



Let's hear it for men's health and wellbeing

Healthwatch Key Findings
Project Summary

healthwatch
Kirklees & Calderdale

**Never
Heard**

Giving a voice to people who need it most

Let's hear it for men's health and wellbeing

What is it and why are we doing it?

'Some men are reluctant to go to doctors, some men don't feel able to talk about their health and wellbeing' – But what about Kirklees and Calderdale men?

At Healthwatch Kirklees and Calderdale, we wanted to find out what men in our community are currently doing to look after their health and wellbeing and how confident they feel doing so. We provided a platform to debunk myths about men's approach to health and wellbeing where men could safely voice their thoughts and opinions.



318

MEN RESPONDED
THROUGH SURVEYS,
GROUP DISCUSSIONS,
SOCIAL MEDIA,
PHONE CALLS
AND 1-2-1
CONVERSATIONS.

From June to August 2023, we spoke to 318 men from all walks of life, and ethnic backgrounds, aged 18 to over 80, and from every postcode in Kirklees and Calderdale.



Key findings

Our conversations with men revealed seven prominent themes.

This summary highlights our key findings and men's ideas for what they need from the health and social care sector to be able to manage their health and wellbeing better.

1. Health and wellbeing

Most respondents said the following were important to them:

- exercise
- dietary choices
- medical care
- social interactions
- relaxation activities

“Being healthy means being in a position in life devoid of worries over health and to have the comfort of professional health persons immediate attention should any untoward situation become apparent.”

— Calderdale, age not given



2. Long-term conditions as a barrier

Most respondents said that challenges relating to their physical and mental health posed significant obstacles to their ability to effectively manage or enhance their overall wellbeing.

“I have problems with my eyesight and hearing. I used to go to a walking group with my friend but he passed away and I can’t find the motivation to go on my own. I bought a dog to try motivate me to go out but it got too expensive to manage so I re-homed him.” — Kirklees, age not given

3. Access to Services

Respondents said that they did not know where to go or who to approach in order to get information to improve their health.

Waiting times and service quality of GPs and other NHS services were recurrent issues. 17% of the men Healthwatch spoke to reported that they could not access medical attention due to these factors.

One percent of men established that they were not able to access services due to problems with transportation issues.

Various individuals stated that communication with providers was problematic. Sometimes, they were not provided person-centred information or were put off contacting their GP because they thought waiting times were considerable.

“I’ve not been able to see the person who can help me. How do I find out who they are?” – Calderdale, age 65–79

“I struggled to book a GP appointment due to work. I couldn’t get one in advance. I had to keep trying on the day but missed out a lot or couldn’t get out of work at such short notice.”
– Calderdale, age 25–49

“I found out I was pre-diabetic during a health check and was told I needed to lose weight. However, I wasn’t told how to do this and had to do my own research; my doctor wasn’t very supportive. As someone with a learning disability, I need extra help understanding things like this.”
– Kirklees, age 50–64



Where do I go? Who do I ask?

4. Money and Time

Participants said that due to family or work pressures, they were not able to attend medical appointments.

Other men said that costs surrounding diet, gyms, and medical expenses made it feel impossible for them to take care of their health.

Some individuals established that they lacked access or ability to navigate the internet.

“I have a baby on the way so trying to put money to one side for that which takes priority over my own health.”

— Kirklees, age 18-24



5. Lifestyle and Motivation

Individuals established that making changes in their lifestyle was difficult due to a lack of motivation. When asked what effect does stress or mental ill health have on your lifestyle choices and ability to manage your health and wellbeing, seven percent of respondents said they use drugs or alcohol to help them manage stress. Throughout our engagement we heard a lot from men about how they turn to drugs and alcohol as a coping mechanism.



