

The value of listening

Healthwatch Doncaster
Annual Report 2023–2024



healthwatch
Doncaster

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"Over the last year, local Healthwatch have shown what happens when people speak up about their care, and services listen. They are helping the NHS unlock the power of people's views and experiences, especially those facing the most serious health inequalities."

Louise Ansari, Chief Executive at Healthwatch England



Message from our Chair



In November last year I found myself taking the on the role of Acting Chair of Healthwatch Doncaster (HWD). While this was unexpected, the challenge ahead is one in which I and the board members revel.

At a time where there are many changes of structure in how the Place committee and SY ICB (South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board) continue their ways of working together, Healthwatch has remained a constant ear listening to the voices of the (extremely varied) Doncaster citizen.

This year Doncaster Council has produced the Plan on a Page and this has been completed in partnership with us. It's a great demonstration of the partnership working that we have with external stakeholders and the value we add.

Our small but tremendous team have reached out and engaged with many underserved communities during the twelve months, which means that we are in a place to see developing trends - and to make sure we are able to help shape the system. This will be even more important over the next few years.

At SY ICP level, we sit on the board - making sure that the voice of Doncaster people is heard at South Yorkshire level. And through this we have made sure that the board's agenda has incorporated the feedback to all citizens, holding them accountable to our communities.

Our simple but effective communications make a difference to our citizens. To take just one example, our weekly communication regarding which dentists were taking on NHS patients took away the stress for people having to ring round them all.

We are ready for the coming year where we will continue to be that voice of the people and communicate all things Health and Wellbeing.

Jon Finegold

Acting Chair of Healthwatch Doncaster



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jon Finegold', with a horizontal line underneath.



About us



Healthwatch Doncaster is your local health and social care champion.

We make sure NHS leaders and 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

A world where we can all get the health and care we need.



Our mission

To make sure people's experiences help make health and care better.



Our values are:

- **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.



Year in review



Reaching out:

719 people

shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.

77 people

came to us for clear advice and information about topics such as mental health and the cost-of-living crisis.



Making a difference to care:

We published

4 reports

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

The report we liked the most was

Ward 24 Gastroenterology Enter & View

which highlighted the struggles people face while on a hospital ward.



Health and social care that works for you:

We're lucky to have

18

outstanding volunteers who gave up 103 hours of their time to make care better for our community.

We're funded by our local authority.
In 2023 - 24 we received

£175,734

which is the same as the previous year.

We currently employ

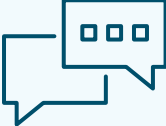







4 staff

who help us carry out our work.



How we've made a difference this year



Spring	 <p>We joined our local Ukrainian gardening club to hear their experiences of local healthcare.</p>	 <p>Gained feedback from people and their family/carers at Doncaster's Dementia Awareness Day.</p>
Summer	 <p>Delivered a health fair in Hexthorpe, by working in partnership with local organisations local people are better supported and informed.</p>	 <p>Shared people's experiences of primary care at the Health and Care Select Committee.</p>
Autumn	 <p>We listened to people about their experiences at local pharmacies, which influenced national data.</p>	 <p>Conducted an evaluation of the Public Health Checks service for Severely Mentally Ill.</p>
Winter	 <p>Attended emergency services during industrial action to speak to patients on how they felt this affected their care.</p>	 <p>Utilised social media to raise awareness of alternative provisions in healthcare over winter.</p>

Your voice heard at a wider level



We collaborate with other Healthwatch's to ensure the experiences of people in South Yorkshire influence decisions made about services at NHS South Yorkshire Integrated Care System (ICS) level.

This year we've worked as Healthwatch across Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield to achieve:



Making sure your voice was heard as part of the Integrated Care Partnership Strategy, "It Starts with People" and hosting Community Conversations where we asked the question "What matters to you about your health and wellbeing?" . Between us we heard from around 800 people whose views have helped influence the NHS South Yorkshire 5 year plan.

