

Quarterly Report: January to March 2022

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 January to March 2022. During this period, we have continued to work in different ways due to the continuation of the Covid-19 pandemic.

This quarter we received feedback and enquiries from:

- Telephone calls - 33% (up from 27% the previous quarter)
- Emails - 27% (up from 19% the previous quarter)
- Post - 1% (up from 0% the previous quarter)
- Website - 13% (down from 15% the previous quarter)
- Social media - 6% (down from 8% the previous quarter)
- Engagement event – 18% (down from 26% the previous quarter)
- Consultations – 1 % (up from 0% the previous quarter)
- Via a third party – 1% (up from 0% the previous quarter)

We have continued to deliver engagement events through this quarter, but we have seen that they account for a smaller proportion of the total feedback methods. This is likely due to the fact that we had to cancel several outreach sessions as a result of the surge in Covid-19 cases.

Also, online contact has decreased slightly from the previous quarter, either directly through our website or via our social media. We are not sure the reason for this but it could also be linked to the cancellation of outreach sessions so we were not posting as much online content.

Areas of Focus

We are open to all feedback about health and social care services. Responses to our 2021 Annual Survey helped us to identify a specific Areas of Focus which we prioritised in 2021/22; this included GPs, dentists, support to live independently/care at home and dementia services.

Aims

The report shows:

- Who we are 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 January and March 2022, we received feedback from 77 individuals from talking to people at face-to-face engagement events, telephone calls, emails, our website, social media, and other sources. This is up slightly from the previous quarter's reach of 73. We signposted 25 of these people to services. This is up from the previous quarter's signposting total of 14.

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 (for example 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 January and March 2022, we collected feedback from people in 62 different Northumberland postcode areas, accounting for 81% of all responses this quarter. 19% of those we heard from gave no postcode (although may have indicated the local area). This proportion is similar to the last quarter (82% Northumberland postcodes and 14% did not give a postcode). Figure 1, below, shows the number and proportion of responses we received from residents in different Local Area Councils this quarter:

