



# Together

we're making health  
and social care better

Annual Report 2022–23

**healthwatch**  
Stoke on Trent

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"In the last ten years, the health and social care landscape has changed dramatically, but the dedication of local Healthwatch hasn't. Your local Healthwatch has worked tirelessly to make sure the views of local people are heard, and NHS and social care leaders use your feedback to make care better."

Louise Ansari, Healthwatch National Director

# Message from our Chair

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I am honoured to continue in my role of Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent Chair with this being my tenth year in this vital position. Our local Healthwatch is here to listen to your health and care stories and share these with the people who plan, buy and provide these services.

As we entered into 2022, with the pandemic officially behind us our optimism was tested with war in Ukraine and the subsequent arrival of people fleeing the conflict, huge rises in energy costs and the cost-of-living crisis plus industrial action across many sectors including our NHS services.

We have seen NHS waiting lists grow as demand for services post pandemic grows framed with periods of disruption that sees many people's treatment further delayed, allied with difficult decisions people are having to make in the face of financial challenges.

I'm proud that Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent continues its tireless work after absorbing budget cuts ensuring we address your concerns. Our aim isn't just to "catch people doing it wrong" and so we have also endeavored to compliment when we hear stories of good practice and excellent customer service. We have also sought to make sure that we connect with those underrepresented groups within our communities as we know their voice is likely often not heard by service professionals and decision makers.

It is impossible to detail all our work in this report, so only the highlights are included. If you wish to discuss any aspects of our work, then please do contact our staff team. If our work inspires you, why not volunteer with us, please get in touch for more details.

Finally, thank you to all our Healthwatch staff members and volunteers plus all who have supported and contributed to the work of Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent. I look forward to continuing our work in these ongoing challenging times.



**Lloyd Cooke – Chair of Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent**

# About us

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## Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent 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.



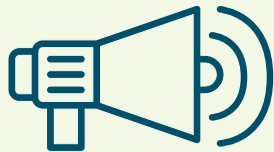
### Our values are:

- **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

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## Reaching out



**1,127 people**

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

**34,029 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

**2 reports**

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

Our most popular report was

**Dentistry Report**

which highlighted the struggles people face on accessing an NHS dentist.



## Health and care that works for you



We're lucky to have

**8**

outstanding volunteers who gave up 28 days to make care better for our community.

We're funded by our Local Authority. In 2022-23 we received

**£128,463** which is 15.7% less than the previous year.

From November 2022 the funding reduced to £91,750 per year.

We currently employ

**1.6 FTE staff**

who help us carry out our work. An additional +0.6 staff are funded via funds carried forward from efficiencies.

# Year in review

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## Social Media

**31,598 people**

followed our social media pages across platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Across our posts there were a total of

**139,787 views**

and an additional

**4,340 interactions**

Including likes, reactions, comments and shares.

## Website

Over the year, we joined the rest of the local Healthwatch network in updating our website to the latest version.

In 2022 – 23 we had

**29,689 people**

who visited our website for news, advice and guidance.

Across our website there was a total of

**55,987 page views**

## Newsletters

This year we have published

**38 newsletters**




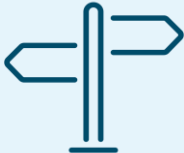




which inform subscribers of any Healthwatch updates along with any additional local and national health-related news, awareness days and events.

Our newsletters get sent out to

**308 subscribers**

and the commissioners of local services.

# How we've made a difference this year

Spring	 <p>We carried out statistical research into Long-Term Condition(s) (LTC) following engagement to determine people's main concerns about services to manage LTC's.</p>	 <p>We carried out a virtual visit to the Fracture clinic at Royal Stoke hospital and alerted hospital managers about key issues we picked up.</p>
Summer	 <p>We created and promoted our Dental survey and supported individuals to seek out and access dental services.</p>	 <p>We signposted residents seeking to complain about various services across the city and supported some individuals needing additional support.</p>
Autumn	 <p>We published our report on dentistry services and alerted commissioners about what needs to change based upon our findings.</p>	 <p>We attended 34 community outreach events and promoted our Long-Term Condition(s) (LTC) project.</p>
Winter	 <p>We engaged with 476 individuals at 21 community events to promote and undertake surveys for our LTC project.</p>	 <p>We promoted the campaign to find out about the impact of the cost of living pressures on resident's health and well-being.</p>

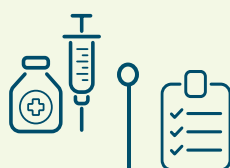
# 10 years of improving care

This year marks a special milestone for Healthwatch. Over the last ten years, people have shared their experiences, good and bad, to help improve health and social care. A big thank you to all our Healthwatch Heroes that have stepped up and inspired change. Here are a few of our highlights:

## How have we made care better, together?

### Improving care over time

Primary care and secondary care pathways have been improved and developed. Healthwatch is part of a team who test and review ideas to inform continual improvements.



