

Championing what matters to you

Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent
Annual Report 2021-22



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Message from our chair

I am honoured to continue in my role of Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent Chair with this being my ninth 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 2021, any optimism that the worst of the Coronavirus crisis might hopefully have been behind did not blind us to the profound effect on daily living and, in particular, the way the pandemic has massively impacted health. So many people have suffered either through illness or bereavement. Many others have faced mental health challenges because of the impact of lockdown.



Prior to the Coronavirus, the most common areas of concern that Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent heard about were GP services, Mental Health Services, Social Care and Hospitals. Even with the focus on Covid over the last two years, these issues are still high on people's list of health related concerns.

We all want to continue to cheer on all the staff in the NHS and the wider care sector who have worked so tirelessly during this crisis. However, we are all aware that even in if we transition to Covid-free living the future looks grim with the knowledge of growing operation waiting lists and a concern about the number of serious health conditions going undiagnosed.

Additionally, because the move from hospital care to community care continued to be a high priority for the local health and care economy, we have sought to remind commissioners and providers of the absolute need to ensure that patient safety and quality of care is not negatively affected during this process. Any new models of care must be discussed with the public, their views sought and incorporated into service change to ensure that the right care is provided in the right place with no gap in service provision. Furthermore, the skills and experience of the voluntary sector must be incorporated into future plans together with being appropriately funded.

Message from our chair

I'm proud that Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent has worked tirelessly to ensure that we address your concerns. Of course, our aim isn't just to "catch people doing it wrong" and so we have also endeavoured to compliment when we hear stories of good practise and excellent customer service.

We have also sought to make sure that we connect with those underrepresented groups with our communities as we know that often less likely to be heard by these service professionals and decision makers.

It is impossible to include all the detail of our work in this report and so only the highlights are included. If you wish to discuss any aspects of our work, then please do not hesitate to contact our staff team and if after having read about our role you would like to volunteer with us, please contact us to register your interest.

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 working with you in the future in these challenging times.

Every Blessing

Lloyd Cooke

Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent Chair



"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."

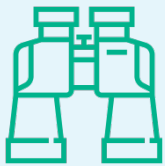
Sir Robert Francis QC, Chair of Healthwatch England



About us

Your health and social care champion

Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent is your local health and social care champion. From Tunstall to Longton and everywhere in between, 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

- 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.



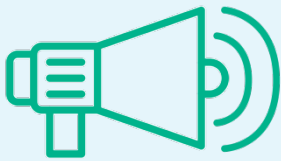
Our values

- 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



1,480 people shared their experiences

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

82,098 people came to us

for clear advice and information about topics such as mental health and COVID-19.

Making a difference to care



We published
12 reports

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

Our most popular report was
Primary Care Services

which highlighted the key areas of primary care that people expect to remain accessible, and in contrast what services could be added to improve local primary and community care provision

Health and care which works for you



We're lucky to have
18

outstanding volunteers, who gave up 77 days to make care better for our community.

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

£152,388

which is **0.86% less** than the previous year.

We also employ
4 staff

to deliver the Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent service.

How we've made a difference throughout the year

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

Spring



From running online drop-in information sessions to attending outreach sessions, we collected over 200 health and social care experiences.



We alerted commissioners about key issues picked up to ensure people's experiences are well considered during health and social care service planning and delivery.

Summer



While Enter and View was suspended, our Virtual Visit programme commenced and conducted various visits to care homes across the city.



We distributed weekly and monthly eBulletins to our subscribers to inform people about local events, issues picked up and opportunities to get involved with their local Healthwatch.

Autumn



Working closely with local organisations we engaged with people to ask their opinions about current Primary Care Services to feed into the future Integrated Care System plans.



We urged the Government to act after reporting a 452% increase in people struggling to see an NHS dentist.

Winter



With more and more people facing mental health challenges, we delivered a mental health project to ask people how they feel about the current range of services and how accessible they are.



