



# Key Recommendations from VIHI Engagement and Consultation Reports

January 2024 – March 2025



# Voice It, Hear It

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## Community voices inspiring positive change to local support and services.

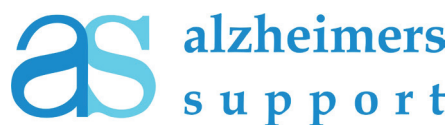
Voice it, Hear It is an engagement project that works with people aged 18+ living in Wiltshire to get involved in shaping the health and social care services they use.

We work with people with physical disabilities, sensory needs, mental health issues, learning disabilities, neurodiversity, long term conditions, complex needs, older people and people with dementia.

We also work alongside Wiltshire Council and the Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire Integrated Care Board (BSW ICB) and people living and working in Wiltshire to co-produce, co-design and co-develop health and social care services in Wiltshire.

Voice It, Hear It is a partnership project led by Community First, working with Wiltshire Service Users' Network, Wessex Community Action, Age UK Wiltshire, Alzheimer's Support and Celebrating Age Wiltshire.

Delivered by:



Funded by:



# Impact at a Glance

“  
Voice It  
Hear It  
”

**12**  
Voice it, Hear It projects



**4**

Completed reports produced



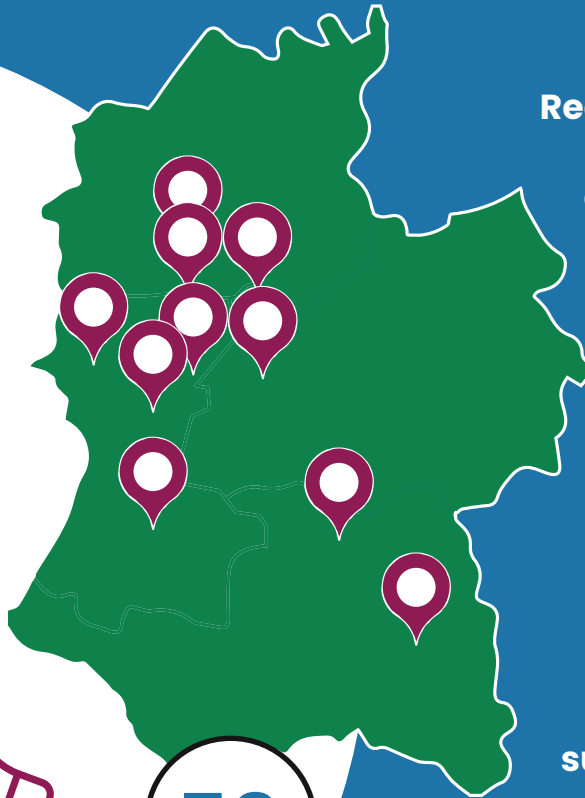
**2**

Summary reports produced

**39**

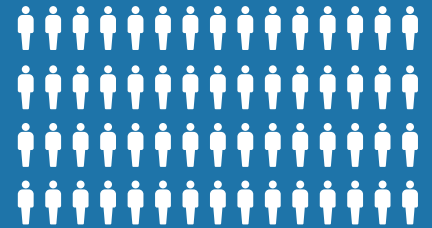
## Geographical areas reached

- Amesbury
- Bradford on Avon
- Calne
- Chippenham
- Salisbury
- Corsham
- Devizes
- Warminster
- Trowbridge
- Semington



Recommendations made to Wiltshire Council as a result of consultation and engagement

**609**



People engaged with surveys, workshops and 1-to-1 sessions

**40,629**

People reached via our communications channels



**50**  
Workshops and 1-to-1 sessions hosted

**117**

New people engaged

**343**

People took part in VIHI surveys

**31**

Presentations and 1-2-1 stakeholder meetings



**21**

Stakeholders engaged in VIHI consultation

# Introduction

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## Summary of Engagement Projects & Key Recommendations

As part of our work, VIHI was initially engaged to support 12 projects in 2024, involving direct engagement with residents to gather insights and shape future services. This summary outlines the key themes covered, the consultation focus, and the status of each project.

While some projects reached completion, others were deferred or remain ongoing, reflecting the evolving nature of the engagement process. The summary below captures the core objectives of each consultation and highlights the reports produced based on resident feedback.

