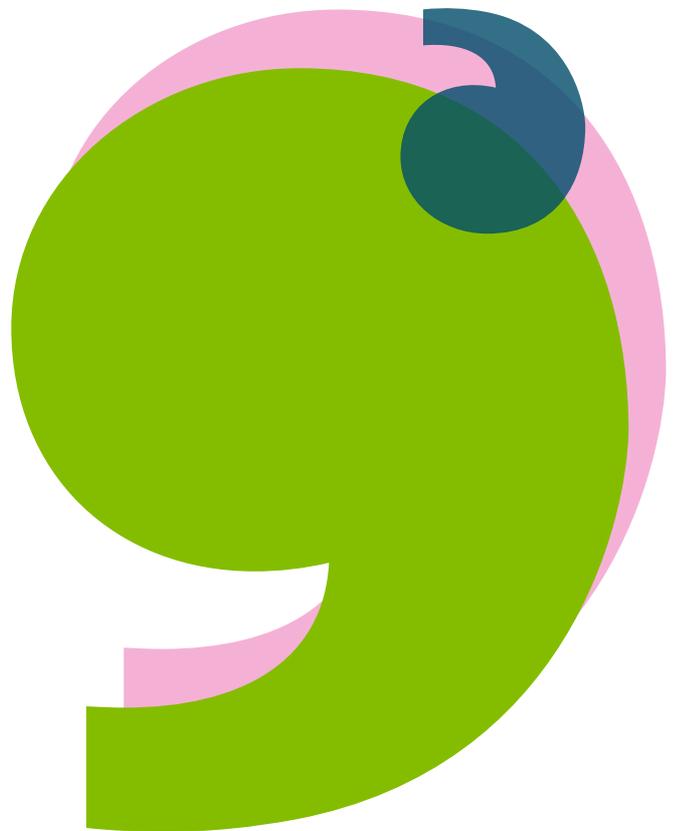




Making your voice count

27 June 2016



1 Introduction

Local Healthwatch work to find out what you want from health and care to make sure that those who run services act on what really matters to you.

We've pulled together 28 inspiring stories from our 2016 Healthwatch Network Awards, to show how your views are helping to improve NHS and social care services across England.

Did you know?

In 2015/16, the Healthwatch network:

- Served 152 areas across England
- Engaged over 385,000 people to find out their views
- Were supported by 6,000 volunteers
- Helped over 220,000 people find information about local health and care services
- Published 1,450 reports
- Made over 3,500 visits to local services to find out if they really work for people

2 Collaboration

2.1 Improving access to dentistry Healthwatch Bradford and Healthwatch Kirklees

The issue

‘How do I get an NHS dentist?’ was the most common question the public asked Healthwatch Bradford and Healthwatch Kirklees during the past two years. Together they found that Bradford and North Kirklees are both significantly above the national profile for decayed, missing and filled teeth and that residents struggle to access dental services.

What did local Healthwatch do?

They worked together to find out about people’s experiences of accessing NHS dentistry services. After speaking to almost 1,800 people, they shared people’s feedback with their Health and Wellbeing Boards.

They also raised awareness of the issue via local media and gained the support of local MPs, who asked questions about the issue in the House of Commons. One MP also met with a junior Health Minister to discuss people’s concerns about dentistry. Healthwatch Bradford and Healthwatch Kirklees shared their findings with an NHS England group, which was set up to improve access to dentists.

What was the impact?

As a result of this work, NHS England is opening practices on a trial basis in Bradford and Kirklees, opening up appointments to 360 new patients per week across both areas.

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They have also committed to sharing information about dentist contracts with local Healthwatch. This will enable the Healthwatch network to work with practices to identify opportunities to prioritise NHS patients in need.

Public Health England has said it will work with Healthwatch Bradford and Healthwatch Kirklees to produce guidance for patients with healthy teeth in order to reduce the number of unnecessary check-ups and release resources for other patients.

By learning from each other, both local Healthwatch have improved the way they engage with people and influence those who run local health and social care services.

2.2 Using people's views to shape mental health services

Healthwatch Middlesbrough, Healthwatch Stockton on Tees and Healthwatch Redcar and Cleveland

Local Healthwatch found that access to, and the quality of, mental health services is a key concern for local people.

