

Championing what matters to you

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees
Annual Report 2021-22



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Message from our chair

I have great pleasure in introducing the 2021/22 Annual Report which highlights much of the work undertaken by staff, board members and volunteers for Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees.

You will be able to read about our work over the past 12 months and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Board, volunteers and Healthwatch officers for their hard work and dedication in ensuring we remain independent champions for the people who use health and care services within the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees.

Our role is to find out what people like about services and what could be improved, and we share these views with those within the local authority to make change happen. Healthwatch also helps people find the information they need about services in their area, and we help make sure people's views shape the support they need.

Our local health and social care services are going through a period of considerable change. The COVID pandemic, financial and political pressures and the desire to improve services all play a part in supporting these changes.

The Health and Care Bill is in its final stages and awaiting Royal Assent. This new Act will change the way health and social care services operate and ensure, through the Care Quality Commission, how providers work together in partnership to provide integrated care.



“A new Integrated Care System and Integrated Care Partnerships will replace the work of Clinical Commissioning Groups. Healthwatch has a role in ensuring community perspectives and equality issues are embedded in health and social care plans and activity.”

Peter Smith, Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees Chair



Peter Smith
Healthwatch
Stockton-on-Tees
Chair

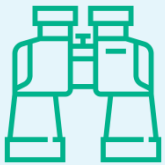
At a local level we are also seeing changes in the way health and social care services are delivered. Technology, health education and medical research are being used to help people support their local GP practices. The taking of your own blood pressure, pulse, temperature and oxygen levels through simple equipment provides a realistic way to increase personal responsibility for our health.

The next twelve months will provide Healthwatch with much to consult on for the people of Stockton-on-Tees. We look forward to finding out your thoughts and ideas about how health and social care services can be improved for all.

About us

Your health and social care champion

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees is your local health and social care champion. From Yarm to Billingham and everywhere in between, we make sure NHS leaders and other 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

To ensure that local people have a voice on health and care services and are able to access the health and care they need.



Our mission

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



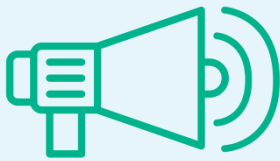
Our values

- 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.

Our year in review

Find out how we have engaged with and supported people.

Reaching out



1,374 people

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

16,865 people

came to us for clear advice and information about topics such as mental health and COVID-19.

Making a difference to care



We published

5 reports

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

Our most popular report was

Community Mental Health Needs

which received the most responses to the 10 recommendations made to support service providers to better meet the mental health needs of the local community.

Health and care that works for you



We're lucky to have

15

outstanding volunteers, who gave 186 hours to make care better for our community.

We're funded by our local authority. In 2021-22 we received:

£130,908

which is 0.7% more than the previous year.

We currently employ

4 staff

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

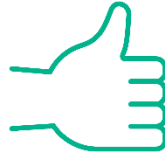
How we've made a difference throughout the year

These are the biggest projects we worked on from April 2021 to March 2022.

Spring



Dedicated Information & Signposting line and comprehensive directory of services, organisations and support groups to ensure accessibility.



Shared good news stories which highlight positive ways of working in challenging circumstances.

Summer



With online appointments becoming the norm, our top tips helped professionals and patients get the most out of digital appointments.



We supported the #BecauseWeAllCare national campaign which saw 54,000 people come forward to tell us about issues they faced with services.

Autumn



Working with key projects such as the Stockton COVID-19 Community Champions, Stockton Resilience & Recovery Project and Stockton Independent Complaints Advocacy Service.



We worked in collaboration with other local Healthwatch to urge the Government to act after reporting a 452% increase in people struggling to see an NHS dentist. We provided a mythbusting tool to ensure correct messages were disseminated.

Winter



When people struggled to see their GP face-to-face we asked the NHS to confirm that everyone has the right to face-to-face appointments.



To support the COVID-19 vaccination programme we talked to different communities to understand their views about the vaccine and published guidance to provide the correct information. We also invited a community representative to join our Board to ensure collaboration to help identify specific issues regarding health and social care.

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 back to services to help them improve.