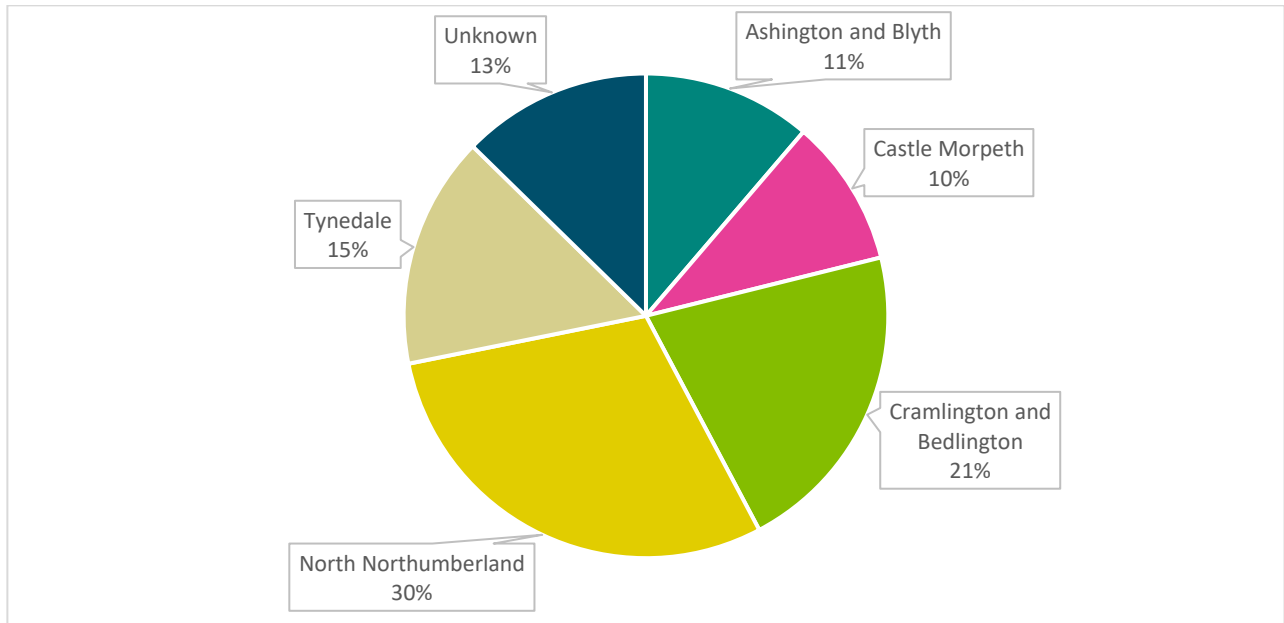


Figure 1. Number and percentage of responses by Local Area Council, Q4, 2021-2022

North Northumberland is the area we heard from the most this quarter, as it has been for the previous two quarters. Berwick had the highest response rate of all the wards with feedback from 13 individuals.

Age

Although we did not ask people taking part in our online forums to give their age, as these were public events, the majority of those we heard from via other routes shared their age with us. Those that did give their age were mainly in the older age groups (shown below in Figure 2).

This year's annual survey has identified that we do not hear enough from young adults (i.e. under 25 year olds) so we were pleased to have seven responses from this age category (10% of the total) – and this quarter we also heard from two respondents aged 16-17 years old. This is the second consecutive quarter we have heard from young adults and the proportion has grown in this latest quarter.

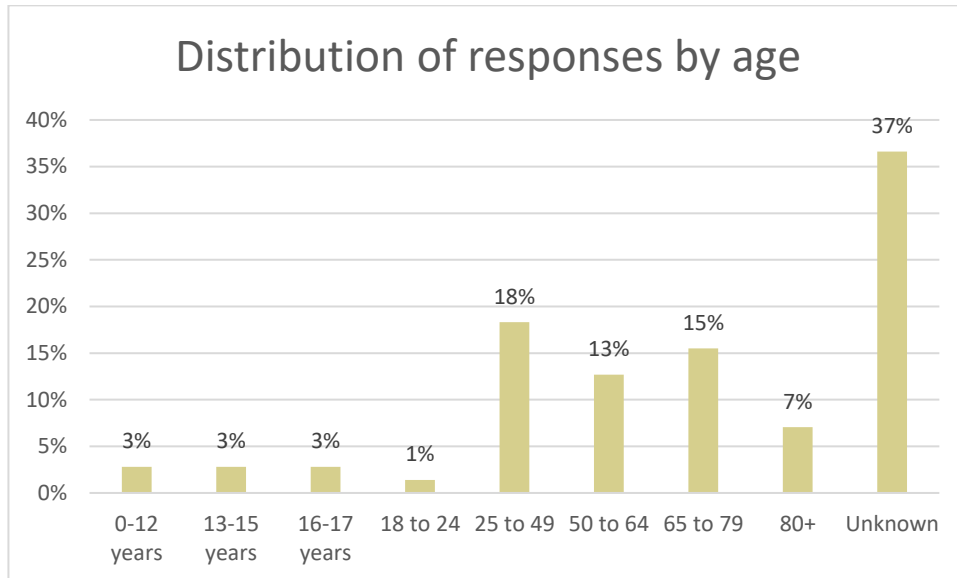


Figure 2. Percentage of responses across age groups in Northumberland, Q4 2021-22.

Gender:

As is usual, the majority of responses are from females (59%). Figure 3, below, shows a breakdown of responses by gender.