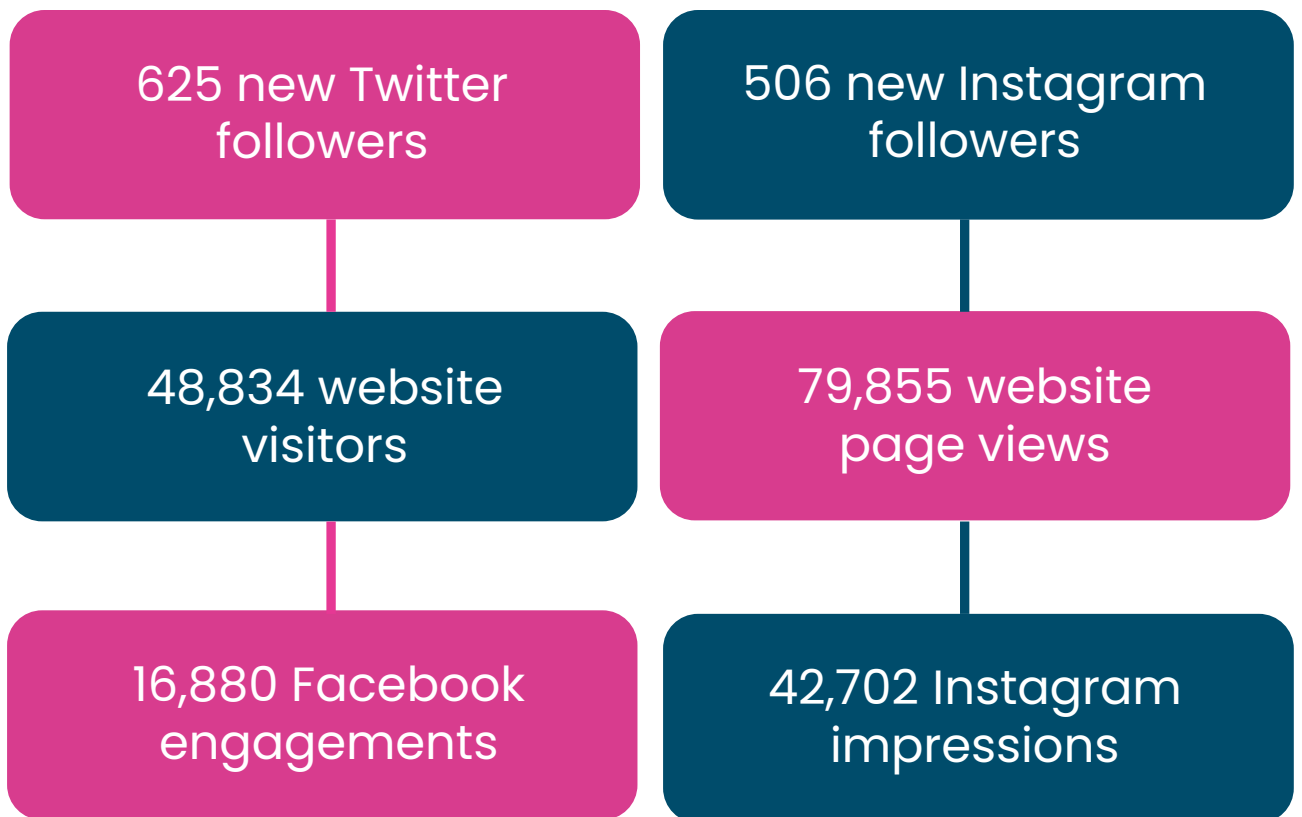
We helped people booked a high volume of blood tests via an online system – with more and more services urging people to book online, people were pleased to find Healthwatch accommodating.

Listening to you – Digital evolution

In adaptation to the Coronavirus Pandemic 2021 – 2022 has elected a hybrid way of working between digital and real-time to ensure our information sharing, community outreach, signposting, advice and information and priority work correlated with members of the public in Stoke-on-Trent.

To achieve effective engagement, our social media platforms and website has been central to deliver maximum efficiency. Consequently, our Facebook, Twitter and Instagram media channels continue to attain growth by means of new followers, public engagements and reach and impressions.

Below you can see a simple overview of our digital growth on the various platforms.



Impressions vs Engagements – understand the difference [here](#)

A virtual adaptation to Enter and View

Find out about our virtual visits and how we have engaged and supported people in 2020-21.

Since March 2020 local Healthwatch followed government guidance and stopped face-to-face engagement with the public, including Enter and View visits. While services began to phase a 'return to normal plan' Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent continued to conduct visits virtually to ease pressure on services and to ensure that we helped to keep everyone as safe as possible. Our virtual visits consisted of online methods to engage with service providers. For example, instead of face-to-face interaction, we simply used telephone calls, emails and short surveys to listen to people's opinions and experiences.

