



Public Bridleway

# Speaking up for better care

Healthwatch Northumberland  
Annual Report 2025/26

# Contents

A message from the Adapt (NE) CEO	2
A message from our Chair	3
About us	4
Our year in numbers	5
A year of making a difference	6
Working together for change	7
Making a difference in the community	9
Listening to your experiences	11
Hearing from all communities	14
Information and signposting	16
Showcasing volunteer impact	19
Finance and future priorities	21
Statutory statements	23



**Acting Chief Executive,  
Healthwatch England**

Chris McCann

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“The NHS plays a vital role in our lives, and we know it faces real challenges. Listening to people’s thoughts about their care is one of the best ways to improve services. Every comment, concern, and compliment helps health and care professionals see what works and what needs to change, so care can be safer and better for everyone.

“We want to say a heartfelt thanks to all the local people who have taken the time to share their experiences, and to the health and social care professionals who have listened and acted on that feedback. Your commitment has helped make a real difference for our community.”

# A message from our CEO

## A year of purpose in a shifting landscape

Adapt (NE) has delivered Healthwatch Northumberland since 2013 and I thank former Director Liz Prudhoe, for her stewardship and dedication to promoting patient and service user experience in improving health and care services.

This has not been a quiet first year. Taking up the role of Chief Executive of Adapt (NE) during a period of such significant change in health and care policy has been both a privilege and a profound responsibility.

The government's reforms set out in the 10 Year Plan include the proposal to abolish Healthwatch and transfer its functions to Integrated Care Boards and local authorities. As are many others, Adapt (NE) is concerned about this proposal. The King's Fund, in its independent national review of the Healthwatch model published in March 2026, found that any future arrangement must maintain independence from the health and care system so it can 'speak truth to power and raise difficult messages where necessary'.

Most importantly, many of the people who contact Healthwatch do so because it is not part of the NHS or the council and that is what makes them feel safe enough to speak honestly. Healthwatch Northumberland will continue to be that safe space.

What I have discovered this year is Healthwatch Northumberland's considerable resilience. We have had to think carefully about how we sustain our work, how we engage with a rapidly changing policy environment, and how we remain unambiguously focused on the people using health and care services.

The challenges ahead are real and we will not understate them, but so too is our commitment to Healthwatch Northumberland's mission.



Chief Executive,  
Adapt (NE)  
Hannah Harniess

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“Many of the people who contact Healthwatch Northumberland do so because it is not part of the NHS or the council and that is what makes them feel safe enough to speak honestly.”

# A message from our Chair

**Welcome to ‘Speaking up for better care’, our Annual Report on our work on your behalf across the county.**

I first want to acknowledge the loss of David Thompson, a long-serving former Chair of Healthwatch Northumberland. His contribution leaves a lasting legacy, and we are stronger for the foundations he built.

Two things have shaped my first year as Chair. Your response to our Annual Survey set a clear course for our focus during the year. Then the launch of the NHS 10 Year Plan challenged our purpose and statutory standing, bringing our future as the independent patient voice into question. This report sets out how we met that challenge.

Healthwatch Northumberland is uniquely placed to reach communities that other organisations cannot – and we have done exactly that – from farming and fishing communities to young people. Our Here to Hear events opened doors across the county.

I am genuinely proud of what we’ve achieved this year. Our work on audiology and access to urgent dental treatment is already driving change. Hearing from unpaid carers, we published our ‘Taking a break’ report. And I was particularly moved by the depth of contribution our volunteers made to our work around palliative and end of life care. Their commitment and insight is at the heart of everything we do.

I also want to draw attention to something that rarely gets the recognition it deserves: our reach beyond Northumberland. Through a formal network of 14 local Healthwatch across the North East, the evidence you provide is amplified at a regional level, extending our influence well beyond the county boundary.



**Chair,  
Healthwatch  
Northumberland**  
Hugh McKendrick

6

“Healthwatch Northumberland is uniquely placed to reach communities that other organisations cannot, from farming and fishing communities to young people.”

# About us

Healthwatch Northumberland is your local health and social care champion.

