

Monthly Report

September 2022

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Location of comments:

Location data is mapped using postcodes of services. The map points are coloured according to the sentiment of the comment:

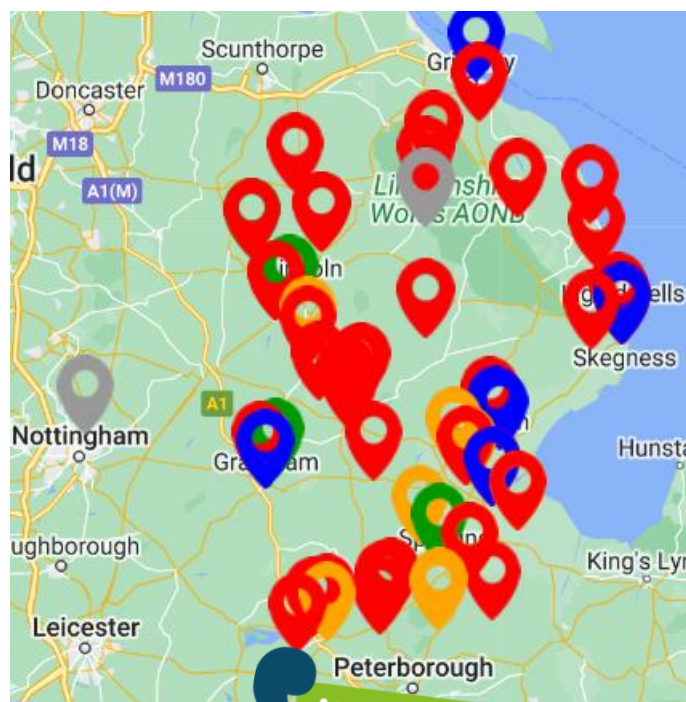
Positive - green

Negative - red

Mixed - orange

Neutral - blue

Unclear - grey



Call us on **01205 820892**
info@healthwatchlincolnshire.co.uk
www.healthwatchlincolnshire.co.uk
HealthwatchLincolnshire  HealthwatchLinc 

Overview

September 2022 Monthly

During September 2022 Healthwatch Lincolnshire received **87** patient experiences directly to our Information Signposting Officer. This is a summary of the key themes raised by patients, carers and service users during September 2022 about services in Lincolnshire.

For more details you can call us on **01205 820892**
Email: info@healthwatchlincolnshire.co.uk



Overall Sentiment

7% of all comments were **positive**
60% of all comments were **negative**

16% of all comments were **neutral**
14% of all comments were **mixed**

September 2022 – Feedback Service Themes



32%

Hospital Services
(All services)



43%

GP Services



8%

Community Health
Services



9%

Accident &
Emergency



1%

Diagnosis &
Screening Services
(GP)



14%

Dentistry



0%

Mental Health &
Learning
Disabilities



9%

Social Care

%s total greater than 100% as many comments we receive contain multiple service themes

Dental Services

Key Themes

- Access to NHS dental services
- NHS practices turning into private practices



What you told us

Difficulties accessing NHS dental care in the county persist. We continue to hear from people who are struggling to find practices taking on new NHS patients. As individuals have been unable to see a dentist for months and often years, for many, their initial dental issues have deteriorated further and/or resulted in other problems. This means that they now need additional treatment, for which, again for the many, is only offered privately. Private treatment for many is simply not feasible.

This month we also heard from another individual whose practice is now no longer offering NHS services. So, these individuals are now also trying to find NHS dental care at other practices, to no avail.

To read more about what you've told us about NHS dental services and our recommendations for dental services in the county, check out our dental report [here](#). **Sharing your feedback on NHS dental services has resulted in change** and has started the reform of NHS dental services. To read about how NHS England has acted on **your feedback** to improve dental care, click [here](#).

Your experiences



Story 1

"I am in desperate need of seeing a dentist. I have been trying for months to be seen but everywhere is full. Is there any help I could receive with this please? I can't afford to go private but really need to be seen."

