

# Health and Wellbeing Board

23 July 2024

Healthwatch County Durham annual report 2023/24 and workplan 2024/25



## 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 2023/24 and details of the priorities for 2024/25.

### Executive summary

- 2 The annual report covers the highlights from 2023/24, 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 1487 people gave feedback about their experiences of health and social care, and 311 contacted us for information, advice and signposting. 23 volunteers gave the equivalent of 231 days of their time.
- 4 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 over 1100 people per month, and over 4500 people follow our social media channels.
- 5 The annual report will be available on our website from 9 July 2024 and shared with Healthwatch England, the Integrated Care Board, NHS England, Adult, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Durham County Council and CQC.

## **Recommendations**

- 6 Members of the Health and Wellbeing Board are recommended to:
- (a) Receive the HWCD annual report for 2023/24.
  - (b) Note the ongoing workplan priorities and the engagement topics for inclusion in the new workplan for 2024/25.
  - (c) Provide comment on the future work areas for HWCD to ensure further alignment to the Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

## Background

- 7 HWCD is the consumer champion for health and social care and delivers an evidence based workplan agreed by an independent board.
- 8 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.
- 9 Healthwatch County Durham is currently hosted by the Pioneering Care Partnership.

## Key events over the last year

- 10 Healthwatch County Durham published 9 reports about the improvements people would like to see with their health and social care.
- 11 The published reports included:

- (a) Access to GP-led services - The experience of patients from the d/Deaf community
- (b) Hospital Discharge – people’s experiences of being discharged from hospital
- (c) 7 Enter & View reports from our visits to GP practices

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

[News and reports | Healthwatch Countydurham](#)

- 12 The top 3 specific areas that people contacted us about were:
  - (a) GP services (37%)
  - (b) Mental Health services (17%)
  - (c) Dentistry (16%)

23% of contact was about Hospital services, but these were widely spread over the range of hospital services.

## Choosing our priorities

- 13 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 health and social care services. We follow national policy in determining our work planning.

- 14 They combine consultation, signposting enquiries and engagement work, alongside local 'word on the street' and assessment of national issues to make sure views and priorities are always balanced.

### **Our priorities for next year**

- 15 We have one workplan priority ongoing from last year:
- (a) Farming Communities – looking at the barriers faced by farmers and farming communities to accessing GP services.
- 16 We have set new priorities based on feedback from the public, which are:
- (a) Mental health
    - (i) Evaluating the implementation and effectiveness of the Community MH Transformation programme, 1 year in.
    - (ii) Suicide intervention and crisis support.
    - (iii) Working with Tees, Esk & Wear Valley MH Trust to address negative feedback and concerns about service delivery.
  - (b) Primary Care – reviewing the impact and effectiveness of Pharmacy First.
  - (c) Maternity services – reviewing the provision for miscarriage support.
  - (d) Youth Health – engaging with people aged 14 – 24 to hear their experience of our priority areas, and to find out what health topics are most important to them.
  - (e) Substance misuse – researching the barriers faced by people when accessing health and care services.
- 17 Following changes to our staffing structure in 2022-23, we also appointed a Youth Engagement Lead in October 2023 to ensure that we are reaching the younger population.
- 18 Whilst our focus remains within County Durham, continuing to support local health and social care decision making, we are an integral part of the established Healthwatch Network for the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care System. We are represented at Central Integrated Care Partnership level by the HWCD lead officer, and the network has representation on the Integrated Care Board. We maintain a key role in ensuring the voices of the residents of the county are heard at a regional level.

## **Conclusion**

- 19 This has been a year of embedding a new team structure and consolidating our role as the independent champion for people using health and care services. The new staff roles have increased our reach into more diverse communities, our digital presence has increased significantly, and our public engagement continues to expand and trial in new areas.
- 20 The embedding of the North East and North Cumbria ICS has brought opportunities for different areas of work, and the NENC Healthwatch Network has been held up as a positive national example of collaborative working.
- 21 There have been challenges in areas where there are ongoing national issues, and the impact we can have is somewhat limited. However, we continue to gather feedback and real life experiences, and ensure that we provide the public with up to date, accurate information.

## **Authors**

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## Appendix 1: Implications

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### 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

(please note that due to the General Election 2024, Annual Reports were given a new publication deadline of 12<sup>th</sup> July 2024)

## **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 until the end of March 2025