

Championing what matters to you

Healthwatch Hartlepool
Annual Report 2021-22



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Message from our Chairman



Hello everyone,

Here we are again, and another year passed since I last wrote about Healthwatch Hartlepool. It has been an extremely challenging year for us all, but I firmly believe we have successfully delivered our statutory duties by learning to adapt our work when faced with the ongoing Covid19 pandemic.

On a positive note, we have continued to engage with residents and our volunteer steering group digitally. Learning throughout the year has confirmed our belief that tackling loneliness & isolation needs to be highlighted as a priority as it is also engaging with those who are digitally excluded. We conducted a huge piece of work, which turned out to be our most successful engagement exercise to date focusing on residents' concerns around GP Access. We even managed to fit in 2 regional consultations to gauge public opinion regarding both Community Mental Health Services & Dentistry.

We again actively celebrated 'World Mental Health' day by collaborating with the Mental Health Forum and a host of partners through some very successful engagements. These included Hartlepool Radio as a major supporter, inviting guests from organisations who have a link to mental health. Also, the Hartlepool Life local paper included a full-page article and Healthwatch dedicated space in their newsletter and on their social media site, as did Hartlepool Borough council. This site also included access for small organisations to use pod casts.

The Volunteer Steering Group remained active utilising weekly on-line meetings to carry out prodigious amounts of work and increase their own learning by welcoming guest speakers across the spectrum of Health & Social Care. I can absolutely confirm that apart from living within a pandemic, our work continues exactly as before.

I can report we are very healthy financially speaking. We are able to make economies of scale by judicious buying and prudent money management. Long may it continue.

I must thank all the Board members who give their time unstintingly and are always there to help when needed. We have all had to prepare for the new way of working that will come under the Health & Care Act 2022. My sincere thanks also go to our Chief Executive Christopher and staff team whose roles have had to adapt to a very new way of working but they have certainly risen to the challenge.

Healthwatch Hartlepool would be nothing without our volunteers. We couldn't carry out the much-needed work without them, thank you. Their task over the next year will be to monitor our new work programme.

I am hoping it will be onwards and upwards in the next year and look forward to seeing you all at our next AGM.

Jane Tilly

Healthwatch Hartlepool Chairman



"The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown long-standing health inequalities into stark relief. With NHS and social care facing even longer backlogs, the unequal outcomes exposed by the pandemic are at risk of becoming worse. Local Healthwatch play an important role in helping to overcome these adversities and are uniquely placed to make a positive difference in their communities."

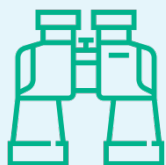
Sir Robert Francis QC, Chair of Healthwatch England



About us

Your health and social care champion

Healthwatch Hartlepool is your local health and social care champion. From the centre of town to the rural areas of the Borough 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

A world where we can all get the health and care we need.



Our mission

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



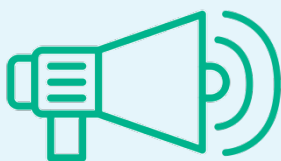
Our values

- 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 and supported people.

Reaching out



587 people

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

248 people

came to us for clear advice and information about topics such as mental health and access to primary care.

Making a difference to care



We published

4 reports

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

Our most popular report was

Accessing GP Services

which highlighted the struggles people have in accessing GP Practices by telephone to make an appointment in a timely and appropriate manner.

Health and care that works for you



We're lucky to have

Over 30

Outstanding volunteers, who gave up **over 200 days** to make care better for our community.

We're funded by Hartlepool Borough Council. In 2021-22 we received:

£116,500

Which is exactly the same as the previous 3 years.

We also currently employ

4 staff

None of whom are full-time, 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



As a key participant in the work of Covid Champions we shared the most up to date information with our volunteers and across our network helping to combat COVID-19 & promote vaccinations.



We alerted North Tees & Hartlepool NHS Foundation Hospital Trust It is quite alarming that there has been a reduction over the last year for diagnosis of dementia/delirium given the previous upward trend.

The last year has brought into the public domain a greater need to address isolation as this can lead to the early onset of dementia and we felt we should flag this within our Quality Account response. It is hoped there is to be collaboration of health & social care partners to increase diagnosis going forward but also provide the much needed support patients require.

Summer



We collaborated with all Tees Valley Healthwatch organisations to work with Tees, Esk & Wear Valley Mental Health Trust, which included an online survey, aimed at reshaping community based mental health services.



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

Autumn



Teaming up with North Tees & Hartlepool NHS Foundation Hospital Trust we organised an event to promote the 'Active Hospital' work.



We worked with all North East Healthwatch organisations urging the Government to act after reporting a 452% increase in people struggling to see an NHS dentist.

Winter



With people struggling to see their GP face-to-face we launched our largest consultation exercise to date in order to scrutinise the population's ability to access a GP in a timely manner.



