

# Together

we're making health  
and social care better

Annual Report 2022–23

**healthwatch**  
Stockton-on-Tees



How can I  
find a new GP  
or dentist?

How do I  
get help for  
an elderly  
relative?

What do I do  
if I am unhappy  
with my care or  
treatment?

Just ask.

**healthwatch**

We are here to help!

Freephone 0808 172 9559

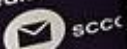
Healthwatch can help you by:

- Providing **information** about how to find your local health and social care services
- **Advising** you about what to do if you are unhappy with your care or treatment



Email: [healthwatchstockton@pcp.uk.net](mailto:healthwatchstockton@pcp.uk.net)  
[www.healthwatchstocktonontees.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchstocktonontees.co.uk)

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"In the last ten years, the health and social care landscape has changed dramatically, but the dedication of local Healthwatch hasn't. Your local Healthwatch has worked tirelessly to make sure the views of local people are heard, and NHS and social care leaders use your feedback to make care better."

Louise Ansari, Healthwatch National Director

# Message from our Chair



It's hard to believe we have arrived at this point in the year, both a time for reflection and a time to look forward, ensuring continued confidence with our partners and stakeholders of the valuable impact that Healthwatch and the public can make to the delivery of health and care services, both locally in Stockton-on-Tees and nationally via the transformation agenda.

This year the Stockton-on-Tees Healthwatch team organised a North East regional event to celebrate the 10th birthday of Healthwatch. Fourteen local Healthwatch came together to highlight the positive work and impact that has been made across the region, championing the voice of the public and their views of health and care services.



**Peter Smith,**  
**Chair of Healthwatch**  
**Stockton-on-Tees**

We know the need to maintain our focus as local Healthwatch has never been greater, finding ways to help maintain stability for the people we represent. The entire health and social care system faces many challenges, from reducing waiting times for vital surgery and treatment; making it simpler to access primary care services; recruiting new doctors, nurses and social workers; ensuring professional social care assessments and the very real issue regarding the lack of NHS dentistry. These issues affect the general population on a day-to-day basis and through their comments and suggestions impacts on how services are planned and delivered.

After 75 years of the NHS, we still face huge challenges alongside social care services in managing to provide quality services whilst under extreme financial pressure. Is change needed? Do services need more investment; or can we develop creative ways of preventing illness and stop the rise in health inequalities whilst supporting our ageing population. Can the NHS, public health and social care organisations work more closely together to provide improved, collaborative, and efficient care? Are we harnessing the best use of technology and available data to provide more control for patients?

Working with the public across the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees our local Healthwatch has managed to demonstrate the power of public feedback, and this has helped to identify what works, to spot issues and to make recommendations on potential improvements. This report demonstrates much of the work we have undertaken over the past 12 months.

I would like to thank Natasha and the Healthwatch team for all their hard work and continuing support to the people and patients of Stockton-on-Tees.



**Peter Smith, Chair, Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees**

# About us

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## Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees is your local health and social care champion.

We make sure NHS leaders and decision-makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care. We can also help you to find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.



### Our vision

A world where we can all get the health and care we need.



### Our mission

To make sure people's experiences help make health and care better.

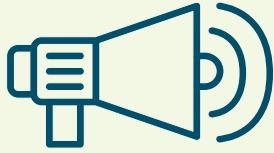


### Our values are:

- **Listening** to people and making sure their voices are heard.
- **Including** everyone in the conversation – especially those who don't always have their voice heard.
- **Analysing** different people's experiences to learn how to improve care.
- **Acting** on feedback and driving change.
- **Partnering** with care providers, Government, and the voluntary sector – serving as the public's independent advocate.

# Year in review

## Reaching out



**1,514 people**

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

**14,971 people**

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

## Making a difference to care

We published

**5 reports**

reports about the improvements people would like to see to health and social care services.

Our most popular report was

**Accessible Information Standards in Health & Care**

which highlighted the struggles people face in receiving health information from health and care services.



## Health and care that works for you



We're lucky to have

**13**

outstanding volunteers who gave up **31 days** to make care better for our community.

We're funded by our local authority. In 2022-23 we received

**£129,079**

which is **0.7 % less** than the previous year.

We currently employ

**4 staff**

(full time equivalent) who help us carry out our work.

# How we've made a difference this year

Spring



## Youthwatch

This year we have worked closely with Youth Focus North East to begin the development of Youthwatch, a platform for young people to have their say about health and care services.