Better outcomes for our underserved communities in South Yorkshire. By working in partnership with our ICS, NHS England and Healthwatch England we are looking at inequalities within the deaf community and how we can make it easier for them to access health and social care. As part of this, we highlighted the lack of BSL interpreting in opticians, and the NHS are now working with opticians to improve awareness of their duties to provide this.



Making sure that the public views and experiences of dentistry are heard by decision makers. We take our intelligence and feedback on local dentistry to our ICS and also to the South Yorkshire Local Dental Network. In November we presented what we've heard at an NHS South Yorkshire Dental event, highlighting the dire state of NHS dentistry and the real consequences for people across our area.

"Our Healthwatch partners in South Yorkshire work tirelessly to ensure the voice of people from Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield influences health and care services. They are particularly crucial to the system in their ability to ensure we hear from our most underserved communities. They effectively balance working with us as partners and holding us to account where necessary, and are a very important cog in our system." – **Katy Davison, Deputy Director of Involvement, NHS South Yorkshire ICB**





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 feed this back to services and help them improve.



GP access is the area of interest people talk about, feedback on and query the most nationwide so when one local resident approached us in regards to registering with their local GP practice we wanted to make sure she was being treated equally and equitably.

Jacqui* had come from overseas to the UK and has long-term health conditions which were being successfully managed back home with medication. Since moving to the UK she has struggled with being able to access any GP or primary care service who would prescribe her monthly repeat medication to help her remain well. She was informed by her local GP practice to register she would require ID and proof of address however we know this is not the case thanks to Doctors of the World and their yellow card scheme. Their yellow card scheme states no one has to provide ID, proof of address or states the needs of the patient, for example if they will need help filling in forms or with reading and understanding.

As an organisation we supported Jacqui and accompanied her to visit her local practice with a yellow card. With our help she was not turned away and the practice offered her a registration form which we helped her complete. It took two weeks for the practice to complete registration which is the average wait time in our area and Jacqui now has access to her local GP.

One Enter & View visit led to the implementation of dementia clocks across all wards at Doncaster Bassetlaw Hospital Trust sites.

When conducting a site visit on Ward 24 at Doncaster Bassetlaw Teaching Hospital (DBTH) the Enter & View team noticed that there were no dementia clocks placed throughout the ward. The team were concerned about the effect this would have on patients who may have a diagnosis of dementia or may have the early symptoms of dementia whilst already being in a hectic and uncertain environment like the hospital.

When we raised our concerns through our Enter & View report the clinical staff were really supportive and welcomed the implementation of the dementia clocks on their ward. From this a further conversation happened with the Head of Patient Experience at DBTH, Grace Mhora, and the hospital trust have committed to ensuring all wards have dementia clocks present to ensure a better experience.

What difference does a dementia clock make?

- Help anyone with memory loss remain grounded
- Reduces stress and anxiety for the patient as they can clearly read the date and time
- Helps caregivers establish a routine
- Display task reminders helps to keep the user focused
- Voice prompts help with medication administration

Evaluation of Public Health Check (PHC)s' for people who are Severely Mentally Ill (SMI).

In autumn 2023, we were commissioned by South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board to independently review and evaluate their health check service for people who are severely mentally ill prior to a new commissioning cycle taking place.

Why are PHCs' needed in SMI patients?

Evidence shows that the life expectancy of people with SMI is decreased by 15–20 years in comparison to the general population. This disparity in health outcome is partly due to physical health needs being overlooked.

Public Health Checks include:

1. a measurement of weight (BMI or BMI + Waist circumference)
2. a blood pressure and pulse check (diastolic and systolic blood pressure recording + pulse rate)
3. a blood lipid including cholesterol test (cholesterol measurement or QRISK measurement)
4. a blood glucose test (blood glucose or HbA1c measurement)
5. an assessment of alcohol consumption
6. an assessment of smoking status

The new service commissioned will offer an additional set of services which will involve increasing appointment times, these appointments will take into consideration care planning, nutrition/diet, substance misuse, a medication review and access to national cancer screening programmes.

