

# Together

**we're making health  
and social care better**

**Annual Report 2022-23**



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**"In the last ten years, the health and social care landscape has changed dramatically, but the dedication of local Healthwatch hasn't. Your local Healthwatch has worked tirelessly to make sure the views of local people are heard, and NHS and social care leaders use your feedback to make care better."**

**Louise Ansari, Healthwatch National Director**

# Message from our Chair

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As the new Chair from September, I want to thank the previous Chair, John Dean, for his many years of service to Healthwatch Sunderland and his personal support.

I have spent the last 7 months reaching out to Board members, staff, volunteers and partners about our local Healthwatch, and it has been a pleasure to hear about the fantastic work undertaken day in day out and now detailed in this Annual Report.

It has also been an opportunity to reset relationships with key leaders in the local NHS and Council, responsible for both commissioning and providing health and care services, agreeing how we work together moving forward. At the same time, we have actively engaged in the new arrangements across the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB), including working with the 13 other Healthwatch bodies, feeding into the ICB.



**“What has been most reassuring to the Board, is knowing the staff and volunteers have been able to get out in the community again, visiting a whole range of groups. They are constantly checking out what local people are experiencing and bringing that to our attention, so together we can make sure this intelligence is used to make a difference.”**

**Debbie Burnicle, Healthwatch Sunderland Chair**

# About us

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## Healthwatch Sunderland is your local health and social care champion.

We make sure NHS leaders and social care 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.



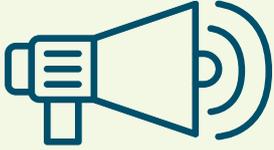
### Our values are:

- **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

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## Reaching out



**2944 people**

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

**2299 people**

came to us for clear information and signposting about topics such as how to make a complaint and NHS dentistry.

## Making a difference to care

We published

**4 reports**

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

Our most popular report was

**GP access**

which highlighted the struggles people face when trying to access their GP practice.



## Health and care that works for you



We're lucky to have

**30**

outstanding volunteers who gave up 79 days to make care better for our community.

We currently employ

**6 staff**

who help us carry out our work.

# How we've made a difference this year

Spring	 <p>Supporting the COVID-19 vaccination programme we talked to 343 people from different communities to understand their hesitancy towards the vaccine and shared our findings.</p>	 <p>Planning and implementing our campaigns for the year ahead to raise awareness of key messages and share information on key local and national support services.</p>
Summer	 <p>Attended Summer events giving children and young adults increased opportunities to feed back on the health services they use.</p>	 <p>Held a workshop to support the council's development of a Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy.</p>
Autumn	 <p>Held a community Organ Donation Event raising awareness of the importance of both diseased and altruistic organ donation and the wider impact.</p>	 <p>Highlighted breast care hospital recall letters in easy read with our #ItsBoobEasy campaign achieving international reach.</p>
Winter	 <p>Supported our partners to develop a new health and wellness hub for our city which will be embedded into every Sunderland GP website.</p>	 <p>Spoke to people who had accessed the Safeguarding process and fed back to service providers to highlight what is working well and what may need to be improved.</p>

# 10 years of improving care

This year marks a special milestone for Healthwatch. Over the last ten years, people have shared their experiences, good and bad, to help improve health and social care. A big thank you to all our Healthwatch Heroes that have stepped up and inspired change. Here are a few of our highlights:

## How have we made care better, together?

### Vaccine confidence

Our research exploring vaccine confidence with people from different backgrounds provided vital lessons for public health campaigns.



### Breast screening

Thanks to patient Sharon sharing her story, NHS England have introduced Breast Screening Recall letters in easy-read formats nationwide. Making a difference for many people who have additional communication needs and learning disabilities.



### Hospital appointment systems

Sharing feedback we had gathered on the hospitals appointment system helped to make it easier to understand and use for patients.



### Care home Life

As a result of our 'Care Home Life – What it's really like!', members of the general public have access to our reports, which detail what life is like in the care homes of Sunderland. This has helped people make more informed decisions on which home is best for them or their loved ones.



