



# Facing the challenges together

Putting the public voice first

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# Message from our Chair

**Following our re-structure, we have had an incredibly challenging, yet remarkably successful year.**

Our priorities have included connecting with people about their experiences during COVID-19, and with those who are not always included in discussions about their health and social care needs.

We have greatly improved our output when compared to previous years; from the people we have engaged with, to the quality and number of reports we have produced.

The input and commitment from our volunteers have been crucial in achieving these improvements. Also, the hard work and dedication from our staff who have remained positive during an incredibly difficult year. We would like to say a big thank you to everyone who has been involved with Healthwatch North Yorkshire over the past year.



**"With an almost entirely new staff team, more volunteers and Trustees and with strong and growing partnerships we are optimistic and looking forward with renewed energy to representing and influencing health and social care matters that affect the people of North Yorkshire."**

## Top successes:

The increase in our website and social media traffic has been significant and we have provided quality information and advice to the public. We have produced three COVID reports detailing the issues and challenges and have identified potential improvements.

We have produced reports on accessing GPs, hospital appointments, GP websites, dental and social care. We have shared these with health and social care providers and commissioners and have also initiated discussions around improvements to service provision.

We have undertaken collaborative work with CCGs, NHS Trusts and the community and voluntary sector, and intend to build upon these relationships in the coming year. One example is our partnership with West Yorkshire & Harrogate Health & Care Partnership, supported by our volunteer network, to produce an Engagement & Consultation Mapping report.



Chris Brackley  
Chair of Board of Trustees.



# About us

## Here to make health and care better

We are the independent champion for people who use health and social care services in North Yorkshire. We are here to find out what matters to people and help make sure your views shape the support you need, by sharing these views with those who have the power to make change happen.

## Helping you to find the information you need

We help people find the information they need about services in their area. This has been vital during the pandemic with the ever-changing environment and restrictions limiting people's access to health and social care services.

### Our goals



#### **1 Supporting you to have your say**

We want more people to get the information they need to take control of their health and care, make informed decisions and shape the services that support them.



#### **2 Providing a high quality service**

We want everyone who shares their experience or seeks advice from us to get a high quality service and to understand the difference their views make.



#### **3 Ensuring your views help improve health & care**

We want more services to use your views to shape the health and care support you need today and in the future.



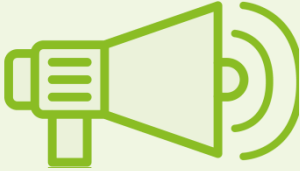
**"Over the coming year our priorities will remain on gathering the public's views on how we all recover from the pandemic (people and services). We will continue to work with healthcare organisations, the voluntary sector and the public to help improve the lives and wellbeing of communities who aren't always listened to or involved in discussions about their health or social care."**

**Ashley Green, Chief Executive Officer at Healthwatch North Yorkshire.**

# Highlights from our year

Find out about our resources and how we have engaged and supported people in 2020-21.

## Reaching out



We heard from

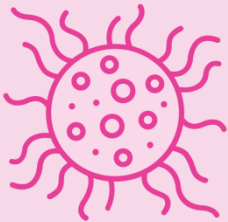
**1,018 people**

this year about their experiences of health and social care.

**74,128 people**

visited our website this year, 139% more people than the previous year.

## Responding to the pandemic



We engaged with and signposted

**393**

people during the COVID-19 pandemic this year.

## Making a difference to care



We produced

**8 reports**

about the improvements people would like to see to health and social care services. This included access to services in rural communities, GP website access and the inclusion of the LGBTQ+ in health and social care.

**4 intelligence briefings**

about the improvements people would like to see to health and social care services. Including dentistry, test-and-trace and the COVID-19 vaccine.

## Health and care that works for you



**88 volunteers**

helped us to carry out our work. In total, they contributed to 50 days across the year to support our work.

**We employ 5 members of staff**

and 4 out of 5 members of the team joined Healthwatch North Yorkshire in the last year.

We received

**£167,625 in funding**

from our local authority in 2020-21, 16% more than the previous year.



