

Your experiences of dentistry in 2023 Healthwatch helps to make local health and care services better for you. We do this by finding out your views and experiences of health and care services and feeding this back to the people delivering and designing services so they can be improved for all residents.

People have been telling us about challenges with getting NHS dentistry. We are now working with the NHS in the North East and North Cumbria to better understand people's **experiences of getting dental care in 2023**, what is working well and what can be improved. To do this, we need feedback from **YOU**.

The information you provide will be stored safely and will be used anonymously to help us work to improve local services.

If you want to tell us about your experience of dental care for your child or someone you care for, you can complete the survey on their behalf, but please complete a separate survey for each person.

The network of local Healthwatch organisations across the North East and North Cumbria are coming together to deliver this project.

If you have any queries about taking part in this survey, please contact Healthwatch; **08002545552** or email yoursay@healthwatchhartlepool.co.uk or contact your local Healthwatch. To complete this survey online, please visit; www.healthwatchhartlepool.co.uk and click on the link.

'Get your blood pressure checked'.

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has launched an NHS campaign to encourage members of the public who could be living with undiagnosed high blood pressure to get their blood pressure checked at a participating pharmacy.

The campaign, backed by British Heart Foundation, Stroke Association, Heart Research UK, Blood Pressure UK, May Measurement Month, British Society for Heart Failure, and more, warns that there are often 'no clues' about who might have high blood pressure.

Who can get a free blood pressure check
You can get a free blood pressure check if you:

- are aged 40 or over and live in England

You cannot get a free blood pressure check if you:

- already have high blood pressure and have had your blood pressure checked by a healthcare professional in the past 6 months

What happens when you get your blood pressure checked

A pharmacist, or member of the pharmacy team, will wrap a blood pressure cuff around your upper arm to measure your blood pressure. They will then share the result with you.

Depending on the result, they might:

- give you advice to support healthy living
- give you a blood pressure monitor to take home with you and return later advise you to see a GP

If you're registered with a GP surgery, your GP health record will be updated.

To find a pharmacy near you that offers free blood pressure checks, visit; <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/pharmacy> Or pop into your local pharmacy and ask about a 'Free blood pressure check.'

Healthwatch Hartlepool is your local health and social care champion.

As an independent statutory body, we have the power to make sure NHS leaders and other decision makers listen to local feedback and improve standards of care. We can also help you to find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.

Healthwatch Hartlepool is part of a network of over 150 local Healthwatch across the country. We're here to listen to the issues that really matter to people in Hartlepool and to hear about your experiences of using local health and social care services.

We're entirely independent and impartial, and anything you share with us is confidential. It's really important that you share your experiences – whether good or bad – and your views on local services. If you've had a negative experience, it's easy to think there's no point in complaining, and that 'nothing ever changes'. Or, if you've had a great experience, that you 'wish you could say thank you'. We can get these messages to the people who pay for and provide services.

Why not become a volunteer for Healthwatch?

Volunteers play a vital role in helping people have their say on health and social care. Volunteering with Healthwatch can help you develop skills, gain experience and make a difference to your community.

A member of the Healthwatch Hartlepool team will be in the **Central Hub every Wednesday from 10am till 12 noon**. If you have a question or query or want to talk about an experience of using any Health and Social Care service, why not pop along for a friendly chat.

Unhappy with your NHS treatment or care?

NHS Advocacy is now provided by **People First**, supporting individuals making a complaint against the NHS. Independent NHS Complaints Advocacy supports people to raise their concerns and complaints about NHS care and treatment.

Call their helpline for information, guidance and support.

9am - 5pm Monday to Friday. Tel:03003 - 038037

For further information please visit;

wearepeoplefirst.co.uk/advocacy/nhs-advocacy/

Contact Healthwatch Hartlepool!

Call: 0800 254 5552 between the hours of 09:00 – 17:00

Monday to Thursday. Text service; 07749 688795

Post: Healthwatch Hartlepool, 1st Floor, Greenbank, Waldon Street, Hartlepool, TS24 7QS

Email: yoursay@healthwatchhartlepool.co.uk

NHS staff report record levels of discrimination from the public

Frontline NHS staff are facing record levels of discrimination from the public, the result of a national staff survey reveals.

One in 12 NHS staff that responded to the poll said they faced discrimination while treating patients at work – the highest percentage since the question was first asked in 2019.

NHS trusts are putting measures in place to protect the frontline workforce with local organisations rolling out thousands of body cams to ambulance trusts in 2021, so paramedics can record patients and the public if they become abusive.

The results of the NHS staff survey, shows the health service workforce feels happier than since the start of the pandemic, with over half (55%) reporting they look forward to coming to work – the highest number since 2020.

There are also improvements in the wellbeing of NHS workers, who are experiencing less burnout than before.

