



Together

we're making health
and social care better

Annual Report 2022–23

healthwatch
Northumberland

Contents

Message from our Chair	3
Message from the Chair of Adapt (NE)	4
About us	5
Highlights from our year	6
Listening to your experiences	9
Hearing from all communities	17
Advice and Information	20
Volunteering	22
Finances and future priorities	24
Statutory statements	25

“

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

Now that the COVID-19 pandemic is less of a concern than in recent years, everyone would have anticipated that health and care services would by now have been more 'normal'. That has not materialised as the relentless capacity pressures and the intermittent industrial actions have presented continuing challenges to the system.

It is to the eternal credit of the staff of all descriptions that the health, safety and wellbeing of patients continue to be maintained at a very high level in Northumberland. That is no mean achievement!

And within all of this, let us not forget the contributions of volunteers who do sterling work throughout health and care. This certainly applies to Healthwatch Northumberland itself, where volunteers young and old undertake so much invaluable work. It is also worthy of mention here that Emma Grimwood has moved on from our organisation, and to express appreciation for her commitment and professionalism in her role as Volunteer Officer.

Also departing at the end of June will be Margaret Young, Deputy Chair. She has been a stalwart during her six years at Healthwatch Northumberland, her wisdom and enthusiasm having made such a meaningful and lasting contribution. She and the team of board members can be relied upon to represent the views of people from throughout Northumberland, sensibly and appropriately.

I should also like to pay tribute to Derry Nugent, Project Coordinator, and the Healthwatch Northumberland staff for their wide-ranging and dedicated efforts. They have ensured that the patient voice is independently heard, listened to and acted upon in various ways and means across the county. There is no doubt in my mind that engagement and involvement of the public is now high profile within health and care organisations. Long may it continue and prosper to ensure that Healthwatch Northumberland has a respected role to play, wherever and whenever it is able to present its findings.

Finally, this will be my final foreword as I also retire at the end of June. The past six years have flown by and it has been a real privilege to have shared a journey with such a dedicated band of staff, board members and volunteers. Meeting members of the public and professionals has been very rewarding as there has been, and remains, a determination from everyone to improve services even further.

All I can add is to write a heartfelt thank you for your support and advice during the past six years. I wish you all well for your futures.



David Thompson
Healthwatch
Northumberland Chair

Message from the Chair of Adapt (NE)

It has been another successful year for Healthwatch Northumberland which has seen us make real progress on the health and social care issues that matter most to the communities in Northumberland.

I must thank the public for sharing their experiences at meetings, online and through surveys. It is only because of this that Healthwatch Northumberland can know, understand and can represent your views to service commissioners and providers and so influence changes.

We can only do this through the dedication of the staff team and our volunteers who have all worked very hard to maximise our reach into communities across the county.

This is a time of great change for the Healthwatch Northumberland Board as we say goodbye to David Thompson and Margaret Young. As Chair and Vice Chair respectively, they have led Healthwatch Northumberland with insight, tact and tenacity for six years through immense changes and of course the pandemic. They go with the heartfelt thanks of everyone at Adapt (NE) and Healthwatch Northumberland.

The next Chair of Healthwatch Northumberland is Peter Standfield. Peter's background in health, social care and the voluntary and community sector, along with his experience of veteran's affairs means he is well placed to lead Healthwatch Northumberland into its next phase.



Lorraine Hershon
Adapt (NE) Chair

About us

Healthwatch Northumberland 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

The people of Northumberland have their health and social care needs met and their experience of using services heard and understood by those responsible for commissioning and providing services



Our mission

To ensure that the people of Northumberland can give their views and are involved in and can influence decisions made about their health and social care

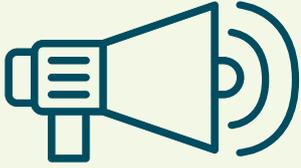


Our values are:

- **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



1953 people

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

4883 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

17 reports

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

Our most popular report was

Autistic young people and mental health services

which highlighted how some NHS mental health services aren't working for local families.



Health and care that works for you



We're lucky to have

14

outstanding volunteers who gave up over 500 hours to make care better for our community.

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

£200,000

which is the same as the previous year.

