

eBulletin

January 2026 Edition



Research Projects 2026/2027

We would love to hear from you, and your communities to help us identify topics that we should consider for next years' deep dives.

You can submit ideas using our [short online survey](#) or this QR code.



Online Hospitals Trust

Under current legislation, local Healthwatch must be consulted whenever a new NHS trust is proposed. In January, local Healthwatch across England were invited to participate in an online meeting about the planned [NHS Online Trust](#) which was announced last September. We were also given a consultation briefing document.

Several of us attended from Healthwatch Staffordshire. This was an opportunity to find out more about how this online service could work and to raise any queries or concerns. The plan is for the first patients to be seen during 2027. We were told that patients will always have a choice of whether to use the current face-to-face options instead.



Local Healthwatch organisations were invited to submit individual responses to the consultation document which must be submitted before 9th March 2026.

Volunteering Opportunities

We're evolving the ways volunteers can get involved and supporting our work in making a difference. Our opportunities now fall into three main areas:

- Enter & Views*
- Research
- Engagement

If you – or someone you know – would like to volunteer and have an interest in any of these areas, we'd love to hear from you.

You can contact us at HWSVolunteering@healthwatchstaffordshire.org.uk or register your interest through our funding hosts, [Support Staffordshire](#), for more volunteering opportunities.

*Enter & View – Volunteer Involvement

We are enhancing our Enter & View team, and our volunteers will now play a crucial role in helping us carry out Enter & View visits across Health and Social Care services in Staffordshire.

If you'd like to learn more about what an Enter & View visit involves, please visit our website, where you can explore all the reports we have produced following previous visits:

[Enter & View Reports – Healthwatch Staffordshire](#)

If you would like to request an Enter & View visit at your service, we welcome you to get in touch with us at enquiries@healthwatchstaffordshire.co.uk

Pharmacy First Project



This month our wonderful Students from Keele university have kick started our pharmacy project off.



What can Pharmacy First treat?

Your local pharmacy can now treat the following conditions:

- Sinusitis (for patients aged 12 years and over only)
- Sore throat (aged 5+)
- Earache (aged 1 year-17)
- Infected insect bite (aged 1 year+)
- Impetigo (aged 18 years+)
- Shingles (aged 18 years+)
- Uncomplicated urinary tract infections (women aged 16 to 64)

healthwatch

Aliza Toor, Areesha Qazi and Diana Mukheisin will be working with our team to capture feedback from **Pharmacies, Patients** and **GPs** about Pharmacy First and the impact it is having in Staffordshire. You can take part using the links and QR codes below:

Pharmacy Survey		GP Survey		Patient Survey	
					

Data Analysis

We had three surveys which closed either in December or January:

- Gynaecological Diagnoses
- Mental Health – Staying Well
- Hazeldene GP – appointments and prescriptions

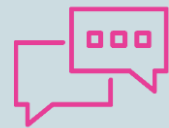
During January we have been taking time to analyse the data we have collected through the surveys and in-person engagement work.

Engagement Events

Our engagement work has been quieter this month as we focussed on analysing data from our recent surveys.

Tamworth Carers Group

Dave met with Carers at this group and gave an update on what we have been doing and our contract extension. He heard positive feedback about the Stoneydelph GP practice, some positive stories about end-of-life care being given at Good Hope Hospital and also stories of long waits in A&E.



Pye Green and Hednesford Carers Group

Jackie met with this Staffordshire Carers Group to talk about Healthwatch. She received feedback about various services including hospital care, residential care dentistry and GP appointments. Some comments were very positive and some negative.