## Integrated Care System (ICS)

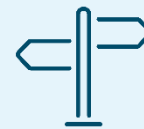
As the transformation of health and care services is developing, we have worked with our ICS colleagues to ensure that we have a role at a strategic level and that the voice of service users and the public are embedded within new structures.

Summer



## Bee Happy

We collaborated with Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Community Based Learning Disability Day Services to engage with people with a learning disability to find out their views and experiences of their health and wellbeing over the past year.



## Coffee Mornings

We have delivered coffee mornings throughout the area to provide an opportunity for people to have their say, while distributing food parcels to those most in need with the support of 'Feeding Families.'

# How we've made a difference this year

## Autumn



### 10-Year Event

We celebrated 10 years of Healthwatch by bringing together partners and colleagues from across the North East to share valuable learning and provide an opportunity to determine our collective ambition for the future.



### 0-19 Growing Healthy

Working with the Stockton Community Wellbeing Champions we supported the Public Health Growing Healthy Stockton-on-Tees consultation, to ensure that the voices of those accessing services were able to contribute to the development of the future commissioning and delivery of the 0-19 health services.

## Winter



### Accessible Information Standards

We engaged with the community to understand how the Accessible Information Standard is working on a local level and to find out how people experience receiving health information from health and care services.



### Waiting Well

We provided valuable feedback to the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board on their Waiting Well programme which aims to support patients to prepare for surgery.

# 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 for you

### Accessing Primary Care Services

Due to intelligence gathered we were able to help the NHS identify and remove barriers to improve access and delivery of health services.



### Community Mental Health

Our period of consultation gave us valuable information about how mental services could work more effectively, which helped to provide an insight to commissioners. We are continuing our involvement to ensure service users are at the heart of the Community Mental Health Transformation Programme.



### Improving Hospital Visiting

North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Trust welcomed feedback that led to reviewing hospital visiting policies, procedures and guidance.



### Care Homes

Our programme of Enter & View visits supported improvements to the care of those living with dementia both in care homes throughout the borough and within North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Trust.



### NHS dentistry

We continued to voice public concerns that improvements to NHS dentistry are too slow, leaving thousands of people in pain. Our findings highlight a serious shortage of NHS Dentists and poor access to treatment.





- To improve our service
- Take on board your suggestions to understand your needs
- To leave feedback anonymously
- Any form of feedback is welcome
- For you to express your concerns and suggestions



**Starfish**  
Health and Wellbeing



## Healthwatch Hero



### Celebrating a hero in our local community

We are delighted to have had the opportunity to work with Catherine from Starfish Health & Wellbeing and gather the voices of those accessing the service to ensure the voice of service users are embedded within the transformation of mental health services.

We received lots of feedback about the drop-in service 'A Place to Be' and the passion shown by Catherine to make a positive change for the residents of Stockton-on-Tees.

While attending a 'lived experience group' information was gathered that highlighted the need for an out of hours drop-in service.

Catherine acted on this feedback and established a 5pm-8pm drop-in service that is well attended, demonstrating local need.

"It's been very helpful, lots of support and able to get out of the house and feel safe with the people I am with, absolutely great support." *Place to Be attendee*

"Catherine is marvellous." *Place to Be attendee*

"Love it when Catherine is here, she is so kind and helpful." *Peer Mentor*

"Catherine is helping, me so much I don't know what I would have done without her support." *Place to Be attendee*

"Catherine is just amazing." *Peer Mentor*

We are very glad to welcome Catherine as a Healthwatch Champion who will continue to share with us the voice of service users, championing what matters to them.



# Listening to your experiences

Services can't make improvements without hearing your views. That's why over the last year we have made listening to feedback from all areas of the community a priority. This allows us to understand the full picture, and feed this back to services and help them improve.

# Advocating for fairer NHS dentistry

**NHS dentistry is in desperate need of reform and this year local Healthwatch came together nationally to successfully move NHS dentistry up the political agenda with our ambition to make it easier for people to find a dentist taking on NHS patients.**

With living costs on the rise, our new findings show widening health inequalities as people in every part of the country struggle to pay for dental care.

We have seen a shortage of NHS appointments, which has affected people on the lowest incomes the most, meaning they were less likely to have dental treatment than those on higher incomes.