## Key Themes & Consultation Areas

### 1. CQC Inspection & Care Act Assessments

- Engaged people who had undergone a Care Act Assessment or an Assessment of Needs as a Carer.
- Supported the CQC by producing a report to inform their inspection process.
- Identified individuals and groups to take part in CQC-led focus groups.

### 2. Learning Disability Health Screening & Life Expectancy

- Worked with Public Health and individuals with lived experience to explore ways to improve accessibility to health screening for people with learning disabilities.

### 3. Prevention Strategy

- Consulted residents on their understanding of prevention and whether they agreed with the strategy's aims.
- Explored whether the language used was clear, meaningful, and accessible.

### 4. Accommodation Strategy

- Engaged people aged 50+ to understand their current and future housing needs.
- Explored what housing and support are needed to maintain independence as they age.

### 5. Community Equipment Service (ICISS) - Ongoing

- Gathering feedback from service users, carers, and professionals to understand:

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- What works well within the service
  - What needs improvement
  - What people want from the service in the future

## **6. Technology Enabled Care (TEC)**

- Consulted young adults (aged 18-25 with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) on:
  - Their awareness and use of technology for independence and well-being
  - Whether they knew what technology was available and how to access it

## **7. Dental Access & Oral Health**

- Investigated people's experiences with dental services and access challenges.
- Assessed whether individuals felt supported in maintaining oral health.
- Explored barriers for those not accessing or receiving adequate dental care.

## **8. Learning Disability Strategy**

- Engaged individuals with learning disabilities and their carers to ensure the strategy was meaningful and relevant.
- Identified any gaps that needed addressing.

## **9. Homecare**

- Collected and analysed customer feedback to help shape Wiltshire Council's homecare contracts, due to be implemented in March 2026.

## **10. Your Care, Your Support (YCYS) Website**

- Wiltshire Council sought feedback on how people use the website and its effectiveness as an information resource.

## **11. Wellbeing Research Program**

- Examined the impact of occupational therapy in adult social care on service user well-being and outcomes.

## **12. Urgent Care & Response at Home**

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## Reports Produced

VIHI has compiled and delivered four reports based on resident engagement and consultation findings:

- Care Quality Commission (CQC) Report
- Accommodation Strategy Report
- Wiltshire Council Prevention & Well-being Strategy Consultation Report
- Learning Disability Life Expectancy Report

## Current Ongoing Projects

These projects are still in progress:

- Dental & Oral Health
- Community Equipment (ICESS)
- Homecare Consultation

## Projects That Were Put on Hold

These projects were deferred before reaching full completion:

- Your Care, Your Support (YCYS) Website Consultation
- Learning Disability Strategy
- Technology Enabled Care (TEC)

## Commitment to Feedback & Transparency

VIHI, in partnership with Wiltshire Council, is committed to keeping participants informed about how their feedback influences decision-making. We follow a “*You Said, We Did*” approach, ensuring that the impact of resident engagement is clear, transparent, and valued.

This summary brings together all key recommendations from residents who participated in our engagement activities. Their insights will help shape future services and policies, reinforcing the importance of listening to lived experiences in decision-making.

# Project Recommendations

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## Key Recommendations from the CQC Adult Social Care Inspection Report (July 2024)

### Reducing stress and pressure on individuals

- Simplify the process: Explore how the assessment procedures could be streamlined to make them more straightforward and less overwhelming.
- Provide clear guidelines: Offer detailed, easy-to-understand guidelines to help individuals and carers know what to expect.

### Improve consistency and familiarity

- Assign dedicated assessors: Ensure individuals have the same assessor for subsequent assessments to build familiarity and trust.
- Training for assessors: Provide assessors with thorough training on conditions e.g. sensitivity to PTSD/brain injuries etc. and understanding individual cases.

### Enhance support and communication

- Better communication channels: Establish clear and effective communication channels between social services, Wiltshire Council departments and individuals.

### Personalised communication

- Ask each individual how they wish to be communicated with, tailoring the approach to meet their preferences e.g. face to face, telephone, online, audio guides, etc.
- Regular updates: Keep individuals informed about their assessment status and any changes in policies or procedures.