Story 2

"It is getting more and more frustrating to get appointments and treatment at the dentist. I have had so many problems this year. I had my check-up cancelled in April/May and was told that this would be rearranged -it wasn't until I chased this - than it became an appointment in October. Then I had to have an emergency appointment because my crown came off and part of the tooth underneath broke. It became infected. The dentist was amazing and took part of the tooth out but booked me an urgent appointment with their clinic team as she didn't have the tools to remove the full tooth. In July as I hadn't still heard anything I contacted the practice and was told that it had gone to the hospital instead of the team by mistake.

I then spent two weeks chasing this and eventually got an appointment, but this was for September 21st and I had to go to Boston instead of my usual practice in Lincoln. So, I've had to put up with a sore tooth from May to September! In the meantime, my other crown came off and I was offered an appointment to see my dentist on September the 5th as I was advised by another dentist that this tooth also needed to be removed and to try to have them both

removed at the same time. I turned up to my appointment on September 5th for a check-up and an examination to see if we could get both teeth out on September 21st to save two appointments but was told that my appointment had been cancelled.

Now I've since found out that my dentist had a family bereavement on this date, so she has my heartfelt sympathies for this. However, the practice should have informed me beforehand of the cancellation as they had done to other patients as I turned up. They then did manage to make an appointment for the 19th September but it looks like this will also be cancelled due to our amazing Queen's funeral. So the upshot is that I now face an extraction of one tooth that is possibly infected on September 21st - 4months with an infection. I then have to wait until I can have another appointment with my dentist to sort out an extraction for a second tooth then I'll need to organise a false bridge of teeth for them both.

Oh, and I forgot to mention the appointment for my check-up that was rearranged for October from the original date in April was also cancelled as I was lost off the system for a while when a new system was installed. I have rung the practice again but have been told that they are unsure if they'll be working on the 19th September but they'll let me know. I can imagine my appointment will be in December at this rate! I love my dentist and fully appreciate her professionalism and high ability as a dentist.

However, I am so disgusted with the systems in place in the NHS dentistry service. I have looked after my teeth for many years and have made sure that I keep regular check-up appointments. Surely, I am entitled to better care than this?"

Story 3

"I have been trying for three years to get my teeth removed and false ones fitted I was referred to Lincoln but was rejected as i was not in their area to no avail even though I live in Lincolnshire then I have been referred to Scunthorpe and apparently I am going to be rejected again on the same basis so both local areas are rejecting me so I cannot get treatment what do I do now as nobody can give me an answer where I can go just because

I am close to a border nobody due to their high volume of back log will take me on surely one area has to be responsible or am I in the Twilight zone never to be resolved at the moment I have hardly any teeth and have abscess that I burst every few days every week and feel unwell all the time. HELP."



Finding it hard to get a dentist appointment?

Dental practices are recovering from backlogs due to strict hygiene measures to minimise the risk of spreading COVID-19 to patients and staff. The situation is improving but we are hearing that Lincolnshire residents without a regular dentist are still finding it difficult to get an appointment. Read our steps below on accessing NHS dentistry.

1 If you have a dentist you usually visit phone them to make an appointment. Appointments will be available according to your individual situation and dental need. Be prepared to wait longer than usual for a routine, non-urgent appointment. You can also take personal steps to maintain healthy teeth.

2 Unlike registering at a GP practice, NHS dental practices are available to everyone to attend a course of treatment regardless of where they live. Visit the NHS Find a Dentist website to search for a dentist in your area. You should also consider widening your search area to where you can travel to.



3 **Is your dental need urgent?** Phone or go online to NHS 111 to check your symptoms and see if you need urgent help. You will be advised if you need to visit your hospital emergency department (A&E) or advised of your nearest NHS dentists providing urgent appointments. The number of urgent appointments available each day is limited. When phoning a dental practice, clearly describe your symptoms, any pain or swelling and the impact it is having on your daily living.

111

4 If you can't find a dentist for urgent treatment, call NHS England's Customer Contact Centre on 0300 311 2233 stating your situation. Keep sharing your experiences with us, positive and negative, the more information we have the more we can help.



What is Healthwatch Lincolnshire doing about this issue? We regularly monitor the access to NHS dentistry in Lincolnshire sharing our findings with dental commissioners to influence positive change.

