



Together

we're making health
and social care better

Annual Report 2022 –23

healthwatch
Blackburn with Darwen

Contents

Message from our Chair	3
About us	4
Highlights from our year	5
Listening to your experiences	9
Advice and information	15
Volunteers	17
Finances and future priorities	19
Healthwatch Together	20
Statutory statements	21



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

Louise Ansari, Healthwatch National Director

Message from our Chair

- Our work in 2022/23 has focused on access to services and the experiences of more vulnerable members of our community.
- Key highlights of 2022/23 include: -
- Gathering people's experiences of residential care
- A focus on people's experiences of the local smoking cessation provision
- Gathering young people's views and experiences of health services
- Working with 'Champion' adults with learning disabilities to support the mental health and emotional wellbeing of young people with learning disabilities
- Understanding people's experiences of accessing Emergency Department
- We are also proud of our work with the other Healthwatch organisations in Lancashire and South Cumbria ICS as 'Healthwatch Together' and we have included an update on this work in this report.
- I would like to thank our Directors, staff and volunteers for all their hard work and most importantly residents of Blackburn with Darwen for sharing their honest views and experiences with us.



John Easton
Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen
Chair of the Board



Sitting in the dentist's office, listening to the cost of treatments brought me to tears. Whenever I eat and feel a twinge my heart drops. I panic that something terrible is happening. MPs have money to get care if they need, most people don't. There's no version of private dentistry that's affordable."

About us

Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen 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

is to work collaboratively with our partners to ensure services are designed to best meet the needs of our local residents. We can achieve this by being a strong independent champion to influence the design and quality of health and social care provision.



Our mission

is to develop unique initiatives to engage with members of the public to drive improvements in health and social care for those using these services throughout Blackburn with Darwen.

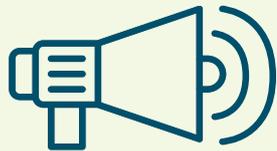


Our values are:

- **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



729 people

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

145 people

came to us for clear advice and information about topics such as dental access and elective care waiting lists

Making a difference to care

We published

11 reports

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

Our most popular report was

Smoking Cessation Report

which highlighted the struggles people face in quitting with clinical support alone.



Health and care that works for you



We're lucky to have

11

outstanding volunteers who gave up 50 days to make care better for our community.

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

£133,650

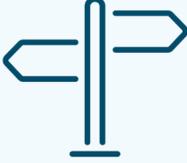
which is the same as the previous year.

We currently employ

6 staff

who help us carry out our work.

How we've made a difference this year

Spring	 <p>Our information and signposting provision was busy, supporting people to get the help they need and to have their voice heard.</p>	 <p>We relaunched our monthly Enter and View programme in care homes in the borough, working closely with the CQC and local Council.</p>
Summer	 <p>We supported young Community Champions at a local SEN school to share messages about staying safe, healthy and how to get help in the cost of living crisis.</p>	 <p>We supported the #BecauseWeAllCare campaign which saw 54,000 people come forward to tell us about issues they faced with services.</p>
Autumn	 <p>We worked with the Lancashire and South Cumbria dental team to make sure vulnerable people gained access to care through new pathways.</p>	 <p>To support the COVID-19 vaccination programme we talked to different communities to understand their hesitancy towards the vaccine and published guidance to improve trust.</p>
Winter	 <p>We engaged with residents in Emergency Department, Urgent Care and Minor Injuries units to understand whether they were accessing the right support at the right time and shared findings with the NHS.</p>	 <p>We spoke with residents about their experiences of giving up smoking and whether the local pharmacy offer is meeting their needs. We shared feedback with Public Health to help shape the offer going forward.</p>

10 years of improving care

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

How have we made care better, together?

Vaccine confidence

Our research exploring vaccine confidence with people from different backgrounds provided vital lessons for public health campaigns.



Youth Voice

We supported young people to address the stigma around accessing mental health services and put them at the heart of redesigning CAMHS locally and shaping the mental health in schools offer.

