

Healthwatch Sunderland (HWS) Advisory Board
Minutes of the meeting held Thursday, 24 July 2025
Millfield Medical Practice, Sunderland

Attendance – Advisory Board members

Debbie Burnicle	DB	Chair
Paul Weddle	PW	Vice Chair
Gavin Barr	GB	
Chris Colley	CC	
Pauline Scott	PS	
Philip Foster	PF	
Emma Anderson	EA	
Joanne White	JW	

Attendance – Healthwatch Sunderland staff

Anna Gillingham	AG	Project Lead
Wendy Hadlington	WH	Engagement Officer
Natalie Goodwin	NG	Engagement Officer
Clare Render	CR	Administrator (Minute Taker)

	Action
1 Apologies & introductions Apologies were received from Julie Parker-Walton.	
2 Declarations of interest/quoracy There were no declarations of interest, and the Chair noted the meeting was quorate.	
3 Minutes of the previous meeting The minutes were agreed upon as a true record. 3.1 GP services – AG reported that the meeting with the Practice Manager to discuss our feedback was postponed due to the Manager being on sick leave. A new date is being arranged.	AG

	Action
3.2 Dementia patients and their carers in the Sunderland Royal Hospital Emergency Department – WH reported that the video has been shared with the Board. JW reported that South Tyneside & Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust (STSFT) needs to address consent-related issues before the video can be published on the Trust's website. 3.3 External meeting attendance – CC and PF are attending the Care Closer to Home steering group on behalf of HWS. AG reported that feedback from the Sunderland Safeguarding Adults Board has not yet been received and will follow up.	AG
4 PCP Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) The updated version of the MOU was discussed by the group. The group now needs to agree on this and sign it off. The following were highlighted: - Page 4 (f) – Ongoing maintenance of the Business Continuity Plan (BCP) and Risk Register is required. DB will follow up with the Pioneering Care Partnership (PCP) to ensure that risks linked to Healthwatch plans are appropriately recorded and shared with us. - Page 7 (e) – first bullet point – Who can be a Healthwatch Sunderland teaAdvisory Board member – tea to be removed. The Board formally approved the document. DB to sign it on behalf of the Board.	DB
5 HWS Advisory Board Governance Review PW informed the Board that Debbie Burnicle's initial three-year term as Chair concludes in September 2025. Debbie confirmed her willingness to continue in the role. She stepped out of the room to allow for an open discussion, during which no concerns were raised. The Board agreed to extend her term in accordance with the governance policy.	
6 Government plans for the future of Healthwatch The summaries of the NHS 10-year plan for England and the Penny Dash review into patient safety were sent to the Board before the meeting. Following the DASH review, the Government has decided to close Healthwatch England and local Healthwatch.	

	Action
It is proposed that the Healthwatch functions will be transferred; health will transfer to the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and social care to the local authority. However, no changes will be made to the provision of local HW until the legislation has been passed by Parliament. A date for this is uncertain, but it is expected that this process will take some time. The Board held an in-depth discussion and expressed concerns and disappointment regarding the proposal. A key issue raised was the need to clearly express the added value that Healthwatch provides to our local partners—such as its strong community connections, independence, person-centred approach, and effective signposting to services. PCP, as the contracted provider of Healthwatch Sunderland on behalf of Sunderland Local Authority, has begun initial discussions to explore the potential implications of the proposed changes and future opportunities for staff. The Chair and Vice Chair met with PCP last week to discuss a joint approach. An update was also given on the National Healthwatch Network thinking, and PCP reasons for not wanting to sign the statement and facilitate the petition being planned by many of the HW local bodies across the country. The Chair, Vice Chair and staff team were supportive of the PCP stance, whilst the Board agreed they did not support the outcome of the Dash review, and we would share this concern with partners. While we await further details from the government, we remain fully committed to our ongoing work—championing the voices of users and delivering our 2025/26 work plan. The Board wished to reassure the HWS staff team of their full support and commitment during this time of change.	
7 Finance The quarter 1 finance update paper was circulated to the Board before the meeting. Everything is on target with the forecast. PW raised a question regarding how HWS charges for commissioned work. AG advised that charging arrangements depend on the specific circumstances and are determined individually for each project, there is no national or regional template/approach.	

		Action
8	Safeguarding AG reported that no safeguarding issues were raised in the last few months.	
9	Stats update The Board discussed the Quarter 1 trends data summary, which had been circulated to the group before the meeting. A full-year trend analysis for 2024–2025 was also shared for discussion. AG reported that the most significant change in the statistics relates to signposting figures. The data in this document only reflects individual feedback from members of the public stored on our recording system and does not include feedback gathered through specific pieces of work. AG explained that the system doesn't allow for this feedback to be captured. However, this broader feedback is captured and presented in various other papers and reports, including our Annual Report. Annual stats – Board members suggested that it may be useful for office staff to review the previous year's data to identify any notable trends or insights. This internal review does not need to be circulated to the Board.	AG
10	Team/work plan update The Board discussed the next steps for our 2025–2026 work plan in response to the Government's announcement regarding the future of Healthwatch, ensuring continuity and alignment with our strategic priorities. The key issue was the planned community engagement to identify key issues for future work – this was no longer of value in light of the Government announcement, as the team would not be able to follow up on any issues identified. Therefore, the following suggestions were made: JW advised that the STSFT is planning to establish a Patient Partner Group, and there may be an opportunity for HWS to contribute to this.	

	Action
- Guiding you home programme - PF said that this group are planning a few projects and they have said that they could do with HWS's involvement. - Neighbourhood health- this is one of the main priorities from the NHS 10-year plan and the focus of the Care Closer to Home group. To date, partners recognise they have not had involvement from the voluntary sector and HWS and need to be supported with this in order to access local voices/views. - Access to Primary Care – the team explained that this remains an area of high feedback from patients and is something practices are still seeking their support in terms of how to improve the patient experience. The Board suggested that a one-pager of possible areas of work be pulled together, factoring in timescales to complete work and potential impact. This can then be utilised by Advisory Board members, who can then invite partners to identify areas where they believe HWS's involvement would add the most value in the time remaining as HWS. The team update/work plan paper was circulated to the Board before the meeting. The Board was given the opportunity to ask questions relating to the update. 10.1 Pre and post dementia diagnosis information booklet – WH reported that distribution of the booklets and business cards has commenced. The priority is to ensure these materials are circulated widely across the City of Sunderland. An analysis will be undertaken to assess where the booklets have already been distributed and to identify areas requiring further focus. Amendments have already been made to the original document, and the most up-to-date version is available on our website. A one-page flyer promoting the booklet has been produced. PW requested access to the flyer.	AG WH

	Action
10.2 Social care services – where to go for what. NG reported that our report is now available on the website and has been shared with the distribution list. Our report highlighted that many members of the public were unsure where to seek support for social care needs. In response, we have developed an information booklet designed to guide individuals through accessing social care support when they need it. This is also available on our website. 10.3 Emergency and urgent care – AG briefed the group on the meeting held in June to discuss this piece of work and confirmed that an action plan has since been produced and will involve support from partners.	
11 Date for virtual informal advisory board catch-up meeting Our next Informal Advisory Board meeting will take place on Friday, 18th August 2025, from 09:30 am to 11:30 am via Teams, and the PCP Deputy Chief Executive will join us.	
12 Date and time of next meeting The next Advisory Board meeting will be held on Thursday, 23rd October 2025, from 10:00 am to noon, Millfield Medical Centre, 63-83 Hylton Road, Sunderland, SR4 7AF.	