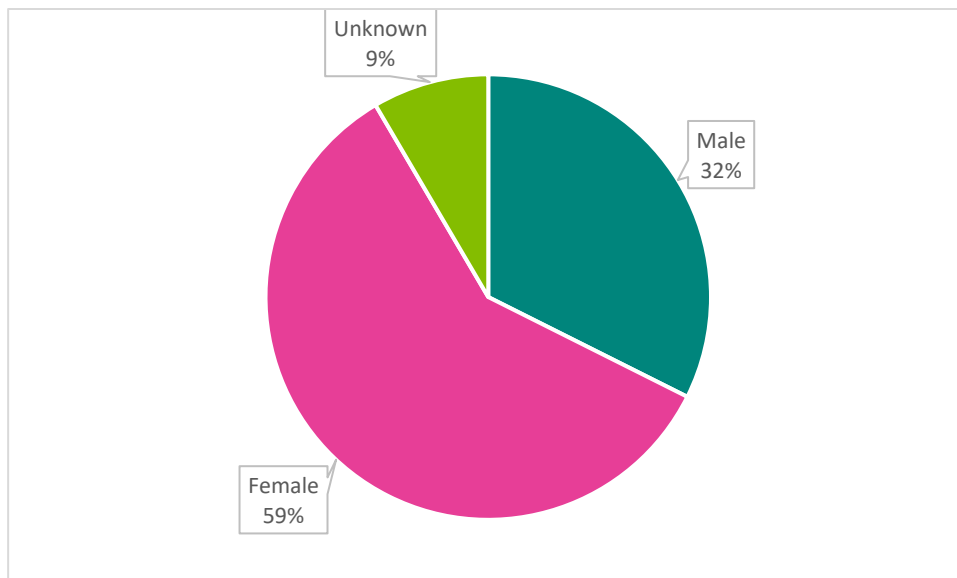


Figure 3. Frequency of responses by gender in Northumberland, Q4 2021/22

Whose experiences are we finding out about?

Most people were sharing their own individual experience of health and social care services with us (68%). This has increased since last quarter (55%).

A total of 28% 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, which is much less than the previous two quarter's figures of 39% (Q2) and 40% (Q3).

What people are saying and experiencing

Of the 71 responses¹ we were given feedback on 36 individual services/service providers. Please see Appendices 1 and 2 for a list of all the services/service providers mentioned. Figure 4, below, shows the breakdown by sentiment of the responses.

