

On equal terms

Then and now

Healthwatch Darlington Annual Report 2020-21



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Message from our Chair

Welcome to the 2021 Annual Report for Healthwatch Darlington. Just as for everyone else, 2020/2021 has been a challenging year for us, but this report details how well we have responded despite the restrictions and how we have continued to help and support our community throughout the pandemic.

Covid rules have meant that we have had to work differently and be imaginative and innovative. All our staff and volunteers rose to the challenge and although working remotely, have enjoyed regular online meetings not only to support members of the public but to support each other through uncertain times. One of our successful innovations has been our live Facebook sessions 'Wellbeing Wednesdays' where we have hosted a multitude of guest speakers and covered issues such as mental health, musculoskeletal, children's development, LGBT+ and much more.

We have supported town wide initiatives ensuring people have received help and support and the most up to date information to keep them safe and well. The NHS has been forced to bring forward innovations such as telephone triage and on line consultations, and this has begged the question as to how well equipped the community is to respond to this new way of working. We worked closely with Healthwatch England and our local GP practices to research just how much of an issue digital exclusion can be for local people. We also looked into patients' experiences of Primary Care in Darlington and Children and Young Peoples' mental health including the effects of Covid rules on them.

I have to make a special mention of Youthwatch Darlington. These are young people who are between 14 and 25, who volunteer to work to improve the health of their peers and the community as a whole. Their work was recognised in a letter from the Lord Lieutenant of County Durham, Mrs Sue Snowdon and they also received a 'Highly Commended' award at Healthwatch England's annual awards ceremony. We were one of just 12 out of 152 Healthwatch around the country to receive such an award this year. Well done to them and the staff that have supported them.

Finally, I would like to thank all our staff, volunteers and Board Members who have persevered throughout these very difficult times and challenging working conditions and commend this report to you.



Dr Robert Upshall

Our project from Youthwatch Darlington to improve the provision of information for children and young people's mental health was selected to be showcased to over 1400 paediatricians, nurses and health workers from across 37 countries at this year's on-line annual conference of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health.

About us

Here to make health and care better

We are the independent champion for people who use health and social care services in Darlington. We're here to find out what matters to people and help make sure your views shape the support you need, by sharing these views with those who have the power to make change happen.

Helping you to find the information you need

We help people find the information they need about services in their area. This has been vital during the pandemic with the ever-changing environment and restrictions limiting people's access to health and social care services.

Our goals



1 Supporting you to have your say

We want more people to get the information they need to take control of their health and care, make informed decisions and shape the services that support them.



2 Providing a high quality service

We want everyone who shares an experience or seeks advice from us to get a high quality service and to understand the difference their views make.



3 Ensuring your views help improve health & care

We want more services to use your views to shape the health and care support you need today and in the future.



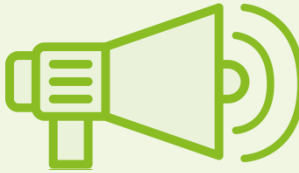
“Local Healthwatch have done fantastic work throughout the country during the COVID-19 pandemic, but there is more work ahead to ensure that everyone’s views are heard. COVID-19 has highlighted inequalities and to tackle these unfair health differences we will need those in power to listen, to hear the experiences of those facing inequality and understand the steps that could improve people’s lives.”

Sir Robert Francis QC, Chair of Healthwatch England

Highlights from our year

Find out about our resources and how we have engaged and supported people in 2020-21.

Reaching out



We heard from

1,269 people

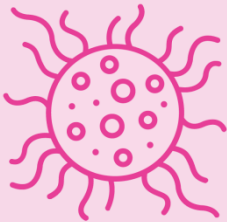
this year about their experiences of health and social care.

We provided advice and information to

32,874 people

this year.

Responding to the pandemic



We engaged with and supported

115 people

during the COVID-19 pandemic this year.

Making a difference to care



We published

2 reports

about the improvements people would like to see to health and social care services. From these, we made **22** recommendations for improvements.

50% of recommendations

we made last year have been acted upon, at the point where we reviewed progress.

Health and care that works for you



32 volunteers

helped us to carry out our work. In total, they contributed **154** days!

We employ 4 part-time staff

which is the same as the previous year.

We received

£73,400 in funding

from our local authority in 2020-21, 0.55% more than the previous year.



Children & Young Peoples Mental Health: Then and now



Then: Access to information and support during the waiting period or in general

Thanks to people sharing their experiences of children and young peoples mental health services in 2018 we were able to help providers and commissioners address the need to improve information and support available for patients, carers and families both in the waiting period for diagnosis and within the community in general.