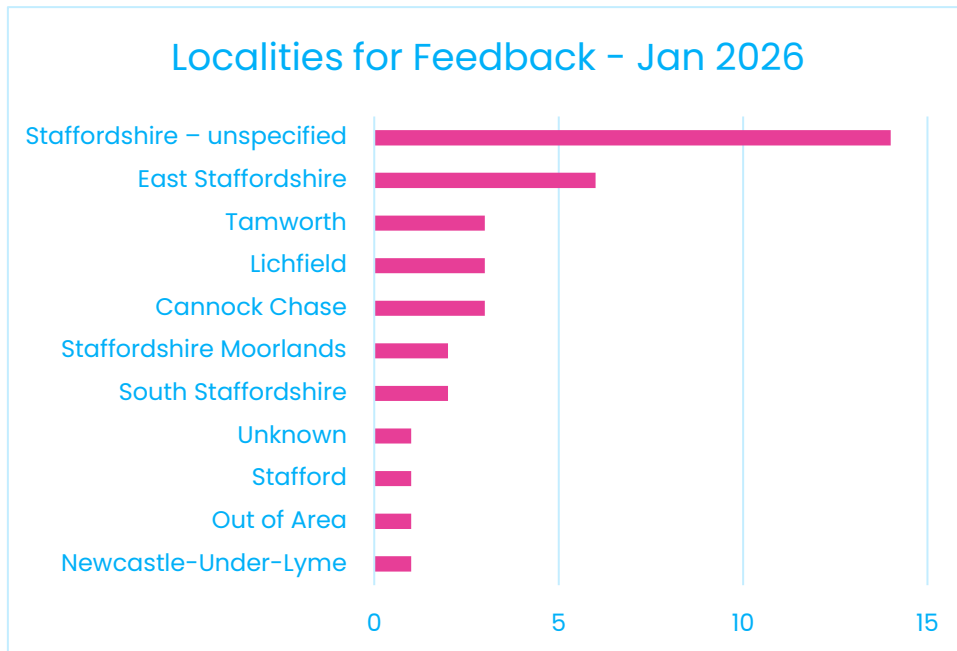
Fundamentals of Care Visit to County Hospital A&E

Dave joined this ICB quality visit and spoke to 7 patients. All were satisfied with their treatment and none who came by ambulance had experienced delays.



January Feedback

39 responses were collected from across the County as follows:

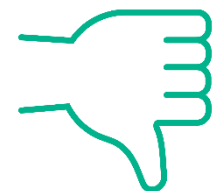


Please note that the feedback does NOT cover Enter & View Visits nor responses to Surveys.

Key Issues

A lot of feedback this month has been around errors in medical records and lost referrals and results. People have reported items missing from their GP medical history, incorrect diagnoses and medications on their records which are never removed, and diagnoses on their history they have not been advised of. Referrals have not been sent/received, tests not arranged and tests and results have not been recorded/sent or added to the NHS App. Some have complained that their records on the NHS App are summarised and therefore not 'complete'. One person believes they are recorded as a 'difficult' patient as their GP no longer responds to them. Another reports unresolved issues with resetting their online password.

Poor staff attitudes have been reported from GPs and their receptionists as well as hospital consultants. These include being dismissive, not listening fully or collecting all of the information and having no empathy. A patient was newly prescribed a medication, that she was already taking. One patient was unhappy to be seen by a social prescriber instead of the Community Mental Health team and felt their conditions were not understood. Another reported a lack of knowledge and understanding around ME. Someone else complained about the level of GP charges for a shotgun licence renewal form and yet another about a GP demanding upfront payment from DVLA before completing a form for them. Home visits are refused unless patients are completely housebound. Updates on complaints are not given.





Accessibility – services are not always following ‘flags’ for communication preferences – one person wanted paper prescriptions and another needed messages by text or email due to hearing difficulties – both preferences were ignored.

Administration issues – Two appointment letters have arrived after the appointment date and caused the patient to be referred back to their GP due to them ‘missing’ these appointments. There are delays in receiving vital medication when regular appointments or blood tests are not completed/reported in a timely manner and confusion about getting medication promptly when staying away from home. One person had difficulties organising timely annual health checks for her two sons with learning disabilities. Another respondent received discharge letters which they found threatening.



