

**Healthwatch Sunderland (HWS) Advisory Board**  
**Minutes of the meeting held Thursday, 23 October 2025**  
**Millfield Medical Practice, Sunderland**

**Attendance – Advisory Board members**

Debbie Burnicle	DB	Chair
Paul Weddle	PW	Vice Chair
Chris Colley	CC	
Pauline Scott	PS	
Philip Foster	PF	
Emma Anderson	EA	
Julie Parker-Walton	JPW	

**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)

**Attendance – other attendees**

Angela Laybourne	AL	Specialist Nurse in Palliative Care at St Benedict's Hospice, Sunderland
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<b>1</b>	<b>Apologies</b>  Apologies were received from Gavin Barr and Joanne White.	
<b>2</b>	<b>Declarations of interest/quoracy</b>  There were no declarations of interest, and the Chair noted the meeting was quorate.	
<b>3</b>	<b>Minutes of the previous meeting</b>  The minutes were agreed upon as a true record.	

	Action
<p>3.1 GP services – AG reported that a meeting with the Practice Manager had taken place. The engagement team has since begun visiting the GP practice to gather feedback from patients about the services provided at the request of the GP Partner. Two engagement sessions have already been held, with a third session currently being planned. Overall, both the HWS Chair and Manager felt assured by the processes the Practice had in place to receive, monitor and action patient feedback, e.g. listening in on so many reception calls a month.</p> <p>3.2 External meeting attendance. AG reported that she is now attending meetings of the Safeguarding Adults Board. The Care Closer to Home steering group has now concluded. Sunderland has been selected as one of the first areas to pilot a neighbourhood health centre as part of the new NHS 10-Year Plan. Elements of the Care Closer to Home initiative are likely to be incorporated into this new model. PF currently attends the new Executive Group for Neighbourhood Health on behalf of HWS, but now feels the time is right for an Operational HWS member instead and has suggested AG take on this membership moving forward.</p> <p>3.3 Meeting with Pioneering Care Partnership (PCP). DB reported that the ongoing maintenance of the Business Continuity Plan (BCP) and Risk Register in terms of how it impacts on HWS has not yet been agreed upon. This relates to a question asked at the HWS Advisory Board meeting about the MoU with PCP. She plans to raise the matter during her next meeting with PCP.</p> <p>3.4 Team/work plan update.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Possible Areas of Work</b> – AG reported that a one-page flyer was produced and discussed at the last informal virtual Advisory Board meeting held on 18th August.</li> <li>• <b>Dementia Booklet</b> – The one-page promotional booklet has been shared with PW.</li> </ul>	DB

	Action
<p><b>4 Potential new co-opted Advisory Board member – Angela Laybourne</b></p> <p>Angela Laybourne, Specialist Nurse in Palliative Care at St Benedict's Hospice in Sunderland, was introduced to the group. She had expressed an interest in gaining Board experience and had met with the Chair and Manager about becoming a Co-optee on the Advisory Board. Both HWS members following the meeting were happy to recommend membership to the Advisory Board. It was also suggested Angela attend a meeting as an observer to gain a clearer understanding of the role.</p> <p>If anyone has any concerns about Angela joining the Advisory Board as a co-opted member, please contact Debbie Burnicle directly. If no concerns are raised, we will assume there are no objections and Angela will take up a place on the Advisory Board.</p>	
<p><b>5 North East and North Cumbria (NENC) strapline</b></p> <p>AG reported that in the North East and North Cumbria (NENC) area, the 14 local Healthwatch organisations are collaborating as part of the NENC Healthwatch Network. The Healthwatch network has asked all HWs to discuss with their Boards about using the strapline 'Working together with NENC Healthwatch Network' beneath their logos in email communications</p> <p>After discussion, the group agreed to use the strapline but felt that 'NENC' should be written out in full as 'North East and North Cumbria.' AG will feed back to the network that, while we will adopt the strapline, we will present 'NENC' in its full form.</p>	<b>AG</b>
<p><b>6 (a) – 2025–2026 work plan priorities</b></p> <p>A copy of the 2025–2026 work plan suggested priorities was circulated to the Advisory Board ahead of the meeting. AG reported that the document outlines our current position and noted that once planning begins for the 'Neighbourhood Health' and 'Guiding You Home' work, these areas will need to be added. DB asked whether these areas could be reflected somewhere to show our engagement with these priorities, even though the timescales are not yet confirmed.</p>	<b>AG</b>