Community Mental Health Needs

Thanks to people sharing their experience of mental health with us over the last year, we have been able to support the analysis work ongoing across the region as part of the Tees Valley Mental Health and Wellbeing Alliance.

This has also helped to inform the Mental Health Community Transformation Programme and Children's Whole Pathway Programme through the implementation of the I-Thrive Framework - supporting children, young people and families when they need it the most - and the future commissioning of services to better meet the mental health and wellbeing needs of the public. We wanted to hear about people's views and experiences of mental health, and how this has impacted on their lives and their health and wellbeing.



82% of people

we heard from had experienced difficulties or concerns in relation to their own mental health and wellbeing in the past year.

We heard from 133 people and used their feedback to advise Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV), NHS Tees Valley CCG and Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council that additional community health and wellbeing support, and community-based health clinics are needed to support people with long-term conditions and/or a disability to help them manage their physical and mental health conditions together.

Improvements on a number of issues we raised on your behalf include:

- Impact on Teesside are leading on increasing access to psychological therapies within the long-term conditions pathway to enable people to manage their physical and mental health conditions together.
- Funding has been allocated to reduce waiting times for psychological therapies.
- TEWV have started virtual hubs for professionals to come together to ensure that care is wrapped around an individual and is provided in a timely manner.

What difference did this make?

TEWV is looking into developing Community Hubs across the Tees Valley to provide integrated support across the geographical area, which includes a proactive as well as a reactive offer.



"We are always pleased to work with Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees to continue to identify any improvements in our services, and to receive valuable feedback from our local population"

Lindsey Robertson, Chief Nurse Director of Patient Safety and Quality,
North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust



Community Mental Health Needs (cont...)

Thanks to people sharing their views and experiences of mental health and wellbeing we were able to help commissioners look at ways to improve and enhance services which take into account the additional mental health needs of people with a long-term health condition and/or a disability.

Between February 2021 – July 2021, support services within the local area highlighted a range of difficulties that people were experiencing in relation to accessing psychological therapies, and shared concerns with us about the impact that this was having on people’s mental health. Between July 2021 – December 2021, Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees engaged with people to understand their views and experiences of their own mental health and wellbeing over the previous year.

The engagement has been supported by the local Healthwatch Champions and the following support services:

- Starfish YEI
- Anchor Housing
- Everyday Language Solutions
- Red Balloons.

We collected views from individuals via surveys – via written and verbal surveys and narratives.

Our report found that there is a strong link between the mental and physical health of those with long-term health conditions and/or a disability, with many people experiencing difficulties or concerns in relation to their own mental health and wellbeing in the past year. Not feeling able to manage physical health conditions and not being able to access services when needed has had a profound impact on the mental health and wellbeing of those with long-term health conditions and/or a disability.

Community Support Groups

Thanks to people sharing their views and experiences of mental health, we have called on local service providers to provide additional support for existing community groups. Community support groups are important to health, wellbeing, and more crucially the safety and welfare of those who attend. Those who attend the support groups have told us that they would value extra health and wellbeing support along with support that can contribute to group resources, security, development, and sustainability. We have also been able to improve communication between local groups and service providers.

Access to community health and wellbeing support and health clinics

We have called on local service providers to deliver community health and wellbeing support and health clinics to people with long-term conditions and/or a disability within the community and to existing groups, to enable people to manage their physical and mental health conditions together.

Community Mental Health Needs (cont...)



“Wellbeing courses that are face-to-face and not just online – not everyone can learn online.”

“We have big lounges where people can come and do group sessions, drop-in clinics, health checks - it’s the perfect place to access everyone.”

“We all have lots of different health problems that are more complicated, and some people have learning disabilities. Wellbeing support, diabetes clinics and vaccination clinics, information and support can be delivered here.”



People have expressed concerns in relation to their physical health conditions not being managed, and that this has impacted on their mental health and wellbeing. The groups have felt that some preventative and healthy living support would be beneficial. We have signposted the community groups to Community Connect and the COVID Resilience Team in Stockton-on-Tees to enable them to access the community health and wellbeing support.