We currently employ

six staff

who help us carry out our work.

How we've made a difference this year

Spring



We helped Brockwell Medical Group to hear patients' views on the proposal to relocate the surgery to a new site at the Northumbria Specialist Emergency Care Hospital.



We commissioned a project to find out what is working well for people who use home care services and to make recommendations for improvements.

Summer



People who attended our care home forums helped us create a useful resource called 'things I wish I'd known before my loved one went to live in a care home'.



We supported the Heathwatch England #BecauseWeAllCare campaign which saw 54,000 people come forward to share the issues they faced with services.

Autumn



We promoted a survey to understand what needs improving for people who develop mental health difficulties relating to their maternity experience.



To support the COVID-19 vaccination programme we asked how it went when you booked your appointment, visited the vaccination centre and how things might be improved for the future.

Winter



With the NHS under extra pressure during winter, we listened to your experiences of care to help services understand what was working and spot issues affecting support for you and your loved ones.



As part of our Signposting and Information Service we shared support and guidance information around the rising cost of living, plus ways to stay safe and well.

10 years of improving care

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

How have we made care better, together?

Mystery shopping

Mystery shopping highlighted ways to improve the OneCall system for social care enquiries and pharmacy services for young people.



Home care

Two reports highlighted the problems of providing care in a large rural county and the impact on patients and carers.

Patient Participation Groups

We showed how important Patient Participation Groups are to primary care and worked with local Primary Care Networks to support new groups.



End of life care

We ensured local people influenced the Northumberland End of Life Strategy and said what they wanted from services for people who are dying and their families.

Service changes

From the instigation of Northumbria Specialist Emergency Care Hospital, closure of GP surgeries and dentists, changes to maternity care and Patient Transport eligibility, we have made recommendations to improve people's experiences.





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.

Autistic young people and mental health services

This year we heard from local families that some NHS mental health services aren't working for their autistic children. To get a better picture of what was happening we asked people to tell us about their experiences of the neurodevelopmental assessment process and mental health support including what is working well and what could be better.

We had 90 responses to our call for feedback. Whilst there was praise for individual staff and services, we heard repeated themes around the struggles parents faced accessing suitable support. This included difficulties in getting an initial referral to services, high thresholds for accessing support, long waiting times and being referred between different services.

We worked with parents to develop the feedback form and co-produced the recommendations with Northumberland Parent Carer Forum. Thank you to everyone who helped us with this piece of work.

Recommendations include:



- Foster a culture of celebration and valuing neurodiversity throughout the diagnostic process; explore and look at positives rather than perceived deficits
- Review packages of mental health support to ensure they meet needs of neurodivergent children and young people particularly in relation to 'time-limited' therapy, waiting times and communication
- Simplify the pathways for accessing support for autistic children and young people, both for the diagnostic process and pre and post diagnostic mental health support to deliver holistic support. Mental health services to continue to run alongside the neurodevelopmental assessment process

What difference will this make?

The feedback we received has been considered as part of the review into the Northumberland Autism Strategy and of the graduated mental health pathway for children and young people.

"We welcome the opportunity to hear about the experiences of young autistic people and their parents and carers in this Healthwatch Northumberland report. It's important for us to learn about and understand the challenges people accessing our mental health services face."

Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust



Exploring A&E attendances by 0-5 year olds living in Blyth

During 2022 Blyth Primary Care Network identified that some children aged under five years old from the Cowpen and Kitty Brewster estates in Blyth had a higher-than-expected attendance rate at A&E at Northumbria Specialist Emergency Care Hospital than other similarly aged children living in Northumberland.

We worked with Northumberland County Council, Public Health, the council's Family Hubs, Heart of Blyth project and Blyth Primary Care Network to investigate this.

In conjunction with the different project partners, we organised four separate sessions in Blyth to engage with parents of pre-schoolers: two drop-in sessions that ran alongside existing Family Hub activities, a session to catch parents as they dropped off their children at Briardale Nursery, and a focus group with a group of black women from the Buffalo Centre.

Our ability to bring people and decision makers together is a vital part of our role. Overall, we found that parents were taking their pre-school children to A&E appropriately and in almost half of the attendance cases the parents had been directed to attend A&E by another health professional including, on one occasion, their GP.

