



healthwatch



Annual Report 2024–2025

**Unlocking the power of
people-driven care**

Healthwatch Hartlepool

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"The impact that local Healthwatch have is vitally important. Healthwatch are empowering their communities to share their experiences. They're changing the health and care landscape and making sure that people's views are central to making care better and tackling health inequalities."

Louise Ansari, Chief Executive, Healthwatch England

A message from our Chairman

Dear All,

Another year has passed, and once again, I'm pleased to share our journey at Healthwatch Hartlepool. It has been an incredibly busy and productive year, and I firmly believe we have fulfilled our statutory duties while strengthening our collaboration with the North East & North Cumbria (NENC) Integrated Care Board (ICB). Our contributions to the Integrated Care System have been widely recognised as invaluable across the region.

We have continued to engage with residents both digitally and in person. This year reinforced an important lesson: effective communication is key. This was especially evident in our recent report on the University Hospital Tees, a collaborative effort with Healthwatch teams across Tees Valley, County Durham, and North Yorkshire. Further collaboration with the 12 North East Healthwatch groups resulted in a comprehensive report for the North East Ambulance Service, contributing to the review of the Trust's Clinical Strategy.

Our work has extended across several important areas, including Enter & View activities in nursing and residential care homes. We also published a detailed report on 'Home Care' and organised town-wide awareness events on key health issues such as the Hospital Group Model, the NHS 10-Year Plan, Women's Health, and Community Wellbeing. These initiatives wouldn't be possible without the valued support of North Tees & Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust, Tees, Esk & Wear Valley (Mental Health) NHS Foundation Trust, North East Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust, Hartlepool & Stockton Health (HASH), and Hartlepool Council's Public Health team, who have helped us inform residents about available services in the area.

Mental health remains a top priority, and we proudly celebrated World Mental Health Day by partnering with numerous organisations for a highly successful & meaningful engagement event. Additionally, our G.P. Access resource has continued to be a valuable tool for both our partners and the wider community, helping residents connect with relevant services.

Our Volunteer Steering Group has remained highly active, meeting both in person and online to drive important work forward. Their commitment to learning has been evident in the many guest speakers they've welcomed across the Health & Social Care spectrum.

I would also like to express my heartfelt gratitude to our Board members, who dedicate their time so generously, as well as to our Chief Executive Christopher and the staff team. Their ability to adapt to the evolving Integrated Care Board landscape has been nothing short of remarkable.

Looking ahead, I am hopeful for continued progress and success in the coming year as we navigate the new NHS 10 year plan.

"Finally, a special acknowledgment to our incredible volunteers—Healthwatch Hartlepool wouldn't be the same without you. Your dedication is vital to our work, and in the year ahead, you will play a key role in monitoring our new programme that includes improving pathways for individuals living with Autism and/or a Learning Disability. Thank you for everything you do."



"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 that is currently out to consultation."

Jane Tilly
Chairman, Healthwatch Hartlepool

About us

Healthwatch **Hartlepool** is your local health and social care champion.

We ensure that NHS 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.



Our vision

To bring closer the day when everyone gets the care they need.



Our mission

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

Equity

We listen with compassion, value every voice, and work to include those who are often left out. We build strong relationships and support people to shape the services they use.

Empowerment

We create a safe and inclusive space where people feel respected, supported, and confident to speak up and shape the changes that matter to them.



Collaboration

We work openly and honestly with others, inside and outside our organisations, to share learning, build trust, and make a bigger difference together.

Independence

We stand up for what matters to the public. We work alongside decision-makers but stay true to our role as an independent, trusted voice.

Truth

We act with honesty and integrity. We speak up when things need to change and make sure those in power hear the truth, even when it's hard to hear.

Impact

We focus on making a real difference in people's lives. We're ambitious, accountable, and committed to helping others take responsibility to make change happen.

Our year in numbers

Reaching out:



1393 people shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.

47 people came to us for clear advice and information on topics such as **their discharge from hospital** and **G.P. Access for those living with a Learning Disability or Autism**.

We moved a great deal of our communications to digital. We had over 1000 interactions with our website **www.healthwatchhartlepool.co.uk** and had over 18,000 views. We published 162 articles on our website and our social media reach was up 230% from the previous year.

Championing your voice:



We published **9** reports about the improvements people would like to see in areas like **Womens ' Health, the NHS 10 Year Plan** and **Home care**.

Our most popular report was our report on the **North East Ambulance Service**, This report covered both their **key strengths** but also **areas requiring improvements** and was **viewed by 632 people**.

Statutory funding:



We're funded by **Hartlepool Borough Council**. In 2024/25 we received **£124,397**, which is **2%** more than the previous year.

A year of making a difference

Over the year we've been out and about in the community listening to your stories, engaging with partners and working to improve care in **Hartlepool**. Here are a few highlights.

Spring

We sponsored and celebrated Dementia Awareness at Hartfields Retirement Village and had over 80 attendees.

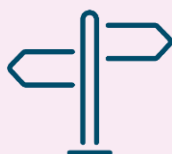


We launched our engagement project on the Group model for both North & Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust and South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.



Summer

We presented all the work articulated in our Annual Report to Hartlepool's Health & Wellbeing Board.



We attended the Discharge Communication event organised by the Foundation Trust after publishing our findings regarding hospital discharge.



Autumn

We once again jointly hosted our information & signposting event to celebrate World Mental Health Day. Information from a range of our partners to over 200 people.



We supported North Tees & Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust with their place-based inspections.



Winter

We held a lunch-time 'Learn & Listen' event with People First NHS Advocacy Service with a focus on Maternity & Neonatal.



We held a workshop covering the proposed NHS 10 year plan as part of our collaborative work with the North East & North Cumbria (NENC) Integrated Care Board and the other 13 Healthwatch across the NENC Integrated System.

