



# Annual Report 2019-20



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# Message from our Chair



2019 / 2020 has been a very busy and productive year for Healthwatch Sunderland. We have provided extensive feedback reports on the Path to Excellence and have indicated impacts on and the difficulties that patients are having where services have been transferred to South Tyneside.

Healthwatch Sunderland, Durham and South Tyneside now have regular meetings in areas of common interest and where the services provided overlap with patients travelling between the Healthwatch areas to use Sunderland and South Tyneside hospital services. The meetings have also proved useful to strengthen our involvement in the North East and Cumbria Integrated Care System NHS initiative.

Healthwatch has continued to visit care homes around the city and our Care Home Life reports are much valued by those who are considering using a care home in their area and the care providers who monitor care homes.

As a recipient of the services provided by the equipment services team, I am pleased to say the equipment services are working well across Sunderland and believe that our feedback report in the past as contributed to this.

Our involvement in the eConsult roll out in the city as patient representatives on the programme board has helped to contribute to much more use of telephone and video consultations by doctors, giving patients easier access to their services where appropriate. With all practices in Sunderland

using eConsult it has proved invaluable during the Covid-19 crisis which impacted towards the end of the year under review, where face to face contact with the doctor has proved to be difficult because of the risk of spreading the disease. Please see page 21 for more information.

The coming year is likely to be very challenging for all of us with the spread of Covid-19 and the impact it has had on the population of Sunderland, where health and social care services have been stretched to the limit dealing with the pandemic.

We have become more involved with the All Together Better initiative which forms Sunderland's Integrated Care Plan. Healthwatch has received a grant from All Together Better to carry out consultation and engagement with the service users, so that their voice is used to feedback their views on the service changes planned, as Primary Care Networks have been formed as part of the national NHS future plans.

Towards the end of the year, the Covid-19 crisis materialised, and Healthwatch has provided advice to the public on how to access health, social care and bereavement services via its website. I look forward to a more normal situation returning soon and would like to thank all of our volunteers who have provided invaluable support to Healthwatch so that we can continue to ensure the public's voice is heard by our health and social care providers.

John Dean  
Healthwatch Sunderland Chair

# Our priorities

Our priorities are shaped by the concerns that the people of Sunderland raise with us across the year. Usually, our Engagement Team are out and about in the community listening to your feedback, and looking at what concerns you most.

This coming year, the health and social care scene is likely to be dominated by the Coronavirus response and how that impacts all health and social care needs for some time to come.

We have already seen some significant changes to how health and social care is delivered – some of these will be temporary, and some will stay with us for longer.

Throughout the coming year, we will be asking you to share your experiences and help inform how your health and social care services look in the future.

We are looking forward to the day when we can once again meet you in person out in the community. Until then, stay safe - and stay involved by reading our newsletter. For information on how to sign up to our newsletter please visit our website at: [Healthwatchesunderland.com](http://Healthwatchesunderland.com)



# About us

## Here to make care better

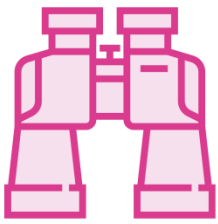
We are the independent champion for people who use health and social care services in Sunderland. We're here to find out what matters to people, and help make sure your views shape the support they need.

We listen to what people like about services, and what could be improved, and we share these views with those with the power to make change happen. We also help people find the information they need about services in their area.

Nationally and locally, we have the power to make sure that those in charge of services hear people's voices. As well as seeking the public's views ourselves, we also encourage services to involve people in decisions that affect them.

 "Thanks for talking to me, you are very warm and understanding." Student, Sunderland Recovery College'





## Our vision is simple

Health and care that works for you.  
People want health and social care support that works – helping them to stay well, get the best out of services and manage any conditions they face.



## Our purpose

To find out what matters to you and to help make sure your views shape the support you need.



## Our approach

People's views come first – especially those that find it hardest to be heard.

We champion what matters to you and work with others to find solutions. We are independent and committed to making the biggest difference to you.



## How we find out what matters to you

People are at the heart of everything we do. Our staff and volunteers identify what matters most to people by:

- Visiting services to see how they work
- Running surveys and focus groups
- Going out in the community and working with other organisations



Find out more about us and the work we do

Website: [www.healthwatchsunderland.com](http://www.healthwatchsunderland.com)

Twitter: @HWSunderland

Facebook: @HWSunderland

# Highlights from our year

Find out about the ways in which we have engaged with and supported people in 2019-20.





## Health and care that works for you



We have

**27 volunteers**

helping to carry out our work. In total, they gave up 786 hours to support us.

