

# Trafford Healthwatch 100: Autumn Winter survey 2022

January 2023

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## About the Trafford Healthwatch 100

Healthwatch Trafford is your local health and social care champion. If you use GPs and hospitals, dentists, pharmacies, care homes or other support services in your area, we want to hear about your experiences. 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. Last year, the Healthwatch network helped nearly a million people like you to have your say and get the support you need.

The Trafford Healthwatch 100 aims to get as many local people as possible to sign up and give their views on topics to do with health and social care via regular surveys. We want to gain as much information as possible so that we can direct our work to the issues that matter.

Full details for signing up can be found at <https://healthwatchtrafford.co.uk/the100/>.

## About this project

To mark the end of 2022, we wanted to launch a survey and hear from local people about Trafford health and care services in general. We wanted to see what the key areas around service experience were, and this was supported by our engagement activities in November and December.

We want to thank all the members of the public that took part, as well as our volunteers who assisted in the review stage of the project.

## What did we do?

The survey was opened in September 2022 and closed in November 2022. It was sent out to our Healthwatch 100 subscriber list, promoted on our website, and shared across social media. We also visited local groups during this time and promoted the survey there.

## Key findings

We mainly heard about five service areas from the survey:

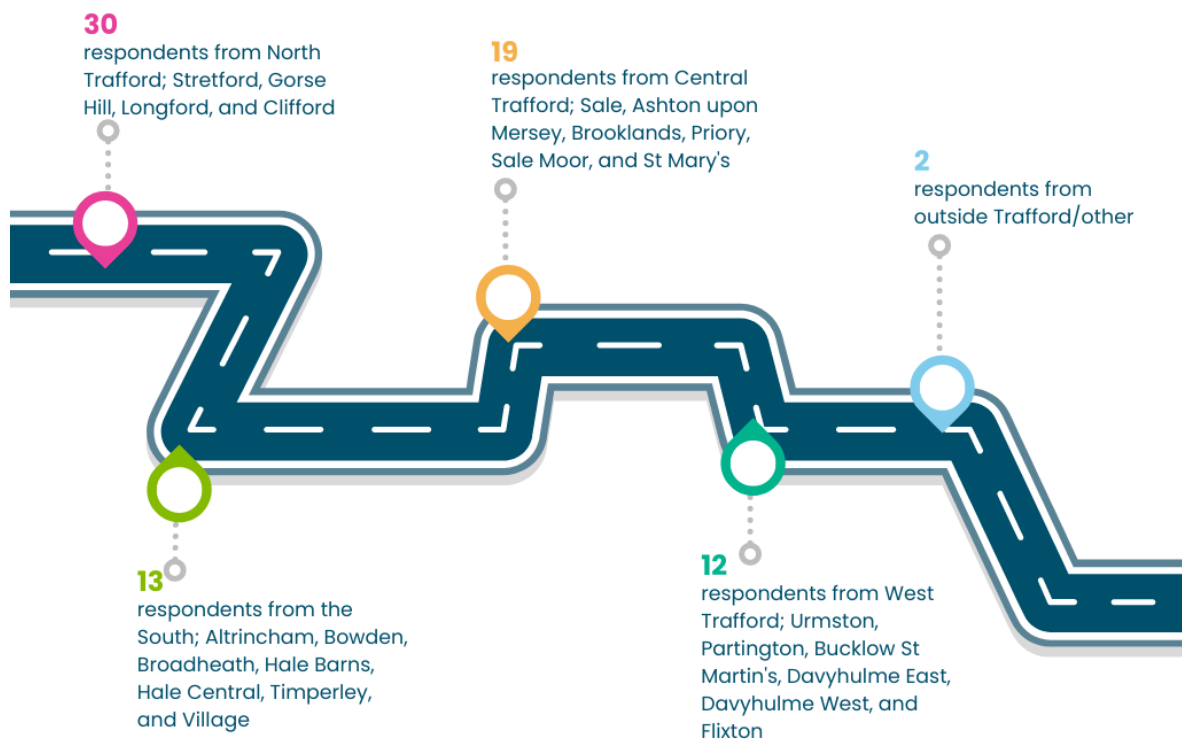
- GP practices
- Mixed services
- Hospitals
- Dentistry
- Other services or not named general comment

