



Compliments, comments and complaints

Encouraging feedback from your patients

A Healthwatch Newcastle report 2014



What is Healthwatch?

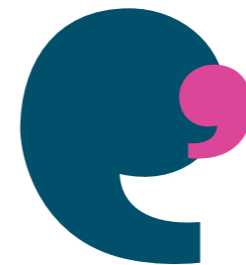
Healthwatch is the national independent champion in health and social care established throughout England on 1 April 2013 under the provisions of the Health and Social Care Act 2012. Healthwatch has statutory powers to ensure the voice of the community is strengthened and heard by those who commission, deliver and regulate health and care services. Healthwatch exists in two distinct forms - local Healthwatch and Healthwatch England at national level.

Healthwatch Newcastle

Healthwatch Newcastle is one of 152 local Healthwatch organisations with a dual role to champion the rights of users of health and social care services and to hold the system to account for how well it engages with the public. The remit of local Healthwatch covers all publicly funded health and social care services for both adults and children. Healthwatch Newcastle collects feedback on services from people of all ages and from all parts of the community, through our network of voluntary and community sector organisations, comments cards at events, monthly drop-in sessions at Newcastle city library, online through the website and social media and from callers to our “Just ask” helpline. As part of the remit to gather views Healthwatch Newcastle also has the power to “enter and view” services and undertake announced and unannounced visits.

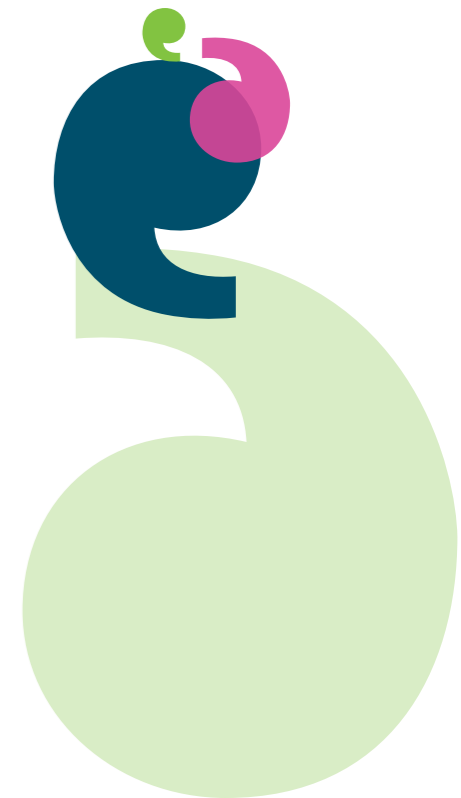
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About the City of Newcastle

Population

Newcastle has a population of approximately 284,000 which is forecast to increase to approximately 291,800 by 2016 according to ONS (Office of National Statistics) projections.

From the ONS 2011 mid-year population estimates, the largest age band is people of working age (25-64 year olds) who account for 49.4% of the city's population, lower than both the North East and England averages. However, people of transition age (15-24) account for 20.5% of the population which is much higher than both the North East and England averages and is influenced by the large student population in the city. In the 2012 student health needs assessment by NHS North of Tyne, the higher

education student population was estimated at 50,000. All age bands are expected to increase in number by 2021 with the most pronounced increase forecast to be in the 90+ age band. This section of the population is expected to increase by 49.4% to 3,100 by 2021.

Ethnicity

According to the Census 2011, 81.7% of Newcastle's population are White British, 3.7% are White Other and 14.7% are non-White. The largest non-White ethnic group are Asian / Asian British (including Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese and Other Asian) who account for 9.8% of the population. The 0-15 age group are the most ethnically diverse and the over 65 age group the least diverse. Across the city, the wards with the most ethnic diversity are Wingrove, Westgate and Elswick. These are located in the inner west of Newcastle and are amongst the most deprived in the UK as well as the city.



