



# Healthwatch Sunderland Annual Report 2020-21

Then and now

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# Message from our Chair

**During the Pandemic Healthwatch Sunderland has concentrated on ensuring the public are kept fully informed on the service changes that have taken place as a result of COVID-19.**

Engagement and signposting has been achieved using our website, telephone contact and social media. Extensive use of Zoom and Microsoft Teams has enabled our board meetings to go ahead as planned alongside our continued involvement with the NHS Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), Local Authority via the Health and Wellbeing Board, Adult Social Services and working groups associated with these organisations.

We have developed and carried out reviews and surveys on how health and social services have performed in Sunderland during the pandemic. Our reports on the COVID-19 vaccination programme indicated the success from those who delivered it in Sunderland. This reports were well received by the NHS Clinical Commissioning Group who were grateful for the feedback.



**“We were delighted to receive a commendation awarded by Healthwatch England for our Care Home Life – What it’s really like work. Shortlisted under the ‘The impact our team makes’ category the annual event celebrated the difference all local Healthwatch staff and volunteers have made over the year.”**

We have taken the opportunity over the year to build on relationships including those with a learning disability and autism, carers, and the local ethnic minority communities etc. We have supported each of these groups with some of the difficulties they have faced over the past year and have made some real positive differences, which can be read later in the report.

We have also initiated the development of a Network of Healthwatch Chairs across the region covered by the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care System (NENC ICS). The network has been set up to facilitate patient representation by Healthwatch on the ICS board and the ICS partnership board alongside PLACE (Sunderland City Level).



Looking ahead, we will be working in partnership with All Together Better Sunderland (a local alliance of providers and commissioners) to determine how effective integrated health and social care services are in the city from hospital discharge to care in the community. This work will be funded by the CCG and will help the Healthwatch financial position. We will also be carrying our reviews in domiciliary care sector and report on the performance of the large number of domiciliary care providers across the city. This area was selected by the public alongside young people, as being key priority areas for Healthwatch to work on over the next year.

**Dr. John Dean, Chair of Healthwatch Sunderland**

# About us

## Here to make health and care better

We are the independent champion for people who use health and social care services in Sunderland. We're here to find out what matters to people and help make sure your views shape the support you need, by sharing these views with those who have the power to make change happen.

## Helping you to find the information you need

We help people find the information they need about services in their area. This has been vital during the pandemic with the ever-changing environment and restrictions limiting people's access to health and social care services.

### Our goals



#### **1 Supporting you to have your say**

We want more people to get the information they need to take control of their health and care, make informed decisions and shape the services that support them.



#### **2 Providing a high quality service**

We want everyone who shares their experience or seeks advice from us to get a high-quality service and to understand the difference their views make.



#### **3 Ensuring your views help improve health & care**

We want more services to use your views to shape the health and care support you need today and in the future.



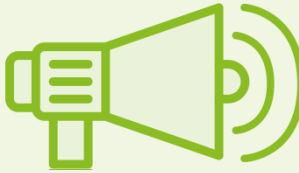
**“Local Healthwatch have done fantastic work throughout the country during the COVID-19 pandemic, but there is more work ahead to ensure that everyone’s views are heard. COVID-19 has highlighted inequalities and to tackle these unfair health differences we will need those in power to listen, to hear the experiences of those facing inequality and understand the steps that could improve people’s lives.”**

**Sir Robert Francis QC, Chair of Healthwatch England**

# Highlights from our year

Find out about our resources and how we have engaged and supported people in 2020-21.

## Reaching out



We heard from

**994 people**

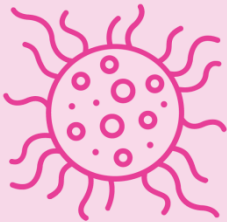
this year about their experiences of health and social care.

We have supported

**287 people**

through our information and signposting service.

## Responding to the pandemic



We engaged with and supported

**790 people**

during the COVID-19 pandemic this year. This has included two pieces of work on peoples experience of services during the pandemic and the COVID-19 Vaccination programme.

