



Together

**We are 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

As the Chair of Healthwatch Gateshead, writing the Annual Report message allows me a chance to reflect on the past 12 months. Like most organisations, we have adapted, renewed, and shifted our delivery patterns as we re-adjust with the aftereffects of the Covid 19 pandemic. I am grateful that through the changes everyone has continued to be flexible and proactively worked to ensure that Healthwatch Gateshead continues to make sure that people using health and social care services have a meaningful voice.

Healthwatch Gateshead continues to support the nine Healthwatch England national priorities through providing local data collection, supplying service users' input and raising people's awareness of the issues.

Also at local level, through our rolling community engagement and outreach programme the Healthwatch Gateshead Committee have been picking up emerging issues and new trends that address local need and then working with commissioners and local partners to make changes.

We are committed to continuing to work closely with the Gateshead system, the Council, health and social care, voluntary and community sector partners, and particularly with the Gateshead Health and Wellbeing Board. Together we will continue to make a difference and work on tackling the health and other inequalities. We thank our partners for recognising our work and expertise and their willingness to involve us at a high level where we can have an influence on behalf of local people. Engagement, Involvement and Outreach activities form the main function of Healthwatch Gateshead, throughout the year we have taken opportunities to reach out to local people and communities, gather views, and provide advice and information.

It is through delivery of this work that as an independent partner within the Gateshead systems, we can effectively collaborate, influence, and have an impact on health and social care services. This year the report on the "Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Services - Experiences of children, young people, and their families in Gateshead" demonstrates our impact and the partnership working that we do, so that the residents experience of health and social care services affect the design and implementation of services across the borough.



Michael Brown
Healthwatch Gateshead Chair

Message from our Chair

I would like to thank our dedicated staff, committee members, volunteers and Tell Us North CIC directors who are fundamental to us delivering an effective Healthwatch service in Gateshead.

However, this year has seen the staff team undergo some significant changes. The previous CEO (Siobhan O'Neill) left in the summer of 2022 and a new CEO (Yvonne Probert) joined in December 2022, an interim CEO (Phill Capewell) bridged the gap and new staff have come on board too. We are now in a time of renewal and looking positively to the future with an enthusiastic new team.

Looking ahead we will continue to build on the relationships that we have within Gateshead, focusing on local people and our communities, while working with others to amplify users' voice and their experiences. I can assure you that Healthwatch Gateshead will continue to ensure local people have effective ways to influence and improve health and social care services. Our promise is to keep challenging ourselves to do even more to hear from all communities, and this means we face the coming year with confidence that we will make a difference in Gateshead.

Finally, I would like to thank the people of Gateshead who have taken the time to share their experiences of health and social care services with us.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Brown". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael Brown
Healthwatch Gateshead Chair

About us

Healthwatch Gateshead is your local health and social care champion.

We make sure NHS leaders and decision makers hear the voice and use the feedback from service users to improve care. We can also help people to find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.



Our vision

We believe that users' views can improve health and social care services.



Our mission

To demonstrate how user views can improve services in health and social care and to provide practical services, support, and advice to help that happen well

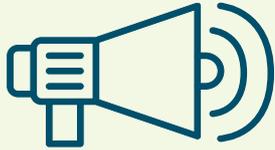


Our values are:

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

Year in review

Reaching out



345 people

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

80 people

came to us via signposting for clear advice and information about topics such as complaints, access to health services, and social care.

Making a difference to care



We published **4 reports** about the improvements people would like to see made to health and social care services.

- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Services: Experiences of children, young people, and their families in Gateshead
- Health and Social Care Committee inquiry into NHS Dentistry
- Caring for Care Givers in Gateshead
- Loneliness and Social Isolation in young people living in Newcastle and Gateshead

Health and care that works for you



We're lucky to have

10

outstanding volunteers who gave up 40 hours to make care better for our community.

We're funded by our local authority. In 2022-23 we received

£140,250

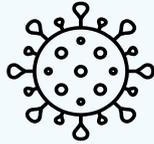
We currently employ

5 staff

who help us carry out our work.

How we've made a difference this year

Spring



We worked to better understand how the COVID pandemic impacted on health and wellbeing.



We focused on refugees and asylum seekers to understand health and social care priorities for these local communities.

Summer



We welcomed a new team in summer 2022 tasked with helping us achieve our mission of engaging with local people to help improve health and social care services in Gateshead.