Public health and health inequalities

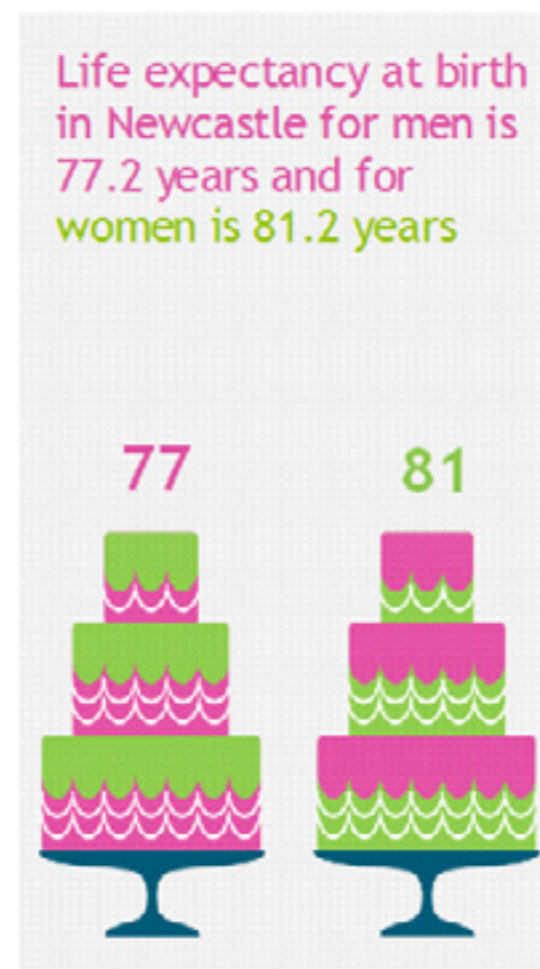
Newcastle upon Tyne contains some of the most deprived areas in the UK as well as some of the most affluent. This means there are huge health inequalities across the city. Life expectancy is 11.4 years less for men and 9.1 years less for women in the most deprived areas compared to the least deprived. Deprivation is also higher than the national average with 29% (13,200) children (under 16) living in poverty.

Census 2011 data shows that 18.75% of the population have a long term health problem or disability which limits their day to day

activities. More than half of these people are of working age between 16-64 years.

Census 2011 data also suggests that almost one in ten (9.2%) (25,644) people have some form of unpaid caring role of which 2.4% of people provide 50 or more hours per week. These are similar to North East and national figures.

Newcastle upon Tyne also has death rates among under 75's for both cardiovascular disease and cancer which are significantly worse than the national and regional averages.



1 in 5 people in Newcastle have a limiting long-term illness





Introduction

Between December 2013 and September 2014 Healthwatch Newcastle carried out mystery shopping in all the GP practices in Newcastle.

The aim of the mystery shopping exercise was to find out what information GP practices had about their complaints procedures, how clear that information was and how easy it was to find.

The main objectives were to:

- Find out what information GP practices in Newcastle provide about giving feedback or making a complaint
- Find out how easy the information was to find without needing to ask a member of staff

- Find out if patients would experience any barriers or need to engage in discussions with staff when asking for information about giving feedback or making a complaint

GP Practices in Newcastle

Newcastle has 36 GP practices over 42 sites which all belong to a Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). Newcastle upon Tyne has two CCG's; NHS Newcastle North and NHS East and NHS Newcastle West. Each CCG has 18 member GP practices which serve populations of 152,000 and 132,000 respectively.

Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG's) were formally established on 31 March 2013. They were set up by the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to commission NHS services in England. Commissioning means deciding what services are needed and making

The aim of the mystery shopping was to find out what information GP practices had about their complaints procedures.

sure they are provided. CCG's commission the majority of hospital and community NHS services in their local area and are co-terminus with local authority boundaries. They are overseen by NHS England.

Since their inception in March 2013, NHS Newcastle North and East and NHS Newcastle West CCG's have worked as an 'alliance' of three CCG's alongside NHS Gateshead CCG. This alliance is now being formalised as NHS England have authorised the three organisations to merge.

From 1 April 2015 NHS Newcastle North and East, NHS Newcastle West and NHS Gateshead CCG's will become one single statutory body.

