

Listening events report

August – October 2025

Whiston Hospital and St Helens Hospital

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About Healthwatch Halton

Healthwatch Halton is the independent champion for people who use health and social care services in Halton. We are one of more than 150 local Healthwatch across England. We exist to ensure that people are at the heart of care.

We help people find information they need about services. We also go out and speak to local people about what they think of local care. We share what works well and what could be better with those who plan and run services.

Our role is to make sure people's voices influence decisions, and we also encourage services to involve people in decisions that affect them.

Our purpose is to help make care better for everyone.

Listening Event feedback

This report summarises feedback gathered during **Healthwatch Halton Listening Events** at **Whiston Hospital** and **St Helens Hospital** between **August and October 2025**.

A total of **59 people** took part — **47 at St Helens Hospital** and **12 at Whiston Hospital**.

Most were patients (83 %), with visitors (15 %) and a small number of volunteers or staff (2 %).

The findings reflect a snapshot of experiences rather than a survey of all patients. They highlight what people value and where small improvements could help.

Please rate the treatment and care you received

- **Excellent 71%**
- **Good 26%**
- **Fair 3%**

The vast majority of people rated the care they received as *excellent* or *good*. Only a very small number gave a *fair* rating, suggesting that while the overall picture remains highly positive, a few people experienced aspects of care that could be improved.

What's good about the hospitals?

Overall feedback was very positive. People spoke warmly about the care they received, the professionalism of staff, and how calm and well-organised both hospitals felt.

This section brings together the themes and direct comments people shared about what works well across Whiston and St Helens Hospitals.

Staff, treatment and care

People consistently described staff as kind, professional and approachable. They valued how teams took time to listen, explain and reassure – especially in clinics where visits could feel stressful.

- *"The staff were very kind and courteous – they make you feel comfortable."* (St Helens Hospital)
- *"Everyone is so friendly and helpful; they go out of their way for you."* (Whiston Hospital)
- *"It's spacious and less busy than Whiston – the doctor was lovely with Mum today."* (St Helens Hospital)
- *"The porter takes me for some fresh air in a wheelchair when I get bored – really kind staff."* (St Helens Hospital, Ward D1)

Specialist departments such as the Eye Clinic, Endoscopy, Rheumatology, Lilac Centre and Plastic Surgery were all praised for efficiency and continuity of care.

Appointments and Waiting Times

Most people were happy with how quickly they were seen, noting that clinics generally ran to time and staff worked efficiently. A few said being seen promptly helped reduce stress and improved confidence in their care.

- *"I was seen quickly and on time – everything was very efficient."*
- *"My follow-up was booked promptly and communication was good."*
- *"All smashing and fantastic – didn't wait long after referral."*

Facilities and Environment

Patients highlighted how bright, clean and welcoming both hospitals felt. They appreciated the layout, atmosphere and general organisation, often saying it helped make visits less daunting.

- *"It's bright and airy here – a pleasure to attend."* (St Helens Hospital)
- *"Always clean and tidy – I would choose St Helens every time."*
- *"The gardens are lovely and the building feels calm."*
- *"Everything is good about this hospital – staff, cleanliness and organisation."*

What could be improved?

Most comments were positive, but people did share a few suggestions to make things easier.

This section summarises their suggestions and frustrations – particularly around parking, communication and waiting times.

Parking and accessibility

Parking remains one of the most common issues people mentioned – all of the feedback this period related to **St Helens Hospital**.

Several patients described the stress of finding a space, long queues at barriers, and limited disabled-bay availability.

- *"Disabled bays are always full or blocked by cars waiting to leave."*
- *"More disabled spaces in the car park would help so much."*
- *"More disabled bays. Another 5 or 6 spaces would help... access to the existing bays needs to be improved."*
- *"Queues at the barrier make you late for appointments."*
- *"The blood-test and pharmacy area is cramped; I wait outside for space."*

While all these comments came from St Helens Hospital, they reflect a wider frustration people experience when parking is limited or confusing.

Appointments and communication

Some people had difficulty getting results or contacting departments. Although many praised staff personally, they felt hospital systems could communicate more clearly and consistently.