Engagement

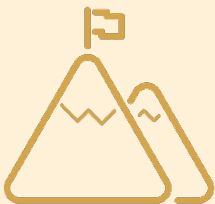


We heard from

78 people from 4 distinctive virtual visits to:

- Davlyn House Care Home
- Shared Lives Stoke
- Dresden House Care Home
- Royal Stoke University Hospital Fracture Clinic

Outcomes



We published

4 reports

about the positive feedback and improvements people would like to see at the respective health and social care service. From this, we made **10** recommendations for improvement.

100% of recommendations

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

What's next



Our **plans for 2022/23**

are to form a hybrid between Enter and View and virtual visits to offer diversity and flexibility in how we engage with health and social care services to speak to a wide range of service users.

We have **10 Enter and View volunteers**

Who support our Enter and View Programme to help us carry out a growing number of visits across the city.

Enhancing our subscriber content

To combat limited periods of engagement during COVID-19 and to ensure our interaction with our subscribers, local organisations and community partners remained constant we reshaped our traditional quarterly newsletter. As such we formed weekly eBulletins and monthly Impact and Insight eBulletins. Both of which are designed to share information about what we're working on, what events we've attended, intelligence we've received and opportunities to support Healthwatch in the community.



“The weekly eBulletins are useful to find out what’s going on in the local area and how I can get involved with Healthwatch Stoke.”

“The monthly Impact and Insight eBulletins are a good way for us to see what’s being shared with Healthwatch and keep an eye on new health and care issues.”



What our eBulletins cover

Engagement...	Who we've connected with
Hot Topics...	Common themes
Achievements...	What we've accomplished
Signposting...	Who we've worked with
Outreach...	Where we've been
Events and Local Groups...	What's coming up



Find out more about our eBulletins [here](#)

Outreach overview

Our outreach and engagement work continued to be delivered very flexibly often being changed from face to face outdoor, indoor or virtually because of the pandemic and the need to follow ever-changing government guidelines.

One of the adaptations was to set up regular virtual Zoom sessions which helped us to continue to be involved in the local communities despite facing lockdowns. These sessions ran frequently and offered an opportunity for people to see us and talk to us at a time that suited them. For example, in the run up to Christmas 2021 and then between Christmas and New Year we held multiple virtual drop in sessions to be there for people in the event they needed advice, support or signposting when many other services were closed.

When lockdown was lifted, our outreach team worked with a variety of organisations by attending their Community events and coffee mornings. At these groups, our outreach team started conversations about what positive change in health and social care could look like whilst complying with social distancing and wearing a face covering. These sessions allowed us to build and develop positive relationships within our local communities and to gather new intelligence on the public perception of the changes in health and social care services that were urgently implemented as a response to the pandemic.



First outreach stall of 2021 at the Better World Festival in Hanley



Volunteer information fayre at Fegghayes Hub



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 and communities of Stoke-on-Trent. This allows us to understand the full picture, and feedback to services to help them improve.



Making dental care accessible

Thanks to people sharing their experiences around the challenges to access a local dentist with us over the last year, we've helped the Government and the local Dental Network stay informed of the barriers that people across Stoke-on-Trent are facing when seeking dental care.

NHS England has recognised the need to update the 'NHS find a dentist' more frequently, to indicate whether the practice is accepting new patients.

Where people could not access a local dentist, we signposted in excess of 50 people to the local Dental Advice Line for alternative support.



Over 200 of people

Contact us to share their difficulty in finding a dentist for routine treatment and care.

Regular updates on the 'NHS find a dentist website helps people to:

- Understand if a local dentist is accepting adults and children
- Consider when the last update to the web page was made which spotlights the latest information about respective NHS dental practices
- Distinguish if NHS dental practices are accepting adults entitled to free dental care

What difference did this make

Better clarity and understanding for people to find a dentist in Stoke-on-Trent without residents having to call a large number of dentists to ask repetitive questions about registration availability.



"A simple but effective update to the NHS find a dentist website makes it a lot clearer for me to support local people to go online and look if a dentist is taking on new patients."



Making access easier in the pandemic

The changes made in services as a response to the pandemic has impacted how people across the nation could access health and social care services. Access became more difficult for some due to digital exclusion, lengthy back logs and new safety restrictions.

