



Healthwatch Gateshead

Annual report 2018-19



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Message from our Chair

From 1 April 2017, the Healthwatch Gateshead contract has been held by Tell Us North, a not for profit community interest company that also runs Healthwatch Newcastle. We have been fortunate to have our contract in Gateshead extended for a further year because the council is satisfied that we have performed well in providing a voice for Gateshead's residents in respect of health and social care policies and services.

One organisation delivering Healthwatch on both sides of the Tyne brings some added advantages. Particularly in regard to health services as we know that some residents cross the Tyne to access them. Therefore it follows that some of our priority areas for research should also be cross-Tyne. Tell Us North staff work flexibly without seeing the river as a barrier to make sure our findings and recommendations reflect the reality of how residents use services and that they represent their views. Having said that, you will see by reading this annual report that Tell Us North is committed to ensuring that Healthwatch Gateshead has its own independent voice that reflects the views of Gateshead's residents where appropriate.

The role of the Healthwatch Gateshead Committee is to oversee and prioritise the work of Healthwatch Gateshead. Esther Ward is a new member who joined us during the year. Esther used to run Gateshead's Older Person's Assembly and brings a wealth of experience about Gateshead and the experience of older people. Our Committee meets at least four times per year and some of these meetings are open to the public to ensure transparency. All of the Committee members either live in, or have a strong connection or commitment

to, Gateshead. Healthwatch is held to account by a national body, Healthwatch England, but also by Gateshead Council's scrutiny processes. We have to prove to these organisations that we enable residents in Gateshead to influence and change services. I'm pleased to report they are more than happy with our activities.

During this past year we have improved and adapted our methods of engaging with service users, patients and carers to make sure we have strong evidence of people's experiences. For example, in respect of mental health services we commissioned other experts in the field to gather evidence from hard to reach groups. By being innovative we found the most efficient and effective way of getting this vital information.

Every year we ask the public to help us choose priority areas based on what is important to them. We then carry out research asking service users and their carers about their real life experiences. Most recently, we have produced reports in areas such as mental health and the impacts of reduced funding for adult social care. For adult social care funding we assisted Gateshead Council in consulting with the public on the Local Government Association's Green Paper, which explored and costed the various options to protect services for the future. We also looked at the impact of the budget cuts the council has had to make year on year on delivering social care. Our reports are available on our website at <https://healthwatchgateshead.co.uk/about-us/reports/hwg-reports>. They are easy to read and relatively short, and all of our recommendations to improve services are

based on the strong evidence of what people tell us. We don't just produce a report and then forget about it. Once our recommendations are accepted by services we follow up a few months later to make sure action has been carried out. We use the council's scrutiny committee to present our reports and then the committee will help us hold services to account to deliver on the actions and make the changes. A most recent example is the report we produced recommending changes in information and guidance to help people understand their rights for NHS continuing healthcare.

Despite being a small team we have made sure that Healthwatch Gateshead has been represented at key meetings with the council and health senior management colleagues where decisions are made to change and reshape services. It is our duty to make sure Gateshead residents have their right to be fully heard and that they are properly consulted and involved. They must have real influence on how services develop and where resources are prioritised. We are gaining a reputation for expertise on how best to engage and involve residents in sometimes difficult and complicated issues but where their views must be taken into account. We are prepared to challenge and speak up on behalf of residents if we do not think they are being listened to or are not being given the opportunity to take part.

Looking ahead we will develop more ways of engaging with hard to reach and under-represented groups across Gateshead. We will increase our volunteers and train some to carry out more complex engagement. We will continue to publish reports to improve services based on priorities the public have said are important to them.

Whilst the Healthwatch Gateshead team will continue its work according to its set priorities we cannot ignore the local, regional and national scene. Financial pressures have not reduced. The health budget has remained static but austerity and cuts continue to bite for local authorities. Whatever the outcome of Brexit, there will be consequences for services particularly regarding the workforce. Brexit is also causing delays to the government making proposals for the future funding of social care. Funding of health and social care has to be on a level footing for true integration of services to happen. We will make sure that we and Gateshead residents are included in any discussions or engagement regarding further integration of health and social care services locally and across the region. We will also keep a close eye on how personal health budgets are introduced, how Primary Care Networks develop and how GPs plan to consult with patients. The roll out of Universal Credit may also have implications for residents' health and wellbeing. We also aim to play a full part in Gateshead Council's Thrive agenda making sure all residents are able to fulfil their potential.

