

# The value of listening

Healthwatch Hartlepool  
Annual Report 2023–2024



**healthwatch**



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**"Over the last year, local Healthwatch have shown what happens when people speak up about their care, and services listen. They are helping the NHS unlock the power of people's views and experiences, especially those facing the most serious health inequalities."**

Louise Ansari, Chief Executive at Healthwatch England



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# Message from our Chairman

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Hello everyone,

Here we are again, and another year passed since I last wrote about Healthwatch Hartlepool.

It has been an extremely busy year for us all at Healthwatch Hartlepool. I firmly believe we have successfully delivered our statutory duties as well as building on our work with the North East & North Cumbria (NENC) Integrated Care Board (ICB). We have undertaken some very meaningful work across the Integrated Care System and this has been recognised regionally as of great benefit.

Once again, we have continued to engage with residents and our volunteer steering group digitally. Learning throughout the year has confirmed our belief that communication is key and this has been confirmed when we published our reviewed 'Discharge' report in respect of North Tees & Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust.

We conducted more work covering Enter & View activity across a number of Nursing & Residential care homes and held a town wide awareness raising events promoting access to Acute Care, Primary Care and Ambulance services. Once again our sincere thanks to North Tees & Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust, Hartlepool & Stockton Health (HASH) and Hartlepool Council's Public Health team for working collaboratively with us in informing residents what services are available across the town.

We again actively celebrated 'World Mental Health' day by collaborating with a host of partners through some very successful engagements. March 24 also saw us launch our new Healthwatch Hartlepool resource for G.P. Access, which has been very well received by both our partners and the wider public. This is a great source of information for sign posting residents to relevant services.

The Volunteer Steering Group remained active utilising monthly face to face meetings in addition to 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 must thank all the Board members who give their time unstintingly and are always there to help when needed. My sincere thanks also go to our Chief Executive Christopher and staff team whose roles have had to adapt to the new way of working in respect of the Integrated Care Board, but they have certainly risen to the challenge.

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



**"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 - Healthwatch Hartlepool Chairman



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# About us

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

We make sure NHS leaders and decision-makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care. We can also help you to find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.

### Our vision

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 are:

- **Listening** to people and making sure their voices are heard.
- **Including** everyone in the conversation – especially those who don't always have their voice heard.
- **Analysing** different people's experiences to learn how to improve care.
- **Acting** on feedback and driving change.
- **Partnering** with care providers, Government, and the voluntary sector – serving as the public's independent advocate.



# Year in review

## Reaching out:

**273 people**

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

**309 people**

came to us for clear advice and information about topics such as G.P. Access and Dentistry.



## Making a difference to care:

We published

**8 reports**

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

Our most popular report was

**Discharge from Hospital**

Which highlighted the struggles people face upon being discharged when living alone or living in a care setting.



## Health and social care that works for you:

We're lucky to have

**30**

outstanding volunteers who give up a huge amount of their time to make care better for our community.

We're funded by our local authority.

In 2023 - 24 we received

**£121,958**

We currently employ

**4 staff**

None of whom are full-time who help us carry out our work.



# How we have made a difference this year

Spring

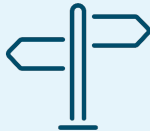


We shared our work programme with the Integrated Care Board Place sub-committee for Hartlepool.



We visited Clifton House Residential Care Home to examine the quality of care and dignity afforded to residents.

Summer



We organised a range of focus groups with the Learning Disability community as part of project 'Growing Older Planning Ahead'.



We published our Tees Valley Youthwatch report following a collaborative piece of work with Youth Focus North East.

Autumn



We hosted an information & signposting event covering 'Accessing Care'. Information was provided to 82 attendees on GP's, Pharmacy, NHS 111, Urgent Care, A & E and Self Care.



We celebrated World Mental Health Day by hosting an event with the Mental Health Forum & Hartlepool Borough Council at the Town Hall.

Winter



We worked alongside the new Integrated Care Board to collate the public's views in respect of access to dentistry.



We published our new resource to the public and our partners detailing 'Top Tips for Accessing Your GP'.

# Your voice heard at a wider level

## We collaborated with other Healthwatch's to ensure the experiences of people in Hartlepool can influence decisions made about services at North East and North Cumbria (NENC) Integrated Care System (ICS) level.

This year we've worked with Healthwatch's across the Tees Valley & wider region to achieve:

### Improved Planning Processes for families who care for an adult with learning disabilities:



The Tees Valley Healthwatch Network provided insight to the NENC ICB, to give them a greater understanding of the needs of people with a learning disability, aged 40+, so they can improve the planning process when families can no longer support their family member to stay at home. We asked professionals, carers and those they care for what is important to them, and what support they need to live a happy and healthy life.