The limitations on access had brought a number of individuals to us at Healthwatch Stoke. These people had sought to understand and work around the many new changes. Some of who we worked with were not residents of Stoke-on-Trent, yet they required support for their vulnerable relatives who live locally, as they were unable to travel during lockdown.

One of the main issues we heard was the lack of communication and transparency being given to the service users. Services often did not have the time or capacity to work closely with these individuals throughout various processes in health and social care. Individuals were left with little awareness of the mapping for a process and had no estimation of when they could expect to receive the requested care or communication.



“It has been great working closely with Healthwatch to get the best support for people.”

Locality Connectors, Stoke-on-Trent



What difference we made

We offered our time as a primary point of contact for those needing support, advice or guidance. Having a name to go to, one that they are confident knows and understands their story and needs alleviated some of the frustrations of not feeling heard, and feelings of wasting time to repeat themselves.

We worked effectively with all the necessary health and social carer services to offer residents a clear understanding of procedures and a coinciding action plan for what they need to do next to secure the desired outcome.

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.



Getting to the heart of the issue

The Local Dental Network to share residents' difficulties. It's important for the NHS and social care to hear experiences people have with their local services as this provides a deeper understanding than using data alone.

This year we have learnt that many residents are struggling to locate a dentist who has availability to take on new NHS patients. We are currently working alongside



Getting services to involve the public

Services need to understand the benefits of involving local people to help improve care for everyone. We provided advice to the Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffordshire Dementia Steering Group by sharing public feedback and consulted with residents around support services and groups in the city. In addition, we coordinated to have an individual attend the meeting whom themselves has dementia, with the intention to put resident views at the heart of care and upkeep of services.



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.

Primary Care and Secondary Care pathways have been improved and developed with voluntary sector partners. Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent is part of a team who test and review ideas to inform the continual improvements; 2 Pop Up Community Lounges support local people within local places in the community. In 2021 a permanent Community Lounge was developed in the heart of Burslem to reinvigorate the Mother Town and bring a whole new life to what 'community' means and inspire other people/organisations to invest in Burslem to bring the heart back to the incredible town.

Advice and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent 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:

- **Booking blood tests on an online booking system**
- **Finding NHS dentists to register with**
- **Sharing local information and events about health and social care in the city**
- **Explaining how to issue a formal complaint about a service**
- **Helping people to access the distinctive services they need**



Signposting people who needed additional support

Our outreach team visited far and wide of the Stoke-on-Trent communities; largely by visiting church groups, food banks, coffee mornings, carers groups, market and festival events.

To make sure as many people as possible in Stoke-on-Trent was able to speak with us to receive advice and information on what matters the most to them, we delivered public talks and spent time in group discussions to spotlight how Healthwatch can offer assistance.

Between April 2021 and March 2022, we signposted **491 people** and provided advice and information on diverse health and social care subjects and where needed offer a continuance of aftercare support.



Care home engagement during the pandemic



During COVID-19, access to care home has been restricted and made it difficult for service users to share their feedback with us and ask for advice and/or information.

We delivered our Virtual Visit Programme in adaption to Enter and View and visited 3 different care home services virtually.

We arranged a virtual visit with the care home managers and had a one-week period to engage with service users, family members, friends and staff. This gave all participants an opportunity to speak with a Healthwatch representative and share anonymous views and feedback, with the aim of improving the service delivery.

We shared **8 recommendations** to two different care home/ home care services.

Volunteers

We're supported by a team of amazing volunteers who are the heart of Healthwatch. 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.
- Attended face to face events in the community in-line with government guidelines.
- Shared digital content on their social media platforms.
- Digitally interacted with other volunteers and members of the public to offer signposting and advice.
- Continued to help with the local volunteering efforts supporting those who were self isolating.