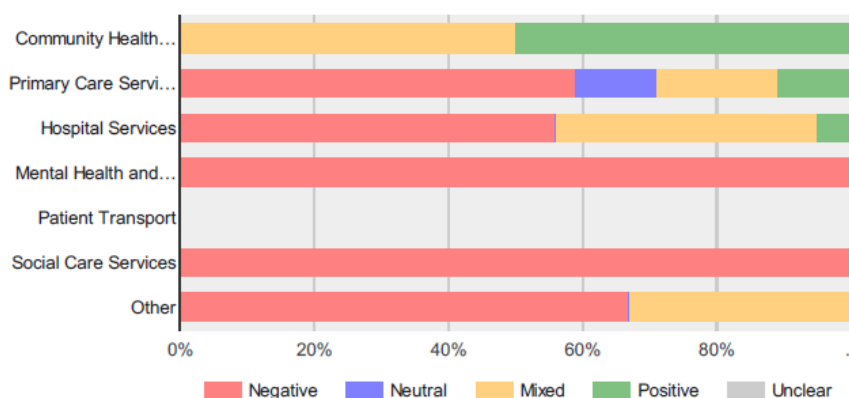
Long waiting times for mental health support, cataract surgery and an audiology assessment were mentioned, along with the usual difficulties getting a GP appointment, GPs running late and the fact that NHS 111 seems to refer most things on to A&E. One person was unhappy with the Orthotics service after a change of supplier.

Carers – a person was stopped from advocating for their spouse and believed there was misdiagnosis and wrong treatment provided. Another felt that social workers had been changed and that this was not communicated to them. A spouse was not allowed to wait inside the hospital while their partner had an MRI scan.

Service Categories

As usual most responses concerned Hospital Services (20) or Primary Care Services (17). Other feedback covered Mental Health and Learning Disabilities (6), Social Care Services (3), Other (3), and Community Health Services (2).

Satisfaction by Service Type



Under **Hospital Services** the responses mainly covered Outpatients (3), Ear, nose and throat, audiology and maxillofacial services (3), Discharge lounge/discharge team/discharge to assess/patient discharge (2) and Neurology, neurosurgery and stroke care (2).

In **Primary Care** the responses were mainly about GP services (16) with one mention of community pharmacy.

Under **Mental Health and Learning Disabilities**, 3 comments related to Community Mental Health Services.

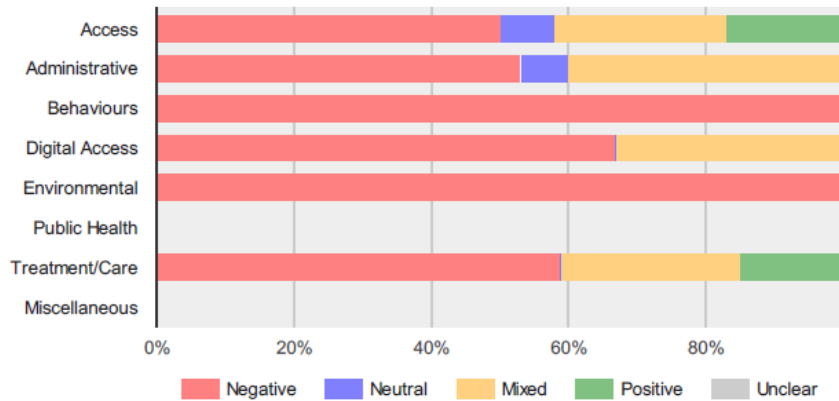
Other mentions NHS 111, the NHS App, and the Integrated Care Board.

Themes

Various **Treatment and Care** themes were mentioned 65 times, and within this area, the topics mentioned most often were:

- Quality of treatment (12)
- Waiting for appointments or treatment/waiting times (9)
- Caring, kindness, respect and dignity (6)
- Person centred care (6)
- Face to face appointments (5)
- Medication, prescriptions and dispensing (5)
- Clinical Decision (3)
- Follow-on treatment and continuity of care (3)
- Waiting times, punctuality and queuing on arrival (3)

Satisfaction by Theme



Access to services was mentioned 12 times, staff attitudes and performance 5, and administration 21 with a focus on results and medical records.