### Improved access to dentistry services by carrying out 3 standalone activities:



- Sought people's feedback about their experience after accessing treatment funded through the ICB's additional investment for additional sessions at some dental practices to improve access.
- Contacted all dental practices in the region to understand what people were being told when trying to access NHS treatments through a 'mystery shopper' exercise.
- Survey of the general population across the North East and North Cumbria to gather their experiences of dentistry in 2023. Over 3500 responses were received.

### An understanding of health-literacy related barriers to research



We held a focus group locally to discuss if participants had previously been involved in research, what their preferred channels for accessing healthcare information were, and identify barriers to future research opportunities.

- Participants' responses varied, with some showing keen interest in future research engagement and others highlighting barriers like limited awareness or understanding.
- Preferred methods for disseminating future research opportunities were both email and face-to-face interactions.

### Worked across the North East & North Cumbria to review the ICB's Involvement Strategy



The Healthwatch Network asked local Healthwatch to come forward from all 4 Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) areas to attempt to achieve a rural and urban geographical spread. They were asked to speak to community volunteers, staff, and Board Members and/or to deliver a focus group from one of the following seldom heard communities – Young people, Deaf/deafened, LGBTQ+ and Asian/ethnic minorities.





## Listening to your experiences

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

# Improving Discharge from Hospital

Last year, we published findings of the experiences the public shared with us about Discharge from hospital. Thanks to this insight, the North Tees & Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust has responded favourably and produced a detailed action plan based on our recommendations following our report being shared and discussed more widely with internal staff and external stakeholders within Hartlepool Borough Council. At this point we must thank Stephen Thomas, our Development Officer, for his hard work collating and delivering the information in this particular project.

## 64%

of patients said that they were discharged from the ward on which they were staying rather than the Discharge Hub or Transport Hub. As with previous findings, it was again reported that some wards were reluctant to send patients to the Discharge Hub due to the possibility they may face a long wait there before going home.



## What difference did this make?

- Progress has been made by the Trust against the recommendations in the previous report we published and there has been a positive impact on many aspects of the patient discharge experience and subsequent care and support.
- The Trust is addressing the ongoing concerns identified in the recommendation review table contained within the Executive Summary of our latest report available on our website [www.healthwatchhartlepool.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchhartlepool.co.uk)

*"Thank you for giving us the opportunity to comment on the discharge report findings. North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust strives to provide excellent care and services to patients. We recognise that supportive and appropriate hospital discharge services are vital and we are committed to ensuring that patients' experiences and subsequent recuperation opportunities are maximised.*

*We are very pleased that you have observed the progress made by the Trust against the recommendations in the 2023 report and that this has had a positive impact on many aspects of the patient discharge experience and subsequent care and support. We are committed to progressing/building on the recommendations from March 2023 report and this current report and will ensure that an agreed action plan is formulated/shared widely across the Trust. Progress against it will be monitored through the appropriate governance structures and system forums.*

*We would like HealthWatch to consider the enclosed response on behalf of the Trust. A more detailed action plan will follow once shared and discussed more widely with internal staff and as appropriate with external stakeholders within Hartlepool Borough Council On behalf of myself and the clinical teams can I thank you for bringing forward the patients voice and supporting the developments of services to patients through their discharge process. We look forward to continuing to work closely with you in the future."*

**Mr N Atkinson – Managing Director**

# Three ways we have made a difference in the community

## Creating empathy...

Healthwatch Hartlepool continues to support the 'Lived Experience' Forum. The meetings capture a group of individuals with lived-experience and organisations that are deemed integral to shaping the future of services in Hartlepool. The Forum has championed the co-production & the active involvement of people with lived experience of mental illness (including carers/families) in the transformation of Community Based Mental Health services across Hartlepool and the wider Tees Valley. It is widely accepted that such involvement in the design of services has been shown to empower service users, increase the quality and efficiency of services and improve clinical outcome.



## Getting Services to involve the public...

Healthwatch Hartlepool is represented on the Governing Body of North Tees & Hartlepool Foundation Trust. Through our work representing the views of the public the Trust has approached Healthwatch Hartlepool to undertake further consultation in the community, particularly with the seldom heard, around the Hospital Group partnership agreement between North Tees & Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust and South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

Our consultation will be collaborative with all Tees Valley Healthwatch, Healthwatch County Durham & Healthwatch North Yorkshire. We will proactively seek feedback & involve people in the development of the clinical boards within the two Trusts i.e. (Surgery & anaesthetics), Urgent & Emergency Care, Medicine, Women's/Children & Young People's Services and Community Services.