	Action
<p><b>Family Hubs</b> – AG reminded the Board that this work involves understanding whether people are using these hubs, and if not, identifying the reasons why. JPW asked whether we are aware of any related activity being undertaken by the local authority. DB suggested that it may be worthwhile reviewing the Together for Children's recent Care Quality Commission (CQC) report first to see if it contains any relevant information, as the Hubs were noted as a very positive development in the Outstanding rating for the organisation.</p> <p><b>Health and Social Care awareness campaigns</b> – JPW asked about the campaigns scheduled for January, February, and March, as these months were currently shown as blank. AG explained that we typically align our campaigns with national initiatives, which provide us with the necessary resources. JPW requested that we focus on alcohol awareness in January and smoking cessation in March and confirmed that resources would be made available to support these campaigns. She reported that she could also ask her team about a possible campaign for February. AG agreed to this request, and the Advisory Board were supportive. JPW to forward relevant resources.</p> <p><b>Primary Care Access</b> – AG reported that this work is linked to the North East and North Cumbria (NENC) Healthwatch Network, with a focus on raising awareness of primary care services, e.g., GP extended access, the NHS App, and the Pharmacy First initiative. Funding and resources for this work have been provided by the Integrated Care Board (ICB), and feedback gathered from the public will be shared with the NENC Healthwatch Network, which will feed it back to the ICB via our quarterly reports.</p> <p><b>Youthwatch</b> – mental health/self-harm – Debbie asked for any information on the potential actions to be taken as a result of the poll priority. AG reported that last year, in partnership with ICB, we undertook a similar piece of work. We have requested the findings from that project so they can be shared and discussed with our Youthwatch group and the City's mental health hubs, who want to increase the offer to young people based on identified needs. The actions will depend on the outcome of these discussions/reviews.</p> <p><b>(b) – Work Plan Request</b> – A copy of the work plan request document was circulated to the Advisory Board ahead of the meeting. AG reported that we have been asked by the Sunderland Safeguarding Adults Board to replicate work previously undertaken around service users' experiences of safeguarding and their awareness of safeguarding processes.</p>	<p><b>AG</b></p> <p><b>AG / JPW</b></p>

	Action
<p>After discussion, the group agreed to proceed with the service user feedback element of the work. Regarding the community survey component, the group supported moving forward after clarifying the effectiveness of the questions on the survey and whether these may need to be altered as a result of the feedback gained from the last community survey.</p>	
<p><b>7 Future of Healthwatch</b></p> <p>A copy of the Healthwatch update paper was circulated to the Advisory Board ahead of the meeting.</p> <p>DB reported that both she and Anna attended a virtual meeting yesterday with representatives from the Department of Health &amp; Social Care, who are responsible for implementing Dr Penny Dash's review.</p> <p>The priorities highlighted from this meeting are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An aim to submit the Bill, which outlines the proposed changes, to Parliament by Easter 2026, which then will require Royal Assent. This is anticipated to take up to at least 12 months.</li> <li>• Confirming the funding for 25/26 and 26/27 very soon.</li> </ul> <p>The next steps are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) are now spending time designing the operational model for the new Directorate of Patient Experience within DHSC. This will be supported by feedback from Healthwatch England and local HWs, and in time, this Directorate will provide the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and local authority guidance on the functions and implementation of the functions that are to transfer from HWE and local HWs.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>8 Finance update</b></p> <p>The quarter 2 finance update paper was circulated to the Board before the meeting. Everything is on target with the forecast, and no questions were raised.</p>	

	Action
<p><b>9 Safeguarding</b></p> <p>AG briefed the group on a series of feedback received from a member of the public regarding the care her husband was receiving in the care home where he resides.</p> <p>On numerous occasions, the lady has raised her concerns with the Safeguarding Adults Team, the Care Quality Commission (CQC), Sunderland Social Care Team, her MP, and the Police.</p> <p>We have also raised this feedback with the CQC and the local commissioner who oversees care homes.</p> <p>After discussion, the group agreed they were satisfied with the guidance the team had provided to the individual. However, it was felt that the Safeguarding Adults Team should be informed of our interest in the case, and that the lady should be made aware that we have shared her concerns with them. It was also suggested that the care and support the lady herself is receiving should be explored and raised with her.</p>	<p><b>AG</b></p>
<p><b>10 Stats update</b></p> <p>The Board discussed the Quarter 2 trends data summary, which had been circulated to the group before the meeting.</p> <p>PS asked about the feedback received regarding Quarter 1 challenges with hospital appointments. AG reported that the feedback primarily focused on the length of time people waited for their appointments to be scheduled.</p>	
<p><b>11 Team and work plan update</b></p> <p>The team update/work plan paper was circulated to the Advisory Board before the meeting. The Advisory Board was given the opportunity to ask questions relating to the update.</p> <p>11.1 <b>Emergency and urgent care</b> – AG briefed the group that a few meetings have taken place to discuss possible actions. It has been agreed to undertake a series of actions that they can implement across the system, e.g., TV screens, etc, to help the public better understand where to go for different types of care.</p> <p>11.2 <b>Sunderland Royal Hospital partnership info stands</b> – WH reported that these are going very well. Our stands continue in the main concourse at the Royal Hospital.</p>	

	Action
<p>11.3 <b>Workwell Workshop</b> – this is a new service to help individuals access the support they need to keep them in work when in poor health.</p> <p>We facilitated a workshop to gain people’s understanding of the new service.</p> <p>11.4 <b>Dementia booklet</b> – PS asked if we drilled down on whether the distribution of this booklet has been local or further afield, individuals or organisations.</p> <p>WH reported that we haven’t drilled down whether individuals or organisations have asked/accessed this booklet. We are also not able to drill down to the exact location from which this booklet was downloaded from the website, although there have been a lot of hits to date.</p>	
<p><b>12 Date for virtual informal advisory board catch-up meeting</b></p> <p>Our next Informal Advisory Board meeting will take place on Monday, 8<sup>th</sup> December 2025, from 09:30 am to 10:30 am via Teams, and Helen Dent, Project Development Manager, who has taken over the role from Gayle Goldsmith, will be invited to attend.</p>	
<p><b>13 Date and time of next meeting</b></p> <p>The next Advisory Board meeting will be held on Thursday, 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2026, from 10:00 am to noon, Millfield Medical Group, 63-83 Hylton Road, Sunderland, SR4 7AF.</p>	