

Impact Report 2023-24



Your story can make a difference
careopinion.org.uk



Welcome to our first-ever Impact Report!

A word from our CEO

At Care Opinion people share their stories not simply to provide data, but to make a difference. People want their experiences to help other patients, encourage staff, or prompt improvements in care. So, impact matters.

Sometimes you can see the impact of this simply and directly in responses from staff: a chair replaced, a leaflet improved, a policy updated. But more often, the impacts that online feedback is creating are hard to pin down. Teams using Care Opinion tell us about improvements in morale and confidence, changing relationships, increasing trust and even wider cultural change.

These impacts may be hard to identify and even harder to measure. So, although there are some numbers in this report, there are also many narrative accounts of impact from diverse perspectives. Of course, we need more research to help us understand and even start to quantify how and why Care Opinion impacts on relationships and culture.

This is our first impact report and I hope you'll enjoy reading it. Perhaps it will spark new ideas on how you could use Care Opinion to help story authors create further change in healthcare. I hope your thinking, and ours will develop further as we go on this journey together.

James Munro.



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About Care Opinion

Care Opinion is a not-for-profit social enterprise. Our online platform provides a public online feedback service for the UK, the Republic of Ireland, and Australia.

Since 2005, we have worked to make it safer and easier for people to be able to share their experiences of health and care in ways which lead to learning and change.

Now, hundreds of health and care organisations across the UK encourage their patients and clients to share their experiences with Care Opinion. We share the feedback with relevant staff who read and respond, and so the journey of learning and change begins.



Our mission

Is to provide an online platform so that:

- people can share honest feedback easily and without fear
- stories are directed to wherever they can help make a difference, and
- everyone can see how and where services are listening and changing in response

Our values

Innovation

We will innovate in the public interest. We will keep listening, learning, and improving, so that we find simpler, safer, and more effective ways for people to share their experiences of care.

Transparency

When things can be seen and shared, they can be improved. We encourage transparency in health/care services, and we will be open, honest and clear in all our activities.

Inclusivity

Everyone's story matters. We will treat everyone as equals and will nurture trust and respect in all our relationships. We will work to make our service accessible and helpful to the widest range of people we can.

Positivity

We believe that people are most open to learning and change when they feel valued and heard. We will make our activities, conversations and connections encouraging, constructive and supportive.

Humanity

We believe effective health and care services have at their heart the humanity of those who rely on them, and those who provide them. We will keep people (story authors, customers and our own team) and their stories at the heart of everything we do.

Impact for authors

We want people to be able to share their feedback safely, anonymously, and without fear.

We know that people often feel a sense of empowerment or relief when they share their feedback, and even more so when they can see it has been read by staff, and perhaps led to change.

Authors also tell us about other benefits of sharing feedback on Care Opinion:

Being listened to
Sharing gratitude
Expressing solidarity and hope
Putting an issue on the record
Reducing the power imbalance
Prompting improvements for others

One feedback author, Fresh Air Fan, summed it up beautifully when they said:

"I felt Care Opinion offered me the chance to tell my story rather than make a complaint... It felt empowering to be able to feedback on healthcare 100% from my perspective and with the freedom of anonymity... The Care Opinion website was easy to use and at the same time knowing my story would get heard was fantastic, I felt jubilant when I received a response from staff! I really felt listened to and that my experience had been taken seriously and acted on... Care Opinion is a valuable platform for the public and I think the most important aspect is feeding back on one's experience, how it felt to you, so that providers can see what being on the receiving end of care is like and whether it's actually matching the values and ambitions of their service... It offers people the chance to be a critical friend which I think is our citizen duty as receivers of free world class care quite frankly!"

We want Care Opinion to be accessible to a variety of seldom-heard communities. There have been several exciting projects created to enable groups to share their feedback.



For example, collaborative work has been done by the Public Health Agency (PHA), the deaf community, and the British Deaf Association (BDA) in Northern Ireland.