## Improving Care over time...

Over the years Healthwatch Hartlepool has been raising the issue of GP Access and highlighting the problems some residents experience. Healthwatch Hartlepool published a GP Access report in March 2022, outlining key headline areas for improvement which was shared and formally acknowledged by the ICB in June 2022. Whilst many of the key themes were already identified by the ICB and nationally by NHS England, the ICB valued the report from Healthwatch and has used the recommendations to ensure a continued focus on the work to deliver improved access for our community.

More recently Healthwatch Hartlepool published a resource for the public showcasing our 'Top Tips' for accessing your GP Practice. This resource is available to download from our website [www.healthwatchhartlepool.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchhartlepool.co.uk).



The following is an example of the useful information you will find within our free resource:

## Use the Right Service



### Self Care

#### Care for yourself at home

Minor cuts & grazes | Minor bruises  
Minor sprains | Coughs and colds



### Pharmacy

#### Local expert advice

Sinusitis | Sore throat | Earache | Infected insect bite | Impetigo  
Shingles | Uncomplicated urinary tract infections in women



### NHS 111

#### Non-emergency help

Feeling unwell? | Unsure? | Anxious?  
Need help?



### GP Advice

#### Out of hours call 111

Persistent symptoms | Chronic pain  
Long term conditions | New prescriptions



### UTCs

#### Urgent Treatment Centres

Breaks & sprains | X-rays  
Cuts & grazes | Fever & rashes



### A&E or 999

#### For emergencies only

Choking | Chest pain | Blacking out  
Serious blood loss

# Learning through lived experience

## NHS community cardiac team and local gym team up after man's heart attack

In 2023 our Chief Executive attended North Tees & Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trusts board meeting to share his lived experience of the cardiac pathway after suffering a heart attack. He also expressed his sincere thanks to the NHS rehab team – after staff went above and beyond to ensure he could continue the CrossFit exercise classes he did before falling ill.

Our Chief Executive had a cardiac arrest in January, after waking in the middle of the night with chest pains. Christopher, who is the Chief Executive and lives in the town, was rushed into the University Hospital of North Tees and, following various tests, it was confirmed he had had a heart attack.

After being transferred to the James Cook University Hospital and following a period of treatment, Christopher was discharged back to his home and offered the opportunity to attend special cardio-rehabilitation classes.

The sessions are run by the cardiac rehabilitation service at North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust in community buildings across Stockton and Hartlepool.

Christopher found the classes “incredibly beneficial” – but it is the help he had off the team to enable him to continue his weekly sessions at Exortus CrossFit in Hartlepool he was equally grateful for.

Christopher said: “I have found the classes to be absolutely fantastic in my recovery.

“On my third week our normal instructor was on holiday and the class was taken by a lady called Nikki Lilley.

“Nikki, as with all the instructors, was really great but I feel she went the extra mile.

“My own heart nurse Michelle told Nikki I previously did CrossFit classes prior to my heart attack and I was keen to return as soon as possible.

“It turned out Nikki attends the same gym and – though she is in a different class – she asked my permission to speak with my coach to aid my rehabilitation and return to CrossFit when I could.

“I agreed to this and Nikki spoke with my coach but also agreed to do a training and awareness session with all the gym's coaches. This was so they could learn what to expect from heart patients and how best to help them to return to a full and active life.

“I think these kind of gestures need recognising as it really is going up and beyond and I really appreciate their care and support.”



# Learning through lived experience

Thanks to Nikki's support, Christopher has now been back doing the CrossFit classes and continues to improve.

Nikki said: "Christopher wanted to know if there was any way he could return to it as he was feeling cautious about going back.

"I go to the same gym and said I would be happy to speak to the team there about tailoring these classes for people who have had a heart issue.

"CrossFit is really about getting your heartbeat consistently high. I have explained to the team what we as a cardio rehab team do in our classes and the protocols we follow."

The rehab team runs five levels of classes, several times a week, from community locations in Hartlepool, Thornaby, Ingleby Barwick, Stockton and Billingham.



Patients are referred into the service, who offer advice and support in areas including angina management, stent or valve theory support, emotional and physical risk factors (such as smoking or alcohol), a look at medication levels and so on.

The team run walking programmes and rehab classes, which Christopher attended and completed at Community Hub South in Hartlepool.

Michelle Peevor, community cardiac rehabilitation nurse, said: "Uptake nationally for these classes isn't high – but when people do come they realise how fun and rewarding it is.

"We ask patients to attend the classes twice a week, following a series of levels. Christopher has just completed the fifth and final level that involves exercises with weights.

"The sessions involve a 15 minute warm-up, a 24 minute circuit, followed by a 10 minute cool-down and heartrate measure after exercise.