### Access to equipment services

By sharing information on equipment services, we supported many local residents to access equipment such as; wheelchairs, walking frames etc helping them to remain safe and independent in their own homes.





## Healthwatch Hero



### Celebrating a hero in our local community.

Sharon is a Healthwatch Hero for bravely raising her experiences with us and creating change so that no one else has to struggle as she did.

Sharon received her routine mammogram invitation in easy read, but when she was recalled for further tests, the letters were not available in easy read.

We helped Sharon tell her story to both NHS England and NHS Improvement and as a result a series of follow up letters have been developed in easy read. This will improve the experience and safety of countless patients undergoing routine breast screening across the country.

Without Sharon sharing her experiences with us, we would never have known about the issue. Thanks to Sharon, people across the whole of England will now be able to better understand their care.



# 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.

# Helping to improve hospital visits for kinship carers and their families

Our work with the South Tyneside and Sunderland Hospital Trust is helping to raise awareness of what a kinship carer is with staff, resulting in a better patient and carer experience.

During an engagement session with local group, More than Grandparents, we received feedback about some of the issues kinship carers were facing when attending the local hospital Children's Emergency department.

Grandparents and carers explained they were often questioned about their legal guardianship of the children they were caring for and asked inappropriate questions by reception staff and, on some occasions, by clinical staff. This was having a significant negative impact on the children who were often left confused and upset.

To raise awareness of these issues we facilitated meetings between kinship carers and the patient experience staff from the Hospital. The meetings allowed the carers to explain their concerns and highlight some of the situations they had faced.

In response to this the Hospital developed and delivered an action plan aimed at addressing some of the issues carers and the children they care for were experiencing, these included:



- Increasing awareness of kinship carers via staff newsletters, in-house awareness raising campaigns and coverage in supervisions with staff etc;
- Additional staff training educating them on the IT flagging systems and correct ways to talk to families coming into the trust;
- Creation of an education video to be used with staff, where carers shared their firsthand experiences of using services and how this made them feel;
- Implementation of new procedures so, if any inappropriate safeguarding referrals are made, the safeguarding team would interject and advise the staff member accordingly.

## What difference will this make?

The changes implemented highlight the power of people's feedback – with decision-makers listening to your voice and taking action.

With these changes in place kinship carers are now able to access hospital-based services without facing additional stress and worry in an already anxious situation.

“Our kinship carers felt empowered by being allowed to talk freely about their experiences. Some kinship carers are already reporting a change in attitude from hospital staff when they attend A&E which relieves their stress during a time, they already find stressful.”

**Melanie Nichols, CEO, More than Grandparents**



# Increased support for amputee patients

Being told you need to have a limb amputated can be a devastating, frightening and life changing experience, with many of those needing the amputation often as an emergency, leaving the individual with little to no time to process the effects of surgery.

Feedback from patients highlighted that they were often leaving hospital with little or no information on where to go for practical and emotional support.

As explained to us by local resident Andrea, who had faced her own amputation, this can often result in people feeling depressed, anxious and alone. After meeting with Andrea and members from a newly established support group, we set about looking at ways to bring about change. This resulted in us:



- Signposting support group members to local organisations who can assist them with the development and promotion of the support group to reach more people.
- Increasing awareness of the support group to other amputees by hosting regular partnership information stands within key areas of the hospital.
- Assisting with the development and creation of an information pack, in partnership with the hospital trust and the support group, which details all the key information patients will need to support them following their amputation.

## What difference will this make?

Thanks to Andrea and others who shared their experiences, patients will now be equipped with the information they need following an amputation. The pack will contain key information and where people can access the practical and emotional support they may need locally. This will help to alleviate some of the worries patients face following a life changing experience.

"I am so pleased I met Wendy and the support that she and Healthwatch Sunderland have given me, and the group has been invaluable. Not only have we been able to recruit new members, but the sessions at the hospital have allowed us to offer peer support to people who have had a recent amputation and more recently offer support to a lady who, for her, amputation is inevitable in the future."

**Andrea, amputee patient and founder member of the peer support group, Out on a Limb.**



# Three ways we have made a difference for the community

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Throughout our work we gather information about health inequalities by speaking to people whose experiences aren't often heard.