The feedback goes on to inform the development of the Community Hubs across the Tees Valley and the information around the physical and mental health will inform the development work that TEWV is carrying out.

Access to signposting, information, advice, guidance, advocacy and psychological therapies

Group attendees have found through personal experience and supporting other group members that those with long-term mental health conditions often require additional support to access primary care and social care services. They also need extra support with additional communication and learning needs and increased access to psychological therapies.

TEWV has increased its community navigator capacity, which roles have the ability to follow the full patient journey and ensure integration back into the community. Funding has also been allocated to reduce waiting times for psychological therapies.

Holistic approach to health and social care support to enable people to manage their physical and mental health conditions together

Within the new Integrated Single Point of Access, a new post has been established in TEWV to work with health and social care teams in the community with the aim of increasing collaborative working and ensuring patients receive holistic care, particularly regarding their mental health needs. This supports the ‘Treat as One’ programme in regard to physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Accessing Primary Care Services

Thanks to people sharing their experiences of accessing health services during the coronavirus pandemic we have helped the NHS identify how to positively remove barriers to improve access and delivery of health services for people who have additional needs or need to access health services in specific ways.

If you're experiencing social marginalisation, exclusion and complex vulnerabilities such as being at risk of harm and abuse, exploitation, trauma, learning difficulties, mental health difficulties, poverty, poor housing, homelessness, addictions, lack of stability, a lack of education and low aspirations, accessing health care services when needed can seem impossible.

Together with 'A Way Out', we looked at the challenges that women faced in accessing health services. Our report 'Women's Experiences of Health and Social Care' found that barriers to accessing GP services influenced women's mental health, wellbeing and other health conditions.

The main issues we heard included not having access to the internet to access health services, not being able to access face-to-face appointment bookings and appointments with a GP. Difficulties around communication between the healthcare professional and the patient had been identified as a barrier to effective pain management for the women.

What difference did this make?

Due to our call for change, NHS Tees Valley CCG has regularly communicated to GP surgeries the NHS England guidance on registration of patients who are homeless.

A pain management programme called 'Improving the Wellbeing of People with Opioid Treated Chronic Pain' (IWOTCH), which aims to empower people so that they are better able to make informed choices jointly with their healthcare provider, will be rolled out in primary care across the Tees Valley.

We helped to inform NHS Tees Valley CCG to ensure that local services are inclusive and responsive to those who may have additional needs.



"A big thank you to Healthwatch for listening to us and the lived experiences of the women we work with and for taking this forward to bring influence a system change. Thank you."

Sarah McManus, CEO, A Way Out.



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 the NHS and social care services to step back and see the bigger picture through hearing personal experiences and the impact on people's lives. This provides a deeper understanding than using data alone, and can challenge assumptions and motivate people to think and work more creatively.

As part of our engagement with informal carers, we worked with our Healthwatch Champions to support carers to have their say about their own mental health and wellbeing during the Covid-19 pandemic, in a way that met carers' communication needs. The carer narratives have enabled service providers to gain insight into the extra care unpaid carers provide, and the impact on their own mental health. This has enabled carers to tell providers about the importance of communication, regular contact, and quality of care when receiving health and social care services.



Getting services to involve the public

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

North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Trust have enabled us to feed back patient, family and carer experiences of hospital services. This feedback has contributed to reviewing and developing hospital visiting policies, procedures and guidance for staff to support patients' visits to hospital.



Improving care over time

Change takes time. We often work behind the scenes with health and care services to consistently raise issues and push for changes.

We collaborated with seven north east Healthwatch organisations to gain feedback from the general public and discover their experiences of accessing and using NHS dental services across the Borough. Our findings highlight a serious shortage of NHS dentists and poor access to treatment. We are supporting the #fixthedentistry campaign from Healthwatch England and influencing the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care System to improve services locally.

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 helped people by:

- Providing up-to-date information on available NHS dental services.
- Increasing social media networks to allow local services to provide people with reliable information they can trust.
- Supporting the development of hospital visiting policies and guidance.
- Helping people to access primary care and mental health services.