To support the COVID-19 vaccination programme we worked with Public Health to promote vaccination clinics and circulated weekly messages across our contacts to help communities better understand the latest information around long covid.

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 feedback to services to help them improve



Transforming Community Mental Health Services

Healthwatch Hartlepool embarked on a collaborative piece of work with their Tees Valley LHW neighbours to help Tees, Esk & Wear Valley Mental Health Trust transform the offer around Community Mental Health services. Our report provided an insight into what matters most to the people of the Tees Valley in terms of mental health support in the community.

The Tees Valley Healthwatch Network engaged over 900 people, including seldom heard groups, who all have a vested interest in an effective mental health offering. Many of the respondents in our engagement exercise had received help or support in the past from a wide range of practitioners, offering a wide array of support mechanisms.



61% of people

we heard from told us the support they had been offered did help them.

The demographics of those sharing their experiences through our survey and attention to those areas of our communities which are often 'seldom heard' through our focus groups, created a well-rounded and diverse foundation for the report. Throughout the published report on <http://www.healthwatchhartlepool.co.uk/> you will find common themes, with the following areas cited by members of the public within the Tees Valley region as the most important factors for an enhanced mental health community-based offer:

- Better communication to the public of what is available in terms of wellbeing support.
- Awareness raising in communities to reduce the stigma of mental health.
- Easier access through local community venues or supporting transport needs.
- Greater accessibility for those who face physical and mental health challenges.
- Provision of more creative activity, exercise, and social activity groups.
- Shorter waiting lists.
- Longer therapy pathways – for example more than 6 sessions.
- Greater exploration of therapies rather than medication.
- More empathy, understanding, respect and awareness of mental health conditions.
- Supporting those who have caring responsibilities, to attend wellbeing sessions themselves: care for the carer.

The focus and desire to improve services and create a mental health offering effective for all was very much welcomed by those we engaged with. The survey upon which our report was built, was co-designed with Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV), and the report was shared and discussed with them to provide an insight into those areas listed above that would benefit from more attention. As your independent health and care champion, we continued our offer to work with TEWV, Hartlepool Borough Council, the Mental Health Forum and the Tees Valley Mental Health Alliance as they developed their new mental health offering, to ensure the voice of local people is listened to when designing health and care services.

What difference did this make

Our report was presented to the Tees Valley Mental Health Alliance and they said:



"We acknowledge and warmly welcome the feedback from our local communities across the Tees Valley region in response to the ask of Mental Health services. Working collectively as partners within the Tees Valley Mental Health Alliance, we are committed to making changes across the mental health system. At the Alliance meeting held on the 15th October 2021 the partnership discussed the report and acknowledged the following next steps.

Moving forward, we will work with each individual place-based area to ensure we are acting upon the key themes raised within the report. We endeavour to have place-based responses back to Healthwatch by December 2021 in terms of more detailed localised actions.

Currently, within secondary mental health care services we have recently held a visioning event, taking on board the Healthwatch feedback to ensure our pathways into services are more accessible, flow with ease, reduce waiting times and work alongside partners to deliver patient centred care. We have committed to the below principles moving forward in our redesign:

- There will be no wrong door in accessing help: No referral will be refused.*
- We will accept each other's assessments, so the individual does not have to repeat their story.*
- There will be no discharge - patients are able to access services in future if needed without having to be re-referred into services.*
- We will work with system partners to ensure care is jointly triaged to ensure the right care in the right place at the right time*

We look forward to continuing our work with Healthwatch throughout the lifetime of this work to provide updates, receive feedback and engage with local voices in shaping the future direction of all mental health services across the Tees Valley."

Dominic Gardener: Chair of the Tees Valley Mental Health Alliance



Additionally our report was presented to Hartlepool Borough Council and utilised in developing a Community Hub model for the delivery of future Community Mental Health Services.



"The Council's Adult & Community Based Services Committee received a presentation in March 2022 regarding Community Mental Health Transformation and recent developments within Hartlepool. This work had been informed by an extensive community consultation undertaken by Healthwatch organisations across the Tees Valley, which had received over 900 responses. The responses received had played a fundamental role in how services were being developed, and Elected Members welcomed the report and noted the positive feedback that was being received regarding the service changes. This is an excellent example of collaborative working that delivered real improved outcomes for local people, and the contribution from Healthwatch Hartlepool was much appreciated."

Jill Harrison: Director of Adults and Community Based Services



Experiences of Dental Care Services

Thanks to people sharing their experience of accessing NHS Dentistry with us over the last year, we've helped inform the Chief Dental Officer of the problems encountered and had our voice heard in Westminster.