We also promoted the 'Healthier Together' app and website as a useful tool for parents with poorly children.

Care homes forums

We have continued hosting quarterly online forums for relatives and loved ones of those living in care homes. During one forum the Carers Northumberland team were able to raise a specific issue they were hearing from carers about difficulties pre-planning respite care for holidays, directly with the Senior Commissioner for Adult Social Care. As a result it has been confirmed that adult social care is going to block book one bed for respite care and look to further changes to this vital service.

Feedback from attendees of the forum helped us shape our 'things I wish I'd known before my loved one went to live in a care home' guidance - a simple list of things to think about before your friend or family member moves into a care home.

The forums also continue to have an impact in providing individual support and reassurance for people who attend.

 "The Healthwatch Northumberland care homes sessions offer an opportunity to vent problems, issues and frustrations to a group of people who understand and are able to support me in my decisions on care home options, respite care, who to go to for certain issues etc. It is greatly valued as a group/service because it is a problem shared and that makes a difference to not feeling so isolated or misunderstood."

Care home forum attendee

Advocating for fairer NHS dentistry

Some issues can only be solved at national level. Dentistry is one such issue. NHS dentistry is in desperate need of reform and this year we have successfully kept NHS dentistry on decision maker's agendas locally and nationally, making it easier for people to find a dentist taking on NHS patients.

We have continued to raise concerns about a shortage of NHS dental appointments in Northumberland. This has been an issue we continued to hear about over the past year, particularly with the residents of Berwick-upon-Tweed and the surrounding areas.

Ensuring the issue has remained high on the agenda with the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB) has been a priority, and, together with 134 other Local Healthwatch nationally, we provided written feedback to the Parliamentary Health and Social Care Select committee's inquiry into the state of NHS dentistry in England.

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

Healthwatch's 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 under-performing

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 eventually 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.

Outpatient appointments

Working with Healthwatch North Tyneside we helped Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust to hear from patients using outpatient clinics and to gather views on new approaches. We visited clinics at Hexham General Hospital, Alnwick Infirmary, Berwick Infirmary and Wansbeck General Hospital.

Patients welcomed many aspects of new approaches to outpatient appointments including more choice of days and times and face-to-face and telephone appointments. However local options and timely communication were two key areas where patients want to see improvements.

Talking about how it will use this information to improve services, Northumbria Healthcare said:

“Healthwatch Northumberland carried out research on behalf of Northumbria Healthcare last autumn about patient experiences of outpatients appointments and to gather views of a new patient initiated follow up (PIFU) pathway. Over 550 patient’s views were collected and analysed.

The findings of the report will be used to inform patient information on our website and leaflets about the new service to ensure people get the information they need to make informed choices.

We are also using the key findings to develop a new patient portal which will be launched later in 2023 to improve communications with patients about their appointments and health information.

It is also contributing to ongoing work to address health inequalities and improve access to healthcare including the cost of travel for attending appointments.”

Out-of-area COVID-19 vaccinations

A member of the public contacted us because they and a family member had received their first COVID-19 vaccination outside of England (in this case Scotland). They were told vaccine records would have to be changed before they could receive second and booster doses.

The family were also told this would have to be done in person at a centre outside of the North East. This would have extremely difficult for them due to age and disability restrictions.

We raised this with NHS England and said this did not meet NHS England’s responsibilities under the Equality Act and Duty.

Although it took some time we were pleased to receive the following response from the Vaccination Programme Manager at the Regional Vaccination Operations Centre:

“As you have highlighted, there have been concerns about the availability of the service because the original service model for overseas was that this could only be offered from large vaccination centre sites, and the majority of these closed in 2022 across the North East and Yorkshire. The plan as we move forward is that the service will be a digital/postal service rather than face-to-face, and this will ensure that future access is not impacted by the availability of large sites that are open across a system or region.”

We have informed the family and will promote this information for others in similar circumstances.

Waiting Well

Eight places across the North East and North Cumbria received funding to deliver a programme of support for patients waiting for NHS surgery.

