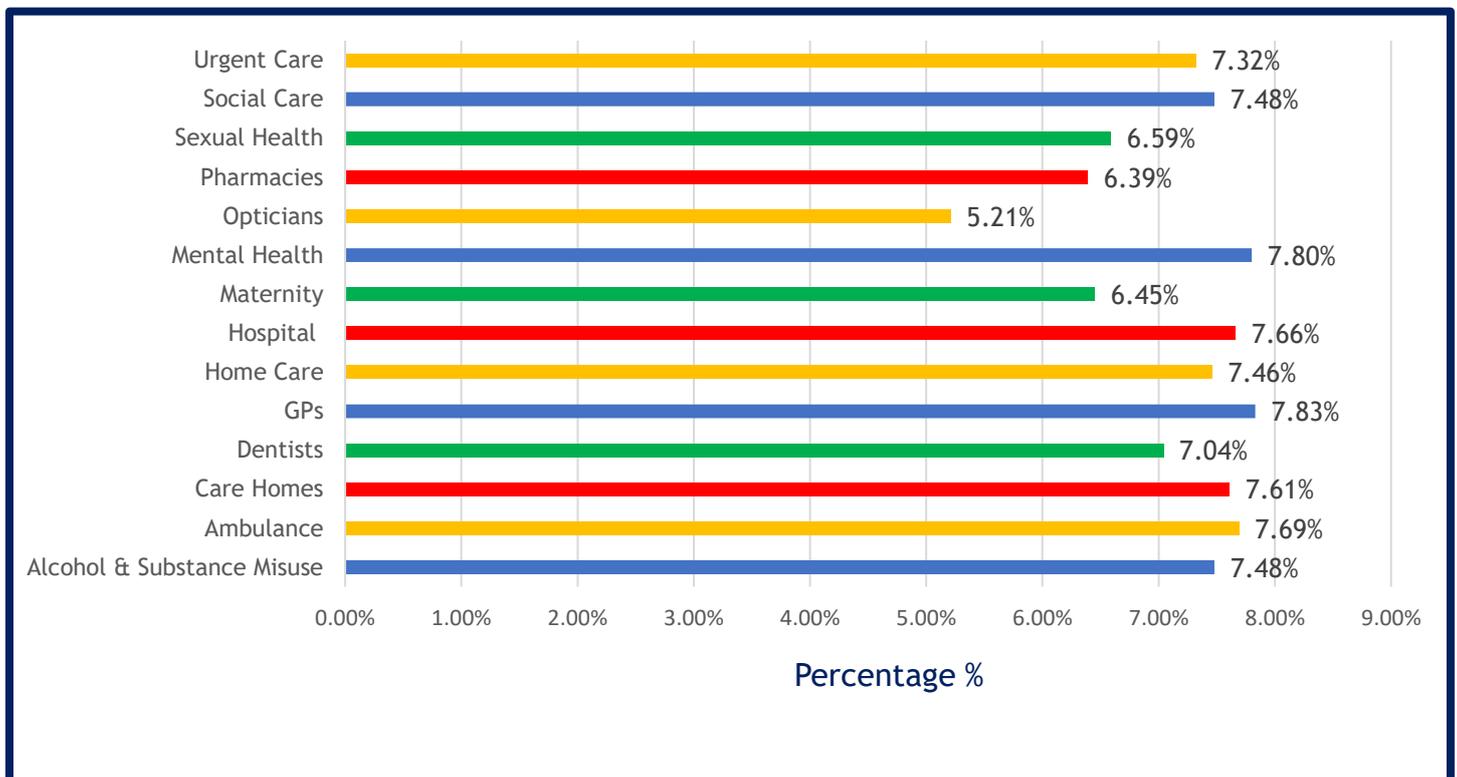
In the summer we asked the public to help us identify what they consider should be our work plan priorities for 2017/18.

The public were asked to identify areas which they felt should be our top three priorities from a list of health and social care services.

269 people responded to the questionnaire. 81 were completed online and 188 completed paper copies. The questionnaires were distributed widely through events, community groups, email, via social media, community hubs and through local health and social

care organisations.

