



Annual Report 2022/2023

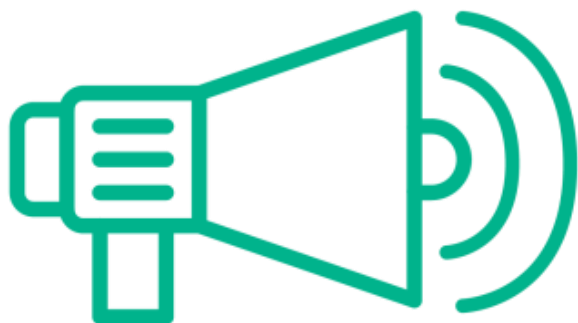
Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee
1st November 2023

healthwatch
Darlington

Our year in review

Find out how we have engaged and supported people.

Reaching out



142 people

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

523 people

came to us for clear advice and information about topics such as mental health and the cost-of-living crisis.

Our year in review

Find out how we have engaged and supported people.

Making a difference to care



We published **2 reports** about the improvements people would like to see to health and social care services.

Our most popular report was **Pandemic Experiences** which highlighted the experiences of local people at each stage of the COVID-19 pandemic

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 **16** outstanding volunteers who gave up 65 days to make care better for our community.

We're funded by our local authority. In 2022-23 we received **£76,634** which is the same as the previous year.

We currently employ **4 staff** who help us carry out our work.

How we've made a difference throughout the year

These are the biggest projects we worked on from April 2022 to March 2023.

Spring



From running information stands to social media posts, our volunteers helped us provide local communities with essential information.



We gathered your experiences of COVID-19 which highlighted the importance of community centered care.

Summer



Our Sensory Impairment Report highlighted the importance of providing Accessible Information to patients and carers



Our local information stands throughout Darlington helped us understand what is important to you in your health and care needs.

How we've made a difference throughout the year

These are the biggest projects we worked on from April 2022 to March 2023.

Autumn	 <p>Our ongoing partnership working with the Integrated Care Partnership is providing a solid basis to improve the wellbeing of our local communities.</p>	 <p>We started working with our Tees Valley Healthwatch colleagues to refresh our Youthwatch project across the region.</p>
Winter	 <p>We shared a survey to help us understand local experiences of pharmacy services. 31% of participants told us how the prescription collection service was not meeting their needs.</p>	 <p>Due to NHS winter pressures, we encouraged local people to share their experiences of care as part of the 'Because We All Care' joint campaign run by Healthwatch and the Care Quality Commission.</p>

10 years of improving care

This year marks a special milestone for Healthwatch. Over the last ten years, people have shared their experiences, good and bad, to help improve health and social care. A big thank you to all our Healthwatch Heroes that have stepped up and inspired change. Here are a few of our highlights:

How have we made care better, together?

Vaccination programme

Our pandemic experiences report based on public feedback, provided our local Integrated Care Board with valuable insights to plan for Phase 5 of the COVID vaccination programme.



NHS Long Term Plan

Healthwatch Darlington coordinated feedback across the 13 northern local Healthwatch teams. One of the key findings in Darlington was the importance for carers to be supported, involved and listened to.



Care Homes

We shared recommendations from our visits to local Care Homes and received positive responses from those who run and commission them.



Transforming mental health services

We helped our local mental health hospital trust understand the needs of our communities and commit to working collaboratively to overcome barriers faced in accessing mental health support.



Sharing your health records

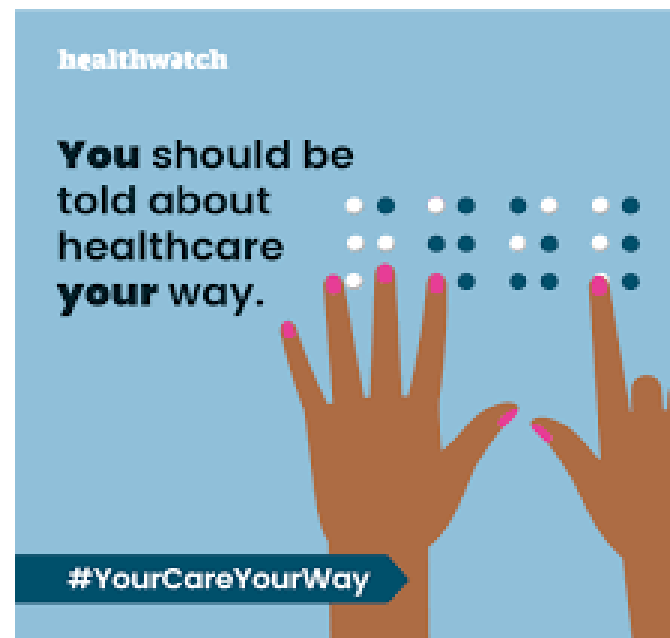
Healthwatch Darlington coordinated feedback from 13 local Healthwatch concerning the Great North Care Record. This regional feedback helped decision makers understand what is important to those whose data would be shared.