We employ

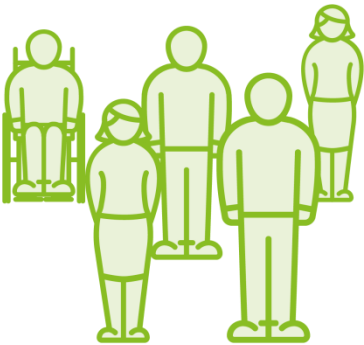
**6 staff members**

We received

**£150,000 in funding**

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## Supporting people



**1,989 people**

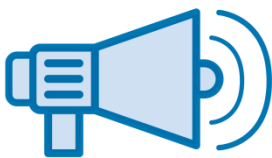
shared their health and social care story with us.

**1,208 people**

Were signposted by Healthwatch Sunderland.

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## Reaching out



We visited

**177 places**

to gather feedback, by means of community events, meetings and stalls.

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## Making a difference to care



We published

**33 reports**

about the improvements people would like to see with their health and social care.

# How we've made a difference

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## Speaking up about your experiences of health and social care services is the first step to change.

Take a look at how your views have helped make a difference to the care and support people receive in Sunderland.

### Improving peoples knowledge and experience of out of hours GP appointments service

Timely access to GP appointments is one of the biggest issues we hear about when talking to local people about the provision of NHS services. Now thanks to the views shared by over 100 local people, the providers of the GP Extended Access Service (Sunderland GP Alliance), will be building on the service provided.

During this piece of work we discovered the following key findings:

- High levels of satisfaction on the treatment patients received at their appointment
- Access to appointment venues was well received by patients
- Some patients required further primary care appointments after they visited the service
- People's experience of accessing the service varied depending upon whether they made an appointment through 111 or their GP practice
- Much of the population of Sunderland are still unaware of the service and how to access it.

As a result of the work Sunderland GP Alliance have now put an action plan in place to work on the following areas:

- Work with partners in General Practice & Sunderland CCG to improve patient's awareness of The Extended Access Service
- During appointments, make sure patients are given information about The Extended Access Service to help them to use it again in the future
- Work with partners in General Practice & NHS 111 to make booking an appointment with us easier for patients
- Help receptionists direct patients to the services they may need
- Give patients at each of their five 'Hubs' information on local pharmacies that are open.

The report has also been published on our website:  
[www.healthwatchesunderland.com](http://www.healthwatchesunderland.com)





## Helping people to have a better experience of wheelchair services

Thanks to people speaking up and giving us their feedback about Sunderland Wheelchair Services, the NHS Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) now have first-hand information about how the service can be improved to meet the needs of the people of Sunderland.

Working with local organisations, we conducted three engagement events made up of 23 people who have accessed the service; either used the service in the past themselves, care for people who had or may need to use the service in the future.

What we found out:

- People told us that having their wheelchair is vitally important - allowing them to spend time with family and friends and stay independent
- People said that the service staff and repair response time is good
- People would like to contact the service in other ways rather than just the telephone and with a person who is patient and a good communicator
- People would like the service to use good verbal and written communication, including easy read documentation and should make other

reasonable adjustments for those people who need them

- Some people told us that current assessment waiting times are too long
- People would like the service to introduce instructions on how to get to the services premises, including bus routes and better signposting to the building
- People said the service website needs to be fully accessible and include full and up to date information about the service.

When this feedback was shared in the form of a report with the CCG they said;

“The CCG and its partners in All Together Better are committed to delivering high quality care for the residents of Sunderland. The Wheelchair Service Review is an example of our continued commitment to do that. Healthwatch provided an invaluable contribution to this by independently gaining views from service users for us, and being part of service redesign events. Working together in this way has enabled us to ensure that the service user needs are truly at the heart of the improvement work for the Wheelchair Service in Sunderland.”

The report has also been published on our website:

[www.healthwatchesunderland.com](http://www.healthwatchesunderland.com)

We would like to say a big thank you to all who supported us to complete this work, without your support these service improvements couldn't be made.



## Improving the lives of Care Home residents

Healthwatch Sunderland's 'Care Home Life – what it's really like' work had another successful year. The team visited all 47 care homes for the second year, listening to residents, relatives, friends and staff who shared with us what it's like to live in the home, to benefit members of the public looking for the right care home for them.

The work is well established and continues to grow and develop, with this year seeing the introduction of a new good practice guide. This one of its kind piece of work has been created to help improve the life of care home residents across the whole of Sunderland.