"It is normally a huge confidence booster for people – they know they can exercise somewhere in a controlled environment where they know they are safe."

Christopher added: "Thanks to the expertise of all of this team, I now have the confidence to return to the life I had before I had a heart attack and I can't thank them enough for that."

Husband and wife Ashley and Natalie McFee set up Exortus CrossFit two and a half years ago. Ashley said: "Nikki visited us and has been really helpful in terms of providing information and support around how we can help Christopher and people like him who have had similar health issues.

"I have invited Nikki back in to talk to all of our staff in more depth around how to tailor our sessions and over different issues that might occur and how we should respond in these scenarios.

"We pride ourselves on offering that personalised support to people who come here and putting the focus on this being a positive and supportive environment to be in."

When Christopher shared his story with the Trust it was agreed that the shared learning would be built into a review of the cardiac pathway to see what further improvements could be made.



# Hearing from all communities

**Over the past year, we have worked hard to make sure we hear from everyone within our local area. We consider it important to reach out to the communities we hear from less frequently to gather their feedback and make sure their voice is heard, and services meet their needs.**

**This year we have reached different communities by:**

- Undertaking a focused piece of work with those aged over 40 who have a learning disability
- Held workshops to examine peoples understanding of Health Literacy and Research.
- Worked with the LGBTQ+ community across the whole of the Tees Valley as part of our regional review of the Integrated Care Board's Involvement Strategy
- Produced reports of our findings and provided them to both the North East & North Cumbria (NENC) Integrated Care Board and the North East Commissioning Support Unit (NECS)

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# Growing Older Planning Ahead – Over 40's with a Learning Disability

**Healthwatch Hartlepool as part of the Tees Valley Healthwatch Network worked in partnership with the North East Commissioning Support unit (NECS) on behalf of the North East and North Cumbria (NENC) Integrated Care Board (ICB) with the aim of delivering a local review in response to the national requirement to improve the planning process when families can no longer support their family member who has a Learning Disability to stay at home. Without adequate planning and preparation, when families can no longer support their family member to stay at home, there could be an increase in crisis placements.**

There is limited information available regarding experiences of family carers who are anxious and afraid about the future for their son or daughter and how this will affect a person with a learning disability. There is little research regarding the lives of older people with learning disabilities, such as health issues, the illness or death of a family member and how this can affect a person with a learning disability and impact on their behaviour. The particular focus of this project was to improve support for families, carers, and older people with learning disability (aged 40+ to reflect the early onset of chronic health conditions such as dementia) by producing effective recommendations.

Our project focused on the key societal challenges of:

- meeting the needs of people (and their carers) with learning disabilities aged 40 and over with increasing life expectancy.
- transition planning for people with learning disabilities as their carers age.
- the health and social care system's response to ageing carer breakdown / crisis arrangements.
- service planning to ensure sufficiency and adequacy of provision to meet complex needs.
- support and guidance for ageing carers.
- effective navigation of appropriate pathways for the cohort of older people with learning disabilities.
- assessment of risk of social isolation and loneliness for older people with learning disabilities.
- identification of inequities in the mental health and physical needs of this cohort.

We asked carers, those they care for, and professionals who support them, to tell us what is important to them, and what support they need to live a happy and healthy life. All three groups of cared for, carers and professionals agreed the best outcomes occurred when appropriately trained support staff were available to help individuals live an independent life and there was help in maintaining a good social network of friends and family, including suitable transport and good community facilities to meet people with similar interests and needs. In total we received 462 responses to our work and 82 responses from professionals.



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# Growing Older Planning Ahead – Over 40's with a Learning Disability

*"I personally feel that people with a Learning Disability should be encouraged when they become a young adult to start thinking about and exploring the idea of living away from their parents / carers to promote their own independence more and I don't feel like they always get the opportunity to, and then it comes to a crisis point of the parents becoming elderly and unable to look after them anymore or worse and then the process is harrowing for all involved." – Cared for Individual.*

To help the NENC ICB achieve the best outcomes, we offered seven recommendations based on our insight, in the following areas:

1. Adhering to NICE guidelines.
2. Good communication.
3. The importance of location.
4. Timely, clear, and phased transition planning.
5. Regular person-centred reviews.
6. Building on the good practice current services offer now.
7. Focused training and support packages.

We look forward to discussing this report with representatives of the NENC ICB and individual local authorities, to ensure the voice of those who are impacted by this service continues to be listened to.