“For me it was finding the motivation to change a lifetime of bad habits. But I get great support from my GP and diabetic nurse and now I actually follow their advice.” — Kirklees, age 50-64

“I am a widower and sometimes it is difficult to motivate myself without the support of a loved one — Calderdale, age 50-64

“I’ve tried quitting smoking a few times but always started again. The advice I got from the stop smoking service was a bit basic and patronising. In fact one of the reasons I don’t really see a doctor is because I know they will just lecture me about smoking.” Kirklees, age 25-49

“When I was first diagnosed with diabetes I didn’t understand what I needed to do. I moved back in with my mum so she could help me with my diet and what to eat. — Calderdale, 25-49

“I drink and smoke more weed. I break down more and lock myself away from everybody.”— Kirklees, age 50-64

6. Support from partners

Many men reported that various aspects of their lives depended on their wives or partners. For instance, some mentioned mobility issues, stating that they relied on their partners to help them move around. Others mentioned their inability to cook or perform household chores because they never learned how to do so.

“Since my wife passed away, I have struggled with the basics aspects of looking after my health like the food shop. I had not done it for over 50 years. I didn't have a clue where to begin with cooking meals for myself.” — Kirklees, age 65-79

7. Mental health

Many of the survey participants mentioned that their mental health issues affected their physical health problems and triggered new symptoms in their mental wellbeing. Additionally, several respondents noted that this led to social withdrawal, sleep difficulties, and hygiene issues.

“During the times when my mental health has been at its worst, I have lost any focus on myself and made very poor decisions such as drinking and gambling to excess...no routine, poor hygiene, bad sleeping habits, eating very little or eating an excess of rubbish foods.” – Kirklees, age 50-64

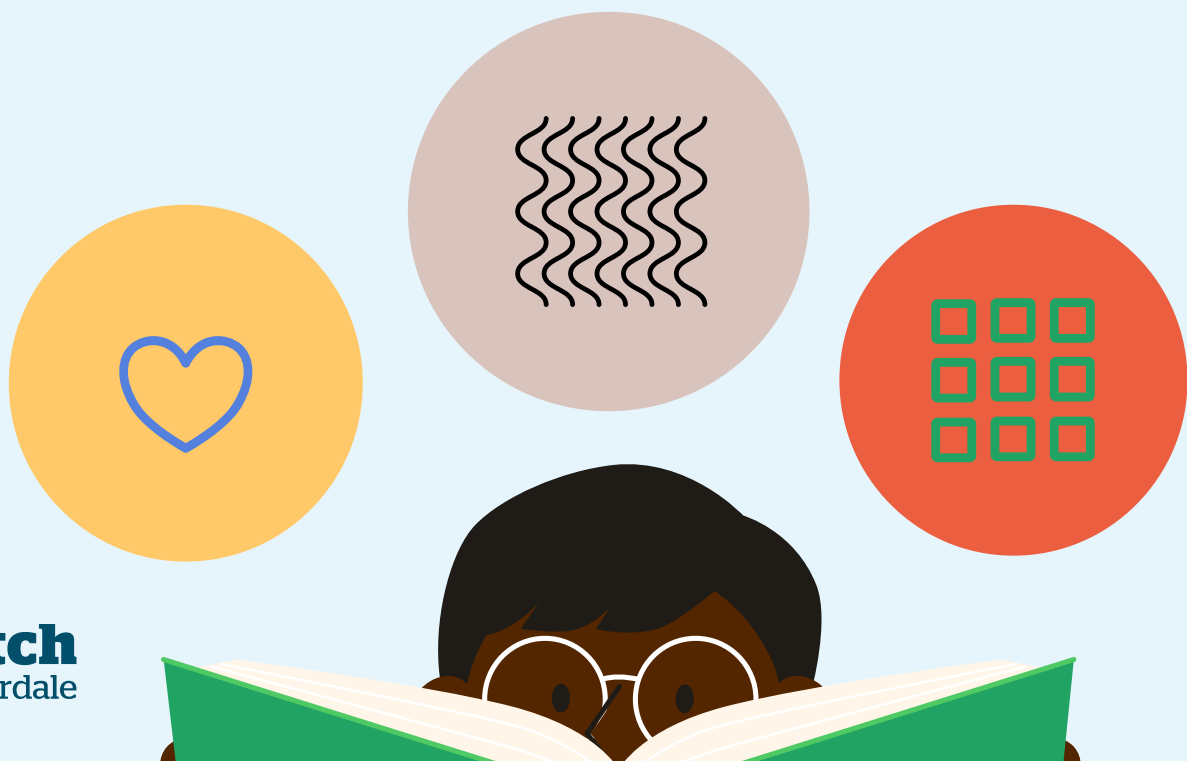
“I have had one-to-one therapy in the past and it was very beneficial, however once you have had several sessions or overcome some of your issues you are discharged. I feel mental health support should be a life long option for people who need/want it.” – Kirklees, age 65-79

