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Healthwatch Newcastle

Annual report 2018-19



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Message from our Chair

In the six years that Healthwatch Newcastle has been running, we have developed an increasingly influential role bringing about change and improvements to health and social care services in Newcastle. We have only been able to do this because residents have shared their stories about their experience of services, and their thoughts about how they can be improved. There is nothing more powerful than the real lived experience of a service to highlight what it feels like to be on the receiving end. It is, therefore, only with your help that we are able to influence change.

Throughout the year, we have also increasingly reached out to an ever wider range of people including black, Asian and minority ethnic communities; homeless people; those with learning disabilities and mental health issues; the Roma and LGBT communities; and also men (who are less likely than women to talk about their health concerns). Our project looking at the uptake of screening showed that some of these groups are less likely to take up the offer of screening, particularly for bowel cancer. And as a result, we have been able to link screening services to communities so that they can work together to address the barriers and improve uptake.

This year, 24 of our recommendations for service improvement have been taken up by

providers, but there is still more that we can do. The NHS and Newcastle City Council continue to face financial and staffing pressures and are increasingly working together to address these issues. This provides an opportunity for us to work with them to make improvements, particularly as people tell us that one of their main concerns is that services don't work well together.

We have only been able to achieve all of this through the dedication and commitment of our volunteers, our small, part-time staff team and the support of our Healthwatch Committee members.

And of course we need to ensure that you keep telling us about your experience of health and social care services. Once you have read this report I would urge you to tell your friends and families about Healthwatch Newcastle so that we can widen our reach, strengthen our understanding of what is important to people and make the case for improvements.



Kate Israel
Healthwatch Newcastle Chair

Changes you want to see

Last year we heard from more than 400 people who told us about their experience of a number of different areas of health and social care. Here are some examples of the changes that you want to see.



All staff employed in GP practices have a positive and courteous manner



Quicker waiting times for a referral to a hospital specialist



A more streamlined process between health professionals when dealing with mental health



Services that promote the support and advice on offer and provide information in an easy to understand format

About us

Healthwatch is here to make care better

We are the independent champion for people using local health and social care services. We listen to what people like about services and what could be improved. We share their views with those with the power to make change happen. People can also speak to us to find information about health and social care services available locally.

Our sole purpose is to help make care better for people.

As Chair of Healthwatch England, it's my role to make sure your Healthwatch gets effective support and that national decisions are informed by what people are saying all over England.

If you were one of the 400,000 people who shared their experiences with us last year, I want to say a personal thank you. Without your views, Healthwatch wouldn't be able to make a difference to health and social care services, both in your area and at a national level. One example of this is how we shared 85,000 views with the NHS, to highlight what matters most, and help shape its plans for the next decade.

If you're part of an organisation that's worked with, supported or responded to Healthwatch Newcastle, thank you too. You've helped to make an even bigger difference.

None of this could have been possible without our dedicated staff and volunteers, who work in the community every day to understand what is working and what could be better when it comes to people's health and care.



If you've shared your views with us then please keep doing what you're doing. If you haven't, then this is your chance to step forward and help us make care better for your community. We all have a stake in our NHS and social care services: we can all really make a difference in this way.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Robert Francis'.

Sir Robert Francis QC
Healthwatch England Chair

Our vision is simple

To be Newcastle's independent voice for outstanding health and social care services for all



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.



People are at the heart of everything we do

We play an important role in bringing communities and services together.

Everything we do is shaped by what people tell us. Our staff and volunteers identify what matters most to people by:



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

We have two main roles:

- Raising people's concerns with health and care decision-makers so that they can improve support.
- Ensuring people are involved in the design and running of services they use.

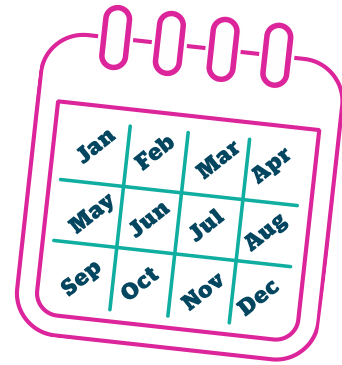
The evidence we gather also helps us recommend how policy and practice can change for the better.

Highlights from our year

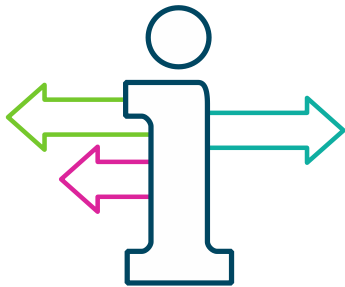
Find out about our resources and the way we have engaged and supported more people in 2018–19.