Working together for change

Introduction to the work between the NENC ICB and Healthwatch

Throughout 2024 –2025 The Integrated Care Board (ICB) and Healthwatch have worked together to build robust relationships to improve health and wellbeing for everyone in our communities. This partnership aims to:

- **Enhance Health Services:** By working together, the ICB can better understand and address the health needs of our communities.
- **Promote Wellbeing:** The collaboration focuses on creating opportunities that support improved wellbeing, including mental health, physical health, and social care.
- **Reduce Health Inequalities:** The partnership aims to ensure that everyone, regardless of their background, has access to quality health services.
- **Engage the Community:** Healthwatch ensures feedback gathered from the public is escalated appropriately to help the ICB make informed decisions about health and care services.
- **Innovate and Improve:** Together, support the development of new and better ways to deliver health care, making it more efficient and effective.

This partnership is a significant step towards healthier, fairer, and more inclusive communities.



Working together for change

Our goal is to make sure people's experiences with health and care services are heard at the Integrated Care System (ICS) level and help influence decisions made about health and care services.

A collaborative network of local Healthwatch:



Building a Strong Healthwatch Network

We formed a network of 14 local Healthwatch groups to improve health and care services both regionally and nationally.

Funding from our Integrated Care Board helped us build strong, meaningful relationships within this network, consistently adding value to the design of health and care services.

We have representatives from our network on local and regional strategic boards. These boards have robust reporting structures that support coordinated and effective engagement with our communities.

Our collaborative approach is recognised nationally as best practice.



**Claire Riley OBE,
Chief Corporate
Services Officer,
NENC ICB**

Working together for change

Work carried out during 2024 – 2025:



Integrated Care Strategy

We received over 400 responses during our engagement period.

A review of the feedback showed that children and young people were under-represented.

Impact:

The ICB added a fourth goal: **"Giving children and young people the best start in life."** This goal increases the focus on people of all ages throughout the strategy.

ICB Involvement Strategy



Refreshing the ICB Involvement Strategy

Healthwatch spoke with over 100 people to help update the ICB Involvement Strategy.

Impact:

Based on their feedback, the ICB has updated its principles to include:

- Meaningful involvement
- Removing barriers
- Listening to feedback

We also helped create a shorter, easier-to-read document and a workplan based on these new principles, including ways to measure success.



Working together for change

Access to dental care



Listening to People's Dental Care Challenges

Over 3,800 people shared their views with us.

We engaged with people across the region to understand the difficulties they face in accessing dental services. We used various methods, including surveys, mystery shopping, general conversations, and one-on-one interviews at Darlington Urgent Dental Access Centre (UDAC).

The ICB has provided the following response

Improving access to dentistry will not be a quick fix but we are working on it, our key focus areas are;

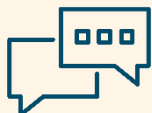
- Stabilising services – additional investment including incentivised access, additional dental out of hours treatment capacity and dental clinical assessment workforce/triage capacity.
- Funding available to deliver a new model of dental care via Urgent Dental Access Centres and provide additional general dental access.
- Working with 'at risk' practices to identify and address financial issues of delivering NHS dental care.
- Working with local dental networks and NHS England North East Workforce Training and Education Directorate to improve recruitment, retention, training and education across the region.
- Developing an oral health strategy to improve oral health and reduce the pressure on dentistry.

We are continuing to work closely with the ICB as new ways of working are developed.



Working together for change

The big conversation: Women's Health



Listening to Women's Health Needs

We spoke to nearly 4,500 people and held six focus groups with women who face extra health challenges. We wanted to understand what matters most to them and their priorities.

What We Learned:

- Mental health and wellbeing
- Healthy ageing and long-term conditions (like bone, joint, and muscle health)
- Menopause, perimenopause, and hormone replacement therapy
- Screening services (like cervical, breast, bowel, and cancer screenings)
- Menstrual and gynaecological health

Impact:

We're now working with our partners to create a "Woman's Promise." This will help women, health professionals, and others understand and support women's health needs and rights.

Change NHS:



We supported engagement for the NHS 10 Year Strategy, delivering over 17 workshops throughout North East & North Cumbria including people from an ethnic minority, people with a learning disability and/or autism and young people.



Our commitment to working in partnership with Healthwatch and being open and transparent in our interactions will continue. We value greatly the contribution of the partnership across the region. We should all be rightly proud of what we have achieved to date, and I look forward to seeing this work progress as we enter the next phase of the ICB.



Sam Allen, Chief Executive at North East and North Cumbria ICB

Working together for change

North East Ambulance Service clinical strategy engagement:



Gathering Feedback to Improve NEAS Services

Over 1,700 people shared their valuable feedback. 12 Healthwatch groups in the North East, along with VONNE, engaged with the public and patients as part of the NEAS clinical strategy review. This work will be ongoing throughout 2025–2026.

Key Strengths:

Compassionate and professional staff	Community involvement
Patient Transport Services	Effective emergency care

Areas for Improvement:

Response times	Mental health support
Communication transparency	Resource and staffing limitation
Coordination with other services	

Raising Voices Together:

To showcase the work carried out by the NENC Healthwatch network, all 14 local Healthwatch came together. We shared experiences and learning, highlighting how local engagement has made an impact both regionally and nationally. This gathering helped strengthen relationships, with a commitment to continue collaborative efforts.

Claire Riley, Chief Corporate Services Officer, emphasised that our efforts have ensured that citizen voices are embedded within the ICB at every level of decision-making. She stressed the importance of involving and engaging with communities in any changes and developments. Claire also highlighted the need for consistent, long-term funding to build on our success and ensure people's voices are heard and acted upon.

Chris McCann, Deputy CEO of Healthwatch England, supported Claire's views on the power of the network. He expressed the ambition for Healthwatch nationally to develop strong systems of work, using NENC Healthwatch as a model for best practice.

We've also summarised some of our other outcomes achieved this year in the Statutory Statements section at the end of this report.

