



Briefing Paper
Access to Healthcare for the Farming Community
December 2025

Introduction

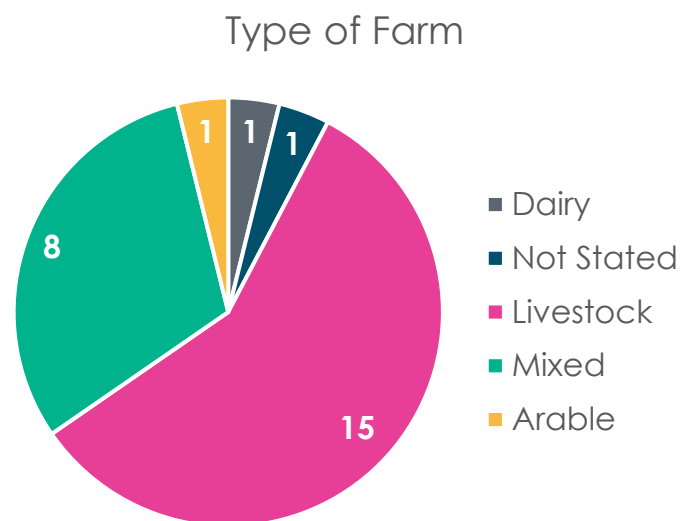
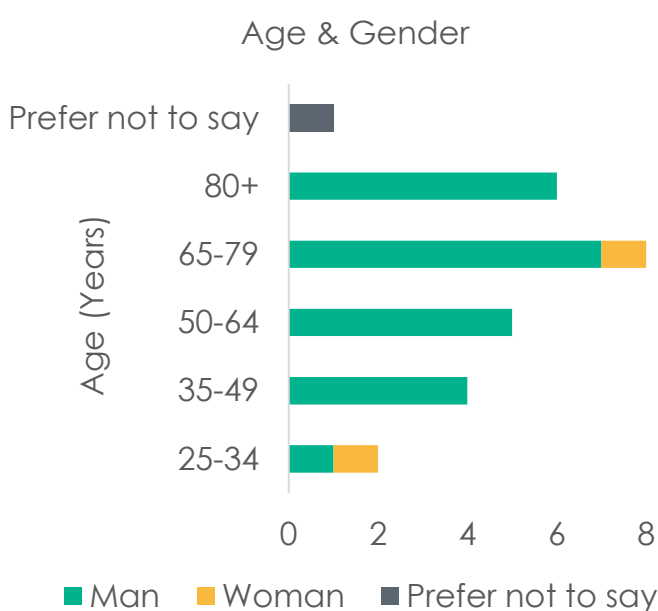
Healthwatch Warwickshire are an independent service for everyone who uses health and social care in Warwickshire. We help people understand the health and social care system through signposting. Together with our volunteers we make residents' voices heard to help improve NHS and Adult Social Care services.

Background

Healthwatch Warwickshire met with the Farming Community Network and local Primary Care Networks to explore health inequalities affecting rural farming communities. As part of this work, we attended the Rugby Livestock Market, which hosted a Farmer's Healthcare Event, in November 2025. We asked farmers and their families about their experiences of General Practice and other healthcare services to find out if farming impacted on their experiences.

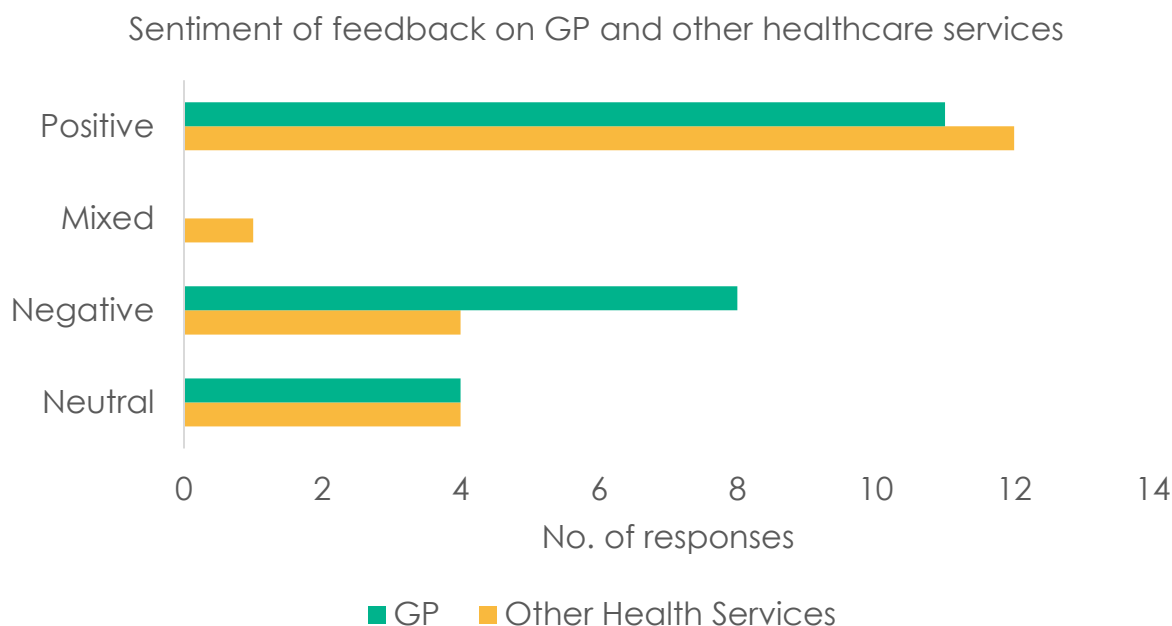
Demographics

The farmers we spoke to were male, aged 65-79 years, and White British living in the counties of: Warwickshire (10), Leicestershire (7), Oxfordshire (5), and Northamptonshire (4). Most of the farmers told us they are Livestock farmers raising sheep and cattle.