Being in a unique position of visiting all care homes across Sunderland, the team

developed this guide as a way of highlighting to the homes managers and owners some of the best practice that the team has witnessed during the work.

The new guide has been well received from managers and staff alike, who love the idea of being able to implement tried and tested ways of working for the benefit of their residents.

Commissioning Specialist Manager Anne Wilson at Sunderland City Council, who works alongside the care home managers was also excited by the work, she said; " I feel that the good practice guide will be a valuable tool for both existing and new care home managers in Sunderland, offering them the opportunity to further develop their own service offer based on tried and tested areas of good practice already being implemented in the City".



### Share your views with us

Are you looking for a care home in Sunderland?

We have gathered feedback from Sunderland care home residents, their relatives, friends and staff who told us what it's like to live in the care homes across the City of Sunderland.

For more information please visit our website at:

[www.healthwatchesunderland.com](http://www.healthwatchesunderland.com)

# NHS Long Term Plan #WhatWouldYouDo

Supported over  
**300**  
individuals in the local community to share their views with the NHS on what the 10 year plan should look like locally.

Views covered areas such as what the  
**NHS**  
in Sunderland could do to help them and their community stay well and provide better support as well as what is important to them.

**Just under half** of the respondents said the most important thing to live a healthy life was access to help and treatment they need, when they want it.

**Just under half** of the respondents said the most important thing to keeping their independence and staying healthy as they got older was being able to stay in their own home for as long as it was safe to do so.

Being involved in one of the CCGs working groups looking at new Primary Care consultation types, we carried out some focussed work on the use of technology in Primary Care. We wanted to capture some feedback from local people so that their views were heard by key decision makers and incorporated. To do this we worked in partnership with a local learning disability advocacy group and a group of volunteers and carried out two workshops.

**THE RESULTS**  
Overall people acknowledged that the use of technology can be very useful in enhancing Primary Care. However people also said that the use of technology has to be part of the wider offer of available choices.



These findings were shared with Sunderland’s Clinical Commissioning Group who now have this important feedback needed, to help inform any future changes to services they may be considering.

# Helping you find the answers

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**Finding the right service can be worrying and stressful. Healthwatch plays an important role in helping people to get the information they need to take control of their health and care and find services that will provide them with the right support.**

This year we helped 1208 people get the advice and information they need by:

- Providing advice and information articles on our website.
- Answering people's queries about services over the phone, by email, or online.
- Talking to people at community events.
- Promoting services and information that can help people on our social media.

**Here are some of the areas that Healthwatch Sunderland has supported.**

### Case study: Hospital text appointments

At the beginning of 2020 we were working to understand and influence improvements with the South Tyneside and Sunderland Hospital Trust's appointment via text, which many members of the general public across Sunderland were telling us they were receiving. Some people told us that they have found them to be confusing and worrying.

This sparked off a piece of work here in the Healthwatch office and several meetings and communications with the Sunderland Royal Hospital Appointment Team and this is what happened as a result:

- Firstly the Trust developed a press release, which was published on their website and also appeared in the local press. This explained the system and what people should do if they don't want

to receive their appointments in this way.

- They also agreed to make changes to the text message which they send out, which will inform people over 75 years old that if they can't or don't follow the link on the text, they will receive a letter through the post with their appointment details on.

When we asked if the text could display which department the appointment is for, we were told that unfortunately they can't do this due to Data Protection rules.

We visited two of the members of the general public who first brought this to our attention when they told us their experience of receiving their hospital appointments via text. They were so pleased that changes had been made and one of the ladies said; "I am so pleased that some good came out of what we told you. It was a real worry and we're happy to have helped other people."

 'I am so pleased that some good came out of what we told you. It was a real worry and we're happy to have helped other people'



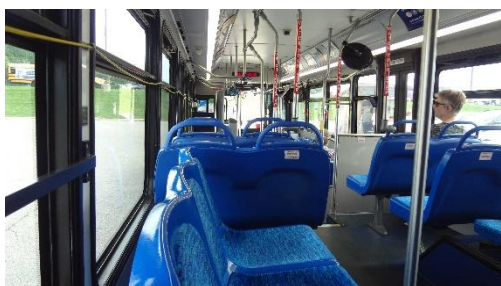
During our engagement work we get asked a range of questions from members of the public about health and social care services which we endeavour to do our best to get the answers they need. Below is some examples of how we have been able to help people out.



A lady asked us if it would be possible for her relative, with a terminal cancer diagnosis, to have someone travelling with her on patient transport rather than her travelling alone. We got in touch with the North East Ambulance Service on her behalf and as a result we were able to inform the lady that if her relative mentioned her support needs when booking transport this could be accommodated as in most extenuating circumstances individuals requests would be honoured.