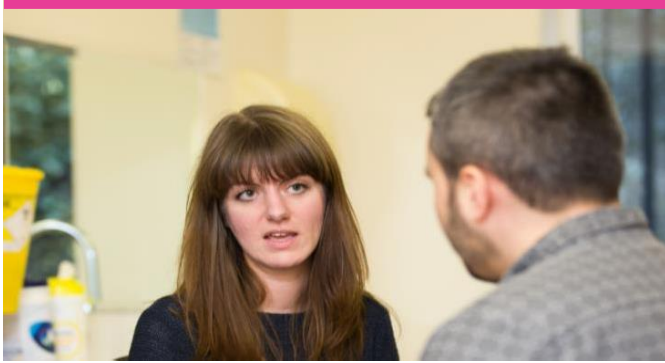
All of this activity could not take place without the commitment of the relatively small team of staff and volunteers. They continue to work hard and effectively despite limited resources. I thank them for their efforts in making sure Healthwatch Gateshead is the voice for Gateshead's residents for health and social care.



Michael Brown
Healthwatch Gateshead Chair

Changes you want to see

People told us about their experience of a number of different areas of health and social care. Here are some examples of the changes that you want to see.



- + Quicker appointments and referral processes to see health professionals.



- + Clarification on prescription charges and fees.



- + Better communication between services to co-ordinate the care you need when you need it.



- + Services should provide information in a format that people can understand with ease to make informed decisions about the care they need for themselves and carers.

About us

Healthwatch is here to make care better

We are the independent champion for people using local health and social care services. We listen to what people like about services and what could be improved. We share their views with those with the power to make change happen. People can also speak to us to find information about health and social care services available locally.

Our sole purpose is to help make care better for people.

As Chair of Healthwatch England, it's my role to make sure your Healthwatch gets effective support and that national decisions are informed by what people are saying all over England.

If you were one of the 400,000 people who shared their experiences with us last year, I want to say a personal thank you. Without your views, Healthwatch wouldn't be able to make a difference to health and social care services, both in your area and at a national level. One example of this is how we shared 85,000 views with the NHS, to highlight what matters most, and help shape its plans for the next decade.

If you're part of an organisation that's worked with, supported or responded to Healthwatch Gateshead, thank you too. You've helped to make an even bigger difference.

None of this could have been possible without our dedicated staff and volunteers, who work in the community every day to understand what is working and what could be better when it comes to people's health and care.



If you've shared your views with us then please keep doing what you're doing. If you haven't, then this is your chance to step forward and help us make care better for your community. We all have a stake in our NHS and social care services: we can all really make a difference in this way.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Robert Francis'.

Sir Robert Francis QC
Healthwatch England Chair

Our vision is simple



Health and care that works for you. People want health and social care support that works – helping them to stay well, get the best out of services and manage any conditions they face.

Our purpose



To find out what matters to you and to help make sure your views shape the support you need.

Our approach



People's views come first – especially those that find it hardest to be heard. We champion what matters to you and work with others to find solutions. We are independent and committed to making the biggest difference to you.

People are at the heart of everything we do

We play an important role bringing communities and services together. Everything we do is shaped by what people tell us. Our staff and volunteers identify what matters most to people by:

- + Running surveys and focus groups
- + Going out in the community and working with other organisations
- + Visiting services to see how they work

We have two main roles:

- + Raising people's concerns with health and care decision-makers so that they can improve support
- + Ensuring people are involved in the design and running of services they use

The evidence we gather also helps us recommend how policy and practice can change for the better.

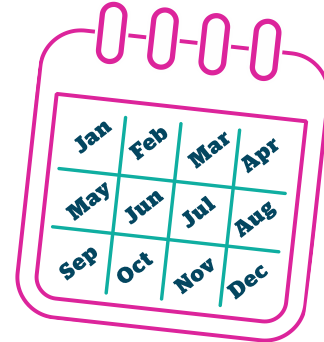


Highlights from our year

Find out about our resources and the way we have engaged and supported more people in 2018–19.



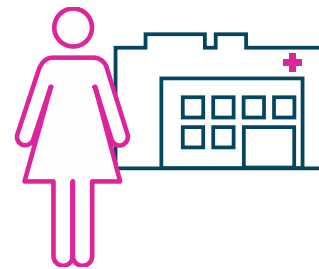
404 people shared their health and social care story with us, 10% more than last year.