Key Findings

Healthwatch Warwickshire received 44 pieces of feedback from farmers about how being a farmer impacted their experiences of seeing a GP or using other healthcare services when they needed to.



Most of the feedback we heard was positive in nature. We heard from many farmers who were able to access health services when needed. Others told us about challenges associated with farming and appreciated it when services took their needs into consideration.

“I have noticed that if the staff in A&E know you are a farmer, they see you quicker so you can be treated and, on your way, back to the farm.”

Feedback on the impact of farming on accessing healthcare

Some farmers told us that they will seek healthcare support when they need it and make time for appointments. Others told us that the demanding nature of farming, which involves 10–12-hour days in the summer and daylight-dependent schedules in the winter along with physically demanding workloads can lead to delays in seeking care.

"You will make time to go if you need to go. I prefer to self-medicate."

"I had the flu jab last year; I was really poorly afterwards. I wouldn't have it done again. I would prefer to just catch the flu and let my immune system fight it."

"I go for the health checks when they call me in."

"I make time to go if I need to."

"I talk to my vet; he gives me a quicker diagnosis. I trust him. If he says I need to see my GP, then I will book an appointment."

"Farmers tend to leave things until the last minute. That is how it was years ago, but I think it is getting better now. It is hard to take time off work."

"You don't go to see a GP unless you are falling apart. I give it a few months and hope its ok after a good night's sleep. We are always busy; there is always a full day's work to do. I don't have the time to go get changed and go see the GP. Unless something is falling off, I won't go."

"GP staff are not very receptive. They should understand that if a farmer is asking for an appointment, they should be given an appointment. The likelihood is that the farmers should have seen their GP 7 months prior, but we are too busy to go."

"I had difficulties in getting a diagnosis from the GP. I was sent from the doctors to A&E and back again. Once I had the blood tests back, I went straight into hospital for 3-6 months for chemo and radiotherapy. I had an operation and have just been given the all clear. My doctor should have been more helpful and the communications between the hospital and GP could have been better. Farmers put up with things rather than seeking help."

Booking a GP appointment

Whilst some farmers reported that it was easy to book a GP appointment, others told us that they experience challenges when using online systems.

"I find it ok to get an appointment."

"I call up at 8:30 and can get an appointment at 9:10 - it is very good."

"I am very pleased and can get an appointment when I need it. Very positive."

"Difficulty getting appointments at the GP."

"Excellent GP. I can call them up and they offer face to face appointments and a range of times, or even on the same day."

"When you call the GP surgery you can wait up to an hour before the call is answered by which time all the appointments have gone."

"You have to book online; I've got no chance. There is no facility for the elderly. It took me more than 10 minutes to fill in the online form to get a GP appointment. There is no option to phone and book an appointment. They don't like it if you walk in and ask."

"Everything is online now; I won't be able to do that. My daughter booked me in for a blood test, it took 3 days to get an appointment. They should be able to do it at the GP surgery."

"NHS App - only concern I have is that you can see the test results before the GP has a chance to tell you about them. Some people may worry about seeing a result they are not expecting."

"NHS App - I am not tech savvy and at my age I don't want to learn. I rely on my daughter to do it for me when I need it."

"You can't speak to a human."

"I find the NHS app confusing; my son orders my repeat prescriptions on it for me."

"I use the NHS App online - it works well for me."

Feedback on accessing emergency care and pharmacy services.

“St Cross is a good hospital. I went to minor injuries and was in and out in about an hour.”

“Healthcare staff are not very knowledgeable about farm injuries. I was attempting to inject a sheep, it moved, and the injection went into my hand instead. I went to A&E; they didn't know how to treat it so I was left waiting for hours until they could figure out what to do with it.”

“I went to the hospital with a broken finger, and I was in and out within 30 mins. It was incredible. They cut my rings off. If farmers get hurt, it can be a dirty cut, so you need to be seen quickly.”

“I appreciate the pharmacy making sure they have my medication ready. I like how they use text messaging to let me know when it is ready for me to pick up.”

“The health service is fantastic in an emergency. I had a heart attack; the ambulance service told me there were no ambulances available and I needed to get to A&E straightaway. We drove to Kettering Hospital (25-minute drive), as soon as the paperwork was filled in, I was seen straightaway and operated on within the hour.”

Next steps

The Warwickshire Rural Hub and the Farming Community Network host quarterly healthcare events across Warwickshire and will share the 2026 dates shortly. To expand access to healthcare services, they are aiming to partner with healthcare professionals to host a healthcare event in Warwickshire North.

For more information contact shabina@healthwatchwarwickshire.co.uk

Healthwatch Warwickshire | 4-6 Clemens Street | Leamington Spa | CV31 2DL | www.healthwatchwarwickshire.co.uk | t: 01926 422823