As we invited general comment on services, we were unsure what would be raised as important by the public. We found concerns about access and waiting times across the board, particularly when the route to access was mainly digital. People were also worried about an overall lack of appointments at GP surgeries.

Issues with health and social care have been discussed publicly in the media as well as among health professionals, and this came across in the survey.

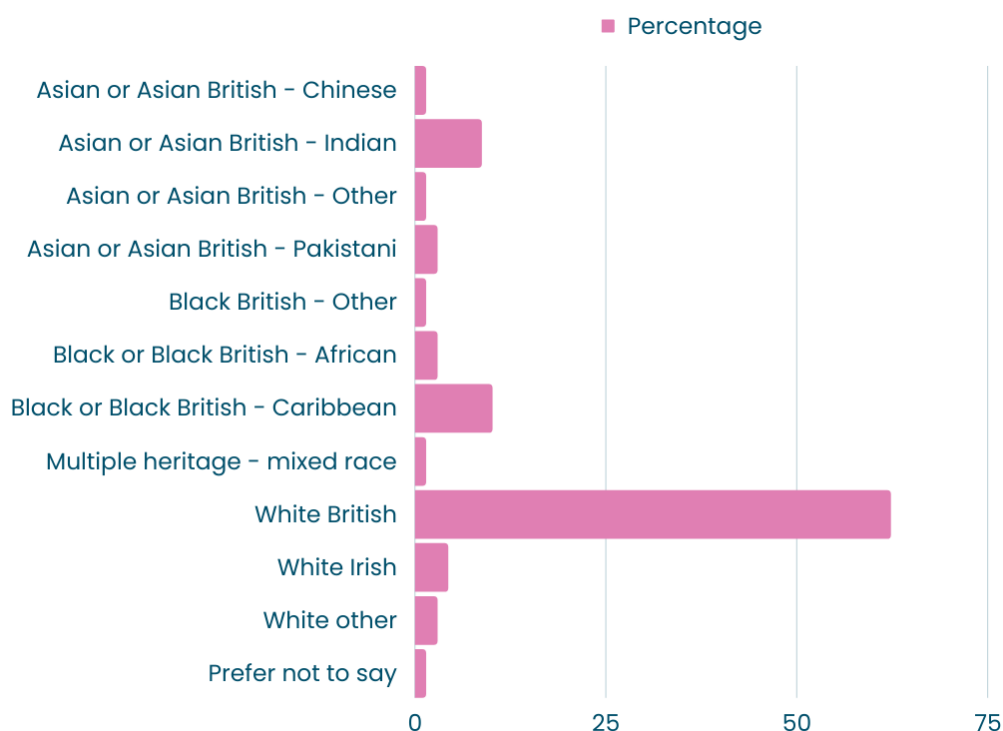
We did note many positive comments related to GPs which highlighted the good quality care being delivered.

## Who did we speak to?



The majority of respondents identified as female (67%).  
 33% identified as male.

## Race and ethnicity



## What we heard

People were asked a series of questions about which service area they would like to comment on and their experience. See appendix for full list of questions.

Comments are presented as closely to how we received them as possible. Therefore some punctuation and spelling errors may remain in the text.

In the interest of readability we have at times edited clear typing errors and also removed personal information and names. We may also remove sections of quotes for clarity where several points are being made. These changes are marked using square [...] brackets.

## Service areas commented on

The table below reflects the areas people mentioned in the survey. Respondents could select more than one answer in this question.