# Dentistry: Putting the patient first



## Access to NHS dental services

**Thanks to people sharing their experiences of dentistry we have been in frequent conversation with NHS dental commissioners for Yorkshire and the Humber over the past year.**

Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, we were hearing on a regular basis from many people who were struggling to find a dental surgery taking on new NHS patients in North Yorkshire. This situation was undoubtedly exacerbated by the pandemic. In our July 2020 COVID-19 report we found that patients wanted better access to accurate information on their dental services. We heard from patients who were unsure if their appointments were going ahead and from patients who had repeatedly had their routine appointments cancelled.

In October 2020 we undertook a 12-month review of all the dentistry feedback in preparation for a meeting with NHS dental commissioners in Yorkshire and Humber. We heard from patients who could still not access a dentist after two, six and in one case – ten years. The long waiting times was particularly alarming, but also, some patients were having to travel hundreds of miles to access a dentist.

In addition to the many people unable to register with an NHS dentist, the closure of Bondgate Dental Practice in Helmsley in September left people who had been registered as NHS patients without a local surgery. Following representations made to the regional dental commissioner by Healthwatch North Yorkshire on this issue, NHS England wrote to former Bondgate patients informing them that three local practices were now providing additional appointments solely for those who had been registered with the closed practice.



## Now: Ongoing dentistry issues

**Thanks to patients sharing their experience of dentistry during the pandemic, we have been able to keep making the argument for greater provision and improvements in services.**

Between February 2020 – February 2021 we received 89 pieces of feedback regarding dentistry. Increasing from 7.38% to 11.27% of contacts on the rolling 12 months' basis since our last review in October.

The main issues included:

- Lack of access to an NHS dentist.
- Frustrations at being pushed towards private appointments.
- Concern about children's oral health.

A significant proportion of our calls regarding a lack of available dentists were from people seeking help in finding a dentist. People told us of the negative financial and emotional strain this situation put on them. One person told us how they had contacted 40 dental practices with no luck.



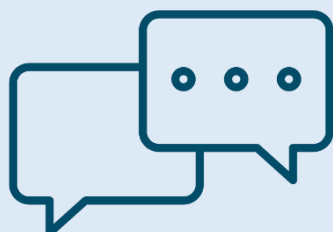
**"We are a family of four and all our appointments have been moved only to be cancelled on several occasions. Now we have been put on a waiting list. My employer goes to the same dental practice, has the same dental surgeon but pays into a private plan and none of his appointments have been cancelled."**

The closure of several dental practices in North Yorkshire is one of the issues that members of the public have told us about over the past few months. When combined with the increased waiting times for routine appointments for those fortunate enough to be NHS dental patients, this is a very troubling direction of travel in terms of dentistry provision across the county.

Unfortunately, part of the problem is funding. The funding contract run by NHS England had not been revisited for over a decade, and simply there was not enough funding available to meet the requirements of the population. However, the contract has recently been revisited and dentists are currently expected to fulfil 60% of their NHS contracts and must continue to prioritise emergency appointments. This policy will run until the end of August 2021.

We encourage members of the public to keep getting in touch with us about dentistry to enable us to keep making the argument for greater provision and improvements of services.

### Share your views with us



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



[www.healthwatchnorthyorkshire.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchnorthyorkshire.co.uk)



01904 552 687



[admin@hwny.co.uk](mailto:admin@hwny.co.uk)



# Accessing services: Putting the patient first



## Accessing services during the pandemic

**Making sure that patients have access to correct and up-to-date information and advice has been a priority for Healthwatch North Yorkshire since the start of the pandemic.**

Access to information is a key theme that emerged in the feedback we were receiving at the start of 2020, and with the pandemic evolving rapidly it was important that we acted quickly.

As a result of the feedback from the public we produced three COVID-19 reports to highlight the common themes that we were hearing about. These included:

1. Accessing NHS services and appointments.
2. Living with a long-term condition, such as diabetes or a lung condition.
3. Challenges around seeing a loved one in a care home.
4. Accessing dental care.

