

Health and Wellbeing Board

29 March 2022

Healthwatch County Durham annual report 2020/21 and workplan 2021/22



Report of Christopher Cunnington-Shore, Chair, Healthwatch County Durham

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of the report is to provide the Health and Wellbeing Board with the Healthwatch County Durham (HWCD) annual report 2020/21 and the priorities for 2021/22. The annual report is attached as Appendix 2 of this report.

Executive summary

- 2 The annual report covers the highlights from 2020/21, how we set our priorities, how we've made a difference, how we have helped people to find the answers they need and how our volunteers support the work we do. It also provides details of our priorities for the coming year.
- 3 779 people gave feedback about their experiences of health and social care and 246 contacted us for information, advice and signposting. 24 volunteers gave 1843 hours of their time, which is the equivalent of around 245 days.
- 4 Our work has been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, especially our inability to conduct our Enter and View visits, although we have continued to provide our signposting, advice and information service without disruption.
- 5 We used social media and our e bulletins to regularly share lots of useful information from reliable sources throughout the pandemic. Providing up to date national and local advice and information about COVID 19. Last year, we shared 206 messages of advice relating to the pandemic across our social media platforms
- 6 The annual report was available on our website from 28 June 2021 and shared with Healthwatch England, the Care Quality Commission, NHS England, Clinical Commissioning Groups, Adult, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Durham County Council

Recommendations

- 7 Members of the Health and Wellbeing Board are recommended to:
- (a) Receive the HWCD annual report for 2020/21.
 - (b) Note the ongoing workplan priorities and the engagement topics for inclusion in the new workplan for 2022/23, which is currently out for public vote.
 - (c) Provide comment on the future work areas for HWCD to ensure further alignment to the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Background

- 8 HWCD is the consumer champion for health and social care and delivers an evidence based workplan agreed by an independent board.
- 9 The workplan comprises our core functions of information and signposting, Enter and View visits and volunteering, public priorities and workplan requests that have been agreed by the HWCD board.
- 10 Healthwatch County Durham is hosted by the Pioneering Care Partnership.

Key events over the last year

- 11 Healthwatch County Durham published 4 reports about the improvements people would like to see with their health and social care, and from this, we made 17 recommendations for improvement
- 12 The published reports included:
 - Access to GP services
 - Pharmacy services
 - Life in a Domestic Abuse refuge during the COVID 19 pandemic
 - COVID-19 vaccination programme

Our reports can be found on the Healthwatch County Durham website [News and reports | Healthwatch Countydurham](#)

- 13 Healthwatch County Durham successfully completed the self-assessment, utilising the Healthwatch England Quality Framework. The framework is a self-assessment tool which Healthwatch boards and leaders can use to explore key questions such as:
 - Which aspects of our work are more effective?
 - Where can we improve things?
 - What barriers do we need to address?
 - What factors drive our success?
 - What impact are we making?

This has helped us recognise our strengths and weaknesses, identifying any changes we need to make to improve the way we deliver the service. The framework has helped us strengthen our governance arrangements, ensuring they are robust and fit for purpose.

- 14 COVID-19 has continued to have an impact on service provision and our ability to engage with the community we serve. Staff continue to work with volunteers and support service users through our signposting and advice service. Following guidance from the government and Healthwatch England we are considering new approaches to our engagement with public in the future.
- 15 The top 4 areas that people contacted us about through our advice and signposting service were,
- GP services (31%)
 - Dental services (19%)
 - COVID-19 vaccinations (19%)
 - Mental Health services (8%)
- 16 Pre-COVID-19, HWCD used to hold an annual event, which gave us an opportunity to engage with the public and stakeholders. This year we held the event online and although it was on a much smaller scale we were able to provide feedback on our work and had two excellent speakers, namely, Michael Laing, Director of Integrated Community Services and Pauline Fletcher, Senior Primary Care Manager (Dental Commissioning Lead – North East and North Cumbria).

Choosing our priorities

- 17 The Board review all the thematic priorities at the end of each year and use what the people of County Durham tell them, to drive continuous improvement in the health and social care services. We follow national policy in determining our work planning.
- 18 They combine consultation, signposting enquiries and engagement work with assessment of national issues to make sure views and priorities are always balanced.