Working together for change



"The effective way that Healthwatch Network has engaged with the North East and North Cumbria ICB is extremely impressive. By working with other Healthwatch across their ICB footprint in establishing strong relationships within their ICB, they have ensured that the voice of the public is heard at every level of decision making in their region."

"They are to be commended on their exemplary approach which means that views of users, families and carers are taken into account by health and social care partners across the North East and North Cumbria ICS."

Chris McCann, Deputy Chief Executive, Healthwatch England."



Working together for change

Developing Our Shared Values Across Our NENC Network

We know the importance of collaboration, together we created these values by talking, listening, and learning from each other. Everyone has a voice—our team, our partners, and the people we support. These values are important to us because they reflect what we believe in and how we want to work: with kindness, honesty, and a real drive to make things better for everyone.

Equity

We listen with compassion, value every voice, and work to include those who are often left out. We build strong relationships and support people to shape the services they use.

Empowerment

We create a safe and inclusive space where people feel respected, supported, and confident to speak up and shape the changes that matter to them.

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We work openly and honestly with others, inside and outside our organisations, to share learning, build trust, and make a bigger difference together.

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Working together for change

What's Next?

Newcastle University asked the Healthwatch NENC network to help with a funding bid to research NHS workforce shortages. These shortages affect staff wellbeing and patient care, especially in underserved areas.

The Healthwatch Network agreed to be a co-applicant for the bid to the National Institute for Health & Social Care Research (NIHR). In 2024, we were thrilled to learn that our bid was successful! We now have a £5 million NIHR Workforce Research Partnership, led by Newcastle University's Medical Education team, to tackle this urgent issue.

Our Focus:

Primary care and maternity services in remote and deprived areas, where staff face intense pressure and fewer resources.

Our Approach:

We are working directly with staff, patients, educators, and policy leaders to co-design solutions that make a real difference.

This Partnership Includes:

- Researchers from Newcastle, Northumbria, Oxford, Birmingham, and York
- NHS leaders and Integrated Care Boards
- Healthwatch and public advisors
- Design experts to turn insights into action

Our Goals:

- Better working conditions
- Reduced staff turnover
- Improved care in underserved areas
- Smarter, more inclusive workforce planning

Working together for change

Shaping Outcomes Together

These outcomes won't be decided from the top down. Instead, they'll be shaped through ongoing collaboration with those delivering and receiving care.

Partnership Details:

- The Partnership will run for 5 years, and we'll share our learning along the way.
- If you work in primary care, maternity, or workforce planning, or live in an underserved area, contact the Healthwatch Network to get involved.
- Look out for the launch of the Partnership's social media in the coming months.

Special Thanks:

A huge thanks to our amazing co-leads, Professor Gill Vance and Dr. Bryan Burford, whose leadership and commitment have brought this Partnership to life.

Read more about the Partnership launch here: [Multi-million-pound investment tackling healthcare workforce challenge](#)



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"Underserved areas are likely to be on the sharp end of challenges to workforce sustainability, and so are priorities for research."

Professor Gill Vance

Making a difference in the community

We bring people's experiences to healthcare professionals and decision-makers, using their feedback to shape services and improve care over time.

Here are some examples of our work in **Hartlepool** this year:

Creating empathy by bringing experiences to life



Hearing personal experiences and their impact on people's lives helps services better understand the issues people face.

Healthwatch Hartlepool is an integral part of the Hartlepool Lived Experience Forum. Our Patient & Public Engagement Officer is on hand at each meeting. This gives people a way of formalising any concerns that they share within the forum if they wish too, which supports forum members to have a voice. Also, by having Healthwatch on the Forum's standard agenda allows time for Healthwatch to update members of our work, which gives forum members the opportunity to be involved in activities that they have experience of, e.g. the Community Wellbeing Event, which gave a voice to people with lived experience of poor mental health.

"We love having Healthwatch as a member of our forum, as together we can support people with lived experience of poor mental health to use their knowledge and expertise to help services be the best they can be."

Catherine Wakeling
Starfish Health and Wellbeing

Getting services to involve the public



By involving local people, services help improve care for everyone.

We worked with the University Hospital Tees on a comprehensive engagement exercise to ensure every resident had the chance to share their opinions on the proposed Group Model for North Tees & Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust and South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trusts.

"We commit to running ongoing engagement exercises to strengthen our accountability to our local population and to ensure that we are effectively embedding our community voices into the design and development of our future services."

Stacey Hunter
Chief Executive of University Hospitals Tees

Making a difference in the community

Improving care over time



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

In 2024, we ran a follow-up engagement exercise to further examine people's experiences of 'Discharge' from North Tees hospital. This included visits to the Discharge Hub where we were to learn about patient pathway and whether we could document improvements. Thanks to what people shared, we've been able to give valuable insight to the University Hospital Tees and jointly agree key actions within their improvement plans.



From left to right Carol Slattery Admin Officer, Michael Booth Volunteer and Stephen Thomas Development Officer

Listening to your experiences

Services can't improve if they don't know what's wrong. Your experiences shine a light on issues that may otherwise go unnoticed.

This year, we've listened to feedback from all areas of our community. People's experiences of care help us know what's working and what isn't, so we can give feedback on services and help them improve.



Listening to your experiences

Championing community concerns to examine Home care: delivering personal care and practical support to people living in their own homes

Last year, we received feedback from care service users and their families about the Home Care service in Hartlepool.

Given the UK's aging population, pressure on NHS services and shortage of hospital beds we felt it was timely and incredibly important to examine the Home care services that so many people rely on in Hartlepool.

What did we do?

In recent years there has been considerable coverage of the many challenges facing the social care sector. The focus is often on residential care, but it is clear that similar challenges are equally prevalent in the provision of home care. It is some years since Healthwatch Hartlepool last focused on this area of care provision. During this time Hartlepool Borough Council has refreshed its Adult Social Care Commissioning Strategy which says

"We all want to live in the place we call home with the people and things that we love, in communities where we look out for one another, doing things that matter to us."

