

# Championing what matters to you

Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen  
Annual Report 2021-22



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# Message from our Chair

The Covid-19 pandemic continued to bring challenges for the Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen team, however we worked closely with partners from the health and social care sectors and the voluntary sector to share information about Covid-19 and gather people's views and experiences of accessing services during this period.

Key highlights of 2021/22 include:-

- A focus on people's experiences of long Covid
- Understanding residents' experiences of GP appointments during the pandemic
- Gathering people's views and experiences of residential care during the pandemic

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**



"The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown long-standing health inequalities into stark relief. With NHS and social care facing even longer backlogs, the unequal outcomes exposed by the pandemic are at risk of becoming worse. Local Healthwatch play an important role in helping to overcome these adversities and are uniquely placed to make a positive difference in their communities."

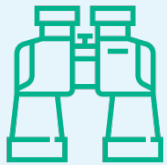
Sir Robert Francis QC, Chair of Healthwatch England



# About us

## Your health and social care champion

Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen is your local health and social care champion. We make sure NHS leaders and other decision makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care. We can also help you to find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.



### Our vision

Our vision is to be an independent voice for the people of Blackburn with Darwen, helping to shape and improve local health and social care services.



### Our mission

To provide honest feedback from people who have experiences of health and social care services to help identify what is working well and what needs to be improved; to help ensure local people are properly consulted in relation to all aspects of commissioning.



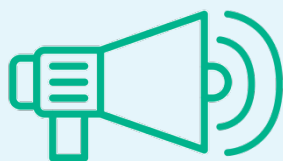
### Our values

- Listening to people and making sure their voices are heard.
- Including everyone in the conversation – especially those who don't always have their voice heard.
- Analysing different people's experiences to learn how to improve care.
- Acting on feedback and driving change.
- Partnering with care providers, Government, and the voluntary sector – serving as the public's independent advocate.

# Our year in review

Find out how we have engaged and supported people.

## Reaching out



**1,151 people**

Shared their experiences of health and social care services.

**73 people**

Came to us for clear advice and information about accessing a dentist in the local area.

**12 people**

Came to us for advice and about mental health and COVID-19.

## Making a difference to care



We published **8 reports**

about the improvements people would like to see to health and social care services.

Our most popular report was

**People's Experiences of Long Covid**

which highlighted the struggles people have accessing support for this condition in Blackburn with Darwen

## Health and care that works for you



We're lucky to have

**10**

outstanding volunteers, who gave up 45 days to make care better for our community.

We're funded by our local authority. In 2021-22 we received:

**£133,650**

Which is the same as the previous year.

We also currently employ

**6 staff**

who help us carry out this work.

## How we've made a difference throughout the year

These are the biggest projects we worked on from April 2021 to March 2022.

Spring



We maintained our advice lines to residents to help them navigate services during the pandemic



To support the COVID-19 vaccination programme we carried out a survey of over six hundred 18-30 year olds to understand their willingness to have the Covid-19 vaccination.

Summer



We supported Blackburn with Darwen Council's 'Covid Community Champions' programme, supporting students of Crosshill School to share key messages with friends and family



We supported the #BecauseWeAllCare campaign which saw 54,000 people come forward to tell us about issues they faced with services.

Autumn



We relaunched our Enter and View programme of visits to residential care homes in the borough, supported by our amazing volunteers.



We wrote to our local MP about the continuing issue of residents not being able to register as an NHS patient with a local dentist or being able to afford treatment.

Winter



We spoke with residents across Blackburn with Darwen and East Lancashire about their experiences of accessing primary care and Emergency Departments.



We gathered people's experiences of living with long Covid through both online surveys and face to face engagement..

# Listening to your experiences

Services can't make improvements without hearing your views.

That's why over the last year we have made listening to feedback from all areas of the community a priority. This allows us to understand the full picture, and feedback to services to help them improve



## Increasing support for residents living with long Covid

Thanks to people sharing their experience of living with long Covid, we have highlighted the need for better multi-disciplinary support, increased promotion of long Covid clinics and the importance of peer support programmes.

We gathered feedback from over 100 residents living with long Covid both online and through face to face workshops. Whilst 56% of respondents' symptoms improved within 9 months, 19% took 10-12 months to recover and 24% of respondents were experiencing Long Covid symptoms for over a year, including fatigue, brain fog, loss of mobility and anxiety.