Digital Health

We have supported the NHS to roll out digital health apps whilst highlighting the need for face to face support for our vulnerable and digitally excluded residents.



Emergency Services

We have worked over a few years with our local Hospital Trust to help shape their communications around accessing Emergency Services, increase awareness of 111 and introduce a booking system in Emergency Department and Urgent Care.

NHS dentistry

We continued to voice public concerns that improvements to NHS dentistry are too slow, leaving thousands of people in pain.





Healthwatch Hero



Celebrating a hero in our local community.

Rita is a Healthwatch Hero for regularly raising her experiences with us and creating change by providing honest and clear feedback on local services.

Rita has a physical disability alongside other health conditions which means that she is unable to leave home without support. However, she has supported the work of Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen for a number of years, sharing her experiences of GPs, pharmacies, hospital departments and patient transport with the team.

Her feedback has helped shape delivery of local services and ensure that they are inclusive for all – and she is always quick to praise great work and support!



Listening to your experiences

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

Advocating for fairer NHS dentistry

NHS dentistry is in desperate need of reform and this year we have successfully moved NHS dentistry up the political agenda, making it easier for people to find a dentist taking on NHS patients.

We have engaged regularly with the Lancashire and South Cumbria NHS dental team, sharing feedback from residents who have not been able to register with a dentist and working together to support the most vulnerable to get dental support.

Changes to NHS dental pathways

As a result of our ongoing communication with the NHS dental team, new pathways have been established to address the needs of more vulnerable patients. These changes include: -



- Ensuring follow up treatment for emergency appointments e.g. ensuring a permanent filling is provided after a temporary one
- Dedicated support for vulnerable groups including cancer patients, children in care and residents with learning disabilities .

What difference will this make?

With these changes in place it should be easier for people get dental support as NHS patients , especially for residents who face a range of health issues and inequalities.



We've been contacted by the mother of a 19 year old with autism. He has been struggling with his teeth for a long time but the family are becoming desperate. He usually goes to day care but hasn't been today because he has not slept with the toothache. Can you help?

Positive changes to accessing Emergency Services

Getting the right help at the right time is important for everyone, whilst ensuring that additional pressures are taken away from Emergency Departments, particularly over Winter.

We have worked with our local hospital Trust and the 111 Programme Board over the last two winters to understand why people are accessing Emergency Services, what their experience was like and what could be improved.

We made a set of recommendations in 2021/22 listed below and followed up on these in 2022/23.

Our recommendations:

1. Increase awareness of NHS 111 phone and online services
2. Promote extended access to primary care and the role of community pharmacy
3. Use communication methods that best suit the demographics to advertise services and support
4. Provide transparency on waiting times for services

What difference will this make?

During our revisit in 2022/23, awareness of NHS 111 had increased from the previous year due to increased promotion. However, people were unaware of the option to book an appointment at Emergency Department through NHS111. This option will reduce pressures on Emergency Department further.

More people had tried alternative options to accessing Emergency Department than in the prior year as a result of improved communication about services. However digital exclusion and language barriers are still an issue for some of our residents in accessing online support.

Whilst most people we spoke with went straight into the department from the waiting room, the new appointment booking system was appreciated by those who took up this option to go home or somewhere more comfortable than the waiting room and return for their appointment.



“The appointment booking service worked well much better than sitting here .” – it was easy to use and

Three ways we have made a difference for the community

Throughout our work we gather information about health inequalities by speaking to people whose experiences aren't often heard.

Creating empathy by bringing experiences to life



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

Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen shared with East Lancashire Hospitals Trust the experiences of women attending antenatal clinics at Burnley General Hospital. Whilst feedback about staff and care was positive, these women experienced issues being able to park near to the clinic, long waiting times for appointments and lack of changing facilities for other children. The Trust has taken this feedback on board and is looking at how they address these issues.

Getting services to involve the public



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

We have worked closely with the ICB communications team on messaging around the Covid - 19 vaccine – listening to people's concerns, myth busting with local community members at the centre of campaigns and addressing issues around accessibility.