Service	Mentions
GP services	63
Hospital outpatients' appointments	22
Dentist	21
Pharmacies	20
Hospital inpatient (day treatment or overnight)	10
Accident and emergency/minor injury units	9
Mental health support	7
Ambulances and paramedics	7
NHS 111	7
Social care eg care homes, and home care	4
Adaptations	1
Other issue/service	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>172</b>

Most people mentioned GP services (36%) with the next most mentioned areas being hospital outpatients' appointments (12%); dentists (12%); and pharmacies (11%).

We often hear more about GP services than other areas. In recent years this has been closely followed by dentistry.

## Experience of care and quality of care received

There were five broad service areas of comment

- GP
- Mixed services
- Hospital
- Dentistry
- Other services or general comments

## GP practices

Question area	Summary of result
Ease of access	About half of respondents rated this area very good or good. We heard a quarter thought it was neither good/bad. A quarter had a less positive view, either poor or very poor.
Experience of care	Over half of respondents felt that care was of a 'good' standard. There were also a smaller number that felt this was neither good/bad. We heard some had a mixed experience or 'poor'.

Key issues highlighted were:

- AskMyGP

This is a service which combines a digital app and portal allowing patients to speak to GPs. We heard that there were some difficulties with using the service.

People were concerned that appointments and access times are limited. In the cases below people felt the practice was using the app in place of a booking system.

*"I have tried to use the Ask My GP service on a few occasions but all too often have been presented with a message saying they are not taking anymore questions that day. Whilst I accept there might have to be a cut-off at sometime, I am being presented with the message at 08:30 when the Ask My GP service only opened at 08:00. I questioned the GP Reception desk about this and was told that each Ask My GP request was considered an appointment and they only made so many appointments available. Ludicrous when my GP Practice has 11 GPs, mind you all are Part Time."*



*"Appointment system ask my [GP] is a good idea but you can never book an appointment there all gone by 9am. Should be separate pool of appointments for 16 and the unders and infants."*

We also heard how using AskMyGP was difficult for one respondent as they need assistance with communication.

*"Hospital and doctor appointments tend to be telephonic. These are unsatisfactory near useless to me. I need nonverbal communication as well as spoken I struggle to form and absorb words whilst on phone. Ask My [GP] is even more useless to me. Expressing my needs on line is even more problematic. [e.g.] I don't know to assess the degree of pain beyond knowing it hurts. I am unfamiliar with medical terminology."*

- Appointment times

Some people told us they were finding it difficult to accessing GP appointment:

*"GPs are now very difficult to contact. You have to ring at 8am or loose your chance of getting a doctor's consultation for that day. Waiting times over the phone for a receptionist to pick up is average of 15 to 30 minutes. 5 minutes consultation with the patient when you see the doctor. You feel like you are being rushed in and out with the doctor."*

*"GP needs to have more face to face appointments. My husband was told no face to face and send pics of a leg injury that turned out to be an arterial ulcer that should have had urgent attention. Difficult to get past difficult receptionists that want to know everything but they have NO medical knowledge."*

- Good quality care

Despite the often-negative feedback received, a large number of comments (17) were positive. Some of the good experiences have been selected below.

*"The Drs surgery I attend is exceptional."*

*“My local GPs [...] are excellent in the 25yrs I have utilised them I have no complaints”*

*“I have never had any problem with any of these services. I have always been satisfied.”*

*“[local surgery] is an exceptional organisation. All doctors are kind, caring, always have time for you. The receptionists are excellent, happy to help in any way they can, always smiling, pleasant and sympathetic”*

*“Went for flu jab. Receptionist was very helpful. Managed to arrange to have Covid jab at the same time”*

*“Lovely people to talk to and expressed a concern for deaf people that can't call in the morning to book doctor appointments. [staff] explained that she is trying to change the method in [Trafford] to make it easier for deaf people.”*

### Mixed services

Question area	Summary of result
Ease of access	There was a near equal balance between those finding access across more than one service to be very good/good and poor/very poor. We also heard that a smaller number were neutral on this question.
Experience of care	The majority found service experience to be 'good', though nearly the same number found it 'mixed'. We also heard from some that were neutral or found this area 'poor'.