### Provide emotional and mental health support

- Link to external support: Connect individuals and carers to external support groups and organisations that can provide additional assistance and create a supportive framework.
- Advocacy support: Signpost or provide advocacy support to help individuals and carers navigate the assessment process and ensure their voices are heard.

### Increase transparency and understanding

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- **Transparent criteria:** Make the assessment criteria transparent so individuals understand how decisions are made.
  - **Personalised assessments:** Tailor assessments where possible to individual needs rather than using a one-size fits-all approach.
  - **Clear terminology:** Explain terms such as 'assessment' and 'eligible needs' in a way that is easy to understand and meets individual needs.

### **Shorten wait times**

- **Reduce wait times and ensure timely assessments.** Explore and implement ways to minimise delays.

### **Empower carers**

- **Support for carers:** Consider resources and support specifically for carers to help them manage the stress of advocating and dealing with the system.
- **Consider training for carers:** Offer training for carers on how to navigate the assessment process and advocate effectively.

### **Create a feedback mechanism**

- **Regular feedback:** Explore a system for individuals and carers to provide feedback on their assessment experience.
- **Continuous improvement:** Use feedback to continuously improve the assessment process and address recurring issues.

### **Foster a positive experience**

- **Respect and empathy:** Ensure all assessors are supported and trained to approach assessments with respect, empathy, and understanding.
- **Celebrate small wins:** Acknowledge and celebrate when individuals make progress or receive the support they need.

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## Key Recommendations from the Learning Disability Life Expectancy Report (October 2024)

### Expand the Health Screening Packs

Roll out the packs to a wider audience beyond the initial pilot, allowing more individuals with learning disabilities to benefit from these accessible resources. Carers could be encouraged to use these packs, as they help explain key health concepts and empower those they support.

### Develop an Online Health Resource Hub

Establish an 'online bookcase' where the health screening packs and other resources can be hosted. This could be located on platforms like "Your Care Your Support" and "Wiltshire Together/All Together," making it easily accessible for individuals, carers, and health professionals. The online hub would serve as a one-stop resource for health information, improving ease of access and distribution.

### Allocate More Time for Health Sessions

Ensure that adequate time is allocated for individual health sessions. Participants need to feel safe and not rushed, with clear explanations given in straightforward language. This is particularly important for individuals with disabilities, as it allows them to absorb and understand the information better.

### Train Healthcare Staff

Provide comprehensive training for healthcare professionals on how to effectively communicate with individuals with learning disabilities. This training should include the use of clear, simple language and techniques for creating a calm and supportive environment during health screenings.

### Ensure Accessibility to GPs and Health Visitors

GPs and health visitors should be given easy access to these packs so they can use them to explain health procedures, screenings, and general wellbeing practices to patients. This will enhance the overall healthcare experience and ensure that individuals with learning disabilities receive the information they need in a way that is understandable and actionable.

### Create Short, Accessible Videos

Develop a series of short, accessible videos with clear transcripts. These videos would offer straightforward explanations of health procedures and screenings, helping individuals with learning disabilities to better understand what to expect. Making these videos available on the proposed online bookcase would further enhance accessibility, ensuring that individuals, carers, and healthcare professionals can easily share and access these resources.

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# Key Recommendations from the Wiltshire Council Prevention & Well-being Strategy Consultation Report (October 2024)

## Clarify and Simplify Language

Respondents found some sections of the strategy overly complex, particularly the first sentence, which they felt was too long and used terms like “resilient” that were unfamiliar. Shorter, clearer statements are recommended to make the strategy more accessible to all. Incorporate video summaries to help convey key messages, ensuring clarity and understanding.

## Clarify Independence Expectations

Acknowledge that independence might not be achievable for individuals with incurable conditions, which would help manage expectations.

## Promote Balanced Use of TEC

TEC should enhance, not replace, personal care. Participants advocated for a balanced approach where technology complements human services without overshadowing the need for personal contact.

## Resources Needed

Allocate funds for training and awareness campaigns to promote TEC effectively.

## Improve Awareness and Accessibility

Increase the visibility of resources, especially online platforms. Also, ensure printed materials are available for those less digitally proficient to maintain inclusivity.

## Accessibility Enhancements

Develop easy-read formats for strategy documents, catering to individuals with learning difficulties and language barriers.

