



Championing what matters to you

Healthwatch North Tyneside
Annual Report 2023 – 2024

healthwatch
North Tyneside

About Us

Healthwatch North Tyneside is your local health and social care champion. We make sure health and social care leaders and decision makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care. We can also help you find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.

We help to shape and improve local health and social care services. We want to show how people's experiences can transform services for the better; and to demonstrate how good involvement can provide solutions to challenges facing the NHS and care services in the years ahead.

Who we are

We are a small independent charity. We are locally based, and our trustees, staff and volunteers are from the area.

Our work is funded by a service delivery contract with North Tyneside Council and through grants or contracts with commissioners, providers or grant funders to fund particular project work.

We are part of a network of over 150 local Healthwatch, who operate in every local authority area in England. This network was established by the Health and Social Care Act 2012, with the aim of putting patients and the public first.

Our **Healthwatch Board** work on a voluntary basis to provide oversight, direction and security to our activities. Our board ensure that our work reflects the concerns and interests of people across North Tyneside. They all act as trustees of our charity. During this reporting period our trustees were: Carol Nevison, Bea Groves, Jackie Doughty, Theresa Culpin, Dr Joanne Brown, Paula McCormack, Judy Scott (to July 2023), Julia Charlton (to November 2023), David Slater (from November 2023), Peter Berrie (from November 2023), Ian Paul Greenway (from November 2023) and Louise Jones (November 2023–January 2024).

Healthwatch North Tyneside is represented on North Tyneside's **Health and Wellbeing Board** by the Chair of the board and our Director. We also play an active role in other strategic groups that deliver operational work around health and care issues in North Tyneside, although many of these were paused at points during this period due to NHS reorganisation.

Healthwatch North Tyneside uses the Healthwatch Trademark when undertaking our activities as covered by the licence agreement with Healthwatch England.

Message from our Chair

I hope our annual report gives you a sense of some of the changes that have happened as a result of what residents have told us.

Residents of North Tyneside continue to generously share their time, views and experiences of local services. They tell us they value our independence from service providers and our honesty in championing their issues. We hear about what works well and what can be better about services. Our 'What we've heard in 2023/4' report summarises the feedback we've received through our engagement activities.



We are here to support the health and care system and improve services based on residents' feedback. While affecting change is often challenging and takes time, we have faced additional complexities this year due to further reorganisations within NHS governance systems. Despite these challenges, we remain committed to working with partners to ensure residents' voices are heard.

Working in partnership is critical to making change happen and I am really pleased to see relationships with North Tyneside Council – particularly the Adult Social Care team, many NHS providers and the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB), continue to deepen and produce change. We are indebted to our voluntary and community sector partners for their support in hearing from residents, and identifying opportunities for change. Our Healthwatch Network in the region continues to go from strength to strength and we proudly play a key role in this success.

During this period, our charity undertook a comprehensive review of our operations to ensure we are robust and deliver to a high standard. We are pleased to be awarded Healthwatch England's 'Committed to Quality' standard mark, reflecting our approach to continuous improvement. This will hopefully position us well for the upcoming tender for core Healthwatch services in North Tyneside in late 2024.

We have seen significant change within our Board of Trustees as two stalwarts of Healthwatch North Tyneside, Julia Charlton and Judy Scott, retired from the Board as they approached the maximum 10 years of service. Both had time as chairs of our Board and helped make our organisation the success it is today. We also welcomed four new trustees to our Board.

Finally, I would like to thank the staff team and volunteers for their passion, drive and commitment to effecting change. It is wonderful to see the culture of collaboration and team work that exists between volunteers, staff and Trustees at Healthwatch North Tyneside and I look forward to this continuing in the future.

Carol Nevison, Chair of Healthwatch North Tyneside

Our Aims



Our vision

People's experiences, views and needs are sought, valued, and acted upon as part of the planning and delivery of health and care support in North Tyneside.



Our mission

To champion the experiences, views, values and needs of local people to positively affect the health and social care services in North Tyneside.



