

# Committee minutes – Public

21<sup>st</sup> May 2025: 10 am – 11:30 am

Hybrid: at the Boardroom (Milburn House, Newcastle) in person and via Zoom

## Committee members present

Michael Brown (MB) – Chair	(in person)
Feyi Awotona (FA)	(in Person)
Alisdair Cameron (AC)	(via Zoom)
Alex Hoole (AH)	(in Person)

## In attendance

Courtney Peel (CP)	Business Services Manager (in Person)
Daniel Milburn (DM)	Healthwatch Newcastle Lead officer (in Person)
Avish Johnson (AJ)	Business Support Officer (in Person)

Meera Soundararajan (MS)	Observer (via zoom)
Emily Sinclair (ES)	Observer (via zoom)

## 1. Welcome by the Chair

- 1.1 MB welcome everyone to the meeting and introduction were made.
- 1.2 MB welcomed Meera Soundararajan and Emily Sinclair and observers to the meeting.

## 2. Apologies for absence

- 2.1 Ann Wynn and Amer Mirza are on sabbatical leave.
- 2.2 Terry Bearpark (TB), Nick Linfoot (NL), Yvonne Probert (YP) and Afsana Begum (AB) gave their apologies for the meeting

## 3. Minutes of meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2025

- 3.1. A reminder email to gather feedback on the website has been sent and will be discussed further under a later agenda item.
- 3.2. The “What do we mean by a Mental Health Crisis” report has now been published.
- 3.3. Notes from the National Healthwatch England Chairs Meeting have been distributed to the committee.

- 3.4. Priorities will be discussed further under a later agenda item.
- 3.5. Committee member recruitment adverts are now live.
- 3.6. The minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2025 were approved as a true and accurate record.

## 4. Electronic Decisions

- 4.1. None.

## 5. Chair – Verbal Update

- 5.1. The Quarter 4 report has been sent to the commissioner. It includes details of outreach events, engagement activities conducted, and research reports published during the last quarter. No feedback has been received to date.
- 5.2. Quality Accounts from hospital trusts and ambulance services have been received, outlining their targets set and achieved. It is a Healthwatch statutory role to make comments or feedback. A joint response, alongside other Healthwatch organisations in the North East, will be submitted for all Quality Accounts by the end of June.
- 5.3. The Annual Report 2024/25 is due to be published with a statutory deadline of the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025. A template for the report has been shared by Healthwatch England, and the team is currently progressing this.
- 5.4. Website – The Communication and information officer has been working on improving the overall look and feel of the website.

Action – Committee members to review the website and provide feedback on the accessibility of information, ease of navigation, and clarity of content. Any additional feedback is welcomed.

- 5.5. MB provided a brief overview of the discussion held at the North East and North Cumbria Healthwatch Charis Network Meeting. Topics included the Dash review and a reduction in ICB funding, which are expected to lead to changes in processes.

## 6. CEO written update

The report was present by MB on behalf of YP, in her absence

- 6.1. Annual Survey Summary Report and emerging priorities:

- 6.1.1. A total of 297 responses were received, providing insights and experiences across a range of health and social care services accessed in Newcastle over the past 12 months. National issues such as dentistry, general practice (GPs), and pharmacy were again raised at a local level.

6.1.2. Mental health, hospitals, the NHS 111 service, social care, physiotherapy, and ambulance services were identified as key local issues emerging from the survey.

6.1.3. As physiotherapy is included in the 2024 priorities for Healthwatch Newcastle, and ambulance services are covered by the Regional Healthwatch Network work programme, the committee agreed to consider mental health, hospitals, NHS 111, and social care as the emerging priorities for 2025.

6.2. Stakeholder survey Summary report: We have received 10 responses which are mostly positive.

Action – AJ to provide details on the total number of stakeholders contacted and the response rate.

Action – The committee recommended that future surveys be sent directly to a named contact within each organisation, rather than to generic email addresses, to reduce the likelihood of messages being filtered as spam.

6.3. Star Awards:

6.3.1. A subgroup comprising of members from Healthwatch Newcastle and Healthwatch Gateshead has met and outlined the Star Awards Scheme for both areas. The Awards will be relaunched in 2025 as part of engagement and involvement activities, with the aim of raising the profile of both organisations within their local communities.

6.3.2. The Star Awards application process will take place each spring with a defined nomination period. Healthwatch Lead Officers will oversee the nomination process as part of their engagement work.