## Encourage Direct Engagement

Direct engagement with service users during the commissioning process was identified as essential. This would ensure that services are truly responsive to user needs and concerns, fostering a more user centred approach.

## Improvements to Processes

Enhance information-sharing pathways for residents and between health and social care sectors to ensure seamless communication.

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## **Support Transitional Services**

Participants stressed the need for dedicated support to help young people transition smoothly from youth to adult services. Early engagement and consistent communication would play key roles in this support.

## **Community Group Support**

Participants highlighted the importance of supporting self-sustaining groups that provide vital social interaction, information, and emotional support. Many of these groups are self-funded, and they often represent the only social opportunity for some members, significantly improving their quality of life and mental well-being.

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## Key Recommendations from the Accommodation Strategy Report (October 2024)

### Enhance support for home adaptations and accessibility

Older residents in Wiltshire overwhelmingly desire to stay in their own homes as they age. To facilitate this, there should be improved advice, guidance, and practical support for home adaptations such as stairlifts, walk-in showers or baths, wetrooms, ramps, and grab rails. Financial assistance, such as grants, should be considered to help cover the costs of these adaptations. Given that a large percentage of survey respondents were social housing tenants, Wiltshire Council should collaborate with Housing Associations to support tenants needing property adaptations and to plan for future accessible housing.

### Increase the provision of bungalows with small gardens

A significant preference exists among older residents considering downsizing for private bungalows with small, manageable gardens. However, there is a perceived insufficient supply of such properties for both homeowners and social housing tenants. Wiltshire Council should explore opportunities to work with developers, Housing Associations, Community Land Trusts, and planners to increase the availability of bungalows with small gardens or courtyards. This preference extends even to those considering supported accommodation, with some preferring a bungalow over an apartment in a retirement village.

### Establish a centralised and accessible housing options information hub

Many residents find it difficult to locate relevant and easy-to-understand information about housing options and choices. A centralised information hub is recommended, with resources tailored to different scenarios and groups, including homeowners and single individuals who currently feel underserved. This could be an online platform with a decision tree or dynamic search functionality. Collaboration with local charities and community organisations can help disseminate this information to service users.

### Adopt a personalised approach to housing options

Recognising that housing decisions are highly personal, a personalised approach is crucial. This approach should consider the individual's wishes, circumstances, family and social networks, personal preferences (such as pets and rural living), current living standards, and ability to move around independently.

### Address the specific needs of older rural residents

Rural residents face unique challenges, particularly regarding transport and access

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to services. A multi-faceted approach is needed to support them in remaining in their homes, including exploring enhanced community transport options, improving access to public transport, and ensuring the delivery of essential services like prescriptions to their homes. Attention should also be paid to facilitating social connections and activities in rural areas to combat potential isolation.

### **Improve the process for accessing housing information and support**

Frustration was reported with long wait times, complex forms, and difficulties in communication between organisations. Efforts should be made to streamline these processes and reduce barriers to accessing necessary information and support, including housing adaptations.

### **Consider the key features desired in alternative accommodation**

While the priority is to support staying at home, it is important to note the preferences for alternative accommodation. If moving becomes necessary, single-storey homes and supported accommodation are preferred over care homes. For care homes, if they become the only option, private rooms with en-suite bathrooms, access to gardens, high-quality meals, social activities, and opportunities for independence and decision-making are essential. The location of any alternative accommodation should ideally be close to family, friends, and familiar communities.

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## Key Recommendations from the Homecare Report (March 2025)

### Enhancing Service Delivery

- Ensure consistent and reliable care by exploring ways to improve carer retention and service continuity to reduce disruptions and implementing better scheduling systems with advance notification of changes.
- Provide tailored and person-centred care through greater flexibility in care plans, development of specialist care pathways for complex needs, and improved dementia care training.
- Encourage carers to prioritise social engagement as part of care provision to address social isolation.
- Ensure carers regularly review care plans and confirm tasks with service users and implement transparent care logging systems.
- Introduce clearer communication protocols to keep users informed of changes and establish direct feedback channels for concerns. Providers could also carry out spot checks and routine reviews.
- Focus on reliable essential care for maintaining dignity and independence.
- Ensure respectful and confidential care to build trust.
- Support the continuation of hobbies and interests through care plans.
- Maintain a regular team of carers to foster consistency and trust.
- Ensure reliable and punctual care services.
- Offer greater flexibility in care services to accommodate social and community participation.
- Maintain stable care teams to reduce stress and improve user satisfaction.
- Expand care to include social participation and companionship.