We have 8 volunteers helping to carry out our work. In total they gave up 356 number of hours.



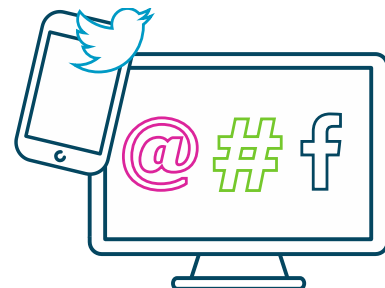
Our volunteers have participated in over 140 hours of training and development.



We visited 42 services and 8 community events to understand people's experience of care.



15 improvements we suggested were adopted by services to make health and care better in our community.



We reached 7,000 people through our website and 117,620 people via social media.

How we have made a difference

People are at the heart of everything we do

Find out how sharing your views with us has led to positive changes to health and social care services in Gateshead. We show that when people speak up about what's important, and services listen, care is improved for all.

Take a look at the examples below, demonstrating how we have made a difference in our community.

Impacts of reduced funding for adult social care



Informing, engaging influencing

Lack of funding for adult social care had been highlighted in the local and national news, and the NHS stated that this is one of the reasons it is under so much pressure.

This issue was shortlisted as a potential project by the Healthwatch Gateshead Committee and put forward as a priority for an annual prioritisation exercise. It was agreed as one of our priorities for 2018–19.

We wanted to give local people an opportunity to have their voice heard at

local and national level and to have a voice about decisions that are taken on their behalf about future funding for social care. With this in mind, we decided to focus on two areas of engagement.

- + The Local Government Association (LGA) Green Paper on the future funding for social care, 'The lives we want to lead'.
- + Gateshead Council social care budget proposals on future funding for social care 2018–19.

What we did nationally

Our aim was to give people an opportunity to have their views added to the Gateshead-wide response to the LGA consultation.

We decided to focus on four areas of the consultation that fit with the role and remit of Healthwatch. We had a total of 63 responses to the LGA consultation, 36 from the survey and 27 through our group work. Our ability to increase this number was limited by the length and timing of the LGA consultation.

- i. The role of local councils in improving health and wellbeing.
- ii. The role of individuals, families and communities in supporting people's wellbeing.

- iii. The impact of local funding cuts on adult social care.
- iv. Concerns about the future if adult social care continues to be underfunded.

The findings formed part of the Gateshead response to the LGA consultation which published its findings in November 2018 and makes recommendations to government around the development of the Green Paper on health and social care.

Below is an example of what people told us about the role they thought that local councils should play in improving people's health and wellbeing:

"I believe that councils have a huge role in improving and maintaining people's health and wellbeing. People should have access to affordable, decent standard housing, community areas, i.e. parks, and open areas should be maintained, free from vandalism and be well lit and monitored closely for potential issues which could affect the lives of people in communities."

Government
Needs Local Care
Community
Services NHS
Major People Help
Provide
Access
People
Role Place Areas
Funding Good Support

What we did locally

We were aware that Gateshead Council would be publishing budget proposals for 2019–20 in November 2018, and that they were likely to include efficiency savings in health and social care.



We held a listening event in December 2018 which was attended by 50 people and invited Service Managers from the local authority to present proposals. We supported table discussions, with each group focusing on at least two of the proposals. Participants were also encouraged to raise any other issues.

A summary of the findings from the event was submitted to the Office of the Chief Executive in Gateshead Council. We were told that the information would be used to inform the outcome of the budget consultation and be part of the budget setting report that was scheduled to go to cabinet in February 2019.

Mental health in Gateshead and Newcastle



We shortlisted mental health as a priority area for 2018–19 for the following reasons:

- + When we consult on priorities for the coming year, mental health always scores very highly.
- + We believe our research in this area will complement information already gathered as part of the ongoing review of local mental health services.
- + It provides an opportunity for Healthwatch to be further involved in that review.
- + It fits our key remit to ensure that all service users and the public are involved in the ongoing development of health and care services, especially those who may struggle to have a voice or to get involved.