Three local Healthwatch decided to work together to find out more about people's views and ideas for making services better. With the help of mental health organisations, over 120 local people attended an event to discuss the issue.

This identified 12 priorities that people thought should be focused on to improve services, which were then shared with mental health commissioners.

The project also resulted in a closer relationship between local Healthwatch, enabling them to tackle issues of importance to their communities together.

2.3 Establishing a shared view of mental health providers

Healthwatch Knowsley, Healthwatch Halton, Healthwatch St Helens, Healthwatch Warrington and Healthwatch Wigan

For five local Healthwatch areas, mental health inpatient services are all provided by the same NHS Trust. These local Healthwatch decided to work together to understand people's experiences of these services and to identify any common issues.

They made coordinated visits to all the inpatient services provided by the trust to listen to people's views. The feedback they heard informed recommendations for improvements to the quality and consistency of support for people using mental health services.

As well as influencing changes to existing services, this coordinated approach, also helped to shape the way a new mental health hospital serving each of these communities will work.

2.4 Working better together with CQC

Healthwatch Kent, Healthwatch Medway, Healthwatch West Sussex, Healthwatch East Sussex, Healthwatch Brighton and Hove and Healthwatch Surrey

The Care Quality Commission (CQC), which conducts targeted inspections based on people's experiences of services, is a key partner for local Healthwatch.

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Six local Healthwatch decided to work together to build a stronger, more consistent way of working with CQC to ensure that people's views were used in the most effective way.

As a result of this work, information about Healthwatch is now part of CQC's induction and training programme and CQC meet their local Healthwatch more regularly. Changes have also been made so that the information local Healthwatch provides can be better tracked by CQC and it is easier to identify how it has been used.

3 Health and social care improvement

3.1 Using people's experiences to improve care in Wakefield District

Healthwatch Wakefield

The issue

Services in Wakefield District have been trying to improve the way they work together to enable local people to have greater control over the care they receive.

To help make sure that this support met the needs of local people, Healthwatch Wakefield were asked to find out what people who had used the Connecting Care service thought worked well and what needed to be improved.

What did local Healthwatch do?

Staff and volunteers have been working to interview 1,000 local people who use the Connecting Care service. Their findings have been used to further develop the service and inform plans for improvements.

Every six months, Healthwatch Wakefield provides updates to Connecting Care commissioners and staff about people's views of the service.

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What was the impact?

People's experiences are shaping the way the Connecting Care service is developed. A number of improvements have already been made including:

- the redevelopment of services provided by the council for emergency short-term care
- the piloting of a care coordinator role to improve the experiences of patients

CQC has used the views Healthwatch Wakefield gathered to inform their review of care for older people to ensure services meet people's needs.

Healthwatch Wakefield has also shared its findings with other health and social care leaders, including NHS England and the Nuffield Trust which invited the team to present at their events.

3.2 Enabling young people to help improve mental health services

Healthwatch Salford

Mental health and wellbeing is a key priority for young people in the community. With the help of local youth organisations, Healthwatch Salford worked with young people to understand the views of their peers.

The views gathered have encouraged mental health professionals to work together more effectively to ensure that young people's needs are met.

Healthwatch Salford produced a report including recommendations for improvements, which are now being used to inform the development of children and young people's services in Salford over the next five

years. The young people who took part are also nominated for a local award.

3.3 Better GP services in Camden Healthwatch Camden

After local people raised GP services as their top concern, Healthwatch Camden decided to find out more about people's experiences.

Their report, which looked at data from across the borough, revealed wide variation among GP services. The findings helped patients better understand their services and supported providers to share best practice.

Additionally, Healthwatch Camden looked at five important issues for people in the area, such as access to GPs for people who are Deaf, and online services.

This has already encouraged serious conversations amongst professionals about improving the quality of GP services. This report is also being used by a range of NHS and voluntary organisations.

3.4 Empowering the public to help improve care services Healthwatch Dudley

Healthwatch Dudley worked with their local Council for Voluntary Services to provide information and tools to educate and inspire people to help improve health services.

