

Health and Wellbeing Board

28 July 2023

Healthwatch County Durham annual report 2022/23 and workplan 2023/24



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 2022/23 and details of the priorities for 2023/24. The annual report is attached as Appendix 2 of this report.

Executive summary

- 2 The annual report covers the highlights from 2022/23, how we've made a difference, how we have helped people to find the answers or information they need and how our volunteers support the work we do. It also provides details of our priorities for the coming year.
- 3 848 people gave feedback about their experiences of health and social care and 687 contacted us for information, advice and signposting. 25 volunteers gave the equivalent of 260 days of their time.
- 4 Our work has continued to be impacted to some extent by the legacy of the COVID-19 pandemic, namely our Enter and View visits, although all other areas of the service have been provided without disruption.
- 5 We used social media and our e bulletins to regularly share health and social care related information from local service providers – our e-bulletin reaches 1200 people per month.
- 6 The annual report was available on our website from 30 June 2023 and shared with Healthwatch England, the Integrated Care Board, NHS England, 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 2022/23.
 - (b) Note the ongoing workplan priorities and the engagement topics for inclusion in the new workplan for 2023/24.
 - (c) Provide comment on the future work areas for HWCD to ensure further alignment to the Joint Local 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.
- 12 The published reports included:
 - (a) Home care services
 - (b) 'Over To You' report – looking at public priorities
 - (c) 'So Here's The Thing' report – children and young people's mental health
 - (d) Patient Views on Access to GP led services

Our reports can be found on the Healthwatch County Durham website:

[News and reports | Healthwatch Countydurham](#)

- 13 The top 3 areas that people contacted us about through our advice and signposting service were:
 - (a) GP services (33%)
 - (b) Dental services (27%)
 - (c) Hospitals (18%)

The topic of most concern to people through public voting was Mental Health.

Choosing our priorities

- 14 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.

- 15 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

- 16 We have some ongoing workplan priorities carried forward from last year, which include:
- (a) Public engagement around the topic of Hospital Discharge
 - (b) Looking at how people are impacted by waiting lists for elective surgery
- 17 We have set new priorities based on feedback from the public, which are:
- (a) Mental health – we will maintain our overview of the Transformation programme and evaluate its effectiveness.
 - (b) Looking into Health Inequalities within access to GP services.
 - (c) Gathering evidence about the barriers to health & care services within seldom heard groups.
 - (d) We will continue to gather real case evidence about the ongoing issues with dentistry.
- 18 We have looked closely at our staffing structure over 2022/23 and have made some changes which reflect our commitment to increased representation of the varied communities of the county. In January 2023 we appointed someone with a mental health background to take a lead on that aspect of our engagement work; in April 2023 we appointed an Engagement & Inclusion Lead to help us ensure that we are reaching as many diverse groups as possible. Our next aim is to recruit someone skilled in engaging young people and expand that area of representation.
- 19 Whilst our focus remains at Place, continuing to support local health and social care decision making, we are now a part of the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care System, with an established Healthwatch Network across the region, and representation on the Integrated Care Board. We have a key role ensuring the voices of the residents of the county are heard at a regional level.

Conclusion

- 20 This has been a year of continuing challenges for HWCD, including the legacy of COVID 19 and significant staff shortages. However, we have

continued to represent the views of our community and engage positively with our partners. We have begun to increase our public engagement once again and we have continued to gather the views of the public and share our findings both regionally and nationally.

- 21 The implementation of the North East and North Cumbria ICS has brought both challenges and opportunities; however we remain 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 5 FTE permanent staff.

Accommodation

N/A.

Risk

N/A.

Procurement

The current contract runs till March 2024 + 1yr.

Appendix 2: HWCD Annual Report 2022/23

Attached as a separate document