

healthwatch

North Yorkshire



NEWSLETTER

Summer 2021



Your **health** and social care champion

Improving health and social care together

Welcome to the summer edition of our newsletter, bringing you up to-date with our work as the independent champion for people using health and social care services in North Yorkshire.

Our focus over the previous months has been our continuing work on dentistry and care homes. Read about the work we have been undertaking on dentistry – a [one year review](#) of all our dentistry feedback, and public engagement in collaboration with NHS England and NHS Improvement – on pages [6-7](#). These efforts are resulting in actual, meaningful improvements in NHS dentistry for people in North Yorkshire.

Additionally, in July we published our [Annual Report](#) for 2020-21 which detailed the work that we've undertaken over the past twelve months and the successes we've had in, for example, people visiting our website (we now have a new updated website!), the reports we've produced and the impact these have had, and the number of people that we have heard from.

Our care home project, 'Care Homes and COVID-19: Lessons from an Unprecedented Time', has now finished the first stage of data collection, involving interviews with care home managers. We will produce our report from the findings in October. Additionally, we are currently contacting care homes to understand the impact of the new legislation mandating that all staff must be fully vaccinated.

The COVID-19 in North Yorkshire: December to March [report](#) published in May was shared with commissioners and stakeholders across North Yorkshire and was positively received. Vale of York CCG used our findings around GP services at their Quality and Patient Experience Committee. The next COVID-19 in North Yorkshire report will be published later this month.

Over the next few months, we will be working jointly with North Yorkshire CCG to undertake a number of engagement events to provide information and clarity on stroke services, across the county, as well as ensuring that people have the opportunity to have their say.

Work on the Young Healthwatch continues. We have begun to have discussions and meet with organisations in Selby to identify a younger audience and engage with networks and groups to meet with - which we will be doing shortly.

It's important to us that we continue to hear from as many people as possible from across North Yorkshire – so we can act on your behalf, and share your experiences, good and bad, with those people and organisations responsible for delivering health and social care across the county. Therefore, please get in touch with us via our website and continue to share your feedback with us. Thank you.

Healthwatch is your health and social care champion. We make sure NHS leaders and other decision makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care.



Meet Our Trustees



**John Cunningham,
Board Member.**

I have been a Trustee of Healthwatch North Yorkshire for two years.

Whilst my previous work experience is not in health or social care, I believe that I bring a different skill set to complement the existing expertise among the Trustees of Healthwatch North Yorkshire and provide a positive impact to the organisation.

After graduating from university, I started a geopolitical risk analysis business and then moved into innovation and the international development of clean-tech. This work has been eclectic with many highlights.

My reasons for wanting to get involved with Healthwatch North Yorkshire were twofold:

In the past decade I have experienced first-hand the demanding work of the NHS and the many challenges that we take for granted. The organisation itself and the breadth of service it provides is incredible – but what struck me the most were the people at the frontline of these services. In all fields of specialisation, the care, warmth, and professionalism of staff was both inspiring and humbling.

Further, as the chairman of the children's charity Wooden Spoon Cumbria I have witnessed first-hand the everyday challenges that many people face. Very often the people I work with are isolated and unaware of the help and support that is available. These people are the reason I wanted to get involved with Healthwatch North Yorkshire and give something back.

Healthwatch North Yorkshire is the interface between the population in North Yorkshire and services provided, between what is needed and what is available. With the impact of the pandemic, there has never been a greater need for this service and the Healthwatch North Yorkshire team, and volunteers, have risen to the challenge admirably.

Our mandate is to be able to help people who are struggling with their healthcare or where services are missing and change this, to ensure that people are receiving the right care for their needs. We will continue to do everything in our power to deliver this.

Have your say

In June we launched our brand new [website](#) and we would really appreciate any feedback on how we can improve and develop this going forward.

It's important for us to know what you would like to hear about - and see on our website.

Get in touch and let us know what matters most to you!

