

Healthwatch Northumberland Strategic Plan 2017-2020

Background

The Health and Social Care Act of 2012 set out a powerful ambition of putting people at the heart of health and social care. The Act created Healthwatch England and 152 local Healthwatch in every local authority area.

Healthwatch is independent and its sole purpose is to understand the needs, experiences and concerns of people who use health and social care services and to speak out on their behalf. We are not part of the NHS or Northumberland County Council nor are we affiliated with any of the health and social care providers or any political party. Healthwatch ensures that the views and feedback from patients and carers are an integral part of local commissioning across health and social care and our remit also includes providing information about local care services and choices to be made in respect of those services.

Healthwatch Northumberland is delivered by Adapt (NE) and engages with the residents, patients, families and carers of Northumberland to understand their views and use these to influence local services. We work with a range of key stakeholders in the county and beyond sharing the views of the people of Northumberland and working to ensure they are central to all decisions made about health and social care. These stakeholders include Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group, Northumberland County Council, North East Ambulance Service including Patient Transport Services, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust and the Care Quality Commission as well as care homes and other organisations such as private companies and charities.

Our Vision

The health and social care needs of the people of Northumberland are heard, understood and met by those responsible for commissioning and delivering services.

Our Mission

To ensure that the people of Northumberland are at the heart of all decisions made about their health and social care.

We will achieve this by:

- Listening hard to people, especially the most vulnerable, to understand their experiences and what matters most to them
- Influencing those who have the power to change services so that they better meet people's needs now and into the future



- Empowering and informing people to get the most from their health and social care services and encouraging other organisations to do the same
- Working with key strategic stakeholders within health and social care to champion service improvement and to empower local people

Our Values

Everything we do is informed by our values. We are:

Inclusive

- We start with people first
- We work for children, young people and adults
- We cover all health and social care services
- We work for everyone, not just those who shout the loudest

Collaborative

- We keep the debate positive and we get things done
- We work in partnership with the public, health and social care sectors and the voluntary and community sector
- We learn from people's experiences and from specialists and experts. We build on what is already known and collaborate in developing and sharing new insights

Influential

- We set the agenda and make change happen
- We are responsive. We take what we learn and translate it into action
- We are innovative and creative - we know that we cannot fix things by sticking to the status quo
- We work with the network of local Healthwatch to make an impact both locally and nationally

Credible

- We value knowledge
- We seek out data and intelligence to challenge assumptions with facts
- We celebrate and share good practice in health and social care. We hold ourselves to the highest standards

Independent

- We are independent and act on behalf of all consumers
- We listen to consumers and speak loudly on their behalf
- We challenge those in power to design and deliver better health and social care services
- We like to highlight what works well but are not afraid to point out when things have gone wrong

Diversity and Inclusion

Because Healthwatch Northumberland starts with people first, it is essential that all our work is inclusive, accessible and meaningful to everyone. Our work covers the health and social care needs of children, young people and adults and we are committed to working for everyone, not just those who shout the loudest.



There are big differences in the experience of receiving or accessing health and social care - people's ability to access services might be affected, for example, by their ethnicity, income or gender. How well people are listened to might be affected by their disability or language or cultural differences. At the same time, access to health and social care affects people's ability to work, care for others or play a part in their local communities. This is why diversity and inclusion is at the heart of everything we do. We work with all groups and individuals including those who are seldom heard or traditionally less likely to engage with services.

Diversity and inclusion is about all of us - including Healthwatch staff and board Members and everyone who works in the network or comes into contact with us. We will always ensure our staff and board can do their work in an environment where they are valued, involved and supported and feel safe from discrimination.

The world we work in

Health and social care are vital parts of many people's day to day lives. Many of us are passionate about the NHS and social care because we, or a loved one, are using a service right now. At some point, though, it is likely that every one of us will need support or treatment.

We are working in a period of major change in health and social care and their delivery mechanisms. We are faced with challenges that relate to demographic, economic and environmental factors and we need to take all of these into consideration when developing our strategy and planning our work.