We made renewed calls on NHS England and the Department of Health and Social care to put a reformed dental contract in place.

## Changes to NHS dental contracts

Our findings achieved widespread media attention and as a result NHS England announced changes, including:



- Increasing the payments for dentists when treating patients with complex needs, for example, people needing work done on three or more teeth.
- Requiring dental practices to regularly update the national directory as to whether they are taking new NHS patients.
- Moving resources from dental practices that are underperforming.

## What difference will this make?

This announcement showed the power of people's feedback – with decision makers listening to your voice and taking action.

With these changes in place, it should be easier for people to find a new dentist taking on NHS patients, alleviating the stress and worry so many suffer when they cannot afford to go private.



“Since I moved to Stockton-on-Tees I have tried to find a dentist who accepts new NHS patients. Every single dentist I contacted, stated that they do not accept new NHS patients or are private patients' practices only. As I understand, I have the right to get access to dental care, yet I end up paying for my check-ups every 6 months. I also paid for fillings twice and had to pay for a tooth to be removed. I was in pain for 2 weeks, but no dentist would have accepted me. The situation is unbearable as well as unaffordable for me.”

**Stockton-on-Tees resident**



# Experiences of the Accessible Information Standards in Health & Care

**At the beginning of this year Healthwatch England launched the 'Your Care, Your Way' campaign. The campaign called for improved accountability and implementation of the Accessible Information Standard (AIS) in health and care.**

The AIS gives disabled people and people with sensory loss the legal right to get health and care information they can understand, and the communication support they need. By law, all publicly funded health and social care providers must fully comply with the AIS and ensure people are given information about their health and care in accessible formats (Healthwatch England, 2022).

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees collaborated with Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Community Based Learning Disability Day Services to find out about the views and experiences of people with a learning disability in relation to their health and wellbeing over the past year.

## Our recommendations:

1. Health and care services to be accountable for delivering the Accessible Information Standard.
2. Every health and care service to have an accessibility champion so that health and social care staff know who is responsible for leading local accessible information policy and delivery, and to support staff awareness of their compliance with the standard.
3. To involve people with communication needs in designing better services.
4. To provide mandatory training on accessible information for all health and care staff - to enable staff to understand the standard and regularly provide information in the formats patients need, and to proactively ask patients about their communication needs.

## What difference will this make?

The findings highlight the importance, for those covered by the AIS, of receiving support from family, carers, and support staff to access and understand information, and to communicate with health and care services. The amount of support that people receive from family, carers and support staff has been stated as the main factor that could affect people's ability to ask health services to provide information or communicate with them in a way that can be easily understood, when needed.

People who are covered by the AIS experience disadvantages in accessing health and care information when needed, and that this has an impact on the quality of care that they've received. This includes missing appointments, not being able to contact the service that was needed, not being able to understand how to take medication, taking the wrong dose of medication, missing out on important information about their health, and that their mental health and wellbeing has been affected because of this.

By raising the profile of the Standard, organisations will be better informed about how they should make sure that people get support from a communication professional if they need it, and about changing working practices to support effective communication, promoting equality and inclusion.

# 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 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.



Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees have developed a programme of coffee mornings that provide an opportunity for individuals to meet with us for an informal chat, information and signposting, and providing an opportunity for our partners to attend in collaboration to address concerns and provide a coordinated approach to help tackle health and wellbeing concerns.

In December 2022 we were able to utilise our coffee mornings to work alongside 'Feeding Families' and help to distribute food parcels to families struggling due to the cost-of-living crisis, while speaking with individuals about their personal concerns accessing health and care services.

## Getting services to involve the public

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

Our work to highlight inequalities in accessing health and care for those who are covered by the Accessible Information Standard, has helped to raise the profile of what service providers need to do to ensure access is equitable throughout the area.

Those who are covered by the AIS are between two-three times more likely to have been refused a request for support to understand health care information when they have asked, and to have not been provided with health care information that they could understand or access. It's important to those who require communication support, that they are made to feel comfortable in asking for information from health and care services in a way that can be easily understood.

Our findings show that people who are covered by the AIS experience disadvantages in accessing health and care information when needed, and that this has an impact on the quality of care that they've received. This includes missing appointments, not being able to contact the service that was needed, not being able to understand how to take medication, taking the wrong dose of medication, missing out on important information about their health, and that their mental health and wellbeing has been affected because of this.

