

A group of people on a stage, some holding musical instruments like guitars and drums, appearing to be in the middle of a performance or rehearsal. The image is semi-transparent and serves as a background for the title text.

**Our Place, Our Say
2025
Summary report**



About

Our Place, Our Say 2025

Five events took place over Tees Valley during October and November 2025.

The events were open to anyone but were aimed at

- People who have a learning disability, their families and friends
- Autistic people, their families and friends
- People who work in local organisations which support local people who have a learning disability, or who are autistic

Our Place, Our Say set out to

- Provide information about local health and care services
- Collect views of local people about services and support in their area
- Provide information to the ICB and others who fund and provide local services, to help them provide the best possible support.





Why?

- We hoped that the project would mean that
- Local people would be better informed about support in their area - this makes it easier for them to get help when they need it.
- Leaders in local health and care services, would know more about the ideas of local people to help them plan local services.
- Staff from local health, care and charitable organisations would meet each other, and be better informed about sources of help in their area.

We asked visitors about local support and services in their area

- A large amount of feedback was received from people with a learning disability, autistic people, family carers, and people who work in local health, care and charitable organisations. This report summarises what local people told us.
- A detailed report was produced for each area, and the feedback is being used by local councils, health and charitable organisations to help shape future services with and alongside local people.

About the events

Five events were held in the following places

| | |
|------------------|--------------------------------|
| Stockton-on-Tees | 1 st October 2025 |
| Redcar | 9 th October 2025 |
| Darlington | 17 th October 2025 |
| Hartlepool | 5 th November 2025 |
| Middlesbrough | 18 th November 2025 |

Each event included

- A 'market place' of stalls where local health, care and support organisations talked with people about their organisations and services.
- Workshops for people to learn more about health and care services, or have a try at a healthy activity.
- A performance by a local community theatre company, or choir.
- Crafts and bulb planting throughout the day – offering a quiet creative space, with support on hand.
- Refreshments available all day, including lunch.

Visitors

- Over 600 local people attended one or more of the events. They were local people who have a learning disability, autistic people, family carers, and people who work in health and care services.
- 159 services/groups had a stall at one or more events. Over 70 organisations took part.

How did it go?

The feedback was extremely positive. People told us they really liked the events, in particular the opportunities to meet with other people, take part in inclusive activities, and to learn about local services and support.

Many said they want to repeat and expand the events.

Some asked for better parking, and wider promotion of the events.



What people said

Great opportunity to talk to people face to face, see what organisations have to offer, and to showcase people's amazing talents. Please make it an annual event.

Everyone was so welcoming!

Fabulous people and stalls, great venue and entertainment.

It is really hard finding out what is available. It's been good to see all the stalls today as there is lots on offer we didn't know about. I thought the whole day was excellent and very informative.



My daughter enjoyed the activities – she made a dreamcatcher and planted bulbs

What people said

From people who work for local health, care and charitable organisations

We got to meet lots of new people and to promote our service.

We found out things we didn't know about local support organisations

We have had a large number of referrals since (from a local community organisation)

I was able to get the information I needed and connect with local services to enable a smoother referral process for people we support



What local people told us

174 people completed a survey to share their experience of support in their local area. Some people gave verbal feedback. People told us what support is helpful, and where improvement may be needed.

What services or support make a positive difference to local people?

Interaction with others.
Loneliness and isolation
are the killers.

My home and my
super family and
friends

Supporting and
volunteering and helping
other people

Local services who
know what is
available

Advocacy

Counselling

[Our local charitable
organisation] is fantastic.
The people are really nice.
They listen to me.

Help to get my own
home...shopping, baking,
dancing, singing...help with
my money, help with
washing my hair



What services or support make a positive difference to local people?

- People listed a wide range of community and charitable organisations. These provide advice, advocacy, clubs, centres, groups offering music, art, drama, and a chance to learn new skills. People feel less lonely and isolated and feel a part of their community.
- Family and friends are the main support for many. They help with day-to-day life, emotional support, and are often the most trusted.
- Social opportunities are vital for reducing isolation.
- Learning and creative activities (e.g., drama, crafts) are important for self respect.
- Volunteering, working and helping people – being part of a team.
- Support to get a job
- Support with accommodation
- Family carers get support from groups where they can talk to others in similar situations, share advice, and get a break when needed.
- Mental health services, including counselling and support groups are valued as vital, helping people to manage stress, anxiety and other emotional needs.
- Specialist services, like NHS and council autism teams, and learning disability support, which help people live more independently, manage money, and make their own choices.