"In collaboration with the BDA the PHA committed to empower sign language users to share their experience in their language. The process was co-designed with four deaf clubs across Northern Ireland and in partnership with Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts.

This project addresses the issue of accessibility and highlights the importance of supporting all users of health and social care services in Northern Ireland to be able to share their experience through feedback, to have an open dialogue with Health and Social Care Northern Ireland (HSCNI) services, and to contribute to learning and improvement across the system.

The outcome of this project is that sign language users have a continued method to be able to share experiences on health and social care services in Northern Ireland in BSL and ISL.

The impact of this is two-fold:

- 1. Service users will know that the system values their feedback, is listening through responses in sign language, and is addressing communication barriers.***
- 2. The services within HSCNI can engage with feedback from sign language users, have a robust method to facilitate this, and use the learning for meaningful action through an open and transparent platform."***

Dalrene Masson,
 Project Lead for PCE/Care Homes, Regional Patient Client Experience team, Public Health Agency, Northern Ireland

What Care Opinion authors tell us about impact

"It's a pleasure to be able to give feedback as a channel for giving personal thanks as well as perhaps providing positive information for other patients and relatives facing the prospect of surgery."

"Care Opinion is a fantastic service that allows patients to provide their feedback on the NHS. A single story can be forwarded to many people and mine was shared with over 170 personnel. Patient feedback is genuinely wanted by NHS staff and believe me they do read it. It's only by us, the patients, giving feedback can changes be made, and that recognition be given to individuals or groups."

"Thank you all for your care, assistance, and determination to make this happen. You offer a platform that is easy to access, easy to put a comment on, either in words or pictures, and one that is a positive experience to use. Your checking processes ensures no one slips up with data protection, etiquette etc."

In Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, Ukrainian refugees arriving in Northern Ireland have been helped to post their feedback on Care Opinion in both Ukrainian and English.

In Scotland, a co-produced project in NHS Tayside supports BSL users to share their feedback online, via a BSL interpreter.

Victoria Sullivan,
NHS Tayside Care Opinion Lead said:

"Tayside's most viewed story during 2022/23 contained a British Sign Language video, produced by our Corporate Equalities Translation & Interpretation Team, who have been working to develop ways to help translate stories and responses in order to make Care Opinion more accessible, diverse and equitable for all its users."



Impact on health and care staff

By the end of 2023 around 14,500 staff had Care Opinion accounts enabling, at minimum, the ability to create searches, alerts and often also respond directly to the feedback author.

Just as with story authors, the impact of public online feedback on those working in health and care services is very diverse. Examples of different types of impact include:

- Building team morale, confidence and pride**
- Learning through listening**
- Encouraging person-centred care**
- Identifying patient safety issues**
- Supporting service improvement**
- Fostering an open and learning staff culture**
- Evidence for professional revalidation**

Learning through listening SoundEar

The mother of a child admitted onto a ward at a Somerset hospital left feedback about their experience of their stay. One of the observations made was about the amount of noise in the ward and the negative impact that this had on very tired parents and patients.

As a result of this feedback, a positive change was made as demonstrated by **Dr Holly Mincher, a paediatric specialty doctor at Somerset NHS Foundation Trust:**

"I would like to update you on how we are improving our care in our children's unit following your feedback.

We have shared your story with all our staff colleagues and especially with the staff who were on during your admission. Your experience has helped us all to reflect upon the importance of general and specific noise across the children's unit. As a result, we have invested in a SoundEar for our Ward.

SoundEar is a visual noise meter, mounted on the wall. When there is too much noise it lights up immediately to serve as a reminder to reduce noise levels. This will

serve to ensure the environment of our wards are as restful and peaceful as possible. I hugely appreciate the importance of this for patients and families when treating and recovering from illness.

Again, many thanks for taking the time in sharing your experience of your stay with us. We have learnt such a lot from your story. We are making changes with the aim to provide the best care for our patients and their families."