- GP, hospital, and dentistry related

In some instances, respondents mentioned several services they felt were not working well.

*“GPS should work Saturday and can’t get an Appointment at the dentist and I was 7 hours in A+E and takes ages for an appointment at hospital outpatient”*

*“Cannot get to see a doctor cannot get to see a physio so had to pay same with dentist have not had any need so far for ambulance or paramedic but God help me if I do almost 70 and let’s be frank no health care available and if and when needed no social care it is a disgrace.”*

- Public understanding

We also had one comment which sought to describe why services might be in the position they are in and what to do in response.

*“All staff are working to the best of their ability but funding cuts, lack of staff means that services are stretched and staff are overworked. I would like to thank the health professionals that I have been in contact, I just wish there was more investment and training to ensure that all services were able to function and meet the needs of the residents.”*

- Young people

There was also a comment related to young people’s services which suggested they are particularly in need of more mental health support.

*“Mental health services for young people are in crisis, you cannot get a CAMHS appointment unless a child is self harming.*

*School nurses are overstretched.”*

## Hospital

Question area	Summary of result
Ease of access	More respondents thought this area was poor/very poor than good/very good or neutral. Though we did have fewer people mention this service area.
Experience of care	Experiences of care were mixed with equal numbers finding 'good', 'a mixed experience', or 'poor'.

- General waiting times

Several respondents were concerned about waiting times to access hospital care.

*"Diagnosed with skin cancer June 2022. Urgent referral from dermatologist to plastics - seen by Surgeon [Oct 2022]. Now a/w surgery - expected to be January 2022. 7 months wait for important surgery to remove cancer from face. Extremely stressful waiting and watching the cancer grow."*

*"You get to A&E [...] and it states 13 hr wait!!! You [could] be dead in that time!@@@ put some money to the NHS and get it back to how it used to be. A caring profession not a business with targets. We are humans!!!!"*

*"Referred to a hand/wrist clinic by [GP]. Was given appointment to attend back clinic as a follow-up had to get another [GP] appointment to be referred again!! Wasting [GP] time and back consultants too."*

*"[Carpel] tunnel - awaiting a hospital appointment since February 2022. Long wait"*

*"Awaiting results of MRI scan. Got the scan done quite easily but so much delay in getting results back (7-8 weeks wait)"*

- Ambulances

There has been increased discussion about ambulance waiting times and we heard two cases related to this area in the survey.

*"I was being transported from [local] Hospital to [neighbouring] Hospital. Upon arrival there were around six ambulances ahead of us. The paramedics were great and settled me down, made sure I was warm enough etc. I asked if they were going now as I could wait in the queue ahead of me. They informed me that they had to wait with me until they hand over to the nurse. I was horrified when they told me that they've waited a full shift waiting to hand over!!!! So, while people are dying as they wait hours for an ambulance, these poor paramedics could be back on the street saving lives. The system is broken. Surely the NHS could an improved system e.g. all the information that they would normally be handed over could be sent from the ambulance direct to the hospital Triage system then [they] could leave after ensuring the patient is well [enough]."*

*"My husband was told the [ambulance] would be 12 hours wait, he was having stroke [symptoms] even the Ill doc said [...]. Over the next 3 days he was [resuscitated] twice. He is a [veteran] he fought for this country and I was a nurse for many yrs."*

- Long COVID

One person shared their experience with Long COVID. We have investigated this area before and found that oftentimes clinics for Long COVID are primarily concerned with to respiratory problems, though this varies by area. This reflects the story below.