Making a NHS complaint

The NHS complaints system in England has a two stage process. Initially a complaint should be made to the relevant service (GP, hospital etc.) which the complaint refers to. If the outcome of this complaint is unsatisfactory, patients can refer their case to the Parliamentary and Health Services Ombudsman who is independent of the NHS and the government.

Within Newcastle, patients can seek advice, guidance and make a complaint about primary care and NHS Foundation Trust services by contacting the Patient Advice and Liaison Services (PALS). Advocacy support for people wanting to make a NHS complaint is provided by the Independent Complaints Advocacy Service (ICA).



The evidence for GP mystery shopping

Healthwatch Newcastle (HWN): Patient and public comments about GP services

Since April 2013, HWN has received 495 comments, from all sources, about health and social care services in Newcastle upon Tyne. Twenty percent (94) of these comments related to GP practices. This is almost four times higher than comments received for any other single health or social care service. Of the 94 comments:

- Two thirds (60) were negative in nature
- One third (32) were positive
- Two were for information only

HWN have also had a number of calls to the 'Just ask' information service from people who were generally unsure about how to make comments or complain about a health or social care service.

The Clwyd Hart Report, 2013

In October 2013, the report: A review of the NHS Hospitals Complaints System, Putting the Patients Back in the Picture, was published. The review was co-chaired by the Right Honourable Ann Clwyd MP and Professor Tricia Hart, Chief Executive of South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.



Twenty percent of comments (94) received by Healthwatch Newcastle related to GP practices.

The report reviewed the NHS hospitals complaints system in England. The report found that people did not complain because they felt the process was too confusing or they feared for their future care.

From this review we know that patients want:

- Clear and simple information about how to complain and the process should be easy to navigate
- Their complaint dealt with sensitively
- To know the complaints process is independent

What has Healthwatch England been doing?

As the national consumer champion for health and social care services, Healthwatch England explored people's experiences of the health and social care complaints systems.

The feedback received by Healthwatch England was that the new system is not clear and is hard to use. The main issue was who to contact to make a formal complaint as this will depend on whether the complaint is about healthcare or social care and whether that care is paid for by the NHS, the local authority or has been paid for privately.

How we did it

As mentioned above, the main objectives of this project were to:

- Find out what information GP practices in Newcastle provide about giving feedback or making a complaint
- Find out how easy the information was to find without needing to ask a member of staff
- Find out if patients would experience any barriers or need to engage in discussions with staff when asking for information about giving feedback or making a complaint



We chose a “mystery shopping” approach to achieve the objectives of this project.

The term “mystery shopper” refers to activity defined by the Market Research Society (2011) as follows:

“The use of individuals trained to experience and measure any customer service process, by acting as potential customers and in some way reporting back on their experiences in a detailed and objective way”.

Mystery shopping is different from patient satisfaction surveys in that it explores the actual patient experience at a snapshot in time and records specific details of that particular experience.

It should be noted that there are some limitations to mystery shopping as a completely objective assessment as some subjective opinion is always involved. We made the data collection

as quantitative and objective as possible to minimise the effect of this.

Before we took the work forward we informed key stakeholders of our intentions as we take a ‘no surprises’ approach. We contacted the two NHS Newcastle Clinical Commissioning Groups and the Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear Area Team but did not provide full details of our plans as that would defeat the purpose of a mystery shopping activity. All stakeholders were happy for the work to go ahead. The mystery shopping was carried out by four Healthwatch Champions and one staff member who visited each practice in person. This is the same approach as other local Healthwatch who have undertaken similar pieces of work. The staff member only carried out visits where there was no availability of Champions.