Our Values and what they mean to us

- **Meaningful involvement** – We help local people to shape and improve the services they use, encouraging decision makers to adopt co-design, co-production and other participatory approaches.
- **Empowering** – We are open and inclusive and strive to understand and empower everyone to have their voices heard equitably.
- **Working together** – We build effective relationships with communities, organisations, providers and decision makers, working in partnership where possible, to maximise the opportunities for change.
- **Trust** – We are trusted to be honest about what people tell us and to voice concerns where necessary.
- **Independence** – We champion what people tell us matters to them and act as a critical friend to providers and decision makers.
- **Evidence based** – We are led by the information we gather from residents. We look at both what works well and what could be done better.
- **Impact** – We are focused on achieving meaningful change for residents.

Our Year in Review

Find out how we have engaged and supported people.



Reaching out

2746 people engaged with us at **103 community events** across North Tyneside.

2210 people shared their views and experiences to help us raise issues and improve care.

817 people shared **2,706 service experiences** in our 2023 annual survey.



Making a difference

some of the impacts we have had this year

- **Carers support being redesigned** based on feedback we gathered
- **New mental health support service** being commissioned based on our work with service users and partners.
- **People's views are shaping** how individual services deliver their work.



Health and care that works for you

We had **4.9 full time equivalent members** of our staff team on average during the year.

1,840 hours of volunteering by our amazing team of engagement, research and administration volunteers and Trustees.

We received **£166,912 of core contract funding** to deliver the Healthwatch service in North Tyneside.

We secured **£46,220 of additional funding** for additional project work in North Tyneside and to fund our Healthwatch work across the North East and North Cumbria.



Information and signposting

Providing health and care information is a core part of our remit. Residents tell us access to high quality information is critical. We use feedback to identify gaps and work with commissioners and service providers to fill those gaps with accessible and useful information.

We have also directly helped over 300 people to get the information or support to access the services they needed. This includes making referrals or signposting to health, care and voluntary sector services and activities.

People contact us by calling our information line (0191 263 5321), via social media, our website contact form, emailing us (info@hwnt.co.uk) or at one of our face to face engagement events across North Tyneside.

Improving access to information

We work with partners and service providers to improve information available to residents. We produce a range of resources ourselves to help residents navigate the health and care system, including our mental health support leaflet.

We are working with residents to create a range of resources that will be launched during 2024 including, new mental health support resources, new Living Well North Tyneside information and support for carers.



How we have helped individuals

Here are some examples of how we have supported local people with their issues:

Finding a new GP – we were contacted by phone by a resident who had recently moved to the Whitley Bay area with their partner. They both needed to register with a new GP Practice but struggled to research practices in the area due to not using the internet. We provided information about local GP practices currently accepting new patients, including contact details and feedback we'd received from service users. With this information they were then able to contact and successfully register with a new practice that met their needs.

Connecting to local support – An older person in the North West of North Tyneside called us feeling down and lonely, and needing help with practical tasks like gardening. We talked to them to understand their interests and signposted to VODA Good Neighbours and AGE UK North Tyneside. They contacted us several weeks later to thank us for the help we provided.

Getting urgent dental treatment – A Howdon resident e-mailed us seeking an urgent dental appointment. They had been 'de-listed' from their NHS dentist since COVID and had phoned several practices to get help with toothache and swelling. We shared our dentistry survey with them and suggested contacting NHS 111. Alternatively they could contact four practices within 15 miles that the Integrated Care Board had commissioned to provide additional urgent dental care services.



Improving Health and Care Services in North Tyneside

We believe services can't make improvements without hearing your views. Listening to views and feedback from all areas of our community is a priority. This allows us to understand the fuller picture and feed this back to services and decision makers.