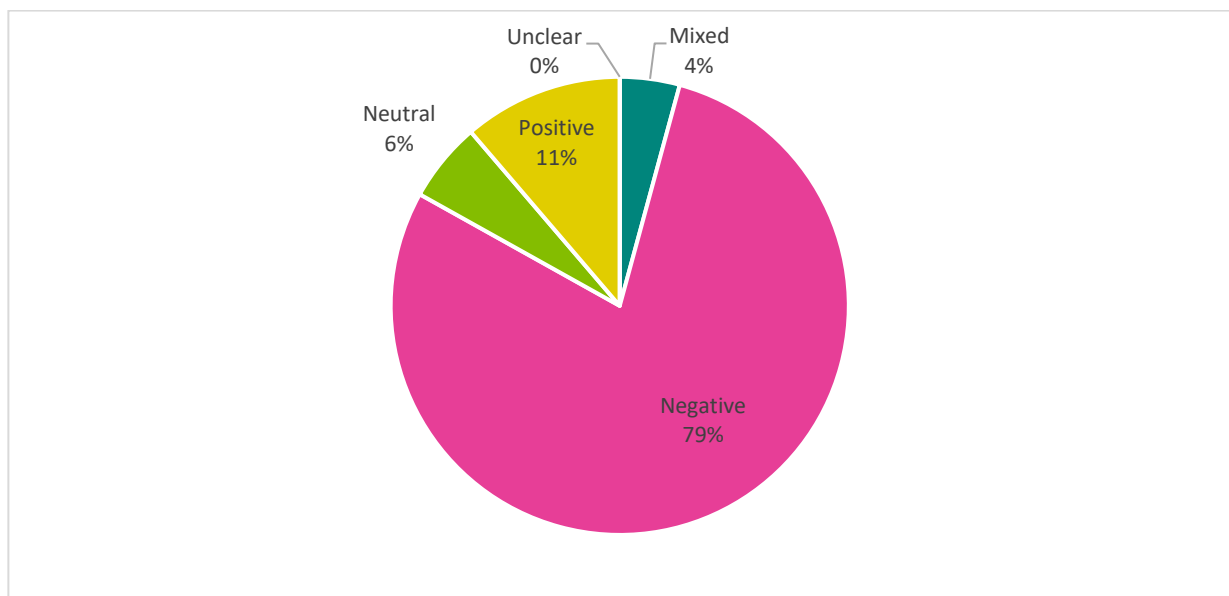


Figure 4. General sentiment of responses, Q4 2021/22

The services/service providers have been categorised into service type, with the six main groups being: primary care, secondary care, mental health, social care, other 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 services.

Positive:

A gentleman came into joint drop-in session at Haltwhistle. In late 2020 during Covid-19 lockdown he broke his leg. He said he had excellent care in RVI which was very welcome in the lockdown as they went above and beyond the call of duty to cheer patients up as they weren't allowed visitors during lockdown. **Patient, West Northumberland area**

¹ Figure excludes signposting only

Neutral:

Call from local link worker asking for advice on behalf of patient she is working with whose husband has gone into permanent care home. States care home used to do lateral flow tests at the home on visitors but now been informed has to do their own before coming in and bring in result. Patient is severely visually impaired so struggles with tests but also reading result. Wants to know if this is now common practice. *Patient's Link Worker, North Northumberland*

Negative:

Caller rang about the care of her father-in-law who lives alone in Bedlington and has dementia and various health issues. He is doing okay now and being looked after by a new care company but was previously cared for by another company until last summer. She said he was in an awful state "left in soiled clothing, toenails very long, hadn't been washed, medication found on the floor, house very dirty, carer once lost him and he was found on the beach, very thin and depressed, money going missing." She feels there were major safeguarding issues and neglect, and the social workers at Northumberland County Council let this happen. We gave advice re making a formal complaint. *Patient's daughter-in-law, Bedlington and Cramlington area*

