



NHS referrals: How does waiting for surgery impact on people's lives?

In coming months, we will be working with Somerset NHS Clinical Commissioning Group to support their review of NHS waiting times for patients from referral to treatment. The aim is to identify what is working well with the referrals system and where improvements can be made.

Our volunteers will be conducting telephone interviews with patients to understand the impact that waiting for surgery has on their daily life, for example on their independence, work, personal relationships, mental and physical health.

If you are a Somerset resident waiting for surgery, and you would like to take part in this study, please get in touch: [Contact us](#).



Access to dental care

Like other health care services, dental care has had to change because of Covid19. Although dentists can treat people if they have social distancing measures and personal protective equipment in place, it seems that there are fewer appointments currently available.

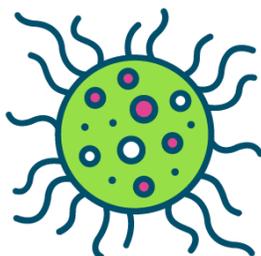
We would like to hear your feedback about accessing dental care in Somerset: [Talk to us](#).

Helping you find the care you need this winter

We've moved into the autumn and the weather is turning colder. This can make some health problems worse, especially for older people and those with ongoing health issues. Covid-19 is adding to the usual concerns about keeping well in the winter, and it has resulted in changes to how people can access local health and care services.



If you or anyone you know, needs help finding out about local health and social care services, you can call **Healthwatch Somerset** on 01278 264405 or visit the [information and advice page](#) of our website.



Update: care during Covid-19 survey

We want to say huge thank you to everyone who participated in or promoted our care during Covid19 survey, which ran from April to September this year.

We had a really positive response with 203 people completing our survey directly, and a further 68 responses through Healthwatch England. GP services received the largest number of comments and 47% of these were positive, while 63% of comments about mental health services were negative. Our survey and the Healthwatch England national survey results highlight an increasing difficulty in accessing dental services.

We are currently reviewing feedback and will publish a full report later in the autumn. In the meantime, you can read Healthwatch England's briefing about what people told them about health and social care between April and June 2020: [Healthwatch England Covid-19 Briefing](#).

Care homes: monitoring quality, driving improvement

Did you know that Healthwatch Somerset has statutory powers to 'Enter and View' publicly funded health and social care premises to speak to residents and patients about their experiences of using the service? These visits are a great way to highlight areas of good practice and to help drive improvements in the quality of care.



This week we reported on the quality of care in three Somerset care homes following visits we carried out at the beginning of the year for Somerset County Council, in conjunction with the Care Quality Commission.

[Read the reports...](#)

Help make health and social care better for you and your community

Healthwatch Somerset is the county's independent health and social care champion. We exist to ensure that people are at the heart of care. Our dedicated team of staff and volunteers listen to what people like about local health and care services, and what could be improved. These views are then shared with the decision-making organisations in the county, so together we can make a real difference.

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