### Supporting the voluntary sector

Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent worked with DEAFvibe to provide support in clarifying what the contractual relationship would be between NHS England and DEAFvibe when the service was moved from the control of the CCG to NHS England. The intervention of Local Healthwatch prevented a situation where patients who required signers/interpreters to attend medical appointments may have been left without support because of poor communication of the service level agreement..

### Booking Blood Tests

As a result of public feedback, we were instrumental in developed a web-based booking system for patients. The online booking service allows patients to book an appointment much quicker and provides a text confirmation.



### While we were waiting

Parents, staff and others spoke to us, and described how they sometimes struggled with peers and professionals who do not understand what it is like to live with a child with learning difficulties. The NHS used our report to inform their commissioning and planning of services for young people with special needs.



### NHS dentistry

We fed back our findings on access to dentistry and as a result steps were taken to provide regularly updated information on the availability of dentists in the Stoke-on-Trent area.







## Healthwatch Heroes



### **Celebrating heroes in our local community.**

We are very grateful to the 104 respondents who completed our survey about access to dental services and the 197 people told us about their experiences of managing their Long-Term Condition(s).

As a result of this feedback, we were able to present their views to NHS commissioner's and make recommendations for how services could be improved .

We were also able to provide feedback to Healthwatch England to inform the work being undertaken at a national level on access to dentistry services.



# 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.

# Advocating for better access to NHS dentistry

Dentistry concerns formed our top intelligence trend during 2022/23 as it was in many areas nationally and was an issue taken up by Healthwatch England. This prompted us to undertake a study to collect local intelligence on access to dental services. Our survey consisted of 5 questions to explore people's concerns and drew 104 responses. Of these 62% had not been able to see an NHS dentist within the recommended 12 to 24 months and 31% confirmed that they would not be able to see a dentist as often as previously due to the cost of NHS treatment.

Our findings were fed back to Healthwatch England to be included in their broader study of dentistry nationwide.



73% of respondents reported that it was hard or very hard to get an appointment for NHS dental treatment.

79.8% of respondents stated that they had either not received or could not afford all the treatment they needed or had to pay privately for some of the dental treatment they needed.

## What difference will this make?

This announcement showed the power of people's feedback – with decision makers listening to your voice and taking action.

With these changes in place, it should be easier for people to find a new dentist taking on NHS patients, alleviating the stress and worry so many suffer when they cannot afford to go private.



"I had been kicked off my dentists list during the pandemic having not had an appointment for a long time and missing previous appointments due to my disability. I couldn't book one when I needed it".

"Nowhere is taking on. Not one dentist in Stoke-on-Trent is taking on NHS patients. I didn't go for 2 years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I had no idea that they just remove you without communication".

"I am suffering with a bad tooth that needs taking out. Nowhere will take it out unless I pay and I can't afford it".

# Better self-management of Long-Term Condition(s)

The Stoke-on-Trent Joint Strategic needs assessment states that the number of people suffering from Long-Term Condition(s) (LTC's) have increased dramatically over recent years due to several factors and a significant number of these have multiple conditions. NHS England state that the NHS should be supporting people to live with LTC's and manage those conditions more effectively outside of a hospital environment and support people to recover and live with their conditions in the community.

## Our recommendations:

1. Information should be available to all patients to help them understand their diagnosis, any treatment planned and the support that is available in the community to help them manage their conditions effectively.
2. GP practices through the role of Social Prescriber should signpost patients with LTC's to appropriate support services that will enable them to maintain and improve quality of life.
3. Health systems should consider the role that complimentary therapies can play in improving a patients mental and physical well-being .
4. The health system needs to take a more holistic approach to treating patients with LTC's thus improving a patient's ability to self-manage
5. Services should explore ways to improve communication about the course of LTC's and what self-help options are available to them.

## What difference will this make?

The report has been shared with the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Integrated Care Board (ICB), and they've recognised how the report shows people are wishing to be more involved with being at the centre of their care and have a desire to self-manage as much as possible. The Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent ICB have shared their aims to work with us at Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent to enable people to be involved in the transformation process to inform the work of the Clinical Improvement Groups, that will look at all things including information and communication at all points in peoples care journey.



"I need a better understanding of the conditions and more information to help me manage them myself."

" I have lots of leaflets but unless someone goes through them with me, they are not much good."

# Three ways we have made a difference for the community

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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 services to see the bigger picture. Hearing personal experiences and the impact on people's lives provides them with a better understanding of the problems.

We supported a patient who contacted us anonymously who was experiencing severe mental crisis. Over a period of days, Healthwatch supported the patient by providing signposting to several organisations who could help. We were then able to gain the person's confidence and with some persistence were able to alert the appropriate mental health and safeguarding services who were able to identify the person and offer appropriate help.

