

On equal terms

Then and now

Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen Annual Report 2020-21



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Message from our Chair

Whilst this year has been challenging for the team, Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen has adapted well to new ways of working and there has been a strong focus on collaboration with partners and stakeholders in Blackburn with Darwen and the wider Pennine Integrated Care Partnership area.

We have played an important role in both sharing information about Covid-19 and gathering people's views and experiences of health and social care services during this time as well as understanding the impact of living through the pandemic has had on our residents' physical health and emotional wellbeing.

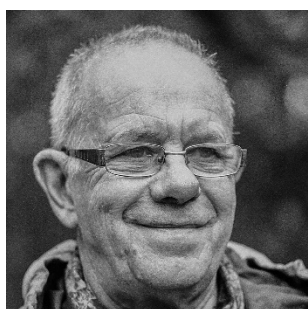
Key highlights of 2020/21 include:-

- A focus on lack of access to NHS dentistry services for new patients
- Understanding residents' experiences of remote GP appointments, particularly those least digitally engaged
- Gathering people's views and experiences of residential care during the pandemic

There has been a strong focus on collaboration throughout the pandemic and we are proud to have supported the hard efforts of our partners in both the statutory and voluntary sectors

We were also proud of our work with the other Healthwatch organisations in Lancashire and South Cumbria as "Healthwatch Together" and we have included an update on this work in this report.

I would like to thank our Directors, staff and volunteers for all their hard work and most importantly residents of Blackburn with Darwen for sharing their honest views and experiences with us, particularly during this very difficult time.



John Easton, Chair of Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen

About us

Here to make health and care better

We are the independent champion for people who use health and social care services in Blackburn with Darwen. We're 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 can 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.



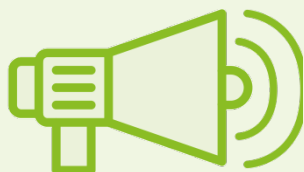
"Local Healthwatch have done fantastic work throughout the country during the COVID-19 pandemic, but there is more work ahead to ensure that everyone's views are heard. COVID-19 has highlighted inequalities and to tackle these unfair health differences we will need those in power to listen, to hear the experiences of those facing inequality and understand the steps that could improve people's lives."

Sir Robert Francis QC, Chair of Healthwatch England

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

1,673

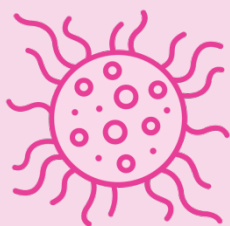
this year about their experiences of health and social care.

We provided advice and information to

312 people

this year.

Responding to the pandemic



We engaged with and supported

2,817

people during the COVID-19 pandemic this year.

Making a difference to care



We published

4 reports

about the improvements people would like to see to health and social care services. From this, we made 18 recommendations for improvement.

60% of recommendations

we made last year have been acted upon, at the point where we reviewed progress.

Health and care that works for you



10 volunteers

helped us to carry out our work. In total, they contributed X number of hours/days.

We employ 3 staff

All of whom are full time.

We received

£133,650 in funding

from our local authority in 2020-21, 10% less than the previous year.



Theme one: Then and now Dentistry



Then: access to NHS dental services – a focus on young people's oral health

Thanks to people sharing their experiences of dentistry we were able to help commissioners and providers identify the support families need to best look after their children's oral health.

Our 2019 report on young people's oral health was written in response to Blackburn with Darwen experiencing significantly worse children's dental health than the England average. We found that 11% of children and young people were not registered at a dentist and 12% of respondents (young people and parents) were not aware that NHS dentist is free for under 18's.

Recommendations from our report included:-

- Better promotion of oral health in children and young people, in particular those that are deemed as 'vulnerable'
- Education of new parents on when to first take their child to the dentist.
- Community education on the impact of diet and sugar consumption on oral health of children.
- Supervised brushing campaigns in early years settings and schools
- Education of parents to support supervised brushing at home



Now: Ongoing dentistry issues

Thanks to patients sharing their experience of dentistry during the pandemic, we have led the campaign to ensure that the issue of dentistry is right at the top of the worry list for NHS England. Making this issue a political and policy priority has been essential to ensuring the issues continue to be addressed.

The team at Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen carried out a 'mystery shopping exercise', calling every dental practice registered on NHS Choices website to understand the overall picture of accessibility to NHS dentists in the borough. We also gathered case study feedback from residents who called our information and signposting service to find out whether they had managed to access the support they needed.