@ Email: Gemma.Hutcheson@hwny.co.uk
Telephone: 07305003053



SCAN ME

VISIT OUR NEW WEBSITE!

<https://www.healthwatchnorthyorkshire.co.uk/>

Facing the challenges together: Putting the public first

Over the coming year our priorities will remain gathering the public's views on how we all recover from the pandemic. We will continue to work with all 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 and social care.

**Ashley Green, CEO,
Healthwatch North Yorkshire.**



In June we published our [Annual Report 2020-2021](#) which highlighted some of our successes and challenges of the past year.

Over the year we went through significant changes - gaining an almost entirely new staff team, more volunteers, and Trustees - all whilst adapting and learning how to cope with the pandemic.

We had an incredibly successful year and developed strong and growing partnerships. We remain optimistic and are looking forward with renewed energy to representing and influencing health and social care matters that affect the people of North Yorkshire.

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

The input and commitment from our volunteers were crucial in achieving these improvements. Also, the hard work and dedication from our staff – who remained positive and dedicated during an incredibly difficult year.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM OUR YEAR 2020-2021

- We heard from 1,018 people about their experiences of health and social care
- 74,128 people visited our website
- We had 2,600 conversations with the public to signpost them to services
- We produced eight reports and three intelligence briefings
- 88 volunteers helped us carry out our work



If someone you know needs help, tell them about us.

Volunteering at Healthwatch North Yorkshire

Our volunteers are a vital part of our team at Healthwatch North Yorkshire, and we would not be able to achieve our goals without our strong team of over 80 volunteers.

There are many benefits to volunteering with Healthwatch North Yorkshire, whether you want to help give a voice to people in your community or develop your professional skills in a health and social care environment.



Meet Our Volunteers:



Richard

'I very recently joined Healthwatch North Yorkshire as a volunteer - although it came about largely by accident. I was looking into all voluntary opportunities in the Harrogate area and came across them online. Having read through the detail about activities and future projects it occurred to me that there was probably no more important a time than the present for the work that Healthwatch do. I was also struck by the Team's enthusiasm to make a difference.

So far I have been involved in work around the future strategy for carers and I am looking forward to many new challenges in the future. I have been made to feel hugely welcome by new colleagues and I am looking forward to working with them in the weeks and months to come.'



Jill

'I've been a volunteer with Healthwatch North Yorkshire for a couple of years having had a varied career in health and social care.

The nature of my volunteering is varied. Sometimes it may be reviewing policies or reports or attending one off events. Some activities can be ongoing or they may be time limited with more intense input. Before lockdown I was asked if I would like to represent Healthwatch North Yorkshire at the Whitby Hospital Patient and Carers Experience forum. This has continued as a virtual group and has been a very productive period with opportunities to get involved with the recent hospital refurbishment project through a range of task and finish groups. These groups give local people a say in various aspects of the hospital build project and some will continue long term as community groups.

Another piece of work I have been involved in is the recent care home project which I have found especially rewarding. Having seen reports in the media about the difficulties experienced by staff and residents in care homes during the pandemic, it was a daunting prospect to be interviewing staff about their experiences - particularly seeking examples of positive practice. I couldn't imagine that there would be much positive things to say and presumed that the period would be shrouded in gloom. Despite everything they had been through, a number of managers made time to reflect on the changes that staff teams had introduced that had made daily life not just bearable but at times enjoyable and fun. Through all the challenges, additional workload and absolute horrors that were faced at times, I hope the hard work, creativity and innovation recounted through this project isn't lost and can give some pointers for future practice in the sector.'

Our focus on Dentistry

Dentistry has returned to being the most common service area in our feedback and signposting activities, after the COVID-19 vaccination programme had dominated our activities in the first half of the year.

Our work in this area, aside from our business-as-usual activities of gathering general feedback and supporting members of the public, has involved undertaking a 12-month review of all our dentistry feedback, and we conducted two public engagements in collaboration with NHS England and NHS Improvement to support them with the procurement of NHS dentistry in Scarborough and Robin Hood's Bay.