An NHS Dentist 4 All

Since as far back as 2015, due to the number of poor experiences shared with us by residents of Lincolnshire, Healthwatch Lincolnshire has been raising concerns about the decline in the access to NHS Dentists in our county. During this time, we have consistently worked closely to raise our concerns with NHS England Midlands Dental Commissioning Team, media, Healthwatch England, as well as with local and regional dental networks.

Whilst we all recognise many of the problems with dental services in Lincolnshire, such as commissioning, workforce and our counties geography. What we see is little or no improvements being actioned. For example, as we have this month, in our county we have seen increasing numbers of dental practices making the decision to 'hand-back' NHS contracts and move to being fully private.



Healthwatch Lincolnshire's '**An NHS Dentist 4 all - Improving Dental Services across Lincolnshire**' campaign will run from 1 October 2022 until 31 March 2023. During this time, we will be raising our concerns both locally and nationally so we need all the help we can to get to bring to the attention of as many people as possible, the need for more NHS Dentists in Lincolnshire.

How can you get involved?



Pledge your support and sign up



Download content to share with the public throughout the campaign



Encourage local people to have their say through Healthwatch Lincolnshire



Stay up to date with dental improvement across the county



Read the experiences of patient's carers and service users



Share this with colleagues, partners, constituents, and other interested parties

To sign up and find out more about the campaign, [click here](#). Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) to stay updated on the campaign.

GP Referrals

This month we heard from several individuals regarding concerns around referral appointments for tests and treatments (although many of the concerns raised this month in relation to hospital referrals have also been raised to us in previous months). Individuals shared their difficulties of getting a referral, the waiting times for referrals and poor communication around appointments. Some felt they really had to 'fight' for referrals. Others were concerned about waiting times and the impact waiting months for appointments would have on their health conditions. Furthermore, during this time and in general, communication between patients and services was often poor (poor communication is not an issue exclusive to GP referrals). This lack of communication around timings of appointments, what to expect whilst waiting and how to 'wait well' often cause additional worry.

Your experiences



Story 1

"I have problems accessing my GP for appointments and the long waiting times in relation to referrals to the Pilgrim Hospital.

My first referral was made in September 2021 by my GP to the Dermatology Department and was confirmed by letter on 17 September 2021. To date I have not had an appointment, despite offering to accept one at short notice as I live close to the Pilgrim Hospital.

My second referral by my GP was to the Rapid Access Chest Pain Assessment clinic in May 2022, as I was experiencing problems with my long term Heart Condition. This was rejected by the Pilgrim Department of Cardiology as it was incomplete and a copy was forwarded to me by letter sent to my GP. I attended the surgery for a blood test and an ECG in order for the Pilgrim to re-review and re-present my referral. I have waited and telephoned the surgery a number of times since. My latest call this week took 52 minutes before it was answered and I was informed that the new Referral letter to the Pilgrim Department of Cardiology was on my GPs desk ready for sending. This has not been confirmed as being sent by the surgery.

I appreciate that the NHS is under great pressure but I am concerned that after this length of time my health at 76 is suffering."

Story 2

"Patient was seen by GP and waiting to hear about a referral to a specialist following a growth in their armpit. First GP would not refer them but following a second consultation with another GP at same practice has been referred."



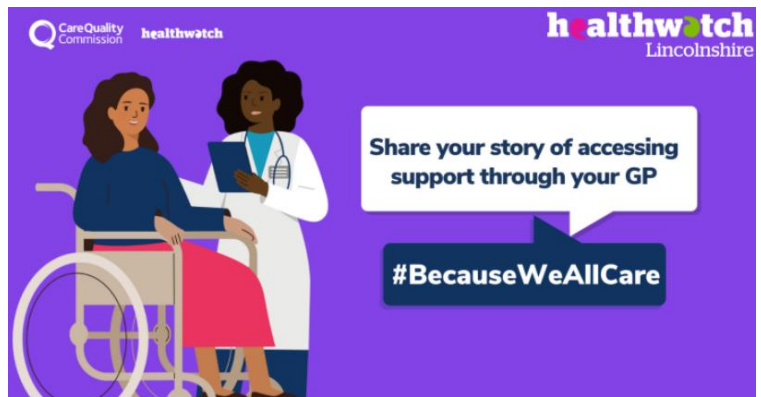
Have you or your loved one been left frustrated after struggling to get a GP referral for test or treatment?