We decided to concentrate on gathering the views and experiences of groups or communities who had not been involved, or had only limited involvement, in recent reviews of local mental health services. Following consultation with partner organisations and mental health specialists,

it became apparent that we could have chosen many different groups. However, we wanted to get a good spread of views from different types of communities so we decided to focus on:

- + Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay and Transgender (LBGT) community
- + Veterans
- + African/Caribbean communities
- + Students in higher education
- + People who are homeless/living in insecure accommodation
- + People in receipt of Universal Credit

We chose these particular groups because we knew, through our involvement in the mental health consultations and through talking to colleagues, that these groups had been under represented in consultations so far. They are also groups of people who can struggle to have their voice heard more generally.

We undertook some of the research ourselves but also offered local organisations the opportunity to apply for a small grant of up to £1,000 to enable them to carry out work on our behalf. This allowed us to hear the views of people and groups that Healthwatch would otherwise have struggled to engage with within the limited time scale of this project. The organisations that worked with us on this project were:

- + Fulfilling Lives Newcastle Gateshead, which focussed on people who are homeless or living in insecure accommodation.
- + Forward Assist, which focussed on veterans.
- + Citizens Advice Gateshead, which looked at people claiming Universal Credit.

Consultations with the LGBT community and the African/Caribbean communities were carried out by our own staff. A third-year student on placement from Northumbria University sought the views of students in higher education.

For comparative purposes, we asked all participants the same set of open questions. Answers were gathered through a variety of methods, including focus groups, structured one-to-one interviews, online surveys, creative data capture and peer research.

All participants were asked:

- + What are your experiences of trying to get help with your mental health?
- + If you managed to get help, what sort of help did you get and how effective was it?
- + What could have made things easier or better for you?
- + Choose three words that describe what a first-class mental health service would look like to you.

Different consultation methods and different sizes of the populations concerned meant that the number of responses varied quite widely across the groups from 13 to 32. However, in total we spoke to 139 people, significantly above our overall target of 120.

We reviewed and collated the results from all six consultations into a final report, which identified common themes and, where relevant, identified issues specific to particular groups. It is worth mentioning that a significant minority of respondents reported positive experiences when accessing mental health services and receiving treatment and support. However,

a number of key issues emerged from the consultations and we have based our recommendations around them. The four main recommendations are relevant for all of the groups involved in the research and cover:

- + Accessible and inclusive information
- + Staff training
- + Waiting times
- + Someone to talk to

We also included some specific recommendations for particular groups:

- + For the African/Caribbean community around breaking down the stigma they perceive is attached to mental ill-health.
- + For the LGBT community around ensuring access to a male or female professional.
- + For veterans around mandatory inclusion of a question about previous military service at assessment.
- For people who are homeless or living in insecure accommodation around inclusive services for people with a dual diagnosis (i.e. who have both a mental illness and a substance misuse issue).

