

# The value of listening

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees  
Annual Report 2023–2024



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# Contents

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Message from our Chair	3
About us	4
Year in review	5
How we've made a difference this year	6
Your voice heard at a wider level	7
Hearing from all communities	15
Advice and information	18
Volunteering	21
Finance and future priorities	23
Statutory statements	25



**"Over the last year, local Healthwatch have shown what happens when people speak up about their care, and services listen. They are helping the NHS unlock the power of people's views and experiences, especially those facing the most serious health inequalities."**

Louise Ansari, Chief Executive at Healthwatch England



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# Message from our Chair

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As we reflect on the past year, it is with great pleasure that I introduce the annual report of Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees. At a time of unprecedented challenges, Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees through its small team of staff, volunteers and board members has gone above and beyond in their efforts to support the rights of individuals to access high-quality health and social care services.

Throughout the pages of this report, you will discover the tireless efforts of Natasha Douglas and her dedicated team and the impact they have made in areas such as GP services, NHS Dentistry, Pharmacies, Drug & Alcohol services, Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) support and issues impacting on growing older with a learning disability. From conducting detailed investigations into healthcare services and undertaking Enter & View visits, as well as empowering individuals to share their experiences, Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees continues to serve our local community through accountability and advocacy.

The work we do has touched the lives of countless individuals across the Borough. Our role as a watchdog for health and social care services has never been more important. As recovery plans develop, bringing about changes to the delivery health and care services, we have ensured that the voices of local people are heard at a local, regional, and national level, informing strategic outcomes to improve the health of our communities. The team have worked tirelessly to ensure that the concerns and needs of patients and service users are not only heard but also acted upon.

Our Annual Event in February 2024 helped highlight inequalities in access to healthcare and has now formed the basis of our work plan as we move forward into 2024-2025.

As we navigate the challenges that lie ahead, I am confident that Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees will continue to be a driving force for positive change in our local health and care landscape. With our commitment to amplifying the voices of those we serve, we will strive to build a healthcare system that is truly inclusive, responsive, and equitable for all.

Thank you for your continued support.



**“I extend my deepest thanks to our staff, board, partners, volunteers and supporters whose dedication and passion have made our work possible. Together, we will continue to make a difference in the lives of individuals and communities across the Borough.”**

Peter Smith, Chair, Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees



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# 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:

**1,842 people**

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

**182 people**

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.



## Making a difference to care:

We published

**9 reports**

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

Our most popular report was

**Views & Experiences of People Accessing or Requiring ADHD Support Services**

which highlighted the struggles people face accessing ADHD support



## Health and social care that works for you:

We're lucky to have

**23**

outstanding volunteers who gave up 37 days to make care better for our community.

We're funded by our local authority.

In 2023 - 24 we received

**£129,997**

which is 0.7% more than the previous year.

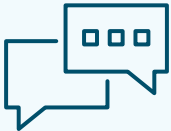



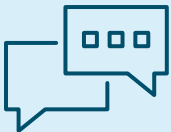



We currently employ

**4 staff**

who help us carry out our work.



# How we've made a difference this year

Spring	 <p>We have continued to develop our network of Community Representatives, ensuring grass root representation is embedded in our work.</p>	 <p>With colleagues across North East &amp; 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)</p>
Summer	 <p>We carried out focused work, providing recommendations that will inform the future commissioning of planned care for adults with a learning disability.</p>	 <p>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.</p>
Autumn	 <p>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.</p>	 <p>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.</p>
Winter	 <p>We conducted Enter &amp; 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.</p>	 <p>We engaged with people accessing Drug &amp; Alcohol services. Working closely with partners, we made appropriate recommendations to inform future service delivery.</p>

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# Your voice heard at a wider level

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## We collaborate with other Healthwatch to ensure the experiences of people in Stockton-on-Tees influence decisions made about services at North East & North Cumbria Integrated Care System (ICS) level.

This year we've worked with Healthwatch across the North East & North Cumbria to achieve:

### Achievement one: Growing Older



Tees Valley Healthwatch Network worked in partnership with North East Commissioning Support on behalf of the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (NENC ICB) to deliver a local review in response to the national requirement to improve planning processes when families can no longer support their family member to stay at home.

The focus of the project was to improve support for family, carers, and older people with a learning disability (aged 40+, considering early onset of chronic health conditions such as dementia) providing effective recommendations, both from a local and Tees Valley perspective.

### Achievement two: Dentistry

Through our information and signposting function, people have been telling us about challenges accessing NHS dentistry services.