Our report found that almost 1 in 2 young people and 7 out of 10 parent carers were unsatisfied with the information and support available during the waiting period for mental health services. Additionally young people who don't use mental health services said that more information should be accessible within the community. We identified that some parents and carers were not receiving the support they needed during the waiting period. In particular, parents and carers were asking for accessible peer support.

It became clear that the provision of information for children and young people's mental health services within health settings, in the community and online needed to be significantly improved. We lead a programme of work supported by our young volunteers in collaboration with NHS services such as GPs and CAMHS to up date the information provided in waiting rooms and on websites. We shared further information across social media, with schools, colleges and community settings focusing on a wide range of mental health topics. Our young volunteers wanted to raise awareness and to ask all organisations to consider how to improve their mental health information and communications across Darlington.



Now: Children & young peoples mental health issues

Thanks to young people and parent carers sharing their experience before and during the pandemic we have continued to ensure that providers and commissioners consider the improvement of children & young peoples mental health information and that more emphasis is placed on support during the waiting period for mental health support.

Between January 2020 and October 2020 we spoke to 478 young people and parent carers. Their main issues included:

- More information and support needed during the waiting period for the whole family
- Lack of support available for parent carers
- More information & awareness of mental health offer needed across Darlington as a whole

People told us that when they were unable to access alternative support or information during the waiting period or in general that it can then be difficult to know where to start without education and signposting from services and organisations. It became clear that nothing had changed since our last report



“The wait lists and lack of support are beyond words, parents need help and support even after diagnose there is zero support”

Parent carer Darlington

“I have no idea what support is available through school”

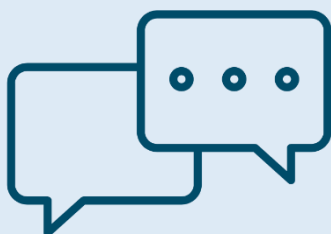
Young person Darlington

We shared our report with the NHS Tees Valley Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to highlight the issues faced by young people and their families and to ensure that information sharing across Darlington was improved across sectors. This has now been placed as a priority action on the local transformation plan which means this will finally be improved using a whole system approach.

This has never been more important as we face an increasing demand on NHS mental health services following the unprecedented impact of the pandemic on mental health. Ensuring that appropriate solutions are offered will decrease pressures on the NHS whilst supporting our young people and families when they need it the most.

We also worked collaboratively with the CCG to successfully secure funding which will establish new mental health support teams within schools providing more early intervention and low level support for young people. This also means more support can now be offered to parent carers. A new parent peer support group is being implemented in the coming months.

Share your views with us



If you have a query about a health and social care service, or need help with where you can go to access further support, get in touch. Don't struggle alone. Healthwatch is here for you.



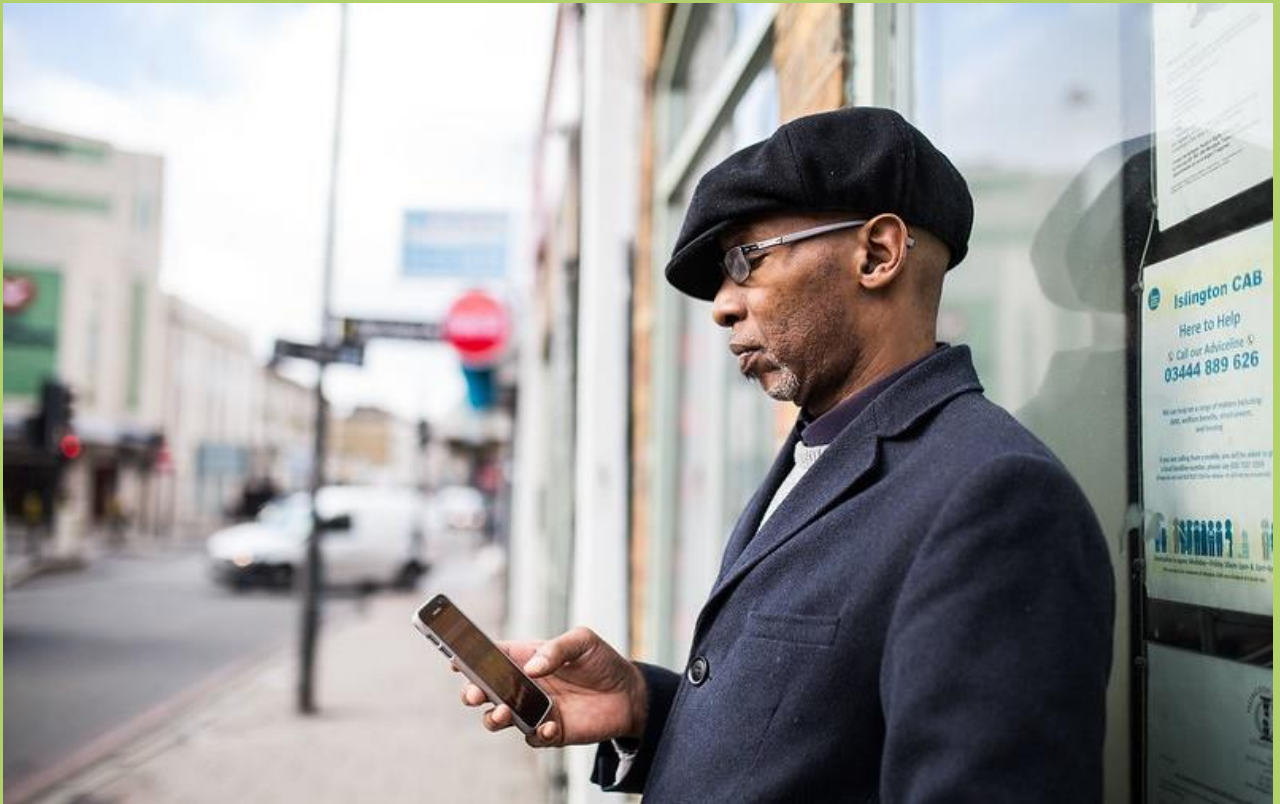
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Accessible Primary Care Services: Then and now