Share your experience today: [Have your say | Healthwatch Lincolnshire](#)

One concern we've been hearing from the public is how hard it can be to get a GP practice referral to another NHS service. GPs are the first point of call for many health issues and the gateway to specialist support. But with many GP surgeries stretched thin and under pressure, it's not surprising to hear people feel they're stuck and unable to get the right support.

Few examples of services your GP can refer you to:

- Mental health support
- Joint replacement surgery for knees, hips and support with arthritis
- Eye surgery
- Non-urgent heart problems
- Diagnostic conditions, such as hearing, skin issues, allergies, other symptoms you have had a while that could be a long-term condition like asthma, diabetes etc.



The impact of delayed referrals

GP referrals affect people of every age group, every background, and every region across the country. Some of the things we've already heard include:

- People feel like their symptoms are dismissed
- They have to try multiple times before they're successful
- They are left in the dark about how serious their condition is.

We want to hear from you

There's currently little data about people's experiences getting a referral from a GP. We want to change this.

As the independent champion of health and social care services in Lincolnshire we want to hear your experiences of trying to get specialist NHS support, like physiotherapy, talking therapies, hospital scans and consultations.

By sharing your story, we can use your feedback to help the NHS better understand your challenges and improve how people access the care they need.

So, if you've got something to say about GP referrals, don't just talk to your friends and family – tell us too.

Poor Communication

What you told us

A theme present in many of the experiences shared this month was poor communication. Whilst this was briefly mentioned above in relation to GP referrals, poor communication was present across multiple services and related to the following:

- Patients not being clearly told the date and time of appointments
- Patients being unsure of which department and/or service their appointment was with
- The purpose of appointments not being clearly explained
- Long waiting times for appointments, results, treatment and follow-ups – during this time communication between services and patients was minimal to non-existent

All of the above cause additional unnecessary worry for patients and has a negative impact on mental wellbeing and subsequently physical health too.

Your experiences



Story 1

"Caller has been diagnosed with Lymphoma and is suffering skin cancer which means that they are under a Haematology Consultant and a Dermatology Consultant both at Boston Pilgrim Hospital.

Their last appointment was on the 07 July 2022 which was attended and at the end of the appointment the Consultant agreed to see the patient in 3 months time (which should be the beginning of October). As the caller has still never received this appointment they called the secretary who agreed that the appointment should have been made by now but hinted that the systems have changed and it is now out of the secretary's control."



Story 2

"My spouse has been waiting for an out patient's appointment. I'm now told today it will be another four months, this is causing great stress as they have recently been seen by a neurologist who has advised they are seen by their cardiologist."

Story 3

"As a Heart Failure patient age 84yrs also with heart valve issues I have had no appointments of any sort from Cardiology for three years now when I contact them I am told I am on the list but no appointments have been given to me and they don't know when I will be seen."

Story 4

"Patient had an appointment at the beginning of June with a Cardiac Surgeon at Leicester Hospitals for a mitral valve problem.

Since this appointment, my parent has also been diagnosed with cancer of the kidney at Lincoln County hospital and needs surgery for removal of the kidney. The consultant at Lincoln County is not willing to proceed with surgery until he has had an update from the consultant regarding my parent's cardiac status. Despite letters, and e-mails being sent and telephone calls made by Lincoln County to the cardiac team, there has been no correspondence whatsoever.

My parent has not had a letter following his clinic appointment, a discussion was being held in the Multi Disciplinary Team (MDT) meeting of which we have had no communication regarding the outcome of this either. We as a family are extremely concerned as my parent has NOW EXCEEDED the 62 days cancer wait from diagnosis to first treatment and we are keen for the surgery to go ahead ASAP to prevent it spreading. I find this lack of communication absolutely appalling and is negligent in the management of my parents condition. Please can you help with this matter. We have contacted PALS but just had a response saying it could be 2 weeks before we hear anything back from them."