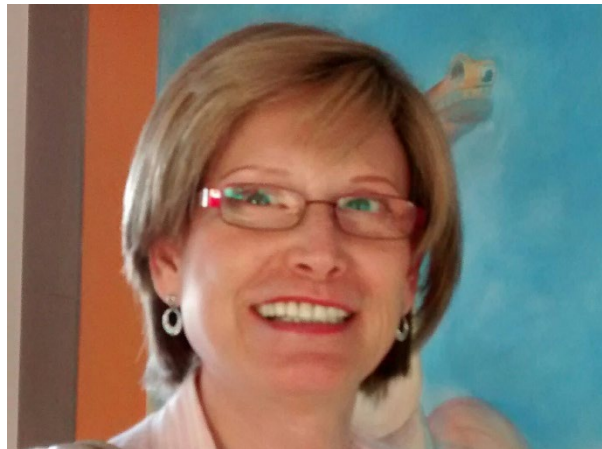
Sue

"I find that Healthwatch is a mind of information and supports me in not only volunteering within Healthwatch but in my role as a Trustee and volunteer at Lifeworks. They support me to support carers of people on the autistic spectrum. Nothing is too much trouble when you ask, and they will find out information or contact people I work with".



Mike

"During the pandemic our Board meetings and other public facing meetings moved online. This demonstrated the inbuilt resilience of Healthwatch and willingness of volunteers, board members and staff to adapt to the change in circumstances. For many this was also an adventure in learning to successfully use applications which support virtual meetings, moving to being at ease with this means".



Jan

"Healthwatch Stoke have been fundamental with enabling me to support the Transgender community of Stoke, they have recently successfully secured a completely new venue for the Stoke Trans Group - **'the T club'** in which to meet up. This was not an easy task but they successfully rose to the challenge and I'm sure they will continue to be a valuable partner to the Stoke Trans community".



Do you feel inspired?

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



www.healthwatchstokeontrent.co.uk



01782 683080



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.

Income		Expenditure	
Funding received from local authority	£152,388	Staff costs	£101,170
Additional funding	£16,948	Operational costs	£21,565
		Support and administration	£29,857
Total income	£169,336	Total expenditure	£152,591

Top priorities for 2022-23

Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent is going to look at Long Term Conditions (LTCs) as a core theme that takes in different aspects of living with LTCs, such as:

- access to GPs and the waiting times for appointments
 - support during discharge from hospital
 - waiting times for hospital referrals / treatment
- and the impacts these might have on people's wellbeing.

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.

Statutory statements

About us

Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent, The Dudson Centre, Hope Street, Stoke-on-Trent, ST1 5DD.

Engaging Communities Solutions CIC is the organisation holding the local Healthwatch contract.

Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent 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 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 4 times and made decisions on matters such as agreeing our 2021/22 Work Programme Priorities and gained approval and feedback on 7 public reports.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities. The public helped shape our priorities by attending online Zoom sessions which were purposely designed to collect information about real-time local issues, and we also used our monthly intelligence reports to identify commonly reoccurring themes that were shared by the public.

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, **by utilising outreach to attend various diverse community groups such as ASHA who are a charity supporting asylum seekers and by attending Communities2Gether meeting which ensures that information is available to ethnic minority groups in their preferred language.** 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 the Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent website under our reports section.

Responses to recommendations and requests

We had 0 providers who did not respond to requests for information or recommendations.

This year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we did not make use of our Enter and View powers, but we did carry out a number virtual visits; these included care homes and a hospital department. Resultantly, 10, recommendations and other actions resulted from these areas of activity.

Health and Wellbeing Board

Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent is represented on the Stoke-on-Trent Health and Wellbeing Board by Simon Fogell, our Chief Executive. During 2020/21 our representative has effectively played a significant lead role on the Health and Wellbeing Board taking a central role in influencing policy and tackling health inequalities often attending meetings in person to ensure the quoracy of the meeting to comply with governance arrangements.

2021-2022 Outcomes

Project / Activity Area	Changes made to services
Primary and Community Care Services	We collected 143 survey responses to explore how residents felt about the existing set of primary care services and what could be further added to improve the service range, whilst further learning about how accessible local primary care services are for people across the city.
Hospital Services	We collected 50 survey responses that collected residents' views on how cancelled or postponed appointments have impacted their physical and mental welfare. We also explored how effective the discharge processes have been for residents.
Mental Health Services	We collected 85 survey responses which individually reflected residents' views on what mental health services are needed in the city and how they can help people recover from the Coronavirus Pandemic coinciding impacts.
Virtual Visit Programme	<p>10 individual recommendations shared based on 4 virtual visits to care homes, home care services and hospital departments. Based on service user feedback we were able to share views and experiences to help the respective service improve the overall service delivery.</p> <p>We visited Davlyn House Care home and identified that additional phone lines are needed to allow family members more regular contact with service users during peak call hours.</p>

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

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