Then: accessing your local GP

GP services that are accessible for all has been a priority of Healthwatch Darlington for the last three years.

In 2018, our research had identified minority and ethnic group patients were finding it difficult to book an appointment and access GP services due to problems with translators and information not being provided in a suitable format. Local patient representatives from ethnic communities in Darlington raised their concerns and called out for change. As a result of the feedback from patients we were able to do the following:

- 1) Call for NHS England North to improve the delivery of the local translation service with the view to recruiting translators with local dialects making it easier for ethnic patients to use.
- 2) Call for GP practices to review their accessible information policy.

In 2020 NHS England North contacted Healthwatch Darlington and told us that our findings helped to inform the decision for them to retender the translation service contract. This meant that a new interpreting and translation service would be implemented in autumn 2020. The process was slightly delayed due to Covid-19, however we helped to share their patient survey in November 2020 providing local patients with the opportunity to share their experiences even further.



Now: accessing your GP before and during the pandemic

We asked local Just before the pandemic we worked with GP practices to further understand patient and carer experiences of primary care services. In 2019/20 some service users identified issues when using GP websites. People felt that GP practices could improve their online information as they found their websites difficult to use, difficult to navigate and highlighted confusing information. Furthermore, patients with a learning disability felt that consistency with access to their GP was important and that unexpected changes to this due to seeing specialist clinicians at another venue was very stressful.

GP practices to improve their websites ensuring they were accessible and easy to use. As a result the Primary Care Network (PCN) which consists of all of our 11 local GP Practices working together to improve the health of the borough's population, were able to learn from patients' experiences which has helped them to develop a Darlington wide website.

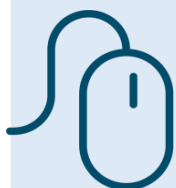
During a year of unprecedented times NHS GP services have had to make extraordinary changes to how they manage access to their services whilst maintaining the safety needed for patients and carers during the Covid-19 pandemic. People began to get in touch with us identifying barriers with the new digital way of accessing their GP practices. We heard from those with sensory impairments as well as people who needed translator services.

“I wear hearing aids and found it very difficult hearing what the doctor said on the phone consultation. I did ask him to speak louder but he didn't.”

The PCN contacted us asking to work together with some of Darlington's marginalised groups who may have been struggling with access during the pandemic. The PCN were keen to understand the challenges faced by our population and to make care as accessible as possible.

Together we explored the potential inequalities surrounding the shift to remote GP appointments and considered the impact of the new ways of working on people who may find it more challenging to access care remotely or virtually with a particular emphasis on social deprivation.

In our research we found that for the most part, remote consultations have worked well and have created some great opportunities for a different way of working for professionals, and a more convenient way for patients to access services. However it also highlighted some of the difficulties faced by local people especially those who may not have access to digital equipment such as laptops, tablets and smart phones, or who cannot afford the extra data needed.



Share your views with us

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Now: accessing your GP before and during the pandemic

People whose first language is not English have found making appointments or speaking to a practice's GP over the phone challenging, and for those with learning disabilities most felt a face to face appointment was better especially as facial expressions were important to them.

During the pandemic and the vaccination programme, the Primary Care Network have ensured they have listened to and acted upon the needs of our population as expressed through Healthwatch Darlington, the voluntary and community sector and public sector partners to ensure they are reaching those most vulnerable.