Healthwatch Champions

Healthwatch Champions are members of the community who act as ambassadors for their local Healthwatch on a volunteer basis. The role of a Healthwatch Champion is varied but can include:

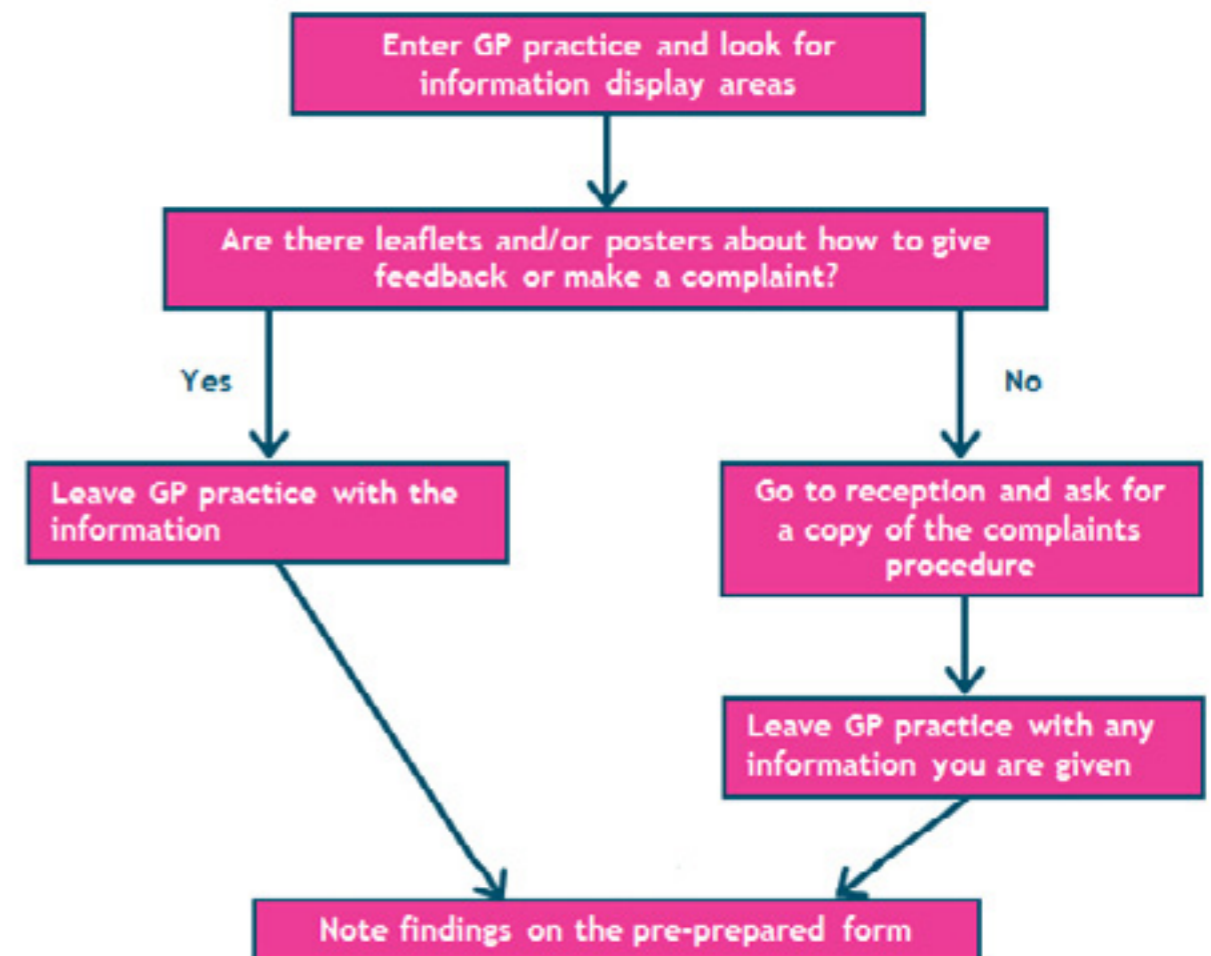
- Helping at events where Healthwatch Newcastle has an information stall
- Helping with time-limited projects and research
- Visiting health and adult social care services

All Healthwatch Champions receive full training and support to fulfil their roles.

We trained our Champions in the mystery shopping approach and provided them with all the resources they needed to conduct their visits.

