



Annual Report 2019-20

Guided by you

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Message from our chair

Welcome to the Annual Report for Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees 2019/20.



I am pleased to introduce the highlights of all the work undertaken by the staff and volunteers of Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees. Our continuous aim is to be representative of the views of local people, reaching as many local residents as we can, ensuring, where possible, service users can have their say regarding the delivery of health and social care services in our Borough.

We work both at a local, national and strategic level with our partners, influencing the emerging changes, and concentrating our efforts on the services provided. We have the ability to work where people receive their care by undertaking specific work plan items aimed at improving service provision.

We undertake 'Enter and View' investigations where our feedback can, where necessary, change how patients and service users are treated. Our work is reliant on feedback from the public, and much of our time is spent seeking views across organisations who form part of our network as well as individual users of services. You will see the outcome of this engagement within the report.

The Healthwatch Executive Board welcomes back Natasha Judge as the Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees Project Lead, who brings a wealth of knowledge and understanding of the health and social care landscape.

The unprecedented pandemic of Covid-19 has enforced us all to work differently during a health crisis, I can only give praise and credit to the community of Stockton-on-Tees for the incredible team work that is taking place to ensure the safety of all of our residents.

My thanks go to the staff and volunteers as well as my fellow Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees Executive Board Members and everyone who has worked on our behalf to ensure that we represent the views of our residents here in Stockton-on-Tees.

Our continuous aim is to be representative of the views of local people, reaching as many local residents as we can.

Anne Sykes
Chair, Healthwatch
Stockton-on-Tees

Our priorities

Last year 1,506 people told us what they thought our priorities should be for the year 2019-2020 and the improvements they would like to see health and social care services make. These became our six priorities for the year ahead:



Care homes should improve services for residents, particularly those residents living with dementia.



Services should improve their support for people living with a sensory impairment.



Services should provide information, in appropriate formats, so that people can make informed decisions about their care.



Access to mental health services should be made easier for adults and children.



Make it easier to get an emergency dental appointment.



Improve accessibility and information for patients at A&E and Urgent Care services.

About us

Here to make care better

A message from Sir Robert Francis QC, Chair Healthwatch England.

The Healthwatch network's collaborative effort around the NHS Long Term Plan shows the power of the network, giving people that find it hardest to be heard a chance to speak up.

The #WhatWouldYouDo campaign saw national movement, engaging with people all over the country to see how the Long Term Plan should be implemented locally.

Thanks to the thousands of views shared with Healthwatch we were also able to highlight the issue of patient transport not being included in the NHS Long Term Plan review – instigating a national review of patient transport from NHS England.

We simply could not do this without the dedicated work and efforts of our staff and volunteers and, of course, we could not have done it without you.

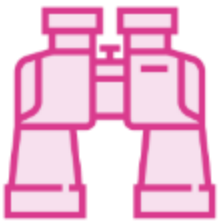
Whether it's working with your local Healthwatch to raise awareness of local issues, or sharing your views and experiences, I'd like to thank you all.

It's important that services continue to listen, so please do keep talking to your local Healthwatch. Let's strive to make the NHS and social care services the best that they can be.



I've now been Chair of Healthwatch England for over a year and I'm extremely proud to see it go from strength to strength, highlighting the importance of listening to people's views to decision makers at a national and local level.

Sir Robert Francis QC
Healthwatch England Chair



Our vision is simple

Health and care that works for you.
People want health and social care support that works – helping them to stay well, get the best out of services and manage any health and social care conditions they face.



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 who 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 helping make improvements to health and social care services and support your health and wellbeing.



How we find out what matters to you

People are at the heart of everything we do. Our staff and volunteers identify what matters most to people by:

- Visiting services to see how they are delivered
- Producing surveys and holding focus groups
- Going out in the community, speaking with groups and organisations
- Providing individuals the opportunity to speak with us on a one to one basis
- Working in collaboration with our partners



Find out more about us and the work we do

Website: www.healthwatchstocktonontees.co.uk

Twitter: @HwStockton

Facebook: @HWStockton.on.Tees

Highlights from our year

Find out about our resources and the way we have engaged and supported more people in 2019-20.



Health and care that works for you



15 volunteers

helping to carry out our work. In total, they gave up 323 hours of their time.

We employed

2.9 staff

1 of whom is full time equivalent, this is the same staffing level as the previous year.

We received

£130,000 in funding

from our local authority in 2019-20, the same amount as the previous year.

