



What you told us

Trends in feedback
January to June 2025

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'.

Feedback

Between January and June 2025, we received detailed feedback from 417 individuals from talking to people at face-to-face events, telephone calls, emails, website queries, social media and other sources. This was more than the previous six months (we heard from 388 people between July and December 2024) and the same number as between January to June 2024.

The feedback we have received has been dominated by feedback on GP services again, with a quarter (25%) of the feedback received in January to June 2025. However, the percentage share of the feedback has dropped slightly from 27% in July to December 2024.

The next most raised services were all of a similar proportion of the total feedback received: Hospital – unspecified department (6% of total feedback received), Audiology (just over 4.5%), Hospital – outpatients (4%) and Dentists (just over 3.5%). The low proportions for the second to fifth most commonly raised services was due to us breaking the feedback received on hospitals into the relevant department, where known. We started doing this in March 2025. Combining all feedback received on hospital services including outpatients, inpatients and emergency care, gave a total proportion of just under 25% of all feedback received (compared to 23% of all feedback received for July to December 2024).

Signposting and Information Service

We spoke with a member of the public at an engagement event who was experiencing some hearing difficulties. They were unaware they could get help via the NHS for hearing aids. They had been to a private provider and were shocked by the costs, so were going to see how it went without hearing aids.

We explained about the NHS audiology service and that they could be referred to the service via their GP. We also signposted them to Vision Northumberland which offers hearing loss support and basic hearing checks.

Ashington and Blyth resident

Signposting/requests for information

In January to June 2025, we signposted 71 people to different organisations for support, which is 17% of the total detailed feedback received. This is up slightly from the previous six months, both in the total number and the proportion of overall feedback received (61 people, 15.7% of overall feedback in July to December 2024). Like the previous six months, the subject matters asked about were very varied with no real themes emerging.

Geographical spread

Between January and June 2025, we heard more from Tynedale and North Northumberland than from Ashington and Blyth, Castle Morpeth and Cramlington, Bedlington and Seaton Valley, as shown in Figure 1 below.

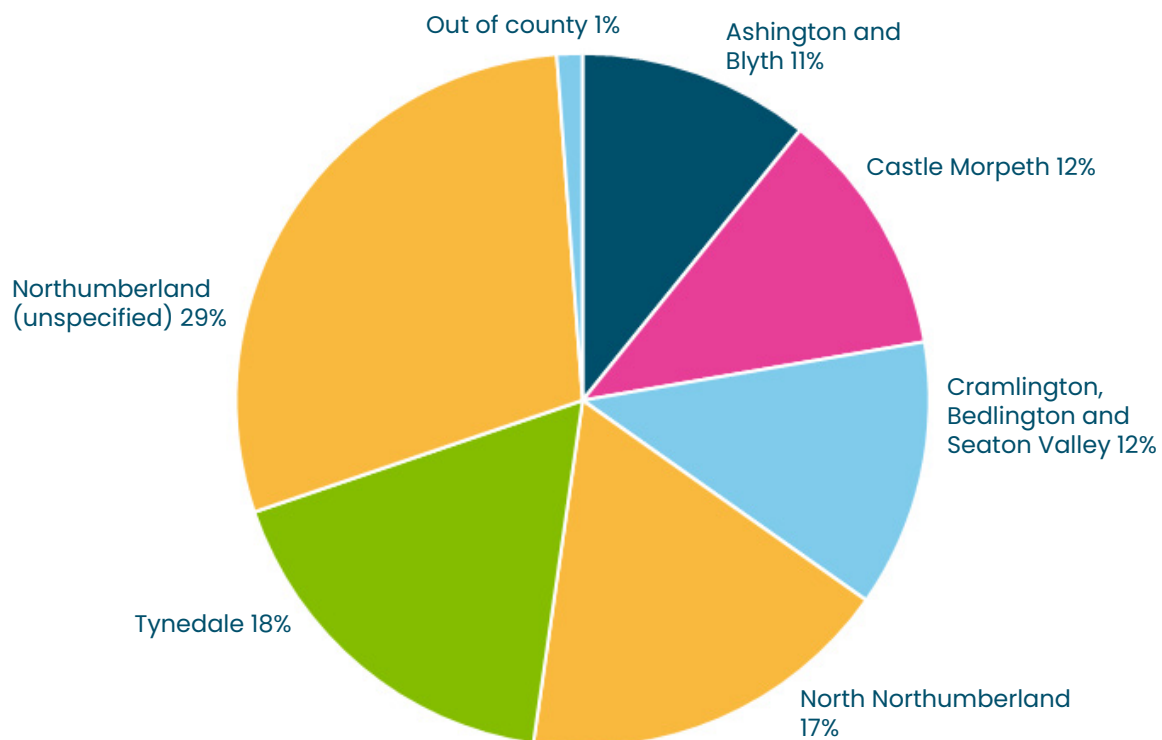


Figure 1. Where we heard from people across the county

The highest proportion of respondents came from feedback forwarded to us via Healthwatch England's website, shown as Northumberland (unspecified). Unfortunately, we get no more location detail other than they are Northumberland residents.