The aim of the ‘Waiting Well’ programme is to:

- Support patients to adopt healthier lifestyles, initially while waiting for surgery
- Help them with recovery after their surgery
- Inspire patients to continue their healthier lifestyle choices in the long-term

The North East and North Cumbria ICB asked Local Healthwatch to find out what people thought about the idea. The focus group in Northumberland told us three words summed up what patients needed from the programme – Continuity, Consistency and Clarity.

One person said the programme would be good as long as it doesn’t mean people on the programme can jump the queue ahead of patients who aren’t on it. The group agreed the benefits of what it means to be on and not on the programme were important.

We made a specific recommendation about the importance of peer support groups/networks and shared user stories. The group felt that being able to speak to other people in similar situations would be useful and improve people’s engagement with the programme.

What difference will this make?

The findings from this work will be used by the NHS when planning the roll-out of the Waiting Well programme across the North East and North Cumbria and help people maximise the benefits of their surgery.

Lloyds Community Pharmacy Closure

In early 2023 the owners of the Lloyds pharmacy network of community pharmacies announced the network was to be sold and branches would close, in particular those located within Sainsbury's supermarkets. While Lloyds operates a number of pharmacies in Northumberland, the biggest impact is in Cramlington where the store in Sainsbury's, Manor Walks, was open for 100 hours per week. Lloyds informed NHS England of its plan to close the pharmacy by mid-summer 2023.

This 100-hour pharmacy is one of five across the county which form the network of out of hours provision of pharmacy services. The conclusion of the Northumberland Pharmacy Needs Assessment 2022 states:

"The council considers that the network of extended hour pharmacies are essential to meet patients' needs by widening access to pharmaceutical services outside core hours when other pharmacies are closed. Any loss of 100-hour pharmacies or reduction in supplementary hours may lead to gaps in pharmacy services."

We raised concerns about how this closure was communicated to patients and carers and asked for NHS England/North East and North Cumbria ICB commissioners to carry out an Equalities Impact Assessment to determine the effect on patients with protected characteristics. We asked how people who would be affected due to their mental capacity, sensory loss and ability to travel to different locations and for whom English is an additional language, including those whose first language is BSL, would be made aware of the change.

Hearing from the local community

The Healthwatch Northumberland Board agreed a series of visits to the pharmacy using our Enter and View powers so that we could hear directly from people currently using the service. We focused on weekend and out of hours times using a short survey. We heard from over 230 people. Nearly half said they had used the pharmacy outside of core hours in the last 12 months. The main concerns were that not having a pharmacy with extended hours would bring complications and considerable inconvenience to people who are already under pressure from long term conditions and disabilities. People were also concerned that the closure would add more pressure on the already overstretched alternative services.

"We often have to pick up medication after 6pm but will no longer be able to do so which means my daughter will be left in pain until the next morning which isn't nice. There are no other pharmacies open late in Cramlington."

"Massive queues at Boots to add to the already big queues."



What difference will this make?

As a result of our work the commissioners are developing a plan for what happens next which will be informed by patients' needs. In addition, the Chair of the Northumberland Health and Wellbeing Board has written to the Secretary of State for Health asking for a review of the community pharmacy funding model which was part of the underlying issue.

How 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.

Annual Conversation



Each year we run an annual survey to hear about people's experiences of health and social care. This year we wanted to get more detailed feedback from those we may not usually hear from, and who may not always respond to surveys about their experiences, through our 'Annual Conversation'.

We worked with community partners across Northumberland to ensure we heard a range of experiences, either during conversations within a group setting or as in individual one-to-one conversation.

We heard from people affected by their loved one's drug and alcohol misuse, and this feedback was used during Northumberland County Council's recommissioning of drug and alcohol services.

Specific needs around access to, and awareness of, adult social care services were raised by ethnically and culturally diverse communities. None of the group appeared to be aware of home care services or care homes or help for carers and where to seek help should it be required in future, so better promotion of services could be needed. There were concerns raised around whether services would 'take over' and consider cultural practices when providing care so it was felt reassurance around this would be needed in the event of seeking help. We were hearing that the best way to promote and raise awareness of services in ethnically and culturally diverse communities would be to have both online and hard copy documents or leaflets available in different community languages, with Kurdish, Sorani, Arabic, Turkish, Spanish and Bangladeshi given as examples. We have shared what we heard about the need to for better and specific communications by those commissioning the services.