Response from North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board

*"The North East and North Cumbria ICB would like to thank Healthwatch for producing the Growing Older Planning Ahead report and everyone who took the time to provide feedback. The report gives a valuable insight into what is important to people and their carers as they plan for their future and helps highlight the journey we need to continue in partnership with those people at the heart of our work.*

*The ICB is committed to improving lives for everyone with a learning disability and their carers and we welcome the report, with its recommendations when planning for people and their future needs. The report will help steer decision making and we will continue to reflect on the recommendations when developing plans with stakeholders. The case studies also resonate with us with continued listening, hearing people's views and their experiences will support in our learning, to achieve better outcomes for people and their families".*

Liz Whitehead – Commissioning Delivery Manager

County Durham and Tees Valley Mental Health and Learning Disability Partnership

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# Accessibility of Council Services in Hartlepool for those with disabilities and long term conditions

Healthwatch Hartlepool participated in Hartlepool Borough Council's Audit and Governance Committee investigation into the 'Accessibility of Council Services for those with Disabilities and long term Conditions in Hartlepool'.

Healthwatch Hartlepool is a member of Hartlepool's Community Led Inclusion Partnership (CLIP) and they provided evidence to the committee around three models of disability (charity, medical and social) and provided a first-hand / lived experience perspective on each.

The Charity Model – This can depict disabled people as victims of circumstance, deserving of pity, unable to look after themselves or manage their own affairs and need charity in order to survive.

The Medical Model – This can assume that the first step solution is to find a cure or to use terminology to make disabled people more "normal".

The Social Model – This depicts the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the normal life of the community on an equal level with others due to physical or social barriers. Barriers can be physical, like buildings not having accessible toilets. Or they can be caused by people's attitudes to difference, like assuming disabled people can't do certain things.

In addition Healthwatch Hartlepool offered to utilise their volunteers to carry out 'Mystery Shopping' as part of the investigation. The below scenarios were designed, and chosen by volunteers, for a range of frontline Council services and guidance was provided on how to carry out the mystery shopper events and submit relevant feedback.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| I. Apply for / renew a bus pass             | V. Reablement or occupational therapy              |
| II. Visit Hartlepool Art Gallery            | VI. Visit a Community Hub or library               |
| III. Visit a leisure centre                 | VII. Make an enquiry at the Civic Centre reception |
| IV. Carry out a task on the HBC website x 2 |  |

All of the above was considered by the Council alongside the results of the extensive town-wide survey and associated workshops. Ultimately the Council agreed a number of recommendations for improvement at their Finance & Policy committee May 2023. Some of the key recommendations were:

Develop a communications campaign to:

- Highlight the various support schemes and reasonable adjustments that are already in place;
- Promote 'One-Stop-Shop' touch points such as the Civic Centre reception and Community Hubs where people can get assistance with everything in one place. Making those who find accessing the Civic Centre aware that the same service can be accessed elsewhere; and
- Promote the role of Community Hubs and Community Navigators to increase the understanding of the services they offer.
- Provide access to a video / telephone translation service (for BSL and other languages) in the Civic Centre, and a private room for the discussion of confidential issues. This facility to be promoted (e.g. via signs on glass partitions in a similar way to how pharmacies tell customers they can use a private consultation room).

Improvements to the HBC website be explored to ensure that it is EDI compliant going forward.



## Advice and information

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

**This year we've helped people by:**

- Providing up-to-date information people can trust
- Helping people access the services they need
- Helping people access NHS dentistry

# Your Health. Your Voice.

**It's essential that people have clear, accurate communication about their care.**

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.



We at People First Advocacy have had the pleasure of working with Hartlepool Healthwatch on several occasions, and each experience has been incredibly collaborative and rewarding. Their team is consistently informative, helpful, and committed to making a positive impact. Partnering with Hartlepool Healthwatch has always been a pleasure, as their dedication and professionalism enhance our mutual efforts to support the community. We highly value our partnership and look forward to continuing to work together."

**Sue Ewington NHS Complaints Advocate – People First**



## Helping residents with the best advice

Healthwatch Hartlepool partnered with the G.P. Federation Hartlepool & Stockton Health (HASH), the North East Ambulance Service, the Community Pharmacy Tees Valley Hartlepool Foundation Trust and Hartlepool Borough Council to showcase a number of topics identified within our work Programme.

The first event was a follow-on to our work surrounding Primary Care Access and was led by Fiona Adamson Chief Executive of Hartlepool & Stockton Health (HASH). We had guest speakers too from the North East Ambulance Service and the Community Pharmacy, Tees Valley. Over 70 people attended our event and received the most up to date information surrounding the circumstances where access should be via self-care, your GP, pharmacy, NHS 111, Urgent Care and Accident & Emergency. The event was complemented by a multitude of stall holders all providing attendees with the advice & guidance they provide from their service areas.