For the first time ever, NHS staff were asked if they had experienced sexual harassment while at work. The survey reveals healthcare workers experienced “unacceptable” levels of unwanted sexual behaviour from the public last year – with 58,000 reporting such incidents. The results show 8.67% of 675,140 NHS workers suffered sexual harassment from patients, patients’ relatives, or other members of the public in 2023. Ambulance staff were particularly affected by sexual harassment, with just under a quarter of staff reporting unwanted sexual behaviour from the public last year. The survey also found 3.84% of staff faced unwanted sexual behaviour from colleagues. The NHS launched its first ever Sexual safety charter at the end of last year, which includes a commitment for trusts to improve the reporting of unacceptable behaviour. As part of the NHS England funded retention programme, one trust implemented a ‘red card’ policy which sanctions patients and visitors who are violent or abusive towards staff. A yellow card represents the failure to stop inappropriate behaviour after a written warning, and if behaviour persists within a 12-month period, a red card status can be issued excluding a patient or visitor from treatment within the trust unless they need emergency care.

Dr Navina Evans, Chief Workforce, Training and Education Officer said: “It is very distressing that more than 58,000 NHS staff reported experiencing unwanted sexual behaviour from the public last year and such conduct should not be tolerated in the NHS. That is why the NHS launched its first ever Sexual safety charter last year which provides clear commitments to improve reporting on unacceptable behaviour, as well as appointing more than 300 domestic abuse and sexual violence leads who will review and improve trust policies for reporting of sexual harassment.

“While there is still more to do, it is good news that less than 12 months on from the publication of the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan staff are happier at work than last year thanks to initiatives such as flexible working hours, clinical support squads to help menopausal women at work, and human resources stay advocates”.

Professor Em Wilkinson-Brice, Director for Staff Experience and Leadership Development at NHS England said: “It is really encouraging that the experience of NHS staff at work improved over the past year, even as they faced near record levels of pressure including the busiest summer recorded in A&E, as well as managing the disruption of industrial action. This improvement is testament to the work of organisations around the country as part of the People Promise Programme, which ensures a focus on tangible improvements that staff have told us make their day-to-day working lives better, such as leadership development opportunities, supportive line management and flexible working options”.

Hundreds of vulnerable pregnant women benefitted from specialist midwife team

HUNDREDS of vulnerable pregnant women and birthing people are benefiting from specialist maternity support on Teesside, thanks to a newly developed midwifery team. As part of the maternity unit, the “Indigo team” was formed at South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, to provide bespoke care and individualised plan to pregnant individuals – who are identified as vulnerable or at risk. Since its inception in 2023, more than 283 women have been referred to the Indigo team. This includes pregnant women suffering from poor mental health, anxiety and depression, personality disorders, childhood trauma, teenage pregnancies, female asylum seekers, learning disabilities and many more. They often find it challenging to engage with the hospital staff due to their history, which may lead to adverse effects on the care they receive during maternity. Various reports relayed severe disparities for women on Teesside such as falling in the top ten percent of deprived areas nationally; a region with the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in England and Wales; a high percentage of childbearing women struggling with their mental health and more. This highlighted an urgent change of direction in how maternity services were provided to vulnerable pregnant individuals.

Community midwifery manager Gina Blewitt understood the need for a different approach to care was needed for these individuals – where their and their unborn child’s health was in danger of slipping into further risk.

As a result, she set out to establish a specialist team where these women could access enhanced care – without any judgments.

She said: “In 2024 it still astounds me that women still die having babies. We now know that women’s social complexities and vulnerabilities are putting them more at risk of poorer outcomes for themselves and their babies.”

Lead specialist midwife for vulnerable women Rachel Fairbairn secured funding for a new midwifery team from Middlesbrough Council and Redcar and Cleveland Council through the national ‘Start for Life’ initiative.

As a result, the Indigo team was formed and since then, they have successfully recruited two full-time specialist midwives and five full-time maternity support workers.

To help identify at-risk expectant mothers and provide personalised care that caters to their needs, the team devised a “complex social need assessment tool”.

The assessment tool promotes an individualised assessment considering various factors and how they intersect into account. This includes those who are victims of domestic abuse and illegal trafficking, female asylum seekers, suffering from poor mental health or are pregnant teens. Utilising the assessment tool women are allocated to the most appropriate pathway of care. Either a specialist midwife will be assigned to the individual, or a joint approach where the individual would have a traditional community midwife and an enhanced maternity support worker.

Gina added: “We are very grateful to the local authorities and the LMNS (Local Maternity and Neonatal System) for providing the funding to help establish the Indigo team.

“It has enabled some of our families with the greatest need to access support and care that is tailored to their individual needs.”

Besides providing specialist care to these group of individuals, the team also organises mental health support groups such as walk and talk, aqua natal and antenatal education.

These sessions have provided a source of encouragement to the vulnerable expectant mothers – helping them to engage actively with the medical team.