In our latest report [NHS Dentistry in North Yorkshire: A Review of Public Feedback 2020-2021](#) we reviewed all dentistry feedback we have received in the 12 month period up to 14 May 2021.

In addition to reviewing pieces of feedback from members of the public, our volunteers contacted all dental practices in North Yorkshire listed on NHS choices website.

Over the 12-months we received 176 dentistry-related comments from members of the public, 70.5% involved members of the public struggling to register with an NHS dentist for a regular appointment. One member of the public told us they had called around 40 dental practices, and not one was able to take them on as an NHS patient.

Our volunteers called 71 dental practices, of these only two were currently taking on new adult patients for NHS treatment – and these had significant restrictions on who could register. We were surprised that most NHS dental practices were not even offering places on their waiting lists. With regard to waiting lists our volunteers identified the longest was an estimated three-year wait, whilst another waiting list had 1,000 people on it.

With people unable to access NHS treatments, there has been a greater thrust towards paying for private dental treatments. The cost of private treatment is prohibitively expensive for those unable to access NHS dentistry – we heard from several people with potential bills running over £1,000 – resulting in people not seeking treatment. Our feedback from members of the public had indicated that NHS dentists were pushing patients towards paying for private treatment, however our volunteer calls to dental practices found only one-eighth of practices offered private appointments unprompted.

For those fortunate enough to be registered as a regular NHS dental patient the situation has not been that much better during the pandemic. Waiting times for regular appointments has been hugely exacerbated during the pandemic. Dental practices closed completely at the start of the pandemic. When they did eventually reopen, subsequent increases in infection prevention and control measures reduced the volume of patients that could be seen each day, adding to pressures on the waiting times.

We can offer a lot of support and can signpost you to relevant information!

We have made several recommendations as a result of our dentistry review:



- Current reforms of the way dentistry is commissioned and provided needs to be radical and more rapid.
- There needs to be greater availability of NHS dentistry, in terms of increased access and affordability for people living in North Yorkshire.
- Greater clarity in the information provided about NHS dentistry is needed, including improvements to NHS Choices website.
- Dental practices should explore opportunities to support people's general health, providing advice on diet and lifestyle, and offer, where appropriate, signposting and referrals to other services.
- The forthcoming integrated care system reforms to health and social care should take a greater role in commissioning NHS dentistry services.

In other activities, we undertook public engagement during June and July in collaboration with NHS England and NHS Improvement. This work has directly fed into NHS procurement procedures as they look to procure new NHS dental contracts in Scarborough and Robin Hood's Bay following the recent closure of NHS dental practices in the areas.

As part of the public engagement, we held three focus groups and ran two surveys (one survey for each local area). We heard from over 200 people as part of our Scarborough public engagement, and nearly 50 for the Robin Hood's Bay work. The results of these have been shared with NHS England and NHS Improvement.

As a result of the Scarborough engagement, NHS England and NHS Improvement have told us they are looking for a service which:

- Serves the people of Scarborough, from a site or sites within Scarborough itself
- Offers extended hours of opening, beyond the 'usual' Monday to Friday, 9-5pm

- Delivers on not just reactive care, but encompasses proactive care too, such as prevention/education
- Is accessible with good facilities and network/ public transport links

We are waiting to hear back on the Robin Hood's Bay public engagement, as NHS England and NHS Improvement were undertaking some of their own public engagement that has only recently finished.

Dentistry has been a major concern for us and many other local Healthwatch organisations across Yorkshire and beyond. Our recent work goes some way to achieving improvements in this area, however we will continue to push on the issue of dentistry for as long we keep hearing from the members of the North Yorkshire community.



SCAN TO READ OUR LATEST REPORT ON DENTISTRY!

The new council for North Yorkshire

In July, the government announced their plans to replace North Yorkshire's county and district councils with a single council covering the whole county. This change means that the current two-tier system of local government, with a county council and seven district councils underneath, will be demolished.