“Darlington Primary Care Network are committed to working in partnership with Healthwatch Darlington to identify and address gaps in service access due to digital technology; in particular those from deprived and excluded communities. We acknowledge that these groups are at a greater risk of poorer health outcomes and we want to improve access for all and reduce inequalities regarding those who are digitally excluded, allowing greater flexibility for Darlington patients and an opportunity to engage with those who may previously have struggled to access GP services”

Dr Amanda Riley, Clinical Director of Darlington PCN

Going forward, it will be necessary for services to take into account individual needs and circumstances whilst embracing the convenience of in a more digitally enabled service for those that wish to interact in this way. Health and care services need to continue working together with an increased focus on tackling digital inclusion to support individuals and communities, particularly those most vulnerable or experiencing disadvantage.



“Darlington Primary Care Network welcome the digital exclusion report and its findings. The report has highlighted areas for improvement and also new ways of working which have had both a positive and negative impact on individuals. We will review the findings and recommendations and aim to implement changes where possible in order to improve access to general practice and continue our work to reduce inequalities and improve access for all.”

**Vikki Bailey, Advanced Nurse Practitioner,
Executive Board of Darlington PCN.**



Responding to COVID-19

Healthwatch plays an important role in helping people to get the information they need, especially through the pandemic. The insight we collect is shared with both Healthwatch England and local partners to ensure services are operating as best as possible during the pandemic.

This year we helped and supported 32,874 people by:

- Providing up to date advice on the COVID-19 response
- Linking people to reliable up-to-date information
- Supporting the vaccine roll-out
- Supporting the community volunteer response
- Helping people to access the services they need
- Holding weekly Live Facebook “Wellbeing Wednesday” sessions
- Providing a thrice weekly e-newsletter at the height of the pandemic

In addition we reached people with information 741,712 times via our social media posts

New way of working



Due to demand during the pandemic we increased our popular weekly e-newsletter to thrice weekly editions. Each issue contained the most up to date local, regional and national health, wellbeing and community news to ensure individuals and organisations were well supported.

Thrice weekly Newsletter

We designed a new way to connect with our online community. "Wellbeing Wednesday" was launched including special 'one off' live sessions connecting patients, service users and their families with health professionals, clinicians and the voluntary and community sector in Darlington.



Wellbeing Wednesdays

Online engagement



Our new model during the pandemic was based on sharing information and encouraging individuals to share feedback connecting them with services.

Some of the top sessions included:

- Primary Care & Flu Vaccines
- NSPCC & Kooth
- CAMHS and Mind
- Women's refuges and domestic abuse
- Unemployment and mental wellbeing
- Access to services across the winter

"I was able to share the video about CAMHS with my friend so they could find out more about the service."



Contact us to get the information you need

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Top four areas that people have contacted us about:



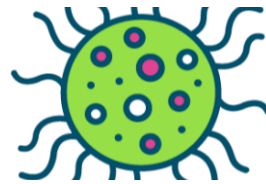
37% on Vaccines



23% on GP services



20% on Hospital Care



20% on Covid-19

Seldom Heard



Early in the pandemic, it was highlighted that some people were unable to access information in a suitable format.

Working with other organisations we were able to share more accessible information in our newsletter and on social media by:

- Linking to Doctors of the World and translated Covid-19 Government guidance
- Providing video links in BSL from SignHealth
- Sharing local authority accessible Covid communications.
- Providing easy read information and guidance



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Volunteers

At Healthwatch Darlington we are supported by 32 volunteers to help us share information, raise awareness within the community, find out what people think is working, and what improvements people would like to make to services.

This year our volunteers:

- Helped people have their say from home, sharing and carrying out surveys either on the telephone or online.
- Created digital content such as advice and information on our website and social media helping us to reach individuals with important information during the pandemic.
- Carried out information and communication reviews for local services on the information they provide especially messages about the pandemic.
- Supported our projects and work by attending meetings, sharing ideas, creating plans and representing us within their communities.
- Shared information by word of mouth with people in Darlington helping to signpost people to the right support
- Shared awareness raising campaigns and assisted us in the launch of a new social media information session ensuring that we were able to engage with our community even further from home.

Volunteer Impact, Awards & Recognition

Volunteers helped their community during the pandemic by designing information campaigns which involved creating advice pages, posters, blogs, gathering the best information in relation to seldom heard and minority patients, loneliness/isolation, access to services during the winter, during and after lockdown advice, and mental health. Not only this but they shared generic health & care information all throughout the year.



Created 15 wellbeing campaigns and shared health information all year.



Volunteers listened to their community about children and young people's mental health, general covid-19 experiences and digital exclusion. Not to mention reporting back 'word on the street' news keeping us connected with Darlington during remote working.

Gathered 748 experiences and held 6 online focus groups.

