



Annual Report 2021/2022

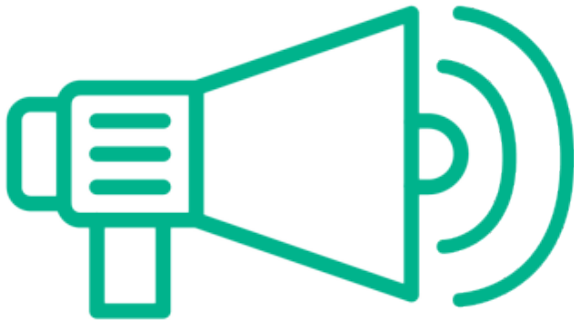
Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee
Wednesday 2nd November 2022

healthwatch
Darlington

Our year in review

Find out how we have engaged and supported people.

Reaching out



384 people

shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.

197 people

came to us for clear advice and information about topics such as dentistry, GP access, mental health services and Covid 19.

Our year in review

Find out how we have engaged and supported people.

Making a difference to care



We published **7 reports** about the improvements people would like to see to health and social care services.

Our most popular report was **TEWV Community Transformation Report** which highlighted the struggles people have with mental health issues

Our year in review

Find out how we have engaged and supported people.

Health and care that works for you



We're lucky to have **12** outstanding volunteers, who donated their time to make care better for our community.

We're funded by our local authority. In 2021-22 we received: **£74,460** Which is **2% more** than the previous year.

We also currently employ **3 staff** who help us carry out this work.

How we've made a difference throughout the year

These are the biggest projects we worked on from April 2021 to March 2022.

Spring



Your feedback to us on monitoring blood pressure at home supported the national picture to deliver better future experiences for people who use these devices.



We delivered our Digital Exclusion Report to Darlington Primary Care Network who committed to review our findings and make changes where possible.

Summer



Our Healthy Eating and Exercise initiative led by Youthwatch inspired families throughout the Borough.



Darlington Community Hub committed to working collaboratively, co-production with local communities and raising awareness of support as a result of your involvement in our Mental Health Report.

How we've made a difference throughout the year

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Autumn



Our Maternity Experiences Report was warmly welcomed by the Hospital Trust and helped them understand the needs and concerns of new and expectant parents.



Our Youthwatch continues to inspire and support young people, interviewing NSPCC and Kooth for Children's Mental Health Week 2021.

Winter



Your feedback helped us support both the national and regional call for improved access to dentistry.



Our LGBT+ Experiences of Health Services report encouraged the Hospital Trust to promote greater awareness of the HIV testing campaign within the Borough through training.

Listening to your experiences

Supporting transformation of mental health services in the community

We wanted to gather insight into what matters most to local people regarding mental health support in the community.

We heard from over 120 local people during our campaign and used this feedback to recommend areas local services should consider in their redesign and reorganisation of core community mental health.



What difference did we make?

Darlington Community Hub Transformation Working Group committed to:

- Working collaboratively to overcome the barriers faced by our local communities in accessing and receiving mental health support.
- Co-producing new ways of working in relation to the Community Mental Health Transformation with local people and communities.
- Raising awareness of what mental health support is already available across Darlington and how to access services.

Youthwatch - Reaching young people and families

Hearing about the rise in young people consuming unhealthy food and drink and increasing screen time, our young volunteers in Youthwatch were inspired to deliver a campaign. They decided to raise awareness and promote positive lifestyle choices, in relation to eating and exercising, with families and young people in Darlington by producing seed boxes.



“I think it did make a difference because it encouraged families to work together to think about eating healthier choices and could have possibly influenced children to think about what they eat.”

Ellie, Youthwatch Darlington volunteer





Seed and wellbeing boxes

Darlington Rotary Club awarded our young volunteers a grant of £250 for a project to make a difference to young people in the town. Our young volunteers used this grant to create 'Little Box of Herb's' - a free seed and wellbeing kit containing a healthy recipe card, herb seeds, bag of soil, planting pots, wellbeing checklist, stickers, and character pencil. The boxes were delivered to families and organisations in Darlington reaching more than 50 children.