Providing support



1,506 people

shared their health and social care story with us.

301 people

accessed Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees advice and information online or contacted us with questions about local support, 30% more than last year.

Reaching out



1,902 people

engaged with us through our website, we visited 75 community groups and events, and increased our social media output by 17% from the previous year.

Making a difference to care



We published

10 reports

which were shared with our partners, stakeholders and the public.

How we've made a difference



Speaking up about your experiences of health and social care services is the first step to change.

Here is how your views have helped make a difference to the care and support people receive in Stockton-on-Tees.

Care Homes For Older People

In 2018, Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees carried out work to find out what it was like to live in a care home for older people across the Borough.

We undertook Enter & View visits to 28 care homes speaking to 148 residents, 123 relatives and 174 staff members.

Our findings were made public in a report finalised in April 2019 and although feedback was generally quite positive, a number of recommendations were made, particularly in regard to improving services for residents living with dementia. These included:

- Activities personalised to meet the needs of individual residents
- Increased opportunities to carry out one-to-one engagement
- Greater use of dementia-friendly features
- Enabling residents to retain more independence
- Ensuring the wellbeing and safety of all residents
- Meeting the cultural, religious and lifestyle needs of residents.

We were invited to present our findings to managers from the local Adult Services Team and at a meeting of service providers.

We were also invited to give a presentation to elected Members at a meeting of the council's Scrutiny Committee.

This was extremely well received and it was recorded that: *"Local councillors were pleased to report the positive input of Healthwatch to the scrutiny meeting and congratulated Healthwatch staff and volunteers for the valuable work they had done."*

Scrutiny members also suggested that Healthwatch should have more powers, to enable more positive outcomes.



Care Homes For Older People



Yvonne Cheung from Stockton Borough Council speaking at the dementia care home guide launch event

We were delighted with the response to the report from our partners and were informed that several providers and care home managers had approached Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council asking what they could do to make their service more 'dementia friendly.'

As a result the Local Authority produced a guide entitled "Making Care Homes Dementia Friendly."

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees provided feedback on the guide and co-hosted a well-attended launch event. All care homes from across the Borough have now received a copy of the guide.

Following on from this initial work, we have carried out a number of follow-up Enter & View visits to find out if care homes have addressed any (or all) of the recommendations we made.

We found that significant improvements had been made and feedback from residents and relatives demonstrates that these have made a positive difference people living there.

One staff member told us:

"We had specific training which has helped us know better how to approach residents (living with dementia). This has shown us how to adapt our approach to the individual and to respect their personal space. We now use the 'hand to hold' technique to aid independence."

Other improvements observed included:

Dementia Friendly features:

- Improved signage and better use of contrasting colour to aid residents find their way around.
- An increase in the use of wall murals and interactive features, providing a greater stimulus for residents and providing opportunities to reminisce about the past.

Activities:

- Increase in one-to-one support, using boxes full of small games, puzzles, crafts and activities designed to help residents maintain their skills, boost blood flow and assist fine motor movement.
- Increased use of 'memory boxes' which were particularly beneficial for those residents living with dementia.
- The development of an in house bar, used on an evening by residents to sit and chat over a drink, and which was used to serve a 'pub lunch' on Sundays. (cont...)

Care Homes For Older People

Training:

- Specific training undertaken by lifestyle co-ordinators in order to motivate residents' participation in activities as well as to improve activities and interaction for people living with dementia.
- LGBT+ training in order to raise awareness and understanding of the needs of residents who may be from the LGBT+ community. This was described as being *"thought provoking and informative."*

Use of technology:

- The use of i-pads so that residents could be supported to keep in touch with families.
- The purchase of 'Alexa' where playlists had been set up and were said to be of specific benefit to residents requiring end of life care.
- One service had purchased a 'Tovertafel' (magic table) which projected images onto a table and which was very popular with those residents living with dementia.

We also found new systems in place to improve resident safety in respect of medicine administration and links to the community nursing service.

One person told us: *"There seem to have been lots of changes. The introduction of re-hydration stations across the home, a Facebook presence so relatives can keep in touch with what their loved one has been doing.*

They have introduced scrap books and improved decoration throughout making the home a lot more dementia friendly."

We have seen an improvement in overall CQC ratings with a number of services moving from 'requires improvement' to 'good' and 'outstanding.'

Comments received from care home providers we revisited included:

Thank you for the report. It is good and rewarding to see we are enriching residents' lives as best as we possibly can and we will continue to do so.