Person-centred care The Veterans Passport

The Veterans Passport was co-created by staff at Stockport NHS Foundation Trust and veteran patients as a response to feedback left by a patient who was distressed at having to repeat their experiences to various health professionals. **Emma Rogers, former matron for patient experience,** explained:

"By working together with veteran patients, we developed the passport as a way to provide a more individualised support system. The passport has been a simple but effective way of providing the right level of information to enable the person to receive personalised care and support at a time when they need it the most. There has been an extensive training programme rolled out for staff across the trust and within the local GPs, with a veterans action group that is supported by trust staff and veterans of all age groups to oversee and guide the process. Working with Care Opinion has allowed us to specifically identify a need for a patient group and therefore allowed us to make changes to the way we work in order to cater for that need. In bringing in the Veterans Passport we are living our shared values and working with patients to make sure their voice is heard in a safe and open way."



Morale and staff culture

Research tells us that the feedback shared on Care Opinion can have a positive impact on the morale on staff:

“Positive appraisals most frequently described by staff members included the ability of online patient feedback to improve staff morale, resilience, and pride through celebration and motivation.”

Implementing online patient feedback in a ‘special measures’ healthcare organisation, by Rebecca Baines (<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/20552076211005962>)

This finding is confirmed by thousands of responses from staff posted on Care Opinion every month. For example:

“We really do value positive and negative feedback. This is not only to ensure that we continue to improve the quality of care we deliver, but also that the team are able to see the positive results of their continued hard work and dedication to their patients and carers.”

We are truly humbled and will pass this on to be shared far and wide with staff who were involved in your care. We are extremely proud of them and this story will not only boost morale but ensure that they are reminded once again of how the work that they do means so much to our patients. This story and your feedback is also invaluable and will help countless others facing the same challenges as you to gain some reassurance of what they can expect during their treatment with us.”

What health and care staff say about Care Opinion

“Care Opinion proved to be a positive model for community healthcare, addressing the need for equitable feedback collection.”

“The easily accessed feedback is also a great resource for revalidation for the nursing members of the team.”

“Through timely response to stories which are critical we are avoiding formal complaints, by opening direct lines of dialogue to understand, apologise and learn when patients and clients have poor experiences. We are now able to analyse and consider common themes, both positive and negative, and ensure these are fed through into our assurance and accountability processes. We look forward to the continued roll out of Care Opinion and the greater use of all the functionality it offers to help shape and improve our service going forward.”

Research

Encouraging and supporting independent academic research is an important part of our work, and a further route to change and improvement in health care.

There are broadly three different ways that Care Opinion supports research:

The stories that people share are a unique source of data for both qualitative and quantitative studies

Almost 2,000 people have now joined our research community and many have been participants in research studies run by the Yorkshire and Humber Patient Safety Research Collaborative

In many studies Care Opinion itself is the subject of the research

To date we are aware of 32 studies on, or using, Care Opinion. In 2023, five new studies were published:

A glimpse behind the organisational curtain: A dramaturgical analysis exploring the ways healthcare staff engage with online patient feedback

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1467-9566.13607>

This study, led by Dr Lauren Ramsey, used ethnographic work at three English NHS trusts to create a novel analysis of staff views about “frontstage” and “backstage” work with patient feedback.

Developing a research community within an online healthcare feedback platform

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/hex.13696>

This study led by Dr Beth Fylan reports on the views and preferences of Care Opinion authors about joining an online research community. The study has informed our work in developing the research community.

Using and loving the NHS

<https://bristoluniversitypressdigital.com/monochap-oa/book/9781447368892/ch006.xml>

This book chapter by Dr Ellen Stewart reports qualitative research using stories on Care Opinion to explore how people feel and express gratitude for the NHS, even in a context where they may also wish for improvements in care.