These are just some of the many challenges people faced due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It became clear, early-on in the pandemic that accessing services was a huge issue for many people across North Yorkshire. We have shared the reports with those responsible for commissioning and delivering services in North Yorkshire.



## Accessing GP services during the pandemic

Over the last 12 months we have witnessed huge changes across the health and social care system in North Yorkshire as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Patient feedback that we have gathered since the start of the pandemic has demonstrated the importance of GP practices — with appointments and access being main areas of concern for members of the public in North Yorkshire. The pandemic has changed the way we have accessed health and social care information, placing a larger reliance on the internet and technology at home. Many people have welcomed this new way of receiving information and support, whilst others have found it a challenge.



**“Doctors not seeing you in surgeries even now lockdown has almost lifted. Only doing phone consultations is not helpful, as my problem was mobility and because of not being able to go outside I could hardly walk. Needed help with pain relief and it wasn’t forthcoming.”**

In our report ‘*GP Website Check-up*’, our volunteers examined what information was being provided to the public, and how accessible the information was. We looked at whether the information fulfilled the public needs and if GP websites provided up-to-date COVID-19 information.

We found many great examples of GP websites providing crucial information for members of the public in North Yorkshire, but also examples of areas in need of improvement. For example, 87% of GP websites provided links to official NHS COVID-19 information. The majority of GP websites (93%) provided clear and helpful information about self-care and local support organisations. However, 16% of GP websites did not make it clear how to book an appointment, and less than half of the GP websites provided up-to-date information about their Patient Participant Group (PPG).

As a result of our report, Vale of York CCG have started to undertake their own audit to look at the clarity of information that is available on GP websites across York and North Yorkshire. They will use our recommendations to find where gaps are and create a ‘website standard’.

Bradford and Craven PCCC (Primary Care Commissioning Committee) endorsed our recommendations and highlighted the inclusion of diversity. They are currently considering the use of easy read facilities on the websites, and taking up a number of our recommendations.

North Yorkshire CCG have told us they found the report very informative and relevant. They will be working with their Primary Care Network’s (PCN) to support GP practices to make the necessary changes to their websites, where relevant.



To find out more > > >  
[healthwatchnorthyorkshire.co.uk/news-and-reports](https://healthwatchnorthyorkshire.co.uk/news-and-reports)



## Responding to COVID-19

**Healthwatch plays an important role in helping people to get the information they need, especially through the pandemic. The insight we collect is shared with both Healthwatch England and local partners to ensure services are operating as best as possible during the pandemic.**

**This year we helped 393 people by:**

- Providing the current advice on the COVID-19 response locally
- Linking people to reliable and up-to-date information
- Sharing relevant news and information about the vaccination programme
- Supporting the community volunteer response
- Helping people to access the services they need

## Top four areas that people have contacted us about:



25% on GP services



21.2% on Dentistry



15.8% on Hospital Care



10.8% on Social Care

## Case Study



Early in the pandemic, we heard from over 150 people about their experiences and the information they require during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our role became much more focused on providing people with clear, consistent and concise advice and information through articles on our website and social media to help address people's concerns.

The key topics people were telling us about included:

1. Mental health
2. Access to services and information
3. Phone/online appointments
4. Patient transport



### Contact us to get the information you need

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# Volunteers

**At Healthwatch North Yorkshire we are supported by 88 volunteers who help us find out what people think is working, and what improvements people would like to make to health and social care services.**

## **This year our volunteers:**

- Supported us in collecting feedback and signposting members of the public to the relevant services.
- Over the year our volunteers have helped us with several projects, this includes 37 days to produce our West Yorkshire and Harrogate Engagement Mapping project and 3 days for the GP website analysis.
- Translated health information into the Arabic language.
- Attended a variety of meetings to influence health and social care services, for example Whitby hospital.
- During lockdown they gathered experiences which helped us publish our COVID-19 briefings.