By working together with the public, we can help to tackle inequalities in accessing health and social care.



# 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.

## Improving care over time

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

'Waiting Well' is a regionwide programme that aims to support patients who are waiting for planned care such as knee and hip replacements.



Evidence shows that taking simple steps before surgery or treatment to improve fitness, diet and mental health plays a crucial role in helping patients to recover more quickly and reduces the chance of being re-admitted to hospital. By empowering them to manage elements of their own health and be in as good shape as they can for their treatment means that there is much less chance of their planned care being cancelled.

To explore public perception, we undertook a piece of engagement to find out what the local views were of the programme. Overall people thought the idea was good and that it would motivate people to take better care of their wellbeing. Our findings were shared with the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (NENC ICB) to inform future planning and delivery.





# Hearing from all communities

Over the past year we have worked hard to make sure we hear from everyone within our local area. We consider it important to reach out to the communities we hear from less frequently, to gather their feedback and make sure their voice is heard and services meet their needs.

This year we have reached different communities by:

- Developing a programme of coffee mornings targeting specific areas.
- Facilitated local services coming together to help support those struggling from socio-economic deprivation.
- Supported and contributed to engagement ahead of the re-commissioning of the 0-19 service in Stockton-on-Tees, ensuring decision makers hear the voices of the public.
- Worked with partners to continue to build our network and help overcome barriers to accessing services.
- Developed an easy read format of intelligence gathering that can be used to support people to have their voice heard.

# Tees Valley Youthwatch

## Tees Valley Youthwatch

Youth Focus North East and Healthwatch across the Tees Valley have collaborated to develop a Young Persons Advisory Board. The aim of this project is to ensure meaningful young person representation is included within service commissioning and planning.

Throughout the ongoing development of 'Youthwatch' it has highlighted the challenges that can be faced engaging with diverse communities and how strategic planning and commissioning needs to ensure that a variety of engagement mechanisms are used to ensure meaningful engagement, both for the communities it is working with and to better inform the delivery of health and care services now and in the future.





## Improved access for 0-19 services

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees collaborated with the Stockton-on-Tees Wellbeing Champions and Stockton-on-Tees Public Health to support the review of 0-19/25 Service.

The purpose of the engagement was to ensure that the voices of local children, young people, their families, and those involved in supporting them are central to the review and re-commissioning of the 0-19/25 service.

The Public Health vision is to enable children and young people with the building blocks to secure the foundation for a healthy life, working with families to promote wellbeing, protect from illness and injury and prevent ill health at the earliest opportunity through prevention and early intervention.



“

*“We would like to thank Healthwatch who have collaborated with the Stockton-on-Tees Community Wellbeing Champions to produce this report reviewing our Public Health 0-19 (up to 25 with SEND) offer. Together they were able to collect responses from almost 100 residents, including harder to reach groups.*

*“The valuable insights and recommendations collated in the [report](#) will, along with other information collected during consultation, contribute to our service review and the ongoing development of a model of support and the commissioning process, working with communities, children and young people and their caregivers.”*

”

**Director of Public Health, Sarah Bowman-Abouna**

## Collaborating to ensure service user voice is at the heart of future service delivery

This year Healthwatch celebrated its 10th birthday. Fourteen local Healthwatch came together who work collectively across the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care System (NENC ICS) region to add value and service user voice to the changing health and care landscape. Staff past and present, Board members, volunteers and partner organisations came together to share in the success that Healthwatch has achieved to date and identify how we can continue to build on our success and support the transformation of health and care services.

We were delighted that Claire Riley from the NENC ICS was able to attend the event and share with us her ambition for the future of health and care services.

With the ICS transformation underway Claire spoke of her desire to ensure insight and feedback from the public was used at both a national and local level. She welcomed the opportunity she has had to work alongside Healthwatch and is looking forward to continued collaboration that will support system wide planning and service delivery.

Claire acknowledged there will be challenges and ‘hard conversations’ along the way and that positive system change will only be achieved through meaningful partnership working. She welcomed the opportunity to answer questions raised and provided honest feedback on the challenges ahead, with a determination to ensure positive outcomes for health and care services.

“Thank you for inviting me to join the Healthwatch 10-year celebration. It is important to celebrate the great work of the Healthwatch teams and the impact this has had on patients, carers and the public. Now we have the opportunity to learn from this work and ensure the voices of our communities are at the heart of health and care services.”