Discouragingly, the concerns raised to us this month about poor communication between patients and health and care services are not new. Indeed, we repeatedly hear these concerns every month. **So, what have we done about this?**

In 2021, we produced and published our Communication Report which highlighted the concerns you have raised to us about how health and care services communicate with you. The report detailed the barriers to effective communication such as jargon and acronyms and the effect poor communication has on patients mental wellbeing. The report also highlighted areas that health and care services need to focus on and improve based on the experiences you have shared with us:

- Administration – Clearer Written Information e.g. care plans or appointment letters
- Integration – Joined Up Communication e.g. information not being shared between services such as test result
- Verbal Communication e.g. language barriers or use of jargon
- Accuracy and Relevance of Information e.g. ensure information is up to date and appropriate
- Scam Communications
- Post Discharge Communication

This report was also sent to the Lincolnshire Clinical Commissioning Group, now the NHS Lincolnshire Integrated Care Board (ICB).

Sharing your experiences has already caused change.

We were delighted when during a meeting we attended with service providers, a presentation was given by the ICB in response to our report. The presentation outlined how the ICB plan to tackle the issues raised above. The action points listed in the presentation should improve communication between services and to patients and thus improve patient experience. This is just one example of how sharing your experiences can lead to positive change.



Have Your Say

Your Health and Care Services in Lincolnshire



Get up-to-date information and advice

Ask those in charge of services your questions

Share your experiences

YourVoice@Healthwatch

Public Event

Wednesday 26th October 2022
11am to 2pm
The Storehouse
North Parade, Skegness
PE25 1BY
Parking available opposite the venue

To book a place contact:

01205 820892 info@healthwatchlincolnshire.co.uk

If you would like to come and share your experiences with us in person and have the chance to talk to those in charge of health and care services, come and join us at our YourVoice event. Join us for the presentation of the Healthwatch Annual Report and future plans. Following this, we will be running our YourVoice@Healthwatch event where you can have your say and ask your questions about Health and Social Care in Lincolnshire. There will also be a Market Place highlighting local services and an opportunity to get up to date information and advice. If you would like to sign up or submit a question for the event, you can sign up here: [YourVoice Sign Up](#). Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) to stay updated on the event – see you there!

Positive Stories

It was encouraging to hear some positive experiences of health and care services in our county this month.



Story 1

"I went for my routine breast cancer screening appointment yesterday. Everybody was very friendly and helpful - I was in and out in 10 minutes. Great service."

Story 2

"Patient contacted Healthwatch to say how happy they were with their GP surgery and that the staff have always been very helpful, all the GPs, Nurses, and especially to paramedics who have been exceptional. All reception staff very nice and a couple of weeks ago saw a Nurse who suggested it would be best that they talk to a GP regarding their condition, the receptionist offered either a phone call or face to face, the patient preferred face to face and this was booked for the following day. Patient very happy with this practice and commented that if it wasn't for this surgery they would not be here, they always go the extra mile."

Story 3

"From diagnosis to treatment, just a few weeks, would highly recommend this surgery."

Story 4

"I had a fall at home where I cut my lip. Spouse took me to A&E where they were excellent. Took great care of me by assessing my issues. They stitched my lip and there is no sign now that this has been done. After less than 3 hours I was out. Very satisfied."

Story 5

"Dedicated nursing staff, they go above and beyond. They explain what the Doctors decide so well. Very caring and dedicated."



Demographics

In addition to location data, for those who consent, we are now able to collect demographic data from the individuals who contact our Information Signposting Officer.

Demographic	Number of people	Demographic	Number of people
Age		Ethnicity	
18 to 24	1	White: British/English/Northern Irish/Scottish/Welsh	17
25 to 49	8		
50 to 64	12		
65 to 79	8	White: Any other White background	1
80+	9		
Gender		Religious Belief	
Male	12	Christian	1
Female	27		
Birth Sex		Carer	
Current same as birth	4	Yes	5
		No	2
Sexual Orientation		Marital Status	
Heterosexual/Straight	3	Single	1
		Married	5
Disability		Long term condition	
Physical or mobility impairment	2	Blindness or visual impairment	1
Sensory impairment	1	Other	3



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