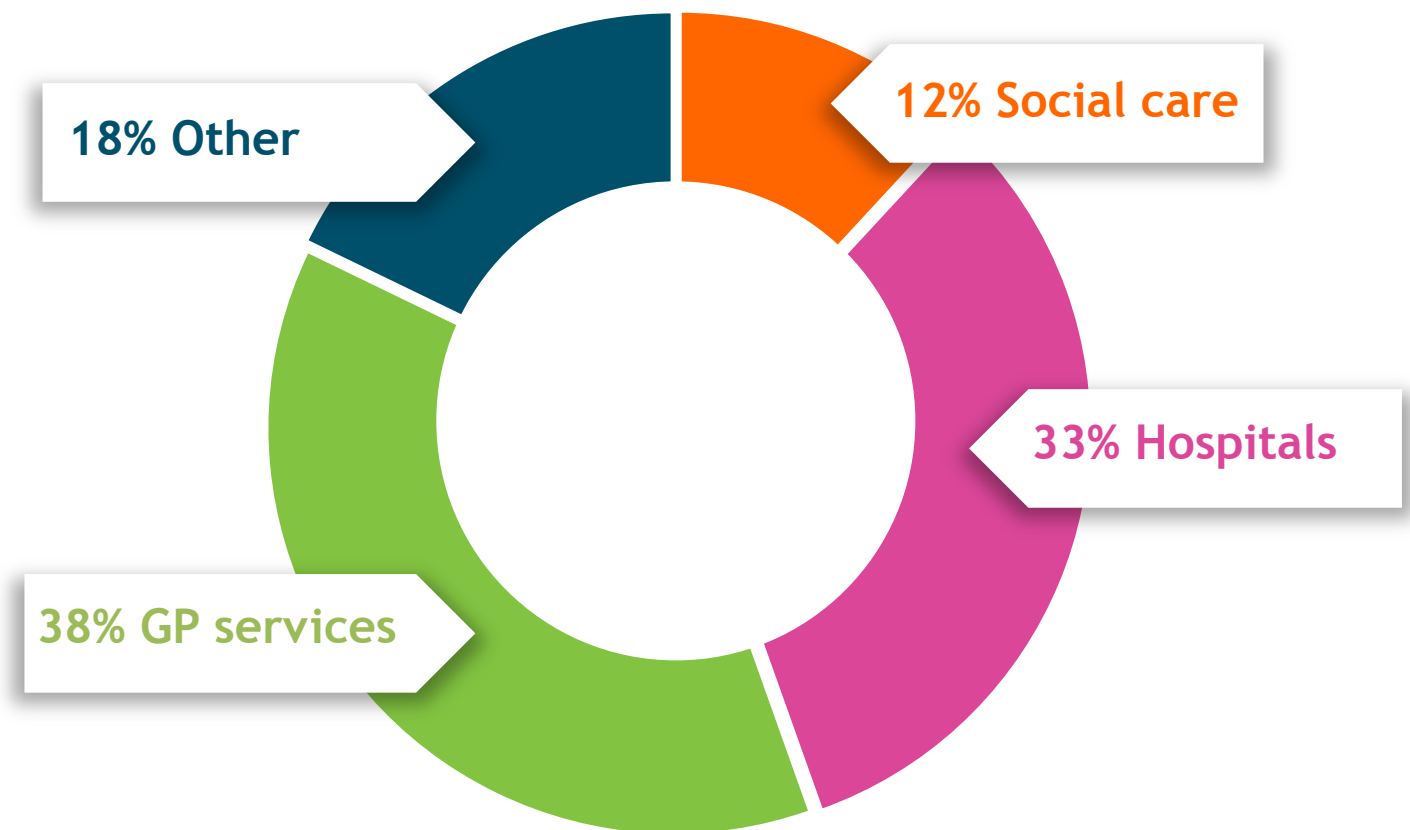
The report and its recommendations will feed into the ongoing review of Newcastle and Gateshead mental health services.

Catherine Richardson, Commissioning Manager - Mental Health at Newcastle Gateshead Clinical Commissioning Group said of the draft report “I found the information very useful and I think it reaffirms our knowledge from the transformation work so far and supports our future direction of travel for mental health transformation.”

What do people want to know?

People don't always know how to get the information they need to make decisions about their own health and care. Healthwatch plays an important role in providing advice and pointing people in the right direction for the support they need.

Here are the most common themes that people ask us about:



How we provide people with advice and information

Finding the right care or support can be worrying and stressful. There are a number of organisations that can provide help, but people don't know where to look.

You can come to us for advice and information in a number of ways including:

- + Our Freephone helpline
- + Our online 'contact us' form
- + At community events
- + Via our online feedback centre, where people can request information about services, or help in making a complaint
- + Promoting helpful services across our newsletters, website and social media

Improving information for the Roma community

A man from Eastern Europe contacted us to seek advice about a letter from NHS Business Services for a prescription fine he had received.

We spoke with leaders in the Roma community and found this was just one of a number of issues the community was facing when accessing primary care, health and social care services in Gateshead.

We established a meeting with Roma community leaders, HAREF (Health and Race Equality Forum) and four local GP practice managers to better understand the health needs of this community.

This resulted in community leaders gaining a better understanding of the interpretation service used by GP services to cascade to Roma community members.

Accessing a Personal Health Budget

We received a call from a carer who wanted information on Personal Health Budgets (PHB). This is when adults that are funded by NHS continuing healthcare would like to arrange their own care and support.

We informed the carer that patients have had the 'right to have' a personal health budget from 1 October 2014 and provided the relevant information.



GP surgeries agreed to alter their patient information leaflets into a clearer format for translation. Members of the Roma community agreed to translate the patient information leaflets and distribute them.

The man was referred to Gateshead Citizens Advice Centre and Independent Complaints Advocacy. Gateshead Citizens Advice Service agreed to attend the community on a regular basis offering advice sessions on a weekly basis covering various issues on debt, housing and employment, for example.