**Claire Riley Executive Director of Corporate Governance, Communications & Involvement, North East & North Cumbria ICS**





# Advice and information

Healthwatch is here for every person living in Stockton-on-Tees. 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.

This year we've helped people by:

- Providing up to date information people can trust.
- Helping people access the services they need.
- Helping people access NHS dentistry.
- Supporting people to look after their health during the cost of living crisis.

## Help to find medication in Stockton

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees were contacted by a lady whose husband had suffered a stroke and had to feed via a feeding tube after hospital discharge.

The initial medication was in liquid form, however when this ran out the pharmacist would only dispense the medication in tablet form, proving difficult to administer and causing concern that the correct dosage was not being given as it was blocking the tube. The lady raised this with her GP and the pharmacist and was advised they were not able to provide liquid form. We were able to source advice from the NHS Patient Care Team who contacted her and were able to offer support to rectify the problem.

## Helping residents with an NHS complaint

**During 2021 – 2022, a client contacted Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees and requested help to make a complaint on behalf of her husband. She was signposted to the Stockton Independent Complaints Advocacy Service (SICA) and the case was successfully resolved. The North East Ambulance Service (NEAS) have used the learning and proposed plans to prevent repeat future experiences.**

The complaint was received about the poor care and treatment received from the NEAS after a nasty fall and head injury.

An ambulance did not arrive until 9 hours after the initial call. When the ambulance did arrive and the paramedics attended to the patient, they found that his temperature was very high and immediately thought he had COVID-19.

The paramedics and the NEAS call operators deemed the client's husband not critical because he was able to respond when they spoke to him. However, when the paramedics took him to the hospital and a scan was carried out, it showed that he had suffered a fractured skull, signs of having a bleed on the brain.

It was strongly felt by the client that NEAS failed in their duty of care, by making a judgement on how serious his condition was based on his ability to answer when spoken to. The injury sustained has had a very adverse impact on their ability to manage most daily functions without difficulty and impacted adversely on the general wellbeing of the whole family.

As an outcome the complaint, the client wanted the NEAS to admit that they failed in their duty of care. A number of questions were put to the NEAS to bring the case to a successful resolution and the outcomes of the complaint were:

- In their complaint response NEAS apologised for letting the client's husband down on the day.
- They acknowledged that on the first call, the health advisor should have probed further to determine whether her husband would have described the headache as severe. They stated in their response that if his headache was severe then this may have resulted in advice to attend an Emergency Department within an hour if they had transport, or a category 3 ambulance being assigned.
- They further stated that as the pain level was not probed enough to determine this, the outcome was to see his GP within 3 days. They admitted that this does not appear to be sufficient for her husband's condition.

All the issues raised in client's complaint were adequately answered, a resolution was reached, and the client was happy with the outcome of the complaint.



# Volunteering

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

## This year our volunteers:

- Have gathered information from local communities, while promoting Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees.
- Visited services to gather services user, carer and friends and family feedback.
- Attended forums and meetings to build capacity and ensure Healthwatch representation.
- Read and provided comments on local policies and initiatives to embed public voice.
- Represented us at planning meetings as services begin to change within the Integrated Care System.

## Jon Carling, Board Member

"I am delighted to be part of the Healthwatch Board in Stockton. It's inspiring to see the enthusiasm of the staff and volunteers, and to contribute to the variety of actions they have taken to make a difference in our Borough. The report on mental health provision was very influential on services, especially in the voluntary sector, for example."



## Leonie McGrother, Board Community Representative

"As Development and Engagement Officer for the Stockton Community Wellbeing Champion Project, being on the Healthwatch Board has been a brilliant opportunity to build on the relationship with Healthwatch Stockton and increase capacity to provide health and wellbeing support to the residents of Stockton-on-Tees. I have learned a lot being a Healthwatch board member and look forward to continuing to work towards improving health and wellbeing outcomes in the area."



### Do you feel inspired?

We are always on the lookout for new volunteers, so please get in touch today.



