

healthwatch

Healthwatch Northumberland
Annual Report 2016/17





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Message from our Chair



I am delighted to have been appointed as the Chair of Healthwatch Northumberland and to present this review of its work in 2016. In doing so I offer my thanks to my predecessor, Cynthia Atkin, who led the organisation so well from its inception and to the members of the Healthwatch Northumberland Board who gave their time and expertise to March 2017.

The health and social care services provided in Northumberland are generally well regarded by its residents. This is the finding from Healthwatch Northumberland's most recent annual survey and it is a view supported by feedback from those who have actually used those services.

It is appreciated that many local people are still prepared to offer their thoughts on these important aspects of daily life - and long may it continue - as such personal involvement reinforces the view that people are at the heart of what Healthwatch strives to achieve.

Whilst this positive picture is reassuring, it does not mean that everything in the health and social care world is rosy. There have been examples of change which have not been universally welcomed by those most affected and where Healthwatch Northumberland played a part in ensuring the feelings of local people have been heard.

It is this willingness to engage which is the cornerstone of how Healthwatch Northumberland seeks to work with partner organisations to further improve the available services. Formally and informally, we intend to continue during the rest of this year and beyond to seek the views of patients, families and carers and then to convey such legitimate opinion to colleagues in health and social care.

There is no doubt that 2017/2018 will be a busy year for all concerned. Everyone at Healthwatch Northumberland is determined to continue to independently work with both residents and colleagues to promote the services available and to help ensure they are of the highest possible standards of safety, care and wellbeing.

David Thompson

Chair



Message from Adapt (NE)

As Chair of Adapt (North East) I wish to take this opportunity to welcome David Thompson as Healthwatch Northumberland Chair, Carole Pitkeathley as Vice Chair and the new Healthwatch Northumberland Board members. I should also like to offer my thanks to the previous chair and board members who kindly extended their period of office for a further 12 months until March 2017. As the formal contract holder for Healthwatch Northumberland we appreciate this added commitment and wish everyone well for the future.

As a community based organisation working with and for disabled people, Adapt (NE) understands the impact of health and social care services on the community and the importance of ensuring these services meet the requirements of Northumberland residents.

We support and share the philosophy of Healthwatch Northumberland and will continue to work with the board and staff team as it develops its work.

Pat Maginn

Chair, Adapt (NE)





Highlights from the year

This year we had a reach of 90,000 on social media



Our annual survey received 348 responses



We facilitated four public events around the NHS Sustainability and Transformation Plan



Our reports have tackled issues ranging from patient transport services to maternity services



We've spoken to people about the proposals for Rothbury Community Hospital



We've met hundreds of local people at community events





Who we are

We know that you want services that work for you, your friends and family. That's why we want you to share your experiences of using health and care services with us - both good and bad. We use your voice to encourage those who run services to act on what matters to you.

We are uniquely placed as a national network, with a local Healthwatch in every local authority area in England.

We think we can do this best and ensure that local people's health and social care needs are heard, understood and met if we do the following:

- Engage regularly with the population of Northumberland to learn about their health and social care issues, views and experiences.
- Focus on particular issues where Healthwatch Northumberland can achieve positive change.
- Make concrete recommendations and hold service providers and commissioners accountable to our recommendations.
- Publicise our work and our successes.

Our priorities in 2016/17 were based on feedback we received from local people, our positive relationships with organisations who commission and provide services and a wish to remain responsive to the rapid changes in health and social care agenda. Our work focused on researching, analysing information, engaging and liaising around the issues of:

Mental Health

Primary Care Services

Domiciliary Care

Access to services, particularly Patient Transport

Hearing the experiences of seldom heard groups

You will see later on what we did and the difference we made in the areas in which we worked.

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Your views on health and care

Listening to local people's views

You can tell us about your experiences of health and social services by phone, through our website, social media pages or by sending us a prepaid feedback card. You can find these cards in various places in your community such as your GP surgery, library etc. and they are a quick way to alert us to what is going well or not so well in your area. If you know of a venue where it would be useful to have some of our feedback cards please let us know. See 'contact us' for ways to get in touch.



Healthwatch Northumberland has focused on attending Listening Events in partnership with Northumbria Healthcare NHS Trust and attended community activities to hear first hand from individuals and groups.