For many residents of Hartlepool who have physical disabilities, learning disabilities, dementia or a range of lifelong health conditions, home care is a vital element in meeting this aspiration, and being able to live safely in one's own home.

We conducted a comprehensive study to –

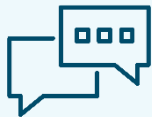
1. Ensure that peoples' experiences of receiving home care services is captured, and that this lived experience is made available to service providers and commissioners of home care services.
2. Identify and promote areas of good practice in home care service provision and highlight areas in which users of home care services feel change or improvement is required.
3. Gain insight into the challenging climate in which home care services are commissioned and delivered, with the backdrop of increasing demand, workforce recruitment and retention issues and ever-present financial pressures.

Many people who use home care services can be difficult to reach as due to their health condition they spend very little time away from their home. We therefore adopted the following approaches to gain insight –

- Developed a service user survey which was promoted widely via the Healthwatch Hartlepool website, and also shared on partner organisation websites, including Hartlepool Carers and the Penderels Trust.
- Visited local community groups in Hartlepool that support and work with people with health conditions and disabilities to promote the survey and conduct focused discussions.
- Promoted the survey via local social work teams.

Listening to your experiences

Key things we heard:



33%

33% of those who completed our survey told us that their care worker frequently changes and sometimes they haven't previously met the carer who attends.



25%

25% of those who completed the survey told us their care worker did not routinely wear a uniform or carry ID.

We didn't ask people to specify health conditions, but reference was made to a variety of issues, including physical disability, learning disability, diabetes, COPD and dementia, all of which had contributed to the persons need for home care services. A variety of funding arrangements were identified, ranging from fully funded care provision through to the individual paying the full cost of the care services they received. Some people also received a personal budget or direct payment through which all or part of the cost of their care service was paid for.

Several family members who had arranged care provision for a parent told us that the funding process which includes a means test, was complicated and information had been difficult to access. One person told us that they had looked on the Hartlepool Borough Council website, but had found information on home care had been hard to find and once found not very helpful. Most of those who returned surveys received their care service from either Dale Care or Vestra Home Care who are both commissioned by Hartlepool Borough Council. Two people also told us that they received their care from Elite Home Care Services.

As one would expect, a wide range of care services were referred to, with the most frequently mentioned being assistance with meals, dressing and showering or bathing. Other frequently mentioned services included assistance with medication and getting up or going to bed. The duration of home care visits was mainly between 15 and 45 minutes. Only 1 person said that their visit was completed in under 15 minutes.

Over a third of people told us that their carer workers often do not arrive on time for their visit. Some told us that this was only by a few minutes, but others said that it was not unusual for their care worker to be up to one hour late. People told us they usually don't receive any notice when this happens, which can lead to anxiety, upset and disrupt the implementation of the individuals care plan. Some people also told us that communication from their care provider when changes to the delivery of their care services routines occur is poor, and the first they know about changes is when they happen. However, most of those who returned the survey felt that they, and their family had been involved in the development of their care plan and in identifying care requirements. We were also told that care plans are regularly reviewed with social worker involvement and input from family members.

Listening to your experiences

Key things we heard:

Almost 90% of those who returned the survey told us that their care worker always treated them with dignity and respect. We received many positive comments about the friendly, caring and supportive nature of care workers, and understanding of the difficulties they often face in fulfilling their roles. Another common theme was that many people felt that their care workers were not allocated enough time and consequently were always rushing to complete tasks.

Some concerns were raised that occasionally staff had left before all care tasks had been completed. Others felt that they would like to be able to chat more as their care worker was one of the few people they saw each day. When asked if they were aware of how to make a compliment or complaint around 30% told us that they didn't know how to, and a similar number felt that when they raised a concern with their care provider they were often not listened to, and consequently no action was taken to resolve the issue.

When asked to rate the quality of the care they received, half of those who responded rated their care as either 8/10, 9/10 or 10/10. 15% of people rated their experience between 2/10 and 5/10. The overall average score was 7.6.

Christine Fewster, Chief Executive Officer of Hartlepool Carers told us:

"Hartlepool Carers work with families throughout our town to ensure unpaid carers have access to support at the right time. Completing carers assessments on behalf of the Local Authority we hear direct from families who receive care within their homes. The messages we hear are inconsistent, with areas of good practice as well as areas for improvement. Some families share that agencies and their teams go above and beyond to help."

One carer said 'My mother-in-law was on end of life, we received 3 calls per day, the girls that looked after her were exceptional, went above and beyond to support us all, working professionally and maintaining my mother in law's dignity at all times, we will be forever grateful'

However, we hear in some cases, families cancelling packages of care due to support not being at times that are suitable for them. Some families also shared that the option for direct payments, enabled them to independently employ support workers to help within their homes, these families were complimentary with the flexibility and control they had over their own care.

Overall, we have seen a reduction in concerns being raised and we work closely with partners to ensure people have support to live as independently as possible within their own homes."



Listening to your experiences

What difference did this make?