Through a range of workshops, the public had the opportunity to take an active role to challenge the way health and care services are delivered.

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The views of the community, including their solutions for overcoming these challenges, were shared with local senior health and care decision makers.

Other public sector organisations have also asked to use the resources developed to engage the public in discussions about improvements to services

4 Commissioning of services

4.1 Making sure people have their say on maternity services

Healthwatch Cumbria

The issue

Maternity services in Cumbria have faced significant challenges. For example in 2015, a report found major failings at Furness General Hospital.

As a result, health commissioners put plans in place to reorganise local maternity services. Residents in the area spoke to Healthwatch Cumbria about this and expressed concerns that maternity services may be under threat.

What did local Healthwatch do?

Healthwatch Cumbria was asked by two local Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG) to talk to the community about their experiences and to gather people's views about what a 'great' maternity service should look like. Working in partnership with the NHS and community groups, Healthwatch Cumbria launched a campaign to encourage people to share their opinions.

They went out into the community to talk to people at toddler groups, play centres, clinics, schools and leisure centres. All together they held 70 sessions to engage people. They also raised awareness online, in the media, and they also sent out over 18,000 response postcards.

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What was the impact?

This approach resulted in 1,234 online responses and a wealth of feedback. Their report directly influenced the design of an £11 million maternity suite at a local hospital. It has been upheld by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, and the Department of Health as an example of good local practice and a model for commissioning future maternity services.

Healthwatch Cumbria's findings are now being used not only to help improve current maternity services, but also to shape future services.

4.2 Securing the opening of a new GP surgery Healthwatch Haringey

Healthwatch Haringey received a number of complaints from local residents about GP services in the Tottenham Hale area, which were overwhelmed by demand and leaving lots of people without access to vital appointments.

They conducted detailed research to gather more people's views and to highlight these issues to those in a position to make change happen.

As a result of Healthwatch Haringey's report, NHS England and Haringey CCG have produced a comprehensive primary care strategy for Haringey which addresses both the short and long term needs of the local residents.

These findings were also instrumental in the decision to open a new GP surgery in Haringey in June 2016.

4.3 Improving home care services for older people

Healthwatch Bradford and District

There are a growing number of people in Bradford and the surrounding area living longer and requiring support at home, but there is also pressure on local finances.

People raised concerns with Healthwatch Bradford and District about the quality of home care services, care staff skills, rushed visits, and a lack of dignity and respect.

They conducted research into older people's experiences of home care services. They sent questionnaires in the post, and offered people the opportunity to share their views via an online survey, telephone interviews and home visits. People's carers could also provide feedback on their behalf.

Healthwatch Bradford and District produced a report, detailing their findings and a number of recommendations for improvements. This report put service user experience at the heart of the council's £27 million procurement process and is helping drive improvements in local home care services.

4.4 Improving access to phlebotomy services Healthwatch Waltham Forest

Healthwatch Waltham Forest received complaints from residents about local phlebotomy services (blood testing). Many had to wait for over an hour for appointments, and often found services closing early due to the volume of patients.

To find out more about people's experiences, local Healthwatch conducted an Enter and View visit and surveyed patients at seven local phlebotomy services in Waltham Forest.

Healthwatch Waltham Forest produced a number of recommendations for improvements, which were shared with the relevant providers and decision makers, who then responded to explain the action they would take.

The local Healthwatch produced a final report, outlining their findings, recommendations, and where changes are going to be put in place.

The local CCG is using Healthwatch Waltham Forest's findings to inform plans to recommission the service in 2017. This will take into account people's views on appointment booking, providing opportunities for patients to share feedback, and the need to offer support to people.

5 Working with the Care Quality Commission

5.1 Building strong relationships to influence change in Worcestershire

Healthwatch Worcestershire

The issue

Local Healthwatch gather invaluable evidence of people's experiences of local health and social care services. Developing relationships with the CQC is critical to their ability to share this insight to inform inspections and help ensure that services meet people's needs.

What did local Healthwatch do?

Healthwatch Worcestershire has worked hard to build strong relationships with local CQC colleagues. They have demonstrated willingness to share information, to take advice from CQC and to work in partnership for the benefit of Worcestershire's patients and service users.