## Making a difference to care



We published

**13 reports**

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

We have attended

**161 meetings**

including 26 focus groups.

## Health and care that works for you



**24 volunteers**

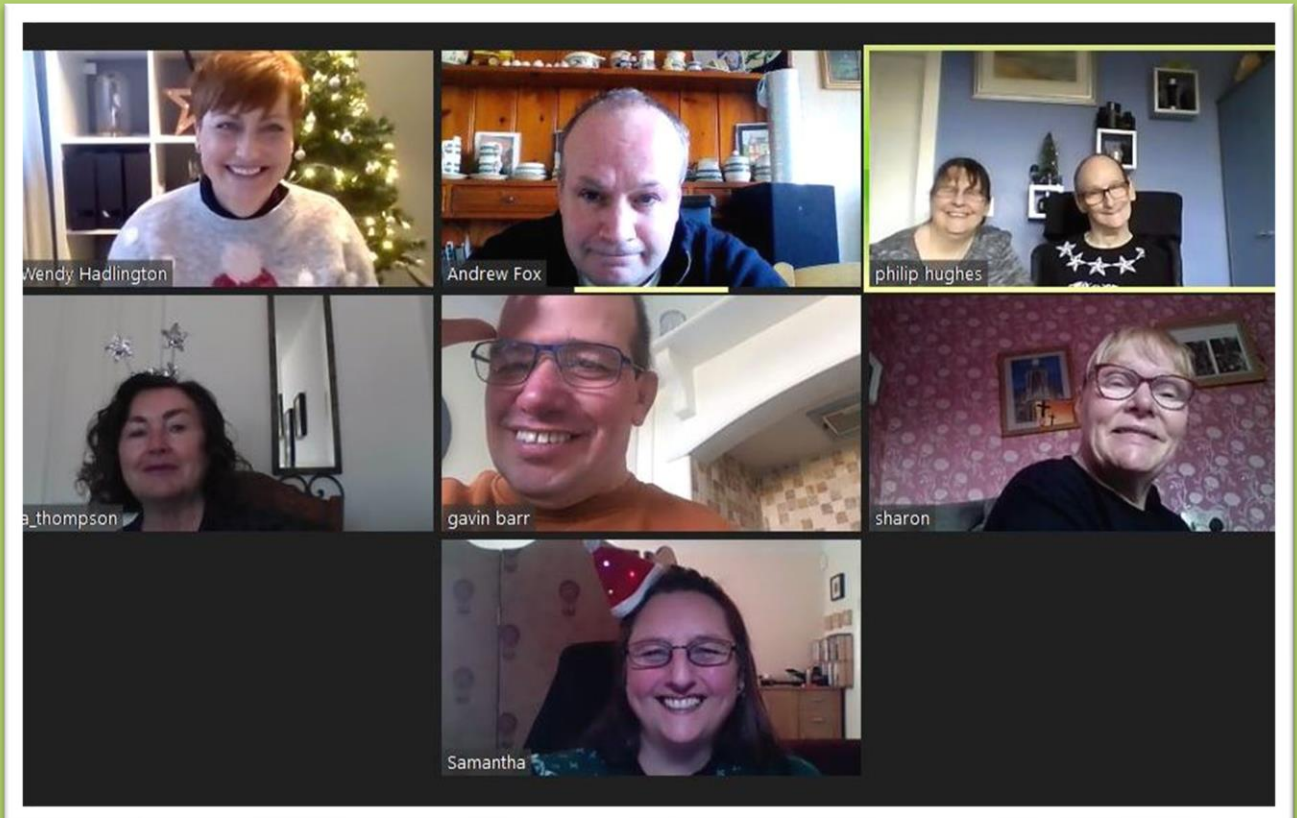
helped us to carry out our work. In total, they contributed 511 hours. This is including 9 board members.

**We employ 6 members of staff**

We received

**£150,00 in funding**

from our local authority in 2020-21.



# Then and now

Reasonable adjustments made to support patient independence



## Then: access to breast screening services

Thanks to people with a learning disability or autism sharing their experiences of breast screening services, we were able to work with NHS service providers to adapt the way they communicate with patients. Ultimately ensure patients have access to clear information about their treatment in a way that is accessible and clear.