We are focused on making real improvements to services based on the information we gather. Changing services can often take a long time, we work with service providers and commissioners to make improvements in the short term, as well as longer term systems change. You can find out more on our website www.hwnt.co.uk

Support for Autistic Adults in North Tyneside

97 autistic adults and the people who support them participated in our research to better understand the support needs of autistic adults in North Tyneside. We worked closely with North Tyneside's Autism Strategy Group and have fed findings into the strategy group's work as the project progressed. Residents told us:

- Getting a diagnosis is important to many people because it helps them to understand themselves. Many people felt it also helped to get additional support (in education or at work) if they needed it.
- There are significant delays within the diagnostic system and information about the process and post diagnosis information could be significantly improved.
- There is very limited support available for autistic adults who do not also have a learning disability. This needs to be improved and reflect the different needs of different adults – including peer support, support with relationships/friendships and sex, support at work and support for families.
- We heard that some services and staff members really do understand autistic people and respond to their needs but many could be more autism friendly – including mental health, addiction services and some primary and secondary care services.

The findings and recommendations were developed with the fantastic support of North Tyneside's Autism Engagement group – a group of autistic adults, carers and parents of autistic children and young people. The findings are being used to develop an action plan as part of the autism strategy activities. Since we started this work, the peer support group 'Autism Better Together' has been formed with the support of North Tyneside Council, providing regular peer support sessions across North Tyneside.

"Since being diagnosed a year ago, aged 46, I have received no formal support whatsoever. No such support exists for adults in my situation. I need information about what it means to be autistic and how to understand and live better as an autistic adult. I need autism-specific emotional, psychological and practical support; none of which I've been offered or are available in North Tyneside."

Killingworth Resident

Hospital to home

We wanted to understand people's experiences of getting care after a stay in hospital, focusing on how health and social care services work together to support people. With pressures on hospital capacity and policies to discharge people as soon as medically fit, we wanted to understand people's experiences of how the system worked.

With the support of the Adult Social Care team at North Tyneside Council, we have reached people who were discharged from hospital into an intermediate care setting, before they moved to their permanent address. Our staff and volunteers interviewed the people, and their family/friends on multiple occasions over a period of 10-16 weeks. The aim was to find out what works well and what could be better about the care they were receiving and how plans for their future care unfolded. We have shared our initial findings with North Tyneside Council who are using this information to review and commission services for the coming winter.

We are starting the next phase of this research focusing on people who have left hospital to receive care at home. This phase will follow a similar approach, with a number of check-in calls or visits over several weeks with participants and their family/friends.

Participants have told us that they have really enjoyed this research approach and built up trusted relationships with our team. We are able to have this privileged access to people at difficult points in their life thanks to the support of North Tyneside's Adult Social Care team and the people who consent to participate. We are grateful to everyone involved.

"I learned that intermediate care was what I needed initially. It led me on to knowing what my needs were. It was marvellous. I'm glad I've had that experience." **Participant, Cullercoats**

Travel and Transport

People have been telling us how travel and transport can be barriers to accessing health and care support. Over the past four years, we have raised these health inequality concerns with decision makers. Healthwatch North Tyneside has now been asked to chair a working group of partners on behalf of North Tyneside's Poverty Intervention Board to explore ways to improve travel and transport issues.



Primary care

We have worked closely with the North Tyneside team at the Integrated Care Board (ICB) to understand the issues people face accessing GP surgeries. We worked closely with one practice in the North West of the borough to understand patient's experiences of their triage appointment model and provided recommendations about how the implementation could be improved. Some of these recommendations were implemented, however, the practice has since decided to change its approach completely.

In March 2024 we successfully secured a small amount of funding from the ICB to explore ways to better inform patients about how GP practices are now working. This includes providing information about new roles within practices and the face to face, phone and online options for getting the support you need from your GP practice. This will be rolled out later in 2024.

Digital inclusion

We have continued to highlight residents' issues with accessing digital health and care services online. Our evidence gathering from engagement activities last year was used in the development of North Tyneside's Digital Inclusion Strategy, with 'digital by choice' being agreed as a core principle of service provision in North Tyneside. This strategy has helped us to challenge services to do better in terms of digital inclusion – particularly around the requirement for people to order repeat prescriptions digitally.

How carers' voices have shaped services and support

Unpaid carers play a vital role in our community. Without them, the health and care system would simply not function and thousands of people who need support would not get the care they need. Healthwatch North Tyneside has made a long term commitment to understand the experiences and needs of our unpaid carers and work with others to ensure unpaid carers are better supported in North Tyneside.

