



## Complaints: Policy and procedure

### Our policy

Individuals and organisations have the right to express their views about the performance of Healthwatch County Durham and the way in which it conducts its business.

Anyone who is dissatisfied with any aspect of the service received by Healthwatch County Durham can make a complaint. We will treat concerns and complaints in the same way.

It is the policy of Healthwatch County Durham to:

- Listen carefully to your concern.
- Be polite, helpful, and deal with your complaint fairly and efficiently.
- Let you know how we are getting on with your complaint, admitting any mistakes made and putting matters right wherever possible.
- Give the right of appeal against a decision made by the Lead Officer.
- Provide reasonable adjustments to the procedure set out below to empower those
- who need support in making a complaint, such as the right to be accompanied in any necessary meetings and providing accessible information formats.
- Use your feedback to improve our service for all who need it.

Complaints we cannot deal with:

Complaints or concerns about the NHS or social care services should be directed to the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board.

Our team can signpost you to the correct organisation that is best placed to handle your complaint.

### Equality, diversity and inclusion

Healthwatch County Durham is committed to ensuring all complaints are handled free from any form of discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Healthwatch County Durham will monitor this policy in order to identify whether it is having an adverse impact on any group of individuals and act accordingly.

### Data protection

To help us handle your complaint we will keep a record of all the information we gather. All information held and processed shall be treated in confidence. Such information will be shared with representatives of Healthwatch County Durham and the host organisation only to the extent required to resolve the complaint in accordance with this policy and procedure.

If the details of a complaint are to be used for quality improvement or training purposes, express permission will be sought from the complainant and personal details will be anonymised from all information prior to it being used.

All personal information collected by Healthwatch County Durham shall be handled in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) as detailed in our host organisation's Information Governance Policy.



## How we will handle your complaint

### How to raise a concern or make a complaint about Healthwatch County Durham

\* Let us know if you need our complaints procedure in a different format such as Easy Read, another language, large print or any other format and we will make reasonable adjustments to support you in sharing your concern or complaint with us.

1. In the first instance we would encourage you to tell us *as soon as possible* if you are unhappy with our service so that we can understand your concerns and quickly try to put things right for you.

2. Providing information or discussing misunderstandings at this early stage helps your concern or complaint to be successfully resolved. You can discuss your issue with any member of the team or contact us via telephone, email or letter.

- Telephone: 0800 3047039
- E-mail: [healthwatchcountydurham@pcp.uk.net](mailto:healthwatchcountydurham@pcp.uk.net)
- Letter: Healthwatch County Durham, Whitfield House, St Johns Road, Meadowfield Industrial Estate, County Durham, DH7 8XL

3. If your concern or complaint is not resolved to your satisfaction, or is about a member of the Healthwatch County Durham team, you should notify the Lead Officer to enable an investigation to take place:

- Telephone: 07706 321095
- E-mail: [gail.mcgee@pcp.uk.net](mailto:gail.mcgee@pcp.uk.net)
- Letter: Gail McGee, Project Lead, Healthwatch County Durham, Whitfield House, St Johns Road, Meadowfield Industrial Estate, County Durham, DH7 8XL

4. If your concern or complaint relates to the Lead Officer, then you can notify the Chair of the Healthwatch County Durham Board:

- Telephone: 0800 3047039 (asking for the Chair to contact you)
- Email: [healthwatchcountydurham@pcp.uk.net](mailto:healthwatchcountydurham@pcp.uk.net) (asking for the Chair to contact you)
- Letter: Mr C Cunnington-Shore, Chair of the Board, C/O Healthwatch County Durham, Whitfield House, St Johns Road, Meadowfield Industrial Estate, County Durham, DH7 8XL

5. The Lead Officer or Chair of HWCD will acknowledge your concern or complaint in writing (or in your preferred method of communication) within 7 days. They will contact you to gather as much information as possible and explain how your concern or complaint will be handled.

6. The Lead Officer or Chair of HWCD will review and arrange the investigation of all concerns and complaints. They, or a designated person, will gather and evaluate the relevant information to make a decision about your complaint.

They will act to resolve your complaint within 15 working days, and will advise you of the outcome in writing, explaining the decision and how it has been reached. If more than 15 working days are needed, you will be contacted and updated about progress and a new timescale agreed.

7. If you are not happy with the outcome at this stage, you will be able to appeal. Let us know within 20 days of receiving your written reply from us, and your concern or complaint will be passed to a member of the HWCD board who has not previously been involved with your complaint or, if more appropriate, to the Senior Management Team at the host organisation for Healthwatch County Durham (this is the organisation that currently holds the contract with the local authority for the delivery of Healthwatch), who will investigate in line with their Complaints Policy.

If a member of the Healthwatch Board investigates, they will review the facts and consider all the evidence to decide if your appeal is upheld. They will share their findings and confirm their decision to you in writing within 20 working days. The concern or complaint will then be closed.



8. If you are still not satisfied you can take your concern or complaint to the Local Authority Healthwatch commissioner:

- Rachael Mawston, Commissioning and Planning Officer, Durham County Council, County Hall, Durham, DH1 5UG
- Switchboard telephone: 03000 260000
- Email: Rachael.Mawston@durham.gov.uk

You may also subsequently take your concern or complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman who can be contacted in the following ways:

- By visiting: [www.lgo.org.uk](http://www.lgo.org.uk)
- Telephone: 0300 061 0614

## Review of policy document

The Board of Healthwatch County Durham will review the effectiveness of the complaints policy and procedures set out in this document every 2 years. Any amendments to this policy or the procedures governing how we handle complaints and concerns will require a simple majority of board members voting in favour.

The amended policy document will be published on the website of Healthwatch County Durham as soon as possible after any revisions.

Complaints policy and procedures	
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