A gentleman asked us if we could find out if he was able to have his bunion operated on, as it was causing him significant pain and distress. After speaking to the CCG we discovered he was eligible for the operation and the gentleman was able to get a referral from his GP for the procedure. He said "Thanks for helping me with information on the bunion operation, I have gone back to my GP and he has agreed to refer me for the operation, which is great."



A lady who was finding it difficult to pay for travel costs to and from her healthcare appointments asked us if there was any support available to her. On her behalf we looked into this and were able to inform her that such help is available through the Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme, a NHS scheme where those with a low income may be eligible to claim help for help travel costs to and from appointments.



### Contact us to get the information you need

If you have a query about a health and social care service, or need help with where you can go to access further support, get in touch. Don't struggle alone. Healthwatch Sunderland is here for you.

w: [www.healthwatchesunderland.com](http://www.healthwatchesunderland.com)

t: 0191 5147145

e: [healthwatchesunderland@pcp.uk.net](mailto:healthwatchesunderland@pcp.uk.net)

# Volunteers



# Our volunteers

We could not do what we do without the support of our amazing volunteers.

This year our volunteers:

- Raised awareness of the work we do at events, in the community, with health and care services.
- Visited services to make sure they are providing people with the right support.
- Helped develop our ways of working and methods of engaging with the public.
- Listened to people’s experiences to help us know which areas we need to focus on.
- And much, much more .....meet some of the team and hear what they get up to.

## Volunteers Linda and Andrea put their volunteering experiences to good use by starring in our training video.

After successfully being selected by Healthwatch England to deliver some Enter and View training to staff and volunteers across the North East, the engagement team explored ways to make the training as exciting and engaging as possible for participants. One of the ideas we came up with was the use of short videos to exemplify good practice when carrying out Enter and View activity.

To help us create these scenarios we decided to look for people to help us star in the videos and a call was put out to our volunteers to see who would be willing to help out.

Volunteers Andrea and Linda stepped up to the challenge and despite both admitting they were slightly out of their comfort zone, both were willing to support the team.

With some words of encouragement and lots of tea and biscuits the ladies performed like true stars. The final footage taken turned out to be more than we had hoped for and will be a brilliant resource in the delivery of the training.

Thanks again to the ladies who went above and beyond in their role, you did great job and we appreciate all that you do to support us.



**At Healthwatch Sunderland we are supported by 27 brilliant volunteers who help us find out what people think is working and what people would like to improve in health and social care services in their communities.**

**This year they donated a massive 786 volunteering hours.**

**Gill and June help to shape new ways for the team to engage with members of the public.**

At Healthwatch Sunderland we seek and value the views and contribution of our volunteers in all aspects of our work and regularly host informal get togethers to discuss ways we can improve the work we do and the way in which we do it.

At one of our get togethers, volunteers fed back that they thought we could improve the way we engage with the public and in particular the group work we carry out in the local community. They said that they felt that sometimes the information and messages we need to get across can be overwhelming for those in attendance.

We were grateful for this valued feedback and invited two of our volunteers Gill and June to support the Engagement Team to develop a simple structure to support people to follow our discussions and enable them to go back to the information in their own time and reflect on the information given.

We have used the 'What we are going to talk about' document now at several groups with positive feedback back from attendees. One person said; "Thank you for coming today, the information you gave was clear and easy to follow. It is really beneficial to have information to take home for future use."

The document has also been shared with other local Healthwatch organisations who love the idea and are looking to adopt a similar approach when they engage with local community groups.



**Volunteer with us**

Would you be interested in volunteering with the team?

Then why not get in touch today.

We are looking for individuals aged 16 plus to help with our engagement work.

# Our Chair

Over the past year, Healthwatch has been involved as the patient representative on the programme board for introducing eConsult.

The eConsult team included practice managers, doctors and the CCG project team.

eConsult includes an online triage to enable patients to indicate their symptoms so that the doctor is aware of their problems prior to the consultation either via the telephone or by using video. Whilst many consultations will require face to face contact for diagnosis and some patients may not be familiar with smart phones, the new approach gives patients the opportunity for increased access to GP's and more informed consultations.

Our Chair, John Dean was the patient representative on the board. The new system has been rolled out to virtually all GP practices across Sunderland with some practices already offering video consultations in addition to telephone consultations alongside face to face appointments. As the Covid-19 crisis develops this approach will enable doctors and patients to avoid risk from travelling to the surgery.