We are a founder member of North Tyneside's Carers Partnership Board. The board is responsible for raising awareness of unpaid carers and improving the health, wellbeing and employment/training of carers. Healthwatch North Tyneside leads the involvement and engagement of carers on behalf of the Carers Partnership Board.

"Carers take a huge weight off the health care system and also ensure kids are in school, adults are in work and we pay the price. We should be cared for better and given more respect in doing this. We need time, money and care to look after ourselves to be able to provide this or we end up in the same cycled system." **Carer from Wallsend.**

How we heard from carers

Working closely with partners, particularly North Tyneside Carers' Centre and North Tyneside's Parent Carer Forum, we have run an annual evidence gathering exercise since 2021 focusing on unpaid adult carers one year and unpaid young carers the next year. We have heard from over 1,200 unpaid carers through surveys. We then tested the findings from this research and our recommendations for action with groups of unpaid carers to be sure we hadn't missed anything. We then shared the findings and actions with the Carers Partnership Board, Health and Wellbeing Board and other key decision makers. Reports about each exercise are on our website.

What has changed as a result?

Here are some of the changes the Carers Partnership Board members are implementing based on the feedback we have received from carers.

Improving identification of carers

It's important that healthcare and education professionals identify when someone is a carer so they can connect them to support. New training has been developed by North Tyneside Carers' Centre for Health, social care and education professionals to help them identify who is a carer, their obligations as professionals to identify carers and what support is available in North Tyneside.

Also, all 25 GP practices are now participating in the GP award scheme that has resulted in a 2100% increase in referrals from GP practices to the Carers' Centre.

Better information for carers

In 2024 a new information campaign will be launched to help residents know what carers support is available in North Tyneside.

Better support for young carers in schools

Young carers told us that they needed better support within schools to ensure their family situation, the pressures on them as young carers and the impact on their school work and behaviour are better understood. North Tyneside Carers' Centre worked with young people to develop their Young Carers in Schools programme that received pilot funding from the ICB and the evaluation of this shows it has been highly successful.

Supporting carers to plan for emergencies

Carers told us they were worried what would happen to their loved one if they suddenly fell ill or had an emergency. In response, North Tyneside Council has recently launched its Carers Emergency Plan Service, allowing carers to register a plan that services can follow if there is an emergency involving the carer. Additionally the Carers' Centre has been working with the Lions Club to promote the Message in a bottle scheme, so that if an ambulance is needed staff know the person is a carer and they can access their emergency plan.

Respite support

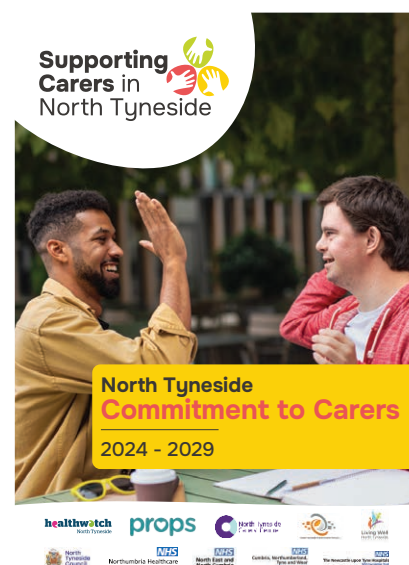
Following feedback about access to respite, a review has been undertaken and North Tyneside Council will be launching two new respite facilities in summer 2024 alongside other measures to improve information about respite support.

Better support for carers

Working with carers, the needs assessment process has been revised and a new Parent Carer's needs assessment has been commissioned by North Tyneside Council. North Tyneside Carers' Centre have listened to the feedback we gathered from carers and reorganised how it delivers its services to an outreach model delivered across North Tyneside, rather than carers having to travel to the centre.

A new strategy for Carers Support in North Tyneside

A new Commitment to Carers has been prepared and will be launched later in 2024. This embeds the principles of listening to and involving carers in service development and improvements, including the annual surveys we deliver on behalf of the Carers Partnership Board.



