

Championing what matters to you

Healthwatch Sunderland
Annual Report 2021-22



Contents

Message from our chair	4
About us	5
Our year in review	6
Listening to your experiences	8
Advice and information	12
Volunteers	14
Finances and future priorities	16
Statutory statements	17

Message from our chair

This past year has been a very busy and productive year for Healthwatch Sunderland. We started the year by working closely with the team from All Together Better Sunderland which involved us providing extensive feedback from the public on all out of hospital services. This has helped the team focus the efforts of service providers on those key areas that require improvements.

We continue to work with seldom heard groups to ensure that their voices are heard and have specifically carried out work with carers, the Bangladeshi community, young people and people with disabilities. Our focus on working with young people who have different health and social issues to adults has led to the development of our new Youthwatch.

As Chair of Healthwatch Sunderland we continue to work with key partners such as the Health and Wellbeing Board and the NHS Clinical Commissioning Board of influence change in services.

The intention for the forthcoming year is to prioritise GP patient access, domiciliary care services, in conjunction with Sunderland City Council and finally hospital discharge.

As this is my final year as Chair, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Carol and her team at Pioneering Care Partnership and our local Healthwatch Team members who have assisted me to undertake what has been an enjoyable role. It has been a pleasure to welcome our new Project Lead Tara Johnson and move offices into a community venue in Pallion which will only strengthen our community links.



Dr. John Dean
Healthwatch Sunderland Chair



“The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown long-standing health inequalities into stark relief. With NHS and social care facing even longer backlogs, the unequal outcomes exposed by the pandemic are at risk of becoming worse. Local Healthwatch play an important role in helping to overcome these adversities and are uniquely placed to make a positive difference in their communities.”

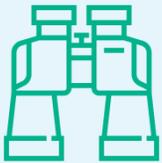
Sir Robert Francis QC, Chair of Healthwatch England



About us

Your health and social care champion

Healthwatch Sunderland is your local health and social care champion. Working city wide, we make sure NHS leaders and other decision makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care. We can also help you to find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.



Our vision

A world where we can all get the health and care we need.



Our mission

To make sure people's experiences help make health and care better.



Our values

- Listening to people and making sure their voices are heard.
- Including everyone in the conversation – especially those who don't always have their voice heard.
- Analysing different people's experiences to learn how to improve care.
- Acting on feedback and driving change.
- Partnering with care providers, Government, and the voluntary sector – serving as the public's independent advocate.

Our year in review

Find out how we have engaged and supported people.

Reaching out



1371 people

shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.

3177 people

came to us for clear advice and information about topics such as mental health and COVID-19.

Making a difference to care



We published

10 reports

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

Our most popular report was

ATB patient and public findings

to discover an understanding of patient's experiences of those services provided by All Together Better Sunderland (ATB) partners.

Health and care that works for you



We're lucky to have

24

outstanding volunteers, who gave up over 500 hours to make health and care better for our community.

We're funded by our local authority. In 2021-22 we received:

£150,000

Which is the same amount as the previous year.

We also currently employ

7 staff

who help us carry out this work.

How we've made a difference throughout the year

These are the biggest projects we worked on from April 2021 to March 2022.

Spring



To improve our accessibility, we introduced a text messaging service, Instagram account and a new website.

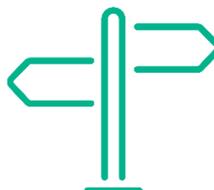


To support with the COVID-19 vaccination programme we listened to over 850 patients about their experiences, helping the NHS to make improvements.

Summer



In partnership with a local charity Love, Amelia and public health we took action to ensure that families in need can now access baby formula through a one-off voucher scheme.



To support people to make informed choices on their and their families health and care in partnership with local providers we hosted several awareness campaigns on-line.

Autumn



We supported women from the Bangladeshi community and those with a learning disability and autism to be involved in work linked to the menopause to ensure appropriate information is available.



Teaming up with national public health teams, breast screening recall letters are now available in easy read format for those who require them across the country.

