

Opcare Survey - follow up contacts by Healthwatch Kirklees

From 286 respondents, 100 asked for Healthwatch to contact them. Each person was contacted by phone call or email and they were asked “is there anything else you would like to add to the feedback you’ve already given?” Additional comments are shown below.

Some people wanted Opcare to contact them to give them an update - details were sent through to Opcare so that they could make contact.

Comments

“My child has been housebound since mid-October, no means of getting out of house without wheelchair as child is too heavy to lift. MP got involved and the appointment has been brought forward to 12 Dec 17”

“People are desperately trying to get a timely service and this is very rarely forthcoming, eg a recent case where the person passed away before the wheelchair arrived, taking away the person’s quality of life. I work to support people with wheelchairs on a national basis and Opcare is top of the list of services who present real challenges - a Cinderella service” Comments made by Wheelchair Services Co-ordinator from Motor Neurone Disease organisation.

“Still having problems with an ill-fitting wheelchair for child. We were promised a 6 month review but nobody has ever got in touch. The seat is tilted back. The paediatrician comments on it every time. OT has tried to get Opcare to look at it. It’s taken so long to sort out that the chair is already too small. How long will it take to get another?”

“The service is failing the most vulnerable. They don’t understand personalisation/urgency. They have no records of what equipment has been issued so can’t possibly turn up with the right equipment/parts for repairs. They have to make multiple visits to get repairs done, when it should be done in one trip”

“The service offer a ‘best-fit’ solution, rather than looking at long term needs. It’s more a case of ‘that will do’ when they would actually save money if they got things right from the outset. My partner’s osteopath and podiatry service are trying to strengthen the leg which has been affected by stroke but the wheelchair provided doesn’t support the position which would help her. Now waiting for a

cushion from Opcare to hold her position and support her but I just can't see this working. Would prefer old wheelchair back as the new one just isn't right and it feels like we've gone backwards. Gemma at Opcare is lovely"

"It's just not fit for purpose, it's falling apart. I don't get any updates on when things are likely to be sorted, just told it's now moved from pending to purchasing but no timescales given. I always have to force the issue, constantly trying to chase up and always get fobbed off. I'm totally dependent on a wheelchair to move and I don't want to go out because I can't depend on the wheelchair I've got as it's just not fit. I'm now on anti-depressants because of all this"

"had a wheelchair but had to send it back because it was like a tank, too heavy to push. They sent someone 3 weeks ago to assess him but I've not heard anything since"

"I'm ringing on a weekly basis because my daughter is sat in a broken chair. The back of it has been broken since October 16, it's split down to the first set of bolts and we have to cover it with a cushion. No spinal support and scoliosis is getting worse. The Velcro on the footplates doesn't work anymore so her feet are not held in position. She kicks her feet out and there's a risk there. She has a fractured ankle and a torn ligament now and this may be as a result of the footplates not holding her feet, we just can't say for definite as she's non-verbal so can't tell us. We only knew when there was swelling. Consultant neurologist requested a seating review in Oct 16. Somebody from Opcare came 3 weeks ago and said it would be a priority and that an emergency chair would be provided in the meantime but we haven't had anything"

"My child has a severe 'head lean' due to wheelchair not being right. My child is damaged as a result. I have begged to be able to use another provider but the CCG wouldn't agree to it. They completely ignored a report we got from an independent OT - they did nothing. They just use excuses not to do anything. Still waiting for moulded seating and the chair is causing pressure sores"

"My main concern is that there are various things going wrong with the chair, some are simple things, but I still don't think the repairs will sort the problem. She's leaning to one side and the repairs won't fix this. I don't think the laterals are right. There are red marks at the bottom of her spine. Hoping changes to chair will work but I'm not holding my breath. Social worker, paediatrician and OT have emailed Opcare; they react to this and someone comes out but after this visit, still nothing happens. Some simple things such as having a spare set of covers and a harness would really help - if the nappy leaks the covers have to be washed - I had to fight for a spare set which I got eventually but they won't give a spare harness. These things get dirty and it's the same as putting your child in grubby clothes"