Listening to your experiences

Sensory impairment and access to health and care services

As a follow up to our Digital Inclusion Report in June 2021 and our involvement in the current Healthwatch England campaign to promote the Accessible Information Standard, we wanted to understand how residents of Darlington who had sensory impairment were impacted when accessing health and care services.



What difference did we make?

- County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust committed to review their compliance to the Accessible Information Standard and to develop an action plan based upon the report findings.
- Tees Valley NHS Clinical Commissioning Group (now North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board) committed to supporting their colleagues throughout the NHS to ensure they are meeting the criteria within the NHS.

Positive changes as a result of your pandemic experiences

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the entire healthcare system was forced to rethink how they could make services accessible to service users whilst keeping our communities safe. Covid did not just affect individuals, it affected everyone, and many challenges had to be faced.

What difference did we make?

Tees Valley NHS Clinical Commissioning Group (now North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board), told us the insights of local people within the report has provided them with valuable information and will allow them to support the residents of Darlington regarding future vaccination programmes and help them plan for future campaigns. They also committed to sharing the findings with the Tees Valley Mental Health and Wellbeing Alliance to help inform their ongoing work.



“This reports findings in relation to experiences of mental health services throughout the pandemic will support our ongoing work across the region as part of the Tees Valley Mental Health and Wellbeing Alliance.”

Director of Finance, North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board



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 is important for services to see the bigger picture. Hearing personal experiences and the impact on people's lives provides them with a better understanding of the problems.

Our pandemic report brought to life people's experiences during and after the pandemic. The awareness of concerns expressed has helped the local NHS to plan future campaigns as well as Phase 5 of the Vaccination Programme from September.

These insights are very valuable to the NHS and have allowed them to support the residents of Darlington to be informed about receiving a vaccination.



Getting services to involve the public

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

Tees, Esk and Wear Valley's (TEWV) NHS Mental Health Foundation Trust used the insight contained within our report to support delivery of a new mental health community-based offer aligned with primary care networks, voluntary sector organisations and local community groups.

We continue to monitor the delivery and commitment given by TEWV to work collaboratively to overcome the barriers faced by our local communities in accessing and receiving mental health support.



Improving care over time

Change takes time. We often work behind the scenes with services to consistently raise issues and bring about change.

Healthwatch Darlington will continue listening to people about how the cost-of-living crisis is affecting people living and working in our Borough, engaging with those communities hardest hit.

We will share what our local health and care services are doing to support our communities during this time.

Hearing from all communities

Over the past year we have worked hard to make sure we hear from everyone within our local area.

This year we have reached different communities by:

- Focussing on supporting those with sensory impairments and receiving accessible care
- Highlighting the experiences of those who found it difficult to access health and care services during the pandemic
- Working with the Integrated Care Board to help them understand the needs of our local communities.



Darlington Organisations Together Network

The lack of a Darlington Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) infrastructure organisation has resulted in many local VCSE groups relying on us to distribute and raise awareness of their services. So much so that our Darlington Organisations Together (DOT) network has become very popular with the smaller VCSE organisations.



“We really enjoy attending the DOT network, it’s friendly, informative and a great way to find out what else is going on in Darlington. Healthwatch Darlington’s weekly newsletter also keeps us updated in between meetings and we know we can send them all our news, events and updates for publishing each week for free!”





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:

- Visited communities to promote their local Healthwatch and what we have to offer
- Collected experiences and supported their communities to share their views
- Shared up-to-date information on health and care services, and health and care events of interest to local people

Finance

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

Our income and expenditure

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from Government	£76,634	Expenditure on pay	£69,727
Additional income	£20,624	Office expenditure	£10,292
Total income	£97,258	Total expenditure	£80,019

Additional income is broken down by:

- **£8,145 funding** NECS children's services
- **£5,000 funding** CCG Community Council
- **£2,479 funding** Healthwatch England website and management system
- **£4,500 funding** ICS participants
- **£500 sale** of furniture

Future Priorities

Top three priorities for 2023-24

1. **Mental Health** – Continue to influence local strategies by following up on our recommendations and evidencing impact.
2. **GP and Dental Services** – Continue to monitor the experiences of people accessing services and the impact of extra funding and commissioning changes.
3. **NHS Pressures** – Monitor the impact that workforce issues and industrial action are having on people accessing services.

For more information

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