“Feedback is indeed a dainty dish to set before the Trust”

<https://pxjournal.org/journal/vol10/iss2/8/>

A further paper from Lauren Ramsey setting out the key lessons for practice and policy from her detailed case studies of use (or non-use) of online feedback in three NHS trusts.

Health service improvement using positive patient feedback

<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0275045>

This study led by Rebecca Lloyd reviewed 68 studies on the impact of positive patient feedback on staff and found a wide range of positive impacts including short-term emotional benefits, improved home and work relationships, reduced absenteeism, and improved staff retention.

Research chats

During 2023 we held six online research chats with academics to understand and share the significance of their findings. Each chat would usually attract around 20 attendees, including a mixture of academics, healthcare staff, and people from patient organisations.



Education

Care Opinion is an effective tool for teaching both undergraduate and postgraduate healthcare professionals in training.

Reading, and engaging with, the experiences of patients and families shared on Care Opinion has the potential to inform clinical practice and foster the growth of empathy and compassion.

In 2023 we held our first national education conference '**Care in precarious times: how patient stories foster motivation and meaning in our teaching**' which attracted almost 200 attendees. The eight sessions explored a range of issues in using online feedback to support medical, nursing, and AHP education, and promote person-centred thinking in our future healthcare professionals.

The conference heard about practical ways in which Care Opinion feedback can be brought into teaching and learning programmes, including for example:

- Stories as a catalyst for patient-centred care
- Use of Care Opinion in simulated placements
- Exploring issues in patient safety
- Care Opinion as data for qualitative research projects

Very often students are asked to pick a condition, intervention or service area of interest, and then find and analyse feedback related to their topic. This simple approach has multiple benefits, encouraging and offering students:

- To take a human-centred approach to patient experience, seeing a condition or a service from the patient's perspective, "through the patient's eyes".

- The opportunity to supplement clinical teaching with experiential and relational richness.
- To identify common problem areas, investigate, action-plan, and suggest improvements in a safe learning environment.
- The opportunity to explore how to react to complex and difficult issues, such as patient harm, in future practice.
- To consider the challenges of leadership and fostering change in complex systems learning about and potentially becoming future change agents.

Dr Giskin Day of Imperial College spoke at our education conference about how Care Opinion narratives add context to clinical encounters for students:

- Environmental elements of medical encounters shape people's experiences: these can often be addressed.
- Emotional repertoires are important parts of people's experiences.
- Telling your story, and having it included in Care Opinion, restores (in part) some agency for many patients.
- Engaging with narrative helps student to articulate impact on their practice and they often pledge to make things better.

What speakers said at our education conference:

"We know from the students who attended the drop-ins, who came regularly to talk to us about their projects, that they found it really empowering to use Care Opinion stories as the basis of their work. And they were telling us, we know that there are real people behind the data and the conclusions we're drawing are fully applicable to our own practice and to the practice of others".

Dr Patricia Harris
Director of Education, Ulster University School of Medicine

"Our chronic pain nurse had never seen Care Opinion before but said that one quote from a service user summed up perfectly everything she had spent her career trying to teach healthcare professionals about the patient perspective. She was amazed by its effectiveness as a teaching tool."

Lucy Mottram
Principal lecturer in Adult Nursing, Sheffield Hallam University

"Ultimately, using patient narratives has enriched my understanding of how a good healthcare experience is centred around the human connection that can only be formed via compassionate patient-centred care."

Imperial College 4th year medical student reflecting on their Care Opinion feedback project

"...going through that much patient feedback, which I had not done before, really gave me a sense of what mattered to people"

Dan Newton
Final year St Andrews University ScotGEM student

"An analysis of Care Opinion stories helps our students to appreciate that context really matters in the clinical encounter"

Dr Giskin Day
Principal teaching fellow, Faculty of Medicine, Imperial College

Impact through online events

In 2023, Care Opinion hosted two online conferences for a general audience, attended by hundreds of people from across the UK who were interested in the power of feedback to help make health and care services better for everyone.