6.3.3. The Star Awards will be a 2-tier System

- Level 1 – Certificate of Nomination
  - Awarded to all nominees whose application is validated.
  - Framed certificate, with citation, presented to nominee at workplace by engagement staff.
  - Presentations can be done on a rolling basis as nominations come in to manage workload/capacity, or all at the end of the nomination period
- Level 2 – Super Star Award
  - Super Star award chosen from all nominations received which are assessed against set criteria
  - Assessment undertaken by small group of volunteers and staff

- Healthwatch Lead Officers to oversee process
- Awards presented formally at Joint Annual General Meeting of Healthwatch Newcastle and Healthwatch Gateshead

6.3.4. Final detailed paperwork to follow

#### 6.4. Volunteering

6.4.1. We have recruited new committee members and Tell Us North CIC Directors. And set three roles for general volunteering which are Research and engagement, Outreach and locality working and Information and communication.

6.4.2. MB explained the process of Enter & View and gave a brief about the Enter & View recently completed by Healthwatch Gateshead and how the committee was able to be involved in the volunteering process.

6.5. Complaints Policy: Healthwatch Newcastle has been operating under the Tell Us North CIC complaints policy. However, in line with guidance from Healthwatch England, a separate policy has now been drafted using the template provided by Healthwatch England and everyone agreed to adopt the new complaints policy.

## 7. Project Update

CP provided the project update in AB's absence:

- 7.1. Hospital Discharge Pathway – Final report complete. Currently on hold – awaiting responses from partners (e.g. Newcastle Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust).
- 7.2. What do we mean by a Mental Health Crisis? – Final report has been published.
- 7.3. Reasonable Adjustments Phase 2 – In process of reviewing timelines via meetings with ICB partner. Committee had previously reviewed and approved the project scope.
- 7.4. Enter & View: Enter & View Officer attended an initial informal visit on 14 May with a potential service. A provisional timeframe has been set for an official Enter & View visit to Castle Dene Respite Centre during the first week of June 2025. The committee approved the project scope and the planned visit.
- 7.5. Youthwatch – No current workshops scheduled. Working on new development with partners.
- 7.6. The Research and Engagement Team is currently producing background research to populate the scoping document for the new priorities. A meeting is scheduled for 27 May 2025. AB will share the scoping documents with the

committee by the end of June 2025 for an electronic decision. These will also be presented at the next meeting.

- 7.6.1. The committee agreed that research will be carried out in the following order: 1. Accessible Information & Health Literacy, 2. Adult Social Care and 3. Physiotherapy. This order of delivery was based on the complexity of the research, the availability of information, and feedback from locality events

**Action – DM to send a report explaining the rationale behind selecting ‘Addressing Social Care Invisibility’ as the topic under Adult Social Care for the new priorities research.**

7.7. Integrated Care Board (ICB) funded projects:

- 1.1.1. Dentistry – The ICB have not yet published the Dentistry report.
- 1.1.2. ICB Involvement Strategy – Healthwatch Newcastle facilitated a focus group with a seldom-heard group (ethnically marginalised/Asian community).
- 1.1.3. North East Ambulance Service (NEAS) – ICB have not yet published the report.
- 1.1.4. Women’s Health: the BIG conversation – ICB have published this report on the 7<sup>th</sup> March 2024.
- 1.1.5. The NHS 10-year plan – Engagement stage completed and waiting on Regional and National reports to be published.
- 1.1.6. Covid 19 and Flu vaccination take up by the public – Report published.
- 1.1.7. Future projects being discussed regionally include:
  - Community Care
  - Patient Pathways
  - Hospital Discharge
  - Health checks for people with LD / Autism
  - Longer Waiting lists for Children and Young People Mental Health
  - NHS 111 service
  - Waiting times for cancer and surgery
  - Continuing Health Care

## **8. Locality working update from Lead Officer**

- 8.1. DM reported that locality working is continuing successfully, with drop-ins taking place across the Newcastle borough.
- 8.2. In Quarter 3, 45 events were held but with lower engagement numbers. However, with only 34 events this quarter, the team engaged with more

people. This increase is attributed to strategic planning, including changes in venue and timing.

8.3. DM clarified that the figures reported for the Outer West locality were incorrect due to an internal system error.

8.4. New venues are being added to the list for drop-in.

### **11:10 Alisdair Cameron left the meeting**

Action – Committee members to send any suggestions for new drop-in venues to DM.

Action – Committee members are encouraged to attend drop-in sessions alongside staff; please contact DM to arrange this.

Action – DM to share details of upcoming drop-in venues and times for the next two months with committee members.

## **9. Finance Update**

9.1. There has been an overspend this quarter, primarily due to Freepost returns from the Annual Survey, DBS checks for new committee members, and activity related to the Enter & View workstreams.

9.2. The committee were also reminded that the overspend was due to Tell Us North CIC having agreed to allocate some reserve funds to increase the capacity of the Healthwatch Gateshead staff team.

## **10. Standing Items**

10.1. No reported safeguarding concerns, health and safety issues, equality and diversity concerns, or freedom of information requests.

## **11. Any other Business**

11.1. None.

## **12. Date and time of next meeting.**

12.1. 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2025 at 10:30 am.