

Health and Wellbeing Board

Date of Board Meeting	28 May 2026
Title of Report or Presentation	Have your say Report Young People's Mental Health Report March 2026 Guiding You Home Report February 2026
Executive Summary Section	
Have your Say 25-26 The difficulty making and securing GP appointments and waiting times dominated feedback in our 2025-26 annual survey. Healthwatch South Tyneside spoke to more than 300 people in visits to 21 groups/drop-ins, asking for feedback on recent experiences of health and social care in the borough. Of these, 128 completed our 'Have Your Say' survey forms and we also recorded 123 pieces of feedback on our database via telephone, email and website forms over the past year. Almost 45 per cent of the comments made in the survey were about GP services, with many about the infamous '8am rush' to secure appointments by telephone. Some patients were unhappy at being pushed to use eConsult, while there were reports the waiting time to see a GP was up to 25 days. However, four GP practices were singled out for praise by patients – with Albert Road namechecked by five survey respondents. The second most commented on area was hospital care, including inpatient, outpatient and A&E, with just under a third of all feedback. Most comments on both in and outpatient care were complimentary, particularly around care and cleanliness, but there were some concerns expressed about understaffing relating to nursing. Waiting times at A&E were another area of concern for some patients, with waits of up to 20 hours claimed. Dental care was the third most commented on service, with almost all feedback referring to the difficulty accessing NHS dental services – not a new issue both locally and nationally. One respondent wrote: "It is very difficult to get an appointment with my GP or be seen by a dentist on the NHS." A range of other healthcare services commented on by survey respondents included mental health, home care, care homes and palliative care. However, less than a quarter of the respondents said they were also asked about their mental health when meeting a health or social care professional. Positive comments included praise for the Brain Injury Service, Breastfeeding Support Team, South Tyneside Family Hub, Cedar Unit and Sunderland Royal Hospital. The overall 'mood' of the feedback appeared more positive than in recent years, which reflects national opinion polling about the NHS.	

But Healthwatch has recommended primary care commissioners look at the negative comments around GP access – potentially seeing if the surgeries which received praise could share some best practice.

Several respondents were positive about pharmacies, and the report also suggests more promotion around the increased range of services they offer could help reduce demand for GP appointments.

Young People's Mental Health Report March 2026

Young people waiting up to two years for mental health support

The number of young people being referred to mental health services in South Tyneside is more than 60 per cent above the national average – and some are waiting up to two years for treatment.

Healthwatch South Tyneside is calling for waiting times for initial mental health consultations and diagnosis for young people in the borough to be reduced significantly in a new report. Latest data* shows the number of new under-18 referrals to secondary mental health services in the borough is significantly higher than the national rate.

In South Tyneside this was 15,685 per 100,000 in 2022/23, 62 per cent higher than the national rate of 9,684 per 100,000 and 23 per cent above the regional rate of 12,763 per 100,000. The recent trend for this indicator is increasing.

Young people's mental health was selected as a key priority in Healthwatch's Operational Plan in response to feedback we had picked up via signposting contacts and our work out in the community.

Thirty voluntary sector organisations and statutory services we contacted agreed to share our details with the young people they supported or relevant colleagues, and Healthwatch visited five of the organisations.

An online survey was shared on their social media platforms, newsletters, bulletins and within their groups. We also took out a sponsored post on Facebook and Instagram, which generated more than 300 click-throughs to the online survey link.

The survey asked questions including who young people sought support from if they were struggling with their mental health, how they rated their experience of local mental health services and how services could be improved, including those offered in schools. We received 53 survey responses and common themes included long lead-in times for mental health support, the way young people felt they were spoken to by health professionals and a call for more promotion of available support.

Comments included:

"Why does everything take so long? We need help when it's in front of us – not in a year or two."

"Professionals need to listen more to young people who are struggling. I've had a few experiences where professionals have spoken over me. This made me feel kind of like I didn't matter."

"I think there should be a lot more advertising of what support is out there."

One service which was singled out for praise by a number of respondents was Stopping Unsafe Relationships Together (SURT).

In the report, Healthwatch has called on the commissioners and providers of mental health services for young people in South Tyneside to ‘significantly reduce’ the waiting times for initial consultations and diagnosis.

It also recommends increased signposting to other appropriate services to help reduce waiting times and for more promotion of mental health services for young people in places such as schools, colleges, community venues, cinemas, fast food outlets, public transport – as well as via targeted online campaigns

Guiding You Home

A series of recommendations have been made by Healthwatch South Tyneside to improve the hospital discharge process following a survey of relatives/friends of inpatients which highlighted gaps in both communication and ongoing support.

They include:

- A new communication protocol when preparing a patient for hospital discharge
- A detailed discussion with the patient and their next of kin/main carer to correctly identify the most appropriate discharge location
- An information pack for the patient/next of kin to include the required discharge medical advice, equipment needed at home, agreed care package and 24-hour support line contacts
- A thorough briefing for home care providers on any new hospital discharge arrangements.

Healthwatch had been asked by NHS and local authority leaders to find out the views of patients and their next of kin as part of the Guiding You Home programme which aims to speed up hospital discharge by supporting patients to return home.

Health and Wellbeing Board Action Request

[Double click on box]	Type	Reasoning
☐	Decision Needed	If a decision is needed or additional funding is sought, please indicate whether a funding stream has been identified:
☐	Endorsement Needed	If an endorsement of a way forward is needed, please provide details:
☒	Information Sharing Only	

Health and Wellbeing Board Theme

[Double click on box]	Outcome
☒	Giving Every Child and Young Person the Best Start
☐	Financial Security to Lead Healthy, Fulfilling Lives
☒	Safe and Healthy Places to Live, Learn, and Work
☒	Good Mental Well-Being and Social Connectivity Across the Life Course
☐	Fair Delivery of Service

☐	Public Involvement and Community Engagement
Author of Report	Healthwatch South Tyneside
Health & Wellbeing Sponsor	John Lowther