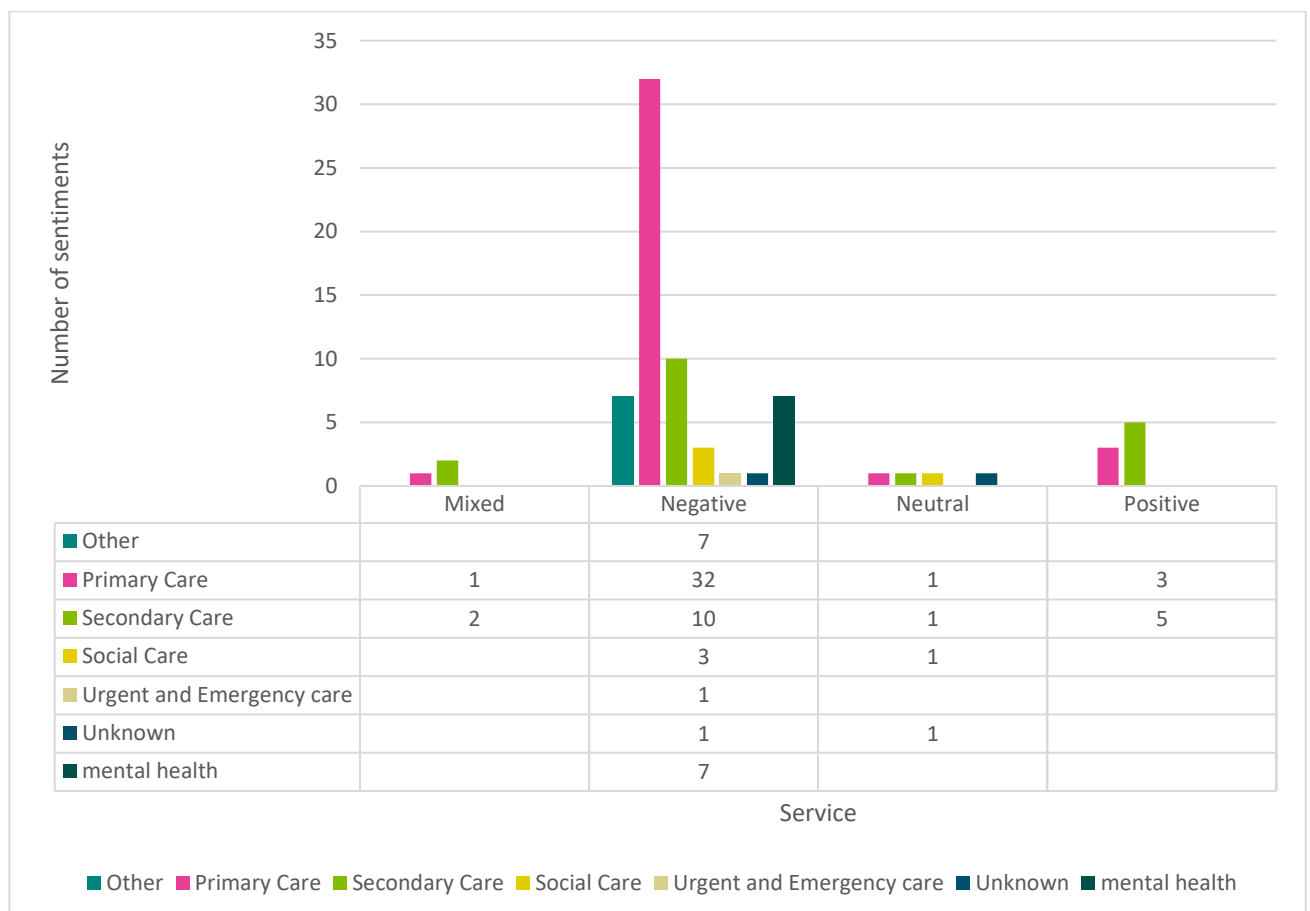


Figure 5. Service Type and Sentiment of responses, Q4 2021/22

Figure 6, below, indicates most comments were about primary care services (49% of all comments, 18 total comments – up from last quarter, 38% and 22 comments). These comments are a mixture of issues, rather than being about access as in previous quarters.