Healthwatch Hartlepool are working closely with Hartlepool Borough Council on a range of recommendations:

1. When care workers are running more than 15 minutes late, the next person to receive care should be contacted and advised of the likely time of arrival to avoid anxiety and distress on the part of the cared for person, and risks associated with late/missed visits minimised. (Ref Home Care: delivering personal care and practical support to older people living in their own homes 1.4.11 – NICE Guideline Sept 2015)
2. Care providers must ensure that communication with those receiving care is robust and when changes to care arrangements are proposed, the cared for person is fully aware of proposals and has been properly consulted about any new care arrangements. (Ref Home Care: delivering personal care and practical support to older people living in their own homes 1.3.10 – NICE Guideline Sept 2015)
3. Care providers must ensure that those receiving care are informed and periodically reminded of the ways in which complaints/compliments can be made. Procedures should also be available on the care organisations website. (Ref Home Care: delivering personal care and practical support to older people living in their own homes 1.4.4, 1.4.5, 1.4.6 – NICE Guideline Sept 2015)
4. Identification badges should be always worn by care workers whilst on duty.
5. Care providers should ensure that as far as is practicably possible cared for people are familiar with the person providing their care services and have been introduced to the individuals who will be providing their care in future. This, and general communication should be overseen by a care co-ordinator. (Ref Home Care: delivering personal care and practical support to older people living in their own homes 1.4.7 – NICE Guideline Sept 2015)
6. As part of induction and ongoing staff development processes, all care workers should undertake training which enables them to recognise and respond appropriately to conditions such as dementia, physical and learning disabilities and sensory loss. (Ref Home Care: delivering personal care and practical support to older people living in their own homes 1.7.4 – NICE Guideline Sept 2015)
7. When carers are regularly running late between appointments, appointment timings should be reviewed to ensure enough time has been allocated to cover completion of care tasks and travel time. (Ref Home Care: delivering personal care and practical support to older people living in their own homes 1.4.1 – NICE Guideline Sept 2015)
8. Hartlepool Borough Council should review the accessibility and content of home care related information on its website and consider introducing financial guidance in line with the NHS example shown in Appendix 1 of our published report available via www.healthwatchhartlepool.co.uk (Ref Home Care: delivering personal care and practical support to older people living in their own homes 1.2.1 – NICE Guideline Sept 2015)
9. Social care providers should liaise with Hartlepool Borough Council social workers if a person receiving home care is isolated and has said that they would like more opportunities to socialise.

Hearing from all communities

We're here for all residents of **Hartlepool**. That's why, over the past year, we've worked hard to reach out to those communities whose voices may go unheard.

Every member of the community should have the chance to share their story and play a part in shaping services to meet their needs.

This year, we have reached different communities by:

- Supporting the launch of a new group in Hartlepool – The 1492 Brain matter injury support group. We have attended the monthly meetings and offered advice and guidance in this endeavour.

"The establishment of the "1492" post discharge brain injury service, was born out of my own 35 year battle post brain injury, to achieve a desirable quality of life. I feel that if at the start of my marathon journey, I was signposted to the services I required, I would have achieved so much more! The overriding goal of the group is for brain injury survivors and their carers, to meet up monthly over a friendly cup of tea or coffee to chat about and discuss available options for progression. I believe that if such an option had been available to me, I would have fared far better in my recovery."

Jonathan Purnell

Advocate Proposer of the 1492 bespoke post discharge brain injury group

- Held a range of engagement drop-in session with people struggling with socio-economic deprivation. These drop-ins have occurred at the Central Hub and the Salaam Centre to name but a few.
- Through all of our work we have made sure that the voices from your local community have been heard by local NHS leaders and Integrated Care Systems. This is evident through our collaborative work to refresh the ICB Involvement Strategy and listening to peoples dental care challenges.

Hearing from all communities

Seeking the views of Hartlepool residents on the Government's NHS 10 year plan consultation.

In November 2024, the government launched 'Change NHS: help build a health service fit for the future', with the aim of getting as many people as possible involved in informing their 10 Year Health Plan for England.

On 28th January 2025, Healthwatch Hartlepool facilitated a workshop which gave the public the opportunity to take part in the biggest ever national conversation about the future of the NHS.

What difference did this make?

Our information together with the feedback from all other workshops across the North East & North Cumbria (NENC) Integrated Care System have been submit to Government to help shape the new NHS 10 Year Plan. Our engagement work was delivered at 'place' and included specific workshops for the seldom heard including Children & Young People, those living with a Learning Disability or Autism and those from the ethnic minority communities. Our work will also help shape a refresh of the Integrated Care Strategy

Helping promote a Dementia Friendly Hartlepool.

Healthwatch Hartlepool actively participates in Dementia Action Week and last year we sponsored a social evening at Hartfields Retirement Village and worked alongside partners such as the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust and The Bridge – Hospital of God. We are an active participant in the associated planning group and also the Dementia Friendly Hartlepool Steering Group.

What difference did this make?

Our work culminated in a range of activities for anyone with a dementia diagnosis, their families and friends. Activities included a multi-generational dementia awareness event, a reminiscence coffee afternoon, and walks at the Summerhill Visitor Centre.

'The Joint Dementia Steering Group is leading the co-production of Hartlepool's first town-wide Dementia Strategy. The completed strategy will be presented to Hartlepool's Health and Wellbeing Board later this year. Key partners, including health and care service commissioners and providers, will then formulate delivery plans and a monitoring framework.'

Information and signposting

Whether it's finding an NHS dentist, making a complaint, or choosing a good care home for a loved one – you can count on us. This year **over 1000** people have reached out to us for advice, support or help finding services.

This year, we've helped people by:

- Providing up-to-date information people can trust
- Helping people access the services they need
- Supporting people to look after their health
- Signposting people to additional support services



Tony Leighton Healthwatch Patient & Public Engagement Officer

Community Wellbeing

On the 24th of March 2025, Healthwatch Hartlepool, working in partnership with the Tees, Esk and Wear Valley (TEWV) Mental Health Foundation Trust, held a Community Health & Wellbeing Engagement event in the Council Chamber, Hartlepool Borough Council.

The event was attended by over 50 people, including members of the public, along with both statutory and VCSE organisations from the local area. Our event provided an opportunity to listen to presentations from various clinicians and directors from TEWV, which was then followed by a Question & Answer session.

The event was extremely well received by all that attended, comments included:

"It was a brilliant event with lots of interesting, relevant information"

" Really good event, answered lots of questions and a really good opportunity to network."