*"I have been struggling to access care/support for a variety of symptoms due to long covid since first having covid 2 years ago. Finally after so long I was eventually accepted by the long covid clinic at [...] hospital (after previously being rejected). I saw them in May and it was a complete waste of time. The initial nurse appointment felt like it was going to be useful as she listened and discussed all my symptoms for an hour. I was told she would refer me to a*

*rehabilitation service in [local area] and she would discuss my symptoms with the doctors to see about referrals.*

*They tried to refer me to the allergy service who rejected the referral. They supposedly discussed my symptoms with other specialities but I never had any feedback. I was due a telephone appointment to see what would happen next. They called my husbands number not mine. He was working so did not answer. He messaged me to say he had a missed call from the hospital. So I called them back to explain and was assured they would call me on my number. No one called. I tried to phone them again and continued to get the secretary (I assume).*

*Eventually I got a letter stating that I had not answered the phone! It said there was nothing more they could offer me at the clinic as they are respiratory led and my symptoms were not respiratory. I have never heard anything back about the rehabilitation service that was supposed to help me try to exercise again. I was forced to pay and see a private allergy doctor at [the] allergy clinic who was extremely helpful, made various diagnoses and asked my GP to prescribe several really helpful medications that I needed to try and control some of my symptoms. He also asked my GP to refer to rheumatology.*

*My GP referred to rheumatology and After 3 months I have now been put on a waiting list for an appointment, I was told the wait would be probably a year! My GP had already referred me to gastroenterology prior to the long covid clinic in May and again after 3 months I was accepted to the waiting list and have been told it would be at least a year. This means by the time I see these specialists I will have been living with my symptoms for around 3 years.*

*I find this so stressful and worrying of what could have developed in that time that maybe if caught earlier might be more easily treated. It is extremely distressing and debilitating to live with so many problems for so long without any support. Unfortunately it is so expensive to pay for all of these things privately."*

- Administrative issues

We heard how administrative mistakes can affect the experience of being a patient.

*"This relates to an adult who is wheelchair essential. Recently felt unwell - his pain barriers are different to the average person - he could not really explain the type or area of the problem.*

*[neighbouring] hospital agreed to admit him and established that there were two problems. He had an internal infection for which he was prescribed medicine for a week.*

*The more noticeable problem was identifying two Kidney stones, one in his tubes.*

*This above was all excellent dealing.*

*Before discharge, which advised he would need to come back for treatment for this, He & his Father specifically advised that a particular date the following week was not available. What do the Hospital Admin do but book an appointment on that very day. This resulted in a phone call to cancel and request a new date. Why is the Admin side of things usually the area where things do not work the way they should?"*

## Hospital admission and discharge

One respondent detailed their experience waiting having to wait on a trolley in hospital. Difficulties in the discharge handover to social care were also apparent, complicated by a cross boundary care issue.

*"Aged late seventies had a bad fall. Left in a corridor on a trolley in excess of 15 hours. With rib, foot and back injuries it was very very painful. It is seriously like lying on a wooden platform to aged bones let alone broken and injured. I know it made my injuries worse. The staff did their best with painkillers etc but it was a nasty experience. Being in a corridor was not problem but I would really have preferred to have been sitting in a softer chair. A previous hospital stay had me "transferred" from a trolley I had been on overnight to another identical trolley in a*

small ward. No pillows are allowed on trolleys apparently which adds to the discomfort.

Discharge meant no social care follow up as I lived in Trafford and the hospital was [in neighbouring area]. Was in bed for a few days and my daughter had to go through GP to ask for help for me as she was unable to be there all the time as she has a child with additional needs. By the time I was supplied with aids I was managing and arranged for them to be returned after a few days.

In addition to this when I was discharged, the papers they supplied with a record of injuries treatment etc also stated that I drank alcohol at an unsafe rate. As a very seldom drinker, birthdays etc, I had to go through PALS to get this changed as it would be on my records that I was an alcohol abuser. I suspect they confused me with a woman admitted at the same time who had an alcohol problem. I was quite angry about this hence contacting PALS and after their intervention a new discharge record was issued.”