- *"I had an MRI scan 6 weeks ago but have still not had the results." (St Helens Hospital – 13 Oct 2025)*
- *"I waited 14 months for a Urology procedure... Communication between GP and hospital [was confusing]." (St Helens Hospital – 8 Sep 2025)*
- *"Appointment letters need to be specific... today should have said drops and a 30-minute slot, not '30 minutes to 3 hours'." (St Helens Hospital – 11 Aug 2025)*

Facilities and environment

People were generally happy with hospital facilities but identified practical improvements – better seating, clearer signage and shorter pharmacy waits.

- *"Pharmacy waits... always at least 30 minutes. I have waited 2 hours or more." (St Helens Hospital – 13 Oct 2025)*
- *"The seats in the waiting area could be more comfortable." (Whiston Hospital – 23 Sep 2025)*

Treatment and discharge

A few patients felt their discharge was rushed or lacked follow-up information,

showing how communication at the end of care can be as important as during treatment.

- *"Discharge felt rushed; I could barely shuffle to the edge of the bed."* (Whiston Hospital – 11 Aug 2025)

Inclusion and staff training

Some people wanted greater awareness from staff about sensitive issues, such as addiction recovery or hidden disabilities.

- *"I found the ENT Consultant's attitude changed when they found out my nasal issues were caused by addiction... more training is needed around addiction and recovery."* (St Helens Hospital – 11 Aug 2025)

Do staff have enough time to spend with you and other patients?

Most people said staff made time for them even when departments were busy. They described staff as attentive, patient and reassuring, with only a few saying their appointment felt rushed.

96 % said yes.

- *"Staff are busy but still make time for you."*
- *"Reception staff walked us to the department."*
- *"Much better here than A&E elsewhere – care is efficient and kind."*

Have you been given enough information about your treatment?

The majority of people felt well informed about their care and appreciated clear explanations and written information.

A small number said they wanted more detail about test results, medications or follow-up steps.

91 % felt well informed.

- *"Staff are thorough and take time to explain things."*
- *"I was told to stop a medicine but not why – that should be clearer."*

Accessibility and getting around

People generally found both hospitals accessible and easy to navigate, helped by clear colour-coded zones and friendly volunteers.

A few suggested more automatic doors and easier drop-off points would make visits smoother.

- *"Layout is excellent – I'm visually impaired and staff help if I need it."*
- *"Automatic doors would help with frames and wheelchairs."*
- *"Parking is the main problem – otherwise fine to get around."*

Have you been treated with dignity and respect?

Nearly everyone said yes – they felt respected and cared for throughout their visit.

Patients consistently described staff as kind, polite and considerate.

98 % said yes.

- *"Everyone was lovely and treated me with respect."*
- *"Staff were compassionate and gentle."*

Any other comments

People often used this space to express gratitude and praise for staff.

- *"This is the best hospital in the area – we're lucky to have it."*
- *"Everything is great – faultless so far."*
- *"All departments are friendly and professional."*
- *"Communication between GP and hospital needs sorting."*

Summary

Feedback shows very high satisfaction across both hospitals. Staff are praised for being kind, caring and professional, and patients describe the hospitals as clean and efficient.

Across both sites, 97 % of patients rated their care as Good or Excellent. Recurring issues include parking and disabled access, communication between

departments and GPs, and small environmental improvements such as signage and seating.

Balancing what we hear

Our Listening Events bring together a mix of views from patients, visitors and carers.

While most people spoke positively about their care, we also record areas that could be improved.

By reviewing all comments together, we aim to give a balanced view that recognises both strengths and challenges.

These comments have informed the recommendations we've set out in this report.

Recommendations

The feedback gathered between August and October 2025 highlights how strongly people value staff professionalism, clear communication, and the clean, welcoming environments at both hospitals.

At the same time, recurring themes such as parking, appointment communication and accessibility suggest there are practical steps that could further improve patient experience.

These recommendations reflect what patients told us would make the biggest difference.