Engagement Events

Meeting people and listening to them, is a major way in which we collect experiences of health and social care and understand the needs of our diverse communities. This year we held a series of drop-in events at hospitals, medical centres and youth centres across the county and had information stands at the Ageing Well Network's Winter Warmer and Step Into Spring events. The team attended the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Information Roadshows and presented to a number of support groups countywide. We also attended the Carers Northumberland Conference and the Northumbria Cancer Patient and Carer Group Conference.

Rothbury Community Hospital

We did some targeted engagement prompted by the temporary and possible permanent closure of inpatient beds at Rothbury Community Hospital and the proposal to create a new Health and Wellbeing Centre.

The NHS Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) commissioned Healthwatch Northumberland to make contact specifically with older people in the Rothbury area during the three month general consultation period. This was in recognition of the number of older people in the area's population and to better understand their feelings and any concerns about the closure proposal and to gather their ideas for services which could usefully be provided from or in the Health and Wellbeing Centre.

From meetings and questionnaire responses the four clear issues to emerge were:

Boundaries of Social and Health Care and these becoming more blurred and difficult to navigate.

Equity or fairness for people living in rural areas, particularly those on fixed incomes or who do not drive and where distances and weather can affect access service.

Uncertainty about how the new service will meet local needs.

There were also concerns the proposed changes had particular implications for single, widowed and ageing women or to anyone without support networks.

We submitted our findings to the CCG and will monitor how the views expressed by older people in Rothbury and the Coquet Valley are reflected in the post consultation proposals due in late summer 2017.

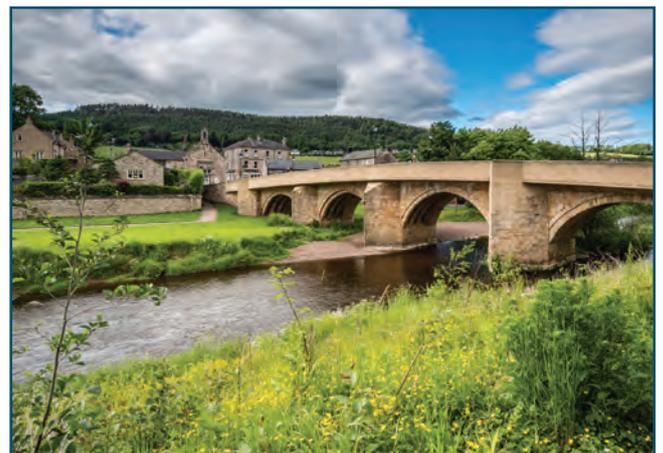
Sustainability and Transformation Plan

In January 2017 Healthwatch Northumberland, NHS Northumberland CCG and Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust held engagement events across the county to talk about the new integrated Accountable Care Organisation (ACO) for Northumberland.

Members of the public heard and asked questions about the ambitious vision for health and care services across Northumberland and how this fits with the draft sustainability and transformation plan (STP) for Northumberland, Tyne and Wear, and North Durham, plus the integrated primary and acute care system (PACS) and plans for joining up care in Northumberland.

Feedback from people at the meetings was positive in terms of Northumberland being the first area to try the ACO model, but they want the health initiatives to be sustainable and offer proper access to services. Concerns were expressed about resources. People also stressed the importance of communication with the public about access and looking after their own health and grassroots engagement. Several people wanted to be 'community connectors' and were keen to help get messages out.

There will be further opportunities for you to engage with the STP as it develops in 2017 and Healthwatch Northumberland will be there and keen to hear your feedback.



Maternity Services

During May 2016 Healthwatch Northumberland held a number of discussion groups across the county in order to better understand what is most important to women at each stage of their pregnancy. This followed similar work when the provision of maternity services for women living in Northumberland changed following the opening of the Northumbria Specialist Emergency Care Hospital at Cramlington in summer 2015.

This project identified several aspects of care which are important to women. The discussion groups have revealed a lack of consistency regarding the quality of women's experiences of maternity services at each stage of pregnancy - whilst some people had really positive experiences, others were dissatisfied with the care they received (or some aspects of it). This is also reflected in feedback Healthwatch Northumberland has received and shared in response to the NHS England National Review of Maternity Services. A copy of the full report is on our website.