The COVID-19 crisis has affected many areas of the NHS. One significant issue that local people raised was about access to dental care. Data from the Department of Health, highlighted that almost 1,000 dentists working in 2,500 roles across England and Wales left the NHS last year (source: BBC News, January 2022 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-59874320>). This was having an adverse impact on members of the public being able to see a local dentist for both regular check-ups and where emergency treatment was needed. Not only had this been frustrating, but many people had been left in pain or discomfort as a result. Some individuals had been offered the option of having private treatment, but this was not affordable for many. Without improved access to NHS dental care, not only do people risk facing greater dental problems in the future, but it also puts pressure on overstretched hospitals and GPs.

Untreated dental problems can lead to pain, infection and the exacerbation of other health conditions such as heart and lung disease and stroke. This national picture was echoed in the North East of England, and Healthwatch Hartlepool had seen a significant increase in people's concerns around seeing a dentist. Throughout 2021 eight local Healthwatch (LHW) organisations in the North East reported that accessing NHS dental services was very difficult, whether registering with an NHS dentist, getting treatment or even getting treatment at a dental hospital. It also appeared that, even prior to Covid, NHS dentists were only funded to cover 50% of the population. With the need to now have lull time in the consulting room between patients due to Covid safe guidelines there was no longer the capacity within the system to meet this target, let alone deal with the backlog of appointments that didn't go ahead due to the lockdown. Eight LHW teams from the North East and North Cumbria Healthwatch Network agreed to undertake a joint project to understand the concerns of their respective local communities. Participating across the North East and North Cumbria Network were the Healthwatch Teams of Darlington, Gateshead, Hartlepool, Newcastle, North Tyneside, Northumberland, South Tees & Stockton.



74% of people

We heard from found it difficult to find an NHS Dentist.

The aim of our study was to determine whether accessing NHS dental services was being raised by a small number of people having a problem or whether it is a more widespread issue. A total of 795 people took part in our surveys so we knew it was a a widespread issue. We then used our findings to:

- Influence the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care System (NE&NC ICS), local service providers, and NHS England to improve access to NHS dentistry.
- Inform the national picture through sharing our findings with Healthwatch England who are calling for reform of the NHS dental contract alongside the British Dental Association (BDA).
- Support improved information for patients regarding NHS dentistry.

What difference did this make

The following testimonials were provided to Healthwatch Hartlepool following publication of our report:



"At Healthwatch England, since we were set up we have seen that some areas of England experienced severe problems with access to NHS dentistry. We heard from Healthwatch Hartlepool about how few practices were accepting NHS patients and the impact that this was having on patients, particularly parents with young children.

The information we received was shared with the Chief Dental Officer and used as the basis of our reports about the problems people faced with the accessibility and affordability of NHS dentistry. Our research was mentioned in a Westminster Hall debate, and we can only achieve that level of prominence.

Healthwatch Hartlepool's Mythbuster, also produced with other Healthwatch in the region, provided practical support to patients trying to access NHS dental treatment. The joint report on Experiences of Dental Care Services produced earlier this year set out clearly how dentistry was facing both longer-term structural issues as well as shorter-term problems caused by the pandemic, leading to many people being unable to access the services they desperately need.

We have seen some progress in the reform of the dental contract and, more recently, saw an additional £50 million made available to improve access to NHS dentistry. The insight from Healthwatch Hartlepool and the wider network has been a vital part of making that happen. We can be very certain that Healthwatch Hartlepool will make sure that dentistry is kept high on the agenda, and will ensure that local people's voices are heard."

NHS England and NHS Improvement stated:

'I can confirm that from an NHS England, local Dental Commissioning Team perspective the North East Healthwatch 'myth busting' leaflet has been extremely useful in helping to improve patient, public and local politicians understanding around the most common myths and mis-understandings relating to NHS dentistry.

It is clear and easy to read and as such we have used it to supplement responses we have made as an organization to enquiries we have received.'



Making it easier to get access to GPs

Thanks to people sharing their experiences accessing GP's, we have helped the Tees Valley Clinical Commissioning Group (TVCCG) identify the problems patients constantly experience and pushed for improvements.

Hartlepool is one of the most deprived areas in England, ranked 18th out of 326 local authority areas and with 7 of the 12 wards in Hartlepool amongst the 10% most deprived in the country.

Healthwatch Hartlepool recognises that many people in Hartlepool are significantly affected by health inequalities and high levels of ill-health. The delivery of supportive and accessible GP services in the town is vitally import and we wanted to drill down into up-to-date experiences of the population across Hartlepool. The response to our consultation (269) demonstrated the strength of feeling amongst patients about these issues.

Our survey and consultations highlighted two key areas of concern:

1. Accessing GP practices by telephone to make an appointment is difficult, time consuming and for some patients poses significant barriers to accessing primary care services in a timely and appropriate manner.
2. Patients generally accept that Covid restrictions, which saw most GP consultations delivered either on-line or by telephone were necessary to safeguard patients and health professionals and limit infection. However, the consultation showed significant concerns that the return of face-to-face appointments is too slow and many patients feel that on-line or telephone consultations are a barrier to receiving the care, diagnostic rigour and reassurance that face-to-face consultations bring.