We also coordinated a meeting between the carer and a lead practitioner at Newcastle Gateshead Clinical Commissioning Group to look at the effectiveness of the current pathway for patients wanting to access a Personal Health Budget.

Our volunteers

How do our volunteers help us?

At Healthwatch Gateshead we couldn't make all of these improvements without the support of our eight volunteers that work with us to help make care better for their communities.

What our volunteers do:

- + Raise awareness of the work we do in the community
- + Visit services to make sure they're meeting people's needs
- + Support our day to day running, for example, governance
- + Collect people's views and experiences which we use in our reports

We have two volunteer roles – Healthwatch Champion and Research Champion. Our Champions help us at events and information stalls, gather health and social care issues in their communities and tell people about Healthwatch Gateshead. Research Champions gather people's views about services using a range of different research methods, and can also be involved in research design and the analysis of findings.

We could not perform our remit without the valuable support from our Champions: Kenneth, Kay, Alison, Shami, Sue, Lisa, Alan and Freda. They are tireless in their dedication to Healthwatch and efforts to make a difference to their community. They are our 'eyes and ears' in the local community.

Healthwatch Champions undertake lots of different activities and training throughout the year.



They visit community organisations to listen to peoples' experiences of their health and social care journeys. They attend stalls at high profile events such as the Newcastle Mela, Newcastle Pride, International Women's Day and World Mental Health Day.

Volunteers provide valuable local information to identify communities of interest and seldom heard communities. They contribute to our regular newsletter, help with data entry, completion of surveys, setting up and participating in events, contributing to ideas and plans, and have even undertaken some mystery shopping exercises.

Our Champions created a 'toolbox' which is comprised of information from the top ten topics/most frequently asked questions. The toolbox can be interchangeable to suit a particular audience, for example men, women, children and older people.



For example, work we carried out with men included signposting information on:

- + Cancer
- + Carers
- + Alcohol and drugs
- + NHS 111 service
- + Mental health
- + Independent Complaints Advocacy
- + Health screening
- + Diabetes
- + Prostate

Champions use this toolbox when visiting communities and engaging with members of the public. Feedback from people has indicated that walking away from a discussion/issue-based topic with a leaflet encourages them to access services, even at a later date. They may not be ready to contact or engage in services at the time of contact but having the information reinforces the self-care model of care.

Champions have also undertaken a series of public health sessions to increase their confidence and knowledge to help people look after themselves in the community. Sessions covered the change behavior cycle, alcohol, talking about cancer, physical activity and healthy weight.

Meet our volunteers

We caught up with a couple of our fantastic volunteers to show you how their work truly makes a difference to the lives of people in Gateshead.

Meet Kenneth



Kenneth Daglish is a retired teacher of adults with learning disabilities who also cared for his father. The catalyst for Ken's decision to join Healthwatch was to help others navigate the care and support pathways, particularly for carers. Like most carers, Ken was unaware of the support and assistance available to aide him in his caring duties, until he met Kay Parker, also a Healthwatch Champion. Through word of mouth and others' experiences, Kenneth and his father were able to access some support making his caring role a little easier.

“I just want to help others’ health and social care journeys be as least stressful as possible. You are already in an emotive state when having to access such services, because no one accesses them if you have a choice, it’s because you are unwell or need help. I just want to give something back and be part of making things better for people”.

Meet Alan

Alan has more than 30 years’ experience of volunteering. As a Healthwatch Champion both in Gateshead and Newcastle for the past two years, he has been involved in various activities, such as note-taking at meetings, outreach work, and mystery shopping GP surgeries and pharmacies.

Having just taken on the role of Research Champion, Alan will support Healthwatch Gateshead staff to design and deliver research projects. The main focus of the role will be to gather people’s views about health and social care services using a range of different research methods.