### Volunteer – Beverley.

"I decided to become a volunteer as I believe the work Healthwatch North Yorkshire does is so important in improving health and social care services. My volunteering allows me to make a positive difference working on projects I find meaningful, whilst also giving me opportunities to develop my own personal and professional skills."



### Trustee – Pat.

"Having worked in the NHS for over forty years as a nurse, I was really pleased to join the Board of Healthwatch North Yorkshire in November 2019. Previously I worked as a Community Public Health nurse, where I worked with families and communities to help improve their health and wellbeing, and I'm particularly interested in work and projects that focus on reducing the health inequalities of different populations."



### Volunteer – Linda.

"I became a Healthwatch volunteer in October 2019, as I wanted to use the knowledge/skills developed over many years working within the NHS to help others - whilst also keeping myself up to date and involved with health and care services. Since then, I have undertaken a variety of volunteer roles and I can honestly say that, although they have been quite different, I have enjoyed every one of these and I have learned a lot."



### Volunteer with us

Are you feeling inspired? We are always on the lookout for new volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering, please get in touch with Lada Rotshtein at [Lada.Rotshtein@hwny.co.uk](mailto:Lada.Rotshtein@hwny.co.uk)



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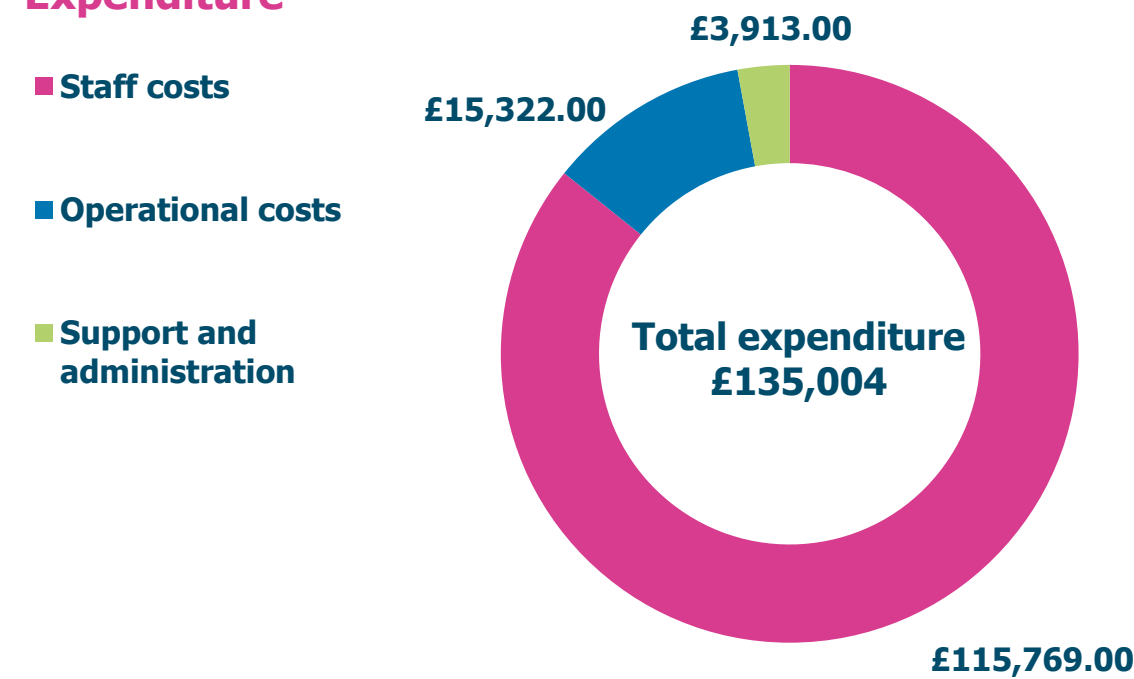
# Finances

To help us carry out our work we receive funding from our local authority under the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

## Income



## Expenditure



# Next steps & thank you

## Top three priorities for 2021-22

- Gather views from the public on COVID-19 recovery to support and influence service changes that will help improve patient experience and outcomes
- Focus our work in areas of health inequalities (such as Scarborough and Selby) to ensure the public's views are represented and effect positive change
- Improve our awareness and reach across North Yorkshire to ensure people know of us, contact us for advice and share their experiences with us

## Next steps

The pandemic has greatly affected how we have all worked, and it has been a challenge for us at Healthwatch North Yorkshire to meet with and hear from all communities across the county. Most of our conversations have been by phone or video call, and whilst this has been important in ensuring that we continue to hear from people, we hope that as we move away from national COVID-19 restrictions we will be able to meet and speak with more people through community groups, networks etc.