Overall findings from our survey and consultation activities are contained in the published report at <http://www.healthwatchhartlepool.co.uk/> Here you will find our summary of findings and the feedback from individual practices across the town.

Our consultation ran from 21st February until 18th March and had the highest level of response than any other consultation/engagement undertaken conducted in the last 9 years.



"People's views come first – especially those who find it hardest to be heard. We will champion what matters to the seldom heard and work with others to find solutions. We are independent and committed to making the biggest difference to residents."

Christopher Akers-Belcher – Chief Executive Healthwatch Hartlepool



What difference did this make

Due to our call for change, Tees Valley Clinical Commissioning Group are in the early stages of working with us to implement the following recommendations:

- All GP practices in Hartlepool should review current appointment processes and in particular their effectiveness in enabling patients to access appointments/consultations quickly. Hartlepool and Stockton Health (HASH) should provide support as appropriate.
- Practices should make extended times available for patients to phone and book appointments, the introduction/re-introduction of on-line bookings and evening/weekend arrangements.
- Patients must be involved in the review process and be consulted about proposed changes to appointment processes.
- All practices should introduce texting services for Deaf patients to use to book appointments and general communication.
- All key practice information must be available in accessible formats appropriate to the needs of patients with sensory impairments and other conditions and disabilities.
- The availability of face-to-face appointments should be reinstated as quickly as possible in line with government guidelines and safety considerations.
- Practices introduce/re-visit staff training to increase awareness of the communication needs and preferences of different patient groups (Deaf, visually impaired, people living with dementia, learning disability etc).
- Practices ensure that information dissemination systems are as effective as possible, and that patients are fully informed of all appointment (including out of hours) and prescription services and arrangements.

These changes will have a significant impact for people who rely on reliable and equitable access to their GP. It's a great example of the positive changes that can happen when people speak up, and services listen.

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, can challenge assumptions and motivate people to think and work more creatively.

As part of our consultation to reshape the future of Community Mental Health services we commissioned a special video utilising British Sign Language (BSL). This highlighted our ambitions and invited our Deaf/Hard of hearing to their own focus group so they could actively be involved in our research. We also collated 'lived experiences' from service users at other seldom heard focus groups to help shape our recommendations.



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 alongside the North East Commissioning Support unit & Hartlepool Borough Council's Audit & Governance committee to give meaningful advice to a local GP practice to shape the additional patient & public engagement required when it was proposed to close a GP Practice located at Hartfields extra-care retirement village. At the time of writing this report we were actively involved in supporting this further engagement with patient groups, which should enable them to collect the views of local people directly and make recommendations for the future service based on rich data.

"On behalf of the Audit and Governance Committee, I would once again like to thank Hartlepool Healthwatch for its commitment to the work of the Committee.

2021/22 has been a very challenging time for all areas of service provision as we continue to deal with the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Healthwatch has been an essential source of local views, comments and concerns for the Committee in fulfilling its statutory responsibility to scrutinise service provision for residents of Hartlepool and proposals for service change.

Healthwatch input this year has been especially important in informing scrutiny of the proposed closure of the Hartfield's Medical Practice. In addition to this, representatives from Healthwatch have also been actively involved in the Committee's activities to scrutinise provision across a breadth of other health services areas, as detailed below.



- *Accessibility of Council Services to People with Disabilities and Lifelong Conditions;*
- *Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment Review;*
- *Quality Accounts across provider Trusts;*
- *Progress updates in relation to the provision of Assisted Reproduction Services and the Midwife Led Birthing Unit in Hartlepool; and*
- *Complaints (via the Independent Complaints Advocacy Service).*

As we move into the new municipal, the knowledge and experience of Healthwatch members will continue to be essential in supporting the activities of the Audit and Governance Committee in effectively scrutinising the challenges facing health service provision.

We look forward to working together over the coming year."

Councillor Rob Cook
Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee



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.

For several years there has been the overwhelming desire from the public for Hartlepool children to be born safely at Hartlepool Hospital. Working alongside the Council's Audit and Governance Committee & North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust we championed this cause and eventually the Hospital Trust launched the Rowan unit in Hartlepool as a Midwifery Led Birthing Unit.

"North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust has subsequently been shortlisted for a major award. The Trust's Rowan Team has been shortlisted for the 2022 Parliamentary Award in the Nursing and Midwifery category. The University Hospital of Hartlepool's Rowan suite opened during the height of the pandemic and brought births back to Hartlepool. The state-of-the-art birthing suite which includes a water pool, active birthing room and individual rooms with a 'home from home' feel, has welcomed 50 babies since opening in 2021.