Healthwatch organisations across the North East and North Cumbria came together to develop an overview report of the emerging issues, to inform the Integrated Care System (ICS) and better understand people's experiences of accessing dental care.

We conducted a mystery shopping exercise, contacting 286 NHS contract holding practices throughout NENC. Of those practices we spoke to, 1.7% offered an NHS routine care appointment within 3 weeks and 0.6% of practices offered an NHS routine appointment in more than 3 weeks.

All the information collected will be used by North East & North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (NENC ICB) for the future planning of Dentistry Services.



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# Your voice heard at a wider level

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This year we've worked with Healthwatch across the North East & North Cumbria to achieve:



## **Achievement three: GP Access**

We were able to provide feedback from 190 people into the Scrutiny Review of Access to GPs and Primary Medical Care, currently being undertaken by Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee, ensuring your voices are used effectively with our partners.

## **Achievement four: Integrated Care Board**

As the delivery of health and care services begin the journey of transformation, local Healthwatch throughout North East & North Cumbria have come together to develop robust ways of working to ensure the voices of the local people we represent are heard. We have developed a Network Operations Group to collectively drive forward system-wide activity and change.

We have a seat at each level of decision making within the ICS – local, subregional, and NENC wide including the Integrated Care Board, appropriate sub-committees and Integrated Care Partnerships.

We have ensured Healthwatch are an integral part of the ICS, independently sharing the experiences of people who use services.







# 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.**

# Improving awareness of ADHD

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees began working with a Care Navigator from the Stockton Community Mental Health Team based at Wessex House. They introduced us to Larissa. Larissa has a diagnosis of ADHD and shared with us her experiences of living with the condition, the challenges she faced and what positive changes she thinks could be made to help others experiencing similar difficulties within the community of Stockton-on-Tees.

Larissa became a Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees Champion and supported us to publish a 'Case Study' that helped us to gather additional feedback and intelligence from the local community about their experiences of ADHD, awareness of information, referral pathways and any challenges that are being experienced.

We spoke with Carers, Service Users, and Professionals to determine what their main concerns are and to inform how services can be improved.

**68**

people gave their feedback of local ADHD services and support, including 30 online surveys



## What did you tell us about ADHD services?

- Extensive waiting times – no clear timescales available.
- Lack of understanding or awareness of ADHD and the impact on individuals and families.
- Unclear referral pathways.
- Lack of adequate signposting to helpful information, including coping strategies.
- People we spoke to overwhelmingly described how peer support would prove highly beneficial in improving wellbeing, providing the ability to share coping mechanisms, have a better understanding of the condition and potential strategies to mitigate poor mental health outcomes.

## What difference did this make?

Our findings have provided valuable feedback to decision makers that will help to inform and plan future service delivery both at a local and national level.

Healthwatch England will be using this report to help shape a national response about the challenges facing people with ADHD and their carers, as changes are made to health and care service delivery.

*"This report is important, highlighting the issues faced by people with ADHD and the need for service-providers to understand the impact of those issues and how they can be addressed."*

*"Catalyst will work with service providers across the VCSE sector in Stockton-on-Tees to raise awareness of the report, the concerns it raises, and the recommendations it makes to tackle those concerns."*

Jon Carling, Chief Executive, Catalyst

# Experiences of People Accessing 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.

**226**

people gave their feedback of local drug and alcohol services, including 36 online surveys



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.

# Experiences of People Accessing Drug & Alcohol Services



**“Substance Use, mental health, and education it is so easy to only see the problems or challenges we face. Success needs to be celebrated but not because Liam running a project says ‘this project is great’ but by independent bodies discussing with people impacted by the project.**

**“I have seen firsthand the profound effect a Healthwatch report had on staff members at Bridges when reading the feedback given by service users, to Healthwatch.”**

Liam Knowles, Project Support, Bridges Family & Carer 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



**“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

# Three ways we have made a difference in 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.**



People we spoke to during our ADHD engagement, described how the ability to meet people in similar situations to talk is a great source of support, not only for them but for friends and family to have a better understanding of ADHD, the impact and how it can be effectively managed.

People described feeling as though they had to find ways to 'fit in' as opposed to their differences being understood and reasonable adjustments made to support them to live in an inclusive way.

*"I try to make sense of who I am and be able to function rather than feeling I'm a terrible person. This has been useful in understanding myself and not feeling alone."*

## Getting services to involve the public

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



Currently development is underway for a Wellbeing Hub in Stockton-on-Tees. We were able to work closely with Sarah Jones who has been appointed to lead on the development of this work, to help to gather valuable feedback to shape the service design and raise awareness of the planned new initiative.