Information campaigns

This new normal can be worrying

Things have been quite uncertain this year...

What can help?

- Wear a face covering based on your likes, hobbies and style
- Focus on the things you like and enjoy, maybe even turn it into a hobby
- Exercise at home
- Limit social media if it's affecting you
- Rest if needed
- Going to your GP (This is okay to do, make sure to wear a face covering)

Useful links

- Mental health foundation www.mentalhealth.org.uk
- Beat www.beateatingdisorders.com
- Shout 24/7 Text: 85258
- Youngminds <https://youngminds.org.uk/>
- NHS Live Well <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/>
- The Listening Post ListeningPost@dacym.co.uk

Early in the pandemic our volunteers recognised the importance of sharing helpful information with the community. Not only this but they also recognised this needed to be inclusive by removing barriers for those who experience inequalities due to health conditions or demographics. Information has been shared online, in poster/leaflet format and in audio format.

"I just wanted to say what a wonderful resource this is and to commend the Youthwatch team in particular. We have a lot of employees with young families and the worries that young people have are all too real to be sure. This kind of peer support is invaluable.

Thanks to everyone!
Staff member, Darlington



Volunteer with us

Are you feeling inspired? We are always on the lookout for new volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering, please get in touch at **Healthwatch Darlington**.



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j.austin@healthwatchdarlington.co.uk

Volunteer Impact, Awards & Recognition

During 2020/21 individual volunteers were recognised for their incredible support during the pandemic: **Faith Miller, Sue Kirk, Amy Adams and Jessica Mather** all received a volunteer of the month award. **Faith** was named a 'Healthwatch Hero' by Healthwatch England at the end of 2020.



Volunteer Recognition



Volunteers were recognised locally and regionally. Youthwatch Darlington received a thank you letter from HM Lord Lieutenant, they showcased projects across the North East and volunteers were praised for their input during our popular Wellbeing Wednesday live sessions.

Community Recognition

National Awards and Recognition!



In November 2020 Healthwatch England awarded our volunteers from Youthwatch Darlington with the 'Highly Commended' award during the annual conference. The award celebrated our volunteers and we were one of only 12 Healthwatch to receive this award out of 152 across England.



In January 2021 we submitted the fantastic work that Youthwatch Darlington have carried out over the last year to feature in the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health Annual Conference. A panel of parents, young people and health professionals selected Youthwatch Darlington to feature in the conference gallery showcasing their work to improve mental health information for young people. This has been seen by over 1400 delegates from across 37 countries.



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Youthwatch Darlington volunteer, Amy Adams

Amy has been a volunteer for two years. Amy has helped to improve NHS waiting areas, listened to young patients, represented young patient voices and represented us nationally.

"I've listened to young people who have struggled to find information about mental health services and worked with others to change this."



Health Connector- Jamie Odgers

Jamie has been a volunteer for almost four years and in that time, he has listened to service users experiences over eight research projects, ensuring patients and carer views are listened to and shared.

"We bridge the gap and help to make services better by sharing service user views."



Health Connector - Sue Kirk

Sue has been a volunteer for one year joining us during lockdown. Sue has helped to ensure vital information is shared right across the community helping people during the pandemic. Sue also represents the voice of other service users.

"I can be the voice for other parent carers in the community. I also share information with others who might not be online or who may have a learning disability."



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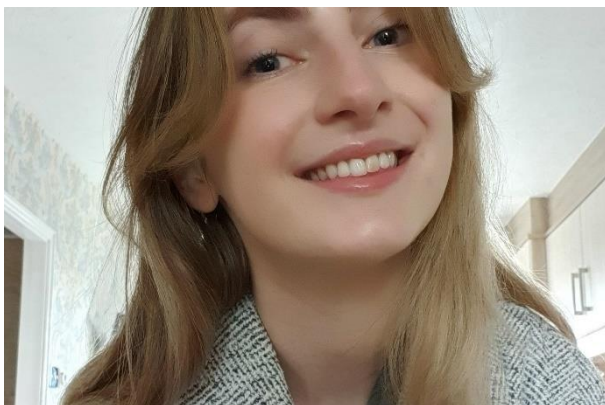
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Health Connector – Gill Waite

Gill has been a volunteer for around 5 years. In her time she has conducted enter & view visits within care homes and hospital wards, assisted with community outreach, supported our administrative functions and listened to countless patient voices.

"I've enjoyed enter & view visits as I have been able to use my skills grown over the years. I love interviewing patients to find out their experiences."



Youthwatch Darlington volunteer- Jessica Mather

Jess has been a volunteer for almost two years. Jess has supported a number of our projects ensuring that young people are more aware of support available. Not to mention Jess hosted a live Facebook session with NSPCC and Kooth.