Improving care over time



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

We carried out a revisit of a previous project on vulnerable adults' experiences of hospital discharge. Whilst people's experiences are still varied and communication between services still needs to improve, we have seen increased integration between services to ensure that people are discharged appropriately to the right place and both the individual and family being informed of next steps.



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:

- Listening to adults who are in recovery from alcohol and substance misuse
- Reaching out to residents who use local Foodbanks
- Sharing feedback on vaccine hesitancy of South Asian heritage communities with the ICB
- Listening to young people's experiences of mental health services

Better care for deaf residents

We built relations with the Deaf Village during the year, learning about the barriers they face in accessing health care.

Lack of interpretation services was a significant issue for residents., particularly at local dentists.

We worked with the Lancashire and South Cumbria dental team to address this, and they supported the cost of interpretation services in one dental practice.

We also shared RNID guidance at the Pennine GP Practice Managers forum and there was acknowledgement of the need to promote alternative ways of booking appointments.



“Deaf people do not have the luxury of having a hearing person on hand to make the call at 8am to book an appointment. If you're lucky you might be given an appointment the same day, but given the short notice they are unable to book and provide interpreters

Local resident



Breaking down barriers to uptake of the Covid - 19 vaccine

Uptake of the Covid - 19 amongst South Asian heritage communities was low so Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen was asked by NHS England to carry out engagement to understand the barriers faced by members of this community in having the vaccine and how they could encourage greater uptake.

We found that having 'community ambassador' health professionals who are best placed to connect with the community and address misinformation and overcome concerns works best. Having communications campaigns in different languages involving local members of the community also have a greater impact on uptake.

“I had received the 1st and 2nd doses of the vaccine, but I feel there was a lack of information about the side effects of the vaccine.

Local resident



Advice and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch is here for you. In times of worry or stress, we can provide confidential support and free information to help you understand your options and get the help you need. Whether it's finding an NHS dentist, how to make a complaint or choosing a good care home for a loved one – you can count on us.

This year we've helped people by:

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

Help to find dental care in Blackburn with Darwen

Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen had 60 people contact them for advice and information on dental services. The public reported to them that most practices were not taking on new patients. The impact of delayed treatment has resulted in people living with considerable pain, developing medical resistance and dental conditions worsening.



“I’m so embarrassed about my teeth. I can’t leave the house. I’m so depressed about this.”

Mary , Blackburn with Darwen resident

Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen’s advice and information has meant people who need urgent treatment know their options and have clear information.



“Thank you for being able to support some of our most vulnerable children to get seen at a local dentist.”

Jasmine House Children’s Home

Helping vulnerable residents get the support they need

Whilst carrying out engagement with residents who access Blackburn with Darwen Foodbank, we met John who complained about his eyesight and that he was struggling to get visual aids.

We contacted Blackburn Blind Society who have now supported him to get the visual aids he needs and not only this have opened up a new social network for him.

A resident called us whilst under the influence of fentanyl to complain about local mental health services. By calling the Crisis helpline we were able to get him into the Minor Injuries Unit locally for physical injuries he had sustained whilst under the influence and get him the mental health support he needed on the same day.



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
- Reviewed GP and dentist websites to review accessibility
- Collected the most up - to - date information on changes to services, such as whether NHS dental appointments were available at a practice

Liz

Liz has a huge amount experience of being a PLACE assessor at local Hospital Trusts and brings this keen eye for detail to her role as an Enter and View volunteer. She is passionate about giving a voice to those who are seldom heard in society and improve someone's quality of experience for the better.



Michelle

Michelle joined our team of volunteers soon after retiring from her role within the NHS because she really missed helping people and the rewards that brings. She is a dedicated member of our Enter and View team and loves engaging with members of our community who are most vulnerable.



Bia

Bia joined us this year as a volunteer whilst studying for a degree in Public Health. Being able to put the knowledge from her course into practice has been a great opportunity for Bia and we have benefited greatly from her language skills, supporting us to engage with wider groups of residents whose first language is not English.



Do you feel inspired?