We will continue to work with health and social care providers and commissioners to ensure that the work we undertook last year, such as our GP Website Check-up report and our Rural Communities micro-study, is continued and our recommendations are acted upon, where appropriate. Some of our future priorities, which the public have told us are important to them, include working with care homes to understand the changes made during the pandemic to ensure residents are supported, access to NHS dentistry and how we can help to improve this.

It is also important to us that we hear from those people who aren't always listened to or involved in discussions about their health or social care, so we will be re-doubling our efforts to ensure we reach out and listen to those communities, and particularly in areas of health inequalities. Our LGBTQ+ report that focused on people's experiences of using health and social care, published in June 2020, had a real impact on shining a light on issues that hadn't previously been heard, so we are keen to continue to help those communities who are seldom heard.



**"We want to ensure that we hear from all members of the public in North Yorkshire – and a group we don't always hear from is younger people. So we will be doubling our efforts in the coming months to work with young people to hear their experiences and stories of how the NHS and social care supports them, and what improvements they would like to see."**



# Statutory statements

## About us

Healthwatch England, 2 Redman Place, Stratford, E20 1JQ.

Healthwatch North Yorkshire uses the Healthwatch Trademark when undertaking our statutory activities as covered by the licence agreement.

## The way we work

### **Involvement of volunteers and lay people in our governance and decision-making.**

Our Healthwatch board consists of 7 members who work on a voluntary basis to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny to our activities. Our board ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community. Through 2020/21 the board met regularly and made decisions on matters such as the work we have been undertaking around care homes and gathering public feedback on COVID-19 (plus staff recruitment, including a new Chief Executive Officer).

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities. We use insight from information and signposting enquiries and intelligence gathered through direct contact with members of the public when thinking about and deciding our priorities.

## Methods and systems used across the year's work to obtain people's views and experience.

We use a wide range of approaches to ensure that as many people as possible have the opportunity to provide us with insight about their experience of health and care services. During 2020/21 we have been available by phone, by email, provided a webform on our website, provided a feedback centre/rate and review system, attended virtual meetings of community groups and forums, provided our own virtual activities and engaged with the public through social media.

We are committed to taking additional steps to ensure we obtain the views of people from diverse backgrounds who are often not heard by health and care decision makers. In 2020, North Yorkshire County Council requested a piece of research to increase the understanding of experiences and needs of the LGBTQ+ community when accessing mental health support. This led to us publishing our report '*LGBTQ+ People's Experiences of Using Health and Social Care Services in North Yorkshire*'.

We will ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. We will publish it on our website and share it with Healthwatch England.

## 2020-21 priorities

Examples of our 2020-21 priorities and how we achieved these, are included below:

Priority areas	Output & impact
Expand information and advice services to the public to support their needs	Reached over 700 monthly subscribers with our e-newsletter providing up to-date service information. Extended our social media followers to just under 2,500 people who we regularly provide information to. Our volunteer network had over 2,500 conversations with the public where they provided signposting advice.
Gather public views on their health & social care experiences during COVID-19	Produced 3 reports over the year that detailed the experiences of people receiving and accessing services during the pandemic, that were shared with and helped to influence conversations and decisions about services in North Yorkshire.
Monitor and contribute the patient voice to service developments and improvements	Worked with seldom heard communities in Scarborough to contribute to discussions around future paediatric services at Scarborough Hospital, and our volunteers were involved in the future design and plans for Whitby Hospital. Worked with the LGBTQ+ communities around the county to understand why this community experiences health inequalities.



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