We gathered feedback from a Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) women's group and a migrant support group. The majority of this feedback reflects experience from mothers whose first language is not English, where some issues relating to expectations of care due to differences in healthcare systems in the UK and their country of origin became apparent.

Due to the timescale of this project, Healthwatch Northumberland recommends that further engagement work is undertaken with seldom heard groups when considering the commissioning of maternity services including targeted engagement work with fathers and fathers-to-be.

Annual Survey

We carried out our annual survey in January and February 2017 which was available online for the first time, as well as in hard copy and promoted through social media. We were delighted that 348 people took the time to give us their views.

The stand out thing we were told is that 92% of people rated their experiences of health and social care services in Northumberland over the last 12 months as 'okay' or better, with 67% rating them as 'good' or 'excellent'.

Services with which people expressed highest satisfaction were community based services - GPs, pharmacies, dentists and opticians.

Asked where improvements could be made people identified four areas:

- **Mental health services - particularly waiting times and services for young people**
- **GP Access**
- **Social and health care co-ordination**
- **Centralisation of hospital services particularly emergency care and the night time closures of urgent care centres at district hospitals**

Asked what should be the top three priorities for Healthwatch Northumberland in 2017 people said:

Integration of health and social care

Mental health service provision for children and young people

Access to GPs

Our board is now looking at how to focus on particular issues where Healthwatch Northumberland can achieve positive change.

Annual General Meeting

Our Annual General Meeting in Stannington in October was a great opportunity to ask questions directly of some of the senior people from the NHS in our region. All of the questions and answers are on our website:

www.healthwatchnorthumberland.co.uk.

The 60 - strong audience asked informed, searching questions covering topics such as the availability of palliative care beds across the county, the procedures followed when a patient is discharged from a Newcastle hospital to Northumberland and how awareness of the needs of those living with Parkinson's Disease and their families can be raised.

The audience was very keen to hear about the proposals for an Accountable Care Organisation and how this would affect the resources supporting health and social care.

Questions about mental health services were raised including commissioning plans for couples counselling and how the different healthcare trusts work together to ensure good quality services for patients is in place and that patients know where to go for help.

Asked about the best community based models for supporting people with mental health issues out in the community and the Recovery College programme, Anne Marshall, Acting Group Nurse Director for Community Services at Northumberland Tyne & Wear Foundation Trust said that the trust was really grateful of the work that had been done with Healthwatch Northumberland for people to share their experiences of this new way of working.



Healthwatch Northumberland AGM 2017



How your
experiences are
helping to
influence
change

Ear Nose and Throat (ENT) services in Berwick-upon-Tweed

In October 2016 we became aware of a planned change in location for ENT outpatient provision at Berwick Infirmary which would result in a period of approximately one month when people in the area would have no consultant led clinics or Hearing Aid Repair Service.

Concerned about a period during which there would be no service and change of location, Healthwatch Northumberland wrote to Northumberland CCG to query the rationale behind the move and requested information about what alternative provision would be available to patients while the clinic was closed.

We met with patients at an ENT drop-in session at Berwick Infirmary to gather their feedback directly. When we were there we only saw one small notice and a few information slips displayed in the drop-in session waiting area so we contacted the provider, Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, to query what information patients had received about the changes.

The response from the CCG was reassuring. It said the move would mean the ENT service would be “delivered from brand new and improved facilities with the capacity to administer the same throughput of patients as before”.

We were still concerned about the continuity of service and care and were pleased when, following discussions with the ENT Directorate Manager at Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Northumberland CCG confirmed ENT services would continue at Berwick Infirmary until the changeover date and patients would be seen by the same staff team.

We were pleased to hear that all patients with upcoming appointments had been sent a letter about the new location for the clinic. In addition there would be a public announcement about the changes including a news item in the Berwick Advertiser to inform local residents about the changes as well as the trust’s ongoing commitment to providing a continued ENT and Audiology service in Berwick.

Primary Care

During August and September 2016 we collected feedback from patients after the closure of Harbottle surgery. The purpose was not to make recommendations for the future of the surgery, but to give a voice to everything residents shared with us. The report was presented to NHS England and Northumberland CCG to inform the ongoing consultation for Harbottle surgery.