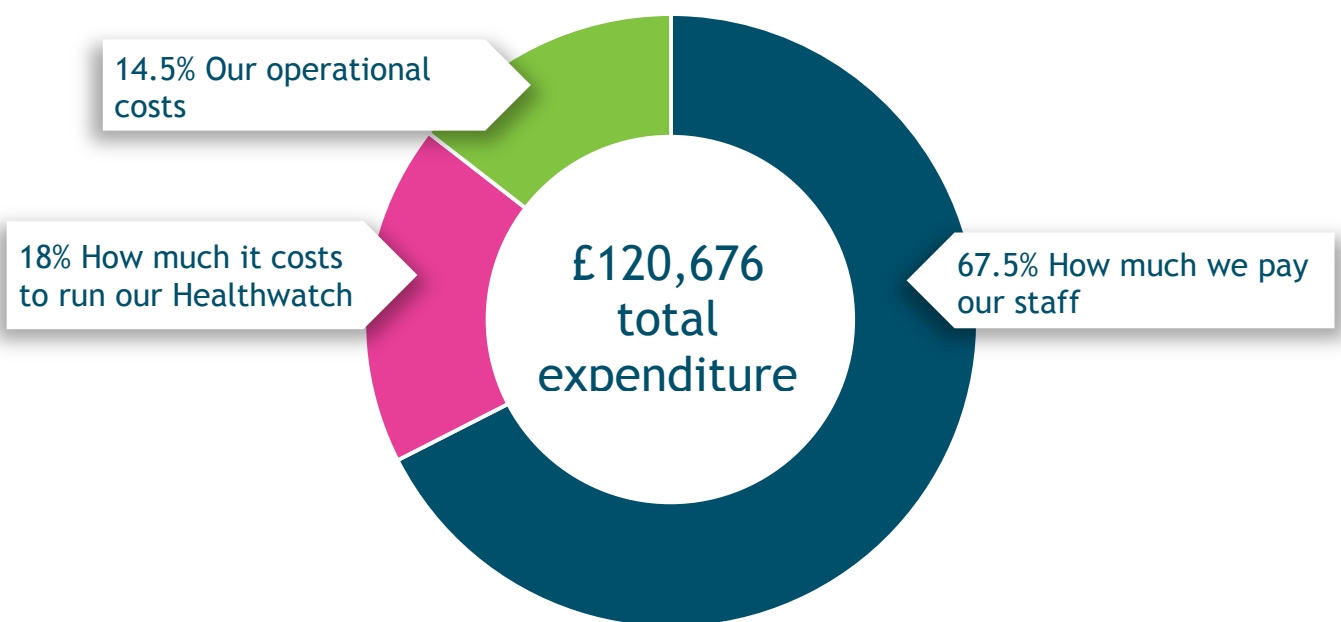
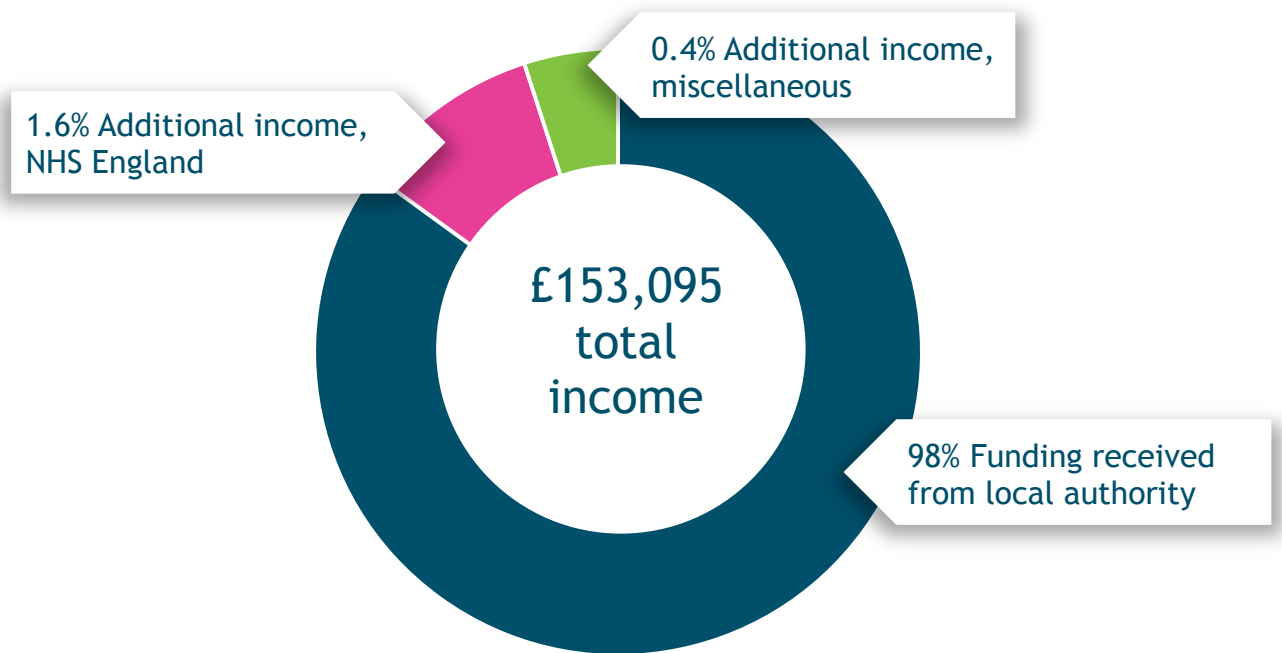
Alan has also benefitted from a wide range of training, including ‘Helping Out Gateshead’, a workshop looking at how volunteering could be better supported in Gateshead, as well as looking at ways of encouraging others to join in and help out.