“My mental health has been bad to the point it stops me from working, makes me withdraw from my friends and not look after myself.”
–Kirklees, age 50-64

“Don’t even think about mental health, men my age just don’t think like the younger ones do.” –Calderdale , age 50-64

Insight talking point

Older men Healthwatch spoke to didn't always understand what mental wellbeing meant. They were more likely to talk about using medication for things like depression. Younger men understood better and could talk more easily about how they support their own mental wellbeing.



What men say they need, to stay well:

Men's voices have been heard and whilst sharing their views with Healthwatch they came up with ideas that would improve their health and help them to take care of themselves.

1. Dietary advice
2. Cooking classes
3. Drop in GP sessions
4. Longer GP appointment times
5. Systems to easily book medical appointments.
6. Community exercise classes or free NHS instructors to motivate them to properly exercise.
7. Support and guidance for holistic approaches to diet and exercise.





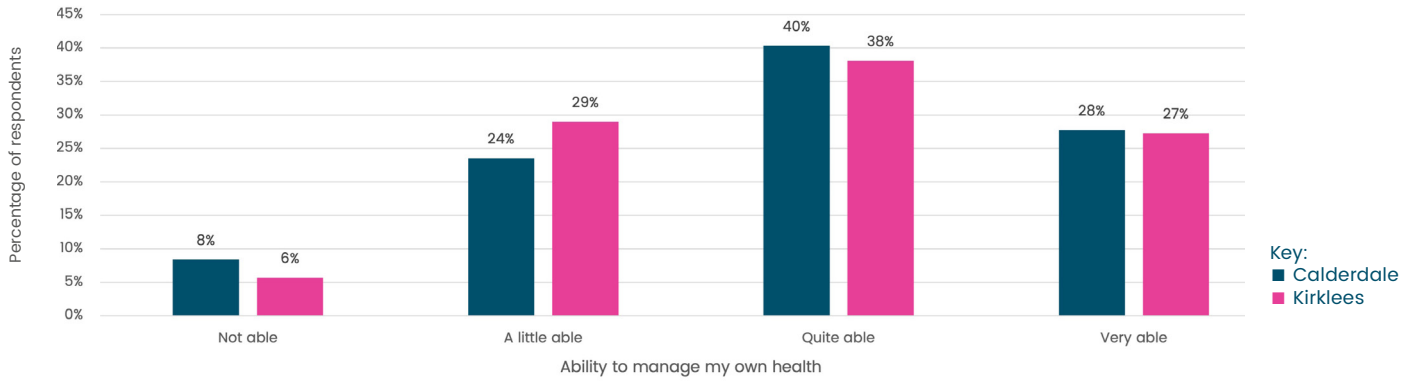
Let's hear it for men's health and wellbeing