Working With the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board regionally

A collaborative network of Local Healthwatch

All 14 Local Healthwatch in the North East and North Cumbria (NENC) have formed a network which enables us to work together, both on a regional and an area basis. Through funding from the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB) we appointed co-ordinators to facilitate engagement projects and the gathering of region-wide public feedback. We also have a Healthwatch Network Representative that sits on the ICB and ensures that the public voice is heard at Integrated Care Systems (ICS) level, influencing decision making across the whole of the NENC ICB.

Healthwatch North Tyneside played a key role in the negotiations of these arrangements and the funding from the ICB. We were selected by our peers to provide the finance and administration support for the NENC Healthwatch Network and our Director, Paul Jones, is the coordinator for the local Healthwatch in the North area and leads on several region wide research projects. We are pleased to say that the ICB has agreed to continue to invest in our network to enable us to work in this way.

Understanding the public view of Dentistry services

At the end of 2023-24, our network was commissioned to carry out public engagement about dentistry, to help inform the ICB's decisions around improvements to services and recovery planning. We carried out extensive public engagement across the region, including surveys and mystery shopper exercises – we gathered over 3500 responses to our general survey alone. We have shared our findings with the ICB and are finalising our report and recommendations that will be shared publicly later this year. Healthwatch North Tyneside's Director is leading this work on behalf of the Network and members of the North Tyneside staff team led the mystery shopping exercises contacting 404 NHS and private only dental practices across the region to test their responses to an agreed scenario. Volunteers from North Tyneside and other local Healthwatch provided crucial support throughout this work.

Making health research more relevant

In February 2024, our network was asked to support the ICB and partners in a 'Be Part Of Research' project. Healthwatch were funded to speak to local communities to understand the level of interest in, and barriers to, taking part in NHS and health research. Our feedback will help the Research Engagement Network encourage more diverse participation, so their research better reflects our communities and helps shape the priorities for further research activities.

Mental Health

Healthwatch North Tyneside has been funded to work alongside Launchpad North Tyneside to support mental health service users, families and carers, to be involved in the NHS Community Mental Health Transformation Programme. One of the key principles of this programme is taking co-design and co-production approaches to improve support in the community.

Residents told us that a real gap in support in North Tyneside is connecting people with mental health issues to support within the community. This includes peer support groups and voluntary sector services, as well as housing support, help with debt and financial issues and relationships. These issues are often a significant factor in people's mental health issues.

Over the last two years, we have worked with a group of mental health service users and carers to develop a new service that will help people improve their wellbeing and recovery, by connecting them to support in the community alongside the offer of clinical support from the NHS. This service has now been agreed and procurement for a service provider will take place during 2024. Residents tell us this will have a significant impact on their experiences of services and may reduce the need for support from the NHS.



Adult Social care

In addition to our core funding, North Tyneside Council commission us to help them to hear from users of adult social care services. We do this by:

- Interviewing a small number of randomly selected service users each month to understand how well they feel listened to and to evaluate the person centred approach of the social work team. We try to hear from both the client and any family/friends if they are involved in their care. The feedback gathered helps review the teams performance by identifying what works well and what could be improved.
- We support the inspire User Forum which acts as a co-design reference group for adult social care services. We also received funding to hear from residents with a learning disability and their families, although this work was delayed due to recruitment.



Our Volunteers

We're supported by a team of amazing volunteers who are at the heart of Healthwatch North Tyneside. Thanks to their efforts, we're able to identify health and social care issues as they arise and understand what is working and what needs improving within NHS and social care.

This year our volunteers:

- Gathered views and experiences from residents by carrying out interviews and surveys when visiting services, over the phone or at community venues.
- Helped with analysing data and writing reports.
- Provided information, signposting and raised awareness of Healthwatch at community events.
- Supported the smooth running of our office and organisation.
- Contributed to discussions on key health and care issues that matter to local residents.

"Volunteering with Healthwatch gives me a feeling that I have helped people, even in a small way. I've met people of all ages and backgrounds and learnt so much from them. I'd like to think it makes me less judgemental and more compassionate."