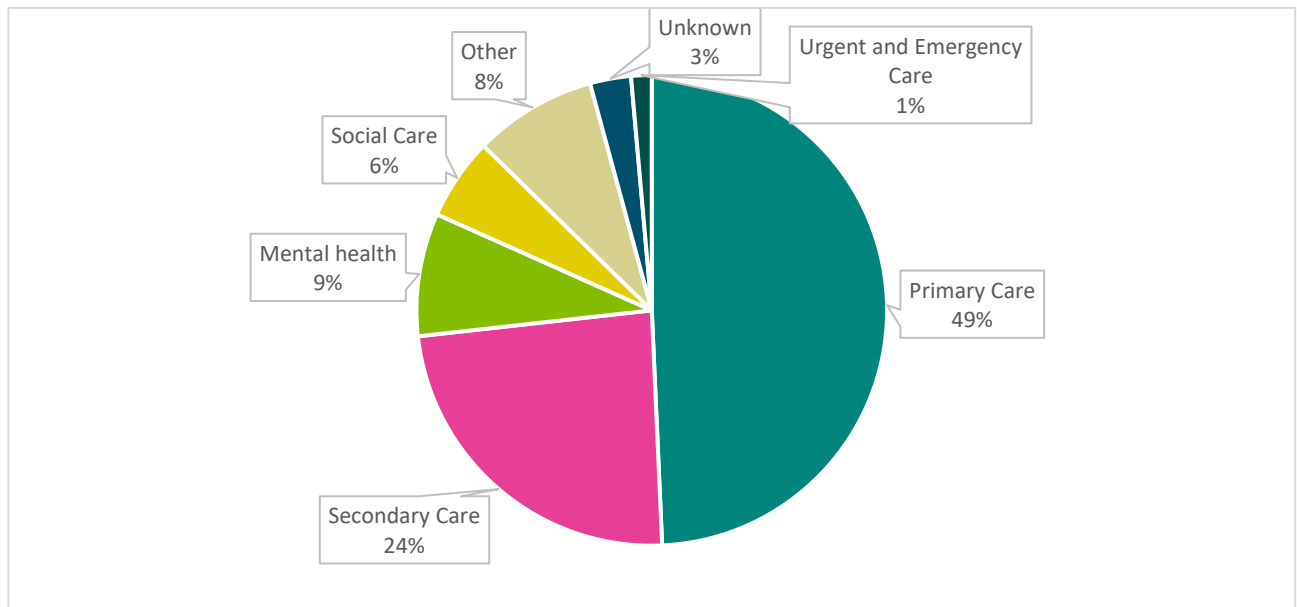


Figure 6. Percentage of responses by Service Type, Q4 2021/22

Covid-19

The concern around the pandemic has continued to be less of an issue with only 12 comments (17% of responses) being related to the Covid-19 pandemic in some way; a similar number of responses as in the last two quarters (quarters 2 & 3 both having eight responses), which is much less than this time last year. This reflects the successful rollout of the vaccination programme and the public’s changing behaviour as restrictions have eased. There was a mix of subjects in the comments with no dominant theme.

Access and Quality

This quarter comments have been more about ‘access to services’ (58%), very different to the feedback from last quarter (41%). This quarter just over half of the negative votes were around primary care. (52%)

Figure 5 is best compared alongside Figure 7 (shown below), which show whether comments are related to quality or access and their relevant sentiment.