Our report highlighted the following key issues:-

- People are being denied a right to NHS dentistry
- Children are not able to see a dentist at key points of their development – exacerbating the issue of poor children's dental health in the borough
- A lack of awareness of where people can get emergency support



"Hi, I need to register my 3 year old son with an NHS dentist - but there is literally none available?? What do I do?"

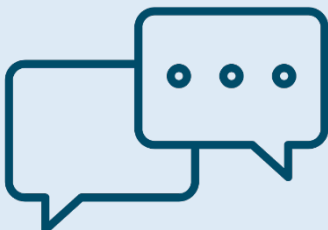
"...I'm thinking it's lucky we're in lockdown and I don't need to go anywhere and if I do I put on a face mask on, no one will see how bad my teeth are..."

Positive Outcomes from our 2019 report

The recommendations from our 2019 report on young people's oral health have been reflected in the 2021 Blackburn with Darwen Public Health Oral Health Strategy. This includes recommended actions of:-

- Integration of oral health into targeted home visits by health/social care workers
- Supervised tooth brushing in targeted childhood settings
- Targeted peer support groups/peer oral health workers
- Healthy food and drink policies in childhood settings

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 is here for you.



www.healthwatchblackburnwithdarwen.co.uk



01254 480002



info@healthwatchbwd.co.uk



Theme two: Then and now Accessing your local GP



Then: accessing your local GP

Being able to get an appointment with a GP has been a priority for Healthwatch since it was first established.

In 2015, the GP patient survey identified one in four people finding it difficult to book an appointment on the phone. In 2016 registering at the local GP was raised as a problem for a number of people, particularly those that were homeless.

In 2019, Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen's report on GP access highlighted the need for simpler ways to register with a GP, again highlighting the issue for our homeless and vulnerably housed community, and the need for support within the community for some of our residents (particularly the elderly, residents whose first language is not English and adults with learning disabilities and autism) to get online and access digital services. Our recommendations included:-

GPs offer support to residents to use online booking apps

GPs reassure their patients that face to face and telephone booking options will remain available for people who prefer these

The apps should use simple language supported by visual and audio options and include the ability to book translation and BSL services

There should be wider choice of appointment times and availability



Now: accessing your GP during the pandemic

The arrival of the pandemic has changed the way we access GPs, placing even more pressure on phone lines and larger reliance on technology at home. We decided to look into these issues after noticing increased levels of negative feedback both through our online feedback form and through comments on social media.

Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen carried out consultation with 3 target groups of residents considered to be “furthest from digital engagement” to understand their experiences of remote appointments – over 65s, residents whose first language is not English and adults with learning disabilities and autism.



“Absolutely appalling service from our GP practice for our autistic teenager who has a serious lung condition and a painful skin condition. 5 emails and 4 telephone appointments later, I had to finally arrange a face to face appointment for my shielding son.”

Key findings from this project were:-

Although remote appointments are easy to access for many of our residents, patients must have a choice over the type of appointment in order for their care to best meet their needs

The need for training and support for residents to access GP appointments online or remotely which was highlighted in our 2019 still remains an issue.

The need for translation services and BSL options in remote appointments/booking apps still needs addressing.



“There is no doubt that being able to do this saved a lot of time and effort and ensured that I got the treatment I needed but it's not the same as face to face ”

These findings have been reflected in a Healthwatch England report and as a result of people sharing their experiences, Healthwatch England are calling on the NHS England and NHS Improvement to conduct a formal review into how people are accessing their GP so that access can be made easier for all.

Locally, our findings have been shared with the Blackburn with Darwen Digital Inclusion Network (including statutory and voluntary sector partners) and with the Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care System Digital team.



To find out more > > >

www.healthwatchblackburnwithdarwen.co.uk

Healthwatch Together

Healthwatch Together, which brings together four Healthwatch - Blackpool, Blackburn with Darwen, Lancashire, and Cumbria – in a formal arrangement with a designated lead is unique among the country's 152 Healthwatch.

The major benefit of Healthwatch Together (HWT) is that our boundary is aligned with that of the ICS, and that is reflected in the nature of the commissioned projects.

As the independent arm of the health and social care system in Lancashire and South Cumbria, we are recognised as the local ICS's 'Engagement Partner'.

Throughout 2020, our expertise was sought to support focus groups, create and distribute surveys, and gather case studies. We are well known and trusted and as a strong and effective example of collaboration, we deliver on our promises and offer great value.