441 people shared their health and social care story with us, 7% more than last year.



11 volunteers help us to carry out our work, from surveys to running stalls and supporting our research reports.



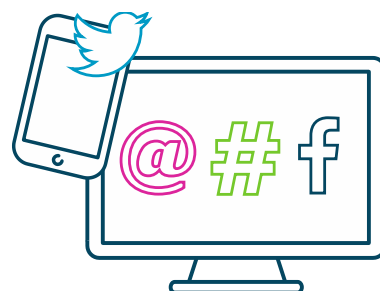
54 people accessed our Healthwatch advice and information online or contacted us with questions about local support.



We visited 17 voluntary and community groups, held 3 one-to-one discussions, and ran 28 stalls to understand people's experience of care.



24 improvements we suggested were taken forward by services to make health and care better in our community.



We reached 7,000 people through our website and 193,712 via social media.

How we have made a difference

Changes made to your community

Find out how sharing your views with us has led to positive changes to health and social care services in Newcastle. We show that when people speak up about what's important, and services listen, care is improved for all.

Take a look at our examples to see how we have made a difference in our community.

Attention on prevention



Data showed us that uptake of the cervical, breast and bowel screening programmes was low in the more deprived areas of Newcastle. So, gathering views about these programmes from people in these areas was one of our priorities during 2017–18. We wanted to find out:

- Why uptake was low in these areas
- The barriers to taking part
- How these barriers could be overcome

We worked with local community groups and organisations in the areas where uptake was low. These groups and organisations are

fantastic to work with as they have developed trusting relationships with their communities. As a result, we ran 12 focus groups with their support, putting us in touch with local men and women, the Chinese community, refugees and asylum seekers, black and minority ethnic communities, people with disabilities, and the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities, amongst others.

We also organised 12 one-to-one interviews with the help of some local GP practices.

This work resulted in a report called 'Attention on prevention: cervical, breast and bowel screening programmes in Newcastle' which contained 16 recommendations (download the report at www.healthwatchnewcastle.org.uk/about-us/reports).

Two recommendations encouraged services and organisations to ensure there was comprehensive and regular community outreach about screening programmes, and to explore how this could be done through training community leaders to deliver and sustain health promotion activities in their communities. Another recommendation suggested that information about the screening programmes should be shared via the refugee welcome pack.

A staff member at the North of Tyne Screening Centre made real efforts to make improvements. We put her in touch with some community groups we worked with. As a result, she managed to:

- Work with the Chinese community to give a talk on the bowel screening programme. Approximately 50 people from the Chinese community attended.
- Build a relationship with a local Romanian community group. They are now working together to develop a leaflet for that community and it will include information on bowel screening.
- Build a relationship with the refugee and asylum seeker community. They are now exploring how people within that community could be trained to share key health messages about bowel screening.

Newcastle City Council (Public Health), the Regional Refugee Forum (North East) and the Health and Race Equality Forum (HAREF) have also worked together to develop the Newcastle Health Access Card for asylum seekers and refugees.

This card contains information that will be of use to this community and the professionals who work with them, and it includes information about the screening programmes. It will be distributed in a variety of ways, including via the refugee and asylum seeker welcome pack.

We will also be talking with Public Health at Newcastle City Council about developing a Health Champion role within the community.

Newcastle Health Access for Asylum Seekers and Refugees

This information will simplify access to health services and healthy living activities in Newcastle. The information is useful for both the Refugee and Asylum Seeker community, health professionals and anybody else wanting to make referrals.

Interpreters
If you are unable to speak or understand English well, you are entitled to have an interpreter at NHS services. Say 'Interpreter' to the receptionist and the language you need. When ringing 999 or NHS 111, say the language you need and they will get someone on the phone. You do not have to pay for using an interpreter.

NHS GP services
You and your family need to register at a local doctor called a GP. **Anyone can register at a GP for free.** You need to make an appointment and you may need to wait unless it is urgent.