# Our plans for next year



# Message from our Project Lead



## Looking back

It has been such a rewarding and valuable year here at Healthwatch Sunderland. Our engagement team completed a second year of Care Home Life Reports – such an important support for those making difficult decisions for themselves or loved ones.

The team were out and about more than ever, listening to what matters to you most, and sharing that information with those who can influence change. Our volunteers have given us more than we could have hoped for – getting involved in sharing direct personal experiences which have helped shape health and care plans – as well as helping us get to hear more of your health and social care experiences.

The year ended in a way none of us could have anticipated, with a lockdown and social isolation guidelines the country has never experienced before. Your feedback, and particularly your appreciation of our key workers has not been dimmed by these changes - thank you for your continued involvement!

## Looking ahead

Given this backdrop of the Coronavirus pandemic and the impact it is having on our health and social care services, our priorities for the year ahead will be determined throughout the year, based on your experiences that you share with us. The course of the pandemic will be a significant factor in those plans.

## Thank you

A huge thank you to all those involved with Healthwatch Sunderland this past year.

The enthusiastic and creative spirit of our intrepid team of staff and volunteers will help us through these unprecedented times, with attention to the voice of the people of Sunderland at the heart of everything we do.

Margaret Curtis  
Project Lead, Healthwatch Sunderland

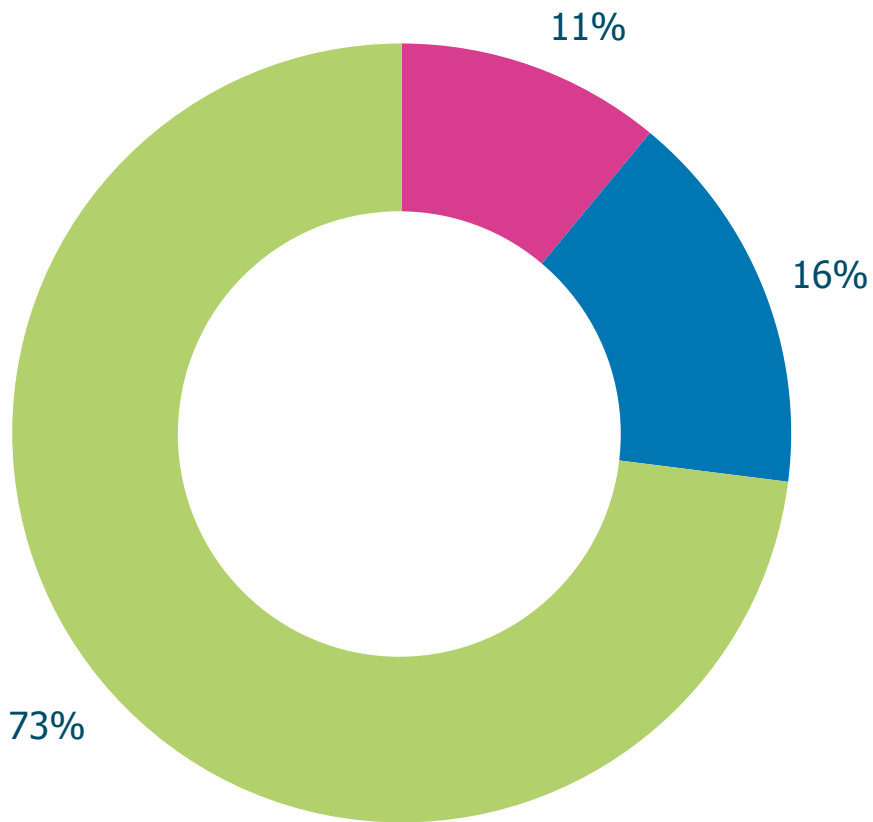
# Finances

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**We are funded by our local authority under the Health and Social Care Act (2012). In 2019-20 we spent £160,239.**



■ How much it costs to run our Healthwatch

■ Management costs

■ Staff costs

# Thank you

Thank you to everyone that is helping us put people at the heart of social care, including:

- Members of the public who shared their views and experience with us.
- All of our amazing staff and volunteers.
- The voluntary organisations that have contributed to our work.



# Contact us



Address and contact details of the organisation holding the local Healthwatch contract as of 31/03/2020.

Email: [healthwatchesunderland@pcp.uk.net](mailto:healthwatchesunderland@pcp.uk.net)

Telephone: 0191 514 7145

Address: Healthwatch Sunderland, Room 608, Hope Street Xchange, 1-3 Hind Street, Sunderland, SR1 3QD

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# healthwatch

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