An ageing population is something to celebrate and it is health and social care services which have allowed many of us to live for longer. This changing demographic represents a new challenge for services. Needs are changing; there is a growth in demand for social care and there are now different demands on health services with more of us managing long term or multiple conditions. At the same time, the resources available to services are under unremitting pressure. It is more important than ever for people to know what they can expect from health and social care and to stay as healthy and independent as possible.

Our annual survey results tell us that people in Northumberland are generally content with the health and social care services they receive but that does not mean that there is not still much to do. Public Health England reports that "the health of people in Northumberland is varied compared to the England average"¹ Some interesting facts:

- Around 18% of children live in low income families
- Life expectancy is 9.3 years lower for men and 7.3 years lower for women in the most deprived areas of Northumberland than the least deprived areas
- By Year 6 of school 19.8% of children are classified as obese
- The rate of alcohol related harm is worse than the England average as is the rate of



self-harm hospital stays, smoking related deaths and overweight adults

- Long-term unemployment rates are worse than the England average
- In 2012 an estimated 3.945² children and young people aged 5-16 suffered from mental health disorders
- In 2012/13 430 young people (aged 0-17 years) in the north east were admitted to hospital with mental health disorders - of these 37 lived in Northumberland³

That said:

- Excess winter deaths are significantly lower than the England average - 6.9% compared to 15.6% for England
- The cardiovascular mortality rate for under 75s is lower than the England average at 69.5% against an England average of 75.7%
- Violent crime in the county is more than 50% lower in Northumberland than in England with crime rates generally being lower by around 48%⁴
- There are 42 GP Practices serving approximately 316,000 patients in Northumberland
- Satisfaction with access to GPs varies both across and within practices⁵

The negative factors impact not only on individuals and their families but also on the cost to deliver health and social care. The health and social care services offered are vast in their coverage and their remit. It is not surprising, therefore, that people find it a bewildering environment. People have spoken to us about how challenging it can be to get even basic information, such as what services are available locally and how to access them. Add to this the fact that we often use services when we are vulnerable or fearful and it is not surprising that many of us find it difficult to speak up, to share our ideas or voice our concerns.

Generational shifts and technological changes have also created significant change for health and social care providers and users of the services alike. Mobile technology has unleashed a wealth of information. We are now used to instant feedback mechanisms and analysis of complex local data or comparisons is now at our fingertips. Tracking our own personal data in real time has become the norm for many. Not everyone, however, has access to technology which can impact not only on their ability to access services but also to engage with those who seek to improve them.

There is huge change on the horizon for both health and social care both nationally and regionally. In Northumberland, the Vanguard has helped to design new models of integrated care. Sitting above this joined up health and social care system is an Accountable Care

¹ Source Northumberland Profile – Public Health England published 6 September 2016

² Source: Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for Northumberland

<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Campaigns/jsna/Our-people/Children-young-people/Children-young-people-with-mental-difficulties.aspx>

³ Source: Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for Northumberland

<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Campaigns/jsna/Our-people/Children-young-people/Children-young-people-with-mental-difficulties.aspx>

⁴ Source Know Northumberland -

<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Northumberland-Knowledge/Know%20bulletins/Population-and-Health-Bulletin-Jan-2016.pdf> 39.5/100k population compared to 64.5/100k nationally

⁵ Source “Access to GP Appointments” – Healthwatch Northumberland -

<http://healthwatchnorthumberland.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Access-to-GP-Appointments-Detailed-findings.pdf>



Organisation which aims to help teams in different organisations work together more effectively. Further change, to create improvement, is also expected with the development of the Northumberland, Tyne and Wear and North Durham Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP). The STP aims to foster closer working across the three areas to improve health and well-being, care and quality and financial sustainability.

For integration to work properly the systems need to ensure that the people of Northumberland not only understand what changes are happening but have input to them. Designing the blue prints for the future without people's involvement will simply not work.

All the changes mean there is an even greater need for Healthwatch Northumberland to be a powerful independent champion.