*"It was a privilege and an honour to be invited to share the Community Mental Health Transformation vision for Stockton-on-Tees with everyone."*

*"The opportunity to share good practice, concerns, network, collaborate, develop partnerships, and learn from each other has been invaluable."*

Sarah Jones, Wellbeing Hub Project Manager

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# Three ways we have made a difference in 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.**

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council produced its Children and Young Peoples Strategy which provides details of the local authorities' ambition for long term change.

Embedded within this strategy was the mission to ensure that service user voice was at the heart of service delivery and design.

In 2023 Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees and the Stockton Community Wellbeing Champions collaborated to provide feedback that will inform future service design and delivery, improving access and support for our communities.

*"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



There's a summary of other outcomes we've achieved this year in the Statutory Statements section at the end of this report.



# 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:**

- Working closely with Youth Focus North East to develop a local 'Youthwatch'
- Listening to carers and service users with a Learning Disability to support the future planning of health and care services.
- Delivering coffee mornings throughout the borough, engaging with the most deprived communities.
- Strengthening our Executive Board by developing Community Representatives to ensure the board is representative of the local community.
- Focusing our annual event on planning future priorities, giving the public the opportunity to shape our work.
- Developing a regular 'Word on the Street' report, providing timely updates to the ICB and partners of what is important to the people of Stockton-on-Tees.
- Supporting our colleagues in Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board to promote safeguarding in the Borough.

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## Gathering feedback of pharmacy services

**It was brought to our attention that people were having difficulty obtaining some prescribed medications and no longer being able to get repeat medication previously used.**

A decision was made by the Healthwatch Executive Board to use our statutory function to Enter & View six pharmacies in the local area.

We wanted to find out how effective people felt Pharmacy Services are, if people were aware of additional services pharmacies provide and if people felt there were ways the service could be improved.

We also wanted to know from a professional perspective, what opportunities and challenges could be identified to support effective information sharing, collaboration, and service delivery.

Our main findings were that people value pharmacy services, and staff were considered helpful and polite. In certain areas people felt access was a challenge, particularly with medication shortages and the need to attend one or more pharmacy service to collect a complete prescription. Some people described difficulties in walking to their local pharmacy due to ill health or frailty.

There was little knowledge of the additional services that pharmacy can provide, with the perception that pharmacists could not provide specialist health care advice, of an equal standard to that of a GP.

Those that had accessed Pharmacy First found the process useful, saving time and avoiding challenges accessing GP appointments.

### **As a result of what people shared:**

- We were able to raise awareness of new pharmacy services available, helping to access health services.
- We provided recommendations to the ICB to inform and influence future planning.
- We were able to support the review of the local Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment.
- We identified good practice improving access for the most vulnerable service user groups.
- We shared learning with partners to raise awareness of the need for consistent and collaborative communication methods.

*“The findings of the report are valuable, the ICB is committed to continuously improving referral pathways, we will feedback to the Local Pharmaceutical Committee with a view to optimising the smooth transition between services for patients.”*

Anya Paradis, Director of Contracting & Oversight (North)

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# Ensuring the public help to shape our priorities

**On Wednesday 21st February 2024 we held our 2023–2024 Annual Event at the River Tees Water Sports Centre, Stockton.**

**The focus of the day was to help to plan for our future priorities and support the Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees Executive Board determine our workplan for 2024–2025.**

The event was attended by the public, a wide variety of community and voluntary organisations, representatives from Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, Stockton-on-Tees Public Health Team, North East & North Cumbria Integrated Care Board, North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust, Tees Esk & Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust, volunteers, and colleagues

We used this opportunity to raise awareness of health and care priorities across the sector, demonstrating an ongoing commitment to collaboration to improve health outcomes for our population..

## **Some of the priorities that people shared with us were:**

- Improved access to services, including health literacy to address health inequalities.
- Improved GP access, including sharing best practice across practices.
- Improve community reach to health and care services.
- Improved migrant health outcomes.
- Continual development of peer-led support services.
- Improved communication and information about end-of-life care and support available.
- Better access to cancer care services.
- Improve access to dentistry services.
- Improved mental health pathways, including access, reduced waiting times, improved collaboration between services.
- Improved access to medication and pharmacy services.
- Improve stigma surrounding substance misuse services and improve access and awareness of services.

This information has helped to shape our work plan for 2024–2025.



## Advice and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees 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, making 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.

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## Reaching young people in Stockton

Working across Tees Valley, in partnership with Youth Focus North East we developed a Youthwatch to find out what was important to young people.