Healthwatch Key Analysis
Data Summary

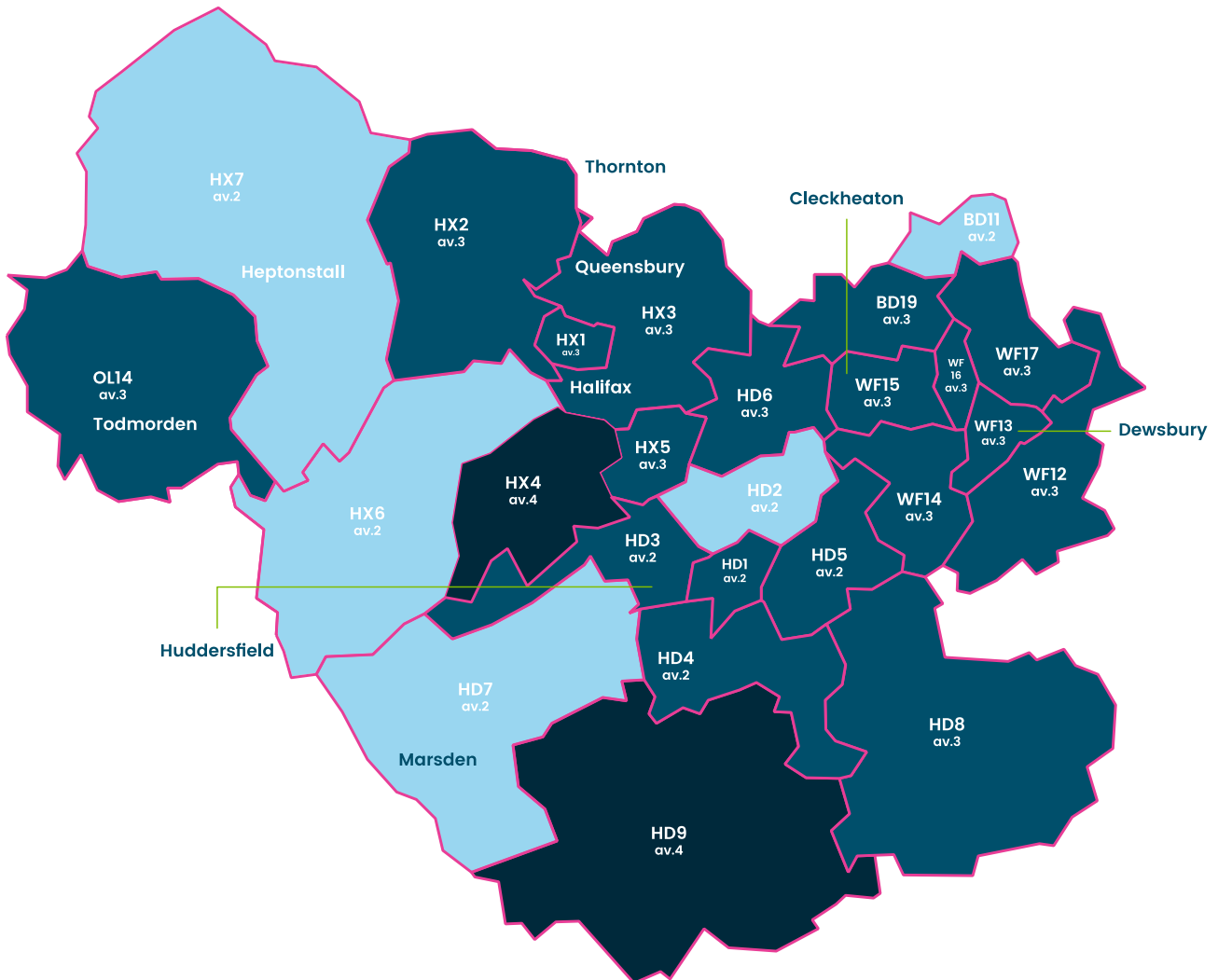
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Men's health confidence in Kirklees and Calderdale

Q. How would you rate your ability (knowledge, skills and confidence) to manage your own health and wellbeing?



The graph above shows that most men in Kirklees and Calderdale feel quite able to manage their own health and wellbeing with around 20-30% feeling either a little able or very able.



The map above shows the average level of men's health and wellbeing confidence by postcode areas based on the responses Healthwatch received. The darker the colour the higher level of confidence (Graded from 1-4).

- Grade Key:
- 4 - Very confident
 - 3 - Quite confident
 - 2 - A little confident
 - 1 - Not confident at all

Q. How confident are you that you can find trustworthy sources of information when using alternative remedies at home or seeking health advice from alternative sources, e.g. internet search?