All Local Area Committees (LACs) areas except Tynedale had GP services as the top issue as shown in Table 1.

Ashington and Blyth	Percentage of responses for each LAC
GP services	38%
Hospital (outpatients)	13%
Care home	9%
Castle Morpeth	
GP services	38%
Hospital (outpatients)	13%
Care home	8%
Cramlington, Bedlington and Seaton Valley	
GP services	38%
Audiology	18%
Dentist	12%
North Northumberland	
GP services	30%
Hospital (outpatients)	18%
Audiology	14%
Tynedale	
Hospital (outpatients)	25%
GP services	18%
Hospital (inpatients)	17%
Northumberland (unspecified)	
GP services	25%
Hospital	25%
Dentist	16%

Table 1. Services we heard about most by LAC

Trends

In the six-month period of January to June 2025 the percentage of positive comments rose from 16% in January to 18% in June and the percentage of negative comments fell from 46% to 39% over the same period.

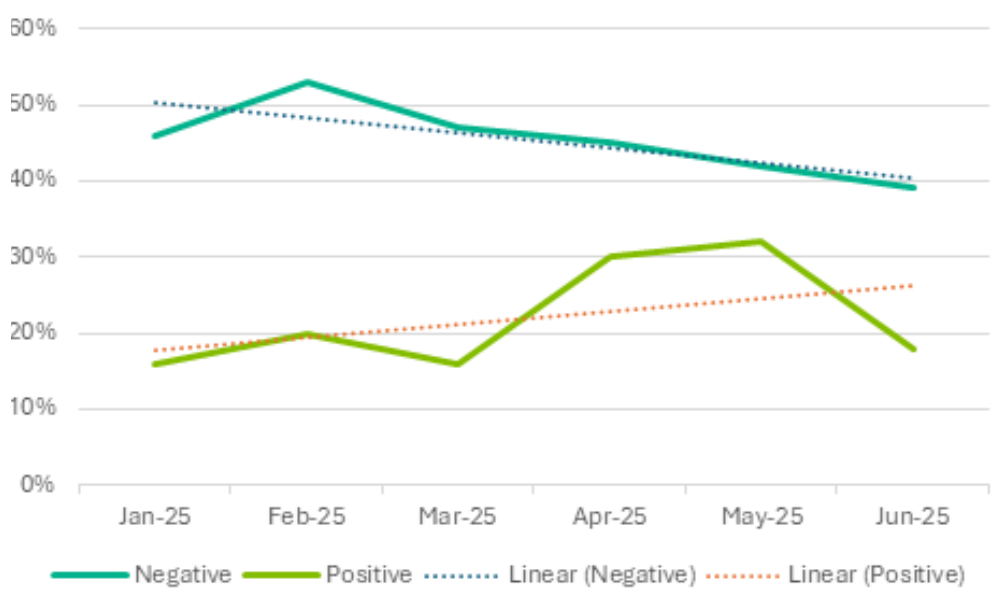


Figure 2. How people were feeling January to June 2025

This continues the trend we have seen over the past year since July 2024 which shows an overall improvement in the Northumberland residents' perception of services, as shown in Figure 3 below.