We engaged with young people aged 18 to 25 to understand their views and general experiences of loneliness and social isolation.

Autumn



We were commissioned by Gateshead Council to understand the experiences of unpaid carers as we came out of the COVID-19 pandemic. We highlighted issues around communication, capacity, coordination, and competence to the attention of the local council.



We launched online monthly forums where we invited local health and social care organisations to share information about their services. Each month we focus on a specific topic area and welcome local people along to learn more about what is available.

Winter



We fed into the submission of evidence to the House of Commons Cross-Party Health and Social Care Committee Inquiry into Dentistry. Our recommendations for the local Integrated Care Board and NHS England were grounded by the experiences of local people.



In line with our newly developed Engagement Strategy, we made a targeted effort to engage with one of the seldom heard groups, young people aged between 16 and 25, through the launch of phase one of our Youthwatch Project.

10 years of improving care

This year marks a special milestone for Healthwatch Gateshead. 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?

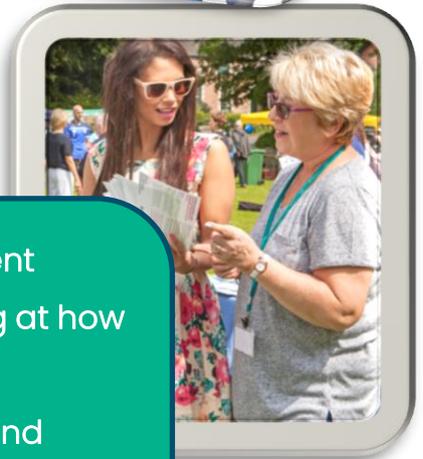


We worked with Newcastle Gateshead Clinical Commissioning Group to discuss our January 2020 report 'Don't box me in' and the resulting action plan to make services young people friendly



**CELEBRATING
SUCCESS
10 YEARS OF
HEALTHWATCH**

We reported on our resilient communities work looking at how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted on the health and wellbeing of people in Gateshead and how different people and communities responded.





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.

Joining Up Services for Children and Young People with Special Education Needs & Disabilities and their families in Gateshead.

Children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and their families can face challenges when accessing services. This year we engaged with local young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and their families, to ensure their voices fed into the Joint Commissioning Strategy.

Our findings showed that there were high levels of dissatisfaction among service users in how services met the needs of the children, young people, and the wider family.

Much of the frustration felt by families appeared to stem from difficulties accessing services and the lengthy waiting times. Although experiences were largely positive when services were eventually accessed, improvements to communication throughout the journey would be a help to many young people and their families.

Changes for Children, Young People, and their Families

Our findings received a great deal of attention from local health and social care providers, and as a result:

- An Action Plan was put in place by the local Integrated Care Board to look at and address the issues raised in our report.
- The findings were presented to the SEND Strategic Partnership Board where it was reported that local education providers would address the issues raised in our report.
- The major points raised in the report were included in the Joint Commissioning Strategy and the full report was published as part of the strategy.

What difference will this make?

This outcome showed decision makers have listened to the voices of local people presented in our report and are acting to address the issues raised.

Should all actions be addressed, interorganisational working should take place to better meet the needs of children, young people, and their families. Communication channels should be effectively used and there should be increased awareness about existing services, including those that could offer interim support.



“Referrals were initially knocked back and it took many years for his needs to be taken care of. I would say the impact has been catastrophic as many learning years have been lost. This will impact him for the rest of his life”

Accessing Dental Services in Gateshead

The Health and Social Care Committee launched an inquiry into dentistry following a survey that showed 90% of dental practices across the UK were not accepting new adult NHS patients. MPs explored the possible impact of changes to make the Integrated Care Systems and Integrated Care Boards responsible for the provision of dental services.

Our findings echoed those that prompted the inquiry into dentistry, with most of the local people we engaged with having mentioned issues around access. The COVID pandemic discouraged some from visiting the dentist; with some local people noting that their dentist was not prioritising routine check-ups and others reported that they did not want to add to an already burdened system.

Our recommendations:

As the inquiry included the role of local ICS and the ICB in the provision of dental services, our recommendations focus on the role the ICS could play in fulfilling our recommendations which included:

- Ensuring the public are informed about personalised recall intervals and the importance of regular dentist visits.
- Ensuring barriers to access are addressed and seldom heard groups are given the opportunity to share their experiences.
- Ensuring patients have access to user-friendly and up-to-date information through a variety of different mediums.