- If you need an urgent appointment, tell the receptionist
- If your GP decides you need medicine, they will give you a prescription. To get your medicine, take the prescription to a pharmacy
- Your GP can refer you to a specialist at a hospital
- If eligible, your GP can provide a range of free immunisations to protect against certain diseases

If you are receiving asylum support, you should have an HC2 certificate which allows you and your dependants to get free prescriptions, free dental care, eye tests and spectacles. If you do not have an HC2, you need to fill in an NHS 1 form. If you need help with these forms

NHS 111
• If your GP surgery is shut or you need advice, ring 111. It is available 24 hours a day.
• If you do not need to see a GP, they will give you general advice or refer you to a pharmacy
• They can book an appointment for you at your GP or Walk-in centre
• If it is an emergency they will refer you to A&E, and can arrange an ambulance

Walk-in or Urgent Treatment centres
These are for **minor injuries or urgent care but NOT for anything very serious or life threatening. You do not need an appointment to be seen.**

- **Mollinex Street, Newcastle NHS Walk-in Centre, Byker.** Open from 10:00am, seven days a week. Tel: 0191 2330566
- **150 Ponteland Road Newcastle NHS Walk-in Centre** Open from 10:00am, seven days a week. Tel: 0191 271 9030 or tel: 0845 60 80 320 (out of hours)
- **Westgate Road Newcastle NHS Walk-in Centre** Open from 10:00am, seven days a week. Tel: 0191 282 3000
- **Linnington Resource Walk-in Centre, Tyne View** Part time opening Tel: 0191 229 1806

NHS 999 for an ambulance
Call 999 (free) if there has been a **serious accident** or if you or someone else is:
• Bleeding a lot
• Finding it hard to breathe
• Feeling severe pain in the chest
• Showing signs of stroke including sudden weakness on one side of the bodyface
• Unconscious

NHS Accident and Emergency department (A&E)
These are in hospitals for people who are **very ill or seriously hurt**, and should only be used in an emergency

NHS Dentists
You need to register for free with an NHS dentist for any treatment to your teeth. If you can't find a dentist accepting NHS patients, you should call NHS England's Customer Contact Centre on **0300 311 2233**. Children receive free dental care and **adults receive free dental care and treatment if they are pregnant** for some treatment.

Opticians
You need to make an appointment with an optician to get your eyes checked. If you have an HC2 form you will get eye tests free. Your optician will tell you if you need to pay extra for some products.

NHS Screening programmes
Screening helps find diseases like cancer and is free for those with HC2 forms. They offer screening for cervical to women aged 25 to 65, breast to women aged 50 to 70 and bowel for men and women aged 60 to 74. If you get a letter about screening it is important you arrange to have this done.

NHS Maternity Services
Maternity care is free for all asylum seekers, refugees and refused asylum seekers receiving Home Office support. Maternity care is classed as immediately necessary and urgent and should be provided.

We are pleased that work is going ahead to explore how people could be trained to share key health messages about bowel screening and about the distribution of the Newcastle Health Access Card. These two activities directly relate to two of our recommendations, both of which were written based on the feedback we received from the asylum seeker and refugee communities.

Mental health services in Newcastle and Gateshead



We shortlisted mental health as a priority area again for 2018–19 for the following reasons:

- When we consult on priorities for the coming year, mental health always scores very highly.
- We believe our research in this area will complement information already gathered as part of the ongoing review of local mental health services.
- It provides an opportunity for Healthwatch to be further involved in that review.
- It fits our key remit to ensure that all service users and the public are involved in the ongoing development of health and care services, especially those who may struggle to have a voice or to get involved.

We decided to concentrate on gathering the views and experiences of groups or communities who had not been involved, or had only limited involvement, in recent reviews of local mental health services. Following consultation with partner organisations and mental health specialists,

it became apparent that we could have chosen many different groups. However, we wanted to get a good spread of views from different types of communities so we decided to focus on:

- Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay and Transgender (LBGT) community
- Veterans
- African/Caribbean communities
- Students in higher education
- People who are homeless/living in insecure accommodation
- People in receipt of Universal Credit

We chose these particular groups because we knew, through our involvement in the mental health consultations and through talking to colleagues, that these groups had been under-represented in consultations so far. They are also groups of people who can struggle to have their voice heard more generally.

We undertook some of the research ourselves but also offered local organisations the opportunity to apply for a small grant of up to £1,000 to enable them to carry out work on our behalf. This allowed us to hear the views of people and groups that Healthwatch would otherwise have struggled to engage with within the limited time scale of this project. The organisations that worked as partners with us on this project were:

- Fulfilling Lives Newcastle Gateshead, which spoke with people who are homeless or living in insecure accommodation.
- Forward Assist, which focussed on veterans.
- Citizens Advice Gateshead, which looked at people claiming Universal Credit.