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



<https://healthwatchblackburnwithdarwen.co.uk/>

 [get - involved/volunteer/](#)

 01254 480002

 Email sarahjohns@healthwatchbwd.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	£133,650	Expenditure on pay	£125,675
Additional income	£44,200	Non - pay expenditure	£14,567
		Office and management fee	£7,442
Total income	£177,850	Total expenditure	£147,684

Additional income is broken down by:

- **£32,000 funding** received from Lancashire and South Cumbria ICB
- **£12,200 funding** from local CVS organisations for community engagement

Next steps

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

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

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

Top three priorities for 2023 - 24

1. Expanding our Enter and View programme into different settings
2. Tackling health inequalities further
3. Engaging with our most vulnerable groups of residents

Healthwatch Together

Healthwatch Together

Healthwatch Together is a partnership that unites four local Healthwatch organisations in Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool, Lancashire, and South Cumbria. Through this vibrant partnership, Healthwatch Together strives to broaden the scope and influence of Healthwatch in the region, forging connections with a greater number of communities, actively listening to diverse experiences, and directing improvements in health and care.

Over the course of the past year, Healthwatch Together has engaged across the Lancashire and South Cumbria footprint, while working collaboratively. This page showcases the accomplishments achieved together during this period.

Raising the voices of the seldom heard, Covid - 19 Vaccination Project

Healthwatch Together collaborated on a project to engage with seldom - heard communities and individuals to gather their experiences of the Covid - 19 vaccination programme. To investigate the factors which influenced individuals' decisions to get or not get the vaccination.

HWT engaged with 1,216 members of the public, having conversations with 19 groups whose voices are typically unheard, to understand their views and experiences of the Covid - 19 vaccination.

Through raising the voices of the seldom heard, Healthwatch ensured that their views will be taken into consideration in the development of future vaccination programmes. From the project, 19 overarching recommendations were compiled for the NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria ICS.





Statutory statements

Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen, Unit 19 Eanam Wharf Business Centre, Eanam Wharf, Blackburn, BB1 5BL

Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen 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

Our Healthwatch Board consists of six 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 community. Throughout 2022/23 the Board met seven times and made decisions on matters such as our Quality Framework self - assessment and workplan and budget for 2023/24.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities.

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

We use a wide range of approaches to ensure that as many people as possible have the opportunity to provide us with insight about their experience of using services. During 2022/23 we have been available by phone, email, provided a webform on our website and through social media, as well as attending meetings of community groups and forums.

We ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. We will publish it on our website.

Responses to recommendations

We had three providers who did not respond to requests for information or recommendations. There were no issues or recommendations escalated by us to 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 Board and a range of steering groups.

We also take insight and experiences to decision makers in Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care System. For example, we shared with the Integrated Care Partnership, residents' views on their draft strategy priorities. We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

Enter and view

This year, we made 10 Enter and View visits into local residential care homes.

Location	Changes made to services
Birchfield Care Home	Management had used our previous report to create a checklist for improvements and had implemented these by this revisit.
Moorland View Care Home	Ongoing redecoration of the home and increased signage within the home
Northwood Nursing Home	Additional disabled parking created and new chefs in place to offer a wider menu
St James House	Links made with social prescribing team for younger residents

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen is represented on the Blackburn with Darwen Health and Wellbeing Board by Sarah Johns, Chief Officer. During 2022/23 our representative has effectively carried out this role by providing updates on our workplan for the year and sharing residents' feedback.

Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen is represented on Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Partnerships and [name] Integrated Care Boards by David Blacklock from People First representing Healthwatch Together.

2022 – 2023 Outcomes

Project / activity	Changes made to services
Engagement on uptake of the Covid - 19 vaccine	Stronger communications campaign to reach a wide audience
Smoking cessation	Review of the current local pharmacy provision
Engagement with young people with learning disabilities	Raised awareness of annual health checks in the school and amongst parents
Engagement with young people about the Mental Health in Schools team offer	Better promotion of the service in schools and increased young people's voice within the provision

healthwatch

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