healthwatch Gateshead

# Committee minutes - Public

24th September 2025 – 2 pm to 3:30pm
Hybrid: at the Boardroom (Citizens Advice Gateshead) in person and online via Zoom

## Committee members present.

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| Michael Brown - Chair | (MB) | (in person) |
| Alan Guest | (AG) | (in person) |
| Gordon Wallace | (GW) | (in person) |
| Bob Gaffney | (BG) | (in person) |
| Peter Wilson | (PW) | (in person) |
| Gillian Hindson | (GH) | (in Person) |
| Lyn Boyle | (LB) | Online (via Zoom) |
| Shamshad Shah | (SS) | Online (via Zoom) |
| Privilege Garaba | (PG) | Online (via Zoom) |

## In attendance

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| Yvonne Probert | (YP) | CEO (in person) |
| Courtney Peel | (CP) | Business Services Manager (in person) |
| Afsana Begum | (AB) | Research and Engagement Manager Online (via zoom) |
| Jack Tinkler | (JT) | Lead Officer (in person) |
| Avish Johnson | (AJ) | Business Support Officer (in person) |

## 1. Welcome and introductions.

1.1. MB welcomed everyone to the meeting.

## 2. Apologies for absence.

Mairi Cox (MC) and Semande Ayihonbe (SA) gave apologies for the meeting.

## 3. Minutes of previous meeting/matters arising.

3.1. The Dementia Care project questionnaires have been updated and are further discussed under the agenda item.

3.2. The Locality Working report and related details were presented at the Annual Joint Meeting (AJM), following the Committee's suggestions.

3.3. A new meeting venue has been booked.

3.4. The minutes from the Committee meeting held on 16 July 2025 were approved as a true and accurate record.

## 4. Electronic Decisions

4.1. Gordon Wallace and Bob Gaffney have been co-opted to the committee.

## 5. Chair – Verbal update

5.1. The North East North Cumbria (NENC) Regional Healthwatch Network meeting was held on 15 September and attended by MB, Chair of Healthwatch Gateshead. Key topics discussed included:

5.1.1. Network projects:

- A bid for the Digital Inclusion project was submitted
- A bid for Social Prescribing was also submitted but was unsuccessful.
- Healthwatch will be supporting the Primary Care Access Recovery Programme (PCARP)project, which commenced on 1 October, with a three-month engagement period.

5.1.2. Network delivery plan - highlighting the need to continue operating as usual until there is a change in legislation.

5.1.3. NHS 10-year plan continuing health care – It was noted that the process of funding for individuals is not standardised across all areas.

5.1.4. ICB Integrated delivery report – discussed as an opportunity to identify key measures that could help the public better understand how services are being delivered across the North East and North Cumbria.
Discussions also covered waiting times, infection control, primary health care, palliative care, and dentistry, which need to be monitored.

5.1.5. A finance review was presented for the Network, highlighting the importance of building up reserves. The Committee discussed recent ICB funding cuts and staff redundancies, including how redundancy payments might affect ICB funds.

5.1.6. Following the closure of Healthwatch England, there may be a reduction in IT support. The Committee noted the need to monitor how this might affect operations, particularly regarding the survey tools, website, and branding guidelines.

5.1.7. Network Identity –The Network proposed adding a tagline to the Local Healthwatch logo. The Committee agreed that staying united within the Network will be beneficial for future work and approved the addition of the tagline where appropriate.

5.2. AJM feedback – A raw write-up from the table discussions at the AJM was presented, the committee were asked for feedback to CP and AJ to consolidate and define the data for the next meeting.

Action – consolidate and present the findings at the next Committee meeting.

## 6. CEO Update

6.1. The Quarter 1 Monitoring Return – has been submitted to the Commissioner.

6.1.1. A discussion took place regarding the contract extension, and the Committee suggested asking for clarity at the next meeting with the Commissioner.

6.2. Ward 23 at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QE) has been closed, with an expected saving of £32.8 million for Gateshead Health NHS Trust. The closure aims to shift care into the community by expanding frailty services, dementia training, and virtual ward capacity.

6.2.1. It was noted that the decision appears to be based more on clinical review than on patient experience. Concerns were raised about the lack of public consultation, poor communication, and whether community and social care services can cope with the additional demand.

6.2.2. Committee suggested the criteria for assigning patients to Pathway 0 and the quality of services provided need to be reviewed and the issue should be tied in with current priorities relating to hospital and social care.

6.2.3. Committee identified Age UK and Carers Federation as potential partners for further engagement on the topic.

6.2.4. A meeting has been arranged between Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust and Healthwatch Gateshead.

Action –feedback from this meeting to be presented at the next committee meeting.

## 7. Project Update

7.1. AB gave a brief update on all live projects, including their progress, status, and possible deadlines/targets for completion.
7.2. AB also provided an update on Enter & View activities and a possible revisit to assess any changes made as per the recommendations in the Enter & View report.
7.3. A discussion took place regarding the change of Enter & View topics, and the Committee agreed on a new theme of Hospitals for the next Enter & View project.

## 8. Locality working update

8.1. The Quarter 1 report has been shared with the Commissioner, and the general themes identified include GP services, mental health support, ADHD, and the NHS app.
8.2. Drop-in sessions and events are continuing as usual, and the team will be including the ICB project work (Primary Care Access Recovery Programme – PCARP) in the drop-in activities.

## 9. Finance Update

9.1. There was nothing to report. Expenses and income are as expected.

## 10. Nolan Principle

10.1. Everyone read and agreed on the Nolan Principles.

## 11. Standing Items

11.1. Nothing to report regarding Safeguarding, Health and Safety, or Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.
11.2. There is no freedom of information requests.

## 12. Any other business

12.1. The location for future meetings was discussed, and the Committee suggested booking Citizens Advice going forward.

## 13. Date and time of next meeting.

13.1. Tuesday 4th November 2025 – 2 pm.