[www.healthwatchstocktonontees.co.uk/volunteer](http://www.healthwatchstocktonontees.co.uk/volunteer)



01642 688312



[healthwatchstockton@pcp.uk.net](mailto:healthwatchstockton@pcp.uk.net)

# 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.

## Our income and expenditure

Income		Expenditure	
Funding from local authority	£129,079	Expenditure on pay	£76,030
Additional income	£5,316	Non-pay expenditure	£25,868
		Office and management fee	£9,416
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£134,395</b>	<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>£111,314</b>

Additional income is broken down by:

- **£816 funding** received from Healthwatch Norfolk for website migration funding
- **£4,500 funding** received from NENC ICB for ICS funding

## Next steps

In the ten years since Healthwatch was launched, we've demonstrated the power of public feedback in helping the health and care system understand what is working, spot issues and think about how things can be better in the future.

Services are currently facing unprecedented challenges and tackling the backlog needs to be a key priority for the NHS to ensure everyone gets the care they need. Over the next year we will continue our role in collecting feedback from everyone in our local community and giving them a voice to help shape improvements to services.

We will also continue our work to tackling inequalities that exist and work to reduce the barriers you face when accessing care, regardless whether that is because of where you live, income or race.

## Top three priorities for 2023-24

1. Growing Older Project – this Tees Valley project aims to deliver a local review to support a response to the national requirement to improve planning process for when families can no longer support their family member to stay at home. The particular focus of this project is to improve support for family, carers and older people with learning disability.
2. Building on our programme of engagement, focusing on the communities we don't regularly hear from.
3. Continuing to ensure the voices of our community are embedded within the ICS and the health and social care transformation – particularly mental health and the development of the local Mental Health Hub.



# Statutory statements

The organisation holding the Healthwatch contract is the Pioneering Care Partnership (PCP). PCP is a multi-award-winning health and wellbeing charity operating across the North East.

For further information, please visit [www.pcp.uk.net](http://www.pcp.uk.net)

Registered Charity No: 1067888. Company Registered in England No: 3491237

Registered address: Pioneering Care Centre, Carer's Way, Newton Aycliffe, County Durham, DL5 4SF

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Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees uses the Healthwatch Trademark



# The way we work

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

Our Healthwatch Board consists of five Executive members and five Community Representatives 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.

Throughout 2022/23 the Board met seven times and made decisions on matters such as:

- Our work regarding the accessible information standards.
- Collaborating with Youth Focus North East to enhance the voice of young people.
- Supporting staff to ensure public representation within the new Integrated Care System (ICS).
- Leading regional Healthwatch as we celebrated 10 years of making difference as a North East region sharing learning and skills.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities.

## Methods and systems used across the year to obtain people's experiences

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 using services. During 2022/23 we have been available by phone, email, provided a webform on our website and through social media, as well as attending meetings of community groups and forums.

We ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. We will publish it on our website, present it to the Health & Wellbeing Board and Scrutiny Committee, and it will be disseminated amongst our partners and commissioners, including North Tees & Hartlepool Foundation Trust and the Care Quality Commission.

## Responses to recommendations

All our reports throughout the year have received responses from the relevant partners and recommendations made will form part of the future planning and commissioning of services.

There were no issues or recommendations escalated by us to Healthwatch England Committee, so no resulting reviews or investigations.

# The way we work

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## Taking people's experiences to decision makers

We ensure that people who can make decisions about services hear about the insight and experiences that have been shared with us.

In our local authority area, for example, we work closely with the Stockton-on-Tees Public Health team to ensure the voice of the public is embedded with plans for future service delivery.

We have good working relationships with North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust to support the planning of their patient and engagement strategy, and we also attend the Patient & Carer Experience Committee

We attend meetings and forums throughout the area to ensure collaboration and a joined-up approach to consultation and engagement.

We are members of the Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board and actively promote raising awareness and safeguarding campaigns.

We also take insight and experiences to decision makers in the Integrated Care System. For example, we collaborated with other local healthwatch within the region to support the consultation of the 'Waiting Well Programme.'

We provide regular update reports to the Integrated Care System of local engagement and grass root intelligence to help identify trends and concerns and steer priorities at a local, regional and national level.

We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.



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## Working with partners

This year we have continued to ensure the relationships built with our partners continue to develop in strength, ensuring the voice of the residents of Stockton-on-Tees remain embedded in-service transformation and delivery.

We work closely with Catalyst, our strategic infrastructure organisation, to look at innovative ways to support health and wellbeing. In particular the development of the Mental Health Hub, which aims to bring services together in a joined coordinated approach to offer service users streamlined delivery of support and care.

We are also members of the Integrated Mental Health Steering Group, a forum that brings together an array of skills and experience to add value and expertise to the transformation of services.