**62% of people**

**we heard from did not receive a clinical diagnosis of long Covid.**

**77% of people**

**we heard from stated that long Covid had negatively impacted on their mental health**

Recommendations from our report included:-

- A more comprehensive screening and diagnosis process by GPs
- Increased promotion and availability of long Covid clinics
- Embedding care coordination in the GP assessment process
- Continued provision of a peer-led, clinician aided support group
- Provision of self-care information as to what to expect after acute Covid-19
- Better promotion of 'Your Covid Recovery' website
- Tailored and targeted communication and education on Long Covid for employers
- Local health and social care agencies to consider additional support for residents experiencing Long Covid who may be vulnerable

### What difference did this make

The report has been shared with Lancashire & South Cumbria ICS who are developing an action plan in response to our recommendations above.



"This was my first attempt to get help when I saw this survey."





## Making it easier to access Emergency Departments

Thanks to people sharing their experiences of accessing Emergency Departments during winter pressures, we were able to support Lancashire and South Cumbria Health and Care Partnership with winter planning, messaging and communication.

Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen engaged patients face to face in Emergency Departments provided by East Lancashire Hospitals Trust and through an online survey. The Trust was facing high pressures during this period with rising Covid-19 cases and a backlog of elective care.

Recommendations from feedback from patients were:-

Roll out of the booked appointment system across each of the settings.

- Increased promotion of the role of the Minor Injuries Units over weekends.
- Increased promotion of 111 phone and website including different languages
- Increased promotion of the role of community pharmacists



“The Minor Injuries Unit is more accessible than the GP and you get seen quickly”



### What difference did this make

We shared these findings with the A & E Delivery Board at East Lancashire Hospitals Trust and the Pennine 111 Programme Board. They acted on our recommendation to roll out the booked appointment system across each of their sites and reported good feedback from patients.

They also increased promotion of alternatives to Emergency Departments on social media.

## Three ways we have made a difference for the community

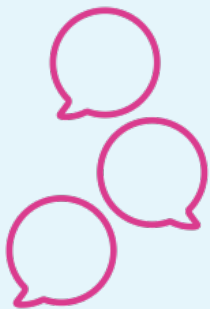
Throughout our work we gather information about health inequalities by speaking to people whose experiences aren't often heard.



### Creating empathy by bringing experiences to life

It's important for the NHS and social care services to step back and see the bigger picture, through hearing personal experiences, and the impact on people's lives. This provides a deeper understanding than using data alone, can challenge assumptions and motivate people to think and work more creatively.

We supported a local resident who had received a letter stating that he was in breach of the local hospital Trust's zero tolerance policy. By supporting him at a meeting with representatives from the Trust we were able to present his position and concerns about his treatment and they agreed to review both the wording and application of the policy.



### Getting services to involve the public

Services need to understand the benefits of involving local people to help improve care for everyone.

We supported Blackburn with Darwen Public Health team to gather feedback about the local health visitors and school nurses provision. This feedback is now being used to help shape the provision and its commissioning going forward.



### Improving care over time

Change takes time. We often work behind the scenes with health and care services to consistently raise issues and push for changes.

We have known about dental problems in the borough for a long time. In 2019 we published our report highlighting issues children's dental health and in 2021 we published a report highlighting the lack of access to NHS dentists in the borough. Last year we wrote to our local MP about the continued poor state of access to NHS dentists in the borough and have supported campaigns by Healthwatch England.

# Advice and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch is here for you. In times of worry or stress, we can provide confidential support and free information to help you understand your options and get the help you need. Whether it's finding an NHS dentist, how to make a complaint or choosing a good care home for a loved one – you can count on us.

This year we helped people by:

- Supporting the COVID-19 vaccination and booster programme
- Supporting people to access the services they need – in particular emergency dental care
- Helping residents to make a complaint about both access to services and treatment
- Signposting residents to both statutory and voluntary services who can support them



## Signposting people who needed additional support

During the last twelve months we have a number of calls from mental health support workers whose clients are struggling with poor dental health which has consequently impacted further on their mental health.

One care coordinator called us asking for advice on how to get help for her client who was a young mother and had been very sick during her pregnancy. Her teeth had become short stumps as a result of vomiting and although she was making great progress, she was too scared to leave home because of the state of her teeth and what people might think of her.

We spoke with the local NHS dental team and managed to arrange for her to be seen at a specialist dental surgery.



## Knowing your rights and who can support you

Healthwatch BwD is a member of the Blackburn with Darwen Learning Disability Partnership Board. We presented to the Board and a group of residents with learning disabilities and autism on what types of advocacy are available to them and who provides this support in the local area.

The presentation sparked a great conversation and we have continued to hold drop in sessions with a self advocacy group of adults with learning disabilities so that they have the skills and knowledge to signpost friends and family to support agencies.

We are now exploring a range of opportunities with the group on how we can champion together the needs and interests of adults with learning disabilities and autism within local health and social care settings.



# Volunteers

We're supported by a team of amazing volunteers who are the heart of Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen. Thanks to their efforts in the community, we're able to understand what is working and what needs improving in NHS and social care.