## Creating empathy by bringing experiences to life

It's important for service providers and commissioners to see the bigger picture. Hearing personal experiences and the impact on people's lives provides them with a better understanding of the problems.

During the months of October – November 2022, 75 recipients and their family and friends informed us about their experience of using care in their own home (domiciliary care). We have fed this back to commissions who said;

"It is encouraging to see high levels of satisfaction among people who receive domiciliary care, and I am pleased to see so many of them and their families report that they feel their carers know them well. Equally the report also helps us to identify areas where we can improve the service going forward which will feed into our overall review of what future services people need to keep them independent and at home. I'd like to thank everyone who took part in the survey."

Graham King, Director of Adult Services at Sunderland City Council

## Getting services to involve the public

Services need to understand the benefits of involving local people to help improve care for everyone.

Working with a local sight loss charity and its members we have helped to ensure patients voices were heard by the NHS when designing and developing a new passport for patients with Macular degeneration. By hosting discussions and listening directly to those with lived experiences, the NHS understood what would work best for patients. This has helped to improve services for all those with a Macular degeneration and support the development of relationships.

## Improving patient access to GP services

It's important that services understand some of the barriers created for patients accessing services .

During August – September 2022, 1261, people shared their experience of accessing their GP with us. We shared this with service providers and decision makers who are now better informed on areas that need to be improved ".....the report that has been published has provided some invaluable insights that we can now work with to help improve access for patients going forward."

NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB)





# healthwatch STAR Sunderland Awards

As a Healthwatch we often hear about those services that shine or individuals who go the extra mile. Celebrating these services or individuals is an essential and enjoyable part of our work and the 'Nominate a Star' scheme is our way of acknowledging the good we hear about.

Over the past year we have presented the following individuals and departments with one of our Star Awards:

- Ruth Bell, Social Prescriber, Sunderland GP Alliance
- Sunderland Royal Hospital Outpatients department
- Johnathan Hindmarsh, Pharmacist, South Tyneside and Sunderland Foundation Trust
- Claire Atherton – Speech and Language Therapist, South Tyneside and Sunderland Foundation Trust
- Steven Gambles – Together for Children



If you would like to nominate an NHS or publicly funded social care staff member, team or service for one of our Star Awards for the difference they have made, please get in touch.



# 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:**

- Listening to young people across the city and ensuring their voices are heard by service providers.
- Hosting sessions with international students ensuring they have the information they need on how best to access health and care across the city.
- Holding regular feedback sessions with those who have a learning disability or autism so they can share their experiences of health and care.
- Working in partnership with the International and Bangladeshi Centre to ensure those they represent have services they can access and use.

## Improved access to the COVID-19 vaccine

We undertook two pieces of engagement work across the year and gathered feedback from over 350 local people as to why they were hesitant to receive the COVID-19 vaccines.

Their main reasons for not being fully vaccinated included cultural or religious reasons and no longer feeling the need to be fully vaccinated due to restriction changes.

Findings were presented to organisations who make up the local NHS Winter Vaccine Board who have used to shape further delivery of the vaccine in Sunderland.



“The information in Healthwatch’s report will help us to work with our partners across the city to improve vaccination uptake by raising awareness of the continued importance of vaccination against COVID-19, in particular during the Autumn and Winter of 2022.” **Sunderland GP Alliance Ltd**

## Young people have their say

### What does self care mean to you?

Self care to me, means how one takes care of their body, their mind and their spirit. We know that it is very important to take care of our bodies and ourselves so that we can function optimally and effectively.



With the help of our Youthwatch volunteers we have been listening to young people by reaching out to those aged 25 and under to understand how services work for them and what’s important.

Young people informed us healthy living and lifestyle and their mental health are important to them. As a result, Youthwatch created and promoted a video to mark self-care week, within the video young people explained the importance of self-care and shared with others their top tips on how best to look after themselves.



“Some of the tips I would give to young people out there is to find what keeps you motivated. What is that thing you love to do that keeps you very energetic, or in a positive spirit. Keep at it. Do it every day, do not stop doing it.”