We ran a general online public survey alongside these detailed conversations. Whether positive or negative, the theme of access to services dominated the feedback we received.





Hearing from all communities

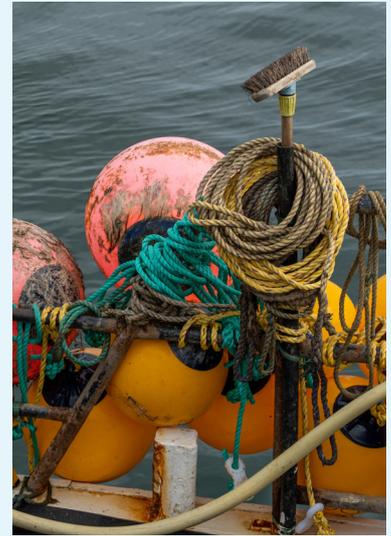
Over the past year we have worked hard to make sure we hear from everyone within our local area. We consider it important to reach out to the communities we hear from less frequently, to gather their feedback and make sure their voice is heard and services meet their needs.

This year we have reached different communities by:

- Regularly visiting a local fishing community to hear from fishermen and their families
- Listening to people who don't often have their say through our Annual Conversation
- Working with schools to hear more from young people in Northumberland
- Holding monthly face-to-face drop-in sessions across the county

Better care for fishermen

We are part of a bi-monthly health initiative bringing healthcare and support services to fishermen and their families at Amble Quayside. 'Health at the Quayside' is an initiative with Seafit – run by the Fishermen's Mission – and Well Up North Primary Care Network. Because of the nature of their work, fishermen can find it difficult to access health services.



The initiative will run throughout 2023, providing a range of free services such as health checks, physiotherapy and mental health support. We have been on hand to listen to people's experiences of services and to provide our Information and Signposting Service, alongside charitable organisations such as Prostate Cancer UK. This is an important piece of work which recognises the health inequalities fishermen face and could lead to similar initiatives with other isolated professions such as the farming industry.

“I could do with going to the GP about my elbow. But nowadays the GP wants you to call at 8.30am. I just can't call at that time. By the time I'm back on shore, all the appointments have been taken.”

Local fisherman

Here to Hear drop-in sessions



Our Here to Hear drop-in sessions take place every month in all five local council areas across the county. These sessions are a way of hearing from more people across our vast and diverse county. The drop-ins ensure our services are accessible to more people in more communities and by reviewing and changing the location of our sessions when necessary, we can meet and hear from people from different areas, both rural and urban.

Coming to a Here to Hear drop-in works. One visitor told us about the difficulties they had trying to access NHS dental care for their young child. We signposted them to a dental practice which we knew had additional capacity for appointments.

“I contacted the dental practice the following day after receiving your message and they saw our son the next day. Thank you so much. It has taken 15 months to find him somewhere.”

Morpeth resident



'How are you feeling?' young people's campaign

We wanted to hear from more young people living in Northumberland about how they are feeling and their experiences of healthcare services in the county. We also wanted to provide information about local services and support to this age group, around both physical and mental health. With a group of volunteers including three of our student volunteers, we developed an online form for under 25s, an animation explaining the campaign, and printed materials to support the campaign.

With the help of local schools and groups we heard from 650 young people living in Northumberland. Some of the themes that came out were that young people would like quicker access to services, more mental health provision and to be listened to by health and care professionals.

“

“I'd like NHS services to be more easily accessible for more people to use and not have such a long wait to speak to someone.”

“Let us say what we need without letting our parents or school know. We need more support for children in making their own appointments without parental supervision.”

“When people do need help the NHS do the best they can and they put all their hard work into what happens.”

Young people in Northumberland



Advice and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch Northumberland 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 a GP surgery, 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
- Hosting monthly online information sessions about a range of conditions
- Supporting people to look after their health during the cost of living crisis

Online information sessions

We continued to hold our monthly online events where we invite a guest speaker from a health charity or support organisation.