Manager, Hadrian Park

We took on board all your recommendations and look forward to seeing you in the future.

Manager, Allington House.



Sensory Impairment

We carried out a number of face-to-face meetings with people who had a hearing or sight impairment, and three people who had both.

We also gathered case studies, looking specifically at peoples' experiences of using hospital services (including patient transport), GP, dental and ophthalmology services as well as social care services where required.

The introduction of the Accessible Information Standard made it a legal requirement for all NHS and adult social care organisations to make sure that people who have a disability, impairment or sensory loss are provided with information that they can easily read or understand.

This legal requirement ensures people can communicate effectively. However, our findings highlight individuals with a sensory

healthwatch
Stockton-on-Tees

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees
Would like to invite you to our
Sensory Impairment Engagement Event
On Wednesday 20th March 2019
At Middlesbrough Deaf Centre, Derwent Street, North
Ormesby, Middlesbrough, TS3 6JB at
11:00am



This is an opportunity to help us to gather your views and experiences of accessing health and social care services with a sensory impairment.

This event is for members of the public living and accessing services in Stockton-on-Tees.

Your voice is important - together we can help to shape and improve future health and social care services in Stockton-on-Tees.

Email: healthwatchstockton@pcp.uk.net Tel: 01642 688312
Text: 07809342194



impairment are still experiencing difficulties on a regular basis when accessing health and social care services.

Very few people we spoke with were even aware of this standard.

One particular cause for concern was access to interpreters for people who required them.

Sensory Impairment

We were told:

"I have arrived at appointments and no interpreter has been booked"

and

"Some interpreters are great, some are not so good"

Accessing services quickly could also be problematic:

"If I have, or need, an emergency appointment, it is not possible, as an interpreter needs to be booked weeks in advance"

People also told us that they sometimes missed appointments at the GP for the simple fact that they could not hear their name being called or could not see the screen.

Overall, our findings highlight that individuals with a sensory impairment are still experiencing difficulties on a regular basis when accessing health and social care services and a number of recommendations were made.

This information was shared with our local Clinical Commissioning Group and it is pleasing to note that all these recommendations are now under consideration locally and several initiatives have now been implemented across the Borough.



Norton Medical Practice



Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees visited Norton Medical Practice to carry out an Enter & View visit following some complaints received about the service provided.

We spoke to 80 patients in the waiting area. Feedback was generally positive, although some patients spoke about difficulties encountered when making appointments over the telephone and the time it took to get an appointment.

Surprisingly, we found that although the Practice had a well-developed website, where patients could access a range of services, including the option to book appointments online, 58% of patients spoken to were not aware of this.

A PPG group was established but 82% of patients had never heard of it. We made recommendations about looking at other

ways of promoting these services.

In response to the report we were told that:

“Our patient group has discussed potentially making themselves available to help patients who would like to use online services but feel they lack the technological skills to do so.”

and:

“I wholeheartedly agree that we could significantly improve the information available to patients in the surgery.”

We could definitely utilise the designated Patient Group Notice Board to advertise the group and explain their role and I will agenda this for discussion at our next meeting.

Practice Manager

A & E and Urgent Care

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees received feedback from a number of residents who were unhappy with the service they had received whilst attending Accident & Emergency and Urgent Care Services at the University Hospital of North Tees.

As a result we arranged with the Trust to undertake Enter & View visits to gather more views from people using the service.

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees staff and volunteers visited the hospital one Friday evening, and left additional surveys to be handed out to patients over the Saturday and Sunday period, a further visit was made the following Monday morning.

We spoke to patients whilst they were waiting to be seen, and gathered further feedback by providing them with a survey to complete and return to us once they had received treatment and had returned home.

Overall the patients we spoke to were generally satisfied with the service, but we made a number of recommendations in respect of:

- access and seating arrangements
- general signage
- patients being kept informed of waiting times

These recommendations were shared with the Trust who are looking to see what adjustments can be made.



Access Arrangements at GP Surgeries



Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees received a number of concerns about access arrangements at local GP services.

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees successfully sourced an accessibility checklist that had been designed specifically for GP practices.

This was shared with practices across the Borough, several of whom responded that they had found the information useful and would be implementing some of the suggestions it contained:

Yarm Medical Centre:

"We found it useful."

Alma Medical Centre:

"We found it useful but haven't had time to use it yet."