### Case Study: Sexual Health & Young People

Sexual health was an area that was discussed, people told us that they felt this was an area that was not widely talked about, they felt that professionals and adults sometimes shied away from the subject, and they wanted more information about what was available.

Three interactive workshops were held to gain insight into:

- In terms of sexual health, what issues they felt are impacting local communities.
- What barriers there are to accessing sexual health services
- Where they would like to access services and get key messages from.

It was evident that sexual health education was dependent on different schools, religious groups, and physical/mental ability.

The young people worked with us to develop a young person friendly information poster, that can be used across Tees Valley to raise awareness and improve sexual health outcomes.

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## Making it real

This year we have wanted to ensure that individual experiences are brought to life, we have done this by developing a series of case studies that are shared with our partners to provide context to key themes shared with us.

### Case Study: Medication Issues

*"I have been Type 2 diabetic since 2007 for a number of years controlled by diet, but from 2012 started to take medication. I was using Metformin, but I had side effects so was not always taking it. I focused on diet and exercise so that by 2019 I was no longer needing to take diabetes medication at all. Then came the pandemic, and I moved back to the North East after being in London for over a decade.*

*"During the pandemic my diet and exercise regime completely broke down, so when I had a full check-up in 2021, I needed to consider taking some medication. I was registered with Yarm Medical Practice and had quarterly appointments with a specialist nurse following blood and urine tests.*

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## Making it real

### Case Study: Medication Issues (cont...)

*"I tried Metformin again but had severe side effects. My nurse recommended Ozempic weekly injections, which I started in late 2021. I responded well to the medication and was using it until Spring 2023. I lost nearly 20 kilos in weight and was feeling good. My job role involved walking up to 6 miles a day, so I was back to exercising as well.*

*"Unfortunately, this Spring I was told that Ozempic was in short supply and my diabetic nurse recommended I switch to Rybelsus, an oral version of Ozempic. This was not as convenient, but I tolerated it well. This July I was told by my pharmacist that the drug was unavailable and would not be for some time. I contacted the GP surgery who rather than talking to me booked me in for blood tests. I attended the blood tests and finally spoke to a diabetic nurse. I was told that because I was not responding as well as some other patients to Rybelsus and due to supply issues, I would need to consider an alternative.*

*"I was given no choice in the matter and even had my "owing" certificate from the pharmacy cancelled, as per the GP surgery's request – I was not told about this I found out at the pharmacy after I went in to collect the medication that they had received in stock. The pharmacy had called me to tell me they had it, so it was embarrassing for them to have me turn up only for them to have to tell me "sorry..." I was not best pleased! Now I am back on Metformin – the slow-release variant – and having the same side effects plus I am gaining weight again. I really benefited from Ozempic/Rybelsus and it is a shame that I cannot continue with it."*

This information, along with additional intelligence, has helped to shape our work plan.



# 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:**

- Visited communities to promote their local Healthwatch and what we have to offer
- Collected experiences and supported their communities to share their views
- Carried out enter and view visits to local services to help them improve



**"After seeing the great work completed by Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees and the way the team engaged with our clients, I was thrilled to be asked to become involved by becoming a board member.**

**"This past year I have worked on several projects to support the health of Stockton, including providing health advocacy, working with the Wellbeing Hub, testing for Blood Borne Viruses and delivering Addiction training to partner organisations."**



Liam Knowles –  
Project Support at  
Bridges Family &  
Carer Service and  
Healthwatch  
Stockton-on-Tees  
Board Member



**"As a Healthwatch champion, I've found working with Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees incredibly empowering. They've provided a vital platform for voicing concerns about the lack of support for the ADHD community. Their commitment to listening, confidentiality, and impartiality has ensured my experiences are heard and acted upon.**

**"Together, we're making strides towards improving care and support for everyone, locally and nationally.."**



Larissa Bennett –  
Healthwatch  
Stockton-on-Tees  
Champion & ADHD  
Peer Support Group  
Lead

## Do you feel inspired?



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

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

 **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 LA	£129,997	Expenditure on pay	£99,711
Additional income	£24,340	Non-pay expenditure	£2,108
		Office and management fees	£32,722
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£154,337</b>	<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>£134,541</b>

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### Additional income is broken down by:

- £15,000 – TVHWN Working Agreement for Growing Older Project
- £305 – Healthwatch Leadership Conference Attendance Support
- £6,000 – North & South Tees Group Model project

Total – £21,305

### ICS funding

Healthwatch across North East & North Cumbria also receives funding from our Integrated Care System (ICS) to support new areas of collaborative work at this level, including:

Purpose of ICS funding	Amount
Waiting Well engagement	£250
Dentistry engagement	£910
Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees Core ICS (Nov '23-Mar '24)	£1,875

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## Next steps

**Over the next year, we will keep reaching out to every part of society, especially people in the most deprived areas, so that those in power hear their views and experiences.**

We will also work together with partners and our local Integrated Care System to help develop an NHS culture where, at every level, staff strive to listen and learn from patients to make care better.