Supporting people with mental health concerns

Through our dedicated Information & Signposting line and as part of our research into the impact of COVID-19 on mental health and wellbeing, our evidence showed an increasing number of people in the community with mental health concerns. People were struggling to access mental health services with waiting times exceeding 19 months as the pandemic went on.



We then engaged with the public to seek their views and experiences of local mental health services. Our findings in the resulting [Community Mental Health Needs Report](#) have led to a number of recommendations. Mental health services across the Tees Valley are now undergoing a review to improve services locally and support the mental health needs of the community.

Helping to address the NHS dentistry issue

National figures from Healthwatch England saw an increase of 452% in people struggling to see an NHS dentist. Feedback from our local community shows the same trend, with 51 requests to find an NHS dentist from members of the public from April 2021 – March 2022.



A collaborative '[dentistry mythbusting](#)' document by north east Healthwatch organisations was produced to help address the concerns which were made worse by common myths and misunderstandings around how dental practices work.

We also worked with seven local Healthwatch organisations to engage with the public and gain feedback on accessing local NHS dental services.

Our [Experiences of Dental Care Services Report](#) enabled us to better understand the experiences of dental care in Stockton during the pandemic. The findings will help to influence the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care System, local service providers and NHS England to improve access to NHS dentistry, and further support the national campaign from Healthwatch England.

Our Information & Signposting line also provided the most up-to-date advice on which local dentists were taking NHS patients, as well as where to go for further information and advice.

Volunteers

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

This year our volunteers:

- Helped people have their say, supporting people to understand information and complete surveys, making sure we include people whatever their communication needs.
- Undertaken outreach work by attending networking events.
- Supported the organisation of mental health focus groups.
- Provided feedback at a range of health and wellbeing meetings on what matters to local communities the most.
- Reviewed training opportunities in support of peers' learning and development as volunteers.





Karen

"I was very lucky to be the Manager of Healthwatch Stockton a number of years ago and now contribute as a member of the Board, so I have seen first-hand the amazing work that Healthwatch has done for both individuals and communities. It's a real honour to be a volunteer of Healthwatch and feel you are making a difference."



Wendy

"In my role as Healthwatch Stockton Community Champion, I provide a voice for the deaf and non-English speaking communities through the charity Everyday Language Solutions. The feedback we receive from members of the public and people we support is vital, as they are from hard-to-reach often vulnerable communities with language barriers. Working in partnership with Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees has raised the voices from these communities to enable them to be heard."



Andrea

As Project Lead for the Stockton-on-Tees COVID-19 Community Champions Team and Stockton-on-Tees Resilience & Recovery Project, I was invited to join the Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees team as a guest member of the Board. This provided opportunity for the three teams to share intelligence and insights from community residents with regulators and the local authority. This was an effective mechanism for ensuring communities were heard. As a result, we now have a team member regularly representing the projects on the Board to ensure we continue to circulate clear and consistent messaging about COVID recovery and the impact of the pandemic.



Do you feel inspired?

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



www.healthwatchstocktonontees.co.uk/contactus



01642 688312



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.

Income		Expenditure	
Funding received from local authority	£130,908	Staff costs	£81,019
Additional funding	£8,600	Operational costs	£23,030
		Support and administration	£8,493
Total income	£139,508	Total expenditure	£112,542

Top three priorities for 2022-23

1. As communities and the delivery of health and social care services begins its transition to a new model of care through the Integrated Care Systems (ICS), we will be working closely with our partners and stakeholders to ensure the voices of local people help to shape service delivery in a meaningful way.
2. This year we will be working with young people to help to identify what is important to them, while raising awareness of existing services and referral pathways.
3. We will be looking to develop creative ways of engaging communities we do not currently hear from to help tackle health inequalities and promote partnership working.

Next steps

The last two years have created new challenges for all of us. Those isolated and vulnerable have seen this made worse, the strain on health and social care services, community organisations and hospital trusts has been unprecedented. But along with the challenges has come the opportunity for development and growth. Partnership working has strengthened across sectors, the need to build capacity not only in our local area but regionally and nationally has been highlighted throughout. Learning from good practice and sharing skills and resources have never been more important. Partnership is the only way to make silo working a thing of the past and ensure we play our part in a health and social care system that works for everyone.