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



## Our vision

The people of Northumberland have their health and social care needs met and their experience of using services heard and understood by those responsible for commissioning and providing services



## Our mission

To ensure that the people of Northumberland can give their views and are involved in and can influence decisions made about their health and social care



## Our values are:

**Equity:** We're compassionate and inclusive. We build strong connections and empower the communities we serve.

**Collaboration:** We build internal and external relationships. We communicate clearly and work with partners to amplify our influence.

**Impact:** We're ambitious about creating change for people and communities. We're accountable to those we serve and hold others to account.

**Independence:** Our agenda is driven by the public. We're a purposeful, critical friend to decision makers.

**Truth:** We work with integrity and honesty, and we speak truth to power.

# Our year in numbers

In 2025/26 we supported more than 2500 people to have their say and get information about their care. We employed six staff and our work was supported by 13 volunteers.



## Reaching out:

2564 people shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.

People came to us over 13,000 times for clear advice and information on topics such as mental health support and where to get urgent health care.



## Championing your voice:

We published 25 reports about the improvements people would like to see in areas such as pharmacy services, carers' experiences and mental health.

Our most popular report was 'Hearing what matters' highlighting Northumberland residents' experiences of audiology services in Northumberland.



## Statutory funding:

We're funded by Northumberland County Council. In 2025/26 we received £200,000 which is the same as last year.

# A year of making a difference

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

## Spring

Sixth Form students at Queen Elizabeth High School in Hexham helped us create a new young people's webpage with details of the support available for mental and physical health.

We visited Hartford Court Care Home in Cramlington to hear from residents and relatives about positive experiences within the home, and what could make things better.

## Summer

We helped patients understand the complaints process by circulating template complaint information to local GP surgeries for inclusion on their websites.

We helped patients of Lintonville Surgery in Ashington to have their voice heard about the proposed surgery move.

## Autumn

100 people joined us at our Annual Event to hear from Joe Morris MP, Adult Social Care Services, and a local pharmacist about Pharmacy First.

On World Mental Health Day we held an online event with local mental health organisations around the importance of good mental health in the workplace.

## Winter

We held 114 in-person and online events this year, where almost 1300 people took the opportunity to talk to us, share feedback, or use our Information and Signposting Service.

We launched our Stellar Awards, which celebrate the people and services who provide a particularly positive health or social care experience for people in Northumberland.

# Working together for change

We've worked with neighbouring Healthwatch to ensure people's experiences of care in Northumberland are heard at the Integrated Care System level, and they influence decisions made about services at the NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board.

This year, we've worked with Healthwatch across the North East and North Cumbria to achieve the following:



## Winter care and pharmacy communications:

Healthwatch supported work to make information about winter care and pharmacy services clearer and more useful for local people. Testing information with people and asking for their insight helped the NHS to understand which messages were working and where things were missing or needed to be clearer or more consistent.

People told us that while some messages were helpful, others were confusing or easy to miss, particularly for those who don't use digital channels or who rely on clear, simple explanations.



## WorkWell:

Healthwatch worked with local people and the NHS to ensure that the early service design of WorkWell - a service designed to help people with long term health conditions stay in or return to work - was shaped by lived experience.

Along with other regional Healthwatch we helped gather feedback in focus groups or through trusted community partners from people with lived experience of managing health, disability and work. Hearing about some of the real barriers faced when trying to balance health and work highlighted the importance of flexibility, trauma informed approaches, and better awareness and understanding from employers.



## End-of-life and palliative care:

Healthwatch supported the NHS to inform future palliative and end-of-life care planning across the region, having conversations with local people about death, dying and end of life care.

Conversations about end-of-life care are deeply personal and can be especially difficult for people facing multiple disadvantage. The importance of using trusted, supportive approaches when discussing sensitive topics ensured valuable insight from people least likely to have their voices heard.

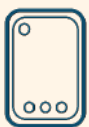


## Modern General Practice Access:

Alongside other regional Healthwatch we supported the NHS to speak to people about their understanding and use of Modern General Practice Access including GP extended access, the NHS App and Pharmacy First. Through this work we also helped local people to understand what services were available to them.

