

Community Voices

100 conversations

100 Conversations Summary Report



100 conversations

Introduction

There's a lot that's good about Dorset's public services, but we know we can do better. That's why we decided to start to 'listen better' to people in Dorset, starting with our 100 Conversations project.

In total, we had 102 in-depth conversations with people from all walks of life around Dorset. The aim of these conversations was to delve into the depth and richness of people's experiences and perspectives, and really listen to the stories they had to tell.

Staff from across Dorset's health and care partnership (including people from the community and voluntary sector) were trained to have these open conversations, letting local people take the lead and tell us what was important to them about their daily lives. This training was carried out and co-designed with us by The Point of Care Foundation.

The conversations were recorded, transcribed (written out word-for-word) and then themed to make it easier for us to see if any areas stood out. This work was done by a company called Darmax Research Ltd.

Through this, we discovered eight main themes:

- Access
- Working Better Together
- Thriving Communities
- Prevention and Early Help
- Engagement
- Physical and Mental Health Conditions
- Characteristics and Demographics (Individuality)
- Services

This document is a summary of what people told us through the 100 Conversations project. The full project report can be found on the 100 Conversations website.

www.ourdorset.org.uk/100

You can request a copy by contacting

icscomms@nhsdorset.nhs.uk

Access

How people felt about first using a service, and availability locally.

'I think distance for people to travel to hospital appointments [...] has actually become quite difficult now, particularly if they haven't got transport.'



What you told us:

- You had mixed experiences of getting fast and easy access to services and appointment.
- Long wait times put some people off from contacting health services.
- Lots of you chose to pay for private treatment because of long waiting lists.
- You would like quick referrals to other support services, diagnostic checks, and blood tests. You'd also like regular health checks.
- Limited access to transport and travel links for people, especially those of you living in rural areas, has a negative impact on accessing services.
- You'd like appointment times that fit around your lives, as individuals.
- Services need enough session to support physical and mental health concerns.

Working Better Together

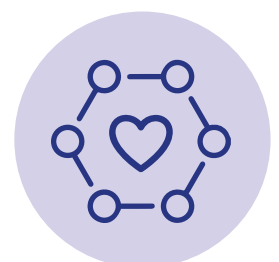
The way that health and care services are structured, the way health and care staff work, interact, communicate and share information.

'I feel very well supported because I know that my eye consultant speaks to my laser consultant who speaks to my diabetes consultant.'



What you told us:

- You really appreciate the NHS, but you're concerned at how stretched healthcare services are, which has a knock-on effect for patients.
- Health and social care staff need extra training, particularly around mental health and neurodiversity.
- Services need to work together and communicate more to give you more joined-up care when you need it.
- It's important to include voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations to help care for people in their communities.
- Patient data and medical records need to be shared more effectively between services so people receiving treatment and their families/carers don't have to keep repeating the same story.



Thriving Communities

How informal and formal support networks, the natural environment, exercise and other interests give health and wellbeing benefits.

‘The more people are connected to others, the more likely they are to look after themselves.’



What you told us:

- Your family, friends, neighbours, and local communities are incredibly important as support networks.
- For people without these networks, it's important that investment is made locally to offer support more formally.
- Peer support groups are also very important and should be made available both face to face and online.
- Education settings should make sure they can give mental health support to students.
- There's a need for equity of support and access for special educational needs (SEN) in schools across Dorset.
- Your local environment is very important, with Dorset's variety of countryside, coast and outdoor spaces playing an important part in helping you look after your health and wellbeing.



Prevention and Early Help

The benefits of providing early help before crisis, self-management tools and different treatment options. It also refers to the need to give physical and mental health the same importance, and thinking about health in the future.

'I think empowering people to help themselves if they've got a long-term health condition is something that [...] is really important.'



What you told us:

- Services should focus on providing easier and earlier access to support. This would lead to better health outcomes and help with crisis prevention.
- Services need to provide appropriate information, tools and techniques to empower people to self-manage their own conditions.
- You'd like a range of options for your care, including therapy, exercise and a mix of traditional and alternative treatments.
- Mental and physical health need to be treated with equal importance.
- Physical health conditions and injuries can cause stress and anxiety, and you would like to have the option to access mental health support alongside treatment for physical health.