The evaluation included a series of activities to capture people's experiences this included;

- Working closely with the People Focused Group's Community Wardens to gain people's personal experiences of PHCs'.
- Gained a presence on the People Focused Group's online forum so people could share their stories anonymously if they wished to.
- Attended two Public Health Check clinics in the north of Doncaster to speak to people whilst at their health check.
- Interviewed a wide range of senior stakeholders to gain their views on PHC's for SMI patients.

Feedback from patients

- Good experience of PHCs' when used but unsure of their purpose
- Hardly anyone aware of outcomes or care plan from their PHC
- Where an introduction to a VCFSE organisation for support such as; the People Focused Group and Doncaster Mind patient really value this

Recommendations:

- Coordination role essential to prevent lapses in eligibility ensuring that no one is left without the necessary care
- Work better together with other delivery partners such as GP's.
- Strengthen VCFSE input to increase uptake in PHC
- PHC should take place in a setting that is comfortable for the person attending the appointment
- Employ a clinician who can review blood tests/ECG results and can execute the next steps for the patient
- Invitations for the PHC should be made accessible in line with the Accessibility Information Standard plus multi-lingual translations.

Our golden threads of engagement which contribute to the diverse tapestry of Doncaster where positive change happens.

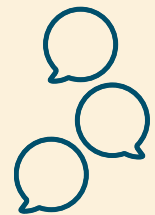
Primary Care Voice Partnership

Primary Care is at the heart of any patient's care journey, covering general practitioner care, dentistry, ophthalmology and pharmacology. It provides the long-term sustainable health care any patient needs to live well with the ability to connect the patient with specialist secondary care if required. The Primary Care Voice Partnership allows us to be able to bring together professionals and people in the same room to share feedback and enhance understanding of services which is an opportunity we began to cultivate in 2023 and has flourished into 2024. Our partnership with the SYICB has enabled us to have guest speakers such as: community pharmacists, general practitioners and dentists all sharing their expertise on how patients can access the right service for their health need at the right time.



Health Ambassadors

Our health ambassadors programme brings together our local underserved communities so collectively as one voice we can tackle health inequalities in Doncaster. The communities represented include: deaf, LGBTQ+, veterans, sex workers, partially sighted plus more. South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board have an open seat within these meetings so as our local commissioner they can hear first hand the challenges our communities face and where service need is required to help. By being present, actively listening and working with us at Healthwatch Doncaster real change does happen.



Happy to Help Drop-In

As we look ahead we always reflect on what local people have shared with us over the previous year. A common theme shared was around people wanting to speak to us face-to-face for signposting support and to talk through their issue rather than having to contact us through a faceless medium. With this in mind we are going back to what we do best, face-to-face drop-in sessions where people can come and every conversation will start with 'Hello, how can I help?' Of course there'll be plenty of tea, coffee and biscuits, after all our engagement team are fuelled by them! We want everyone to feel listened to, supported and to have their voices heard in 2024.





Hearing from all communities

Over the past year, we have worked hard to make sure we hear from everyone within our local area. We consider it important to reach out to the communities we hear from less frequently to gather their feedback and make sure their voice is heard, and services meet their needs.

This year we have reached different communities by:

- Extending our working day to attend community groups.
- Connecting with our local sexual health provider to hear from our sex worker community.
- Utilising the model of sharing a patient story to our local PLACE committee to highlight real lived experience.

Community Conversations



In 2023 we delivered a South Yorkshire wide project around 'What matters to you about your Health and Wellbeing?' to help develop the Joint Forward Plan. We've since revisited this project in early 2024 to see whether people's views remained the same or whether the plan needed to be changed one year forward.

The majority of our engagement was delivered through community conversations which involved sitting down with local communities and allowing them to have their voices heard through guided conversations. Communities we connected with included: ethnic minorities, deaf, partially sighted, people in recovery, LGBTQ+, sex workers, young people plus many more.

As a result of the Joint Forward Plan these commitments were made:

- Expand the workforce in GP and Dentistry to improve appointment access
- Develop family hubs as a one-stop shop for families and carers in our local communities
- Improve services for Children and Young People to help reduce waiting times in terms of mental health, learning disability and autism support
- Working with partners to make sure everyone is aware of transport support such as: reimbursement scheme to help with paying for patient transport or parking when accessing services

Good conversation is here to stay



Our local communities loved the opportunity to have a real conversation with our engagement team. This led us to adopt the community conversation as part of our everyday engagement to gain valuable real time insights on how local people feel about local health and social care in Doncaster.