The results of the survey are shown below. As the results were very close we have detailed the feedback given on the top five services.



1. GP Services

GP services was the highest ranked health and social care service which the public felt we should focus on. GPs are often the first point of call for individuals when any health issues arise, however feedback received highlighted that individuals are having ongoing problems with regards to accessing their GP, waiting times, registering as a new patient and referrals into other services.

‘The rules around getting a GP appointment are impractical especially for people who work full time’

‘My local GP recently closed forcing me to travel further this is restricting my access to appointments’

‘You can never get a GP appointment’

‘I often have to wait more than four days to see a GP’

‘Problems changing and getting registered with a new GP’

‘GPs need a clearer understanding of other services which patients can be referred into’

‘GP links with the Voluntary Community Sector is vital in the development of social prescribing’

2. Mental Health Services

The second highest priority ranked by the public was mental health services. Feedback through this engagement exercise highlighted that mental health services across South Tees are difficult to access with a lack of communication between services. There is also a need to raise awareness of mental health to help reduce stigma in the local community.

‘There should be more help and awareness for people with mental health issues’

‘Mental Health is a huge problem which directly affects physical health’

‘I see a lot of mental health patients not getting support’

‘It’s not easy to access mental health services’

‘It’s not talked about enough due to ongoing stigma’

‘This is a real issue in Middlesbrough and people should be aware of the services available to them’

‘No communication within mental health services’

‘Crisis team don’t come out when needed’

‘There is a need for more promotion and education around mental health and the services available’

‘Difficulties accessing or receiving continued support with mental health issues’

3. Ambulance Services

Ambulance services were found to be of high importance to the public. Feedback highlighted from the public’s personal experiences found that this service is impacted by reduced resources and increasing demands.

‘The more services available takes away from emergency services’

‘Strain on ambulance services’

‘We need more ambulances to reduce response time’

‘They do not have efficient resources evidenced by the waiting times for ambulances’

‘Additional crews and time would help to improve their response and treatment’

4. Hospital Services

A range of feedback was received with regards to hospital services. Comments highlighted problems with booking appointments, lack of communication between departments and ranging levels of care within the local hospitals.

‘There needs to be a better connection between hospital services and social care’

‘The level of service in hospital can vary depending on department’

‘Hospital services are an essential part of a patients care’

‘More availability or choice for access to hospital services is needed’

‘Accessing appointments and booking system needs simplifying’

5. Care Homes

The local community raised a number of issues with regards to staff shortages, lack of adequate staff training and addressing the needs of the residents in care homes.

‘Closing of care homes, lack of funding and staff shortages’

‘Care homes need more staff to look after people’

‘Care homes are notorious for problems, would recommend a more holistic approach’

‘The emotional and physical needs of residents are not being met’

‘All staff should receive adequate and frequent training in order to provide appropriate care’

‘We need to ensure that people have the best care especially for those living with dementia’

Additional key themes

Although not ranked in the top five, the following themes were found to be of high importance to the local community across South Tees.

i. Alcohol and Substance Misuse

Raising awareness and improving education with regards to alcohol and substance misuse was found to be important to the local community. The need for more referrals and easier access to support was also highlighted.

‘Alcohol and substance misuse cause wider issues within the community’

‘The police should refer individuals to health services to access support’

‘Alcohol and substance misuse is not spoke about enough and should be focussed on in the community and within schools’

‘It is important that young people have somewhere to go to access support for alcohol and substance misuse’

ii. Dementia

Dementia care was also found to be a common theme highlighting the need for improved staff training and quality of care. Feedback received also stated that there is a lack of support services for individuals living with dementia and their carers, particularly in Redcar & Cleveland.

‘Need to ensure people have the best care especially for those living with dementia’

‘All health and social care staff should receive frequent training on dementia care’

‘Need more support for individuals living with dementia, lots of problems accessing services in Redcar and not enough information’

The results of our survey have given us an insight into what people feel should be a priority for Healthwatch across South Tees and through our engagement activities we can look for further evidence to support the findings.