**Chidera, Youthwatch volunteer**



# Advice and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch is there for residents living in Sunderland. We can provide confidential support and free information to help you understand your options and get the help you need. Whether it's finding an NHS dentist, how to make a complaint or choosing a good care home for a loved one – you can count on us.

This year we've helped people by:

- Providing up to date information people can trust
- Helping people access the services they need
- Helping people access NHS dentistry
- Hosting health campaign events and promoting key health messages

## Supporting local people in emergency situations

As part of our signposting service, we give local people a tool to help them remain safe. The impact of this has been great.



“When contacting a lady for her welfare morning call, I suspected she had taken a stroke, so I called 999 and the paramedics arrived. Luckily, the lady had attended a coffee morning hosted by Healthwatch Sunderland, where she had received a Lions Club Message in a Bottle which she had completed and stored in her fridge. The bottle was retrieved and provided the paramedics with all the information they needed in order to treat the lady. It was a godsend and I fully believe this helped saved her life.

There is good news, the lady has made a good recovery. Once again thank you for bringing the Message in a Bottle scheme to our attention and I just wanted to share with you our heartfelt appreciation.”

**Janine Proctor, Oakfield Court Manager**

We would like to thank the Lions Club for supplying us with the bottles and to their local representative for keeping us stocked up.

## Supporting international residents to access appropriate health and care

**Working in partnership with Sunderland University we have informed and signposted hundreds of students new to the city, to the most appropriate health and care services.**

International students who are new into the city are very often unaware of how to access the local health and care services, which can lead to the inadvertent misuse of services, causing at times, additional pressure on the NHS.

Through our information and signposting service, we were able to work in partnership with the University to ensure students are given up to date information on how best to access health and care services. This work has seen us being built into the university's induction programme for all new international students and the development of information detailing Sunderland health services.

As a result of the success of this work, the pack has also been used and replicated when engaging with refugees in our city.



“The expertise of those who work within Healthwatch has meant that we have been able to call on them for support in delivering key messages to our students in light of issues raised by local GP surgeries.”

**Emma Davisworth, International Welfare Adviser, University of Sunderland**



# 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:

- Visited communities to promote Healthwatch Sunderland and what we have to offer.
- Collected experiences and supported their communities to share their views.
- Reviewed new NHS websites to review accessibility and usefulness.
- Delivered promotional health related campaigns on self-care, mental health, cancer awareness, organ donation and many more.
- Represented us at key strategic meetings.

# Our volunteers

Our volunteer team are as dedicated and enthusiastic as ever and continue to support us in all that we do. They have dedicated over 500 hours over the past year, helping to make a real difference to the local community. Some of the areas they have supported us include:

- Attending hundreds of meetings, community groups and events to promote Healthwatch and what we have to offer, reaching over 2,500 local people throughout the year.
- Supporting our local community to share their views and collecting over 2,944 views.
- Reviewing new NHS websites to review accessibility and usefulness.
- Attending several workshops hosted by health and social care providers to share their views on service improvements and changes.
- Delivering promotional health related campaigns on self-care, mental health, cancer awareness, organ donation etc.
- Representing us at key strategic meetings including the Health and Wellbeing Board, Safeguarding Board, Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, Primary Care Committee, Northeast Ambulance Forum plus many more. Ensuring patient and service user voice is paramount.



## Do you feel inspired?

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



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



0191 5147145



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

# 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. We have secured the contract for the next few years, giving us sustainability and greater impact going forward for people of Sunderland.

## Our income and expenditure

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from Government	£160,684	Expenditure on pay	£116,053
Additional income	£12,696	Non-pay expenditure	£32,168
		Office and management fee	£10,758
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£173,380</b>	<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>£158,979</b>

Additional income is broken down by:

- **£300 funding** received from Sunderland GP Alliance for COVID-19 Vaccine research project.
- **£816 funding** received from Healthwatch Norfolk for Website Migration.
- **£150 funding** from Sunderland City Council for a Focus Group on Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy.
- **£5,430 funding** from Integrated Care Board for GP Access Research Project.
- **£1,500 funding** from Healthwatch England for CRM Replacement Fund.
- **£4,500 funding** from Integrated Care Board for Integrated Care Strategy.