Working with Sunderland People First to gather their experiences of health and social care service we were informed about a member's recent experience of using the breast screening service. Sharon shared her delight after receiving her initial invitation for her breast screening appointment in an easy read format and then her subsequent disappointment at receiving a follow up letter, calling her back to clinic for further tests, in a format she couldn't understand. She explained that she felt this had taken away her independence, as she had to rely on her sister to explain the contents of the letter to her.



## Now: Reasonable adjustments

**Thanks to local people sharing their story we have been able to bring about change and improve services for patients not just in our area but across England.**

After some initial research we found out that easy read breast screening letters are produced by Public Health England and there are three additional letters for patients when being recalled to the service. Unfortunately, none of which are available in easy read.

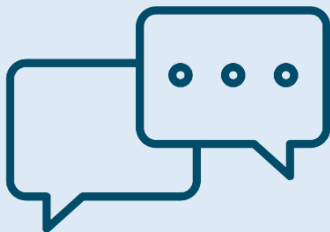
Following this up, a member of the Healthwatch Engagement Team met with Mike Harris, Publications and Information Manager, from Public Health England Screening, to discuss the need to make reasonable adjustments and provide letters in an easy read format, at all stages of their treatment. Mike acknowledged the issue and responded positively. We later received the following feedback;

**“Work is progressing to finalise the new easy read letter templates. We’ll be aiming to publish them on GOV.UK within the next couple of months and will publish a blog article on the PHE Screening Blog to signpost to them.”**

By working with local people, we identified a problem and found a solution with the provider so other similar negative experience wouldn't happen in the future. We shared the update with Sharon whose story helped influence this national change, she said;

**“I am really pleased that I shared my story with Healthwatch Sunderland, and that action has now been taken by the Public Health England Screening team, to make sure that information in the future is accessible. I hope that this will make it easier for women with a learning disability to attend their appointments, to know what will happen and be able to ask any questions if they are worried.”**


**Sharon Bell, Self-Advocate, Sunderland People First**



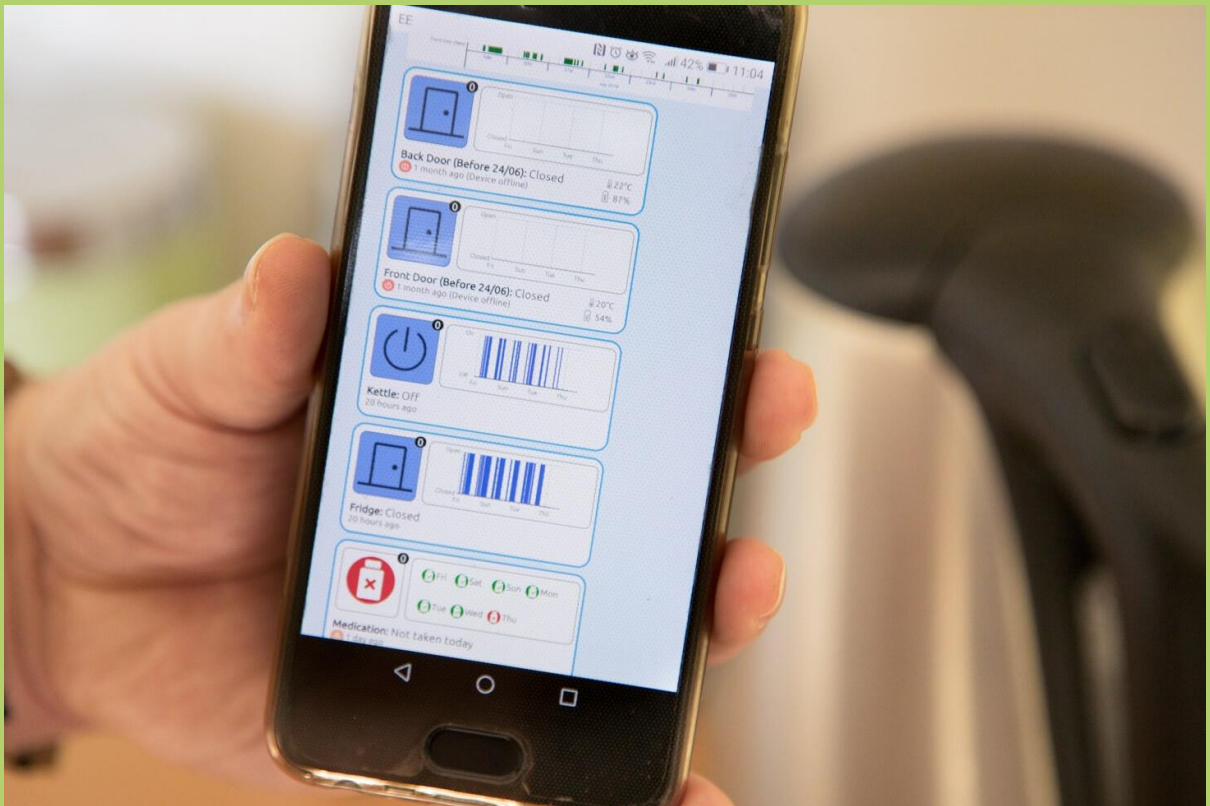
### Share your views and questions with us