Spring: The Ripple Effect

Our May 2023 conference was titled **“The Ripple Effect – the many benefits of online feedback”**. As the name suggests, the sessions at this event focused on the impact’s stories and responses on Care Opinion have on patients, carers, staff and services.

The conference began by outlining how to start a ripple of impact across a healthcare organisation by exploring key features of the Care Opinion platform. Subsequent sessions featured eight guest speakers working in healthcare services in Scotland, Northern Ireland and England, who shared their experiences of creating impact in their own organisations and how they have listened to, responded to, and learned from the gift of feedback provided by the public.

As well as the many benefits in terms of learning, development, and change, speakers also shared experiences of the positive impact online feedback has had on staff culture. The conference was closed by our CEO James Munro who shared how new possibilities for change were offered by new features in development, and by the impact of new academic research about or using Care Opinion.

Autumn: Caring for Care

Our November 2023 conference referenced the influential paper **“Caring for Care”** by Fadhila Mazanderani of the University of Edinburgh, who opened the conference. Dr Mazanderani presented the findings of research showing how people post feedback online to express their care for other patients, for staff, and for the health system which enables care to be available.

Further guest speakers shared their experience of connecting with people who have historically been unheard, ensuring their voices are heard and can have an impact on services. We also welcomed speakers who highlighted the importance of responding well to critical feedback, and what we can learn from this practice.

In a second research session, we welcomed Dr Lauren Ramsey of the University of Leeds who shared her ethnographic studies of contrasting attitudes to public online feedback in three English healthcare trusts. Our day ended with an award ceremony to celebrate nine Care Opinion “star responders”.

Conference impacts

Both conferences were an opportunity for healthcare staff, educators, researchers, policymakers and others to learn from one another, make new connections, and hear about emerging tools and approaches.

Across both conferences, along with our other events in the year (research chats, education conference, policy webinar), we welcomed hundreds of attendees. All sessions were recorded and made available on our blog for anyone to watch. Feedback from speakers and attendees confirmed that our events have been valued by the health and care community, and the rise in registration throughout the year shows the growing interest in this area.

Recent feedback from conference attendees

"It's great to hear the different ideas about ways to use and promote Care Opinion from different parts of the country"

"I found the sessions very useful, the speakers had great inputs on how they have used Care Opinion, it was very helpful"

"As we are at the start of our journey with Care Opinion it was great to hear the positive stories on the roll-out of Care Opinion within the different areas"

"I really enjoyed the conference, it was a good introduction to Care Opinion as we don't use it in our organisation. Everything was well organised and the speakers were great."



Care Opinion in numbers

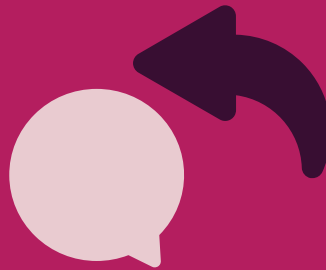
Stories published in 2023

27,825



Responses to stories in 2023

31,441



Changes planned/made in 2023

353



Health and social care staff listening to stories

14,467



Subscribing organisations

102



Organisations receiving free basic registration access

447



Webinars and training sessions held in 2023

154



People who attended webinars and online conferences in 2023

1,621



Support hours provided in 2023

7,402



What impact do we aspire to in the future?

The impacts Care Opinion creates for patients, healthcare staff and the healthcare system more widely could be far greater than they are today.

We would love to see the scale and range of impact created by online feedback increase in the coming years.

We would also like the impacts we create to become more visible, so that people who share feedback can see the difference they make, both individually and collectively.

Thoughts from Care Opinion team members on our goals for future impact

More staff listening to patients. Can we reach 20,000?

We would like our platform to become more accessible, especially for different language speakers .

I would like to see greater involvement from general practice. Where we have worked with GPs there have been benefits to patients and staff.

To see all the services that we support sharing Care Opinion with patients and clients.