Complaints Advocacy

Healthwatch Hartlepool works collaboratively with People First Advocacy service. This is an NHS Independent Complaints Advocacy service. We signpost residents if they feel they have not had the service they expect from the NHS and want to complain. Over the last year the majority of referrals into this service came from Healthwatch Hartlepool. These NHS complaints cover care and treatment in respect of hospitals, GP's, dentists, pharmacies, opticians and NHS funded care homes.

'The long-standing partnership we have with Healthwatch Hartlepool is invaluable, we work closely with the Team supporting Hartlepool residents with NHS complaints and also raising awareness about the benefits of the advocacy service on offer . This close working relationship has allowed us to ensure all referrals to the advocacy service are dealt with quickly and efficiently, this enables the residents of Hartlepool to receive a swift, seamless service.



We also value the opportunity to attend local events arranged by the Healthwatch Team and this recently included an opportunity for us attend a lunchtime briefing session, which offered a great platform for networking with other local organisations, to ensure that NHS Complaints Advocacy reaches the people that need it. This session also gave People First the opportunity to promote the new maternity and neonatal advocacy service, which supports people to have their voice heard throughout investigations and complaints into care received in maternity and neonatal departments '."

Sue Ewington NHS Complaints Advocate – People First

Healthwatch Hartlepool Coffee Mornings

Healthwatch Hartlepool has continued to build on the success of its virtual coffee mornings. We strive to be as inclusive as possible in the ways in which we communicate with and provide information to residents in Hartlepool. For some people, attending meetings in person can be challenging so we have continued to hold regular virtual coffee mornings. This gives various health, care and community & voluntary sector service providers the opportunity to talk about services and developments to an audience they otherwise would not reach. It can also provide a secure setting, in which a difficult issue can be discussed in a sensitive and supportive environment.

Example –

Following enquiries received about the Do Not Attempt Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation, Zoe Booth, Lead Nurse for Palliative and End of Life Care at North Tees and Hartlepool, attended a virtual coffee morning to discuss DNACPR. She explained that cardio pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) is an emergency treatment, which can sometimes restart the heart and breathing but is not appropriate in all cases. For example, if someone is coming to the end of their life because of an advanced and irreversible illness, their heart and breathing should be allowed to stop as part of the normal process of dying. She advised about various aspects of DNACPR, dispelled common myths and answered questions on the topic. She shared the importance of raising public awareness about discussing DNACPR and crucially that a DNACPR discussion or document does not mean that treatment and care will not be given.

Other Contributors at virtual coffee mornings have included –

Neil Harrison – Adult Services (Hartlepool Borough Council)

Catherine Wakeling – Starfish Health and Wellbeing

Abigail Ray – Public Health – (Hartlepool Borough Council)

Jane Harvey – Community Pharmacy – (Tees valley)

Joan Stevens – Health Scrutiny – (Hartlepool Borough Council)

Together with our in-person events, workshops and regular newsletters, our virtual coffee mornings will continue to play an important part in our developing communication and engagement approaches.

Showcasing volunteer impact

Our fantastic volunteers have given many hours and days to support our work. They provide Healthwatch Hartlepool with a rich mix of talent and thanks to their dedication to improving care, we can better understand what is working and what needs improving in our community.

This year, our volunteers:

- Visited communities to promote our work
- Collected experiences and supported their communities to share their views
- Carried out enter and view visits to local services to help them improve



“Presentation of cheques with Stagecoach to The Haven and LilyAnne’s from the funds raised for World Mental Health day.”

Showcasing volunteer impact

"My name is Bernie Hays and I am a volunteer with Healthwatch Hartlepool.

Volunteers with Healthwatch Hartlepool come from all walks of life. They come from having the experience of supporting a family member or friend or just having that compassion to listen and support when needed.

My own experience has been working as a bus driver/inspector. Then at 46 years of age I then went on to work for the NHS and trained as an Occupational Therapist.

Just like myself, they also may be at retirement age and just want to continue to remain active and be involved as and when able. To talk to people and work as part of a team and have that support when needed.

As a volunteer I have been involved and visited Care Homes completing Enter & View visits, meeting the staff, residents, carers and family members. Following the visits, the Enter & View team gather all the information together and put a report together based on all the factual information received.



I have also been involved in Discharge Planning of our local hospitals. This has involved speaking to staff, patients who are ready for discharge on the day and their family members.

Each year on October 10th it is World Mental Health Day. Hartlepool Healthwatch with the support of Hartlepool Borough Council and other organisations and volunteers support this event.

It takes a lot of organising, and in October 2024 the venue had to be changed. I arranged with Stagecoach Hartlepool, who kindly supported the event providing a free bus for the local community. They also had collection buckets on the buses for a number of weeks and raised almost £500 for two local town charities.

I must not also forget I managed to get a retired nurse to come along who sang a few songs and brought that community spirit together."



Bernie Hays
Older People representative
Volunteer Steering Group

Showcasing volunteer impact

"The last year has seen some rewarding times and some changes.

I am the mental health lead for Healthwatch Hartlepool and also a public governor for the Tees, Esk Wear Valley (TEWV) Mental Health Foundation Trust. I have also been the Chair of the Hartlepool Mental Health Forum. As the local mental health organisations have evolved and taken on wider responsibilities, it was decided that the role of Forum would also change, it would focus on World Mental Health Day, and any associated events. To promote and inform the people of the local and national mental health services.

The new planning group is a collaborative of Hartlepool Healthwatch and the Local Authority with support from various other organisations and volunteers.

We held our Annual World Mental Health Day event on October 10th at the Centre for Independent Living. This was a new venue and was very successful. There were the usual activities, plus some new, such as the Wellbeing Champions Awards for young people. We had the honour of welcoming the Mayor and Consort and our local Member of Parliament. I must convey my many thanks for the support of the local people, and enthusiasm of so many organisations, which made for a very busy but informative and successful day

In March we held a community Wellbeing Event. The TEWV Mental Health Foundation Trust brought a team of specialist officers who came and addressed the meeting with several presentations and discussions about the present and future of mental health services in Hartlepool and its surrounding areas. It was well received and thanks to all those involved. We hope to repeat this at some future date.