Elm Tree Practice:

"I have looked at your checklist and will incorporate it with the one we currently have in place."

Queen Street Practice:

"I confirm that we will be using this and have found it very helpful."

Norton Medical Centre:

"Very useful and intend to go through it."



Long Term Plan

#WhatWouldYouDo

Highlights



Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees obtained the views of 166 residents and worked with neighbouring Healthwatch in the region to feed these views into a regional response. A copy of the response can be found [HERE](#) or by contacting us directly.



In total there were 1,143 surveys collected by local Healthwatch across the region.



Nationally more than 40,000 people shared views with their local Healthwatch. All of these were collated into a response to the NHS National Plan.

NHS Long Term Plan

Following a commitment from the Government to increase investment in the NHS, the NHS published the 'Long Term Plan' in January 2019, setting out its key ambitions over the next 10 years.

Healthwatch England launched a countrywide campaign to give people a say in how the plan should be implemented in their communities.

We asked people #WhatWouldYouDo to improve the NHS locally. The top issues that people told us they wanted services to focus on are:

- Easier access to GPs
- Not to be digitally excluded
- Quicker access to diagnosis and

support

- To be able to stay in their own home as long as it is possible to do so safely

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees spoke to 166 people locally. This information formed part of a regional response which was fed into a national Healthwatch response.

As the independent consumer champion we will continue to work with the NHS, as they develop services in the Long Term Plan's Framework, to ensure that the voices and views of local people are part of the process.

Helping you find the answers

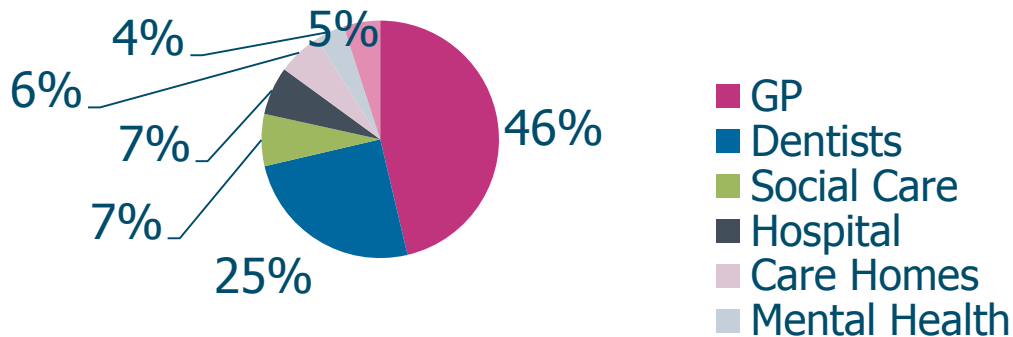


Finding the right service can be worrying and stressful. Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees plays an important role in helping people to get the information they need to take control of their health and care and find services that will provide them with the right support.

This year we helped 301 people get the advice and information they need by:

- Providing advice and information articles on our website.
- Responding to people's queries about services over the phone, by email, or online.
- Talking to people at community events.
- Promoting services and information that can help people on our social media.

The most common things people asked us about are:



Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees work closely with Stockton Independent Complaints Advocacy (ICA) Service.

Stockton ICA provides free, confidential, independent support to residents of Stockton-on-Tees who wish to make a complaint about a NHS service.

Healthwatch and Stockton ICA share anonymised data relating to issues and complaints raised, and work in collaboration to identify trends which may require action.

If you would like to speak to a member of the Stockton ICA team get in touch on **0808 172 9553** or email SICA@pcp.uk.net





Case study: Providing information following GP practice closure

In April Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees were notified of the closure of Birchtree Medical Practice. This practice held the contract for the 'Special Allocations Scheme' (previously known as the violent patients scheme).

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees were contacted by NHS England to provide information and support to patients who may not have received letters with details of the service they had now been allocated to.

This could have been because they had moved, whilst some were in prison at the time letters were sent out.

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees received several queries about this matter, and following consultation with NHS England, were able to confirm whether or not patients still remained on the 'Special Allocations' register along with details of their new allocation.

This included transport arrangements for those who would need to travel to access the service.

We were also able to provide a link between the patient and the newly allocated service.



Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees were contacted by NHS England to provide information and support to patients.





Providing information

A gentleman contacted Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees as he was experiencing problems with some of the continence aids that had been supplied to him. We made contact with the local continence service who visited him and arranged to provide the correct equipment to meet his needs.