We aim to feature health conditions that don't always have a lot of public exposure and ask that presenters focus on what support and services they can offer people living in Northumberland. The sessions are attended by a mixture of health professionals and members of the public.

This year almost 150 people came along to the ten sessions we hosted, and 50 of them went on to subscribe to our newsletter. Organisations who presented for us this year include the National Autistic Society, Diabetes UK, Kooth and the Limbless Association.

Providing this service not only helps individuals directly, but helps professionals give advice to people and they in turn get the help they need.



“Personally, I find your online sessions really helpful at getting to know different organisations and the support they offer, and I always share the resources after with my team.”

Lisa Baker, Social Prescriber

Access to flu vaccinations

We heard from someone who had recently arrived in the country who was having difficulties booking flu vaccinations for their children. Due to the timing of their arrival into the UK they had missed the school flu vaccination programme.

They told us they had contacted their local GP who advised them to ask school, and school had in turn asked them to go back to their GP. They were left with no understanding of how to access this service for their children. After looking into this further we managed to contact the childhood immunisations team to book a community clinic appointment.

After having initial difficulty in finding the right department to contact and then being asked to complete online forms to access an appointment which unfortunately did not work, we eventually arranged an appointment by telephone for them for the following day. Whilst the staff were friendly and helpful the process itself appeared to be complex and difficult to navigate and would be even more so for someone whose first language was not English. The person was very pleased with the result.



“Really you did very well with us I am so thankful for what you did.”

South East Northumberland resident

Support with communication issues

We were contacted by someone looking for information following a delay in communication after having an MRI scan. We were able to refer them to the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) for help with getting answers and support.



“In these difficult times there must be many other patients who are as anxious as I was, and they probably don't know about Healthwatch Northumberland and PALS who can come to the rescue.”

Alnwick resident

Signposting to local activities

During one of our Here to Hear sessions a local resident asked if we could help them find social groups in the area. We signposted them to several groups including Northumberland Recovery College. A peer support worker agreed to give them a call to discuss their needs further and book them on to suitable activities.

“Today is my lucky day.”



Blyth resident



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 as part of our Here to Hear drop-in sessions
- Collected experiences and supported their communities to share their views
- Carried out Enter and View visits to a pharmacy which is closing
- Created a campaign to help us hear more from young people
- Supported us in the office with data entry, research and administration

Colin

"I like volunteering with Healthwatch Northumberland as it gives me a chance to give something back to the community. I have had my own health problems so I can understand and appreciate other people's experiences. I regularly help at engagement events and enjoy speaking to the public and hearing their views. I also enjoy raising awareness of Healthwatch Northumberland and the work we do."



Karen

"I love being a volunteer in the Healthwatch Northumberland office, as there is always different and interesting work to do. I think volunteering with Healthwatch is important, to get our name out there so the public can have their say about the health and social care services they use."



Hearing from young people

Our volunteers have attended Freshers Fairs to hear from young people, raise awareness of our services and promote our volunteering opportunities.

This served as a pilot for our county-wide 'How are you feeling?' young people's campaign which was developed by a team of staff members and volunteers including Jess, Ann and Molly, pictured here with Volunteer Officer Emma at Queen Elizabeth High School, Hexham.



Do you feel inspired?

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

 healthwatchnorthumberland.co.uk

 **03332 408468**

 info@healthwatchnorthumberland.co.uk

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	
Annual grant from Government	£200,000	Expenditure on pay	£157,591
Additional income	£29,971	Non-pay expenditure	£30,848
		Office and management fee	£20,000
Total income	£229,971	Total expenditure	£208,439

Additional funding is broken down by:

- £20,377** - brought forward from 2021/22
- £1,500** - Healthwatch England for Power BI training
- £1,000** - Northumbria Healthcare for outpatient engagement project
- £2,594** - NHS England for Healthier Together project
- £4,500** - North East and North Cumbria ICS Healthwatch Network grant

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 tackle inequalities that exist and work to reduce the barriers you face when accessing care.