## Getting services to involve the public



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

Our work on Long-Term Condition(s) has highlighted to the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Integrated Care Board the need to improve the information available about different LTC's that people live with so that patients can become more confident in managing their conditions and have better access to the services that exist in the community to help them self-care more effectively.

## Improving care over time



Change takes time. We often work behind the scenes with services to consistently raise issues and bring about change.

Over the year we have been consistently raising the issue of access to dentistry and continued to work with the Local Dentistry Committee to provide clear advice and information to patients. As a result, there is now clear and consistent advice for patients on how to find a dentist for those who need urgent treatment.



# 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 seen a significant reduction in our budget and therefore our staffing complement. We have therefore had to find new ways to reach people across the whole of Stoke-on-Trent. We adapted our business model to adapt and thrive in a digital age. By growing our digital offer, we were able to reach out far and wide providing the public with accurate and reliable up to date information.

We have been recognised for our swift adaptation in utilising digital platforms and were announced winners of the Digital Transformation Award . As a result of our digital transformation, we have been able to reach out to more communities and have increased our reach by 20%



## Breaking down barriers between public and NHS professionals.

A significant number of people reported their frustration at the lack of empathy they feel when they are chasing around trying to get help with their health concerns. Many reported a lack of hope in services having exhausted all the options they have tried.

As a result of this feedback, Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent had a briefing meeting with senior health executive and helped galvanise an understanding of the patient experience and the pressures the system was under. This led to an agreement for Healthwatch to undertake work to help shape services that support people to remain independent longer. This led to Healthwatch undertaking a survey into the self-management of Long-Term Condition(s)



"I have found it very frustrating trying to get help for my eating disorder and mental health. I was referred from the GP to the eating disorder service and was told I was not bad enough to be accepted for help from then so was then referred to the mental health service but then told I did not meet the criteria for that service either so was sent back where I started at the GP who also told me they could not help me."

- Local resident.



# 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've helped people by:

- Providing up to date information about services from the NHS and Adult Social Care.
- Helping people access the services they need by signposting 133 people to the appropriate services.
- Distributing Healthwatch leaflets to the 81 groups, and events we have attended this year.
- Helping people access NHS dentistry by providing information.
- Supporting people to access the distinct services they need.
- Sharing information about local events in the city.



## Help to find access GP and Adult Social Care

Healthwatch was contacted by an elderly female who was housebound. She had not been able to attend a vaccination centre for a Covid -19 vaccinations and needed to access her GP about her Chronic Kidney Disease and partial sight and being untrained to use her white cane to enable her to leave the house. Her home care had been cancelled and she had not seen a social worker for months. Her mental health was suffering, and she was unable to get through to anyone who could help her. Healthwatch were able to contact services on her behalf and after some persuasion the GP agreed to contact her to arrange assessment and treatment, also Stoke-on-Trent Adult Social Care agreed to contact the lady to reassess her needs. We were also able to signpost her to mental health support services to after telling us of her feelings of self-harm and suicide.



“Thank you for all the practical help you provided and the information you gathered to help me make get the help and support I needed at what was a very difficult time .”

- Local resident

## Signposting people who needed additional support

Our team have visited 81 groups , events, carers groups, coffee mornings etc covering the different communities across Stoke-on-Trent. In addition, we have reached out extensively through our digital and social media platforms to ensure that as many people as possible are aware of Healthwatch, are able to receive advice and information and signposting where appropriate. In all, we signposted 133 people and provided advice and information to 1127 people. We also offered direct support to 21 people who needed additional support to access the services they needed.





# 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:

- Visited communities to promote their local Healthwatch and what we have to offer.
- Collected experiences and supported their communities to share their views.
- Undertook Quality & Assurance Visits along with health partners at local services.
- Collected the most up-to-date information on changes to services, such as whether NHS dental appointments were available at a practice.

## Kevin

"I have had the privilege of being a volunteer for Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent for the best part of a decade.

During this time, I have seen the role I play within Healthwatch expand. I am now an 'Authorised Representative' which means that I am trained to perform Enter and View visits to local services.

Sometimes the role of a volunteer is demanding, but as a volunteer, we are supported at all times by the excellent staff. I find the role that I perform for Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent always rewarding. To me personally I like to think I am giving something back to my community and to the greater people of Stoke-on-Trent."



## Simon

"Volunteering doesn't have to be just a one-way street.

At Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent, our provider organisation Engaging Communities Solutions CIC, enables their Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent staff to take paid time off to undertake volunteering activities within the community.

I use my time to support two charities that I am a trustee of, one a Scout Group and another a community building and recreation grounds.