To hear more feedback from children and young people.

I would like every story shared on Care Opinion to receive a response. No story should go unheard.

It would be good to see more clinical staff who understand the power and importance of offering an authentic apology. I am hopeful that learning about Care Opinion early in their careers will help this.

Sometimes we see a "change planned" on the site. I'd like to see more staff come back and update when a "change made" follows.

Why couldn't Care Opinion be on the curriculum in all medical and nursing schools? Maybe it already is!

Points of view

“Care Opinion is one of the most impactful and important ways of demonstrating a culture of openness”

Finally...

Care Opinion would like to thank everyone who has shared their story and read or responded to a story. Without this input, Care Opinion would not be able to support the learning and change that is happening within health and care services across the UK and further afield.

Shaun Maher

Strategic advisor for person-centred care and improvement, Scottish Government

“Care Opinion plays an important role in giving the people of Scotland a voice to let us know how their health service is doing, praise where praise is due and suggestions for improvement when things could be better. It bypasses the usual bureaucracy and provides an independently moderated unfiltered feedback loop from the perspective of the public without fear or favour, and that is to be highly valued!”

It is helping us to democratise and humanise the NHS and open up constructive improvement-focused dialogue between people who provide services and people who receive services. Care Opinion is one of the most impactful and important ways of demonstrating a culture of openness, bringing opportunities to learn and improve, boost morale and spot opportunities to improve that otherwise would be missed.”

Jessie Cunnett

Chief executive, Point of Care Foundation

“The amazing thing about Care Opinion is that it brings feedback into the open. Creating a transparent feedback loop that creates a genuine two way dialogue around experiences of care and how these can be improved. The impact of this is that people who have experiences to share feel heard and those who are providing care can respond in real time. The outcome is that improvements can be made quickly, building

trust and collaboration. Care Opinion provides an easy-to-use platform that generates a partnership of learning and improvement in care between everyone involved.”

Martin Jones

Alcohol and substance misuse service manager, HSE Ireland

“Care Opinion brings the views of service users, their families and carers to the people responsible for providing their care, in a very practical way. The individual who posts a story has the opportunity to express themselves, feel heard, and be responded to in a helpful manner. A wider online audience of interested parties then have the opportunity to learn about innovative service developments in mental health and addiction and service changes can be considered in the context of the feedback. Care Opinion has been part of changing the culture of our organisation, towards being more inclusive of stakeholders including service users, families and carers.”

Iona Gibson

ScotGEM 2nd year student

“Care Opinion is a very accessible tool which gives patients a voice. Medical students are the doctors of the future and I find it invaluable to have a tool such as Care Opinion to know what changes I should fight for in my career. With Care Opinion at our fingertips there is no excuse for “not knowing” the needs of our patients. I want to continue to use it as a platform to better understand the needs of others so I can provide the care they deserve.”

Abigail Barkham

Divisional Clinical Lead for Physical Health Mid and North Hampshire

“Care Opinion in Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust has grown from a small pilot study now to organisational roll out. It has grown because there is an appetite to improve our approach to gaining patient and carer stories. We have learned that one method does not fit all. By ensuring we have met the needs of all to let us know how we have done, we hope to hear everyone. It matters to us that every voice is heard no matter how small. It matters that clinicians can remain rooted in their feedback and make changes related to care outcomes.”

Dr Holly Mincher

Paediatric speciality doctor in training, Paediatrics, Somerset NHS Foundation Trust

“Reflecting on my experience of Care Opinion, what started as a creative mission to improve feedback opportunities for patients and families has become far more than just that. One patient story, be it sharing a kind word or encouraging a change for better care, creates a wonderful ripple effect. The positivity it creates grows and expands, touching an individual member of staff, the paediatric department, cross-specialty departments and colleagues and most importantly the patients and families we care for. Care Opinion is more than just a means to collect patient feedback: it creates all kinds of impacts far beyond what I expected.”

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