*"I am looking forward to the continued input of Healthwatch as we progress with the agreed changes in our local communities, and I very much welcome their continued support to understand and address the key health inequalities that impact upon access, effectiveness, and experience of our mental health services."*



**Dominic Gardner Care Group Director MHSOP/AMH, Durham Tees Valley Care Group Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust**

## Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees is represented on the Stockton Health and Wellbeing Board (HWBB) by Peter Smith, Healthwatch Chair.

During 2022/23 our representative has effectively carried out this role by regular attendance at the HWBB meetings, contributing to discussions, sharing intelligence, and raising awareness of the Healthwatch workplan. Facilitating bi-monthly Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees board meetings, involvement regionally in Healthwatch discussions and planning relating to the new Integrated Care System. Reviewing reports and recommendations, providing feedback and responses as required.

We also take insight and experiences to decision makers in North East and North Cumbria (NENC) Integrated Care Board. While we have worked together informally for many years, recent funding from the ICB has enabled the Network to formalise working arrangements through our Operational Protocol, so that it can systematically represent the views of service users, families and carers with partners across the Integrated Care System. Local intelligence is collated across each of the four sub-regional areas and shared at Area ICP meetings.

## Healthwatch representatives

At regional level, the Healthwatch Regional Coordinator represents service-user voice from across the region at the NENC Integrated Care Partnership Strategic meeting, Quality & Safety Committee, Primary Care Strategy & Delivery sub-committee, Healthy & Fairness Advisory Group, Equality, Diversity & Inclusion meetings and System Quality Group meetings.

The network of local Healthwatch has also been commissioned to undertake additional research to ensure local opinions are represented in the ICB's work priorities, including focus groups for the Waiting Well, and consultation around the development of the ICB strategy.

We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees has been represented on the Integrated Care Partnerships in the South ICP area of NENC ICS by Toni McHale and Christopher Akers-Belcher. The Regional ICP is attended by Christopher Akers-Belcher, Healthwatch Regional ICB Coordinator. The Integrated Care Board Participant for the network is David Thompson, Chair of Healthwatch Northumberland.

## 2022–2023 Outcomes

<b>Project / activity</b>	<b>Changes made to services</b>
Experiences of the Accessible Information Standards in health and care.	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council adult social care are currently undertaking a review of its day opportunities and wider community options.
Provide better access to local areas for people who use wheelchairs.	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council has been successful in two grant awards to develop changing places within Stockton to enable people to have their personal needs met within the community.
Provide more opportunities for people with a learning disability to participate in local activities that are enjoyable and meaningful, and that enhance learning.	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council has made a commitment to work with people and their carers to participate, at all levels, in shaping and delivering service delivery. To strengthen and grow the relationships people have in their communities working with them to be active and valued members of their communities.

## 2022–2023 Outcomes

Project/ activity	Changes made to services
Growing Healthy – Stockton-on-Tees Service Review.	The valuable insights and recommendations collated in the report will, along with other contribute to the service review and the ongoing development of a model of support and commissioning process, working with communities, children and young people and their caregivers. The Public Health team are using the recommissioning process as an opportunity to review our current offer and the needs of children, young people and families in the borough.
Waiting Well across the North East and Cumbria.	Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees were able to gather valuable insight into the public perception of the ‘Waiting Well’ initiative to improve health. Overall, the findings were that the programme is supported, this information along with areas to consider, was shared with the NENC ICS and this programme is continuing to be rolled out regionally.
Experiences of Dental Care Services.	Following on from previous work we continue to be involved in ensuring that dentistry remains a high priority within the commissioning arena. A dentistry myth buster was developed and disseminated; we currently have representation within the Dentistry Workforce Development where all intelligence to date will be shared. There are plans to continue our work with the ICB throughout 2023-2024.
Youthwatch working together across Tees Valley.	The collaboration with Youth Focus North East and Healthwatch colleagues has enabled a joint working agreement that focuses solely on the challenges faced by young people. This work has identified how, by combining expertise and knowledge we can begin to add value and consistency throughout the area, developing mechanisms to enable us to work differently so that engagement meets the needs of the community.
Healthwatch 10th Anniversary.	This year 14 local Healthwatch came together to share learning, knowledge, and expertise to ensure as we move forward within the Integrated Care System, we have a coordinated approach, adding strength to the public voice.



# healthwatch

Stockton-on-Tees

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