"Young people sometimes don't feel listened too but as volunteers we act as champion for those voices."



Youthwatch Darlington volunteer – Jaden Kirk

Jaden has been a volunteer for one year. In Jaden's time as a volunteer, he has taken a lead role in creating podcasts, graphics and other media formats. This has made Youthwatch Darlington more accessible during a period of uncertainty.

"My role means I am able to contribute to sharing information more widely in the community and raise awareness."



Volunteer with us

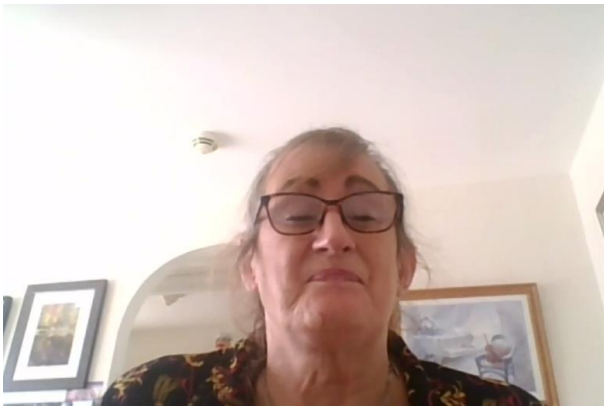
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Health Connector – Jen Mason

Jen shares her experience and passion advocating for the LGBT+ community to assist us in our work.

"I've been able to share my views on how Healthwatch Darlington can develop their advice and information on their website ensuring that the information shared is helpful for all and is inclusive."



Health Connector – Rachel Harrington

Rachel shares her interest and skills in the area of research and data, assisting us with our research projects the most recent being our 'Covid-19 vaccine' project.

"Sharing my skills and experiences in research means I have helped ensure that surveys are reaching as many people possible and that they are structured in a way that makes them more understandable for people in Darlington."



Youthwatch Darlington Volunteer – Ellie McLernon

Ellie supports the research element of Youthwatch Darlington's projects and has an interest in mental health. Ellie is a university student and also shares information with others her own age.

"The information I learn about health services and wellbeing can be shared with others which will help them in the future."



Volunteer with us

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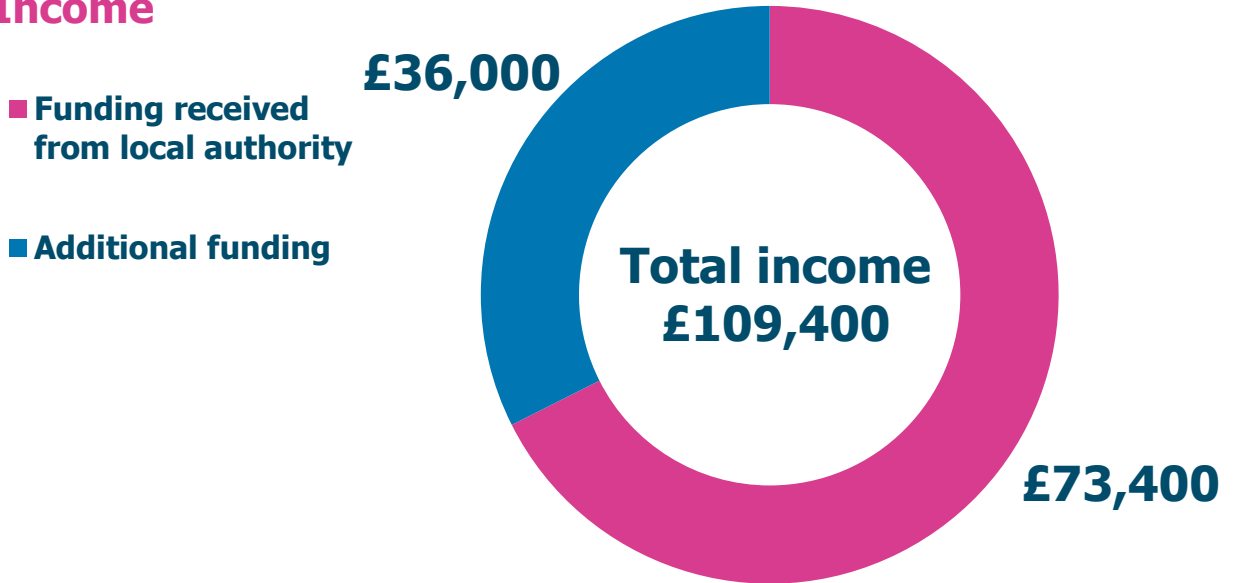
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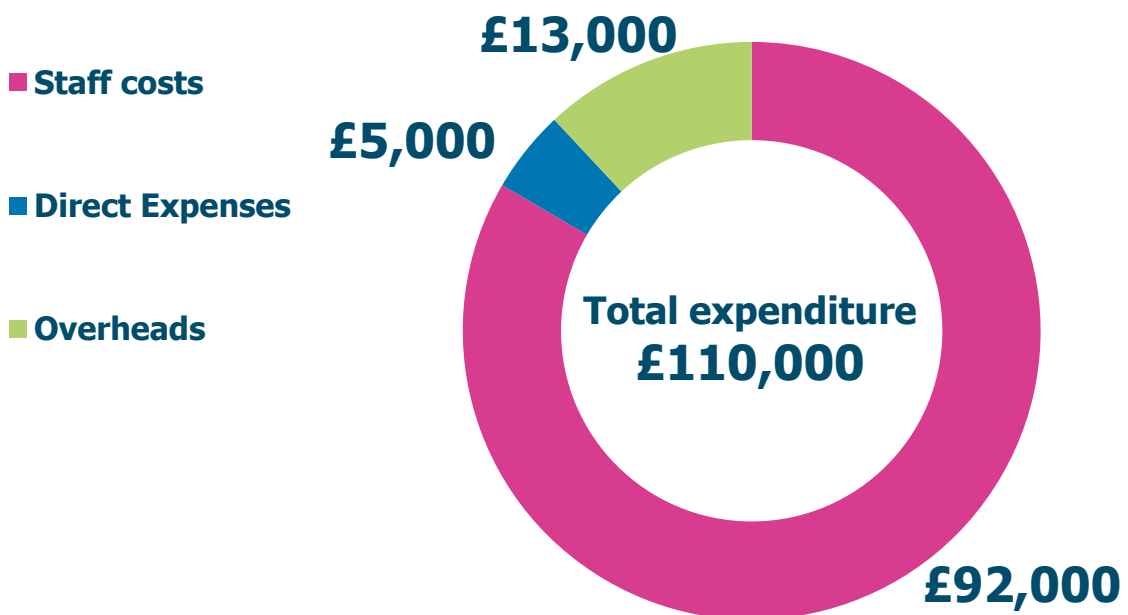
Finances