Top three priorities for 2023-24

- 1. Social Care:** We will gather the experience of those residing in care homes using our Enter and View powers. We will work with Northumberland County Council as it develops its Adult Social Care Plan ensuring our communities' views are heard.
- 2. Health:** We will focus on how people access services, especially where there are specific barriers, for instance due to the job they do or where they live. We will continue to gather experiences of primary care services.
- 3. Volunteering, Communications and Engagement:** We will increase the number of volunteers and the diversity of people involved with Healthwatch Northumberland. We will build on our 2022 experience by using more targeted focus group 'conversations' to gather the experiences of Northumberland residents.



Statutory statements

Healthwatch Northumberland
Adapt (NE)
Burn Lane
Hexham
Northumberland
NE46 3HN

Healthwatch Northumberland uses the Healthwatch
Trademark when undertaking our statutory
activities as covered by the licence agreement.

The way we work

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

The Healthwatch Northumberland Board consists of 11 members 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 communities. In 2022/23 the board met five times and made decisions on matters such as agreeing an Operational Plan and priorities to guide our work, and agreeing to use our Enter and View powers to gather patient experience of a community pharmacy closure. Our volunteers were involved in recruitment of our new Board Chair.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities, by using the feedback people give us about their experiences, conducting focus groups and an Annual Survey to highlight areas where we can make a difference.

Methods and systems used across the year to obtain peoples 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 health and care services.

During 2022/23 we have been available by phone, text and email, provided a webform on our website and attended virtual and face-to-face meetings of community groups and forums. We hold five drop-in sessions per month in community locations plus a monthly online forum and we engage with the public through social media.

We are committed to taking additional steps to ensure we obtain the views of people from diverse backgrounds who are often not heard by health and care decision-makers. This year we have done this by holding focus groups with black women, carers of people with drug and alcohol addiction, learning disabled people and people in the fishing industry. We worked with schools to hear from young people aged 13+. We ensure that this Annual Report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. We publish it on our website, across our social media platforms and produce hard copies for our stakeholders.

Responses to recommendations

This year we made 42 recommendations through reports, discussions and presentations. We had no providers who did not respond to requests for information or recommendations. There were no issues or recommendations escalated by us to the Healthwatch England Committee, so no resulting reviews or investigations.

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 take information to the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Equalities Plan System Planning Steering Group, Primary Care Applications Working Party, Carers Board, Community Mental Health Transformation Leadership Forum and the Older Persons Pathway Group.

We also take insight and experiences to decision makers in the North East and North Cumbria ICB at 'place' level; this is through our attendance at the Northumberland System Transformation Board. We also provide insight by working with other Local Healthwatch in the North of Tyne Integrated Care Partnership and to the Integrated Care Board and System Quality Group with Healthwatch across the North East and North Cumbria ICB area.

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

Enter and view

We carried out four Enter and View visits this year. This was to one site - Lloyds pharmacy within Sainsbury's in Cramlington.

Our visits highlighted the impact closing the pharmacy would have for vulnerable people. Our recommendations to Northumberland Health and Wellbeing Board were that NHS England/North East and North Cumbria ICS community pharmacy commissioners in considering the imminent closure and for the future service should:

1. Ensure direct communication be made to patients at the point the prescription is made (e.g. at the GP surgery) as to where an electronic prescription is being sent
2. Ensure direct communications be made to patients and carers who have repeat prescriptions at this pharmacy
3. Ensure an Equalities Impact Assessment be done by NHS England and/or North East and North Cumbria ICB to determine the effect on patients with protected characteristics. These recommendations have been taken up by NHS England and/or North East and North Cumbria ICB.

Health and Wellbeing Board

Healthwatch Northumberland is represented on the Northumberland Health and Wellbeing Board by our Chair, David Thompson. During 2022/23 our representative has effectively carried out this role by providing contributions based on feedback and evidence gathered from service users on issues such as access to dentists.

David Thompson also represented Healthwatch Northumberland on the North East and North Cumbria ICS Place System Transformation Board and the Healthwatch Network at the Integrated Care Board.

healthwatch Northumberland

Healthwatch Northumberland
Adapt (NE)
Burn Lane
Hexham
Northumberland
NE46 3HN

www.healthwatchnorthumberland.co.uk

t: 03332 408468

e: info@healthwatchnorthumberland.co.uk

 @HWNland

 healthwatchnorthumberland

 hwnland

 Healthwatch Northumberland