Our year-long 'How are you coping with the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic?' series of four surveys provided both the ICS in Lancashire and South Cumbria, and North Cumbria with timely and meaningful information to health and social care system partners.

In the past year, Healthwatch Together have co-produced a patient's charter with Morecambe Bay CCG's perioperative group; created surveys with Lancashire and South Cumbria Foundation Trust (LSCFT) to understand patients' use of digital consultations during the Covid-19 pandemic; gathered the experiences of patients discharged from hospital during the pandemic commissioned by the local government authority; worked with Lancashire and South Cumbria Elective Care Recovery Group to explore how patients felt about going to hospital for scheduled surgery.

Continuing Objectives

- **Facilitate conversations and to bring about co-produced solutions.**
- Engage and empower our communities to drive forward meaningful change in health and social care provision.
- To be widely recognised as a statutory, professional partnership. To speak with one voice and to provide real solutions to the challenges we face together.



**Healthwatch
Together**

Blackburn with Darwen,
Blackpool, Cumbria and
Lancashire working
in partnership



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 our local community by:

- Providing up to date advice on the COVID-19 response locally
- Linking people to reliable up-to-date information, including supporting the local Covid Community Champions programme
- Supporting the vaccine roll-out including consulting with over 600 18-30 year olds on their views on the vaccine
- Supporting the roll-out of the designated Covid-19 care home programme, ensuring this met both residents' and families' needs
- Helping people to access the services they need

Top four areas that people have contacted us about:



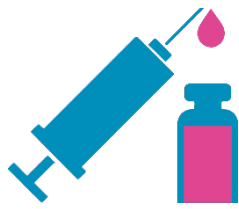
10% on GP services



75% on Dentistry



10% on Hospital Care



5% on Vaccines

Case Study



During the pandemic, Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen have worked closely with the NHS England dental team, signposting patients to the Lancashire Emergency Helpline for advice and support.

However, we received some calls from vulnerable adults who desperately needed oral health support. One gentleman was referred to us by Minds Matters because he was too embarrassed to show his counsellor the state of his teeth but this was exacerbating his mental health issues and causing him to stutter and require speech therapy support.

Healthwatch Blakburn with Darwen worked with the NHS England dental team to get him emergency access to a local dentist within a week.



Contact us to get the information you need

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 is here for you.

-  www.healthwatchblackburnwithdarwen.co.uk
-  **01254 480002**
-  **info@healthwatchbwd.co.uk**



Volunteers

At Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen we are supported by 10 volunteers to help us find out what people think is working, and what improvements people would like to make to services.

This year our volunteers:

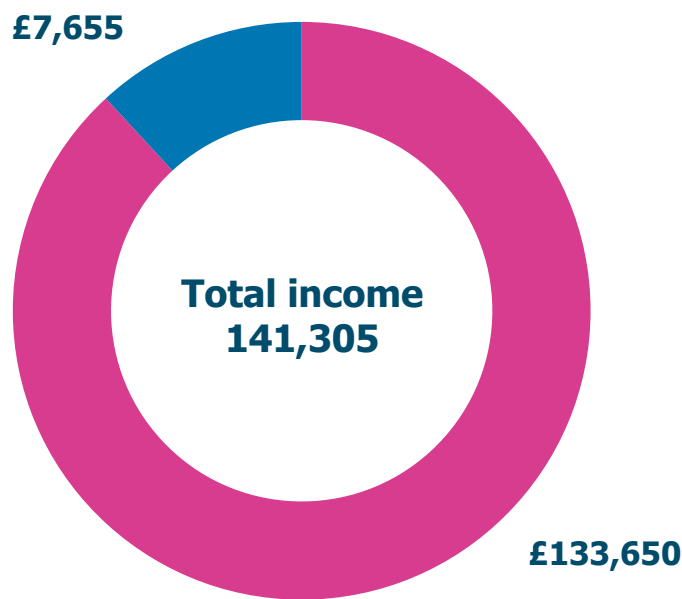
- Helped people have their say from home, carrying out surveys over the telephone and online.
- Created digital content on our websites and social media.
- Carried out mystery shopping exercise of access to NHS dentists