Winter



We thanked three local community pharmacy services for the positive feedback we collected from patients as part of our Nominate a Star service.



We supported the Local Authority to involve service users in their work by recruiting new members to their Wheelchair Service User Forum.

Listening to your experiences

Services can't make improvements without hearing your views. That's why over the last year we have made listening to feedback from all areas of the community a priority. This allows us to understand the full picture, and feedback to services to help them improve



Improving community-based health and social care services

Thanks to people sharing their experience of out of hospital services with us, we've helped the local health and social care alliance All Together Better Sunderland (ATB) to understand where improvements are needed.

Feedback from over 600 local patients and service users helped the newly formed health and social care alliance hear from people on what is the most important to them and where services need to improve.



34% of people

we heard from did not feel involved in decisions relating to their hospital discharge

The feedback received highlighted the main areas people felt required improvements. These included:

- Increased access to face-to-face GP appointments.
- Involvement in decisions made around the hospital discharge process and the quality of support received when leaving hospital.

What difference did this make

As a result of the findings identified ATB have now been able to develop an action plan to look at those key areas requiring improvements. We have been invited to continue to work in partnership with ATB as they develop the detail of their action plan which will involve our team;

- Identifying, through patient feedback those top 2-3 priority areas requiring improvements within the hospital discharge process.
- Assisting the CCG and the Primary Care Networks to collect patient feedback on the newly introduced initiatives and working practices within primary care.



“This feedback is incredibly important and will help us to continue to build on the work we have done throughout COVID-19 and make vital improvements to our services as we recover.”

Dr Martin Weatherhead, Chair of ATB Sunderland and a practicing GP in the City.



Patients from the Bangladeshi community have improved hospital experiences

Thanks to people from the Bangladeshi community sharing their experiences of health services, we have helped the NHS make their services more inclusive.

By working with members of the local community who use Sunderland Bangladesh and International Communities (SBIC), we gathered feedback on people's experiences of using health services over the past year. The main issues we heard from people were linked to the poor treatment and care patients were experiencing when visiting hospital, mainly as a result of communication issues and a general lack of understanding around cultural needs and differences.

We were able to connect and bring together representatives from the South Tyneside and the Sunderland Foundation Trust (STSFT) and representatives from SBIC who with our support, worked in partnership to address the issues identified so that people from the local BAME community would have a better experience when receiving hospital treatment.



“Through our partnership working with Healthwatch we are able to advocate the voices of BAME individuals raising their issues and concerns in relation to health inequalities and how better we all can work together to make services meet needs of local BAME communities and individuals.”



Abu Sharma, Manager of Sunderland Bangladesh and International Communities

What difference did this make

Due to our partnership working the Trust are now working with the SBIC to develop new equality and diversity training package for hospital staff,. They are developing communications aids including picture cards, which will ultimately enable staff to communicate better with people who do not have English as a first language. The Trust will also continue to share important messages with the SBIC who will disseminate across their communities.

These changes will have a significant impact for people who use the hospital services and is a great example of the positive changes that happen when people speak up, and services listen.

Three ways we have made a difference for the community

Throughout our work we gather information about health inequalities by speaking to people whose experiences aren't often heard.



Creating empathy by bringing experiences to life

It's important for the NHS and social care services to step back and see the bigger picture, through hearing personal experiences, and the impact on people's lives. This provides a deeper understanding than using data alone, can challenge assumptions and motivate people to think and work more creatively.

We shared with the NHS stories highlighting the difficulties now faced by some patients when accessing hospital appointments that had been relocated away from Sunderland. Patient June's story which was presented in person, really helped decision makers understand the issues and resulted in plans to commission a new transport service to assist patients attending appointments in the future.



Getting services to involve the public

Services need to understand the benefits of involving local people to help improve care for everyone.

Following the Public Health 'You're Welcome' Standards Framework, our Youthwatch volunteers supported a team within public health to evaluate the local sexual health offer. Focusing on a young person's point of view the volunteers reported back on what worked well and what needed improving in areas such as the website, promotional materials and the clinics.