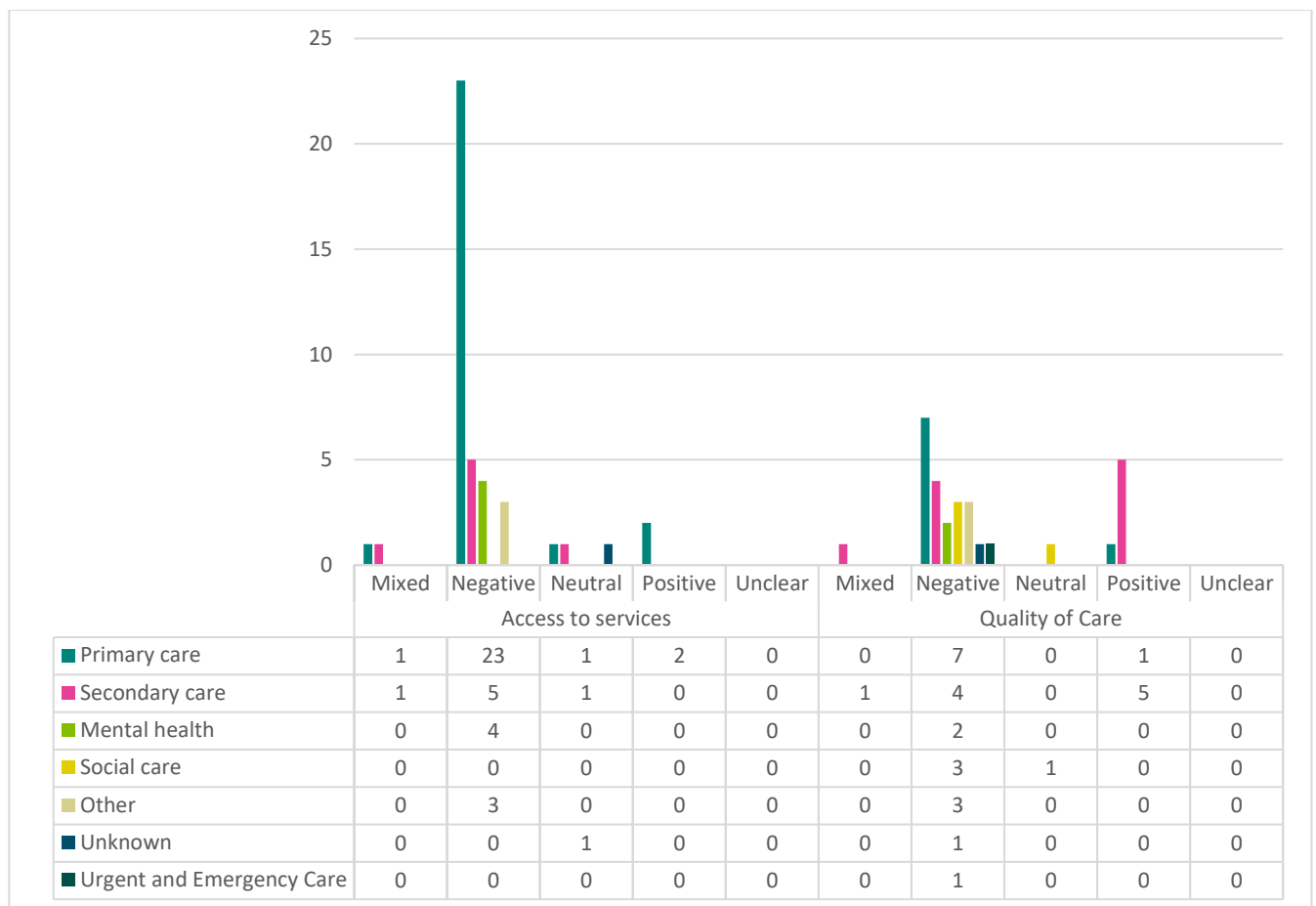


Figure 7. Frequency of responses related to Quality of Care and Access to Services, Q4 2021/22

Signposting

In total, we signposted or gave information to 25 people who contacted us with an enquiry, which is the same as last quarter. Some people were signposted to more than one service. Table 1, below, shows the services we signposted people to this quarter.

Table 1. List of services Healthwatch Northumberland signposted people to, Q4 2021/22

Service Name	Service Type	Number of times signposted to	Signposted to in Oct-Dec 21?
Adapt North East	Voluntary sector	1	No
Carers Northumberland	Voluntary sector	2	No
Contact Family Services	Voluntary sector	1	No

Healthwatch Nottingham	Other	1	No
Hencotes Dental Surgery	Primary care	1	No
Independent Complaints Advocacy Northumberland	Other	6	Yes
Kooth	Voluntary sector	1	No
Newcastle Freeman Hospital	Secondary care	1	No
NHS 111	Other	2	No
NHS England	Other	3	No
NHS Website	Other	1	No
North of Tyne PALS	Other	5	Yes
Northumberland and Tyneside MIND	Mental health	1	No
Northumberland Citizens Advice Bureau	Voluntary sector	1	No
Northumberland County Council	Other	1	No
Princess Street Dentist, Corbridge	Primary care	1	No
Grand Total		29	

Online Forums and Face-to-Face Engagement

Face to face engagement

This quarter we continued to run our programme of ‘here to hear’ drop-ins across the County with venues in Cramlington, Haltwhistle, Berwick, Blyth and Morpeth and also hosted an additional session at Haltwhistle and Berwick.

Throughout the quarter at these sessions, we have spoken and received feedback from 18 people, signposting some to local services and gave out information about Healthwatch to 6 people.

Online forums and engagement

We continue to run our monthly online session using guest speakers including the Integrated Wellbeing Service in January attended by 24 people, Social Prescribing in February attended by 21 people and Parkinson’s UK in March also attended by 24 people. The sessions meet our information and signposting function giving people access to reliable information and advice about health conditions or services including support available nationally and in Northumberland. They have proved popular, and we have received good feedback about the events including suggestions for other topics that people would like to see.