As well as supporting other services over the year such as 'Dementia' we again held our annual celebration of World Mental Health day in October. Throughout the year we also held our weekly surgeries for Advice & Guidance at the Central Hub and now also collaborate on a monthly basis with Hartlepool Carers by providing a similar service at North Tees Hospital.



Community Pharmacy Tees Valley has been welcomed to join the Healthwatch Hartlepool team to distribute useful information about local pharmacy services throughout the year in the form of conferences and coffee mornings. We have found this a very positive experience and a great opportunity to offer guidance and support to those who need healthcare access in Hartlepool along with allowing us to receive 'on the ground' feedback from those who use pharmacy services in the hope we can give the optimal patient experience and best healthcare outcome.

The 'What to do When You Feel Unwell' event was an excellent production of primary care services showcasing what is available locally and nationally in supporting a healthcare journey but also gave explanations into why there are sometimes delays in accessing a service and the many pressures arising.

We hope to continue to join Healthwatch Hartlepool and thank you for invites we have received so far."

**Jane Harvey**  
**Service Implementation**  
**& Peer Support Manager**  
**Community Pharmacy, Tees Valley**



Our virtual coffee mornings continue to be successful and really help with those suffering with anxiety attending face-to-face meetings. Our 2023/24 guest speakers at virtual coffee mornings were varied and included:

April – **John Blenkinsopp** – North Tees and Hartlepool Hospital Trust – Patient Engagement Activity

May – **Claire Robinson** – Hartlepool Borough Council – Public Health Update

June – **Jane Harvey** – Community Pharmacy Tees Valley – Local Pharmacy Update

July – **Hannah Robertson** (The Bridge) and **Jannette McGuire** (North Tees and Hartlepool Hospital Trust) – Dementia Services in Hartlepool

September – **Jan Hollis** – Hartlepool Carers – Carer update

October- **Julie Sinclair** – North Tees and Hartlepool Hospital Trust – Cancer Services and Support

November – **Sue Ewington** – People First – Local Advocacy Service Update

December – **Gary Greenman** – North Tees and Hartlepool Trust – Hospital Podiatry Services

January – **Julian Penton** – Hartlepower – VCS and community Transformation updates

February – **Kelly Thomson** – North Tees and Hartlepool Hospital Trust – Domestic Violence Project

March – **Jane Harvey** – Community Pharmacy Tees Valley – Local Pharmacy – changes and service developments



# Volunteering

**We're supported by a team of amazing volunteers who are at the heart of what we do. Thanks to their efforts in the community, we're able to understand what is working and what needs improving.**

## **This year our volunteers:**

- Supported our Patient & Public Engagement activity
- Promoted Healthwatch Hartlepool in the community and what we have to offer
- Collected experiences and supported the population to share their views
- Carried out 'enter and view' visits to Residential Care Homes to help them improve
- Undertook training on Safeguarding & supported the induction of new volunteers



It has been another busy year for Healthwatch Hartlepool. We are continuing to listen to the views and concerns of the people of the town and we are reacting accordingly.

Our training has been updated to ensure we stay in line with the guidance for volunteers to work effectively. I have enjoyed taking part in the induction of new volunteers and in particular, sharing my experiences of undertaking 'Enter and View' visits at a number of health and care settings.

We have also continued with our monthly on-line development meetings, as they have proved more beneficial from the point of view of being able to access speakers, who are much more willing and able to speak to us from their places of work.

We have continued our programme of 'Enter and View' visits this year and also worked with North Tees & Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust by participating in their place-based quality assessments. This was specifically at the request of the Hospital Trust.

Listening to patient experiences of accessing dentist appointments was another large piece of work undertaken this year. We heard about the problems patients faced accessing NHS dentistry services, a problem unfortunately felt by many people, not only in Hartlepool but also Nationally. We are at present awaiting the outcome of recommendations made to the Integrated Care Board regarding this work.

Our thanks as usual, to our amazing staff team, who have worked tirelessly as always to keep everything up to date and running, thereby allowing the volunteers to continue with the important work of Healthwatch on behalf of the people of the Town."

**Margaret Wrenn**

**Chair of the Volunteer Steering Group & Board member**



This has been a year of progress and change. Healthwatch Hartlepool is incredibly lucky to have Zoe Sherry as our Mental Health Lead. Zoe not only undertakes this role with passion but is also Chair of Hartlepool's Mental Health Forum and a Governor at Tees, Esk & Wear Valley Mental Health Trust. Zoe brings an unmeasurable amount of skill, expertise, intelligence and knowledge to her role and Healthwatch Hartlepool is most certainly the beneficiary.