## Dentistry

Question area	Summary of result
Ease of access	We had a low number of mentions for this area. However for the few we had people thought access was poor/very poor.
Experience of care	A small number of people commented but those that did found it ‘poor’ – mainly as they could not access care.

- No dental care

We previously completed a collaborative piece on the shortage of NHS dentists in the Greater Manchester area<sup>1</sup>. This continues to be a concern as noted by three of the respondents.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.healthwatchtrafford.co.uk/report/2021-08-16/greater-manchester-dentistry-report>



*"I cannot find a dentist that is taking on NHS patients. The real issue here is that what should be a routine filling is turning into a much more serious and expensive root canal treatment."*

*"NHS dentist not available local"*

*"My daughter has been waiting over 2 years for orthodontic braces, Lack of orthotic care in Trafford. She is nearly 15 and still on waiting list. She is often getting pain in her jaw and headaches struggling with chewing, and it's affecting her self confidence at school and with friends. I believe [they] are deliberately making kids wait longer, so they need treatment when they become of age where they have to pay privately. So many parents if they can afford it, are having to seek private orthotic treatment as the waiting list is so long. Many private dental practices don't even take on kids."*

There was one person that had been able to find a local dentist after many years.

*"I have just found a nice new dentist after about 4 years of not being able to get an appointment at my old one"*

### Other services or not named general comment

*\*Due to the nature of this set of comments no table summary is provided. The services are too varied with some were not named.*

- Pharmacy

People were generally positive about pharmacy services.

*"I now use [a local pharmacy], who are a family concerned organisation, proper communication, deliver regularly to suit your times."*

*"Availability of flu jab, walk in service, no waiting and no appointment. Very efficient."*

*"GP and Pharmacy services are good"*

*"Local pharmacy has improved their organisation since refurbishment of shop."*

*"Pharmacies a life saver for ongoing medication, advice and quick free vaccines"*

However there were two respondents that had concerns about local pharmacies.

*"There always seems problems with pharmacies, no organisation, no relevant conversation with colleagues."*

*"Regarding the pharmacy, the pharmacy is going to move. Hence, the environment is not too good. I am quite sure they will improve after moving to new place."*

- Social care

Some people had difficulty with social care services.

*"Social care basic but unreliable and not enough time spent so parents have paid for private care"*

*"More information and support in health and social care is needed"*

## Closing comments

This survey was conducted to check in on the state of health and care for people living in the local area. We noted the rise in discussion of these topics nationally, particularly around access and waiting times, and wanted to see if this would be reflected in the feedback from Trafford residents.

We found concern about GP access to be one of the most important issues to local people. In particular, patients felt excluded by limited appointment booking windows and struggled to access appointments. We also heard many positive comments about GP practices from patients who were satisfied with their care. It is worth noting that we do not always receive the names or locations of practices and so our findings cannot be said to reflect the situation at every site.

Hospital waiting times were a key issue for several respondents. While we received some general comments about this, we also received a small number of more detailed stories that expand on the patient journey and where things might improve.

There are many challenges facing health and social care at this time and our survey provides a useful snapshot of the situation at present and helps us understand where our work might be most needed.

Thank you to all those that took the time to share their thoughts and experiences with us.

# Appendix

## Survey questions

Q1. Choose the area of care you would like to tell us about? Please select the options that you'd like to talk to us about. You can pick more than one.

Q2. Please tell us about your experience. What went well? What could have been better?

Q3. Does your feedback apply to a specific service? If so, please tell us which ones(s). eg. the GP surgery name or hospital department

Q4. How easy was it to access the help and support you needed?

Q5. How would you describe your experience of care?

Q6. In relation to this experience please select what best describes you

Q7. Demographic questions

THIS REPORT IS AVAILABLE IN OTHER FORMATS ON REQUEST.

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