We have also signed up 26 people to our newsletter who originally attended our online sessions. We have held four further online forums this quarter and a summary of the feedback we collected through these forums has been included below.

Care Homes visiting in Northumberland

Held 7 February 2022 with five attendees

People told us:

- That communication with some care homes was still poor at times and some felt like a ‘nuisance’ raising issues or concerns with staff.
 - Positive experiences of visiting loved ones because of being registered as an ‘essential care giver’.
 - Visiting procedures were quite rigid and it was felt in some cases individual circumstances should be considered more e.g. allowing visits in communal areas for those with mobility issues
 - About ‘things they wish they had known’ when their loved ones moved into their care home.
- This discussion was started at our last forum and further feedback received which will help us shape a guidance document for those in similar situations.

Longhoughton engagement

We were asked by Longhoughton Parish Council to minute the specially convened parish council meeting to discuss the proposal by Alnwick Medical Group to close the Longhoughton Branch Surgery. Our independence was cited as an important factor in the request. Dr Syers and Pamela Phelps from Northumberland CCG attended along with 26 members of the public.

We also hosted two online engagement sessions which five members of the public attended.

From all engagement events patients’ concerns are accessibility to primary care services especially for people who do not drive and within the context of housing developments. The community also asked about the use of alternative premises in the village. Alnwick Medical Group is considering the points raised in preparing its case for the CCG.

Brockwell surgery Engagement Sessions

Held one session on 21 February and two on 21 March.

We assisted Brockwell Surgery with some engagement including hosting three online forums to hear feedback from patients about the proposal to relocate Brockwell surgery to a new build located on the site of the Northumbria Specialist Emergency Care Hospital.

Pauline Ironside and Dr Aamir Munir were there from the practice to provide an overview of the proposed changes, timescales and answer questions from those in attendance.

In broad terms, those attending raised concerns around accessibility of the new location by public transport and asked questions about how parking would be separate from that for hospital patients. A report incorporating all feedback has been forwarded to the surgery and Clinical Commissioning Group.

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
Adapt North East	1
Carers Northumberland	2
Contact Family Services	1
Healthwatch Nottingham	1
Hencotes Dental Surgery	1
ICAN	2
Independent Complaints Advocacy	1
Independent Complaints Advocacy Northumberland	3
Kooth	1
Newcastle Freeman hospital	1
NHS 111	2
NHS England	3
Nhs Website	1
North of Tyne PALS	5
Northumberland and Tyneside MIND	1
Northumberland Citizens Advice Bureau	1
Northumberland County Council	1
Princess Street Dentist, Corbridge	1
Grand Total	29

Appendix 2. Service category and sentiment

Sentiments by service	Mixed	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Grand total
Audiology		1	1		2
Cancer Services				2	2
Care at Home		1			1
Child & Adult Mental Health Services (Other Services)		1			1
Children Services		3			3
Community based services for people with a learning disability		1			1
Community healthcare and nursing services		2			2

Community Mental Health Team (CMHT)		2			2
Community pharmacy		1			1
Continuing Care		1			1
Dentist (non-hospital)		12	1		13
Depression and Anxiety service		1			1
End of Life Care		1			1
GP practice	1	14		3	18
Health Visitor		1			1
Hospital				1	1
Mental Health services		1			1
Neurology		1			1
Oncology	1				1
Ophthalmology		1			1
Orthopaedics				1	1
Other (Community services)	1				1
Other (Urgent and Emergency Care)		1			1
Outpatients		1			1
Pharmacy		1			1
Physiotherapy		3		1	4
Psychiatry/Mental Health (Other Services)		1			1
Residential Care Home		3	1		4
Unknown		1	1		2
Grand Total	3	56	4	8	71