It's great to be able to give back to communities by volunteering for good causes that make a real difference to people's lives. I find it a wonderful way to match the hard work our own Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent volunteers deliver for their communities if we are all able to do our little bits.



### Do you feel inspired?

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

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

 **03303 130247**

 [info@healthwatchstoke.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchstoke.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.

## Our income and expenditure

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from Stoke City Council	£128,463	Expenditure on pay	£101,714
Additional income	£1,000	Non-pay expenditure	£18,846
		Office and management fee	£12,846
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£129,463</b>	<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>£133,406</b>

Additional income is broken down by:

- **£1,000 funding** received from Healthwatch England for involvement in a project

## Next steps

In the ten years since Healthwatch was launched, we've demonstrated the power of public feedback in helping the health and care system understand what is working, spot issues and think about how things can be better in the future.

Services are currently facing unprecedented challenges and tackling the backlog needs to be a key priority for the NHS to ensure everyone gets the care they need. Over the next year we will continue our role in collecting feedback from everyone in our local community and giving them a voice to help shape improvements to services.

We will also continue our work to tackling inequalities that exist and work to reduce the barriers you face when accessing care, regardless whether that is because of where you live, income or race.

## Top three priorities for 2023-24

1. Services for people with Parkinson's disease
2. Carers services
3. Sensory impairment



# Statutory statements

Engaging Communities Solutions CIC holds the contract to deliver Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent and is based at Blakenall Village Centre, 79 Thames Road, Blakenall, Walsall, WS3 1LZ.

Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent uses the Healthwatch Trademark when undertaking our statutory activities as covered by the licence agreement.



# The way we work

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## 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 to our activities. Our Board ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community. Throughout 2022/23 the Board met 4 times and made decisions on matters such as agreeing our 2022-23 work programme priorities and gaining agreement and feedback on our 2 public reports.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities.

## 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 have the opportunity to provide us with insight about their experience of using services. During 2022/23 we have been available by phone, email, provided a webform 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. We also have copies in different formats available on request.

## Responses to recommendations

We have received a response to our report on Long-Term Condition(s) from the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Integrated Care Board. There were no issues or recommendations escalated by us to Healthwatch England or the Care Quality Commission, 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 insight and experiences that have been shared with us.

In our Local Authority area for example we take information to the provider of the service involved including the Local Authority and health and social care providers.

We also take insight and experiences to decision makers in Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent. For example, we present our reports to strategic and operational leads within the ICS and County Council and where appropriate we will work in collaboration with our neighbouring Healthwatch to present information affecting the whole system. 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 took part in 8 quality visits as part of the programme at North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare Trust:

- Mental Health Liaison Team
- Sutherland Community Mental Health Team
- Hilda Johnson House Rehabilitation Unit
- Child and Young Person's Intensive Support Hub
- Lymebrook Centre
- Greenfields
- All Age Access Team
- Ward 3

## Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent is represented on the Stoke-on-Trent Health and Wellbeing Board by Simon Fogell, Chief Executive of Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent. During 2022/23 our representative has effectively carried out this role by being one of a core number of Health and Wellbeing Board representatives meeting face to face to ensure the Board could discharge its work. Our representative made sure people's views were known in relation to issues that they have told us matter to them as well as challenging providers and commissioners to ensure the they were involving people in re-shaping or designing new services.

Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent is represented on the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Integrated Care Board by Simon Fogell Chief Executive of Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent. Simon Fogell also attends the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Integrated Care Partnership and at the following systems meetings within the ICP:

- System Quality Group
- Strategic Transformation Group
- Patient Safety Incident Response Framework (PSIRF) Implementation Group
- Urgent and Emergency Care Board Meeting
- System Palliative End of Life Care Programme Board
- Getting Involved Service User and Carer Forum
- People and Communities Assembly meeting - Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Integrated Care Board

## 2022–2023 Outcomes

Project / activity	Changes made to services
NHS Dentistry in Stoke-on-Trent	NHS are updating their 'Find a dentist' website more frequently and have made changes that make the website more user friendly.
Long-Term Condition(s)	The ICB are to work with us to ensure that people are involved in the improvement of the services based on the recommendations made in our report.

# healthwatch

Stoke on Trent

Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent  
Commerce House  
Stoke-on-Trent  
ST1 5BE

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

t: 03303 130 247

e: [info@healthwatchstoke.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchstoke.co.uk)

 @HealthwatchSoT

 [Facebook.com/HealthwatchStoke](https://www.facebook.com/HealthwatchStoke)

 @healthwatchsot


 Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent

The contract to provide the Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent service  
is held by Engaging Communities Solutions C.I.C.

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

t: 01785 887809

e: [contactus@weareecs.co.uk](mailto:contactus@weareecs.co.uk)

 @EcsEngaging

 Engaging Communities Solutions (ECS)