Many people were unaware of extended access at their GP surgery, and the understanding of Pharmacy First varied, with some people receiving inconsistent information, or being unsure what the scheme could help with. Digital access worked for some but excluded others, particularly older people, disabled people and those without confidence, devices or reliable internet access.

Feedback highlighted the need to focus on clearer communication, more consistent offers, accessible information, and non-digital routes that work for everyone. This valuable insight from local people is being used to inform future primary care planning.



## Developing NHS online:

Healthwatch across the North East and North Cumbria submitted a joint response to a national consultation on 'Developing NHS online'. Bringing together what people across the region have told Healthwatch about digital health services, this collective insight helps ensure local people's experiences are heard in national discussions.

Healthwatch highlighted that online services must remain an option, not an expectation. Clear communication, meeting the Accessible Information Standard, and strong non-digital alternatives are essential to ensure people are not excluded or disadvantaged as services change.

# Making a difference in the community

We bring people's experiences to healthcare professionals and decision makers, using their feedback to shape services and improve care over time. Here are some examples of our work in Northumberland this year.

## Creating empathy by bringing experiences to life

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

This year we have been working on the Persistent Physical Symptoms project, a two-year joint research project in partnership with Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, Northumbria University, and residents of Blyth, Ashington and Newbiggin by-the-Sea.

The aims of the project are to understand people's experiences of long term physical issues that lack clear medical explanations. Gathering this valuable lived experience will enable us to understand what community-based health and wellbeing support is already available and co-create options for improving support, including how services work together.

## Getting services to involve the public

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

Working with Northumberland County Council on its mental health needs assessment we had in-depth conversations with many people across Northumberland about their lived experience of mental wellbeing and any barriers to accessing care. Working with community partners allowed us to speak to people who we might not usually hear from, ensuring their valuable insight informs the local authority's new mental health strategy.

## Gaps in services for people with visual impairment

Following our work in this area Northumberland County Council has now developed a Visual Health Needs Assessment, which sets clear intentions to improve services.

**"Following the advice in Healthwatch Northumberland and Vision Northumberland's report 'Eyecare pathways', it quickly became clear that the council should complete this assessment to understand our local population's eye health needs in depth."**

Northumberland County Council spokesperson.



## Improving care over time

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

Last year Newcastle Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust produced an action plan to improve audiology services in Northumberland in line with our recommendations based on user feedback.

Your ongoing feedback means we can continue to monitor progress of this service, more recently raising concerns on gaps in local provision, excess demand on local drop-ins, and a lack of patient awareness around the ways to access support.

As a result, Newcastle Hospitals agreed to make it clearer to patients how to access help, and has listened to our feedback about gaps in provision. An example of this is batteries now being supplied at Seghill Surgery.

**“It has been extremely well received not just by patients of the practice, but patients of other practices who were experiencing difficulty, so a real community resource. Thank you for your help.”**

Patient of Seghill Surgery.

Our report was also used as part of Newcastle Hospitals’ audiology service review, contributing to its future planning and bringing patient feedback to the heart of improving service delivery.



## Adult Social Care People’s Panel

We have chaired the Adult Social Care People’s Panel since 2023 and we were delighted this year to reflect on what has been achieved since then. Panel members, all of whom have direct experience of using care services, feel strongly that the group’s influence is particularly evident in relation to carers, with feedback being positively received and acted upon.

Meetings now include workshops where adult social care staff and panel members work together to co-produce ideas and solutions. The first focuses on adult social care commissioning.

# Listening to your experiences

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

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



# Understanding people's awareness and use of the Pharmacy First scheme

The Pharmacy First Scheme was introduced in 2024 to enable community pharmacists to supply prescription-only medicines to treat seven common health conditions, without the need to visit a GP.

## What did we do

We launched a survey to find out people's awareness of the Pharmacy First scheme in Northumberland. We also wanted to understand people's use of the scheme and any barriers to access or care.

## Key things we heard:



**63%**

**of those responding had heard of the Pharmacy First scheme.**

Awareness was more limited in North Northumberland where 61% had not heard of the service, and with older adults aged 80+ where 53% had not heard of the service.

**89%**

**of people who had used the service felt confident about the diagnosis and treatment suggested by the pharmacist.**

The two most common worries people had about using the scheme were the pharmacist missing something more serious, or still needing to go back to their GP.