Consultations with the LGBT community and the African/Caribbean community were

carried out by our own staff. A third-year student on placement from Northumbria University (see page 15) sought the views of students in higher education.

For comparative purposes, we asked all participants the same set of open questions. Answers were gathered through a variety of methods, including focus groups, structured one-to-one interviews, online surveys, creative data capture and peer research. All participants were asked:

- What are your experiences of trying to get help with your mental health?
- If you managed to get help, what sort of help did you get and how effective was it?
- What could have made things easier or better for you?
- Choose three words that describe what a first-class mental health service would look like to you.

Different consultation methods and different sizes of the populations concerned meant that the number of responses varied quite widely across the groups from 13 to 32. In total we spoke to 139 people, significantly above our overall target of 120.

We reviewed and collated the results from all six consultations into a final report, which identified common themes and, where relevant, identified issues specific to particular groups. It is worth mentioning that a significant minority of respondents reported positive experiences when accessing mental health services and receiving treatment and support. However, a number of key issues emerged from the consultations and we have based our recommendations around them. The four

main recommendations are relevant for all of the groups involved in the research and cover:

- Accessible and inclusive information
- Staff training
- Waiting times
- Someone to talk to

We also included some specific recommendations for particular groups:

- For the African/Caribbean community around breaking down the stigma they perceive is attached to mental ill-health.
- For the LGBT community around ensuring access to a male or female professional.
- For veterans around mandatory inclusion of a question about previous military service at their assessment.
- For people who are homeless or living in insecure accommodation around inclusive services for people with a dual diagnosis (i.e. who have both a mental illness and a substance misuse issue).

The report and its recommendations will feed into the ongoing review of Newcastle and Gateshead mental health services (download the report at www.healthwatchnewcastle.org.uk/about-us/reports). Commenting on the draft report, Catherine Richardson, Commissioning Manager - Mental Health, at Newcastle Gateshead Clinical Commissioning Group said, "I found the information very useful and I think it reaffirms our knowledge from the transformation work so far and supports our future direction of travel for mental health transformation."