Maddy, Healthwatch North Tyneside Volunteer

Maddy has supported community engagement across North Tyneside, conducted interviews for our hospital to home research, and is the queen of capturing data from paper surveys, into our electronic systems.

"I enjoy volunteering for Healthwatch North Tyneside because it's like you are doing something positive for your area and the people that you know. It's a great organisation and everyone is very helpful and friendly. They are well connected and influence the NHS and the Council to get the public what they want."

Lee, Healthwatch North Tyneside Volunteer

Lee has supported our Hospital to Home research by interviewing people in intermediate care settings and supports our community engagement activities.

"I enjoy working with the warm and welcoming Healthwatch team. I feel I am doing something useful and it has helped me find a sense of belonging. Volunteering with Healthwatch is flexible, you can do as much or as little as you are able and there are a range of ways to contribute. No two days are the same, there is always plenty of variety."

Michael, Healthwatch North Tyneside Volunteer

Michael supports our community engagement activities at the weekend and during breaks from his studies.



Do you feel inspired?

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



www.hwnt.co.uk



0191 263 5321



info@hwnt.co.uk

Our Finances

To help us carry out our work we receive funding from our local Authority under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to fund the core Healthwatch service in North Tyneside.

Our income and expenditure

Income		Expenditure	
Healthwatch Core Services contract from North Tyneside Council	£166,912	Staffing costs	£137,941
North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board Contribution to Local Healthwatch	£4,500	Operational costs	£36,032
		Governance costs	£1,300
Total income	£171,421	Total expenditure	£175,273

In addition to the above, we have successfully secured additional funding to support specific project activities and information campaigns during this period. Before agreeing to undertake any additional funded activities, we ensure that they align with our values and ethos and do not compromise our independence.

Activity	Funder	Status
Community Mental Health Transformation	North East And North Cumbria ICB (North Tyneside)	Ongoing
Adult Social Care user experience	North Tyneside Council	Ongoing
People with Learning disabilities and supporters	North Tyneside Council	Ongoing and delayed due to recruitment
Vaccine Inequalities	North Tyneside Council Public Health Team	Ongoing
North East & North Cumbria Healthwatch Network Coordination	North East And North Cumbria ICB	Ongoing
North East & North Cumbria Healthwatch Network Project delivery	North East And North Cumbria ICB	Ongoing

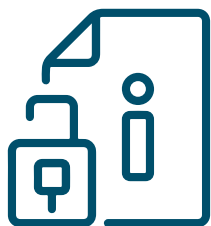
In addition, we hold and administer funds on behalf of other partnerships that we are involved with.

Our Work for the Year Ahead

Each year we select a small number of key issues to focus our project work on. These are based on what people told us is important to them through our engagement work; the feedback we receive, and our annual survey. Many of these issues are continuing from last year as our work is ongoing and have been discussed with key stakeholders.

Key themes for 2024–25

Overarching themes



Improving access to reliable health and care information.



Understanding and tackling health inequalities.



Ensuring different voices are heard.

Key issues

- **Creating an Age Friendly North Tyneside** – hearing from residents about their experiences of aging in North Tyneside and what they want to see in the future.
- **Hospital to living at home** – continuing our hospital to home research by hearing the experiences of people being discharged from hospital and getting care and support in their own homes.
- **North Tyneside's Care Homes** – working with North Tyneside Council to hear from residents of residential and nursing care homes in North Tyneside.
- **Children and young people's mental health** – engaging people in systems change.
- **Getting care when you need it** – focusing on Primary Care (GPs and dentistry) and Urgent and Emergency care.
- **Travel and transport** – continuing our work with partners and the North Tyneside Poverty Partnership.
- **Carers** – publish our findings and next steps for young carers and hear from adult carers in early 2025.



Committed to quality

We are committed to delivering the highest quality we can. Every 3 years we carry out an in-depth audit with Healthwatch England to ensure this.

healthwatch
North Tyneside

Registered Charity Number 1160753

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