Signposting to support services

A lady phoned for advice about her Mother who she suspected was in the early stages of dementia. We contacted the local Livewell Dementia Hub (LDH), a specialist service supporting people living with dementia and their carers. A specialist advice worker from LDH contacted the lady and provided her with information and support.



Seeking an emergency dentist

A gentleman who had recently moved into the area contacted Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees seeking access to emergency dental care.

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees located a dental practice taking on new NHS patients who were also able to deal with his immediate problem.



Contact us to get the information you need

If you have a query about a health or social care service, or need help with where you can go to access further support, get in touch. Don't struggle alone. Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees is here for you.

Website: www.healthwatchstocktonontees.co.uk

Telephone: 0808 172 9559 (Freephone)

Email: healthwatchstockton@pcp.uk.net

Volunteers



At Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees we are supported by 15 volunteers to help us find out what people think is working well, and what people would like to improve, with regard to services in their communities. This year our volunteers:

- Raised awareness of the work we do at events, in the community and with health and care services.
- Visited services to make sure they are providing people with the right support.
- Helped support our day-to-day running.
- Listened to people's experiences to help us know which areas we need to focus on.

Meet our Volunteer - Sandy

I worked in the secondary education sector for over 38 years, initially as a teacher, then later as a Deputy Headteacher and Educational Consultant. I retired from paid employment in 2017 but always intended working in a voluntary capacity to benefit my community using one format or another. I have lived in the Stockton area for over 40 years and, once retired, felt it was time for me to give something back to my neighbours.

Having looked at potential volunteer opportunities I found that Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees matched my local interests and I hoped my skillset could provide additionality for their team to enhance what they were already offering.

I had worked with local authorities and social services in my previous jobs, pertaining to supporting young people with special educational needs or who may need support from the social care system. So, to use me effectively, one of my first volunteer roles was to assist a group of young people to realise their goal of canvassing secondary school students concerning their experiences of the health service.

I was able to help in the formatting of the questions and the methodology relating to the process of reaching the desired number of young people. This project is currently still in progress. I am hoping to continue in this capacity, supporting young people who are



Sandy Hanson – Board Member & Volunteer

involved with Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees and bringing the necessary information to help reach their targets with young people.

In the short time I have been volunteering, I have had the opportunity to visit residential care homes and learned a lot about how our elderly community members live their lives and the services who care for them. This has also allowed the residents and their families to give important feedback on how to improve what is offered to them. On a personal note it has shown the massive importance and necessity of residential care homes in my area, something I knew very little about until now.

I enjoy being a member of the volunteer team both on the ground and at a Board level. I believe the team are open to new ideas and interested in what members have to say and to offer. Being a volunteer is a perfect forum to share and feel valued for your contribution, no matter how big or how small, and to know that my tiny part in the big wheel actually does make a difference.

In the short time I have been volunteering, I have had the opportunity to visit residential care homes and learned a lot about how our elderly community members live their lives and the services who care for them.

Sandy Hanson, Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees volunteer



Sandy (second from left) with staff, volunteers and Executive Board Members from Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees at a care home visit

This has also allowed the residents and their families to give important feedback on how to improve what is offered to them.

Our volunteers

We could not do what we do without the support of our amazing volunteers. Meet some of the team and hear what they get up to.

Lynda

After retiring from a career in the NHS as a Biomedical Scientist, I thought it was time to give something back to the community and make a difference to the people around me.

So I became a volunteer with Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees. I soon found out that volunteering is a two-way street.

The basic prerequisite skills for volunteering are a willingness to pitch in, having an open mind and compassion, it offers vital help to people in need, worthwhile causes, and the community, but the benefits can be even greater for the volunteer.

As a volunteer I am able to use the skills that I have, but it has given me the opportunity to develop them.

I attended a patient leadership course last year which greatly improved my communication and networking skills along with the confidence to speak in public.



Christine

I first heard about Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees via my GP Practice.