### Our top three priorities for the next year are:

1. Focusing on tackling health inequalities, particularly the migrant community.
2. Continuing to develop our engagement with young people, using a local approach.
3. Working across the Tees Valley to raise awareness and provide feedback in response to the local hospital group model of working.





## 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

© Pioneering Care Partnership

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees uses the Healthwatch Trademark when undertaking our statutory activities as covered by the licence agreement.

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# The way we work

## **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 of our activities. Our Board ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community.

Throughout 2023/24, the Board met six times and made decisions on matters such as:

- Deciding to undertake Enter & Views at Pharmacies throughout the area to gather local views.
- Developing our work plan item about people's experiences of ADHD services, providing evidence to help inform a national picture, with supporting recommendations.
- Identifying new ways of working to ensure the voice of the public is escalated to decision makers in a timely way.

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 can provide us with insight into their experience of using services. During 2023/24, we have been available by phone, and email, provided a web form 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.

The Stockton Community Wellbeing Champions have a seat on our Executive Board, they share with us feedback gathered from the local community to help to inform our work.

## **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.

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## The way we work (cont)...

### Taking people's experiences to decision-makers

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

In our local authority area, for example, we take information to:

- Health and Wellbeing Board
- Health and Wellbeing Partnership
- Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board
- Adult Social Care & Health Select Committee
- Health & Wellbeing Forum
- Coalition of The Willing Working Group
- Integrated Mental Health Steering Group
- Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy Working Group
- Healthwatch England Leads Meeting
- North Tees & Hartlepool Foundation Trust Council of Governors

We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in our North East & North Cumbria ICS.

- Integrated Care Partnership Sub Committee Stockton-on-Tees
- Healthwatch NENC Network Operations Group
- NENC ICB Quality & Safety Committee
- NENC Primary Care Strategy & Delivery Sub Committee
- NENC Integrated Care Board Patient Voice Committee

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

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## Enter and view

This year, we made six Enter and View visits.

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
Norton Glebe Pharmacy	Information and intelligence was received by Healthwatch Stockton about the emerging shortages in medication and pharmacy closures.	Provided a report on findings, including recommendations to inform future delivery and decision making at both a local and regional level.
Boots Pharmacy – Thornaby-on-Tees Health Centre	As above	As above
Synergise Pharmacy – Stockton Town Centre	As above	As above
Pharmacy World – Roseworth	As above	As above
Whitworths Pharmacy – Yarm	As above	As above
Boots Pharmacy – Billingham	As above	As above

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## Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees is represented on the Stockton Health and Wellbeing Board by Healthwatch representatives and Chair, Peter Smith. During 2023/24 our representative has effectively carried out this role by:

- Providing leadership and expertise to the Healthwatch Executive Board and Healthwatch Stockton Team.
- Sharing timely updates of the Healthwatch work plan at strategic meetings.
- Supporting the Healthwatch Stockton Lead to ensure an effective model of service delivery.
- Representing Healthwatch Stockton at local and regional meetings.

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees is represented on North East & North Cumbria Integrated Care Partnerships and North East & North Cumbria Integrated Care Boards by Healthwatch representatives, Rebecca Morgan, Natasha Douglas and Chair, Peter Smith.

## 2023 – 2024 Outcomes

<b>Project/activity</b>
Views & Experiences of People Accessing or Requiring ADHD Support Services
Views & Experiences of People Accessing Drug & Alcohol Services
Growing Older Planning Ahead – For Adults with a Learning Disability
Access to Dental Services – Final report expected May 2024
Views & Experiences of Pharmacy Services – Final Report April 2024
Youthwatch – Working together across Tees Valley – in collaboration with Youth Focus North East
1. I need a Doctor
2. Insight into Youth Sexual Health
<b>Outcomes achieved</b>
7 reports relating directly to health & care services
We have made 47 recommendations.
Provided insight for our four 'Word on the Street' reports – shared widely with partners ensuring timely feedback of intelligence received.
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 NHS Foundation Trust, Select Committee, Health & Wellbeing Board and the VCSE



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