



# Annual Report 2023-2024

Stockton-on-Tees

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

**We make sure NHS leaders and decision-makers hear local voices and use feedback to improve care.**

**We can also help 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



# A look back at our work 2023 -2024

1,842 people

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

182 people

came to us for direct information and guidance.

17,844 people

were able to access up to date health and care advice and information through our various online platforms.

We published 9 reports about the improvements people would like to see in health and social care services.

# How we've made a difference this year

- We have continued to develop our network of **Community Representatives**, ensuring grass root representation is embedded in our work.
- With colleagues across North East & North Cumbria, we developed robust reporting mechanisms to capture and escalate the public voice in a timely way, **informing decision making within the Integrated Care System (ICS)**
- Our programme of **coffee mornings** was delivered in a wide variety of locations, promoting inclusion and reach, increasing meaningful feedback from a variety of communities.

# Our Work Plan This Year

Public voices have helped us to provide valuable feedback to decision makers, making a difference and improving how health and care services are delivered.

- **Views & Experiences of People Accessing or Requiring ADHD Support Services** -We worked closely with people with lived experience of ADHD to raise awareness and gather views of how health and care services could be improved. This work will help shape national initiatives to inform service change.
- **Views & Experiences of Pharmacy Services** - We conducted 6 **Enter & Views in pharmacies** across the Borough to raise awareness of the Pharmacy First service and gather feedback on current service provision and inform future planning.
- **Youthwatch** - Working together across Tees Valley - in collaboration with Youth Focus North East -In collaboration with our colleagues in Tees Valley, we developed '**Youthwatch**' to engage with young people to gather their views on health services and produce two reports.

1. I need a Doctor

2. Insight into Youth Sexual Health

# Our Work Plan This Year cont.

- **Views & Experiences of People Accessing Drug & Alcohol Services** - We engaged with people accessing **Drug & Alcohol services**. Working closely with partners, we made appropriate recommendations to inform future service delivery.
- **Access to Dental Services** – Working with colleagues throughout the North East & North Cumbria we contacted 287 dental practices in a mystery shopping exercise to determine service provision in the region.
- **Growing Older Planning Ahead – For Adults with a Learning Disability** - We carried out focused work, providing recommendations that will inform the future commissioning of planned care for adults with a learning disability.

# So what?

## Public voices have helped to inform

- **9** Reports relating directly to health & care services
- We have made **47** Recommendations to improve health and care services and access
- Provided insight for our **4** **'Word on the Street'** reports – shared widely with partners – ensuring timely feedback to service providers and decision makers
- Supported decision makers in the planning of developing new and innovative ways of working. Including Public Health, Integrated Care System (ICS), Local Authority, North Tees & Hartlepool Foundation Trust, Select Committee, Health & Wellbeing Board and the VCSE



# Who have we spoken to?

Our work continues to develop throughout Stockton-on-Tees

- **1842** People engaged with feedback
- **6** Enter & Views carried out
- **226** Meetings attended with partners and professionals
- **44** Events hosted
- **13** Focus groups
- **182** People supported directly with information & advice
- **52** Services attended throughout Stockton-on-Tees
- **177** Events attended

# Spotlight on Dentistry

- Volunteers from the Healthwatch Network across North East & North Cumbria carried out a mystery shopping exercise throughout the region - contacting dental practices to determine waiting times and accessibility.
- The scenario we asked about was someone who does not have a regular dentist, looking for urgent dental care, having had pain with a back tooth for 2 days that they are managing unsuccessfully with painkillers.
- During this time, we also had an open survey running to provide other ways of capturing information, together with our information and signposting function.
- It is anticipated that a final report for the North East & North Cumbria , including recommendations will be available by the end of September 2024.
- Healthwatch are working closely with the ICB to ensure our recommendations inform the dental recovery plan - including the newly opened dental emergency provision in Darlington

# Spotlight on Dentistry continued...

- The Dental practices contacted were NHS service providers
- 24 (9%) of Practices offered an NHS appointment the same day or next day.
- 6 (2%) Offered an NHS appointment within 2-3 days.
- 18 (6%) Offered an NHS appointment more than 3 days away.
- 23 (8%) Said to call back tomorrow to see if an urgent care appointment is available.
- 216 (75%) Offered no NHS appointments, of these one offered to join a waiting list and 93 of these offered a private appointment, many wanted paying up front for private appointments.

# Spotlight on Drug & Alcohol Services

- There is a high prevalence of drug and alcohol related harm in Stockton-on-Tees, with alcohol-related hospital admission and deaths relating specifically to alcohol being significantly higher than the national average.
- Long term illicit drug use and drug related deaths are also significantly higher than regional and national averages.
- Together, with the support of Public Health and service providers we engaged with those that had experience of drug & alcohol services to determine what was working well and what could be improved.