### Supporting the Workforce

- Review pay and working conditions to support carer retention and workforce stability and provide career development opportunities.
- Expand training in dementia care, communication skills, and cultural competency for carers.

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- Ensure respite care staff are well-trained to handle complex care needs.
  - Improve carers' communication skills and address language barriers.
  - Address concerns about carer time management and ensure they have adequate time for tasks.
  - Consider the need for mandatory care qualifications as part of systemic improvements.

## **Improving System and Processes**

- Simplify and streamline the assessment process to ensure timely and accessible evaluations for all, including self-funders.
- Improve hospital-to-community referral systems as crucial access points for care services.
- Ensure social workers provide sufficient oversight to guarantee consistent agency service quality.
- Promote personalised care processes with more user involvement and flexibility in recruitment and care arrangements.
- Enhance agency accountability regarding carer reliability and professionalism.
- Streamline the care arrangement process, especially for specialised or medical care at home.
- Ensure that care planning processes actively involve users and their families in decision-making.
- Provide resources and advocacy support to help users navigate care options and services.
- Streamline care arrangement processes, especially during critical periods such as hospital discharge.
- Offer more proactive support and better access to information about services to prevent reactive crisis management.
- Carry out the financial assessment much earlier in the process.
- Set expectations early regarding funding and potential personal contributions.
- Make it very clear that the assessed need may not be fully funded.
- Check understanding to prevent individuals from incurring significant debts.

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- Address the issue of high staff turnover among social workers to improve continuity.

### **Enhancing Information and Access:**

- Provide clearer guidance on eligibility and available services to all individuals, including self-funders.
- Improve information accessibility through better documentation and follow-up processes.
- Provide clearer information about additional sources of support, including financial guidance, emotional well-being, and condition-specific organisations.
- Help signpost individuals to home safety services like the Bobby Van and fire safety checks.
- Raise awareness of specialist condition support charities and third-sector organisations.
- Improve public awareness of available homecare support and clarify referral pathways.
- Ensure accessible, impartial advice on care options, funding, and local services is widely available.
- Provide better information, including client reviews, to allow for informed choices of care companies.
- Make information about finding care agencies and the CQC more visible.

### **Addressing Funding and Resources:**

- Review direct payment rates to align with actual care costs.
- Explore additional financial support options for those facing high disability-related expenses.
- Increase funding for home adaptations and mobility aids and simplify application processes.
- Review funding eligibility criteria to provide more equitable access to care services for individuals with assets.
- Consider aligning personal budget rates with agency rates to alleviate recruitment challenges.
- Address the high costs of care and provide more comprehensive funding options for families.

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- Recognise the financial strain in rural areas and the impact of low pay rates on carer recruitment.

### **Fostering Integration and Collaboration:**

- Embed homecare within a broader ecosystem of support, including adaptations, respite care, and social engagement.
- Consider collaborating with community organisations to ensure individuals have access to a wider support network.
- Recognise the role of external organisations in offering befriending schemes and social inclusion opportunities.
- Ensure well-integrated homecare services with primary care, community health teams, and wider social support networks.
- View care homes as part of a broader housing and care continuum.
- Ensure smooth transitions for young people moving into adult social care.

# Thank You

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We want to offer our deepest thanks to everyone who took the time to engage with Voice It, Hear It (VIHI), sharing your stories, experiences, and recommendations. This report is more than just a summary – it is a reflection of your voices and the real impact that engaging with us has made.

These recommendations you've shared show the power of coming together to influence change. They highlight what matters most to you and offer practical ways to improve services, support, and ultimately the quality of life for those living and working in our communities.

Your willingness to share honestly and openly has not only shaped this report but has also helped create a foundation for action. The impact of your engagement is clear—your voices are driving forward meaningful conversations and paving the way for positive change.

Thank you for trusting us with your insights. We hope this summary of the recommendations in this report honours your contributions and helps ensure that services are more responsive, compassionate, and centered around the people they support.

With heartfelt appreciation,  
The VIHI Team



**Voice It, Hear It**

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