



Independent champion for people in Northumberland who use health and social care services

**healthwatch**  
Northumberland

## News and Updates

December 2020

### A message from our Chair



2020 has been a strange year and during these challenging times I really have appreciated the efforts made by staff, volunteers and board members here at Healthwatch Northumberland. Patterns of work have been adapted, with online meetings having replaced the more usual face to face engagements. Yet the varied efforts undertaken to listen to people - and to support and advise them - have remained both fruitful and positive, not least in the comments and suggestions about health and social care which have been conveyed to providers, commissioners and politicians.

Speaking of which, we are all indebted to the professionalism and resilience shown by those who work in the health and social care services and by those who volunteer in so many different ways. This message is therefore simple and well meant: thanks, thanks and thanks again to all of them, and to you, our supporters across Northumberland. May everyone enjoy the festive season in whatever form it takes - keep warm, keep well and keep smiling!

### Plans for new Berwick Hospital gets the go ahead

Plans to build a new £25million hospital in Berwick have been given the go-ahead. Originally built in 1874, the current infirmary is no longer suitable for the efficient delivery of modern-day healthcare.

The new purpose-built hospital will re-provide all the existing services with the addition of an accredited endoscopy suite to deliver care closer to people's homes, and house GP practice Well Close Medical Group.

### Have a question for our board?

Our next Board Meeting is on Tuesday 15 December and we'd like to hear from you if you have a question to ask us. Whether it's about our work as champion for people who use health and social care services, or about local services themselves, please get in touch (see overleaf).



### What do people think of services to help with hearing loss?

After receiving feedback from people in Northumberland about the end of the Hear to Help service provided by charity Action on Hearing Loss, we decided to investigate the potential impact on service users. Hear to Help was a drop-in service delivered in community locations including libraries and GP surgeries.

We were told people appreciated the service and did not want it to be withdrawn. We took a deeper look at the impact, if any, of the withdrawal of this service and to build a greater awareness and understanding of what people in Northumberland want and need in services to support with hearing loss.

Visit our website or ask for a copy of our findings.



## Need help getting online?



If you would like help getting on Zoom so that you can join in our online discussions, please call us on 03332 408468 or text 07413 385275 and we'll call you back. This is Colin's story:

Hi everyone, my name is Colin Nevin. I am 69 years old and I am partially sighted. A new experience for me was when Emma from Healthwatch Northumberland asked me to join her Zoom training.

"Zoom" I said. "What's that?" Well, I went for it. I had bought a new PC before lockdown. The first time on training I found that my camera wasn't working so I got a new one. The next time I could not find a mic so I bought some earphones with built-in mic. Now I am on Zoom it has opened up a new world. I can now take part in meetings and AGMs which is really good.

I must say thank you to Emma for the help she has given me. I hope this will encourage others to give it a go and enjoy this as I am.

## Useful Numbers

**Non-emergency health issues:** 111

**OneCall (for concerns about someone's welfare):** 01670 536400

**Northumberland Communities Together:** 01670 620015

**Citizens Advice Northumberland:** 03444 111 444

**Samaritans:** 116 123

## How to book a timeslot at A&E

This month the NHS introduced a new system called NHS 111 First. If you have an urgent, but not life-threatening health problem you can now contact NHS 111 first to find out if you need to go to A&E. NHS 111 can book you an appointment at your local A&E or emergency department.

This means you will have an allocated time to attend hospital and be treated, so you don't have to wait a long time to be seen and can also help services avoid becoming overcrowded.

Your NHS 111 advisor or clinician could also make you a direct appointment with a GP, Pharmacist or Urgent Treatment Centre. They may also be able to give you the advice you need without using another service.

## Helen joins the team

Engagement Officer Helen Brown joined the Healthwatch Northumberland team in November and we're very pleased to have her on board! Helen previously worked for Talking Matters Northumberland on a project which supported people getting physically active to improve mental wellbeing.

Hopefully Helen will be out and about talking to people across the county next year, but until then will be listening to your NHS and social care experiences on the phone or via our online public forums.



## Get in Touch

We'd love to hear from you. Please contact us at one of the ways below.

Not online? That's fine! We offer a telephone appointment service for anyone who would like a friendly call from one of our team. Just call or text us to arrange a call back at a time that suits you.

**Please note: our office will close from 5pm Thursday 24 December to 9am Monday 4 January.**

**Call:** 03332 408468  
**Text:** 07413 385275  
**Email:** [info@healthwatchnorthumberland.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchnorthumberland.co.uk)  
**Website:** [healthwatchnorthumberland.co.uk](http://healthwatchnorthumberland.co.uk)

**Write to:** FREEPOST Healthwatch Northumberland,  
Adapt (NE), Burn Lane, Hexham,  
Northumberland NE46 3HN

**Social Media:**