# Spotlight on Drug & Alcohol Services

This focused engagement work highlighted areas that could help to improve services for those needing support with substance abuse.

These included;

- Greater choice of meeting places and drop-in venues.
- Face to face out-of-hours service - including evenings and weekends.
- Multi-agency approach – avoiding a ‘wrong door’ or having to repeat frequently, difficult questioning, including housing, schools, justice system, social services, and mental health services.
- Continued development of Lived Experience Peer Support.
- Freephone Service - that can be accessed via a mobile phone, with good promotion of the service.

# What difference did this make?

- This work has highlighted the challenges facing family, friends, carers, service users and professionals when facing substance addiction. The effect of drug abuse and alcohol addiction can affect different people in different ways, but the commonality is the negative impact it can have on all who are involved.
- This report will form part of a wider piece of work with the Public Health Stockton-on Tees Team, as the Peer Support Advocacy service is developed. It will also help to plan and shape the future commissioning of Drug & Alcohol Support Services.

*“The recommendations contained within this report will help current service providers to improve service delivery and accessibility.*”

*“We would like to thank Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees for completing this exercise and for working with us to understand the feedback and recommendations, as well as providing us with the opportunity to share a comprehensive insight of our service and how we are meeting some of the challenges identified.”*

**Jenny Thompson, Services Manager, Stockton Recovery Service**

*“We would like to thank Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees for seeking the views of local people who access a range of drug and alcohol services across Stockton-on-Tees. As commissioners of some of these services, we welcome their feedback, and always endeavour to learn from local experiences to help us improve the support available.”*

**Mandy Mackinnon, Strategic Health & Wellbeing Manager, Public Health Stockton-on-Tees**

# Who have we worked with

Year on year our network grows and develops – dependent on our workplan priorities, commissioning and impact, the partners we work closely with can change.

## 2023-2024 Key Partners

Stockton-on-Tees Community Champions	North East Autism Society
Catalyst (VCSE)	TEWV
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council	Red Balloons
Public Health Stockton-on-Tees	Mental Health North East
North Tees & Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust	Stockton-on-Tees Family Hubs
Autism Parents Together	Stockton Community Mental Health Team
North East & Cumbria Learning Disability Network	Starfish Health and Wellbeing



# Community Groups

We want to ensure that our intelligence reflects the voice of service users – we have attended

Autism Matters	Fresh Balance
STEPS	Changing Lives
MAIN	Bridges Family & Carer Service
Change Grow Live (CGL)	Thornaby Community Partnership
Starfish Health and Wellbeing	Stockton Parent Carer Forum
Alliance Psychological Services	Radio House
A Way Out	Accent Group – Argyll House Residential Provision
Andy's Man Club	Mums in Recovery

# Behind The Scenes

We have worked to ensure NO voices are missed, strengthening reporting pathways and intelligence gathering.

- Complete overhaul of recording processes
- Additional reporting mechanisms
- Robust partnership working
- Reflection of how we can have better impact
- Strengthened working across Tees Valley Healthwatch
- Introduction of Community Representatives – ensuring our work is meaningful
- Embedded working arrangements within the ICS

# Our work priorities 2024/2025

Every year we set priorities that will form focused workplan items, to capture your voices and support making positive changes and improvements to health and care services

- **We held a public work plan event to gather the public and partners to help shape our priorities**
- We provided a platform for partners to raise awareness of other local priorities, including – The Local Authority, ‘Making it Real Board’, The ICB, sharing plans for future care and Sarah Jones as she leads on the ‘Wellbeing Hub’
- We know services and capacity are under significant strain – by working together we can help determine how services are commissioned to support accessibility for all, aiming to improve health outcomes and reduce health inequalities.
- Our focused priorities for 2024-2025 are Young People and Migrant Health
- Together we can help to make a difference.

# What our Partners said about our work

Our reports are always sent to service providers and commissioners for response and feedback, to tell us how our work will be embedded within transformation.

*"Thank you for sharing this report with us. It is very positive to see how many people and services have contributed to the content. It is pleasing to see the good practice evidenced in the report. We welcome the recommendations and will take forward within our planning processes."*

***Emma Champley, Assistant Director, Adult Strategy & Transformation  
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council***

*"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"*

**Sarah Bowman-Abouna, Director of Public Health  
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council**

# Questions?



Together We Are Stronger

**healthwatch**  
Stockton-on-Tees