"Once again Healthwatch Hartlepool played an active role in the development and delivery of a successful celebration event marking World Mental Health Day which was held at Hartlepool Town Hall. Please support us again this year, on 10<sup>th</sup> October at the Centre for Independent Living.

Healthwatch monitors local mental health services and possible changes that may give rise to concern and attends meetings and forums to represent public opinion. We worked closely with partners from Hartlepool Borough Council and the Community and Voluntary sector and despite some last minute changes the day went well with few hitches. As usual, we had music, social dancing, free refreshments, school art competition, mindfulness classes and a variety of stalls with lots of information. For the first time, art classes were included in our schedule. The sessions were well received and will be repeated next year.

Finally, a big thank you to our volunteers without whose hard work and support the day would not have been possible."

**Zoe Sherry**

**Mental Health Lead**



Hi, my name is Bernie Hays and I am a volunteer with Healthwatch Hartlepool. As a volunteer we help people to have their say on Health & Social Care. As a team we support each other and share our knowledge, skills and experience hoping to make a difference within our community.

We have what we call monthly 'Coffee Morning', which takes place online. We have a guest speaker each month for e.g., someone from Safeguarding, Carers, local council and outside agencies.

I am a volunteer of the Dementia Steering Group. This involves meeting people with the early onset of dementia, as well as other Health Professional and volunteers.

I have attended the 'Early onset Dementia' weekly coffee mornings, participating in a quiz, memory boxes, arts & crafts and other activities.

I have been part of the team doing 'Enter and View' visits to Residential Care Homes. This involves meet & greet, communicating with staff, residents their families and carers. We discuss their experience of hospital discharge to a care home for either short-term rehabilitation, with the aim of returning back to their own home or to remain as a permanent resident within a long-term care setting.

**Most recently I have been involved with the Healthwatch Discharge Project with other members of the team.**

Before visiting the discharge lounge, meetings take place to discuss the discharge process. This enables the volunteers to have a clear understanding, from the patient's admission to discharge and the five key stages of the discharge triage process.

On arrival when visiting the Discharge lounge, we were greeted by the clinical lead. We were introduced to the nurse in charge and Health Care Assistant (HCA). We had a tour of the discharge lounge, brief overview of patients present in the discharge lounge, awaiting to either return back to their own home, residential home or for rehabilitation. Patients can be transported either by ambulance, family/carers own transport or volunteer drivers.

When speaking with the patient, family members or carers present. We introduce ourselves and the reason for the visit. We listen to the patient's views, their journey from hospital admission to discharge.

We take notes and gather information to enable to have a clear overview of their experience. We listen to the positive and sometimes negative views of their stay in hospital. Some of the views shared include:

1. Patients informed us that there would be transport present when going to the discharge lounge. However, on arrival transport had been delayed and the patients stay was longer than expected.
2. Patients, medication not available for discharge.
3. We observed staff in the discharge lounge listening to patients, keeping them informed of developments and doing their utmost to make the patients stay as comfortable as possible.

Finally, our report has been positively received by the Hospital Trust and an action plan has been agreed."

**Bernie Hays**  
**Volunteer Steering Group member**





I have been a member of Healthwatch Hartlepool and previously Hartlepool LINK since 2009. I have spent many years trying to improve the experience of care provision and health outcomes for the people of Hartlepool.

I am a member of the Volunteer Steering Group of Healthwatch Hartlepool and also a Board Member. I find the work extremely rewarding and have made lifelong friends who share the same goals as I do.

In 2023/24 we undertook a review of how discharge from local hospitals had progressed since our previous investigation, which was undertaken some years ago.

We found many improvements and some areas in which further development was still required. Our work led to an excellent report which has been acted upon by North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Hospital Foundation Trust.

I was also involved in the planning and delivery of an annual celebration event to mark World Mental Health Day on October 10th. The event was well supported and enjoyed by all those who attended.

'Enter and View' is always an important part of our work programme and last year I was part of a team of Enter and View volunteers who visited a recently opened care home, Merlin Manor, for the first time.

I attend our monthly virtual coffee mornings, which are an opportunity to catch up with other volunteers and also hear from health professionals and service providers about their work and recent developments.

Finally, I am looking forward to being part of the project group who will be looking at domiciliary and reablement care services as part of our forthcoming work programme.

Volunteering with your local Healthwatch really does make a difference!"