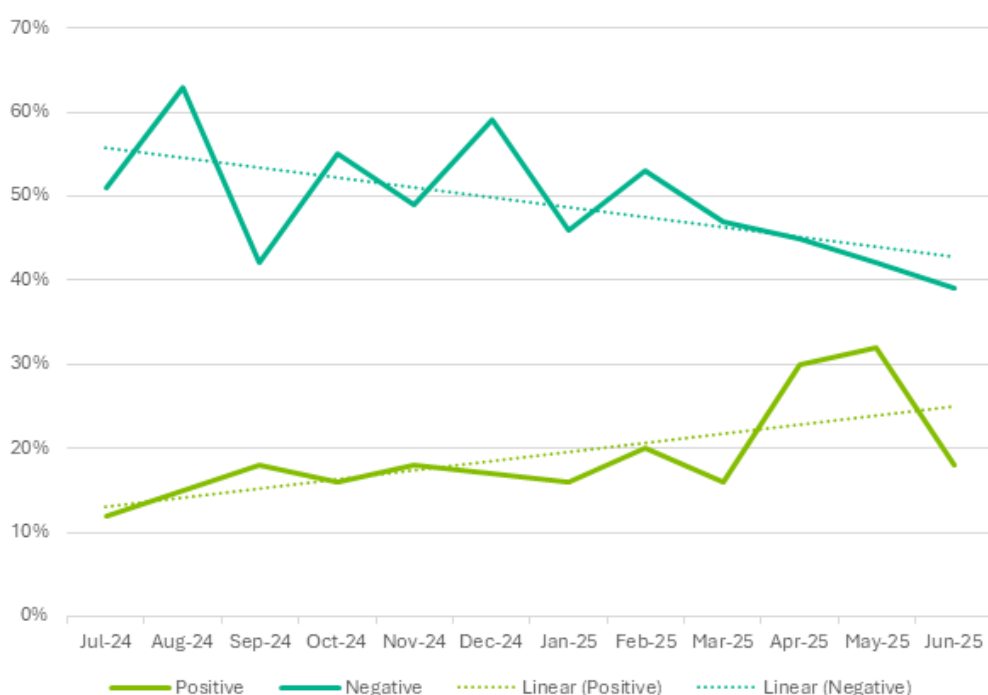


Figure 3. How people were feeling July 2024 to June 2025

Demographics

Figures 4 to 6 give the demographic breakdown of those who gave feedback on services of the past six months, with the first graph, Figure 4, showing the distribution of age and sex across the county. Overall, just over 70% of respondents were female, 26.5% were male, 1.5% the sex was unknown and just under 2% preferred not to say. These overall figures show a similar percentage of male respondents compared to the previous six months (27% male, July to December 2024) but with a noticeable increase in the percentage of females (up from 65% in July to December 2024).

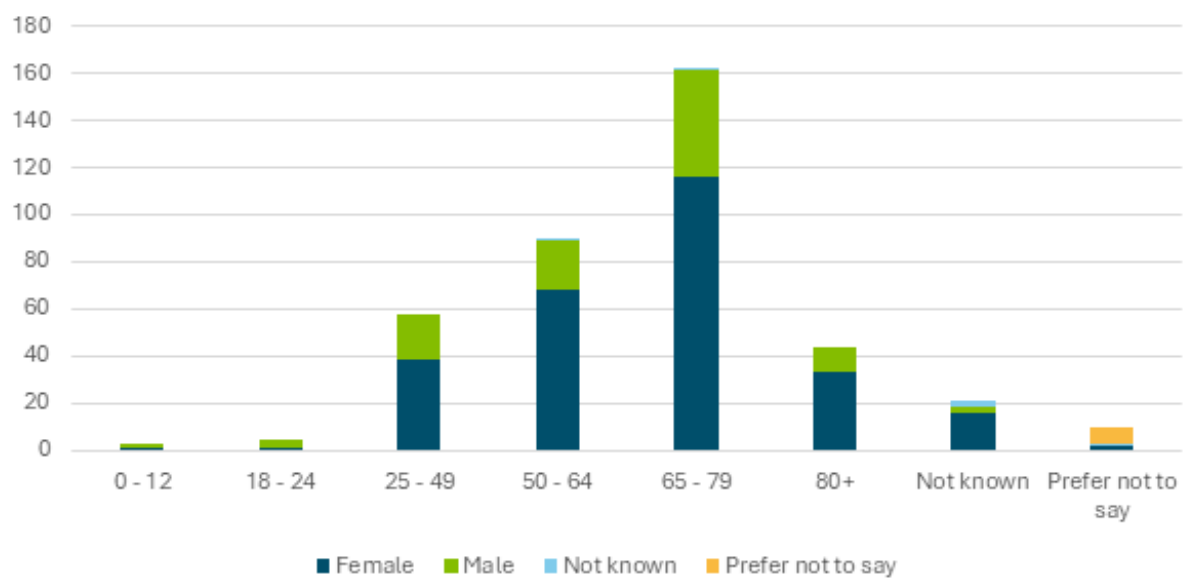


Figure 4. Age distribution by sex, January to June 2025 (n=392)