The government decision comes after a consultation earlier this year.

What will change and when?

The new North Yorkshire Council will officially start in April 2023. Until then, services will continue to be provided by the current county council and the seven district or borough councils.

Did residents have a say on the decision?

Yes. Two proposals were put forward. A new, single council for North Yorkshire or two new unitary councils – East North Yorkshire (including Scarborough, Ryedale, Selby, and York) and West North Yorkshire (Hambleton, Richmondshire, Harrogate, and Craven).

The government carried out a consultation which asked several questions about each proposal. There were 4,297 responses from residents, councils in neighbouring areas, health providers, the police, businesses, voluntary groups, and education bodies.

Will this mean less representation for my local area?

No. While there would no longer be district councillors, many county councillors already represent both councils. The new council will create six Area Committees where local councillors, clearly accountable to the public for all local authority services, will meet.

Will my council tax change?

The new council will decide how to introduce a fairer structure for future Council Tax, as the tax is currently at different levels in different part of the county.

Get in touch and share your views with us!

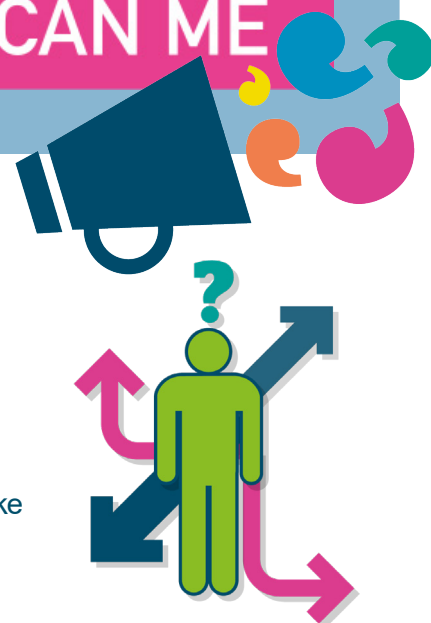


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Six things you need to know about the new council

North Yorkshire county council have said that the new council will:

1. be a strong voice in the North, speaking out nationally for rural and coastal communities
2. bring together the best services for residents and businesses, make them even better and save money by reducing duplication
3. keep the county and nationally acclaimed services together
4. unite North Yorkshire to operate at scale and sustainably, driving recovery from the pandemic
5. create a revolution in localism so communities have the funding and power to take action on what matters to them most in their area
6. build on the strong identity and global brand of North Yorkshire and what makes our county so great



Living with COVID-19 and beyond



#SpeakUp

The last eighteen months have been some of the most difficult times in recent history, and through these difficulties we have heard many stories of heroism. Whether that's been friends and families supporting each other, neighbours supporting neighbours, health care staff across the NHS responding to the pandemic with resilience and dedication, or care home workers going that extra mile to support the people in their care. This has truly been a time when people have needed to come together to show their solidarity and help each other.

Across England local Healthwatch – including Healthwatch North Yorkshire – have played their part in listening to the concerns of the public and sharing these with local GPs, hospital trusts, social care providers and those people responsible for the delivery of health and social care across the county.

The vaccination roll-out and take up across North Yorkshire has been a huge success and showed that we can have a real impact when working together (people and health organisations). Our focus now will be on how we as a community respond to the further challenges of living with COVID-19 and hopefully in a post-COVID society.

'The voice of the public has never been more needed'

The pandemic has truly tested public resolve and has affected all reaches of our lives; socially, economically, and on our health and mental wellbeing. Our health and social care system faces significant challenges in restoring services, not only in hospitals, but also in social care, primary care,

mental health, and community-based services. The voice of the public in helping to shape how we all respond to the future challenges, has never been more needed. Healthwatch North Yorkshire will be continuing to focus on listening to the people of North Yorkshire to ensure that we use the experiences of the last eighteen months to adapt, improve, and strengthen our health and social care system for the future. And importantly, work with our health partners to make sure people receive the care they need.