49
average

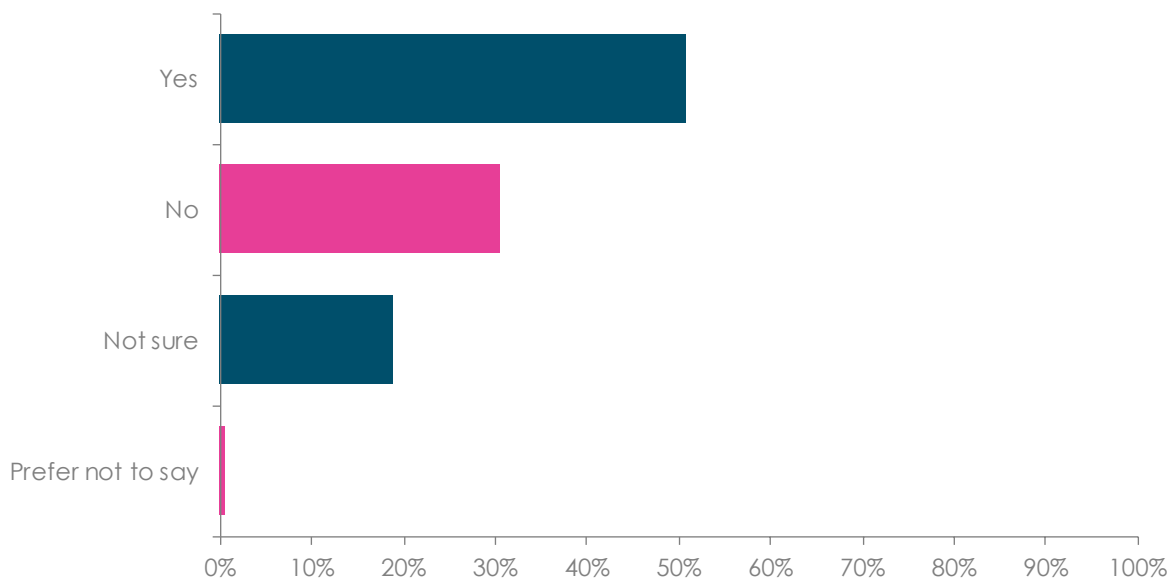
On a sliding scale from 0-100 Sliding scale where 0 = "not confident" and 100 = very confident, the average response selected was 49.

Q. Do you think about your future health and take steps to prevent new or additional health conditions that require ongoing medical care?

60
average

On a sliding scale from 0-100 Sliding scale where 0 = "I don't consider my future health at all" and 100 = "I do all that I can to look after my health now and for the future" the average response selected was 60.

Q. Do you prioritise your mental wellbeing as much as your physical health?



The graph above shows 51% of men prioritise their mental wellbeing as much as their physical health, 30% do not, 19% were unsure and 1% preferred not to say.

“I have an awareness of what I eat, drink, exercising and ensuring my mental health is good, to live a positive life.”

—Calderdale , age 50-64

“I don't do anything, nothing is wrong, so I just live life and don't think about my health.” —Calderdale , age 25-49

Men's ability to manage their own health

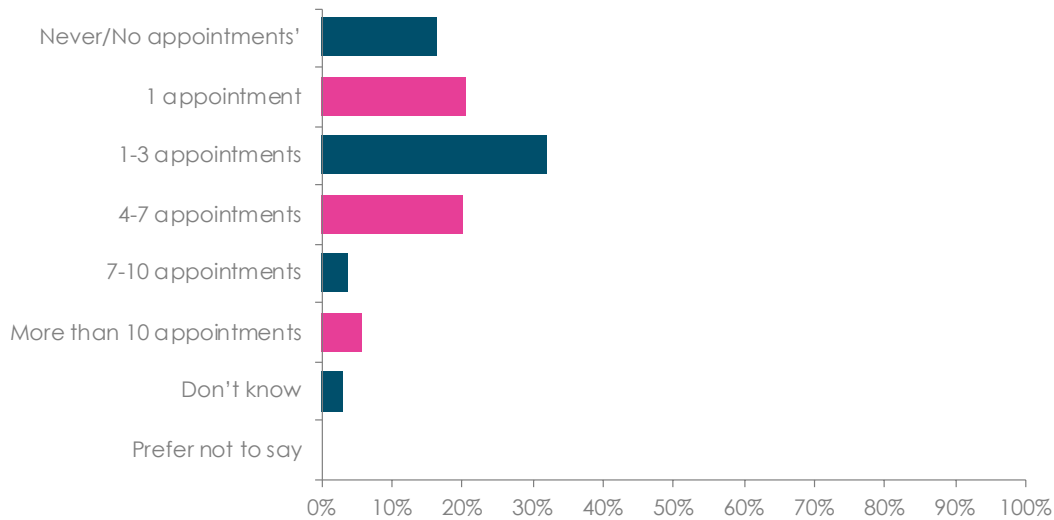
Q. Do you feel like you do enough yourself to maintain or improve your health?