## Next steps

In the ten years since Healthwatch was launched, we've demonstrated the power of public feedback in helping the health and care system understand what is working, spot issues and think about how things can be better in the future.

Services are currently facing unprecedented challenges and tackling the backlog needs to be a key priority for the NHS to ensure everyone gets the care they need. Over the next year we will continue our role in collecting feedback from everyone in our local community and giving them a voice to help shape improvements to services.

We will also continue our work to tackling inequalities that exist and work to reduce the barriers you face when accessing care, regardless whether that is because of where you live, income or race.

### Top three priorities for 2023-24

1. Hospital care
2. Accessible information
3. Youthwatch



# Statutory statements

Healthwatch Sunderland, 53 St Luke's Terrace, Pallion, Sunderland, SR4 6NF

The organisation holding the Healthwatch Sunderland contract is the Pioneering Care Partnership (PCP). PCP is a multi-award winning health and wellbeing charity operating across the North East.

For further information please visit [www.pcp.uk.net](http://www.pcp.uk.net). Registered Charity No, 1067888 Company Registered in England No. 3491237 Registered address: Pioneering Care Centre, Carer's Way, Newton Aycliffe, County Durham, DL5 4SF © Pioneering Care Centre

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

# 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 to our activities. Our Board ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community. Throughout 2022/23 the Board met 9 times and made decisions on matters such as GP Access, Domiciliary Care and future work plan items such as hospital discharge.

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 have the opportunity to provide us with insight about their experience of using services. During 2022/23 we have been available to engage with the residents of Sunderland by phone, email, by providing a webform on our website and through social media, as well as attending meetings of community groups and forums and hosting information stands at a range of public places across our communities.

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 and distribute it via our e-newsletter and social media platforms. It is also available in hard copy on request.

## Taking people's experiences to decision makers

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

We also take insight and experiences to decision makers in North East and North Cumbria (NENC) Integrated Care Board. While we have worked together informally for many years, recent funding from the ICB has enabled the Network to formalise working arrangements through our Operational Protocol, so that it can systematically represent the views of service users, families and carers with partners across the Integrated Care System. Local intelligence is collated across each of the four sub-regional areas and shared at Area ICP meetings. At regional level, the Healthwatch Regional Coordinator represents service-user voice from across the region at the NENC Integrated Care Partnership Strategic meeting, Quality & Safety Committee, Primary Care Strategy & Delivery sub-committee, Healthy & Fairness Advisory Group, Equality, Diversity & Inclusion meetings and System Quality Group meetings. The network of local Healthwatch has also been commissioned to undertake additional research to ensure local opinions are represented in the ICB's work priorities.

## 2022–2023 Outcomes

Project/ activity	Changes made to services
GP access	Development on new ways of working to improve patient access to their GP.
Covid -19 vaccine hesitancy work	Key public health messages have been developed and plans in place to remove barriers faced by the most vulnerable when accessing vaccines.
Kinship carers hospital improvements	Increased awareness of kinship carers with local hospital staff, the production of an information video and implementation of new safeguarding procedures and staff training.
Young Healthwatch	Increased awareness of mental health support services and how to manage own mental health.
Amputee patients	Provision of all the key information needed to support patients following on from an amputation.
#ItsBoobEasy online campaign	Increased awareness of the availability or easy read mammogram recall letters.

## Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Sunderland is represented on the Sunderland Health and Wellbeing Board by Paul Weddle, our Vice Chair. During 2022/23 he has effectively carried out this role by providing meeting attendees with health and social care service trends and themes which we have identified from our data sets. He also provides feedback on our work plan priorities, which inform change.

Healthwatch Sunderland is represented on the Integrated Care Partnerships in the Central ICP area of NENC ICS by Rebecca Morgan (PCP), and by local Healthwatch Chairs. The Regional ICP is attended by Christopher Akers-Belcher, Healthwatch Regional ICB Coordinator. The Integrated Care Board Participant for the network is David Thompson, Chair of Healthwatch Northumberland.



**healthwatch**  
Sunderland

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