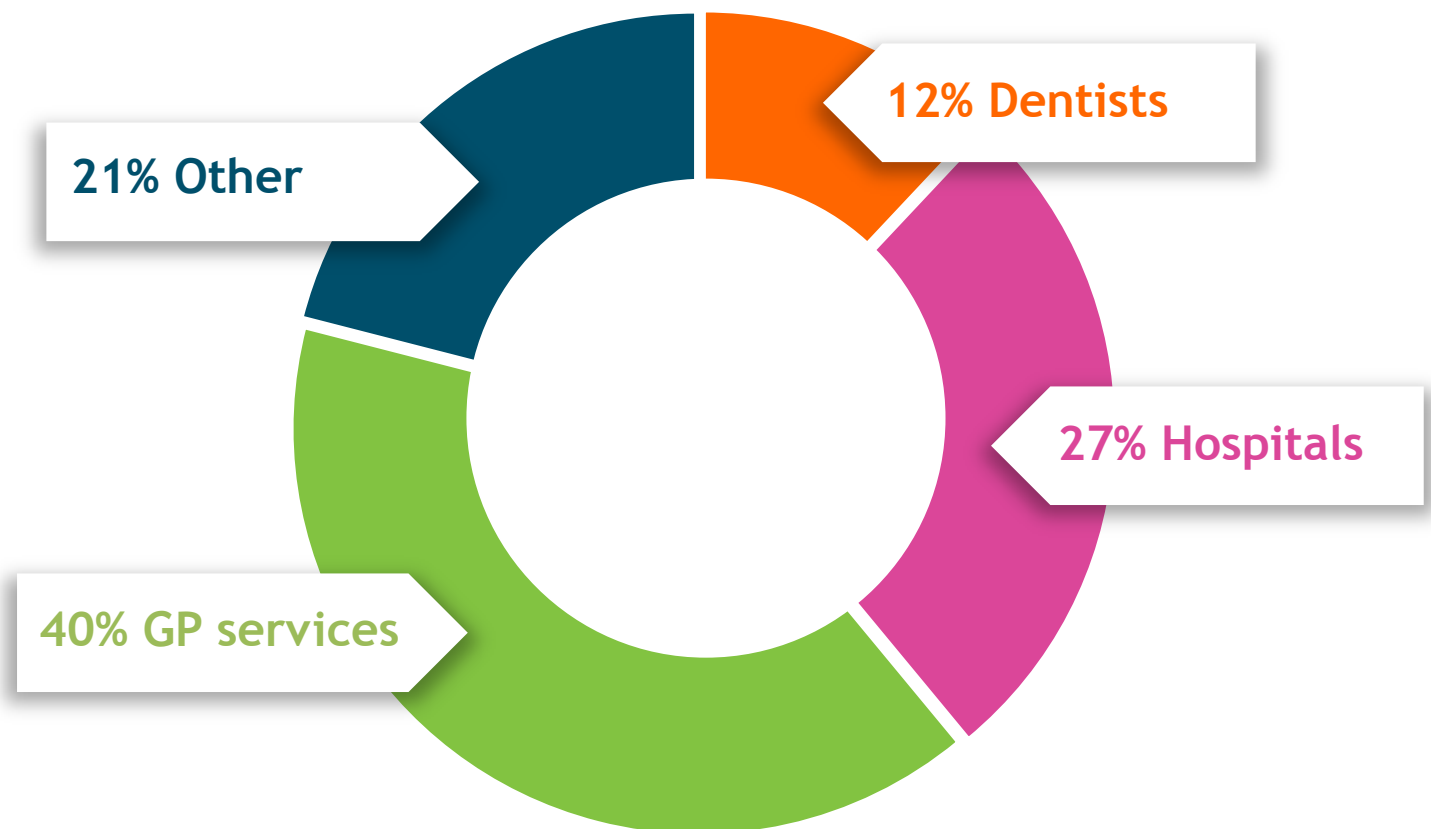
Helping you find the answers

What do people want to know?

People don't always know how to get the information they need to make decisions about their own health and care.

We provide an information and signposting service – 'Just ask' – giving people free, independent and confidential information and pointing them in the right direction for the support they need.

Here are the most common themes that people ask us about:



How we provide people with advice and information

Finding the right care or support can be worrying and stressful. There are a number of organisations that can provide help, but people don't know where to look. Last year we helped 54 people access the advice and information they needed (below are some examples).

We provide advice and information in a number of ways including:

- Our 'Just ask' Freephone and email service.
- Our online feedback centre, which has an option to request information about services, or help in making a complaint.
- At community events.
- Promoting helpful services via our newsletters, website and social media channels.



Many of us don't know where to go if we have a problem or concern to raise

Accessing information



We received a call from a partially blind person who was unable to read a letter from NHS Newcastle Gateshead Clinical Commissioning Group about changes taking place at a local Newcastle GP practice.

We had a copy of the letter that had gone out to patients so we were able to explain the decision regarding the practice to the person.

He expressed concerns about his ability to access the practice due to the planned changes. We were able to put him in touch with someone at the practice to express his concerns to.

Expressing concerns

We received a call from a patient who was concerned about the merger of two Newcastle GP practices in her area. She was concerned that she would no longer be able to see the same GP if the merger went ahead as planned. She trusted her GP and due to her complex medical condition, continuity of care was really important to her.

We were aware that drop-in events were taking place in local community venues. We recommended that she went to



the drop-in to express her concerns and get the answers to her questions. With her permission, we also expressed her concerns on her behalf to NHS Newcastle Gateshead Clinical Commissioning Group and NHS England, as she was concerned that she may not be able to make the meeting. We were pleased that she did get to the meeting and was listened to by those who could help.

Making a complaint



A caller rang with a complaint about the NHS because her mother had been waiting five months to see an oncologist. She had been told that, due to staff shortages, no oncologist was available. Her mother was receiving cancer care and support at the time via her GP and a Macmillan nurse.

The caller was not confident about making a complaint, so we made a referral on her behalf to North East NHS Independent Complaints Advocacy (ICA). We followed up with the caller, who was pleased to receive a response within an hour of referral from ICA, and was happy with how her complaint was progressing.

**Talk
to us...**

Our volunteers

How do our volunteers help us?

At Healthwatch Newcastle we couldn't do all of this without the support of our 11 fantastic volunteers who work with us to help make care better for their communities.

Our volunteers, known as Healthwatch Champions, help us in a variety of ways from helping us talk to people at regional events such as Pride and Mela, to running more local stalls such as at Newcastle College's Fresher's Week. They help us gather opinions from members of the public around health services by visiting local hospitals and GP practices as well as supporting us at focus groups, which this year has included a learning disability group and older people's groups. Champions are also invaluable in the support they give in talking to people in health services such as GP practices and hospitals.