The Rowan Team - Hartlepool Hospital

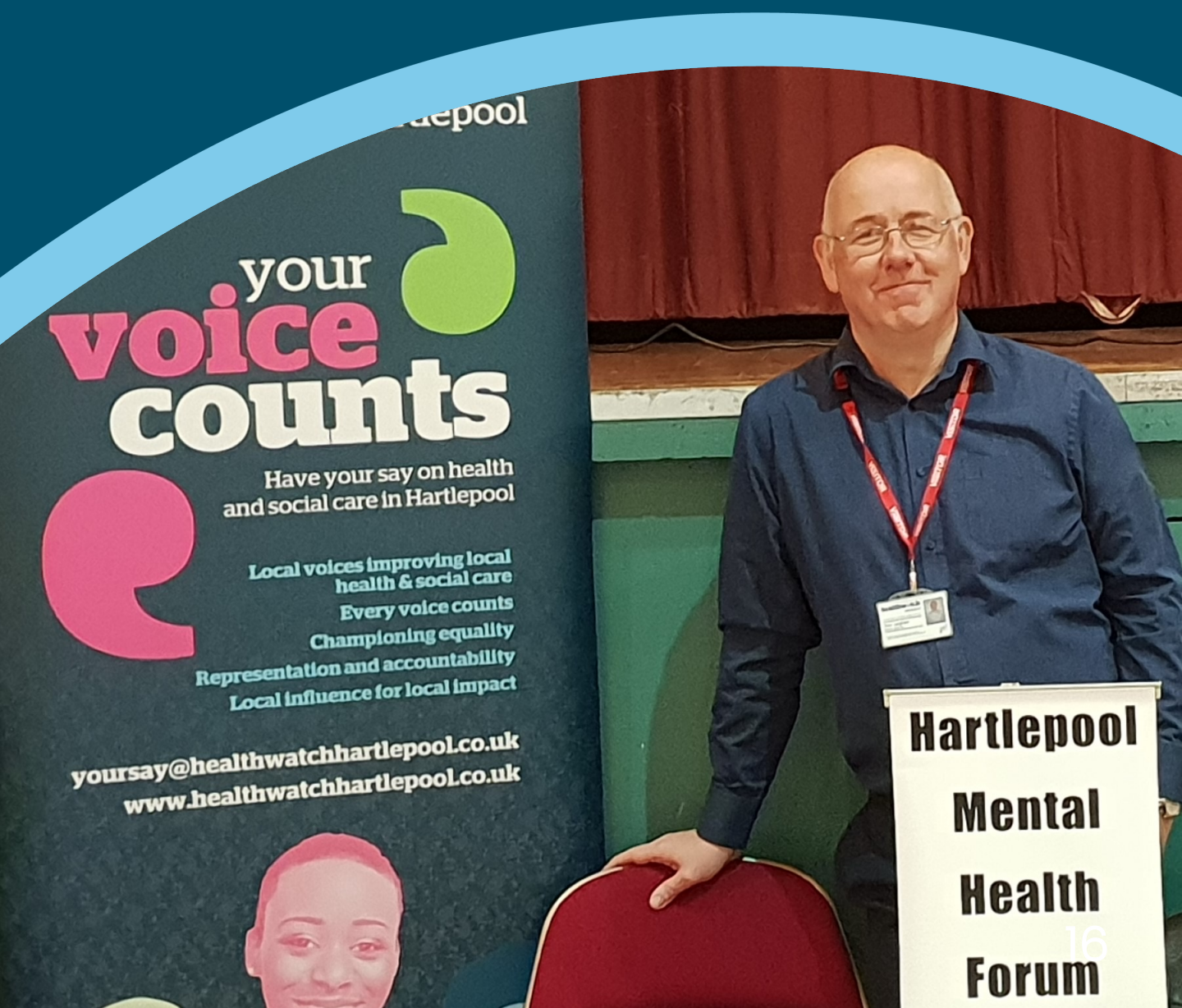
Beating more than 700 competitors to be named the regional winner in the Nursing and Midwifery category, the Rowan Team are excited to be in the final national shortlist."

Advice and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch Hartlepool 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 COVID-19
- Linking people to reliable information they could trust
- Supporting the COVID-19 vaccination and booster programme
- Helping people to access the services they need



Signposting people who need an advocate

Healthwatch Hartlepool has a successful and long-standing agreement with the North East NHS Independent Complaints Advocacy (ICA). We have helped many people access an advocate across the full spectrum of Health Services when they felt they had nowhere else to turn for help & guidance. With the arrival of the pandemic, we quickly realised that patients could be left without support and we made sure this didn't happen.