CQC has reciprocated, demonstrating its commitment to listening to Healthwatch Worcestershire, and publicly reporting on the influence the organisation has had on its activities. By working with CQC, Healthwatch Worcestershire has been able to use its findings to help improve the quality of services.

What was the impact?

By using the views they have gathered, Healthwatch Worcestershire has been able to influence CQC activity.

Making your voice count

For example, they heard numerous local concerns about mental health services. As a result, they worked with CQC to run 'listening events' to ensure the CQC had the best opportunity to understand the concerns of patients and their carers. This led to a shift in focus for CQC's inspection of mental health services and the Trust in charge was assessed as 'Requiring Improvement' and now has an action plan in place to help them improve.

This is just one example of how Healthwatch Worcestershire has worked with CQC to identify where local services need to improve and helped make change happen.

5.2 Helping CQC target the right services to inspect

Healthwatch Bolton

Healthwatch Bolton has built a strong relationship with the CQC by working together to identify which local care services to visit.

This has increased efficiency, allowing both local Healthwatch and the CQC to maximise their efforts to collect up to date experiences from care home residents.

In particular, Healthwatch Bolton's work on improving residential care, home care and mental health services has been praised by CQC.

The regulator has also recognised this work by naming Healthwatch Bolton in their Good Practice Guide.

5.3 Making care homes a better place to live Healthwatch Lancashire

Healthwatch Lancashire found that local health and care services were under pressure because of an ageing population in the area.

They visited 29 care homes to hear what people had to say about the care they were receiving. Their findings have led to huge improvements in care homes, particularly around the sharing of good practice.

CQC inspectors have praised Healthwatch Lancashire for helping to make local people's voices heard.

By working together they have improved services, shared intelligence and built stronger working relationships for the future.

5.4 Developing regional relationships with CQC Healthwatch Sheffield

Through building a strong working relationship, Healthwatch Sheffield and local CQC inspectors have improved services for the public.

By communicating regularly, both teams have been able to work more efficiently together to identify emerging trends quickly and also share key findings.

Healthwatch Sheffield has also worked hard to help their local community understand that although they work closely with the CQC, they both play very different but complementary roles in improving health and care.

6 Volunteering

6.1 Empowering volunteers to help people's voices be heard

Healthwatch Islington

The issue

Volunteers play a crucial role in enabling local Healthwatch to reach as many people as possible in their community. Recruiting volunteers and retaining them can be challenging as they are giving up their free time to support Healthwatch's cause.

What did local Healthwatch do?

Healthwatch Islington has used a number of ways to attract and retain volunteers across their community including training courses, online groups and celebration events.

To motivate volunteers and demonstrate the value of their contributions, Healthwatch Islington invests in raising public awareness of the findings volunteers have gathered. They also share outcomes with their volunteers via an online group. Volunteers are offered additional training in areas such as safeguarding, and chairing and note-taking for meetings. Volunteers are given certificates and are invited to a special celebration and thank you event once a year.

What was the impact?

Healthwatch Islington volunteers have led a variety of high-impact work. For example, 21 young adult volunteers were trained to interview 50 of their peers, from a range of backgrounds, about their mental health and the support services that they would find most useful. They collated their findings into a report - Mental

health services for young adults – which informed the recommissioning of services.

One young volunteer became a member of the procurement panel that decided who would deliver these new services. Another Healthwatch volunteer goes with the charity 'Help on Your Doorstep', knocking on doors in some of the most disadvantaged estates in the borough. She helps the local Healthwatch reach people who are isolated, who have mobility issues, and who are most in need of social care services.

These are just two examples of the difference Healthwatch Islington's volunteers are making to their community.

6.2 Investing in volunteers to increase their impact

Healthwatch York

There are a number of different ways that people can volunteer for local Healthwatch. Healthwatch York has developed a range of volunteer roles that people can choose from or combine to suit them. These include; helping the public with information, research and engagement, office support and overseeing strategic direction through the leadership group.

In addition to a detailed induction and role related training, Healthwatch York hold annual development days for their volunteers. Their most recent one included a skills audit that will contribute to their strategic plan and help ensure they are making the most of their volunteers.