The themes that came out of the drop in sessions and questionnaire focused on access, especially transport in a rural area and continuity of care. After discussions with NHS England and the CCG, people in the main recognised the challenges rural surgeries were facing. However, they remain worried that there may not be a surgery provision in Harbottle. They were passionate in their views about the importance of local services.

Domiciliary Care

Throughout the year we reviewed our feedback for domiciliary care and further work in this area will be considered as part of our strategic planning for 2017-2018.



Helping you
find the answers

Signposting

Providing people with help and advice about local services and navigating the health and social care system is a relatively modest but important part of our work. Last year we received 94 requests for information. Questions about how to make a complaint about a service were a prominent theme and it is how we started to understand the problems with the Patient Transport Service booking procedure which ultimately led to the change in eligibility criteria.

At other times our support and advice can simply help to solve a tricky family problem. Mr Smith (not his real name) wanted to find a dentist for his elderly mother living in Rothbury and needed one with a ground floor surgery. A simple enough request. However Mr Smith lives over 400 miles away so could not easily find one himself.



By calling us we were able to advise him about a suitable practice in Alnwick which was accepting new NHS patients, was on a bus route and with plenty of accessible parking. Mr Smith was delighted; he completed the paperwork and his mother, who had not seen a dentist for years, can now maintain her regular oral health routine.

The image features a dark teal background with three large, overlapping circles. A large orange circle is on the left, partially overlapping a large green circle on the right. A smaller, lighter green circle overlaps the bottom of the orange circle and the left side of the large green circle. The text 'Making a difference together' is written in white, sans-serif font, positioned within the orange circle.

Making a
difference
together

Using your experiences we can make recommendations to providers about how their services can be improved to meet local needs.

This year we worked with the North of Tyne Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) and North East Ambulance Service (NEAS) when we received feedback from people in Northumberland who had experienced problems with the booking service for the non-emergency Patient Transport Service.

With a 90% satisfaction rating across the North East we know the service is greatly valued by those who use it, but what became clear to Healthwatch Northumberland from feedback and monitoring information is that people in Northumberland have experienced problems actually getting to the service via the booking procedure - many only securing a service when they appeal after first being turned down.

We decided we needed more insight on the transparency and application of eligibility criteria. We talked to NEAS, NHS Northumberland CCG, North of England Commissioning Support Unit (NECS) and PALS. Each organisation engaged with the issues quickly and positively and we are pleased to report the eligibility criteria have been changed. Of particular note is the extension of automatic eligibility for people with dementia, a 30-mile boundary and the ability to book multiple trips when people are undergoing a course of treatment.

These are being tested for a trial period which started in spring 2017 and we will request regular data from the CCG to ensure there is robust monitoring of the impact of the new criteria.

We were invited by Northumberland CCG to be a core panel member for the Vanguard Co-Design Forum. This forum is working with the CCG to ensure primary care services meet the requirements of residents across all of Northumberland. Healthwatch Northumberland is a core member and has been able to contribute to ongoing developments and include feedback from residents across the county.

Health and Wellbeing Board

Health and Wellbeing Boards (HWB) are an important feature of the reforms introduced by the Health and Social Care Act 2012. The HWB has a major role in shaping local services through a more strategic and integrated approach to commissioning services.

The main value of being part of the HWB was being able to ensure the patients voice is heard at all decision-making levels.

Healthwatch Northumberland has developed strong relationships with the commissioners, providers and elected members, enabling open and transparent discussion based on the information we receive, and on the need for patient and public involvement at all levels.

Our former chair, Cynthia Atkin also established and chaired the HWB sub group for communication and engagement. The group was successful at engaging with the people of Northumberland through shared information events, engaging with patients and the public together.

Commissioners and providers in Northumberland have a history of partnership working; many examples of integrated working in this county have been used at national level as a good example. Healthwatch Northumberland was also very much involved with the work of public health with health inequalities being high priority.

Responding to Quality Reports

One of the formal duties of Healthwatch is to comment on the Quality Account Reports from organisations providing NHS services. A Quality Account is a report about the quality of services by an NHS healthcare provider and looks at patient safety, the effectiveness of treatments that patients receive, and patient feedback.