This year our volunteers:

- Helped people have their say from home, carrying out surveys over the telephone and online.
- Supporting creation of our newsletters
- Carried out telephone calls to local dentist services assessing their accessibility.
- Carried out Enter & View visits in residential care homes and reviewed the related reports prior to publication





**Liz**

"Through my role as a Healthwatch BwD volunteer I am able to significantly influence change in health and social care. I am passionate about giving a voice to those who are seldom heard in society and improve someone's quality of experience for the better. Volunteering with Healthwatch enables me to make that difference and I feel valued and supported in all the activities that I undertake."



**Michelle**

"I recently retired from my role within the NHS and really missed my work helping people and the rewards that brings. The role of Enter and View volunteer has given me this back, particularly engaging with members of our community who are most vulnerable. I really believe working together with teams in a supportive way is the best way to achieve results."



**Trisha**

"I'd worked in health all my life and wanted to put my expertise to good use in a volunteer role. I had poor experiences of adult social care for my parents and I know from a family member's perspective what good should look and feel like! I find it really rewarding being able to give feedback through Enter and Views to help others make informed decisions about their loved one's care."



**Do you feel inspired?**

We are always on the lookout for new volunteers, so please get in touch today.



[Contact us – Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen](#)



**01254 480002**



[Info@healthwatchbwd.co.uk](mailto:Info@healthwatchbwd.co.uk)



# Finance and future priorities

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

Income		Income	
Funding received from local authority	£133,650	Staff costs	£96,872
Additional funding	£30,770	Operational costs	£23,270
		Support and administration	£3,714
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£164,420</b>	<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>£123,856</b>

## Top three priorities for 2022–23

1. Youth Voice in Healthcare
2. People’s Experiences of Accessing Support for Substance Misuse
3. Travellers’ Experience of Accessing Health & Social Care Services

## Next steps ....

The pandemic has shone a stark light on the impact of existing inequalities when using health and care services, highlighting the importance of championing the voices of those who all too often go unheard.

Over the coming years, our goal is to help reduce these inequalities by making sure your voice is heard, and decision makers reduce the barriers you face, regardless of whether that’s because of where you live, income or race.

# Working in partnership across the northwest: Healthwatch Together

Healthwatch Together is a dynamic collaborative which brings together four local Healthwatch across Lancashire, South Cumbria, Blackpool and Blackburn with Darwen.

The collaborative draws together the experience of engagement professionals, to expand the reach and impact of Healthwatch's presence in the region, to connect with more communities, hear more experiences and support more far-reaching improvements.

This year has been another highly impactful year for the collaborative with work that has taken the team across the Lancashire and South Cumbria footprint whilst formalising a new approach to leadership.

## Meet our new Strategic Lead: an innovative role

Working in partnership since 2018, 2022 marks a key milestone for the collaborative in the appointment of a Strategic Lead, Rimpay Batta. Rimpay has joined the team to drive the collaboration forward, leading on project activity in partnership with Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care System (ICS). Healthwatch Together is proud to be one of the first Healthwatch collaborations in England to appoint a specific position to lead on its strategic work with the ICS.

*"Healthwatch Together supports the ICS to design and deliver its engagement strategy, ensuring engagements are fully inclusive and hear the voices of its diverse local population and the communities it serves. People's experiences and insights are then embedded within its decision-making processes"*



**Rimpay Batta**  
Healthwatch Together  
Strategic Lead

 "I am looking forward to leading the collaborative and working with local populations in partnership with the Integrated Care System to ensure people's voices are embedded in the design and delivery of our local services"



# Healthwatch Together: Our work

Working together, sharing expertise, Healthwatch Together delivered a varied programme of projects this year, each designed to connect the views of local people with the services they use.

Here are two examples of the collaborative in action and outcomes we have achieved:



# New Hospitals Programme



Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen as part of Healthwatch Together, helped to facilitate and encourage patient and public involvement in the Lancashire and South Cumbria New Hospitals Programme (NHP).

The programme is aiming to enhance the region's hospitals and services, to provide excellent and connected hospital care for local people.

Healthwatch Together's role was to ensure that the local community were able to share their thoughts on a longlist of proposals for future investment, to identify the most and least preferred and collect this feedback to inform the next phase of this programme.

## Recommendations:

Based on this engagement, Healthwatch Together made a series of recommendations designed to further involve the public in the development of their local facilities. These included:

- Targeted efforts need to be made to address the concerns of seldom heard groups
- Consider the questions asked by the public and ensure that the public are kept informed
- Use the data collected on the longlist of proposals to inform the shortlisting process.