Making your voice count

They also hold 1:1s with all their volunteers to discuss their role(s) and get their feedback on how they're communicated with and supported. They produced an action plan and, as a result, they have already seen a stronger relationship between volunteers and the leadership group.

In 2015/16 Healthwatch York's volunteers have engaged with an estimated 1,240 people at information stands. They have also visited 23 care homes and spoken to 117 residents and relatives who would not otherwise have had the chance to have their say. Council staff have said that working with volunteers enhances the council's reports on care homes and has challenged and improved the way they do things.

6.3 Making the most of volunteer power Healthwatch Nottinghamshire

Over 6,000 volunteers support the Healthwatch network to help people have their say on health and care.

At Healthwatch Nottinghamshire, there is a vast and multi-functional volunteer team, with over 50 volunteers active at any one time.

They have worked to develop eight different roles to suit people's skillsets, interests and availability. Volunteers are given an in-depth induction as well as training specific to their role.

Volunteers are a critical part of Healthwatch Nottinghamshire's team and are involved at every level from promoting Healthwatch to listening to people's experiences of care to prioritising what the local Healthwatch should be working on.

6.4 Supporting volunteers with learning disabilities

Healthwatch Essex

Volunteers are vital to the work of local Healthwatch and help them engage with communities that are typically hard to reach.

Healthwatch Essex trained 16 people with learning disabilities to volunteer for Healthwatch. These individuals have helped to support Healthwatch Essex in its communication across Essex, by working as a peer network with the learning disability community.

The volunteers have engaged with hundreds of people and this has helped increase the number of health checks for people with learning disabilities by around 20%.

As a result of their work in raising awareness, Healthwatch Essex sponsored the first Essex Learning Disability Health Day organised by NHS England Midlands and East (East) and Healthwatch Essex.

7 Community

7.1 Championing easier and fairer access Healthwatch Kirklees

The issue

Healthwatch Kirklees heard that carers of children with severe disabilities were having to travel as far as Manchester to attend a Personal Independence Payment (PIP) review, which establishes how much financial support people with disabilities receive. They then discovered that Kirklees was the only area in West Yorkshire that did not have a PIP assessment centre, while most other West Yorkshire areas had at least two.

What did local Healthwatch do?

They spoke to local support services to better understand the impact that this was having on people in the community. They then wrote to ATOS, who conduct assessments on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions, with the feedback they had gathered to ask about any plans to open an assessment centre in Kirklees to make things easier and fairer for people in their community. When ATOS said no, they worked to raise the issue with other local organisations to encourage them to push for change.

Healthwatch Kirklees provided a letter template for local organisations to use to write to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, to ask for a change in the way PIP Assessments were delivered in Kirklees. Their work was backed by three local MPs and ten local councillors who wrote to the Secretary of State, alongside community organisations, law centres, and a wide variety of organisations that support people in the community with specific health problems and disabilities.

What was the impact?

As a result, a new centre in Kirklees is due to open for PIP assessments to take place.

As well as this being a positive result for those who need to use the centre, this work has also helped to raise the profile of Healthwatch Kirklees within their community and help build relationships with voluntary groups, councillors and MPs.

7.2 Improving access to phlebotomy services Healthwatch Barking and Dagenham

When Healthwatch Barking and Dagenham asked the local community about key health issues they should focus on for 2015-16, phlebotomy services (blood testing) were the top concern.

They spoke to 239 people in their community about their experiences of accessing phlebotomy services to better understand the issues they were facing.

They discovered that not all services were equally accessible for patients. At two local hospitals patients faced waiting times of two to four hours to have their tests. At the same time less well known sites were not operating at full capacity.

Healthwatch Barking and Dagenham shared their findings and recommendations with the people who commission and provide the service.

As a result, an action plan has been put in place to address the issues that Healthwatch have raised to help improve services for the local community.

7.3 Harnessing the skills of the local community

Healthwatch Hampshire

Healthwatch Hampshire recognised the power of using the skills, experience and existing networks within their community to encourage involvement in health and social care services.