- 1. Celebrate good practice** – share examples of staff kindness and professionalism.
- 2. Improve communication and information sharing** – simplify letters, ensure timely results, link better with GPs.
- 3. Address parking and accessibility** – review disabled bays, signage and Blue Badge guidance.
- 4. Enhance inclusion and understanding** – offer training around addiction recovery and inclusive practice.
- 5. Small comfort and way-finding changes** – better seating and clearer signage would make a visible difference.

Addendum

August to October 2025 Feedback Update (Addendum)

This short addendum summarises other feedback received by Healthwatch Halton during the period **August to October 2025**, relating to **Whiston Hospital** and **St Helens Hospital**.

These comments were gathered outside the formal Listening Events and include experiences shared directly with Healthwatch through other channels.

Whiston Hospital

15 comments

Departments mentioned: A&E, Cardiology, Plastics, Outpatients, Urology, Maternity, Radiology, Bloods.

What's good

Patients consistently praised professional and caring staff, particularly within Outpatients, Cardiology, Plastics and Maternity.

- *"Staff were fantastic, explained everything clearly and made me feel at ease."* (Cardio – 15 Aug 2025)
- *"Very professional and caring, all staff lovely from reception to nurses."* (Plastics – 30 Aug 2025)
- *"Midwives were wonderful and couldn't be faulted."* (Maternity – 19 Sep 2025)

Several noted clear communication and reassuring explanations, saying clinics were well organised and efficient.

"Always clean and organised, never any problems with staff – Whiston Hospital is excellent." (Outpatients – 22 Aug 2025)

What could be improved

A&E waiting times remain a recurring theme.

- *"The staff were very good with my mum, but the wait was over 6 hours*

before being seen.” (A&E – 7 Aug 2025)

- *“Waiting on a trolley for hours, staff apologised and were kind.” (A&E – 27 Sep 2025)*

Some described difficulty contacting departments or delays in test results.

- *“Good care, but hard to get through on the phone to rearrange appointments.” (Urology – 4 Sep 2025)*
- *“Staff brilliant but too long waiting for results.” (Radiology – 12 Sep 2025)*

Parking and waiting-area comfort were also mentioned as areas for improvement.

St Helens Hospital

12 comments

Departments mentioned: Eye Clinic, Rheumatology, Lilac Centre, Orthopaedics, Outpatients.

What’s good

Staff were repeatedly described as friendly, efficient and helpful, providing consistent, person-centred care.

- *“Staff in Eye Clinic are lovely and very efficient.” (Eye Clinic – 10 Sep 2025)*
- *“Staff are brilliant, clinic runs smoothly every visit.” (Orthopaedics – 24 Sep 2025)*
- *“Caring and helpful nurses, always take time to listen.” (Lilac Centre – 20 Sep 2025)*
- *Several praised Rheumatology, calling it “simply fantastic” and describing St Helens as “a fantastic little hospital... We are very lucky to have such a wonderful general hospital.” (Rheumatology – 11 Oct 2025)*

The hospital was again described as clean, calm and well organised, with patients appreciating its accessible layout and the helpfulness of volunteers.

What could be improved

Pharmacy delays were raised by several people, with waits of up to an hour for prescriptions.

Parking charges and barrier queues were mentioned as ongoing frustrations.

- *“Update on parking as I was alarmed that cost has gone up from £1 to £3 for 30 mins parking.”* (Rheumatology – 11 Oct 2025)

Summary

Across both hospitals, patients continued to highlight the professionalism and kindness of staff, the cleanliness of facilities, and the helpfulness of volunteers. Practical issues most often related to A&E waiting times, communication, pharmacy delays and parking arrangements.

The feedback aligns closely with the main Listening Event findings and provides an additional snapshot of patient experience from August to October 2025.

Trust Response

MWL would like to thank Healthwatch Halton for undertaking outreach events to meet with our patients at Whiston and St Helens hospital between August and October 2025.

The reports will provide the senior team with an additional method of feedback that has highlighted both the positive feedback we receive to enable us to share the gratitude of our patients with the wider team, as well as affording us the opportunity to make ongoing improvements where required.