What difference will this make?

Raising public awareness around dentistry is key. Personalised recall intervals will help ensure patients are seeing a dental professional on a regular basis suitable to their needs. Ensuring information is up-to-date and user-friendly will ensure local people have access to timely and correct information. While pooled resources will help unburden the system and can help in the early diagnosis of major oral health issues, including oral cancer.

“It is nigh on impossible to get a routine check-up and thus my teeth have suffered. My dentist is now more expensive due to filling crack worsening and now cannot be refilled and I need a crown. Treatment is very expensive. I was already anxious, going to the dentist did not help my mental health one bit.”

Three ways we have made a difference for the community

Through 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 services to see the bigger picture. Hearing personal experiences and the impact on people's lives provides them with a better understanding of the problems.



Healthwatch Gateshead shared experiences about the process for COVID-19 vaccination for long-term patients in Gateshead hospitals with the Patient Experience Team. By doing this, there was a process put in place for inpatients who had been in hospital for more than 42 days. A local resident said, "Now that the QE has adopted a policy for long-stay inpatients it will benefit a number of those who otherwise may have faced an unnecessary delay in receiving their protection"

Getting services to involve the public

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



Healthwatch Gateshead engaged with local people to understand their experiences and opinions of the North East Ambulance Service (NEAS). The engagement focused on public trust in the service, and we ultimately recommended that any actions should focus on delivering transparently and building trust. NEAS are working on engaging with the local people. Through our engagement with local people, we were able to share with NEAS what trust means to people and areas that need to be addressed to develop trust

Improving care over time

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



In 2022-23, Healthwatch Gateshead started engaging with local people through short research projects. One of these projects included the topic of Heart Health. We found that understanding of CPR and the confidence in carrying out CPR was poor among local people. To help combat this, we worked to remind people of the range of free resources to help people increase their awareness around this valuable lifesaving skill.



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:

- Developing specific targeted programmes of work focusing on specific seldom heard groups.
- Developing working relationships with organisations working directly with specific groups of interest.

Getting young people involved in improving services

This year we launched Youthwatch in an effort to get young people involved in influencing the future of health and social care services.

There are around 18,000 young people in Gateshead. The views of these young people aren't always heard and as a Healthwatch we wanted to change this.

Phase one of our Youthwatch project has seen us understand what is important to young people in the area. Phase two of Youthwatch (due to launch in 2023-24) will enable young people to get involved in projects that are important to them and bring the information to decision makers in a timely manner.



"I think the health services are good but could be improved more to reach each person's needs without discriminating because of their age or gender."



Diverse Communities. Diverse Experiences.

In 2022-23, Healthwatch Gateshead have engaged with diverse communities across Gateshead including Sikh, Hindu, Pakistani, Bengali, Muslim, Chinese, and African. We have worked with organisations supporting people seeking asylum and those who are refugees.

We have utilised the language skills of team members to help members of the local community overcome language barriers and share their health and social care experiences.

The profile of Healthwatch Gateshead has increased among diverse communities across the borough and we are now hearing from a diverse range of communities.



Advice and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch is here for you. In times of worry or stress, we can provide confidential support and free information to help you understand your options and get the help you need. Whether it's finding an NHS dentist, 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:

- Helping people develop awareness of services in the local area through our online forums.
- Providing signposting information and advice through our website, email & telephone lines.
- Reaching out to our connections within the health and social care system to resolve specific issues.
- Developing our presence within local communities, providing an opportunity for people to share their experiences face-to-face.

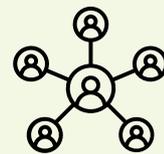
Building relationships to support local people together

Healthwatch Gateshead have been contacted by local people presenting complex needs and don't know where to turn. To offer the best possible service, as part of our signposting role, we have been working to develop strong relationships with advocacy services in the Gateshead area to ensure local people receive the right support at the right time.

Without tailored support and guidance many of the local people who contact us have difficulties navigating the complex health and social care system.

Through the development of these stronger relationships, Healthwatch Gateshead has gained insight into wider health and social care issues from the advocacy services.

These relationships also extend beyond advocacy services as Healthwatch Gateshead have begun to map services within the locality to ensure the support network is as robust as possible.



Keeping Warm with Healthwatch

Healthwatch Gateshead and Healthwatch Newcastle worked jointly to host a Keeping Warm with Healthwatch event this year. The event brought together several organisations across the areas to share information and advice with members of the local community.