## What difference did this make?

Our findings were shared with the Head of Services and Support, Community Pharmacy North of Tyne. They have used our insight into awareness of the scheme to increase knowledge and uptake in specific communities.

"The Pharmacy First report confirms our feeling that the older population is not as aware of the services offered by community pharmacy and the skills and knowledge pharmacists have. We have already started to make contact with Age UK, etc. to start addressing this inequality."

# Understanding carers' experiences of taking breaks from their caring role

Following feedback on difficulties accessing respite care we launched a piece of work to find out unpaid carers' experiences of taking breaks from their caring role.

## What did we do

With help from Carers Northumberland to hear from carers, we wanted to understand more about what had worked well, what had not worked so well and what would help carers to take more breaks.

## Key things we heard:



**33%**

**of carers were unable to regularly enjoy activities for themselves such as socialising or hobbies.**

**76%**

**of carers responding had not taken a longer break from caring (two consecutive days or more) in the past 12 months.**

Of those who had not taken breaks in the past 12 months, 33% were unaware of the options available to them to take a break from their caring role

**64%**

**of carers would like more opportunities to take a break from their caring role.**

## What difference did this make?

We shared the feedback with Adult Social Care, detailing the barriers carers face in taking breaks and the impact of the caring role on wellbeing. We recommended promoting greater awareness of the available options for unpaid carers to take breaks and the importance of prioritising taking breaks during carers assessments.

The findings will be used by the local authority to work alongside the local carers forum and carers partnership board.

“The council is keen to further explore the themes identified, including the availability and promotion of services, accessibility, and the emotional impact of carers trusting services to replace their caring role when they take a break. In addition, there may be scope to increase availability of services using a direct payment and this may be a route to overcoming some of the difficulties people describe in their responses.”

# Hearing from all communities

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

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

This year, we have reached different communities by:

- Increasing our regular presence in refugee and asylum seeker communities
- Ensuring we hear from those who may experience greater barriers or inequalities of care, such as rural or financially disadvantaged communities
- Hosting a focus group to hear from those living in coastal and rural communities about their views on end-of-life care, death and dying to help shape NHS plans



## Working with young people

Our work with Sixth Form students at Queen Elizabeth High School in Hexham around mental health has led to them helping us create more accessible and comprehensive information and resources.

This is being used to promote awareness of services to students, parents, carers, and staff at the school, as well as the wider public who access our Information and Signposting Service.

This work is continuing with a new project at Bede Academy, Blyth to gather experiences of the school community there, to support improvements in mental wellbeing.

## Fishermen and their families

This year we have continued to link in with The Fishermen's Mission SeaFit Programme to bring health and wellbeing support to fishermen, their families, and the wider communities in which they live. Events have taken place in Amble and have been extended to Blyth and Seahouses.

## Farmers

We continue to hear regularly from farmers and their families at Hexham Auction Mart as part of the Supporting Our Farming Communities initiative, alongside other community partners. We know farmers are more at risk of suicide and poor mental health. Through our Information and Signposting Service we can play our part in overcoming barriers to healthcare and help to raise awareness of wellbeing services.

“Even though I've never spoken to you before I feel encouraged that someone is looking out for the mental health of farmers.” Northumberland farmer.

## Refugees and asylum seekers

We have continued to make links with refugee and asylum seeker communities in Northumberland and the services that provide support to them. This is helping us understand more about barriers to accessing services, and to increase use of our Information and Signposting Service. Queries about how to access dental care are common. We asked the NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board for translated versions of patient communications on this issue, and these are now in production.

We also used valuable insight from a charity working with these communities to understand more about their lived experience of mental health and barriers to accessing support, which will feed into the council's mental health strategy.

# Information and signposting

When you're struggling to find an NHS dentist, looking for help about how to make a complaint, or need advice about a good care home for a loved one – we're your first port of call.

**This year more than 600 people have reached out to us for advice, support or help finding services. These conversations also help us to understand where, and how, your care can be made better.**

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

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



## How we helped Jo find support for her long-term condition

**We were able to give Jo\* some much needed reliable information about ME/CFS and Long Covid alongside suitable local and national support services.**

She contacted us for help and information following a struggle to find supportive local services.