What is important to people about support?

Friendly people

People who listen and care

Somewhere to go and meet friends

People being approachable, person centred

Accessible services for all – easy to find and know about

Affordable

Knowing what services are available to us – days like today really help

It is important that they listen. That they always follow up and have good communication.

Social groups

Being part of a team

Easy to get to

Easy to contact in a crisis

Improving the independence of people who need support

A purpose - to prevent a mental health crisis



What is important to people about support?

- Family, friends and neighbours are very important. They help people feel safe, supported and connected.
- When receiving support, people value staff who are kind, friendly, patient and respectful. They want staff who listen and understand their needs.
- People want help that is person-centred and helps them be independent.
- Support should be close to home so it is easy to get to. Travel is often a barrier to people getting the support they need.
- Access is important – people want a place which is open when they need it (which can be outside office hours).
- There should be information about what support is available: simple to understand, with clear times and easy-read information.
- Specialist support for people who are autistic, people who have a learning disability and people with Special Educational Needs or Disability (SEND) is essential.
- Mental health support, safe spaces, and activities that help people feel well are highly valued.
- Carers benefit from groups where they can share experiences and get emotional help – these sometimes provide support, and also create a place where carers can voice their views, and share their experiences in order to influence services (education, health and social care)



What is missing or needs to be better?

It would be helpful to know what local services are available.

It is really hard finding out what is offered and available. It's been good to see all the stalls today as there is lots on offer we didn't know about.

Waiting times! for assessments and for referrals to service - sometimes years

Evening activities

People to actually listen

Adult social services still have yet to assess me after a year and a half.



Adult sensory area, no local services...that provide for adults who use wheelchairs

What is missing or needs to be better?

- People often wait too long for assessments, and for autism or learning disability diagnoses. Some said private assessments are not accepted (within education or health services).
- Many people said it is difficult to find information about services. They want simple, clear and central places to look things up.
- Different services do not always work well together. People want smoother transitions, especially from children's to adult services.
- Many places are not fully accessible. Some people need better transport, more accessible toilets, or buildings that are easier to use.
- People want more mental health support, especially support designed for people who have a learning disability and autistic people.
- Families said support services need more funding. They want services that treat people fairly and understand their needs.
- There were calls for more social activities, sensory space and support for independence.
- Some people feel lonely and isolated.



How can organisations make it easier to give feedback?

More events like these!

A range of accessible formats – written isn't always the best!

Keep contact going – send texts and make calls

Different ways to give feedback

Come and listen to what we have to say

It would be easier for me to have a chat.

Private pages on social media



How can organisations make it easier to give feedback?

- People want to be listened to and taken seriously. They want staff who show respect and care about their experiences.
- People want to be able to give feedback in a range of ways: paper forms, phone calls, emails, online forms, or face-to-face conversations. Anonymous options help people feel comfortable giving honest feedback.
- People like local events where they can talk in person. They want staff to visit local day services and community groups to hear their views.
- Clear contact details and simple information help people know who to talk to.
- Organisations should reach people who are not in groups.
- People want organisations to keep in touch, share updates, and build trust over time.



Summary

Human connection is important for everyone's health and happiness

People with a learning disability and autistic people can feel lonely more often. The feedback shows that it is important for health and care services to continue supporting groups that offer friendly, inclusive social activities. Peer support, especially for family carers, is very helpful and can protect wellbeing.

People want to be independent, creative, and part of their local community

Services can help by giving real chances to learn, work, and enjoy activities that matter to them.

Local day activities and services are seen as very important

They help people stay well and stop problems before they become crises. It is important that support is close to where people live, available at the right times, and easy to find. Using local community spaces can make services easier to reach.

Family carers need support, and carers' organisations really help



People want to be listened to and involved in planning their support

Different ways to share views are needed, including face-to-face conversations, so people feel respected and heard.

Specialist services are valued, especially for people who need a range of support

There are gaps in support and long waiting times. Feedback shows that offering support while someone is waiting for an assessment or diagnosis can really help.