If you have a query about a health and social care service or need help with where you can go to access further support, get in touch. Don't struggle alone. Healthwatch is here for you.

 [www.healthwatchesunderland.com](http://www.healthwatchesunderland.com)

 0191 514 7145

 [healthwatchesunderland@pcp.uk.net](mailto:healthwatchesunderland@pcp.uk.net)



# Then and now

## App developed to support people's independence



### Then: Remaining independent in the home

**The Social Health Enabling Independent Living (SHEILA) App was developed by Sunderland City Council to help local residents to live independently.**

Having identified a need to support some local residents who wished to remain in their own home but required some additional support to do so, Sunderland City Council explored some of the assistive technology ideas available and came up with the idea of an App.

Healthwatch Sunderland were informed of these potential developments and were eager to ensure that service users and carers alike were involved in the agreed development of the App. Through discussion with key staff, it was agreed that Healthwatch would join a working group, which was made up of social care staff and IT developers. After initial meetings it soon became evident that the group would benefit from service user involvement and we invited some of our volunteers who had experience of being a carer themselves. Volunteers participated in the work and represented the gap that existed in ensuring that those who would be benefiting from the service had the opportunity to have their voices heard and listened to.





## Now: App developed to support people's independence

The App is now in use and is helping local people with many aspects of their life by promoting independence and supporting them to perform everyday tasks. These tasks range from opening and closing curtains, reminding them when to take medication or what time of day or date it is. This App also has more advanced applications such as the clever use of sensors on external doors and fridges etc. which will then alert carers or family members when it's out of the ordinary. Feedback so far has been positive and has improved the ability for people to stay in their own home for longer, with a much higher degree of personal independence. In addition, the App has also given carers and family members reassurance that their loved one is safe and can remain at home.

The volunteers involved in the work are proud of their involvement and were impressed with how receptive the group was. They feel their voices were both heard and listened to as part of the development process, with many of their ideas being taken on board by the developers. Our volunteer Pauline, who was part of the working group said;

**"I was thrilled to be asked to join the Family Carers and Care Recipient Group to share my experiences as a carer as part of the software improvement review of the Social Health Enabling Independent Living (SHEILA) App. To hear that the App is improving the quality of life of users is fantastic and that it has won a European award is great news".**

Healthwatch is proud to support the work and its achievement and were over the moon when it was announced that Sunderland City Council was named winner of the 2020 Civic Innovation in Technology Award (Europe) from the Technology and Entrepreneurship Center at Harvard. The award serves as recognition of the Council's innovative approach to supporting social care with the use of assistive technology. Healthwatch was praised for supporting local people to become involved in the work.

