



News update - June 2026



In this edition, we're asking for your feedback - if you recently contacted us - in our annual satisfaction survey plus we're giving a 'thank you' to our volunteers with a special report looking over their work across the previous 12 months.

We are supporting the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (NENC ICB) in asking patients who have used patient transport their views and news on a very special 'guest resident' at a care home in Consett!

As always, thank you for your continued support — your feedback helps us make a real impact. ❤️

News & Information

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WE'VE BEEN NOMINATED FOR
**VOLUNTEER GROUP
OF THE YEAR**

VOTE FOR US AT [MYLOCALAWARDS.CO.UK](https://mylocalawards.co.uk)

**MY LOCAL
AWARDS**

The graphic features a dark teal background with large, stylized, overlapping shapes in pink, green, and white. The text is centered and uses a mix of white and pink colors for emphasis.

Voting is open, we'd love your support 

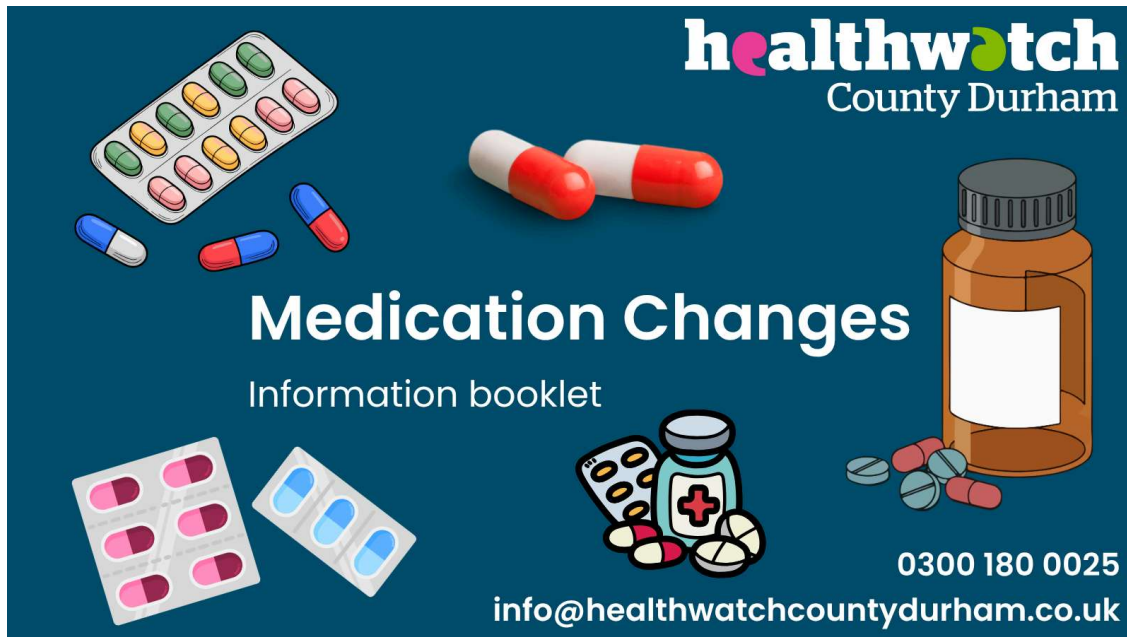
[Vote Now!](#)

Medication Changes

At Healthwatch County Durham we've been hearing from people with concerns about recent changes to their medications, including reductions in long-term prescriptions.

Common themes include;

- Why has my medication been reduced?
- Why has my medication been changed?
- Why does my medication look different?
- Why can I no longer get my usual medication?



To help patients understand some of these reasons behind changes to prescriptions and what communication they should expect to have with healthcare professionals, we've produced an overview booklet to help you become better informed.

Read our information booklet on the PDF below.

Medication Changes Booklet

How Are We Doing?

If you have been in touch with Healthwatch County Durham over the last 12 months we want to hear from you!



We are committed to listening to peoples experiences of health and social care and we want to ensure that the service we provided was tailored to your needs.