This model also helps to bring to light some of the hidden voices. Surprisingly we've found that the aging well population have struggled to voice their issues, but Healthwatch Doncaster have dedicated the time and support to become the listening ear our communities need to access the support and signposting they need as and when required. Feedback below from our aging well community:

"We want health professionals to do Department for Work and Pension assessments."

"[GP] Practice complains to patients about missed appointments even though the patient can't get through on the telephony system to let them know they are unable to attend."



Advice and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch Doncaster 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, signposting to local services or choosing a good care home for a loved one – you can count on us.

This year we've helped people by:

- Providing up-to-date information people can trust
- Helping people access the services they need
- Helping people access NHS dentistry
- Supporting people to look after their health during the cost-of-living crisis

Dentistry in Doncaster



Dentist services in Doncaster are at breaking point every week we hear from people struggling to access services to help with oral health issues.

Our local solution

We are strongly solution focussed and wanted to provide our local population with something that supports them best when struggling to find a dentist that can offer them treatment or check-up dependent on need, so we developed an active list which is regularly updated of which dentists are available to support local people.

We will continue to help local people to find appropriate dental support. Our dental list will provide knowledge of availability on non-urgent check-up and treatment with local dentists providing NHS care for both adults and children. As always when a patient requires emergency care we will direct them to NHS 111 so they are seen as soon as possible.

Connecting people at Christmas



During winter and especially through Christmas some of our most vulnerable communities require extra support to help them thrive rather than survive.

We launched our 'Don't be alone this Christmas' campaign utilising our healthwatch elf Hagrietta who visited local places to share with people places they could go to, to be better connected and warm over the festive season. Opportunities included: a community Christmas dinner, how to reach out to the Samaritans and where to join in the festive penguin trail across the city.

Within the campaign we also developed an informative sheet on what local health and wellbeing services were available to people when normal services were closed over Christmas and New Year. It featured: pharmacies, mental health support, alternative health care provision to A&E. This resource was also translated into the top 6 languages most spoken within our communities in Doncaster.



Don't Be Alone This Christmas

If you need someone to talk to the **Samaritans** are there to listen. Any time, Day or Night. You can call from any phone for FREE

Call 116 123

healthwatch





Volunteering

We're supported by a team of amazing volunteers who are at the heart of what we do. Thanks to their efforts in the community, we're able to understand what is working and what needs improving.

This year our volunteers:

- Raised the profile of Healthwatch Doncaster by attending NHS Improvement week event, Patient Participation Group meetings and community event's
- Influenced the following literature with Doncaster Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals: Visitors charter, Pressure Ulcers, PALS poster and patient letters, Patient Safety Incident Response Framework and mixed sex accommodation policy.
- Supported the engagement sessions of the merger for Oakwood surgery and Bawtry & Blyth Medical Centre. The merger is very close to being completed, we've followed this up with a meeting with their business manager and practice partner.



"I have been involved with Doncaster Healthwatch since the Summer of 2020, at the height of the Covid pandemic. All volunteer meetings were held online and engagement with patients was suspended. From my perspective, finding out what matters to people when accessing healthcare in Doncaster is the most interesting part of the volunteer role and that happens best in a face-to-face context. I have recently trained to become an Authorised Representative and I am involved in the programme of Enter and View visits to healthcare settings where NHS services are provided. I would like to broaden my experience of the Enter and View process, so I can make a more informed contribution to service improvement."



Julia

Favourite place: Kronvalda Park, Rīga, Latvija.



"I enjoy meeting people and being part of the Enter and View project involves this. It is very satisfying to feel that we can make a difference and improve conditions for the people of Doncaster. I also enjoy the Primary Care Voice Partnership meetings as they give valuable information as to what is happening in Doncaster in the NHS and it is useful to be able to pass the information on."



Jean

Favourite Place: My garden

Do you feel inspired?