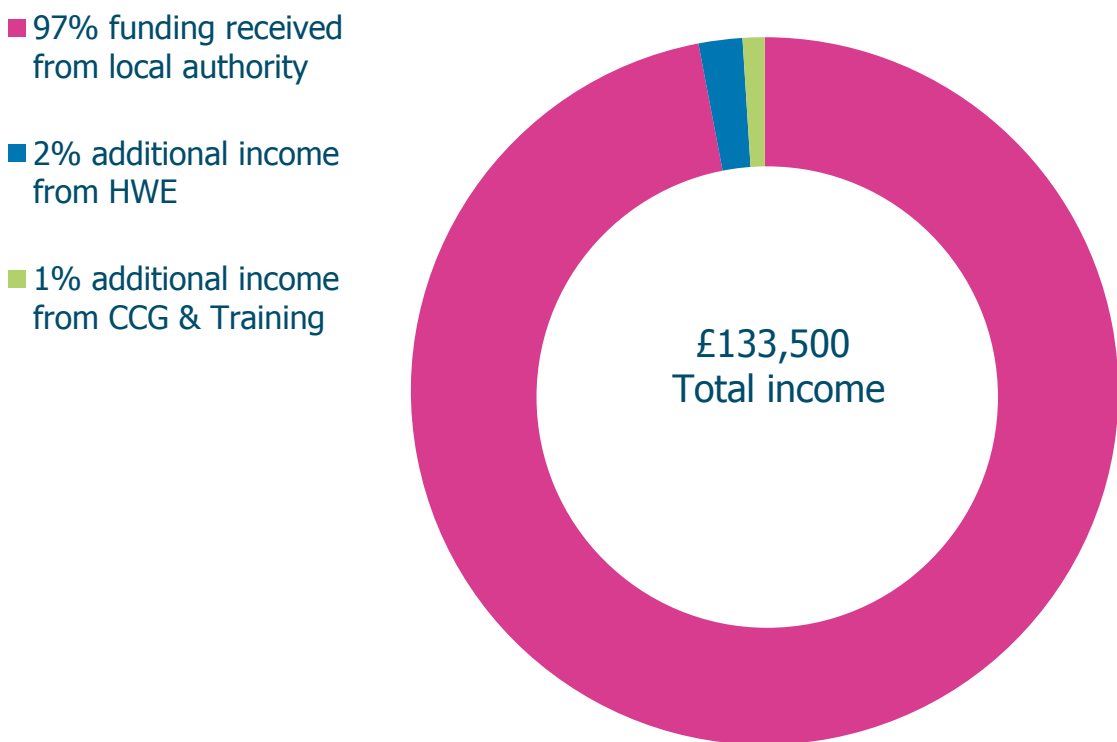
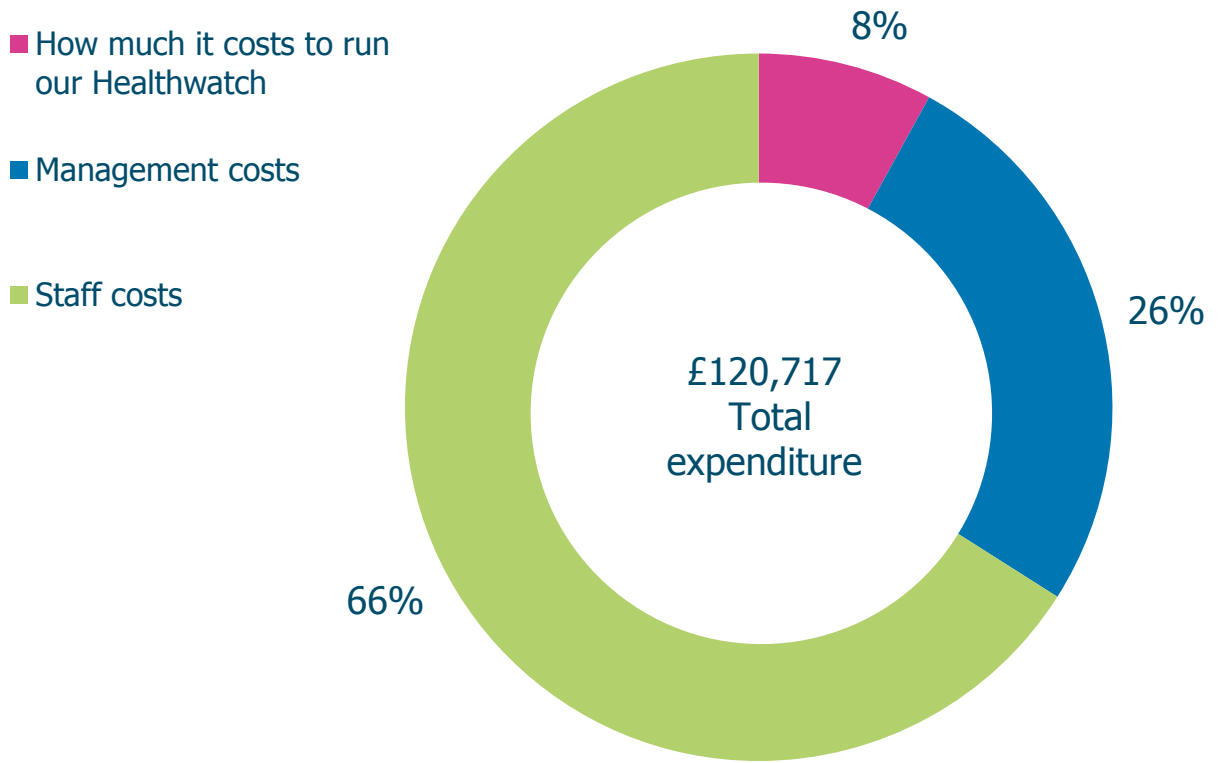
I have always been interested in local health and social care services and when I heard Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees were looking for volunteers, I jumped at the chance to become part of their organisation.