So, October 10th, 2025. World Mental Health Day event is booked, look for the publicity.

To everyone who has supported us, especially our very valued volunteers and all the people and organisations, Thank you."



Zoe Sherry
Mental Health representative
Volunteer Steering Group

Volunteering with Enter and View

In 2024/25 Healthwatch Hartlepool undertook 4 visits to care homes in Hartlepool, Merlin Manor, Sheraton Court, Brierton Lodge and West View Lodge. Each visit was carried out by a team of staff and volunteer visitors, all of whom had completed Healthwatch Hartlepool's Enter and View training programme and undertaken a DBS check.

Each E&V visit is unique, depending on the place visited (Care home, hospital, surgery, pharmacy) and the reasons or circumstances which have led to the visit taking place. However, as Enter and View visits have been part of our core Healthwatch remit for many years now, consequently, their preparation and execution follows a tried and tested pathway.

A visit may be undertaken as a result of concerns raised about the quality of a service, poor patient/resident experience or in some cases, feedback indicating outstanding practice, which through our report we hope to highlight and share. Visits can also be focused on a particular theme, such as Dementia care and provide feedback and insight into a wider piece of work within our workplan.

The four reports which followed our visits to Merlin Manor, Sheraton Court, Brierton Lodge and West View Lodge all reflected the feedback we received from residents, staff and family members, and each report contained recommendations based on our findings and observations.

Enter and View group member Margaret Wrenn, who was lead visitor on several of the visits said of her experiences –

"I enjoy meeting people who are using the services available to all in our Community. It is enlightening to listen to the compliments, complaints and concerns which arise in our conversations with users of the services and their relatives. (In the case of a Care home visit, sometimes the resident's opinion differs with that of their relative when asked the same question, and naturally both answers are expressed in our finished reports)."

"We have been working together as a group for quite some time now and each have our strengths, which come to the fore in every visit, so the information which is collected, is as factual, comprehensive, and concise as possible".

"Our reports are shared with the service provider, commissioners, CQC and Healthwatch England, and the service visited is always invited to provide a comment on our findings and recommendations which is included in the final report."

"I would like to thank the Healthwatch team for the respect shown to the Home, residents, relatives and staff during their visit."



Hollie Rhodes – Manager Sheraton Court Care Home

Showcasing volunteer impact

Finally, it is always rewarding when our visits help to improve standards, make positive changes to service provision and promote and share good and innovative practice. The high regard and respect with which our visits are viewed by commissioners and partners organisations is reflected in the testimonial below:

"From a social care perspective, Enter & View visits are a really useful tool that Healthwatch carry out. These visits allow discussions with people using services and allow an independent observation of services being delivered on the ground in social care settings. They have the potential to highlight areas where improvement or changes are required, but they can also show good and innovative practice, which can be shared with others. The learning from these visits is invaluable and has been used in the past to help make a real difference to people receiving these services every day."



Trevor Smith
Head of Commissioning (Adult Services)
Hartlepool Borough Council

Be part of the change.

If you've felt inspired by these stories, contact us today and find out how you can be part of the change.



www.healthwatchhartlepool.co.uk



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Facebook.com/HealthwatchHartlepool

Finance and future priorities

We receive funding from **Hartlepool Borough Council** under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to help us do our work.

Our income and expenditure:

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from Government	£124,397	Expenditure on pay	£127,545
Additional income	£47,836	Non-pay expenditure	£21,480
		Office and management fee	£8,040
Total income	£172,233	Total Expenditure	£157,065

Additional income is broken down into:

- £9,500 from the North East Commissioning Support unit for a project 'Growing Older Planning Ahead' for people living with a Learning Disability over the age of 40.
- £9,500 from the North East Ambulance Service (NEAS) for our work to review their Clinical Strategy.
- £200 Donation from Hartlepower C.I.C. for World Mental Health day.
- £200 Donation from the PFC Trust for World Mental Health day.
- £263 from CQC bursary for Healthwatch England event
- £119 refund on bank charges

Integrated Care System (ICS) funding:

Healthwatch across the North East & North Cumbria also receive funding from our Integrated Care Board (ICB) to support new areas of collaborative work at this level, including

Purpose of ICS funding	Amount
Regional Coordinator	£23,804
Intelligence gathering and monitoring	£3,500
Womens Health	£350
NHS 10 year plan	£400

Finance and future priorities

Next steps:

Over the next year, we will keep reaching out to every part of Hartlepool, especially people in the most deprived areas, so that those in power hear their views and experiences.

We will also work together with partners and our local Integrated Care System to help develop an NHS culture where, at every level, staff strive to listen and learn from patients to make care better.

Our top three priorities for the next year are:

1. Healthwatch Hartlepool would like to work with Hartlepool Borough Council, Inclusion North Tees, Esk & Wear Valley (Mental Health) NHS Foundation Trust and the ICB to examine the patient pathways involved in Annual Health checks for those living with a Learning Disability and/or Autism. This piece of work is currently in its infancy, but we are hoping to examine the communications strategy around appointments, access and associated Health Plans. It is very much hoped this piece of work in Hartlepool can be a pilot within the Tees Valley and feed into the work of the ICB more broadly.
2. To complement our work, we shall be undertaking planned visits to the University Hospital Tees to examine cardiovascular patient pathways and transfers of care. Other visits will be based around Primary Care with a focus on access and improvements.
3. Our third strand of work will be working alongside the ICB – Our focus will be based around the findings of our engagement into the NHS 10-year plan. Working with the ICB we hope to undertake further engagement around delivery of the plan whilst examining those areas within the plan that we can influence with regards to improving population health. In addition to this work, we shall be looking at the ICB's Primary Care Access Recovery Plan and what resources could be utilised by Healthwatch to enhance access.