We value the incredible contribution our Champions give and we aim to support them by giving something back. This year we offered the following training:

- Induction training (for new volunteers)
- Deaf awareness training
- Safeguarding adults training
- Research training
- Cultural awareness
- Professional boundaries

At Healthwatch Newcastle we recognise that every Champion is different, so we provide a variety of roles to fit everyone, including:

Community Champion

This role enables us to hear many views and experiences of Newcastle health and social care services. The role involves:

- Accompanying staff to events to tell people about our organisation.
- Helping us gather people's experiences of using health and social care services from all communities.
- Receiving and cascading information that we send out.
- Helping us with time-limited projects and research.

Research Champion

This role involves working with Healthwatch staff to prepare for data collection sessions. A volunteer may also support staff in the design of research projects, the analysis of results and the development of recommendations.

In addition to these roles, our Champions help out with office administration from time to time. This may include data inputting, mailing, and letter and survey distribution.

This year we collaborated with Northumbria University and recruited a third-year psychology student on a placement programme. The student supported our project work on experiences of local mental health services. This part of the research involved gathering views on mental health services from students in Newcastle.

Meet volunteer Susan

I have helped Healthwatch Newcastle for over four years now, gathering information about health and social care issues and talking to the people at events, such as the Chinese New Year celebrations in Newcastle.

This year was a double celebration for me – the Year of the Pig and, more importantly, my 80th birthday!



I joined the team because I wanted to learn more about how health and social care services worked and hopefully influence the way they are run. My contacts in the Chinese community have really helped Healthwatch better understand the health needs and social care issues affecting my community in the city.

As well as volunteering at Healthwatch I also look after my 12 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren, as well as being a carer for one of my grandsons who has autism.

Meet volunteer Allan

I have been a volunteer with Healthwatch Newcastle for over five years. Although retired, I keep myself busy. I am passionate about helping to promote a better health and social care system and I enjoy meeting and talking to people of all ages.

In another guise I am a semi-professional clown, known as Cloggs. I enjoy teaching and showing my skills such as juggling and magic tricks to both young and old.



Some of the ways I have been involved in volunteering include helping people in the community have their say on health and social care. I speak to local people about their experiences and give them a platform to share their views and ideas for how services can improve. I also attend community events to raise awareness of the work Healthwatch does and encourage people to share their feedback on health and social care in their community.

Meet volunteer Leigh

Leigh is a 21-year-old student, studying at Northumbria University. She is in her third year of a psychology degree. As part of her finals, Leigh came to Healthwatch Newcastle to volunteer in a specific area of project work around students and their mental health.



Q: Why did you choose to volunteer with Healthwatch?

A: I chose Healthwatch to volunteer for my placement as I was interested in the mental health aspects of my psychology course and Healthwatch allowed me to investigate opinions within this public sector for students.

Q: Can you tell us a little bit more about the project you did and how you collected the data from students?

A: The project allowed me to ask students for their personal views and opinions on mental health facilities within Newcastle and Gateshead. They gave their opinions on what would improve the services and how they were failing. I got this information through an anonymous questionnaire that was sent out to all psychology students at Northumbria University.

Q: What did you enjoy about the work you did?

A: I mostly enjoyed getting to be a part of the team that researched this area and how the research that we did would potentially bring changes to the services and facilities.

Q: Would you recommend to other students to volunteer with Healthwatch?

A: I would recommend Healthwatch to other students to come and volunteer for, as they cover a wide area of topics and the work they do is crucial for understanding how the facilities and public sectors function around the Newcastle and Gateshead area and what changes can be made to improve them.



Volunteer with us

Are you feeling inspired? We are always on the lookout for more volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering get in touch at Healthwatch Newcastle. We are especially keen to recruit younger people (aged 16–25 years).