Since 2014 Healthwatch Hampshire has been investing in small projects that aim to improve the wellbeing of their local communities.

By encouraging people to apply for funding and supporting them with their projects, more people within the community are becoming actively involved in helping to shape health and care services.

Over the past two years they have funded 27 different projects throughout the county, involving 2,000 people and reaching thousands more with their work.

7.4 Becoming an effective hub for information and advice

Healthwatch Isles of Scilly

Healthwatch Isles of Scilly has worked hard to establish themselves as an accessible and effective community hub.

They relocated to a more prominent and accessible location, and developed a database of local, regional and national services they shared with all local public facing services. This has now become the primary data source used by the council.

They have also established a good relationship with their senior GP and Practice Manager and, as a result, advertise health and care information in practices across the islands. They improved the layout of their website and the way they used social media to engage their community.

Visitor numbers to the website have increased and social media posts are reaching a bigger audience as a result. They have also received an increase in the number of queries and experiences being shared by members of the community.

8 Diversity and inclusion

8.1 Inspiring young people to become health researchers

Healthwatch Dudley

The issue

Five in ten young people surveyed in a recent national poll, conducted by Healthwatch England, said they would be interested in helping improve local health and care services by sharing their experiences. To enable more young people to have their say on health and care, Healthwatch Dudley worked with Dudley Youth Service to set up the Dudley Youth Health Researchers project. With the help of funding from NHS England, the project set about getting more young people involved in health research by supporting those who wanted to make a difference.

What did local Healthwatch do?

They approached local groups and charities who support people to share their invitation to get involved. They brought together a group of young people from different backgrounds, with a wide range of experiences, including those living in care or supported accommodation, and caring for others.

Healthwatch Dudley provided the volunteers with the support and training they needed to produce evidence based research. The young people produced questionnaires that were shared with local schools, youth groups and support groups.

Through the hard work of the young researchers, the local Healthwatch collected the views of 1,100 young people. As well as providing valuable intelligence for local health and care professionals, the project also

helped those involved develop new skills.

What was the impact?

Healthwatch Dudley secured funding from the Dudley borough Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services Transformation Plan to interrogate its findings and use the results to help shape how future mental health services for children and young people are delivered.

The project is not only influencing the shape of services, Healthwatch Dudley also shared what they learned from the project at the national conference for young people and health and social care professionals.

Learning from the project is also being used to help develop a 'young champion' programme that is being set up by Dudley Public Health, Dudley CCG, Dudley CVS and the local Healthwatch.

8.2 Investing in community projects to help people

Healthwatch Dorset

In Dorset, the local Healthwatch decided they needed to come up with better ways of reaching every section of the community.

Through their annual Community Investment Fund they support local community and voluntary groups with funding and mentoring. This enables them to find out about a range of people's views regarding local health and care services, and raise awareness of Healthwatch.

Healthwatch Dorset is currently supporting 14 diverse initiatives in the community that are having a real impact.

Making your voice count

For example, a report on mental health awareness amongst Black and Minority Ethnic communities has contributed to a review of acute mental health services. In addition, an eating disorder awareness video, made with a local university, is now used to help improve public understanding of the issue.

8.3 Seeking out men's views in Blackburn Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen

The staff at Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen are always thinking of new ways they can find out the views of different sections of their community. In 2015, they decided they needed a new approach to increase the number of men they engaged with.

They embarked on a tour of local pubs and clubs to hear about men's views and experiences of health and care. They raised awareness with beer mats and used pub quizzes and informal interviews to speak to over 185 men.

What they heard informed eight recommendations for improvements to services. To share their findings, the local Healthwatch held a pub quiz at a local working men's club and invited health professionals, as well as men from the local community.

8.4 Improving advocacy for transgender people

Healthwatch Brighton and Hove

People who identify as transgender can face problems accessing health and social care services. With 2,760 people who identify as transgender living in Brighton, the local Healthwatch is working to improve the support available to them.

After an assessment by the local council identified a number of issues, Healthwatch Brighton and Hove formed a partnership with the LGBT mental health service MindOut.

The partnership has got funding from local NHS and social care commissioners to set up the city's first transgender advocacy service. The service will offer advice, information and support on health and care issues.

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