In 2016 Healthwatch Northumberland gave comments on the Quality Accounts of the NHS Trusts serving the county's population: Northumbria, North East Ambulance Service, Northumberland Tyne & Wear and Newcastle Hospitals.



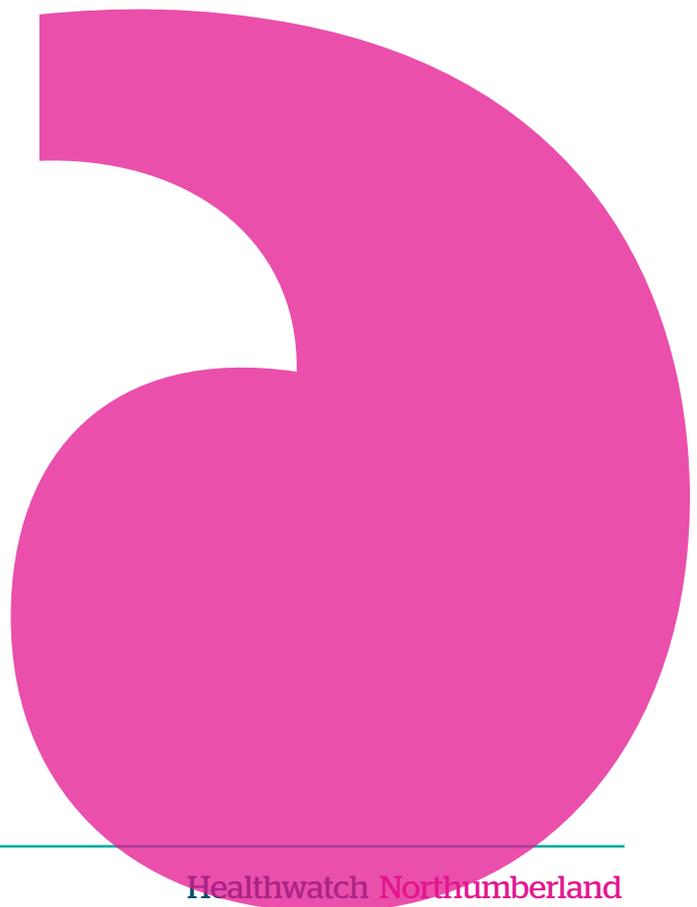
In each case we highlighted where the trust was doing well and where we thought there were areas for improvement. For example for the North East Ambulance Service we highlighted the problems with the Patient Transport Service which ultimately led to our report and changes to the eligibility criteria. For Northumbria NHS Trust we raised the issue of shared working with Primary Care as a key issue for patients' experiences.

Our full responses can be found on the relevant trust's website or by asking them for a copy of the 2016 Quality Report.

Task Groups

The Social Care Task Group completed the first stage of its work to ensure that users and carers living in Northumberland have a voice and can influence social care services. It did this by working with Northumberland County Council (NCC) and contributing to improvements in the process of assessing care homes with NCC. The next stage will be to look at how we can develop this work further with care homes, NCC and the Care Quality Commission.

The Mental Health Task Group continued its work to ensure that users of mental health services and their carers have a voice and can influence mental health service delivery in Northumberland. The meetings bring together people from all services: Northumberland Tyne & Wear NHS Trust, NCC Adult Social Services, the police, as well as voluntary and community sector organisations. Issues discussed this year included the Recovery College and how development across the county would be beneficial, the street triage process and support for carers.



Our People

We thank the board members who extended their term of office to March 2017 and oversaw the work reported here. The Healthwatch Northumberland Board's role is to develop and oversee the strategy that guides our work. The strategy is developed by taking the feedback we receive from the public, publicly available information and our own commissioned research to identify priority issues and actions.

The board has up to eleven members and is led by the Chair, David Thompson and the Vice Chair, Carole Pitkeathley. Each board member comes with specific knowledge of a geographical area, a health related issue or group of people. This may be from working as part of an organisation or from their personal experiences of a long term health condition, their age, equality and diversity issues or mental health services.

Individuals sit on our board for up to six years and every three years we look for new members.