Clear and easy-to-understand information is needed

Improving how information is shared will help people, families, and carers find the right support more quickly and at the right time.



Message from NHS North East North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB), Tees Valley

The ICB, Tees Valley Local Authorities, and our partners are fully committed to improving services for people with learning disability and autism.

We warmly welcome the 'Our Place, Our Say' report and are grateful to everyone that contributed to it and attended our engagement events. Your feedback is crucial in helping us plan high quality, safe and sustainable health services for the future as it guides our decisions and helps us to shape services that truly meet the needs and aspirations of those that use them.

We are committed to listening to you, learning from you, and working together to create positive changes that matter most to you and your families. This report is a powerful reminder of what we can achieve by talking and listening to each other and valuing the contributions of our partners. By continuing to hear your thoughts and ideas, we will keep improving and striving to commission services that have a positive impact on the health of our population.

Liz Whitehead, Commissioning Manager

NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board

Our Place, Our Say 2026

Local people are already planning for Our Place, Our Say 2026. If you want to know more:

Check out [our-place-our-say - Skills for People](#)

Or email ourplace@skillsforpeople.org.uk

Who took part

in Our Place, Our Say 2025

Carers Together, Middlesbrough

Age UK Teesside

Backstreet Theatre Company

Billingham and Norton Primary Care Network

Bridge Creative

Catalyst Stockton

CLIP - Community Led Inclusion Partnership, Hartlepool

Creative Support

Cruse Bereavement Care

Daisy Chain

Darlington Association on Disability

Darlington Borough Council

Learning and Skills Team

Darlington College

Darlington Connect

Darlington Learning Impairment Network

Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)

Eastern Ravens Trust

Elevating Voices CIC

Five Lamps Organisation

The Glowsticks Project

Hartlepool Borough Council

Citizenship Group

Community Hub

Hartlepool Now

Jobs and Skills

Learning Disability Team and Young Transitions Team

Support Hub

Supported Interns Team

Targeted Employability and Volunteering Team

Wellbeing Team Support Hub



These organisations took part in Our Place, Our Say 2025

Hartlepool Carers/ 1 Hart 1 Mind 1 Future

Healthwatch Darlington

Healthwatch Hartlepool

Healthwatch Middlesbrough

Healthwatch Redcar and Cleveland

Healthwatch South Tees

Healthwatch Stockton

Hope Foundation

HS&H

Inclusion North

Let's Connect, Hartlepool

MATRIX Neurological

Middlesbrough Council

22 Levick Court

Connect / Telecare Service

Learning Disability Team

Occupational Therapy Team

Public Health - Specialised Physical Activity Team

Public Health Team

Recycling and Waste Services

Rekindle (Digital Inclusion)

Staying Included

Staying Put Agency

Welfare Benefits Team

Middlesbrough First

Middlesbrough SEND Parent Carer Forum

NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board

North East and North Cumbria Learning Disability and Autism Network

North Star Housing Group

North Tees & Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust - Stop Smoking Service

Norton Men's Shed



These organisations took part in Our Place, Our Say 2025

Penderels Trust

People First Independent Advocacy

Red Balloons

Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council

Healthy Communities Team - Public Health South Tees

Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council Commissioning Team

Safe Places Scheme, Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board

Safer Communities Victim Care and Advice Service, Hartlepool

SEND Family Voice, Parent Carer Forum

Skills for People

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

Adults Carers/Shared Lives Service

Adult Learning Disability Team

Allensway Centre

Community Day Options

Fairer Stockton

Health and Wellbeing

Learning and Skills Service

Making it Real Board

Public Health Information Library

Family Hubs

STEPS

Stockton Citizens Advice

Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust

Durham and Tees Valley Adult Autism Team

Durham and Tees Valley Adult Learning Disability Intensive Support Team

Durham and Tees Valley Adult Learning Disability Physical Health Team

Adult Learning Disability North Tees Community Team

Adult Learning Disability South Tees Community Team

Darlington Community Team

Teesside Mind



These organisations took part in Our Place, Our Say 2025

Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board

Thirteen Group

Volunteering Academy at Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency

We Care You Care

Wellbeing Hub/ Catalyst Stockton

Women's Health Hub Hartlepool