"The relationship North East NHS ICA has with Healthwatch Hartlepool has gone from strength to strength over the many years we have worked together. The last 12 months have been challenging for us all and we have had to find and develop new ways of working, which have proven to work well and will be here to stay for many of us. The continued support from the Healthwatch Team has enabled our advocacy service to be present, accessible and available to the residents of Hartlepool, whatever their situation or circumstance. We look forward to the year ahead and continued partnership work"

Sue Ewington – Advocate North East NHS ICA

Hartlepool Hospital – Vision for the future

In February 2022 Healthwatch Hartlepool collaborated with North Tees & Hartlepool NHS Foundation Hospital Trust and hosted a very successful event to showcase the Hartlepool Locality Provision. Key senior staff from the Trust gave an overview of current services and their vision for the future of our hospital.



The presentations covered Maternal Health/Birthing Unit, the Children's Hub, Outpatients, Urgent Care, the Community Diagnostic Hub, the Holdforth Community Hub and gave key examples around Hartlepool being a Centre of excellence for Elective Surgery.

The Trust further explained their vision is to enable people and communities to look after themselves and remain well, independent and healthy, but when needed offer care and support at or close to their homes, in a way that identifies issues early, resolves them quickly and prevents or supports people going into hospital on a planned or emergency basis.

This event followed a previous successful event (October 2021) with the Hospital Trust focusing on their work around 'Active Hospital'. Detailed information was provided to promote the benefits of physical activity. This is a collaborative system approach across health, social care & the voluntary sector.

Volunteers

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

This year our volunteers:

- Helped drive our patient and public engagement agenda by promoting our surveys with family, friends and other Voluntary & Community Sector groups that they attend.
- Worked with our Development Officer Stephen Thomas in developing virtual Enter & View activity.
- Provided leadership by Chairing Hartlepool's Mental Health Forum.
- Represented Healthwatch Hartlepool at the Health & Wellbeing Board and the Council's Audit & Governance Committee.
- Continued to help with the relaunch of the town's 'Chatty Cafés' in the Central Hub as part of work to tackle loneliness & isolation.



Margaret Wrenn – Chair Volunteer Steering Group

“The past year has been challenging yet again. Although we have managed to keep up with our training and refresher training, usually via zoom meetings, we have been restricted in carrying out our usual Care Home visits, visits to GP surgeries, Pharmacies or Dentists. We have carried out one visit this past year, to a Care Home, which was a virtual one.

Another problem has been signposted to us recently, and that is the difficulty patients are having to be able to access ear syringing/microsuction, because a number of GP surgeries no longer offer this service within their practices.

Specsavers in Hartlepool, who have the contract to supply and fit hearing aids, have advised a six-month waiting list for the procedure to be carried out in their stores. This is difficult to understand because the isolation that can be felt whilst deaf due to the presence of wax in the ears, can cause untold distress to those so afflicted, and hearing aids cannot be fitted whilst there is wax in the ears”

Zoe Sherry – Lead member for Mental Health

“The last year has been a very difficult year, in that our usual ways of communication have been disrupted by the covid19 pandemic. We have had to refine and change to meet the challenge. Some of the changes that were forced upon us have been surprisingly positive. We have been able to widen our field of contacts and were able to have some meaningful collaboration with more organisations than ever before, some of which were new to us.

The Mental Health Forum in collaboration with Healthwatch Hartlepool was able to use their public forum to update information about changes within the mental health arena, and about activities that had been introduced to manage and combat covid19 . Members acted as a catalyst to other organisations not normally within easy reach.

Sadly, we were unable to hold our annual World Mental Health Day event. Despite this setback we were determined to continue with meaningful communication, so we had to be innovative.

Hartlepool Radio was a major supporter, inviting guests from organisations who have a link to mental health. These people were allocated slots on the morning show during mental health week. This was very successful.

The Hartlepool life local paper included a full-page article and Healthwatch Hartlepool dedicated space in their newsletter and on their social media site, as did Hartlepool Borough Council. This site also included access for small organisations to use pod casts.

We were able to have multimedia mental health information in a cartoon format, in easy read, and various other formats accessible to many people.

This year we again produced customised shopping bags, a joint production from Healthwatch Hartlepool and the Mental Health Forum containing useful information from several organisations, also a customised trolley key ,these were distributed via Pharmacies, many going to a new audience.

We have refreshed the Healthwatch mental health leaflet to try to include as much information and access to services as we can.

Once again, we were offered a unit in the shopping centre. This year it displayed artwork. The artwork was from a competition, using a project by a local primary school. Their subject being “how their local environment affects their mental health” The pictures were judged, and prizes awarded. The standard was high and there were several winners. The outright winner is to be our poster next year

An outcome of the art competition is that it had led to closer working with the Mental Health Forum. It was possible to support the school with information and access to various services and people in relation to the various forms of disability

The Forum was also asked to have a representative on the covid resilience panel that allocated funding to organisations responding to the covid challenge

So overall the world has changed, and keeps changing, but we hope that we are changing with it. We have proved our resilience and that our plans are flexible. We are planning for next year and hope to bring even more opportunities to promote and support mental health . Keep watching and listening and we hope to see you again soon.”