63
average

On a sliding scale from 0-100 where 0 = "there is more I could do myself but I'm not able" and 100 = "I do everything I can within my ability" men's ability to maintain or improve their own health resulted in an average of 63.

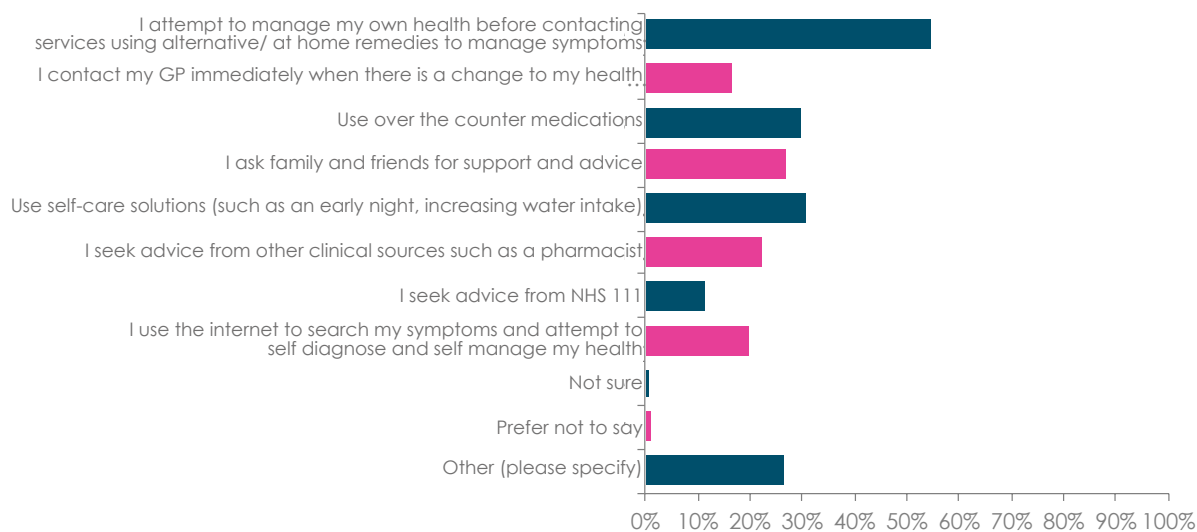
How men are accessing services

Q. How many GP appointments have you had at your GP practice in the last 12 months? (Both face-to-face and telephone appointments.)



The graph above shows that 35% of men have had 1-3 appointments at their GP practice in the last 12 months. 24% have not had any, 18% have had 4-7 appointments, 13% have had one, 5% have had 7-10 appointments and just 3% have had more than 10. The rest (5%) didn't know.

Q. Which of the following would you do when experiencing a non-urgent health issue or a change to your health? (More than one answer could be selected.)



The graph above shows that 45% of people attempt to manage their own health using alternative/at home remedies to manage symptoms, before contacting services. 26% contact their GP immediately, 25% use over the counter medications or seek clinical advice from a pharmacist, 22% ask family or friends or use self-care solutions, 21% search on the internet, 11% call 111, 3% didn't know or prefer not to say. More than one answer could be selected for this question.

What's next?

Healthwatch will share this information with providers and commissioners of services. We'll be asking them to tell us what they could do to improve the service they offer to men, that will empower men to look after their own health and wellbeing.

> [Click here for our men's health and wellbeing health inequalities summary](#)

> [Click here for our men's health and wellbeing Kirklees report](#)

> [Click here for our men's health and wellbeing Calderdale report](#)

> [Click here for our men's health and wellbeing mental health report](#)



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