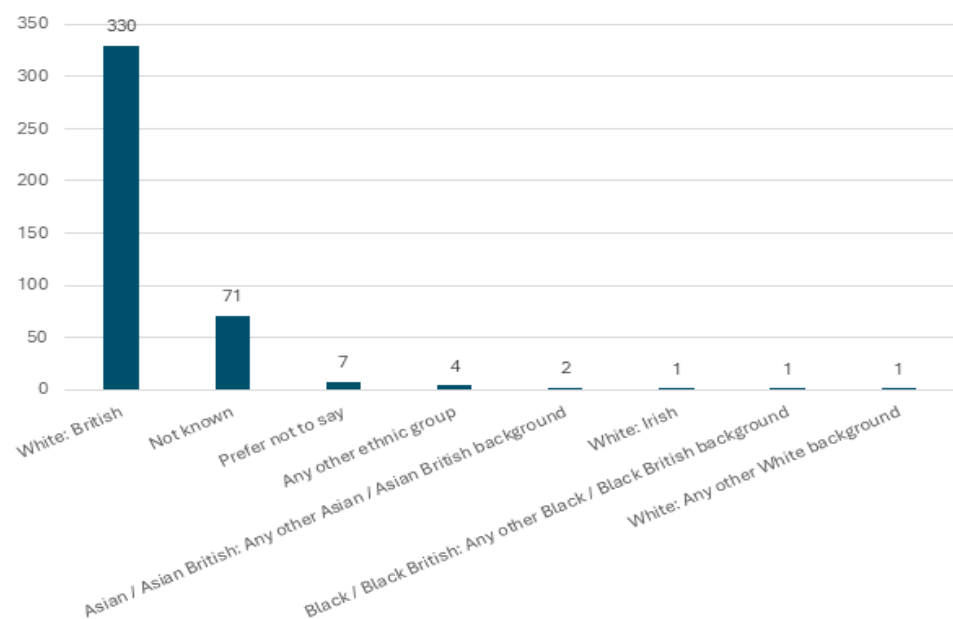


Figure 5. Ethnicity of respondents, January to June 2025 (n=417)

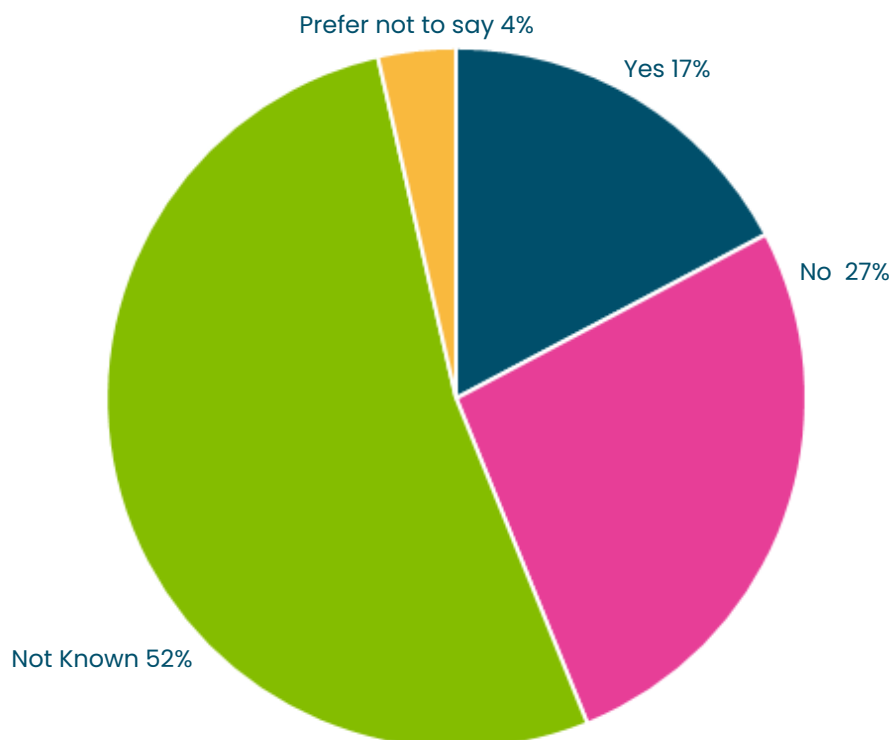


Figure 6. Do you consider yourself to have a disability? January to June 2025 (n=417)

The proportion of disabled people we heard from in the period January to June 2025 had risen slightly compared to the previous six months (July to December 2024 – Yes 15%, No 24%, Not known 61%).

Signposting and Information Service

A man attending one of our Here to Hear events told us his social life is very restricted due to his 'problem'. Gradually he opened up to us that he suffered from double incontinence since surgery some years ago. He was feeling down because the other care home residents where he lives were often going on outings, and he had to be near a toilet so felt he couldn't go.