Improving care over time

Change takes time. We often work behind the scenes with health and care services to consistently raise issues and push for changes.

The people of Sunderland have been telling us for some time now about the issues they are faced with when trying to access their GP practice and in particular their GP. Working with our local CCG we have over several years closely monitored the introduction of new service provision including virtual appointments and other initiatives. In 2022-2023 we will be looking more closely at the issues and implementing work to see what additional improvements can be made to help with ease of access for patients.

Advice and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch is here for you. In times of worry or stress, we can provide confidential support and free information around anything related to help and social care to help you understand your options and get the help you need we are here to help patients and residents of Sunderland

This year we helped people by:

- Providing up to date information on COVID-19
- Linking people to reliable information they could trust
- Supporting the COVID-19 vaccination and booster programme
- Helping people to access the services they need



Supporting patients with GP changes

The closure of a local GP practice resulted in over 2,000 patients having to re-register with a new practice.

Working alongside the GP practice and the NHS Clinical Commissioning Group we supported with the transfer of patients into their new practice. Many patients required additional support to complete registration forms whilst others simply had queries or questions about their prescriptions or transfer of care etc.

“Many thanks to you and your wonderful team for the support they are offering to our patients.”
Judith Taylor, Head of General Practice



Access to COVID-19 vaccine

After hearing from several excluded groups that they were struggling to access the COVID-19 Vaccination venues and appointments we raised the issues with our local CCG vaccines team so we could work with them to help improve patient access.

Excluded groups, including the homeless, the elderly, the young and those from deprived areas informed us they were facing Issues such as lack of public transport to access local vaccine venues and incorrect information on when and where people could go.

The vaccines teams acted swiftly and increased the number of vaccine venues and ensured that all information available on vaccine availability was up to date and correct.



Volunteers

We're supported by a team of amazing volunteers who are the heart of Healthwatch. Thanks to their efforts in the community, we're able to understand what is working and what needs improving in NHS and social care.

This year our volunteers:

- Helped people have their say, supporting with survey distribution and assisting with workshops and consultation events.
- Helped to raise peoples awareness of local health and care service provision and awareness of key health messages.
- Assisted with the creation of Vlog content to be shared across our social media.
- Attended many training sessions to increase their knowledge so they can better support people through our information and signposting service.



Youthwatch

In December 2021 to support the delivery of our work with young people the team begin work on setting up the organisations first Youthwatch.

Working alongside the local community, colleges, schools and university we put together a recruitment campaign to bring on board some local young people aged between 16-25 to support us in our work.



We quickly recruited, inducted six young people who began the work. They decided to the best way to start would be to listen to other young people across the city on what is most important to them, when it comes to their health and care. A survey was designed and distributed to collect the information and over 200 young people took part in the survey. This resulted in 3 priorities areas; Mental health, Healthy Living/lifestyle and Cancer.

In addition to this the group were approached by public health to undertake an evaluation project concentrating on the local offer of sexual health services aimed at young people. The work is ongoing, and the outcomes will aim to make services offered more user friendly for those young people who use it.



Do you feel inspired?

We are always on the lookout for new volunteers, so please get in touch today.



www.healthwatchesunderland.com



0191 5147145



Healthwatchesunderland@pcp.uk.net

Finance and future priorities

To help us carry out our work we receive funding from our local authority under the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

Income		Expenditure	
Funding received from local authority	£155,250	Staff costs	£103,808
Additional funding	£20,540	Operational costs	£27,990
		Support and administration	£26,654
Total income	£175,790	Total expenditure	£158,452

Top three priorities for 2022-23

1. Access to GP practice appointments – we will be looking more closely at the issue and implementing work to see what additional improvements can be made to help with ease of access for patients.
2. Domiciliary care – to ensure that public voice is heard when the recommissioning of domiciliary care takes place. We as an independent body will be engaging with services user to collect their views.
3. Hospital discharge – working alongside All Together Better Sunderland and the local hospital trust we will be identifying the main key issues that need to be addressed by service providers to help patients feel more involved in the discharge process.