# 889

people shared their views

## The impact:

We connected the views of 889 local people from across Lancashire and South Cumbria to the New Hospitals process.

796 of these connected with us through 16 public roadshow events and a further 93 participants from 9 focus groups, covering 10 protected characteristics:

- Gypsy Roma and Irish Traveller communities
- Those who are homeless
- Substance Misuse, dual diagnosis and offending behaviours
- Rural & farming communities
- Long-term conditions
- Deaf & hard of hearing communities
- Single parents
- Unemployment or low income
- Mental Health Services

## We heard views including:

"We desperately need more Parkinson's nurses. We currently only have two nurses for the whole of Lancashire and Cumbria and they can't cope. Currently they have 650 patients to support between them across the region."

"People with neurological conditions are frightened by change – consistency is important – hence this will be a challenge for people if they have to attend a new hospital facility."



# Making a difference to emergency settings

Healthwatch Together engaged with members of the public across Lancashire and South Cumbria to understand patient experience and presentation at Emergency Departments, Urgent Treatment Centres and Walk-In Centres.

The project was organised to help local services discover the most suitable methods of communication for their patients and to understand a sample of the public's views on the role of emergency departments within their care.

Together, we visited 17 sites and spoke to 565 people including 44 case studies and 16 focus groups. Based on these conversations, we produced a set of reports that are now influencing improvements across our area.

## The impact so far:

### Urgent care

The Urgent and Emergency Care Network that comprises of the NHS clinical leads from across Lancashire and South Cumbria are using the reports to inform their operational plans for 2022-23.

### The Northwest Ambulance Service and NHS England Improvement

The Northwest Ambulance Service are looking at the patient experience of NHS 111 and NHS England Improvement have shared the reports with their regional Health and Equalities Unit so they can be collated with the findings from across the other two Integrated Care Sectors (Greater Manchester and Cheshire & Merseyside).

### NHS Communications

NHS communication leads in Clinical Commissioning Groups and Trusts are creating action plans to improve local communications based on feedback from people

### Primary Care sub cell for Lancashire and South Cumbria

The group have said they will look at the primary care and pharmacy recommendations made by HWT and work with secondary care colleagues too as there is some crossover between the findings.



## Feedback from the NHS:

"The Healthwatch Together team worked hard to understand the brief and then held multiple Face-to-face conversations in our Urgent & Emergency Care sites across the region, as well as online and by telephone, to deliver valuable insight that will help shape our operational planning for 2022-23."

"We're grateful to Healthwatch Together for the localised approach they were able to take.

The variety of patient experience feedback that was captured allows us to really listen to and then act upon what our communities are telling us and we can focus on working as a partnership to deliver the best services possible across Urgent & Emergency Care."

Laura Harvie Senior Communications and Engagement Manager Lancashire and South Cumbria Communications and Engagement Team

# 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 2021/22 the board met 7 times and made decisions on matters such as the workplan for 2022/23 and a skills audit for new board members.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities. We carry out surveys with residents about their health and social care priorities both in person and online. We use insight from our information and signposting enquiries and we discuss priorities with representatives of both the statutory and voluntary sectors through several forums of which we are members.

### **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 2021/22 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, attending drop in breakfasts for the homeless and visiting the local travellers' camp.

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 and social media and share it via our newsletter and through partners.

### **Responses to recommendations and requests**

We had no providers who did not respond to requests for information or recommendations.

Our Enter and View activity in the year was focused on visiting a range of sizes and types of residential care provision and all reports are shared with the CQC and the Council's Quality Assurance team.

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 2021/22 our representative has effectively carried out this role by attending all meetings and sharing updates on Healthwatch BwD activity.

### 2021-2022 Outcomes

Project / Activity Area	Changes made to services
Engagement on uptake of the Covid-19 vaccine amongst young adults	Changes made to messaging about the vaccine to make it more appropriate and effective for a younger audience.
Engagement with young people and families about the health visitor and school nurse provision	The provision is being reshaped to best meet the needs of families and young people highlighted in their feedback
Engagement with young people about the Mental Health in Schools team offer	Better promotion of the service in schools, increase young people's voice within the provision to ensure it continues to meet their needs.
Engagement with residents on access to primary care	Review of accessibility and availability of face to face appointments being carried out.
Engagement with residents experiencing long Covid	Better promotion of services available to support residents experiencing long Covid, and increased multidisciplinary working to support their needs.
Engagement with South Asian women on uptake of physio support	Better promotion of the service in different languages and a more person centred approach to engaging women in the offer.
Enter and View visits to local residential care homes	Improvements to the physical environment within the homes, changes made to ensure a better dining experience (lunchtime supervisor role created), and changes to management.



**healthwatch**  
Blackburn with Darwen

Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen

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