"It has been a very difficult but productive year, special thanks once again to the staff and volunteers at Healthwatch Hartlepool for their continued support, professional challenge and curiosity. The service has been instrumental in its involvement with the development of the Hartlepool mental health plan and support to the Tees Valley Mental Health Alliance in shaping future services. Healthwatch Hartlepool continue to support the actions following a review of the joint sensory loss plan and their contribution has helped shape the work of the Teeswide safeguarding Adults Board."

Neil Harrison – Head of Safeguarding and Specialist Services



Carol Sherwood – Director of Board

"I have been a member of Healthwatch Hartlepool & formerly Hartlepool Local Involvement Network (LINK) since 2008. I have been in the Volunteer Steering Group for many years and Director of the Board for the last two years. I have been involved in many pieces of work within Healthwatch Hartlepool's work programmes over the years. It's wonderful that after Covid restrictions we are now able to resume our work to a higher degree and progress with our Enter and View. Also, our work on Isolation and Loneliness, a problem which has increased throughout the pandemic throughout this time. We have been busy collecting information regarding dentistry and GP Access specifically appointments. I have been attending the Dementia forum meetings regularly and I'm looking forward to the Dementia awareness week which is held in May of every year. Lots of events are planned to take place across the town and I'm sure will be enjoyed by all. We have a planned face to face Enter and View again very soon too. Then we are to look at the Hospital discharge problems reported to Healthwatch Hartlepool over our next year of work."

Bob Steel – Volunteer

During the first year of the Covid pandemic Healthwatch Hartlepool worked hard to ensure that we kept in touch with our volunteers. An important part of this process was the introduction of weekly virtual coffee mornings which allowed us to -

- Engage regularly with volunteers and hear their stories.
- Update and inform volunteers on developments around Covid and other health and care issues.
- Enable volunteers to access social and emotional support from one another.

As Covid restrictions started to ease from April 2021 we consulted with volunteers who told us they no longer felt there was a need for weekly Coffee Mornings. However, they did see real value in continuing with events on a monthly basis. This was particularly so for those volunteers who were in a high-risk category, for whom there was still an imperative to minimise social contact. Also, from an operational perspective, continuing to run virtual Coffee Mornings has allowed us to enhance the ways through which we communicate and engage with our volunteers and wider partners.

During the year we have continued to invite guest speakers to our virtual Coffee Mornings. They have continued to provide our volunteers with valuable updates on a wide variety of health and care issues from local, regional and national perspectives.

This year our guest speakers included -

Neil Harrison (Head of Safeguarding and Specialist Services, Hartlepool Borough Council)

Karen Hawkins (Associate Director, Tees Valley NHS CCG)

Jane Harvey (Service Implementation and Peer Support Manager, Tees Local Pharmacy Committee)

Emilee De Bruijn (Chair, Hartlepool Baby Bank)

Delana Lawson (Quality Assurance and Regional Manager, Healthwatch England)

"The virtual Coffee Mornings help me keep in touch with what is going on at Healthwatch Hartlepool as well as providing useful insights into what is happening in the health and care sector in the town"



Do you feel inspired?

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



www.healthwatchhartlepool.co.uk



01429 288146



yoursay@healthwatchhartlepool.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.

Income		Expenditure	
Funding from Council	£116,150	Staff costs	£118,136
Additional funding	£15,390	Premises	£12,755
		Operational Costs	£10,762
Total income	£131,540	Total expenditure	£141,653

Surplus expenditure relates to contingent liability in respect of year 20/21

Top three priorities for 2022–23

1. Review the implementation of the National Policy & Operating Model in respect of Hospital Discharge & Community Support.
2. Undertake a series of ‘Enter & View’ visits across a number of Nursing/Care homes in Hartlepool.
3. Continue to work with Tees, Esk & Wear Valley NHS Mental Health Trust, the Mental Health Forum and Hartlepool Borough Council to closely monitor the impact of the ongoing reconfiguration of Community Based Mental Health Services.

Next steps

The pandemic has shone a stark light on the impact of existing inequalities when using health and care services, highlighting the importance of championing the voices of those who all too often go unheard.

Over the coming years, our goal is to help reduce these inequalities by making sure your voice is heard, and decision makers reduce the barriers you face, regardless of whether that’s because of where you live, income or race.

Statutory statements

About us

Healthwatch Hartlepool, 1st Floor 'Greenbank', Waldon Street, Hartlepool, TS24 7QS

Charity Number: 1165402

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

If you need any of our publications in an alternative format please contact us.