Our finances

How we use our money

To help us carry out our work, we are funded by our local authority. In 2018–19 we spent £121,000.

We also received £3,100 of additional income from work undertaken for NHS England and other small contracts.



Our plans for next year

Message from our Chief Executive



This year has been yet another incredible but challenging year for us. So many things in our health and social care environment are changing, austerity measures still continue to affect our communities and the services we all use. This pressure, along with upcoming shortages in key staff groups in the NHS, means that local health and social care services have to make changes to the way they run. This is both a threat and an opportunity.

We generally have very good local services, although there is always room for improvement, and as money becomes tighter, we want to make sure that we keep what works really well. But people tell us that services don't work together well, they don't always meet people's needs and the way that people live their lives. These changes mean that we have a great chance to get the people that plan and provide health and care services to involve local people in designing the new services.

Since taking over the running of Healthwatch Gateshead, we've begun to build a reputation for being a constructive partner to the health and care system. We can challenge the current situation and work with them to create better ways to do things and involve service users and the public.

However, this does mean that we are in demand and, unfortunately, our small staff team can't do everything, which is why the support of the Healthwatch Gateshead Committee members and our Healthwatch Champions is so valuable.

I'm very proud of our work over the year including:

- + Our work on carer's assessments which was used to help inform the new carer's support contract.
- + Our work with the Roma community, helping them to link with and inform local GP practices.
- + Our work on NHS continuing healthcare that is helping Newcastle Gateshead Clinical Commissioning Group to review the way it does things.

Service users and members of the public have helped us to identify and select our priorities for 2019–20, which are:

- + Supporting effective GP patient participation groups
- + Adult Social Care Direct

I look forward to what this year has to bring.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steph Edusei'.

Steph Edusei
Healthwatch Gateshead Chief Executive

Thank you

Thank you to everyone who has helped us put people at the heart of health and social care, including:

- + Members of the public who shared their views and experience with us.
- + All of our amazing staff and volunteers.
- + The many voluntary organisations that have contributed to our work, including Gateshead Long Term Conditions Group, Whitehills Ladies Group, Cumbric Roma Community, Fulfilling Lives Newcastle Gateshead, Forward Assist and Gateshead Citizens Advice Bureau.
- + Gateshead Council, including the Public Health Team.
- + Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust.
- + Newcastle Council for Voluntary Service.
- + Gateshead College.

“Healthwatch’s commissioning of our Experts by Experience to conduct peer research was a really positive experience for us. Our Experts reflected how they were actively involved by the Healthwatch team. They felt really valued and listened to which was a great confidence boost for everyone involved!

The [mental health services] project broadened our understanding of access to mental health by hearing the stories of more than twenty people with lived experience and the findings will help shape our work at Fulfilling Lives going forward.”

Ang Broadbridge

Fulfilling Lives Newcastle Gateshead

“It is such a relief and great to hear that there is an organisation like Healthwatch around who are independent and help us all get the best for patients. Thank you for listening to me and telling me about ICA.”

Carer, calling on behalf of her mother

“The Council welcomes the [funding for adult social care] report produced by Healthwatch, and in particular would like to thank Healthwatch for the support they provided in gathering key and essential feedback from people who use services, to feed into the LGA Adult Social Care Green Paper, which enabled us to reflect and report the direct experience of people with lived experience, and ensure that we already have a rich body of evidence to feed into the Government’s Green Paper when it is published.

We have considered the recommendations made and provided the following responses, which we look forward to continuing to work with Healthwatch to deliver.”

Steph Downey

Gateshead Council

Contact us

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healthwatch
Gateshead