www.healthwatchnewcastle.org.uk

t: 0808 178 9282

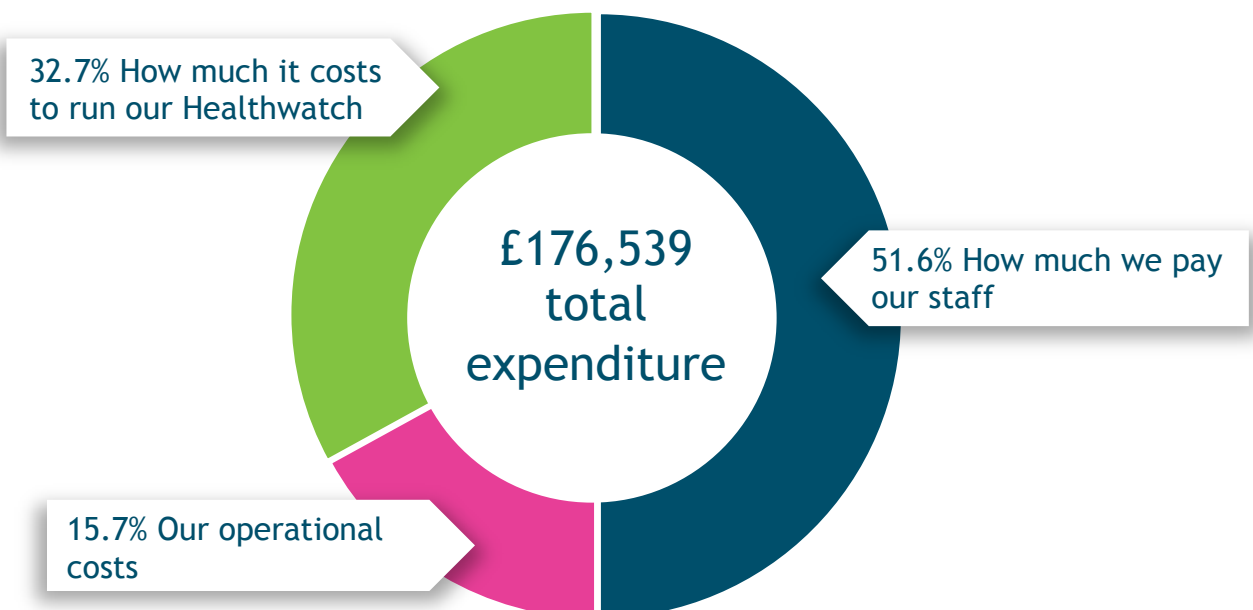
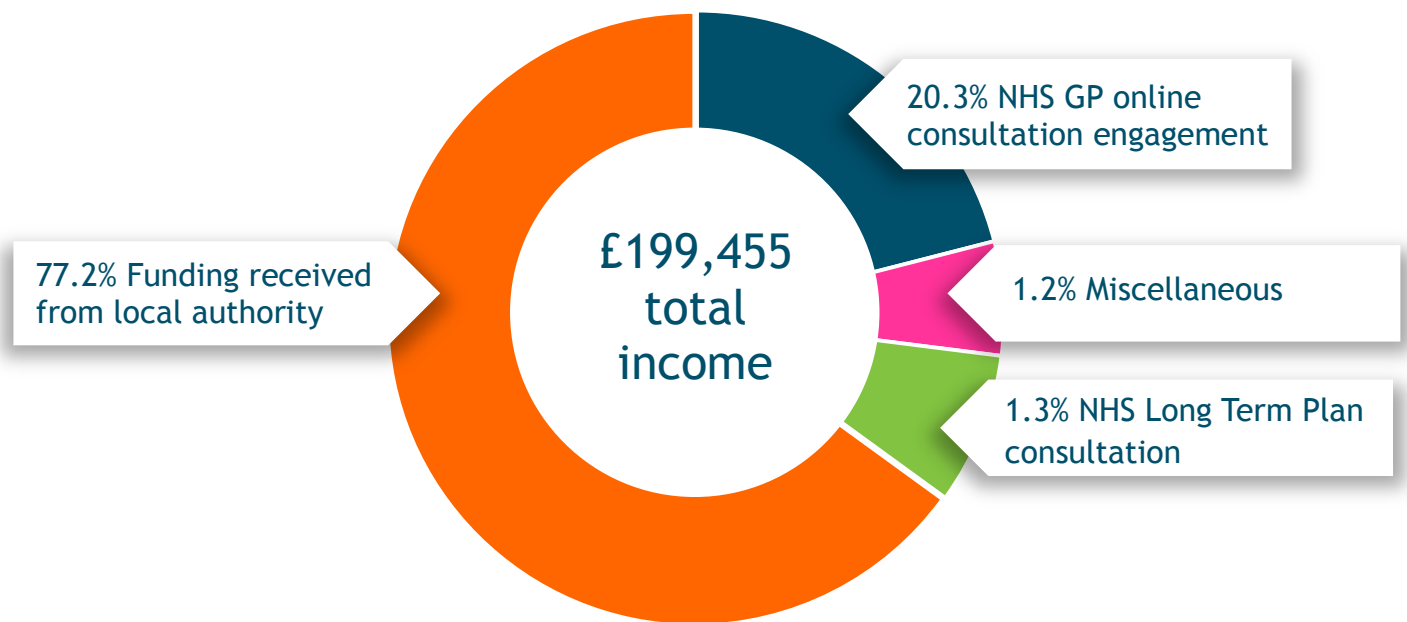
e: info@healthwatchnewcastle.org.uk

Our finances

How we use our money

To help us carry out our work, we are funded by our local authority. In 2018–19 we spent £176,539.