To help us carry out our work we receive funding from our local authority under the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

Income



Expenditure





Statutory statements

About us

Healthwatch Darlington Limited, Jubilee House, 1 Chancery Lane, Darlington, DL1 5QP

Healthwatch Darlington uses the Healthwatch Trademark when undertaking our statutory activities as covered by the licence agreement.

The way we work

Involvement of volunteers and lay people in our governance and decision-making.

Our Healthwatch board consists of five members who work on a voluntary basis to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny to our activities. Our board ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community. Through 2020/21 the board met 12 times and made decisions on matters such as the business continuity plans and the working arrangements due to the pandemic.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities by holding focus groups and various surveys throughout the year, as well as logging every contact we have via our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system which enables us to keep track of trends. We actively involve our volunteers and the community via social media and our Wellbeing Wednesday sessions by encouraging honest and open conversations about particular topics and interests. We also work closely with Healthwatch England regarding national matters which might affect our local population and our priorities may also be influenced by the priorities of local commissioners and providers of health and care services, especially if there is the likelihood of service change which could affect access to local services.

Methods and systems used across the year's work to obtain people's views and experience.

We use a wide range of approaches to ensure that as many people as possible have the opportunity to provide us with insight about their experience of health and care services. During 2020/21 we have been available by phone, by email, provided a webform on our website, attended virtual meetings of community groups and forums, provided our own virtual activities, provided a popular weekly e-newsletter and engaged with the public through social media.

We are committed to taking additional steps to ensure we obtain the views of people from diverse backgrounds who are often not heard by health and care decision makers. This year we have done this by, for example, our work with accessing primary care services, our research on people who are digitally excluded, our work with NHS England North and the translation and interpreter service and via our Darlington Organisations Together (DOT) network which includes many of the smaller community groups who reach out to those that are seldom heard.

Community Testimonies for online engagement

- *“Really enjoyed this and some great information well done Healthwatch.” - Viewer*
- *“Congratulations to Healthwatch Darlington for being an amazing an inspirational organisation, your work is invaluable well done.” - Viewer*
- *“Brilliant informative session” - Viewer*
- *“These sessions have been really helpful thank you” - Viewer*
- *“I think that went really well, thank you for inviting us and giving us this opportunity. If there is anything else we can perhaps to look to work together on, going forward, please do reach out.” - NSPCC*
- *“Thank you for hosting this meeting so well. I really enjoyed it and hope patients benefited from it. I wonder whether we should make it a regular event especially as the NHS landscape is changing so rapidly often from day to day.” - Local GP professional*

Responses to recommendations and requests

We had no providers who did not respond to requests for information or recommendations.