We explained there are ways that could help. We suggested he contact his GP and request a referral to a Continence Nurse Specialist or the Practice Nurse.

North Northumberland resident

Levels of deprivation

We started asking respondents for their full postcode in January 2024 to cross check against the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) and determine which decile they are from.

The IMD ranks geographical areas of England with the same levels of population in order of deprivation, from the most to the least deprived. These rankings are divided into ten bands, 'deciles', and using a postcode tool a respondent's address can be given a decile score – where the first decile is the most deprived area, and the tenth decile is the least deprived area.

We were able to gather the full postcode from just over 14% (a seventh) of those we heard from. This data shows we are hearing from all deciles with a close to 50-50 split of hearing from the most deprived areas (28 respondents, deciles 1 – 5) to hearing from the least deprived areas (32 respondents, deciles 6 – 10). See figure 7, below. This is a reduction in the proportion of respondents we were able to gather postcode from compared to the previous six months (just over a fifth of those we heard from, July to December 2024) but an improvement in the balance of hearing from the most deprived areas and the least deprived areas. The split was 45:55 for July to December 2024 (most deprived: least deprived).

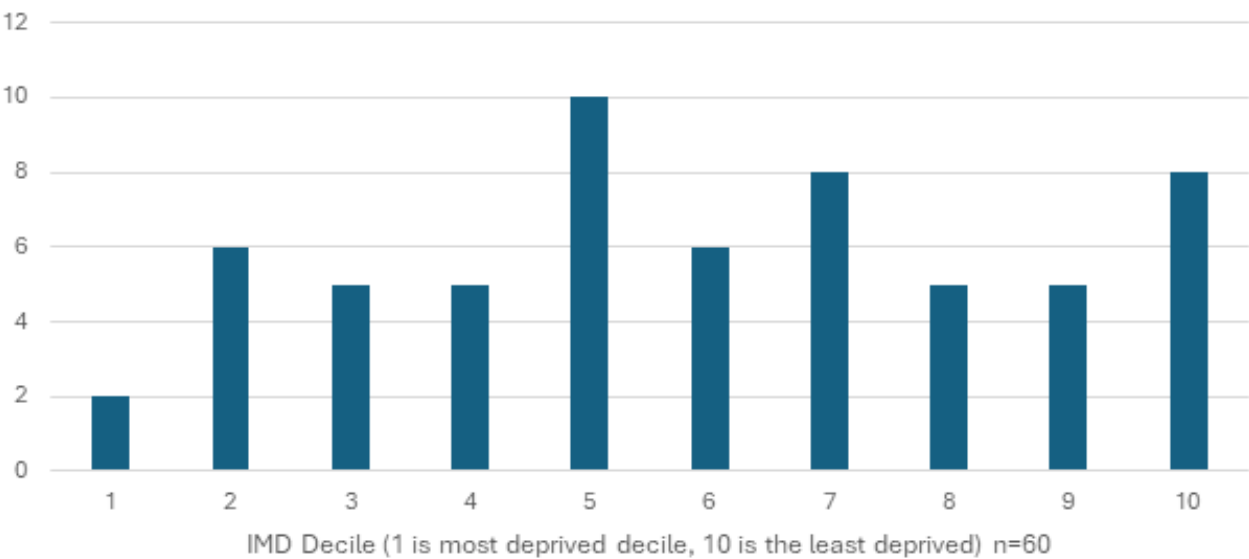


Fig. 7. Distribution on respondents by Deprivation decile (January to June 2025)

Insights

The long-term trend over the past year in the public's perception of services has continued to improve, judging by the proportion of positive to negative comments we received between January and June 2025.

We heard from more people with disabilities over the past six months than in the second half of 2024, and we are still hearing from a greater proportion of respondents with a disability than the county's own demographic distribution.

We heard from a similar proportion of men and boys of all ages in these past six months as we did in July to December 2024. This is a plateau in the slow and steady improvement in our engagement with males over the past two years. We are working to improve this further.

We have continued to broaden our reach to hear more from the more deprived communities, and we are now getting almost a 50:50 balance between the most deprived and least deprived sections of the population.

We are hearing about concerns with one GP practice, in particular. We will raise the matter with this practice so it can address the identified issues.

Signposting and Information Service

A man who spoke little English came to see us at our Northumberland County of Sanctuary session in Ashington. With the help of Google Translate we worked out he wanted advice on where he could access mental health support. As he would need translator support, we recommended he approach Qwell as this service is online.

We also gave him a copy of our mental health support booklet as he could translate the text using Google Translate. He seemed happy with this support.

Ashington and Blyth resident

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