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

 www.healthwatchdoncaster.org.uk/volunteer

 **01302 965450**

 info@healthwatchdoncaster.org.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.

Our income and expenditure

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from Government	£175,734	Expenditure on pay	£138,016
Additional income	£24,010	Non-pay expenditure	£11,517
		Office and management fees	£41,854
Total income	£199,744	Total expenditure	£191,387

Additional income is broken down by:



- £2,500 received from Healthwatch England for work on a Primary Care Project – Pharmacy What People Want.
- £350 from HWE bursary
- £7,000 received from the local ICS.
- £14,160 funding received from SYICS Place for a project Evaluation of Severe Mental Illness Public

ICS funding

Healthwatch across South Yorkshire also receives funding from our Integrated Care System (ICS) to support new areas of collaborative work at this level, including:

Purpose of ICS funding	Amount
South Yorkshire Insight Bank	£7,000

Next steps



Over the next year, we will keep reaching out to every part of society, especially people in the most deprived areas, so that those in power hear their views and experiences.

We will also work together with partners and our local Integrated Care System to help develop an NHS culture where, at every level, staff strive to listen and learn from patients to make care better.

Our top three priorities for the next year are:

1. Mental Health and Wellbeing.
2. Local solutions and helping to build towards a healthier Doncaster.
3. Raise awareness of Healthwatch Doncaster so we can help the population of Doncaster have their voice heard and shape services in the best possible way.



Statutory statements

Healthwatch Doncaster

8D Cavendish Court, South Parade, Doncaster. DN1 2DJ

Healthwatch Doncaster 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 4 members who work on a voluntary basis to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny of our activities. Our Board ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community.

Throughout 2023/24, the Board met 5 times and discussed matters such as: governance and income generation.

Methods and systems used across the year to obtain people's experiences

We use a wide range of approaches to ensure that as many people as possible can provide us with insight into their experience of using services. During 2023/24, we have been available by phone, and email, provided a web form on our website and through social media, as well as attending meetings of community groups and forums.

We 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 with local stakeholders.

Responses to recommendations

We had 0 providers who did not respond to requests for information or recommendations. There were no issues or recommendations escalated by us to Healthwatch England Committee, so no resulting reviews or investigations.

Taking people's experiences to decision makers

We ensure that people who can make decisions about services hear about the insights and experiences that have been shared with us.

In our local authority area, for example, we take information to PLACE committee, Primary Care Operational Group and Patient Experience Involvement Committee at Doncaster Bassetlaw Teaching Hospital Trust.

We also take insight and experiences to decision makers in South Yorkshire Integrated Care System. For example, we are represented at the South Yorkshire Integrated Care Partnership in collaboration with our regional Healthwatch's and we are all represented by Healthwatch Sheffield. We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

Enter and view



This year, we made 1 Enter and View visit. We made 5 recommendations or actions as a result of this activity.

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
Doncaster Bassetlaw Teaching Hospital – Ward 24 Gastroenterology	Request for an independent review	Report produced with a series of recommendations for consideration.

Healthwatch representatives



Healthwatch Doncaster is represented on the Doncaster Health and Wellbeing Board by Fran Joel – Chief Operating Officer. During 2023/24 our representative has effectively carried out this role by representing the local voice of Doncaster and ensuring their needs are met through strategic conversation.. Topics of discussion have included: our local deaf community, Doncaster’s dementia strategy and carers to name a few.


2023 – 2024 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
Primary Care – Pharmacy What People Want Pharmacy Interviews	People and staff had their voices heard which in turn influenced a three-tier approach of recommendations which included; request for improvement to the Prepayment certificates for prescriptions, public feedback to be involved in future evaluations, internal IT systems to be enhanced and pharmacy first to be expanded.
Ward 24 Gastroenterology Enter & View	Better communication between health professionals and patients, implementation of dementia clocks and sister walk rounds to enhance buzzer/walking aids/hydration accessibility on the ward.
Community Conversations	Partnership work with local hospital to improve communication at multiple levels including; outpatients check in, patient care and ensuring the hospital is compliant with the Accessible Information Standard.

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