This year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we did not make use of our Enter and View powers due to Covid restrictions. Consequently, no recommendations or other actions resulted from this area of activity.

There were no issues or recommendations escalated by our Healthwatch to Healthwatch England Committee and so no resulting special reviews or investigations.

Health and Wellbeing Board

Healthwatch Darlington is represented on the Darlington Health and Wellbeing Board by Michelle Thompson BEM, Chief Executive Officer. During 2020/21 our representative has effectively carried out this role by building up a local picture of community needs and experiences of people who use services and reporting any concerns about services to commissioners, providers and council health scrutiny.

Michelle also presents information for the Strategic Needs Assessment and discusses and agrees with other members of the Board a Health and Wellbeing Strategy. During this year a number of meetings were cancelled due to the pandemic but Michelle was still able to input by ensuring the importance of clear, consistent messaging by all organisations regarding the response to Covid-19 and the local outbreak control plan.

2020-21 priorities

Project / activity area	Changes made to services
Academic Health Science Network Great North Care Record Trusted Research Environment Strategy.	To gain an understanding of the public's view on data sharing and what they thought about the concept of a Trusted Research Environment. The information gathered informed the regional strategy.
Darlington Health Protection Board Weekly Meetings	Key partner in the town wide Covid response including providing information and feedback from the public and working in partnership with other key stakeholders to ensure consistent messages and information was used and shared throughout the pandemic and vaccination programme.
Substance misuse	We previously worked with service users to co-produce a leaflet for the Tees Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Mental Health Trust to use as a source of support for future users of the service. Service users felt that information sharing was over whelming and they wanted something that easy to understand and provides them with the information they needed so they could use mental health services confidently. We ensured this information was being shared widely within the Trust and it can also be found on their website. .
Youthwatch visit to CAMHS	Youthwatch Darlington continued their work with CAMHS following on from an observation visit to the waiting area. They shared their ideas to make improvements to the environment for young people. They took part in an online video session with CAMHS community support worker where they discussed how to make the waiting area welcoming for different age groups and talked about what information should be shared with young people. They have designed new art work which is now on display and showcased this during a live Facebook session.
NHS Clinical Research	Healthwatch Darlington has led on various projects across the North East and North Cumbria with our 12 other Healthwatch neighbours. This project gathered a snapshot in each area of what local people think about clinical research. What people told us was shared with the NHS and will be used to help develop a plan for our area. We will update once the plan is published..



"Thank you so much for hosting yesterday. I really enjoyed it and had fun. I know a lot of my family and friends gave us great feedback!!

Hopefully we had a high number of views. Then Youthwatch Volunteers are great, it's really nice to know Darlington is in good hands with proactive young people"

Kooth

Next steps

Top three priorities for 2021-22

- Children and Young People's Mental Health – we will continue to influence local strategies by following up recommendations and evidencing impact.
- Understanding the experiences and impact of Covid pandemic and vaccinations and lessons learned
- Digitally Excluded and Seldom Heard Groups

Next steps

- As we move away from restrictions, we hope to resume our face to face meetings for those that do not want to or cannot use digital approaches.
- We intend to continue our work with mental health services especially community solutions and with primary care services due to the effect that the pandemic has had on services and the back log created.
- We will continue to reach out to our seldom heard communities including the LGBT+ community to gain a better understanding of their experiences and needs when using local health and care services.



“We have experienced a very challenging but positive year collaborating with others to ensure those facing inequality are listened to, and those with the power to make change have acted to improve services.

Thank you to everyone for sharing your views and experiences, to organisations who worked with us to reach out to those most vulnerable, and to our fantastic team of staff and volunteers who worked tirelessly to help and support our community in a crisis.

Our approach is guided by placing individuals and communities at the heart of everything we do so as to develop a health and care system which is truly person centred and meets the needs of our diverse population.

I hope the momentum of communities working together is supported going forward for more joined-up approaches and sharing of resources and community assets to help and care for those most in need”.

Michelle Thompson BEM, Chief Executive Officer, Healthwatch Darlington

Thank you!

- To the people of Darlington
- Our wonderful volunteers
- Our amazing staff team members
- Our supportive Board Members
- Healthwatch England
- All our North East & North Cumbria Healthwatch colleagues
- Darlington's Voluntary and Community Sector
- Darlington Organisations Together (DOT) Network
- Darlington Borough Council
- Darlington Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee
- Darlington Health Protection Board
- Tees Valley Clinical Commissioning Group
- Darlington Primary Care Network
- Primary Healthcare Darlington
- Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust
- County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust
- NHS North East Commissioning Support
- North East Academic Health Science Network
- Care Quality Commission
- North East Independent Complaints Advocacy (ICA)





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