We sent a recording of a recent online session we had hosted with the ME Association alongside putting her in touch with a local, Northumberland-based support group.



“Thank you for so much... for all of the information provided, it has been so helpful, along with the video too. I am sincerely grateful. Thank you also for your listening and sympathetic ear.

“Words just can’t express the relief that comes with knowing that there are people out there willing to help and support those who are going through this rather debilitating illness, rather than having to fight it alone which I feel I have had to do over the last five months!”

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## Supporting Ali to get a dental appointment

**Ali\* was helped by us to secure routine dental care.**

Ali was new to the area having just moved with his parents, when we met him at one of our Here to Hear events. He had braces and needed to find dental care in the local area, being unable to travel the nearly 300 miles to his previous dental practice.

We helped Ali to look online for local dentists and rang several practices on his behalf before finally finding one that was able to register him as an NHS patient. We arranged a routine appointment for him at the practice in a few months’ time and Ali and his parents were very grateful and happy to have been able to secure dental treatment.

## Finding podiatry support for Mary

**Mary\* was given information about podiatry support and signposted to suitable local services.**

She contacted us following a conversation with her GP surgery. Mary was told she was not eligible for NHS podiatry services. Due to her age and limited dexterity, Mary was finding it increasingly difficult to cut her own toenails. We explained how changes to NHS funding meant that access to podiatry services was limited, and provided details of local private services that she could contact.

“Thank you so much for the very helpful information. Healthwatch Northumberland is an amazing organisation.”



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## How we helped Lucy to get the appointment she needed

**Lucy\* was able to get a suitable Covid vaccination appointment after she contacted us for support.**

Lucy had been worried that the Moderna vaccine she had been offered in the spring campaign would cause flare-ups for her inflammatory arthritis. Having experienced similar side effects previously, and after discussion with her consultant, she wanted to have the Pfizer vaccine. However, she had been unable to make any progress with this through her GP or NHS 119.

We contacted the local NHS Integrated Care Board which commissions the Covid-19 vaccination programme to get further information about the vaccine types being used, and how we could assist Lucy to get an alternative.

Whilst we found out that the vaccine type (Pfizer) Lucy preferred was not on offer for adults in this campaign, we were able to make an appointment for her locally with a service that had stocks of a suitable alternative vaccine.

“Healthwatch Northumberland really went the extra mile to find out what options were available to me with regards to receiving an alternative Covid vaccine, because of the impact the Moderna vaccine has on my rheumatoid arthritis condition.

It was a complex situation and they got to the bottom of it with the result that I now have an appointment in the next couple of days. Many thanks!”

\* Names have been changed to protect anonymity.

# Showcasing volunteer impact

Our fantastic volunteers have given 384 hours to support our work this year. Thanks to their dedication to improving care, we can better understand what is working and what needs improving in our community.

## **This year, our volunteers:**

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



# At the heart of what we do

**From finding out what residents think to helping raise awareness, our volunteers have championed community concerns to improve care.**



Susan

"I became a Healthwatch Northumberland volunteer because of a negative experience we had with my late husband's care in an NHS Scotland hospital. I used to volunteer for Citizens Advice in Gosport. I have always strongly liked helping people. It gives me real satisfaction, helping others. Knowing I was part of a beneficial change in the NHS, is what makes me feel good.

"I joined to give my life some meaning, to know I could be of service for a great cause. This is one service that would give anyone thinking of volunteering, real satisfaction and an impact upon possibly every person living here, including, one day, ourselves!"

"The best thing about volunteering with Healthwatch Northumberland is listening to people's experiences, good and bad. Some people just need to 'get it off their chest'. They just need someone to listen and share the information with and forward it to the appropriate providers. I am particularly pleased with the Stellar Awards. It's so good to see appreciation given to people who go the extra mile and help us all in our time of need, especially in these days of cut backs and dissatisfaction.

"If you have a few hours to spare, volunteering is so worthwhile. There is a great variety of opportunities. I personally have learnt a lot and met some lovely people. It's satisfying too."