Next steps

The pandemic has shone a stark light on the impact of existing inequalities when using health and care services, highlighting the importance of championing the voices of those who all too often go unheard.

Over the coming years, our goal is to help reduce these inequalities by making sure your voice is heard, and decision makers reduce the barriers you face, regardless of whether that's because of where you live, income or race.

Statutory statements

About us

Healthwatch Sunderland, 53 St Luke's Terrace, Pallion, Sunderland, SR4 6NF

The organisation holding the Healthwatch contract is the Pioneering Care Partnership (PCP). PCP is a multi-award winning health and wellbeing charity operating across the North East

For further information please visit www.pcp.uk.net.

Registered Charity No, 1067888 Company Registered in England No. 3491237

Registered address: Pioneering Care Centre, Carer's Way, Newton Aycliffe, County Durham, DL5 4SF

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The way we work

Involvement of volunteers and lay people in our governance and decision-making.

Our Healthwatch board consists of 8 members who work on a voluntary basis to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny to our activities. They ensure that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community. Through 2021-22 they met 6 times and made decisions on matters such as how we will tackle domiciliary care as we move into this years plan following COVID-19, how best to support the local Bangladesh community with issues faced when accessing hospital services and how best to address negative feedback on both NHS and social care services. They have also took part in a board development day which resulted in receiving funds from Healthwatch England to help with further board recruitment and improvements which will be a priority in the coming year.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities by using the information we collate, whether this is feedback from a service user, patient or local organisation, insight from an information and signposting enquiry or intelligence gathered at a public workshop or forums. All the data gathered is monitored and used to track those areas that need further consideration. Then utilising our decision-making policy and procedures, these areas will be discussed by our Board and considered as potential pieces of work.

Methods and systems used across the year's work to obtain people's views and experience.

We use a wide range of approaches to ensure that as many people as possible have the opportunity to provide us with insight about their experience of health and care services. During 2021-22 we have been available by phone, email, a webform on our website, attended face-to-face and virtual meetings and forums, provided our own virtual activities and engaged with the public through all our social media platforms.

We are committed to taking additional steps to ensure we obtain the views of people from diverse backgrounds who are often not heard by health and care decision makers. This year we have done this by; building on our relationships with several communities including the Bangladeshi community, carers, young people, those who have a learning disability and / or autism amongst many more. We will continue to link these organisations and others like them to service providers and decision makers to ensure the voices of their service users are heard and listened to, making services which are better for them and others in the future.

We ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. We publish it on our website and distribute via our e-newsletter and social media platforms. It is also available in hard copy on request.

Responses to recommendations and requests

This year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we did not make use of our Enter and View powers. Consequently, no recommendations or other actions resulted from this area of activity.

There were no issues or recommendations escalated by our Healthwatch to Healthwatch England Committee and so no resulting special reviews or investigations.

Health and Wellbeing Board

Healthwatch Sunderland is represented on the Sunderland Health and Wellbeing Board by our Chair, Dr John Dean. During 2021-22 our Chair has effectively carried out this role by supporting the production a joint health and wellbeing strategy, contributing to the assessment undertaken of the health needs of the population, including a pharmaceutical needs assessment and when relevant carrying al out commissioned work to support patient and public participation.

2021-2022 Outcomes

Project / Activity Area	Changes made to services
All Together Better Patient and Public findings	Development of an ongoing action plan and partnership working.
COVID-19 Vaccination Programme	Vaccination programme delivered in more accessible venues.
Baby formula for families in need	An introduction of baby formula voucher scheme available to those families in need.
Breast screening appointment letters	Development of a national easy read letter for patients attending breast screening recall appointments. Accompanied by a patient video highlighting the impact this will have for those patients that require an easy read version.
Bangladeshi community experiences as hospital patients	New practices in place to improve the support and care offered to patients from the Bangladeshi community.
Sexual health services & young people	Improvements to ensure services are more young people user friendly.
Access to hospital appointments	Availability of commissioned patient transport for those attending appointments relocated outside of Sunderland.



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