We also received £45,500 of additional income from work undertaken for the North of England Commissioning Support Unit, NHS England and other small contracts.



Our plans for next year

Message from our Chief Executive



This year has been yet another incredible but challenging year for us. So many things in our health and social care environment are changing, austerity measures still continue to affect our communities and the services we all use. This pressure, along with upcoming shortages in key staff groups in the NHS, means that local health and social care services have to make changes to the way they run. This is both a threat and an opportunity.

We generally have very good local services, although there is always room for improvement, and as money becomes tighter, we want to make sure that we keep what works really well. But people tell us that services don't work together well, they don't always meet people's needs and the way that people live their lives. These changes mean that we have a great chance to get the people that plan and provide health and care services to involve local people in designing the new services.

In some ways, Healthwatch Newcastle is a victim of its own success. Over the last six years, we've built a reputation for being a constructive partner to the health and care system. We can challenge the current situation and work with them to create

better ways to do things and involve service users and the public. This does mean that we are in demand and, unfortunately, our small staff team can't do everything, which is why the support of the Healthwatch Newcastle Committee members and our Healthwatch Champions is so valuable. I'm very proud of our work over the year including:

- Our work on support for children and young people with special needs and disabilities which is continuing to have an impact.
- Our work on home care which helped shaped the new service contract.
- Our cancer screening research, which is supporting more people to get information about essential services.
- Our work with people who are homeless, which is helping to connect service providers with this often-excluded community.

Service users and members of the public have helped us to identify and select our priorities for 2019–20, which are:

- Supporting effective GP patient participation groups.
- Children and young people's mental health.

I look forward to what this year has to bring.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steph Edusei'.

Steph Edusei
Healthwatch Newcastle Chief Executive

Thank you

Thank you to everyone who has helped us put people at the heart of health and social care, including:

- Members of the public who shared their views and experience with us.
- All of our amazing staff and volunteers.
- The voluntary and community organisations that have contributed to our work, including ACANE, Deaflink, People's Kitchen and Search; and Fulfilling Lives Newcastle Gateshead, Forward Assist and Gateshead Citizens Advice Bureau which helped us to hear from seldom heard communities.
- Tracey Stuchlik and Donna Aydon, GP practice managers at Thornfield Medical Group and Parkway Medical Group, who helped us get local GP practices involved in our work gathering the views of housebound patients.
- Andre Yeung, Public Health Pharmacist at Newcastle City Council, who helped us get local pharmacies involved in our work gathering the views of housebound patients.
- All GP practices and pharmacies in Newcastle who helped us to distribute our surveys.

“Healthwatch Newcastle’s commissioning of our Experts by Experience to conduct peer research was a really positive experience for us. Our Experts reflected how they were actively involved by the Healthwatch team. They felt really valued and listened to which was a great confidence boost for everyone involved!”
Ang Broadbridge
Fulfilling Lives Newcastle Gateshead

“Through working with Healthwatch Newcastle we were able to make contact with some community groups we had not worked with before, and we are now working with the Romanian community to develop a health service leaflet to be published in their own language, which includes information about screening.”
Karen Rowell
North of Tyne Screening Centre

“Working for Search, a charity supporting older people in the west of Newcastle, I am very aware of the impact health and social care services can have on the quality of life and wellbeing of people. Having an organisation like Healthwatch Newcastle to amplify the voice of those who are often marginalised in this area is really important and Healthwatch Newcastle has worked hard to make this happen.

It’s also really encouraging that, for those who have taken the time to contribute and comment on their care experiences, there is a real effort to report back about any changes and how their involvement has improved things for others, which makes it all worthwhile.”
Johanne Mears
Search

“Many thanks for sharing your [primary care services for housebound people] report with us. It contains very interesting findings and clear recommendations. This is a good tool to contribute to eliminating health inequalities in our region.”
Ahcene Djabri
NHS England

Contact us

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If you require this report in an alternative format please get in touch with us at the address above

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