Contact number: 01429 288146

Email address: yoursay@healthwatchhartlepool.co.uk

Facebook: facebook.com/HealthwatchHartlepool

Website: www.healthwatchhartlepool.co.uk



The way we work

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

Our Healthwatch Hartlepool board consists of 5 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. Through 2021/22 the board met 7 times and made decisions on matters such as their Annual Report to the Charities Commission and a comprehensive review of our Finances.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities. During the last year we have promoted national & regional consultations and reported our involvement to Healthwatch England. We have utilised this intelligence and our own town-wide surveys to help shape our future work programme. Our lead member for Mental Health is Chairman of Hartlepool's Mental Health Forum and we also utilise our patient & public involvement officer to facilitate contact with the Independent Complaints Advocacy Service (ICA).

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

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 2021/22 we have been available by phone, by email, and in person. We can be accessed too via our website. We have attended some of our meetings virtually but also attend a vast array of community groups and forums, provided our own virtual activities and engaged 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, for example, by hosting specific Focus Groups with the Deaf & Blind Community, LGBT Community and the 50+ Forum.

We always ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. We also publish it on our website www.healthwatchhartlepool.co.uk.

Responses to recommendations and requests

We had no providers who did not respond to requests for information or recommendations.

This year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we made only limited use of our Enter and View powers. Consequently, we only were able to undertake one virtual visit to a care home and the single recommendation was simply to be commended for the way it has maintained a high standard of care for residents during an extremely difficult and distressing time.

There were no issues or recommendations escalated by Healthwatch Hartlepool to Healthwatch England Committee and so no resulting special reviews or investigations but there was one single case that had to be referred to the Care Quality Commission (CQC). This was subsequently investigated locally by the Local Authority.

Health and Wellbeing Board

Healthwatch Hartlepool is represented on the Hartlepool Health and Wellbeing Board by both Christopher Akers-Belcher our Chief Executive and Margaret Wrenn who is both a Director of Healthwatch Hartlepool and the Chair of our Volunteer Steering Group. During 2021/22 our representatives have effectively carried out this role by attending the Board and actively participating in the scrutiny, probity and challenge of reports presented:

Project / Activity Area	Changes made to services
Organisational Change	
ICS Updates	
Partner	
Healthwatch Hartlepool Annual Report (Healthwatch Hartlepool CIO)	
Clinical Commissioning Group Annual Report 2020/21	
Mental Health Update – Hartlepool Mental Health Forum	
Community Mental Health Transformation Project – <i>Programme Manager, Community Transformation Tees Valley</i>	
Dentistry: - Update on NHS General Dental Access - Presentation – <i>NHS England and NHS Improvement; and</i> - Accessing Dentistry Consultation Report – <i>Healthwatch Hartlepool</i>	
Covid-19	
Covid-19 Update	
Health and Wellbeing Board Terms of Reference – Review	Implementation of local Covid-19 outbreak control arrangements via: - Incorporation of the role and duties of the Outbreak Control Engagement Board in to the activities of the Health and Wellbeing Board; and - Establishment of the Health Protection Board.
Care Quality Commission (CQC) Inspectional and Review (TEWV)	
Covid Champion Scheme	Covid Champion Network established as part of the Covid-19 response. The network of Covid Champions (across all sectors, residents and businesses) supported and informed the Council’s Covid -19 response.

Operational Items	
Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA)	Fulfilling the HWB responsibilities in line with the requirements of the National Health Service (NHS) (Pharmaceutical and Local Pharmaceutical Services) Regulations 2013, specifically: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review and approval of the 2022 PNA. Fulfilled the HWB’s statutory role in relation to the of the HWB to review Hartlepool’s PNA; and - Publication of Supplementary Statement to the PNA as required.
SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) Improvement Plan Progress and Annual Report	
Better Care Fund Update	
Director of Public Annual Report	
Communications and Engagement Strategy	Approved strategy as referenced in the HWB terms of reference.
Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2020-21	
Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report 2020-21 – <i>Director of Adult and Community Based Services and Independent Chair of Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board</i>	
Better Care Fund Plan 21/22 – <i>Director of Adult and Community Based Services</i>	
Public Health Review	
Face the Public	Identification of requirement for process review.
Update Reviewed Health and Wellbeing Strategy (HWS) Priorities and Development of a ‘Place Based Plan’	

“In February 2022 Healthwatch Hartlepool and key stakeholders presented a report to the Hartlepool Health and Wellbeing Board, its findings were based on the views of local people and have helped to shape the future direction of travel for Community Mental Health. Healthwatch Hartlepool engaged locally with a number of people in one of its largest consultation exercises, a testament to its continued support in particular to the 4 seldom heard groups; Older People, the Deaf community, the Blind & Visually Impaired community and the LGBT community. Without their insight it would have not been possible to provide the evidence required to affirm change.”

Councillor Shane Moore – Chairman Hartlepool Health & Wellbeing Board



healthwatch

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