**"Healthwatch have played a vital role in supporting our development of the SHEILA App. The organisation's unique background and understanding of the Sunderland health and social care community, provided us with an understanding of what carers and clients would need from the software. The group provided ideas and suggestions and guided the software developer to designing a user focused solution. SHEILA wouldn't be half as good if it weren't for their input and commitment in helping us design a solution to benefit Sunderland residents."**

**Dave Young, Deputy Strategic Change Manager, Sunderland City Council**



# Responding to COVID-19

**Healthwatch plays an important role in helping people to get the information they need, especially through the pandemic. The insight we collect is shared with both Healthwatch England and local partners to ensure services are operating as best as possible during the pandemic.**

This year we have helped in many ways, some of which have included:

- Providing up to date advice and information on support services on COVID-19 through our dedicated webpage, which has received **2686** hits
- Speaking to Sunderland people about their worries and concerns around the pandemic and listening to their feedback about services
- A team member becoming a Sunderland COVID-19 Champion, which has enabled us to keep up to date with reliable, local COVID-19 information and disseminate this through our e-bulletin and social media channels
- Helping people to access the services they need, at the right time
- Linking local people with a Learning Disability, Autism, Dementia and their carers to a local GP and Clinical Director, from the NHS Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group, who was able to meet with them for a COVID-19 related question and answer session
- Providing service providers with patient and service user feedback on how they have operated throughout the pandemic
- Feeding back to those responsible for the vaccine programme delivery on patient experience to help the progress of the programme
- Producing a short film featuring a GP practice manager who provided patients with answers to many questions we received about GP appointments and how to access them during the pandemic

# Sunderland says “Thank You”



Building on the Healthwatch Sunderland Nominate a Star work (which is one of the ways in which we ensure that services receive the great feedback we hear about them), we spent this year asking the people of Sunderland to send us their 'Thank You' messages to those individuals working to save lives and keep us safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We received over 50 responses over the months, from local people who wanted to thank a range of services and individuals including local care homes, hospital wards/department, Nurses, Pharmacists, Dentists plus many, many more, here are a couple of examples.



**“I would like to say thank you to all the care staff at Lansbury Court Care Home - looking after a dear relative for us and in lockdown. We think they are all doing an amazing job and tonight at 8pm I will be clapping for them and those like them in other homes across the city looking after our precious family members.”**




**“I would like to thank Avenue Pharmacy in Roker Avenue, they're the best and still ensuring everyone has what they need. They've been working extra hours and are always very helpful and very happy. They've had to implement safe distancing and are coping fabulously. They deserve recognition. ”**



If you would like to nominate a staff member, team or service for one of our Star Awards for the difference they have made to you or someone you know please visit our website or get in touch.

 [www.healthwatchesunderland.com](http://www.healthwatchesunderland.com)

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# Volunteers

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, our usual work including carrying out all face-to-face work in the community, has ceased and both staff and volunteers have become home based.

However, this hasn't held our volunteers back. They volunteer team remain as dedicated and enthusiastic as ever, supporting our activities and keeping up to date with all things health and social care related. They have dedicated over 500 hours over the past year with the following activities:



**Our Board** – virtual meetings are now the norm, with our Executive Board Volunteers attending strategic meetings and events across the health and social care sector to ensure the voice of Sunderland people continues to be heard.



**Campaign Group** – this brand-new group has been formed to promote national and local health and social care campaigns, through social media, e-bulletins and virtual events. So far these have included; Self Care Week and Brain Awareness Week with many more planned for the year ahead.



**Training** – even more eager to increase their knowledge and skills, our volunteers have completed training in Dementia Friends, Fire Safety Awareness, Modern Slavery, Mate Crime and Hate Crime and the Independent Complaints Advocacy Service, which have all been delivered virtually by local organisations and some in partnership with Sunderland People First.



**Research** – volunteers have used their research skills to see how care homes were keeping in touch with resident's friends and family members whilst they were unable to visit due to the pandemic. They also supported with the development of a directory of online activities for care homes to use to enhance their activity programme. These documents are available on our website.



**Social activities** – importantly our volunteers have been there for each other during this difficult year by keeping in touch with each other, attending regular virtual coffee mornings and get togethers.