Our priorities for next year

- 19 We have ongoing workplan priorities carried forward from last year, these include
- Gathering the experiences of children and young people accessing Mental Health support
 - Gathering the experiences of people accessing Home Care Services

- Undertaking targeted work with seldom heard groups accessing primary care
- Publishing the results of the survey we conducted into registering with an NHS dentist
- Following up the recommendations made in our reports to see which recommendations have been adopted by service providers
- Undertaking a dedicated piece of work with volunteers and the public creating some video diaries, highlighting their experiences accessing Health and Social Care Services

20 Whilst our focus remains at Place, continuing to support local health and social care decision making, we are involved in the changes to the Integrated Care System (ICS) being implemented in 2022. We are working with our colleagues in the 12 other local Healthwatch within the ICS. We have a key role ensuring the voices of the residents of the county are heard at a regional level.

21 We are in the process of undertaking a survey, asking the public to prioritise 5 further workplan items we want to take forward in the next 12 to 18 months. The 5 topics are,

- Hearing about the experiences of people visiting loved ones in care homes and the impact of Covid restrictions on the Mental Health of people living in care homes
- The experiences of patients being discharged from hospital, including accessing patient transport from hospital to home. We are currently in discussions with CDDFT about working together and have joined the Hospital Discharge Group.
- COVID-19 has had a significant impact on hospital waiting times and we want people to share their experiences of what it has meant for them being on hospital waiting lists.
- Are patients getting information in an easy to understand way? Is the accessible information standard being used in Health and Social Care services?
- What are the experiences of patients accessing GP appointments and healthcare services. Are things improving?

Conclusion

22 This has been a year of continuing challenges for HWCD, including COVID 19 and staff shortages. However, we have continued to represent the views of our community and engage positively with our partners. Although engagement out in the community has been scaled

back, we have continued to gather the views of the public and share our findings both regionally and nationally.

- 23 We recognise with the implementation of the North East and North Cumbria ICS there will be both challenges and opportunities, however we are committed to ensuring the voice of local people in health and social care service delivery is still heard. We will continue to work closely with our partners in the county to improve outcomes for the members of the public in County Durham.

Authors

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

Local Healthwatch have been set up in every local authority in England by the Health and Social Care Act 2012. This details the statutory duties of each Healthwatch, which include:

- Promoting and supporting the involvement of local people in the commissioning, provision and scrutiny of local care services.
- Enabling local people to monitor the standard of provision of local care services and whether and how local care services could and ought to be improved.
- Obtaining the views of local people regarding their needs for, and experiences of, local care services and importantly to make these views known.
- Making reports and recommendations about how local care services could or ought to be improved. These should be directed to commissioners and providers of care services, and people responsible for managing or scrutinising local care services, and shared with Healthwatch England.
- Providing advice and information about access to local care services so choices can be made about local care services.
- Formulating views on the standard of provision and whether and how the local care services could and ought to be improved, and to share these views with Healthwatch England.
- Making recommendations to Healthwatch England to advise the Care Quality Commission to conduct special reviews or investigations (or, where the circumstances justify doing so, making such recommendations direct to the CQC); and to make recommendations to Healthwatch England to publish reports about particular issues
- Providing Healthwatch England with intelligence and insight to enable it to perform effectively.
- Each local Healthwatch must produce a report in relation to their activities at the end of each financial year
- All local Healthwatch are required to publish an annual report by 30 June each year and submit to Healthwatch England and local commissioners

Finance

HWCD is commissioned by DCC and the finances managed by Pioneering Care Partnership, the contract holder

Consultation

Engagement and consultation is the core work of HWCD

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

HWCD adheres to PCP's equality and diversity policy and training.

Climate Change

N/A

Human Rights

N/A

Crime and Disorder

N/A

Staffing

HWCD has 4.5 FTE staff.

Accommodation

N/A.

Risk

N/A.

Procurement

The current contract runs till March 2022 + 3yrs.