Stella

## Be part of the change.

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



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



03332 408468



[info@healthwatchnorthumberland.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchnorthumberland.co.uk)

# Finance and future priorities

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

## Our income and expenditure:

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from Northumberland County Council	£200,000	Expenditure on pay	£ 182,920
Additional income	£11,550	Non-pay expenditure	£11,600
Carried forward	£35,324	Office and management fee	£20,000
		Other operating costs	£11,354
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£246,874</b>	<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>£225,874</b>

## Integrated Care System funding

Healthwatch across the North East and North Cumbria also receive funding from our Integrated Care Board (ICB) to support new areas of collaborative work at this level. We also received funding from North East Ambulance Service (NEAS), Northumbria Primary Care (NPC), Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (NHCT), the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and Northumberland County Council (NCC) for specific projects.

Purpose of funding	Funder	Amount £
Healthwatch NENC network funding	ICB	£5,347
Lintonville Surgery survey analysis	NPC	£750
Modern General Practice Access work	ICB	£300
Persistent Physical Symptoms project Year 1	NHCT/NIHR	£2,003
End-of-life engagement work	ICB	£350
Mental health public engagement	NCC	£2,800
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>£11,550</b>

# Finance and future priorities

**We will keep working across the county, reaching out especially to people less often listened to, for example, people whose work or lives means they face difficulties in using health and care services.**

From our day-to-day work we know that the following three service areas are of concern to Northumberland residents: GP services, hospital discharge services and audiology services. We intend to focus most of our work on these three service areas over the coming year. However, we also want a fourth service area to prioritise, so through our Annual Survey we asked people to choose which of the following additional service they want us to focus on:

- **Digital access** (such as GPs' online booking services)
- **Urgent dental care**
- **Travel for care** (including Patient Transport Services)
- **Accessible information** (Information that meets your needs)

We will confirm additional area/s as the year progresses.

# Statutory statements

Healthwatch Northumberland is delivered by Adapt North East, Burn Lane, Hexham, Northumberland NE46 3HN.

**Healthwatch Northumberland 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 board consists of eight members who work voluntarily 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.

In 2025/26, the board met six times and made decisions on our operational plan and our project work programme. The board also decided to use the Healthwatch Northumberland Annual General Meeting to bring the public, community groups and senior decision makers together in Hexham at the local auction mart. We engaged with members of the farming community, a community that feels it is not always heard.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities by using the feedback people give us about their experiences and a poll in our Annual Survey.

## 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 2025/26, we have been available by phone, email, via a form on our website and through social media, as well as attending meetings of community groups and forums. We attended 114 community events and hold eight regular drop-in sessions per month in community locations, plus monthly online sessions covering different health and social care issues.

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, across our social media platforms and produce printed copies on request.

# Statutory statements

## Responses to recommendations

There were no providers 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 Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Primary Care Working Party, Carers Partnership Board, GP Access Task and Finish Group, Community Mental Health Needs Steering Group and the Northumberland Neighbourhood Health Collaborative Group.

We also take insight and experiences to decision makers in the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care System. Healthwatch Northumberland is represented at the NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board and associated sub committees by Christopher Achers-Belcher, Chief Executive, Healthwatch Hartlepool. Derry Nugent, Strategic Lead, represents Healthwatch Northumberland at the NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board Sub Committee - Northumberland (now disbanded).

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

## Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Northumberland is represented on the Northumberland Health and Wellbeing Board by Hugh McKendrick, Chair of the Healthwatch Northumberland Board. During 2025/26 our representative has effectively carried out this role by presenting the Healthwatch Northumberland Annual Review, showcasing the impacts achieved particularly through the Pharmacy Needs Assessment and audiology reports.

The 13 local Healthwatch in the North East and North Cumbria have a formal operating protocol to coordinate joint work with the NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board. This work is funded by the Integrated Care Board and ensures that the experiences of people in all areas of the region are heard at the highest decision making levels.

# Statutory statements

## Enter and view


We did one Enter and View visit in 2025/26.

Location	Reason for visit	What we did as a result
Hartford Court Care Home	To understand good practice in care home provision.	We wrote a report with recommendations – the service followed up on these, and patient safety improved.



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