### Volunteer - June

Volunteer June is usually out and about supporting the Healthwatch with patient engagement activities, but this year COVID-19 put a stop to that and June, due to her health, was asked to shield. However, June still wanted to continue to support us and helped us to promote self-care week by starring in a video where she shared her struggles during a year of COVID-19 and how she used self-care to improve her own mental health and wellbeing.



### Board member - Gavin

Gavin, who works for Sunderland People First as an Advocate, also regularly attends Healthwatch Board meetings and gets involved in campaigns and focus groups. Gavin always brings a common-sense approach to his feedback and comments and his involvement is truly valued and appreciated. Our team have learnt so much about Learning Disabilities and Autism from working with Gavin and his colleagues from Sunderland People First – Thank you!

### Going the extra mile

Not only are our volunteers valued members of our team, they also support a range of other organisations by giving their time freely and can't wait for the lockdown restrictions to be lifted so normal business can resume for them at; St Benedict's Hospice, Healing Opportunities Sunderland, Age UK, North-East Regional Alcohol Forum, local foodbanks, local befriending services, the list goes on and on.

By either sharing their own experiences or those they have engaged with as part of their role, our volunteers have been able to influence change in local health and social care service for the better.



**"As a volunteer with Healthwatch I have met many people who have had a similar experience to myself, that of caring for a disabled relative. This has meant that I have been able to share and receive useful information as well as giving and gaining emotional and practical support." - Gaynor**



### Volunteer with us

Are you feeling inspired? We are always on the lookout for new volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering, please get in touch at:



[www.healthwatchesunderland.com](http://www.healthwatchesunderland.com)



0191 514 7145



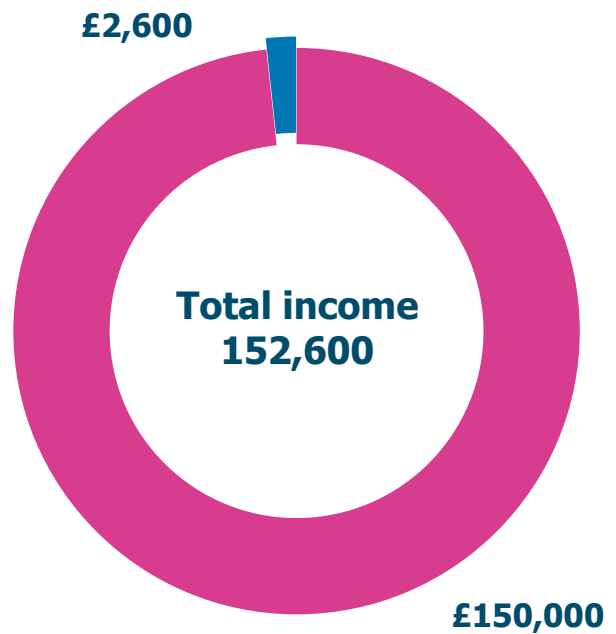
[healthwatchesunderland@pcp.uk.net](mailto:healthwatchesunderland@pcp.uk.net)

# Finances

To help us carry out our work we receive funding from our Local Authority under the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