With every challenge comes the opportunity for change. We are committed to working with our partners and the public to build resilience within the community of Stockton-on-Tees, supporting us to have a healthier population, promoting wellbeing and capturing service user voices to ensure those with the power to make changes know what is important to you, as they undertake the development of integrated health and social care services.

Statutory statements

About us

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees, Catalyst House, 27 Yarm Road, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 3NJ

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

Registered Charity No, 1067888 Company Registered in England No 3491237

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

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Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees used the Healthwatch Trademark



The way we work

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

Our Healthwatch board consists of six members and two community representative seats, specific workplan items, with a diverse range of experience and skills. The inclusion of a non-voting seat on the board enables a broad range of public representation of service user groups with the local area.

Our Board work on a voluntary basis to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny to our activities, ensuring that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community.

Through 2021/22 our board met six times and made decisions on matters such as approving the recommendations made to service providers based on what people have told us on a wide range of health and wellbeing issues and the introduction of local community representatives at board meetings.

Our Board also made the decision to proceed with the engagement with unpaid carers to find out their views and experiences of their own mental health and wellbeing during the pandemic.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities. As a result of the information and signposting contact around difficulties in people accessing GP services and NHS dentists, we have been able to ensure that people who face additional barriers to accessing GP services are able to register with a GP, and that access issues around local NHS dentistry registration have been shared to inform the Healthwatch regional NHS dentistry consultation. We have also been able to provide a public voice into the development of the new North Tees and Hartlepool NHS trust visiting policies for family members and carers of patients.

Methods and systems used across the year's work to obtain people's views and experience.

We use a wide range of methods 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 2021/22 we have been available by phone, by email, provided a webform on our website, attended virtual meetings of community groups and forums, provided our own virtual activities, engaged with the public through social media and held workplan-specific focus groups..

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. In 2021/22 we have done this through, for example, contact with the Stockton-on-Tees Healthwatch Champions and partnership working with local service providers and developing networks.

Methods and systems used across the year's work to obtain people's views and experience (cont...)

We have been able to carry out face-to-face focus groups which has enhanced engagement and communication around peoples' health and wellbeing needs, such as those with long term mental health conditions and people who have a learning disability.

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:

www.healthwatchstocktonontees.co.uk.

Responses to recommendations and requests

27 recommendations have been made. One provider did not respond to requests for information or recommendations.

This year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we did not make use of our Enter and View powers. Consequently, there are no recommendations or other actions resulting from this area of activity. There were no issues or recommendations escalated by our Healthwatch to Healthwatch England Committee and so no resulting special reviews or investigations were needed.

Health and Wellbeing Board

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees is represented on the Stockton-on-Tees Health and Wellbeing Board by Peter Smith, Chair. During 2021/22 our representative has effectively carried out this role by attending the majority of the meetings and contributing to the varied discussions.

2021-2022 Outcomes

We have circulated relevant and specific information to the public and Healthwatch network. We are part of ongoing priorities throughout the Borough, including integrated care plans and mental health transformation.

Discussions included:

Project / Activity Area
COVID-19 Outbreak Management Update
COVID-19 Vaccination Update
Children and Young People’s Mental Health Update
Volunteering Strategy
NHS England next steps for Integrated Care Systems
Healthy Lifestyles and Activity
Healthy Schools
Adult Acute Mental Health Inpatient Services – Improvement Actions
End of Life Strategy
Special Educational Needs & Disabilities Strategy
Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment
A Fairer Stockton-on-Tees: A Strategic Framework for Reducing Inequalities in the Borough

Health and Wellbeing Board (Cont...)

Project / Activity Area
Tackling Inequalities - Public Health
Food Power Network
Needs-Led Neurodevelopmental Pathway for Children and Young People
Child Death Overview Panel
Domestic Abuse Steering Group Update
Alcohol Strategic Group Update
Adult Social Care Strategy 2021 – 2025
Better Care Fund 2021 – 2022



healthwatch

Stockton-on-Tees

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