Share your health and care experiences with us!

As an example, we will be reaching out to younger people in North Yorkshire to hear about their experiences during the pandemic, to help understand how the pandemic has affected their wellbeing and access to health services. We will also be focusing our efforts in those areas of need, including Scarborough and Selby, to ensure that all sections of our diverse communities are heard and represented.

We will continue to provide the latest advice and signposting to health and social care services across the county via our website and phone line – and we would encourage you to contact us for any help or questions. Similarly, we encourage you to share your health and social care experiences with us.

Your local health and social care champion

At Healthwatch North Yorkshire we are committed to improving health and social care services across North Yorkshire. People tell us about the issues that matter most to them, and we share these experiences with local health and social care providers so that services can be improved.

It's important that people continue to get in touch with Healthwatch North Yorkshire, as the more feedback we receive, the more information we can provide to local health and social care providers – who have the power to change services across the county.

We produce reports and recommendations to influence positive changes in local health and social care services. They include:

Research reports:

From time to time, we will ask you for your views about health and social care services in surveys or using other methods like interviews or focus groups.

Enter and View reports:

Our reports following visits to premises where NHS or adult social care is provided to people. We assess services using the views of residents/patients and their carers and make recommendations so they can be improved.

Annual reports:

Each year we produce an annual report to showcase our achievements, report on our finances and demonstrate how we have been working to improve health and social care services.

Briefings:

We often produce briefings to tell people what we know about local health and social care services. These might be to inform a Care Quality Commission inspection or to inform discussions at an important meeting.

Scan to read our reports!



**Have
your
say**

Are you in? Join our network!

We are developing two new networks for individuals and organisations to tell us the issues they are facing in health and social care to build up a picture across North Yorkshire.

We will be asking people to fill in a very short (anonymous) survey on different topics each month and organisations to give a quick quarterly update of what they are hearing from their members and service users. All the feedback will go into our new quarterly pulse reports to make sure the people making the decisions know what the issues are in real time. We will share the reports via this newsletter, on our website, and social media so you will see what others are saying.

So, are you in? We would love you to join our networks and start sharing your views from October.

Find out more or sign up by contacting Ruth Stockdale: Ruth.Stockdale@hwny.co.uk or 07458 301393 and help us put our finger on the pulse of North Yorkshire's health and social care issues.



Visit our website and sign up to our monthly e-newsletter to keep up to date with the latest health and social care news across North Yorkshire.



Top local news

- North Yorkshire charity Dementia Forward has begun new dementia day services in Richmond.
- Public consultation underway about proposed changes to the delivery of Sexual Health Services in North Yorkshire.
- Research undertaken shows the big difference charities, social enterprises, and community organisations make across the region.
- GP practices in the Vale of York are enabling patients to monitor their blood pressure at home to improve the management of a cardiovascular disease.
- Pregnant women in North Yorkshire and York have been urged to take up the offer of COVID-19 vaccination.



Aged 16-25? Scan QR to complete our survey.

Work on Young Healthwatch continues. We are developing our connections and mapping exercise in the Selby district. This will contribute to our plans and ambitions to gather the voices of young people and their experiences of health and social care, who are often not heard.

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North Yorkshire

Healthwatch North Yorkshire is your local health and social care champion. From Scarborough to Richmondshire and everywhere in between, we make sure NHS leaders and other decision makers hear **your voice and use your feedback to improve care.**

If you've recently visited your GP, or local hospital, or used any health and care services in North Yorkshire we want to hear from you. Whether you've had a good or bad experience, we can use your feedback to improve services for everyone and we have the power to make NHS leaders and other care providers listen to what you have to say. We're completely independent and impartial and anything you say is confidential. We also offer information and advice to help you to get the support you need. Our service is free, simple to use and can make a real difference to people in North Yorkshire.

Share your views with us.



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