The GP practices were split into nine groups which followed a logical walking, driving or public transport route. The groups were allocated to the Champions ensuring no one carried out visits on their own GP practice. The staff member also did not visit their own GP practice. Champions were provided with the address and opening times of the practices along with a time period in which to complete their visits.

Their visits were conducted as shown in the diagram below.





How we did it

The checklist that the Champions completed during the visit is below

healthwatch
Newcastle

Mystery Shopper Questionnaire

Name of Healthwatch Newcastle representative	
Name and address of GP surgery.	
Date of visit	

Information Displayed:

Were leaflets available to pick up and take away?	
Were they easy to find?	
Were posters about giving comments of complaints on display?	
Were they easy to find?	



If posters/leaflets were not displayed:

Did the staff ask for your contact details before they would give any information?	
Did the staff have a copy of the complaints process?	
Did the staff give any explanation as to how to use the comments/complaints process?	
Was the information available in alternative formats? E.G. In large print, Braille, other languages or Easy-Read (for people with learning disabilities)	
Did you feel that the surgery encouraged feedback (e.g. by telling you that they welcomed feedback, tone of leaflet/posters, to ask if there was anything you wanted to feedback to them in person at the time etc.)	



What we found out

42 GP practices were visited.

22 (52%) displayed leaflets or posters on how to comment or make a complaint

52%

39 (93%) had their complaints process on their website

93%

At 20 (48%) of the practices, our Champions needed to ask staff for information

48%



Staff at 14 (70%) of these 20 practices provided a copy of the complaints procedure

70%



Staff at 7 (35%) of these 20 practices explained how to comment or complain

35%



Staff at 2 (10%) of these 20 practices asked for contact details

10%



Of all the practices visited, our Healthwatch Champions felt that 18 (42%) actively encouraged feedback

42%

Other findings

Of the 42 visits, six GP practices took an enquiry about the complaints process very seriously:

- GP practice one: This practice was very concerned and wanted to resolve the issue. The Champion was asked to wait to see someone.
- GP practices two and three: These practices asked what the complaint was about and asked for the Champion's contact details so the practice manager could call them.

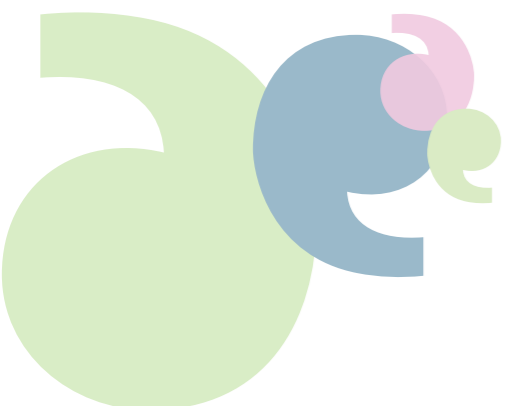
“The staff member really wanted to help.”

“It was a very open waiting room to be discussing problems in.”

- GP practice four: The office manager of this practice printed off all the relevant complaints information and sat down with the Champion to explain the process.
- GP practice five: This practice was keen to resolve the issue informally there and then.
- GP practice six: This practice explained that they could help complete the form if needed and gave the Champion the impression that it prefers to resolve issues there and then.

These all seem to be appropriate approaches if it is clear that it will meet the needs of the patient. It is worth noting that the approach used by GP practice one was slightly embarrassing for the Champion.

“It was encouraging that the staff member was interested in dealing with the complaint straight away.”



“The leaflets were easy to find.”

Our Champions noted that GP practices should avoid displaying leaflets right by reception as this could put people off taking leaflets about making a complaint.

Our Champions also discovered that you can get a wealth of information if you ask for the 'Practice guide'. When this was asked for our Champions were often given:

- A booklet about the practice - including opening times and clinic information
- The latest patient newsletter
- Information about their patient participation group
- Information about interpreting and translation services
- Information on how to give feedback or make a complaint

“There were a lot of leaflets on display and it didn't seem to be in any order.”

“It was encouraging to see PALs leaflets readily available to patients.”

“The receptionist was very helpful.”