**Carol Sherwood**

**Volunteer Steering Group & Board member**

## Do you feel inspired?



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

 [www.healthwatchhartlepool.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchhartlepool.co.uk)

 **0800 2545552**

 **Email [tony@healthwatchhartlepool.co.uk](mailto:tony@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.

## Our income and expenditure

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from Local Authority	£121,958	Expenditure on pay	£101,648
Additional income	£46,583	Accommodation	£8,040
		Other Expenditure	£46,159
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£168,541</b>	<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>£155,847</b>

## Additional income is broken down by:

- £15,000 received from the North East Commissioning Support unit for work on our project 'Growing Older Planning Ahead'
- £7,780 received from the North East & North Cumbria (NENC) Integrated Care Board (ICB) for projects and intelligence gathering for 'Patient Voice' committee
- £23,069 received from the ICB to host the NENC Healthwatch Network Regional Coordinator
- £734 received from bank reserves account

## ICS funding

Healthwatch Hartlepool across the North east & North Cumbria receives funding from our Integrated Care Board per above to support areas of collaborative project work at a system level, including:

Purpose of ICS funding	Amount
Core intelligence gathering	£4,500
Waiting Well Campaign	£250
Review of ICB Involvement Strategy	£1,200
Health Literacy	£1,440
Dentistry	£390
Total	£7,780

## Next steps

**Over the next year, we will keep reaching out to every part of society, 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. A focus on the quality and effectiveness of care provided through domiciliary care and reablement.
2. Work collaboratively with the ICB Place sub-committee in respect of Cardio Vascular Disease & associated health checks.
3. Expand our work of 'Enter & View' covering both Health and Care settings.



# Statutory statements

**Healthwatch England, 2 Redman Place, Stratford, E20 1JQ**

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

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

Throughout 2023/24, the Board met 7 times and made decisions on matters such as our volunteer handbook and our Governance Framework review.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities and our work programme is monitored on a monthly basis by our Volunteer Steering Group.

## 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 2023/24, we have been available by phone, and email, provided a web form on our website and through social media, as well as attending meetings of community groups and forums.

We ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. We will publish it on our website [www.healthwatchhartlepool.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchhartlepool.co.uk) and host an open day at our accessible premises to showcase our work.

## Responses to recommendations

We had 14 providers (G.P. Practices) who did not respond to requests for information or recommendations. There were no issues or recommendations escalated by us to Healthwatch England Committee, so no resulting reviews or investigations.

## Taking people's experiences to decision-makers

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

In our local authority area, for example, we take information to the Council's Audit & Governance Committee, which has the Health Scrutiny function and also attend the Council's Adult & Community Based Services committee.

We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers within the North East & North Cumbria (NENC) Integrated Care Board (ICB). 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 also a member of the Strategic Integrated Care Partnership in his role as Regional Coordinator for the NENC Healthwatch Network.

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

## Enter and view

This year, we made 2 Enter and View visits. We made 9 recommendations as a result of this activity.

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
Clifton House Residential Care Home	<p>To gather feedback from residents and family members of their impressions of care provision and how this has evolved since the Covid pandemic</p> <p>To gain insight into the day-to-day provision of care and the specific support for residents living with dementia</p>	<p>Wrote a report with recommendations – the service was found to be very good albeit the home decoration should be improved.</p>
Merlin Manor Care Centre	<p>To gather feedback from residents and family members of their impressions of care provided since opening in 2022</p>	<p>Wrote a report with a range of recommendations retailed on our website:</p> <p><a href="http://www.healthwatchhartlepool.co.uk">www.healthwatchhartlepool.co.uk</a></p> <p>These included the commending of staff for the overall standard of care &amp; dementia training is promoted at a more advanced level.</p>

## Healthwatch representatives


Healthwatch Hartlepool is represented on the Hartlepool Health and Wellbeing Board by Christopher Akers-Belcher – Chief Executive and Margaret Wrenn – Chair Volunteer steering Group. During 2023/24 our representative has effectively carried out this role by presenting our reports & findings, participating in the review of the town's pharmaceutical needs assessment, assisting with the review of the Health & Wellbeing Strategy, promoting the need for ambitious targets around the health checks and health plans required by residents living with Autism or a Learning Disability.

Healthwatch Hartlepool is represented on the Hartlepool Integrated Care Board (ICB) Place sub-committee by Christopher Akers-Belcher – Chief Executive. Our Chief executive also holds a place on the ICB Patient Voice committee, Quality & Safety committee & System Quality Group.

# healthwatch

Healthwatch Hartlepool,  
'Greenbank',  
Waldon Street,  
Hartlepool,  
TS24 7QS

 [www.healthwatchhartlepool.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchhartlepool.co.uk)

 0800 254 5552

**Text** 07749688795

 [yoursay@healthwatchhartlepool.co.uk](mailto:yoursay@healthwatchhartlepool.co.uk)

 [Facebook.com/HealthwatchHartlepool](https://www.facebook.com/HealthwatchHartlepool)