Our Current Board Members



David Thompson
Chair



Carole Pitkeathley
Vice Chair



Margaret Young
Individual Member



Colin Watson
Individual Member



Madeleine Elliott
Individual Member



Anne Lyall
Northumberland CVA



Sharon Spurling
Carers Northumberland



Liz Prudhoe
Adapt (NE)



Catherine Lee
PALS

**It starts with
you**



We hope that our new website will encourage more people to tell us their experiences of what is happening in health and social care services in the communities of Northumberland. On the website (www.healthwatchnorthumberland.co.uk) you can now leave your comments using the 'have your say' online form. By sharing your experiences you may encourage others to add their voice. This will help us spot trends and highlight good practice and to raise problems with the relevant organisations providing the service.

Helping to facilitate and maintain strong relationships between people who use services and the organisations who provide them is an effective way Healthwatch Northumberland can make a difference to people's experience of health and social care. Our work with In It Together exemplifies this.

In It Together

'In It Together' is a group of parents and carers of children and young people with a wide range of disabilities and special needs which aims to work closely with service providers and commissioners to develop and maintain accessible, high quality services for all children and young people with additional needs and disabilities. The group has around 500 members.

Healthwatch Northumberland has been involved with the forum for a number of years and when we learnt from Northumberland CCG that the number of referrals for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) were increasing rapidly but with relatively few meeting the criteria for an assessment and/or obtaining a subsequent ASD/ADHD diagnosis, it was decided to review the feedback raised by In It Together members.

Healthwatch Northumberland identified a number of reoccurring themes and concerns raised at the Parent Carer Professional Forum. In addition to identifying themes relating to the experiences of both parents and children and young people, it had been noted a number of times that parents and carers were concerned by the lack of representation from a health commissioning perspective at the meetings. As a result, the group felt that sometimes its strategic influence was lost.

With this in mind, Healthwatch Northumberland set out to ensure that the group's concerns were heard at the right level. We facilitated and attended a meeting with the Chair of In It Together and the commissioning lead for mental health and learning disability services from Northumberland CCG to discuss and consider how to address each of the themes identified.

The outcomes of this meeting were:

Whilst the commissioners and providers were aware of a number of the issues raised and were already considering how to address them, the group identifying the themes was helpful and they will be shared with the Emotional Health and Wellbeing Board (EHWB) Strategy Group.

A number of the points identified fit into the Local Transformation Plan (2015-20) under the THRIVE model components (Coping, Getting Help, Getting More Help and Getting Risk Support) and will be taken forward.

It was acknowledged that In It Together has a wealth of information and experience to contribute and the group now has an open invitation to attend the EHWB Strategy Group meetings.

The Children and Young People Service and the CCG will review invitations to all meetings, to prioritise appropriate attendance and how best to share information.

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Our plans for
next year

Our Plans for Next Year

There have been lots of changes at Healthwatch Northumberland as our board has looked at the best way for us to get the experiences and voice of Northumberland's communities heard by the providers of health and social care.

We are finalising our strategic plan for 2017/18 which will show how we will achieve this.

Right now the board and staff team are clear that the two things we will do are:

Listen and hear what is happening - this might be through events, feedback forms, social media or our website. Whatever the method, we want you to get in touch.

Work on issues where our activities are leading towards a demonstrable impact or change.

To see our plan for the year visit our website or contact us on 03332 408468.



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Our finances

Healthwatch Northumberland is a project commissioned by Northumberland County Council and delivered by Adapt (NE).

Income	£
Funding received from local authority to deliver local Healthwatch statutory activities	224,000
Additional Income	12,000
Total income	236,000
Expenditure	£
Operational costs	69,998.69
Staffing costs	95,693.13
Office costs	23,156
Total expenditure	188,847.82
Balance brought forward	47,152.18

Get in Touch



events



email



text



facebook



tell us your views



twitter



telephone



website



write to us



Contact

Get in touch

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We will be making this annual report publicly available on 30 June 2017 by publishing it on our website and sharing it with Healthwatch England, CQC, NHS England, Clinical Commissioning Group/s, Overview and Scrutiny Committee/s, and our local authority.

We confirm that we are using the Healthwatch Trademark (which covers the logo and Healthwatch brand) when undertaking work on our statutory activities as covered by the licence agreement.

If you require this report in an alternative format please contact us at the address above.

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Acknowledgment:

Northumberland photographs courtesy of Dave Shaw.

healthwatch

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