Finances

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

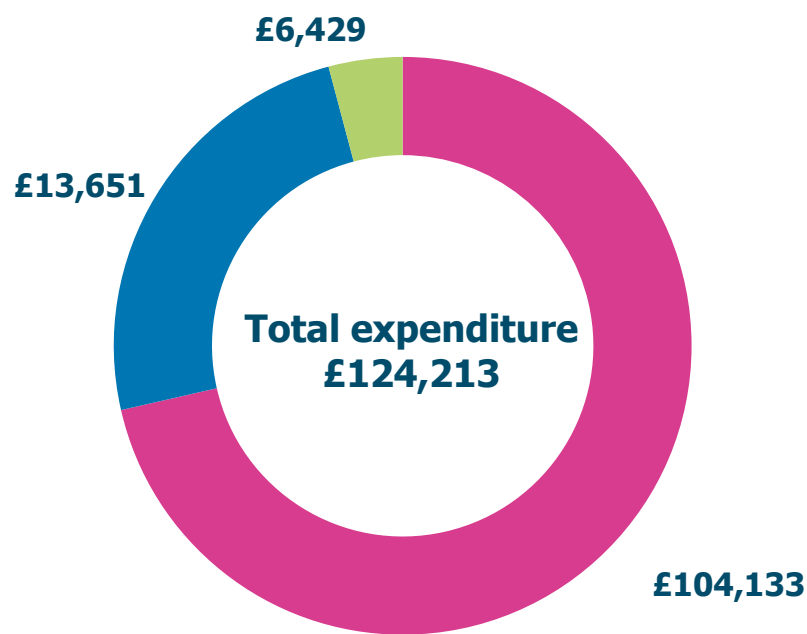
Income

- Funding received from local authority
- Additional funding



Expenditure

- Staff costs
- Operational costs
- Support and administration



Next steps & thank you

Top three priorities for 2021-22

- Restarting our Enter and View programme in residential care homes
- Engaging with young people in Blackburn with Darwen who have been significantly impacted by the ongoing restrictions in the borough
- Understanding the impact of long Covid on our residents, particularly those facing several health inequalities

Next steps

- We will complete our Healthwatch England Quality Framework assessment and develop an action plan to ensure the high quality of our provision and impact of our work.
- We will develop a new website which is more accessible for residents to access
- We will reframe our volunteer information and signposting provision to allow more people from all backgrounds to become "Healthwatch BwD champions" in their local area.



"Tackling unfair health differences will need those in power to listen. To hear the experiences of those facing inequality and understand the steps that could improve people's lives, and then to act on what has been learned."

Thank you

- I would like to thank our Board of Directors for their continued support and hard work with a clear focus on the future of the organisation.
- I would also like to thank our volunteers, including our work placement student from Blackburn College for donating their time across the year where they have been able to during this incredibly challenging time.
- The whole team at Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen are incredibly grateful to our voluntary sector partners for their continued support for our engagement projects, working together in the interests of the least heard and most vulnerable members of our community.

Sarah Johns, Chief Officer Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen



Statutory statements

About us

Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen, Unit 19 Eanam Wharf Business Centre, Eanam Wharf, Blackburn, BB1 5BL. Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen 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 six 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 six times and made decisions on matters such as ending a management service level arrangement to become a completely independent organisation and moving office to a more central location which can be better accessed by the public and volunteers.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities. We consult with the public each year on their priorities for our upcoming annual workplan through focus groups and surveys and using information gathered through our information and signposting activities.

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. This year we have done this by, for example, offering translation support for residents whose first language is not English to participate in our projects.

We ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. We publish it on our website www.healthwatchblackburnwithdarwen.co.uk

2020-21 priorities	
Project / activity area	Changes made to services
Access to NHS dentists	NHS England are piloting a flexible commissioning approach to meet the needs of vulnerable residents.
Remote access to GPs	NHS Digital are working with the voluntary sector locally to address training needs amongst residents
Complaints handling by East Lancashire Hospitals Trust	A new complaints panel has been established by the Trust, involving Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen and local advocacy services to review themes of complaints and better promote how to complain and showcase the Trust’s learning from complaints
Experiences of residential care during Covid-19	Pennine Regulated Care team to work more closely with Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen to gather residents’ and families’ experiences.

Responses to recommendations and requests

This year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we did not make use of our Enter and View powers. Consequently, no recommendations or other actions resulted from this area of activity.

There were no issues or recommendations escalated by our Healthwatch to Healthwatch England Committee and so no resulting special reviews or investigations.

Health and Wellbeing Board

Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen is represented on the Blackburn with Darwen Health and Wellbeing Board by Sarah Johns, Chief Officer. During 2020/21 our representative has effectively carried out this role by providing updates on Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen activities at each meeting.



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