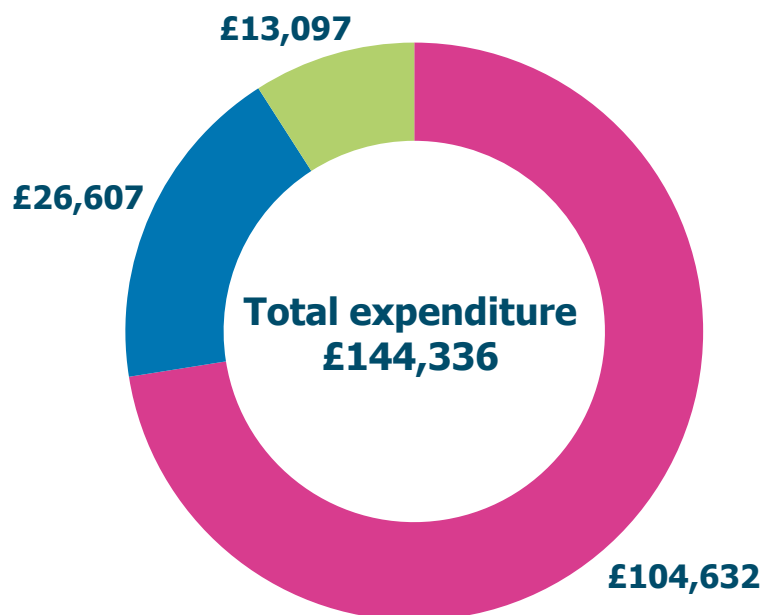
## Income

- Funding received from local authority
- Additional funding



## Expenditure

- Staff costs
- Operational costs
- Office costs



# Next steps & thank you

## Top four priorities for 2021-22

- Out of hospital services
- Domiciliary care (care in your own home)
- Young people
- Carers and the impact of COVID-19

## Next steps

As we move away from national restrictions Healthwatch is very much looking forward to getting back to working directly with people in communities again. When safe to do so, we will be able to see you all again soon and hear your views on health and social care services in person.

We are committed to ensuring Sunderland health and social care services are equally accessible to all residents in Sunderland. We will continue build on our working relationships with organisations such as the Bangladesh International Centre, Sunderland People First, the Essence Service and Pallion Action Group, to name just a few. Linking these organisations and others like them to service providers and decision makers to ensure the voices of their service users are heard and listened to, making services which are better for them and others in the future.

We will listen to the people who kindly took the time to vote on our Priorities for 2021-2022 and are committed look into; Domiciliary Care in Sunderland, Young People and Carers and the impact of COVID-19.



**"Overall, it has been a successful year for Healthwatch Sunderland despite the difficulties caused by COVID-19 and I would like to express my thanks for the superb efforts by PCP and all of our volunteers and partners who have contributed to this success.**

**I would also like to thank Margaret Curtis our Project Lead for her work over the years. She has now decided to change her career and move on and explore new opportunities. We wish her luck in her new career."**

**Dr. John Dean, Chair of Healthwatch Sunderland Chair**



# Statutory statements

## About us

Healthwatch Sunderland is managed by the Pioneering Care Partnership (PCP) Registered Charity No. 1067888 Company registered in England No 3491237 V.A.T Registration No 708 1680 37 Registered office: Pioneering Care Centre, Carers Way, Newton Aycliffe, County Durham, DL5 4SF

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

If you need this in an alternative format, please contact us.

## The way we work

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

Our Healthwatch Board consists of 9 members who work on a voluntary basis to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny to our activities. Our Board ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities. We ensure all information we collate, whether this be feedback from a service user or patient, insight from an information and signposting enquiry or intelligence gathered at a public workshop or forum etc helps us to set our work priorities. All this data gathered is monitored by the team and used to track those areas that need further consideration. Then utilising our decision-making policy and procedures, these areas will be discussed by our Board and considered as potential pieces of work.



## How we collected people's views and experience over the year.

We use a wide range of approaches to ensure that as many people as possible have the opportunity to provide us with insight about their experience of health and care services. During 2020-21 we have been available by phone, by email, provided a webform on our website, attended virtual meetings of community groups and forums, provided our own virtual activities and engaged with the public through social media.

We are committed to taking additional steps to ensure we obtain the views of people from diverse backgrounds who are often not heard by health and care decision makers. This year we have done this by, for example, by carrying out focussed work with those from the ethnic minority communities learning disability and autism, areas of deprivation and carers to name just a few.

We will ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. We publish it on our website, e-newsletter and social media platforms. We have also produced a summary document of the report as a quick read.



**"A huge thank you to Wendy Hadlington for giving the Sunderland Bangladesh International Centre the opportunity to work in partnership. Through our partnership work with Healthwatch Sunderland, we have been given a platform to give feedback from the BME communities in Sunderland on health and social care services and highlight health inequalities directly to service providers. We have also made links with a range of key partners and stakeholders."**

**Nahida Aktar, Community Development Officer,  
Sunderland Bangladesh International Centre**



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