Unfortunately because of recent events with Covid-19, my volunteering has been put on hold. Hopefully once it is safe to do so, I am looking forward to becoming an active member of the team.

Finances



We are funded by our local authority under the Health and Social Care Act (2012). In 2019-20 we spent £120,717.



Our plans for next year



Message from our Project Lead

I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to return to my previous post as the Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees Project Lead.

Over the past six years I have witnessed Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees evolve, professional relationships develop, and the effectiveness of engagement and intelligence gathering from the public and our partners excel.

Robust working relationships with our external colleagues, Stockton-on-Tees Local Authority, North Tees Foundation Trust, Catalyst, the Care Quality Commission and many others has enabled us to demonstrate the positive impact that collaboration can have on our community.

Previously we have striven to demonstrate the impact we can have by working together. I feel our annual report 2019-2020 shows how this has been achieved, making real changes to help improve health and social care and identifying what is important to those that are using it now and in the future.

We have strengthened our independent Executive Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees Board by actively seeking those who bring



Natasha Judge, Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees Project Lead

a vast array of experience and skill sets.

We have trained additional Enter and View representatives to enable us to capture more service user voices at the point of service delivery.

We have continued to build on our Information and Signposting service, utilising the skills and knowledge of our partner projects, joining together information gathered from grass roots intelligence.

A Message from our Project Lead – Natasha Judge

Having the Independent Complaints Advocacy Service embedded within our local Healthwatch, has given us the unique ability to gather additional information that helps to inform all of our work.

We have extended our reach to those who may wish to receive information via newsletter and ensure these are circulated on a regular basis and increased our social media activity.

Towards the end of this financial year the unprecedented pandemic of Covid-19 has enforced all of us to change the way we work.

However, I have witnessed first-hand how the relationships previously built have been the foundation to rise to the challenge and support our local community.

We have been actively seeking the views of everyone effected by the Covid-19 pandemic via an online survey and through our partners, to enable current circumstances and views shape our

future work plan. This helps to ensure we respond effectively in our role as the voice of the public.

As soon as practically possible we will be revisiting our work with young people and progressing feedback we have received regarding help improving access and support to mental health services.

I look forward to working with you the public and our partners to seek positive changes to health and social care services in the future.

Natasha Judge

Project Lead, Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees



Thank you



Our thanks go to the Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees Executive Board who, with expertise and knowledge, guide us through some difficult decisions. Thank you also to our team of volunteers who work tirelessly to ensure we make a positive difference to as many as we can.

We would also like to thank our partners, who demonstrate how working openly and transparently can make such a difference to the outcomes for the service users.

Lastly and most importantly we would like to thank you, the public of Stockton-on-Tees. Without your voice we could not deliver the work we do, aiming for a stronger, healthier community with the right support at the right time.

Our future priorities will focus primarily on working with the public and our partners to ensure as we emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic, help and support is directed to where it is needed most.

We will continue to strive to reach as many of the public as we can and that what we are told forms our future work plan.

Mental health support for all ages will be a key focus for us, helping raise awareness of preventative measures and building resilience in our community. By working together we can help improve health and wellbeing, now and in the future.

As we move into an uncertain era, we look with positivity at the opportunity that lies ahead to strengthen our collaborative efforts and make a real difference to our community.

We look forward to working together to build on our success and support our local community in the future.

healthwatch

Stockton-on-Tees

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