How we work

Healthwatch Northumberland voices people's concerns and provides feedback to service providers and commissioners. By engaging directly with users of the service and their carers we collect vital data on how and why people use services in their area. We listen to local stories and combine this with our research of specific issues and use this to influence the decisions made and the service provided. We analyse the information we receive and use this to evaluate services, identify areas for improvement and work with commissioners and providers to find ways to improve services. We call this the principle of "check and challenge". We work with all stakeholders to ensure the voice of the residents of Northumberland is amplified and listened to. Our place on the Health and Wellbeing Board and our relationship with commissioners and providers means Healthwatch can ensure that the voice of the people of Northumberland is brought to the very heart of the decision-making process. Specifically, we:

- 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 service providers and commissioners accountable to our recommendations
- Publicise our work and our successes

As well as representing the people of Northumberland we provide direct support to people in their communities by giving them information or signposting them to the local services they need.

How we decide what to focus on

The potential scope of our work is vast - we have a responsibility for health and social care services for all adults, children and young people in Northumberland with particular reference to those who are most vulnerable or may be excluded. This means we must prioritise the issues we focus on.

We use three sources to inform our operational plan. They are:

- Feedback - Evidence provided to us through feedback mechanisms such as listening events where we listen to local stories and peoples' experiences, feedback cards, surveys and information provided by our partners



- Our work - Evidence we gather through our work including projects, meeting with stakeholders and liaising with regional and national Healthwatch
- Wider data - Local, regional and national data sets that highlight issues affecting the most excluded, large areas of our population, etc.

Our work is informed by policy debates and developments at both a national and local level and this makes sure our work remains relevant to the changing health and social care landscape. To prioritise our work our Board considers carefully all these sources of information and then identifies where Healthwatch can add most value.

- We ensure that our prioritisation of the issues we work on fits with our role and responsibilities. This ensures that we are delivering to our statutory remit
- Then we consider how much the issue matters to people. It must be something they care about as we are here to be the voice of people in health and social care
- We then ask whether the change needs to come from us so we aren't focusing on things that others can do more easily and effectively
- Finally, we consider our work as a full set of priorities, as together they need to have the greatest impact for people using health and social care services

Our strategic aims

We have three strategic aims which are underpinned by strategic priorities. The strategic priorities will be ongoing throughout the life of this plan and each year will include selected themes. More information on the themes and how these will be delivered can be found in our operational plan.

Aim 1: The health care system works for the people of Northumberland

Strategic priorities:

1. The people of Northumberland can access the services they need at a time they need them and at a place they can get to.
2. The views, knowledge and experiences of health service users of Northumberland are listened to and influence health service developments in health in Northumberland and beyond.

Aim 2: The Social Care system works for the people of Northumberland

Strategic priorities:

1. The people of Northumberland know and understand how to access social care services.
2. The views, knowledge and experiences of social care users of Northumberland are listened to and influence social care service developments in Northumberland.

Aim 3: Healthwatch Northumberland is recognised and valued for the contribution it makes to improving health and social care services provided to the people of Northumberland

Strategic priorities:

1. Healthwatch Northumberland is known, trusted and engaged with by the people of Northumberland.



2. Service Providers, Commissioners and key stakeholders respect and value Healthwatch sufficiently to engage with it at a strategic level.
3. Healthwatch Northumberland takes a leading role in ensuring engagement on strategic changes and new service delivery mechanisms is effective, appropriate and timely.

How we will achieve these strategic aims

We live in challenging times where health and social care services face unrelenting pressure. The board and staff of Healthwatch Northumberland are committed to working together to do everything we can for the people of Northumberland, to ensure that their voices are heard and that their views are central to all decisions about the care they receive.

Our strategic aims are far-reaching and to achieve them will take robust planning and dedication and hard work by our staff and our board. We know there is much to be done and that we cannot do it all at once. We have taken a pragmatic approach to prioritising our work over the next three years. Using the information we have gathered from service users, their families and carers and other stakeholders in the county and beyond, Healthwatch Northumberland has developed a set of operational objectives against which it will measure itself and its impact. These measures show real outcomes that we will seek for the people of Northumberland. The detail of those operational objectives can be found in our operational plan.