We have noted the content and are pleased to see that 96% of our patients receiving care rated care as excellent/good which is a further improvement upon the previous outreach event. We were pleased to see evidence in the report that our staff are viewed as being professional and how calm and well-organised both hospital sites are. The report assures us that our patients consistently describe staff as kind, professional and approachable and that patients also valued how teams took time to listen, explain, and reassure — especially in clinics where hospital visits could feel stressful.

We apologise to those patients that have not been fully satisfied or are frustrated with our services when they visit, we are happy to investigate individual cases if those patients would like us to. Patients should be advised to contact Patientexperienceandedi@MerseyWestLancs.nhs.uk if they would like us to do this.

Although listening Events only offer a snapshot of the experiences of patients who attend our hospitals on a given day, they allow us the additional opportunity to receive, acknowledge, and use feedback from our patients into our robust improvement plans. Thank you for sharing recommendations within this report. Some of the improvement that you have identified are already being addressed.

There is a planned piece of work to review the appointment letters that patients receive. Our aim is to make sure that patients have all the information that they

need to make visiting the hospital run smoothly including allowing extra time for parking and encouraging patients to bring their own wheelchair for use to get to their appointment. Patients should also be encouraged to use the NHS App to access their health record. Results are available as soon as they are uploaded by the GP and are also available to the GP as soon as they are processed by the laboratories.

We look forward to welcoming you to Patient Experience Council to present your findings to members.

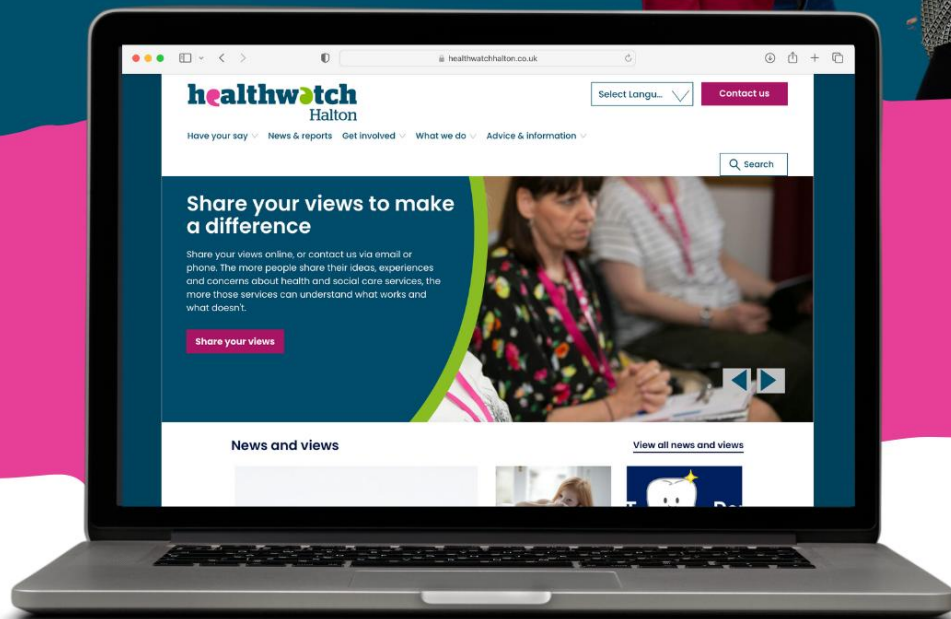
We also look forward to welcoming Healthwatch again in the future to conduct outreach sessions in the support a positive experience for our patients.

Yvonne Mahambrey, Quality Matron – Patient Experience
Mersey and West Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust

Have Your Say

Share your experiences of health & social care services in Halton on our website or with your mobile phone.

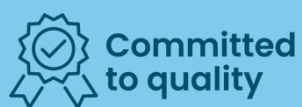
Visit our webpage:
www.healthwatchhalton.co.uk
click on the tab 'Have Your Say'



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or call us on 0300 777 6543





We are committed to the quality of our information.
Every three years we perform an in-depth audit
so that we can be certain of this.

healthwatch
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