Positive Feedback from January

GP practices and hospital outpatients received praise in January.

*"I would like to provide feedback on **Audley Health Centre**. On the Friday before Christmas, I contact the surgery via the NHS app. I shared my symptoms and very quickly afterwards, I was phoned and offered an appointment later the same day. I was referred for further tests, which took place before Christmas. The results came back really quickly, and I have been offered a follow-up appointment on 7th January. I am very impressed with the whole process."*

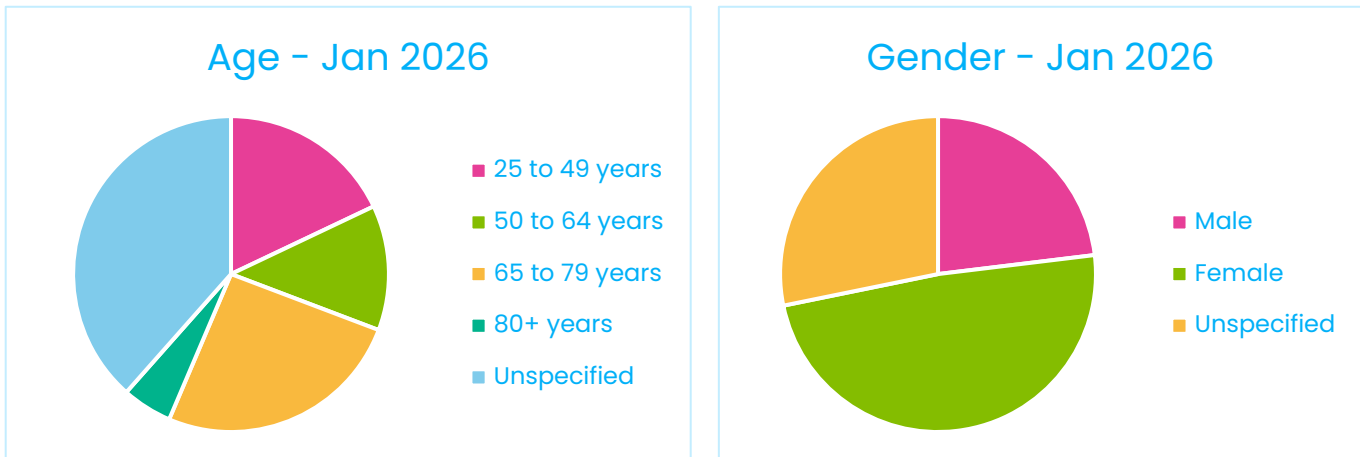
*"I was feeling so unwell, I needed to see GP. I walked into surgery and wonderful Dr K agreed to see me straight away. He was thorough and kind. I feel full of gratitude. I got the help I needed!
Trinity Medical centre."*

Other GP practices praised were **The Orchard, Salters Meadow and Moss Street**. For hospital outpatients we heard:

*"Went for my biopsy and I couldn't fault the staff. Put me at ease and made me feel comfortable."
(**County Hospital, Stafford** - outpatients)*

*"Pleasant, efficient experience. The Audiologist was professional, but friendly, explained all procedures."
Samuel Johnson Hospital - Audiology.*

Demographics



We reached 4 carers. Nobody declared themselves as a member of the LGBTIA+ community. Under ethnicity, one respondent was Welsh, all others who specified were White British.

There were 8 respondents who said they had a disability and 8 who said they had an unspecified long-term condition. Specified conditions were fewer this month and included: cardiovascular disease/heart failure (3); hearing loss (3); Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME) (1); fibromyalgia (1); mental health (1); dementia/cognitive loss (1); learning disabilities (1); physical disability/mobility issues (1); cancer (1 – ovarian); cataracts (1); respiratory issues (1); pneumonia (1); high blood pressure (1); arthritis (1); dehydration (1); broken leg (1); shortness of breath (1).