Next steps and recommendations

We are now working to provide each GP practice in Newcastle with a confidential feedback report so practices can start to make improvements where needed. We will follow up their progress within three months of sending the report and we will help GP practices to make improvements where we can.

In terms of the overall findings, we are pleased that most GP practices display leaflets and/or posters and have the complaints process on their website. This will help ensure that people are able to make comments or complaints about a service without experiencing barriers or embarrassment. We are also pleased that most staff members were able to provide our Champions with a copy of the complaints procedure on request without demanding any contact details.



The aim of the mystery shopping was to find out what information GP practices had about their complaints procedures, how clear that information was and how easy it was to find.

However, we ask the Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear Area Team, the NHS Newcastle Clinical Commissioning Groups and the GP practices in Newcastle to:

- Ensure that all practices display information about how to comment or make a complaint in their reception and on their website
- Increase the number of practices where it is felt that patients are encouraged to give feedback

We recommend that all GP practices also create a 'feedback display' containing the following:

- Healthwatch Newcastle leaflet/poster
- Patient Advice and Liaison Service leaflet/poster
- Independent Complaints Advocacy Leaflet/poster
- Your own complaint leaflet/poster

With this in place, hopefully less people will have to ask for a copy of the complaints procedure but, if they do, this should be easily available to them on request.



Sources

- NHS Choices <http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/thenhs/about/Pages/ccg-outcomes.aspx> accessed on 27 August 2014
- Newcastle West Clinical Commissioning Group Commissioning Plan 2013/14-2015/16
- Newcastle North and East Commissioning Group Commissioning Plan 2013/14-2015/16
- Public Health England Newcastle upon Tyne Child Health Profile March 2014
- Public Health England Newcastle upon Tyne Health Profile 2014
- Newcastle Wellbeing for Life: Know Your City, a profile of the people living in Newcastle: People living, working or learning in Newcastle (A). downloaded from: <http://www.wellbeingforlife.org.uk/know-your-city>, on 26 August 2014
- Newcastle Wellbeing for Life: Know Your City, a profile of the people living in Newcastle: People living, working or learning in Newcastle (B). downloaded from: <http://www.wellbeingforlife.org.uk/know-your-city>, on 26 August 2014
- Health Needs Assessment of University students studying in Newcastle, NHS North of Tyne, 2012
- Healthwatch Newcastle Comments Log
- Healthwatch England: Improving the health and social care complaints systems: Background and positioning briefing, November 2013
- Rt Hon Ann Clywd MP & Professor Tricia Hart: A review of the NHS hospitals complaints system: Putting the patients back in the picture, October 2013



Appendix 1

Our visit to SAMPLE	
<p>Our mystery shopper visited your practice on 16 January 2014. The purpose of this visit was to find out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What information the GP surgery was providing about how to comment or make a complaint • If it was easy to find that information without having to ask a staff member • If people were able to ask for this information without experiencing any barriers or having to engage in lengthy or defensive discussions with staff <p>To find out more about why Healthwatch Newcastle chose to do this work please read the enclosed report - "Compliments, comments and complaints - encouraging feedback from your patients"</p>	
Our findings	
<p>Before speaking to staff:</p> <p>The complaints procedure is on the practice website.</p> <p>There were leaflets on display about how to comment or make a complaint but no posters.</p> <p>After speaking to staff:</p> <p>The complaints leaflet was given but no explanation was given.</p> <p>The information was not advertised as being available in other formats.</p>	<p>Our Champion felt that feedback was encouraged because...</p> <p>The Staff member helped them to find the leaflets and gave them information.</p>
We recommend that:	
<p>Your practice creates a 'feedback display' containing the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthwatch Newcastle leaflet/poster • Patient Advice and Liaison Service leaflet/poster • Independent Complaints Advocacy Leaflet/poster • Your own complaint leaflet/poster <p>We can help you do this if needed. Please get in touch with us if you'd like help.</p> <p>Rachel Head Champions' Support Worker Direct: 0191 235 7026 Rachel@healthwatchnewcastle.org.uk</p>	



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