The boxes were designed to inspire children to think about healthy ways to create food using ingredients such as fresh herbs which can easily be grown from home and offer ideas on how to improve overall wellbeing by taking simple steps such as drinking more water, reducing screen time and spending time outdoors.



Three ways we have made a difference for the community

Throughout our work we gather information about health inequalities by speaking to people whose experiences aren't often heard.



Creating empathy by bringing experiences to life

It's important for the NHS and social care services to step back and see the bigger picture, through hearing personal experiences, and the impact on people's lives.

Our work with Maternity Voices in Partnership (MVP) and a group of those experiencing maternity care in Darlington, highlighted three areas critical in ensuring the highest level of care is available to all.

- Communication - letting patients know what will happen, when and how.
- Effective planning and communication of business continuity – recently experienced through the pandemic.
- Recognising when staff need support themselves to give supportive, empathetic, and understanding levels of care.

Darlington Clinical Commissioning Group committed to seek assurances on these areas highlighted in our Maternity Experiences report via their Quality Committee



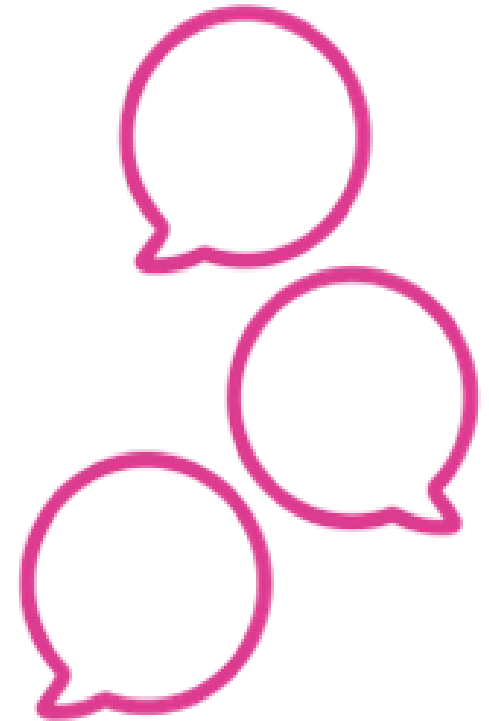
Getting services to involve the public

Services need to understand the benefits of involving local people to help improve care for everyone.

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.

Thanks to grant funding from Healthwatch England and Darlington Primary Care Network, we looked at the impact of moving to remote appointments on the population of Darlington.

Darlington Primary Care Network committed to implement changes where possible in order to improve access to general practice and continue their work to reduce inequalities and improve access for all.



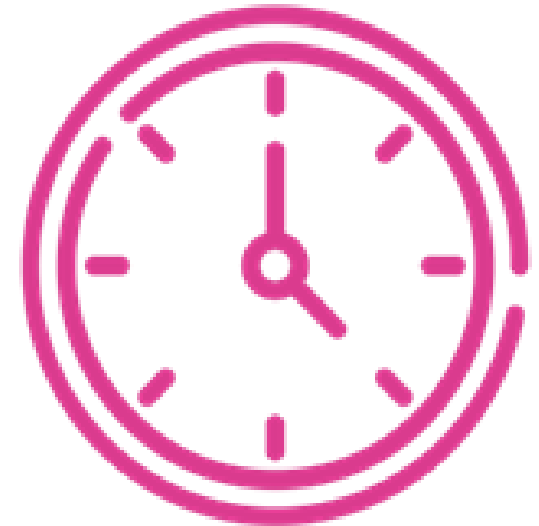
Improving care over time

Change takes time. We often work behind the scenes with health and care services to consistently raise issues and push for changes.

Healthwatch England is at the forefront of campaigning for reform of the NHS dental contract alongside the British Dental Association (BDA).

This year, Healthwatch Darlington joined forces with eight other local Healthwatch to support the national picture as well as informing local service providers of the experiences of their patients.