Healthwatch England News

Our colleagues at Healthwatch England have been busy and released the following blogs and articles during January.

Weight loss drugs on the NHS

People have told Healthwatch England that [weight loss](#) drugs are transformative, but that there are problems accessing them on the NHS.

They identified four key themes from the experiences people shared with them about asking for NHS funded weight loss drugs:

- Access to weight loss drugs can transform people's lives
- People experience a postcode lottery of access to NHS funded weight loss drugs
- People are forced to go private, face rising drug costs or miss out
- The impact on diabetics

In our October edition, we previously clarified the [policies in place for Staffordshire](#).

AI in NHS care: what's the impact, and what do people think?

As the Government attempts to 'make the NHS the most AI-enabled care system in the world', the [public's early experiences](#) show it may be causing as many issues as it aims to solve. Healthwatch England recommend five principles for AI use in the NHS:

Transparency – Consent – Safety – Co-design – Human backstops

Response to Online NHS Trust Announcement

[Healthwatch England's response](#) to the Government announcement about the NHS online hospital, allowing nine common conditions to receive faster access to specialist care.

People's Panel

As well as sending your feedback on Health and Social Care to Healthwatch Staffordshire using our [feedback form](#), there are other ways to influence local care.

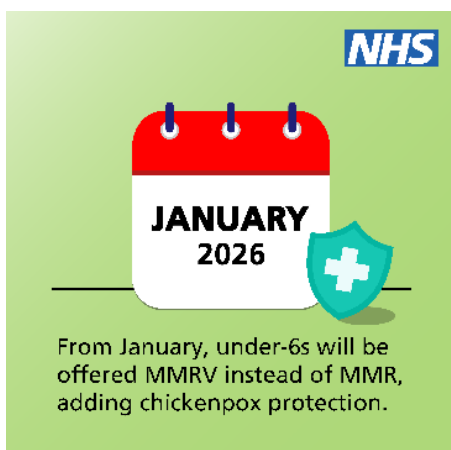
Are you interested in shaping health and care services locally? Do you want to share your views and experiences of accessing health services? Join the [People's Panel](#) for the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Integrated Care Board.



Social Media Catch-up

January is the last month that we will be posting on X. We will still continue to post regularly on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#). Please follow us to get these useful updates sooner!

Highlights you may have missed:



[MMRV](#) is now part of the NHS routine childhood vaccination programme, replacing the MMR vaccine. It protects against measles, mumps, rubella and chickenpox. Chickenpox is very common and can sometimes lead to serious complications, so vaccination helps reduce the risk of serious illness as children grow. You don't need to do anything – your GP will be in touch when your child is due.

On the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Integrated Care System website you can read more about [Urgent Dental Treatment](#) and using [GP Online Services](#) to manage your health the easy way.

Awareness campaigns with useful links:

[Dry January](#) – a campaign to help people manage their drinking in the New Year.

Check out eligibility criteria and locations for these free services to lose weight or stop smoking from **Everyone Health – Staffordshire**

✔ [Adult Weight Management](#)

✔ [Stop Smoking](#)

[Brew Monday \(Samaritans\)](#) The Samaritans advise connecting over a cuppa to check in with each other on any day of the year.

In [Cervical Cancer Prevention Week](#) Eve Appeal has information about cervical screening and adjustments you can ask for to help make yourself more comfortable. Remember cervical screenings are estimated to save 5000 lives a year in the UK. The website also has lots more information on [HPV and HPV vaccination](#).



On [Stroke Prevention Day](#) 2026 you are encouraged to monitor your blood pressure. That's because high blood pressure is the biggest risk factor for stroke. If you have a high reading, you can help lower it by making some simple lifestyle changes.

Get in touch

Healthwatch Staffordshire

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