Engagement

The way services engage with people, and the relationship with the staff that care for them. It also refers to people, families and carers being included in talks and decisions about care.

‘She listened to exactly what I said, and she believed me. And just followed her instincts and went with it. And I’m incredibly grateful.’



What you told us:

- You’d like to see better signposting to what services are available locally.
- You’d like to see a single directory of services that tells you when to access different services and for what type of treatment/condition.
- Person-centred care should be central to health and social care.
- You want to feel listened to, trusted and included in discussions and decisions around your care.
- Services should also involve relatives and people involved in the care of patients in these discussions.
- You’d like to be treated by the same person/people because it helps build a good relationship and allows the healthcare professional time to notice subtle differences in the person they’re looking after and refer to other support more easily.
- During wait times you’d like services to keep in touch with information about what’s going on and what the process is.
- You told us a lack of communication from services while waiting for treatment adds stress and anxiety.
- It’s also important for services to follow-up with you after treatment to make sure you’re coping, both physically and emotionally.
- You’d also like to see a range of options for services to contact you, including digitally, via telephone, and video support. You’d like to be asked what method of contact you’d prefer.

Physical and mental health conditions

People's experiences using services and other support with a mental and/or physical health condition.

'[I]t's part of who I am, but I don't let it define me, but [...] I always have to carry it with me.'



What you told us:

- Services need to listen to people's views and adapt to better help people with additional needs.
- Mental health services are stretched, with long waiting lists and a lack of access to low and moderate mental health services before reaching crisis.
- Medication is sometimes prescribed too quickly, and you'd like to see other options for therapies, like talking therapies and exercise.
- You'd like to see more drop-in mental health services in the community, such as the Retreats. You'd also like to see more informal settings for talking, like coffee mornings, benches and walk and talk groups.
- You'd like to see more mental health services and support targeted at men's health.
- Access to support needs to accommodate people's ongoing care, when they need it, instead of starting their journey again each time.

Characteristics and demographics

Everyone is different.

Experiences of using services and other support as an individual.

'I had a wonderful, wonderful dermatologist who, the first time I saw her, as soon as I stepped through the door, spoke to me like a person, which was very important for me, not like a patient. She spoke to me like a person.'



What you told us:

- You are all individuals, with different life experiences and different experiences of accessing health and care services.
- Being a carer totally absorbs people's lives and involves a constant battle with services, which is physically and emotionally exhausting.
- There is a lack of respite provision for carers. Services are often based in urban locations, which is inconvenient for carers living rurally, and who find it difficult to leave the house because of their caring responsibilities.
- Carers want to feel listened to by services, involved in discussions and given all the information about the health needs of the cared for person.
- You also experience additional costs and financial strain as a carer.
- People of different cultural backgrounds described being welcomed into their local communities.
- People who do not speak English struggle to understand what services are telling them, and need more support accessing information.
- Services need to visit ethnically diverse communities, talk to them and share information in community settings, such as churches and mosques.
- Services should work more with community leaders to support engagement within their communities.

Services

Feedback about specific services across Dorset.

'They were really good at giving the right kind of advice of how worried to be and when, and they're very calm and very, very efficient.'



What you told us:

- There's inequity of access to GP practices and the services they offer.
- GP practices need to make sure they are aware of other services so they can signpost and refer people to them.
- GP practices need to provide easy access to a range of appointment options, and make booking appointments easy for everyone.
- You had mixed experiences of using NHS 111.
- You were appreciative of medical advice from pharmacists, but you were concerned about the proposed extra workload being placed on them.
- You were frustrated at the need for GP involvement when amending prescriptions, and of pharmacies not always ordering repeat prescriptions.
- Accessing NHS dentists is difficult with limited access locally, with some of you having to pay for private dental treatment.
- You had mixed experiences using Steps2Wellbeing mental health support.
- You had a range of experiences accessing council services, particularly around social/council housing.
- You found accessing social care support frustrating.

More feedback, including direct quotes from 100 Conversations participants, can be read in the full report [here](#).