"Very poor. Still waiting for seating to be properly sorted and it's been 2 years. Daughter's condition is getting worse. The stress of sorting this out has been horrendous" (crying as she spoke to me)

“Wheelchair was condemned by OT in June. I was told a new one would be ordered but I haven’t heard anything and I’m virtually housebound now”

“I’m permanently in a wheelchair. They took one for repair months ago and I’ve not had it back. Currently in old wheelchair”

“Frontline staff are very, very good. My gut feeling is that someone is sitting on the budget. It took from February last year to end of October to get a replacement chair, followed by 3-4 months waiting for a cushion, then 12 weeks for back rest to be sorted. Still waiting for replacement foot rest to be supplied. I’m using HD cardboard to stop my right leg from flopping out and I was told a solution would be manufactured. I’ve got doubts about the training and qualifications of staff doing the repairs. They just don’t seem to have the right training and don’t have right spares. There’s a high turnover of staff. No updates are given by Opcare and this causes anxiety. They could do more to link with other organisations too”

“I’m paraplegic and can’t stand at all. I had an electric wheelchair for a few years and was independent but I had to send it back. I always understood that if it broke down I would get help but I found out that there’s no help if this happens. I have no family to help me. What would I do if I broke down away from home? I had to send it back because I’ve got nobody to help me. My consultant at Pinderfields wanted me to have the electric chair and I loved it when I had it; it got me out and I was independent. I’m really sad it’s gone. I wouldn’t have minded paying for a break down service. I live in Elland and only go to Elland so I wouldn’t have broken down far from home. I’m using my manual chair now”

“Recently had a problem with manual wheelchair, they came and had a look and wanted to provide a new one, even though it was just a problem with the arm rest but they couldn’t get parts for it any more. I ended up buying the arm rest on ebay and doing it myself. Then there was a problem with the controller, it just needed a new little joy stick which they could have sent in the post but they insisted on replacing the whole thing which cost £180 instead of a couple of pounds. Wasting money”

“Daughter has missed 8 months of school, we’ve been waiting over 2 years for a chair. After waiting 12 months they gave her the wrong one, far too big for her. She falls from one side to another and once nearly hit her head on a lamppost. People from Opcare have said the chair is not good and that it’s only meant to be sat in for 2-3 hours, not full days. They reviewed and measured everything in March and said it would be 6 weeks until we get a new one. Social worker, GP, Locala, Forget me Not have all contacted Opcare about it. Still having to use the chair that’s not right for her. I have a very, very bad back as a result. She’s 19 years old with a life-limiting condition and I’ve had to keep her indoors for almost all of the last 2 years”

“We’ve recently seen the therapist and been given a provisional date in Feb 18 for new wheelchair. Opcare use the issue of backlog to explain the delays - they need to be more transparent. Not the fault of the therapists working frontline”

“Wheelchair delivered last week but I have to wait until someone can come to take me out. I use sticks to get about in the house but can’t get out without a wheelchair. Nobody has ever mentioned an electric wheelchair”

“Mum has no wheelchair, had to borrow one but it’s too small. She had assessment June/July and we were told it would be sorted”

“Assessment was great but then didn’t hear anything else. I rang Opcare this morning and was told they had the wheelchair and that it should be delivered after Christmas. If I hadn’t rung I wouldn’t know this. Just a phone call to explain what’s happening would help”

Beechwood, Leonard Cheshire Disability Service - informed us of a resident who had sustained a broken leg because of issue with wheelchair. Notified CCG as serious incident. It has been reported to CQC and RIDDOR. Beechwood have invited Healthwatch to talk to other residents who are also experiencing difficulties.

Online reviews for Opcare can be seen on the Healthwatch Kirklees and Healthwatch Calderdale websites:

<https://www.healthwatchcalderdale.co.uk/services/calderdale-greater-huddersfield-and-north-kirklees-posture-mobility-service-opcare-elland-hx5-9hb/#reviews>

<https://healthwatchkirklees.co.uk/services/opcare-posture-mobility-services-elland-hx5-9hb/>