Statutory statements

Healthwatch Hartlepool CIO holds the local Healthwatch contract.

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

Charity Number: 1165402

The way we work

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

Our Healthwatch Board consists of 5 members who work voluntarily to provide direction, oversight, and scrutiny of our activities. We also have a Volunteer Steering Group that oversees the delivery of our work programme.

Our Board ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community.

Throughout 2024/25, the Board met 8 times and made decisions on matters such as endorsing our submission to Healthwatch England regarding the Quality Framework and receiving updates on our 'Enter & View' activity. We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities.

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

We use a wide range of approaches to ensure that as many people as possible can provide us with insight into their experience of using services.

During 2024/25, we have been available by phone, text and email, provided a web form on our website and through social media, and attended many meetings of community groups and forums.

Two groups that have proved to be of significant importance is our attendance at the North Tees & Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust's Patient Carer Experience Council and the People with Lived Experience Group.



"At a time of great change in health and care services we would like to thank Healthwatch Hartlepool for their continued support and input to both our patient carer experience council and people with lived experience group. We have particularly appreciated the way in which relevant key information has been shared and reported back, not only through these meetings but also from the support provided to the PLACE visits held within the Trust. The valuable suggestions and feedback from the representatives who attend these visits in person, often contribute to positive changes being made. This crucial partnership role has also enabled us in these groups, to hear clearly the voices of the population of Hartlepool, ensuring that we use that feedback when considering the needs of the locality in any improvement work that we undertake in the Organisation."

Melanie Cambage RN DN QN PNA
Group Deputy Director of Patient Experience and Involvement
University Hospitals Tees

Statutory statements

Responses to recommendations

We only had 2 providers who did not respond to requests for information or recommendations. This is a significant improvement on the previous year when 14 providers failed to respond. There were no issues or recommendations escalated by us to the Healthwatch England Committee, so there were no resulting reviews or investigations.

Taking people's experiences to decision-makers

We ensure that people who can make decisions about services hear about the insights and experiences shared with us.

For example, in Hartlepool, we take information to:

- The Health & Wellbeing Board
- Audit & Governance
- The Health & Wellbeing Alliance

We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in the North East & North Cumbria (NENC) Integrated Care Board. We hold a place on the ICB Place sub-committee and share our work on a quarterly basis. Our Chief Executive is also a member of the Integrated Care Board and a member of the Strategic Integrated Care Partnership in his role as Regional Coordinator for the NENC Healthwatch Network.

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

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Hartlepool is represented on the town's Health and Wellbeing Board by our Chair of the Healthwatch Volunteer Steering Group Margaret Wrenn and our Chief Executive Christopher Akers-Belcher.

During 2024/25, our representative has effectively carried out this role by providing details of the Healthwatch work programme, collaborating on the review of the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment and raising the concerns of residents in respect of Mental Health in-hospital provision.

Healthwatch Hartlepool is represented on North East & North Cumbria (NENC) Integrated Care Board and Strategic Integrated Care Partnership by our Chief Executive Christopher Akers-Belcher. Other positions held within the Integrated Care system are on:

- Primary Care Strategy & Delivery sub-committee.
- System Quality Group
- Healthy & Fairer Advisory Group
- Equality and Diversity
- Patient Voice Group
- Ethics committee
- Quality & Safety Committee

Statutory statements

Enter and view

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
Merlin Manor Care Centre	Review progress on previous visit December 2023	Wrote a report with recommendations including acknowledgement of the developments that have taken place since our last visit.
Sheraton Court Care Home	Gain insight into care provision with a particular focus around dementia	Wrote a report with recommendations including reference to accidents/incidents must be recorded in a timely manner.
Brierton Lodge Nursing Home	To observe and gauge any improvements since our 2019 visit. Focus on support afforded residents living with dementia	Wrote a report with recommendations including the need to record visitors and the requirement to record falls/injuries immediately. Also to encourage the use of the 'This is me' booklet with families and staff.
West View Lodge Care Home	Focus on care provision in the care home including intermediate care	Wrote a report with recommendations including highlighting the facility is not a good location for those with drug/alcohol dependency

Statutory statements

Training & Development

Healthwatch Hartlepool has a deep commitment to continuous improvement and for this reason we invest in our staff and volunteers.

During 2024/25 we continued to provide a wide range of training and developmental opportunities to volunteers and staff. The aim of our training offer is two-fold, to address identified organisational requirements, and to provide personal and skills-based development opportunities.

This year saw a focus on the recruitment and development of our new volunteers and the development of our in-house IT capabilities, which are both reflected in the training that was accessed and delivered over the course of the year.

Summary of Key Training and Development Events 2024/25

New Volunteer Induction Training – (7 x 1:1 sessions)

Enter and View Refresher Training – (1 session x 7 participants)

Introduction to Enter and View – (4 x 1:1 sessions)

Smart Survey Training – (3 sessions x 2 participants)

Data Upload and Management Training (3 sessions x 2 participants)

Disability Awareness Training – (2 sessions, x 2 participants)

Challenging Health Inequalities (1 session x 1 participant)

Dementia Awareness (1 session x 8 participants)

Sensory Loss and Communication (1 session x 2 participants)

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion – (2 sessions x 2 participants)

Disability Awareness – (2 sessions x 2 participants)

Modern Day Slavery Awareness Training – (1 session x 5 participants)

Young Adults Mental Health – (1 session x 1 participant)

Mental Health and Deafness – (1 session x 1 participant)

North Tees and Hartlepool Hospital Trust Discharge Workshop – (1 session x 8 participants)

CQC Intermediate care Workshop – (1 session x 3 participants)

Improving Dementia Care Skills (Teepa Snow) (1 session x 2 participants)

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