The event was recognised as a great networking opportunity with organisations in attendance connecting with one another and learning about the services each other provide. The event also enabled many attendees to gain more awareness about services that they may not have otherwise known.

Engagement highlighted issues around the cost-of-living and the impact on day-to-day and social activities. Following on from the event, we began scoping a cost-of-living and winter pressure research project that is due to launch in the first quarter of 2023-24.





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 Gateshead and what we have to offer.
- Collected experiences and supported their communities to share their views.
- Carried out visits to local services to help them improve
- Reviewed GP and dentist websites to review accessibility.
- Collected the most up-to-date information on changes to services, such as whether NHS dental appointments were available at a practice.



Do you feel inspired?

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



www.healthwatchgateshead.co.uk



0800 038 5116



info@healthwatchgateshead.co.uk

Finance and future priorities

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

Our income and expenditure

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from Gateshead Council	£140,250	Expenditure on pay	£105,151
		Non-pay expenditure	£1,773
		Office and management fee	£35,512
Total income	£140,250	Total expenditure	£142,436

Next steps

In the ten years since Healthwatch Gateshead was launched, we have 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 tackle the inequalities that exist and work to reduce the barriers faced when accessing care, regardless of whether that is because of where you live, your income or your race.

Emerging priorities for 2023-24

Hospital Discharge

Access to GPs

Mental Health

Accessible Information Standards

Health Literacy

Social Care



Statutory statements

Healthwatch Gateshead
MEA House, Ellison Place, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 8XS

Organisation holding the Healthwatch Gateshead contract:
Tell Us North CIC (company number 10394966)
MEA House, Ellison Place, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 8XS
Email: info@tellusnorth.org.uk

Healthwatch Gateshead 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 Gateshead Committee consists of 6 members who work on a voluntary basis to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny to our activities. Our Committee ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community.

We include 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 tell us about their experience of using services. During 2022/23 we have been available by phone, email, provided a webform on our website and through social media, as well as attending face to face meetings at community groups and forums.

We ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. We will publish it on our website, provide paper copies, promote it at meetings as well as via social media and in our newsletter.

Responses to recommendations

This year 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 insight and experiences that have been shared with us at Healthwatch Gateshead.

We take information to various groups and committees such as the Gateshead Carers, People at the Heart of Care and Carers Partnership. In addition, we take insight and experiences to other decision makers in the Gateshead system. We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

The way we work

We supported a gentleman to challenge the QE's accessibility resulting in an action plan and commitment from the QE, including new communication processes for non verbal people.

We produced in December 2022 a report looking at user experience of SEND services in Gateshead.

1. This report is being used to inform the joint commissioning strategy in Gateshead.
2. The ICB has developed a clear action plan as a result of the recommendations.
3. The work will be presented to the SEND strategic partnership board.

Two Healthwatch reports giving both a Gateshead view and regional North East view on dentistry services produced in in January 2022 were highlighted in discussion at the House of Commons.

Our revisit to the subject in Jan 2023 will form part of a national view submitted by Healthwatch England for the House of Commons Health and Social Care Committee inquiry into NHS dentistry.

We effected change to the national abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA) screening letters to include more accessible communications methods.

Influence and Impact via the Gateshead Health and Wellbeing Board and Health and Social Care Scrutiny Committee

Healthwatch Gateshead is represented on these 2 groups by the Healthwatch Gateshead Chair and the Chief Executive Officer of Tell Us North CIC .

During 2022–2023 our representatives have effectively carried out this role of representation by attending meetings and contributing to actions and decisions in order to improve the wellbeing and health of everyone in the borough, particularly focusing on reducing health inequalities.

Thank You

We would like to extend our thanks to :-

- Atypical Support CIC
- Connected Voice
- Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust
- Disability North
- Faith Groups across Gateshead
- Friends Action North East
- Gateshead Council
- Leam Lane Community Centre
- National Autism Society Tyne and Wear
- NECS
- Gateshead Parent Carer Forum
- NHS Gateshead Clinical Commissioning Group
- NHS Staff
- North East Autism Society
- North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board
- Parent Carer Forum
- Primary Care Networks and GP Practice Managers.
- GP Practices in Gateshead
- RNIB
- Skills for People
- The Lawnmowers
- The Twisting Ducks Theatre Company
- Your Voice Counts

healthwatch

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