We will continue to monitor this area, support local community voice and provide advice to those who are experiencing difficulties with dental care.





Advice and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch is here for you. In times of worry or stress, we can provide confidential support and free information to help you understand your options and get the help you need.

Whether it's finding an NHS dentist, how to make a complaint or choosing a good care home for a loved one – you can count on us.



Volunteers

We're supported by a team of amazing volunteers who are the heart of Healthwatch Darlington. Thanks to their efforts in the community, we're able to understand what is working and what needs improving in NHS and social care.

This year our volunteers:

- Helped people have their say from home, carrying out surveys over the telephone and online.
- Created digital content on our website and social media.
- Carried out website and telephone reviews for local services on the information they provide and assessing their accessibility.
- Assisted as part of 'Readers' Panels' – checking local services' publications to make them more people focussed and easier to read.
- Continued to help with the local volunteering efforts supporting those who were self-isolating.

Voluntary, Community & Social Enterprise Sector (VCSE)

The lack of a Darlington VCSE infrastructure organisation has resulted in many local VCSE groups relying on us to distribute and raise awareness of their services.

Our Darlington Organisations Together (DOT) network has become very popular with the smaller VCSE organisations and created a forum to generate opportunities to work together and promote and showcase all their work and news.

We have an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the VCSE, which services are well-served and which areas need more support and funding. In addition to this we have strong links with local, regional, and national statutory bodies. We can empower the sector to advocate for its importance, represent the voice of Darlington within the NHS Integrated Care System and other decision-making forums to ensure continued support for the sector.

Finance and future priorities

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

| Income | |
|---------------------------------------|----------|
| Funding received from local authority | £74,460 |
| Additional funding | £65,059 |
| | |
| Total income | £139,519 |

| Expense | |
|-------------------|----------|
| Staff costs | £73,049 |
| Operational costs | £66,270 |
| | |
| Total expenditure | £139,319 |

Top three priorities for 2022-23:

- Mental Health Services
- GP Access
- Dentistry

Next steps

The pandemic has shone a stark light on the impact of existing inequalities when using health and care services, highlighting the importance of championing the voices of those who all too often go unheard.

Over the coming years, our strategic aims are:

- To help reduce these inequalities by making sure your voice is heard, regardless of where you live, income or race.
- To empower you to voice your worries and concerns and help local and regional decision-makers to act upon them to improve local services.
- To provide you with accurate, reliable, relevant and useful information about local services, when you need it, in a format that meets your needs.
- To continue to develop effective strategic partnerships with statutory, voluntary and community sector organisations and established special interest groups, in order to identify any patterns or trends and take appropriate collaborative action.
- To deliver an effective service for the public and provide maximum public benefit in return for the investment made in our activities

What current issues are we monitoring?

| Priority | Issue | Description |
|----------|---------------------------------------|---|
| | LGBTQ+ Older People | Issues affecting the wellbeing of older LGBT+ people |
| | NHS pharmacy and prescriptions | People's experiences of accessing pharmacy services and prescriptions, as well as specific issues (repeat prescription discrepancies). |
| | Access to GP services | People's experience of trying to access GP services HWE soon to launch comms kit and survey |
| | Mental Health | Ensuring equity of services and more services are delivered in the community as has been expressed in our project work with TEWV |
| | Accessible Information | People's experiences of getting health and care information in a format they can understand or being provided with support to understand information. |
| | Dentistry | Experiences of people accessing dental services |

For more information

Healthwatch Darlington

Sterling House

22 St Cuthbert's Way

Darlington

DL1 1GB

Website: www.healthwatchdarlington.co.uk

Email: info@healthwatchdarlington.co.uk

Tel: 01325 380145

Instagram: @healthwatchdarlington @youthwatchdarlington

YouTube: <https://youtube.com/channel/UC-mVUiDs78wgqkzKpLtPCVw>

 **Twitter:** @healthwatchDton

 **Facebook:** @healthwatchdarlington @youthwatchdarlo

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