If this hasn't happened we want to put it right.

And, if the service was helpful, we want to ensure that we continue to improve, by identifying what worked well.

Please help us do that by filling out our short questionnaire about the service you received.

Tell us how we did - complete the survey now

All information shared will be confidential and anonymised.

Shildon Alive

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Healthwatch is independent champion for people who use health and social care services in County Durham. We listen to your experiences and share what we hear with those who design, deliver and fund local services.

We want to hear from you!

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Help us improve health and social care services in County Durham

GP Services

New drop in service where you can tell us your health and social care experiences.

Starts Tuesday 16th June 2026 and will run every 3rd Tuesday of each month from 12:30pm to 2:30pm

To find out more email:
julia@healthwatchcountydurham.co.uk

91-95 Church Street,
Shildon, DL4 1DT

ADHD Assessment + Right to Choose

Since 2019 demand across NHS England for ADHD and Autism assessments has increased. NHS services have not been able to expand at the same pace as the demand which means more people are on the waiting list and expected to wait longer for an assessment.



To help reduce waiting times in the North East and North Cumbria, there are additional providers commissioned by the Integrated Care Board (ICB) to carry out ADHD assessments.

FIND OUT MORE

Pony visits Consett Care Home

Residents at Hampton Court Care Home in Consett were delighted to welcome a very special visitor; during a recent visit from our team.

Tiny Tom, a pony from Shelly Equine Assisted Therapy, spent the morning meeting residents and bringing plenty of smiles along the way.

From cuddles to gentle strokes, Tiny Tom loved all the attention — and many residents enjoyed the care home gaining a new resident for the morning!

Animal therapy can have a hugely positive impact on wellbeing and cognitive function, while also providing calming sensory experiences.

It is wonderful to see one of our county’s care homes going the extra mile to provide such meaningful and beneficial experiences for residents.

Shelly Bruce owns and runs the CIC based in Houghton-le-Spring.



“We provide equine-assisted therapy, wellbeing sessions, riding lessons and confidence-building activities for children, young people and adults – as well as outreach to care homes and school. We offer a calm, supportive and inclusive environment where people can build confidence, emotional wellbeing and life skills through interaction with horses and ponies.”
- Shelly Bruce

Events & What's Happening

Healthwatch County Durham - June Update

See where our team are this month across the county and we welcome a new addition to the team!



Our engagement team are always out and about listening to your experiences of health and social care services attending community hubs, events and more. Here's where you might see us this month:

- Teesdale Shed, TCR Hub, [DL12 8TD](#), Thursday 11th June 10am-12pm
- Shildon Alive, [DL4 1DT](#), Tuesday 16th June, 12:30pm-2:30pm
- Willington Open Church, [DL15 0AG](#), Wednesday 17th June, 10am-12pm
- Belmont Community Centre, [DH1 2LL](#), Friday 19th June, 1:30pm-3pm
- Horden Hub House drop in, [SR8 4LX](#), Mon 22nd June, 10am-12pm
- The Venue, Stanley, [DH9 6AH](#), Mon 29th June, 10am -12pm

Meanwhile, in April we were joined by Ethan, as our Communications & Administrative Co-Ordinator and our new e-bulletin editor!

Ethan has a varied background, bringing communications & IT expertise as well as knowledge of health & social care and youth work.

Ethan has hit the ground running including improving our social media platforms ([such as adding us to Blue Sky](#)), updating our website and helping us with our designs for reports and posters.

So, if you think our posts and publications have improved – we can thank Ethan.

We're very happy to have him on board 😊

'A Thank You' to our Volunteers

Monday 1st June to Sunday 7th June marks the annual Volunteers Week and here at Healthwatch County Durham we want to take the opportunity to celebrate this

occasion with 'A thank you'.



Without the work of volunteers our Enter and View visits to care homes across the county wouldn't take place and important work such as ensuring hospital patients are aware of our service also wouldn't be able to happen.

A strong team of 26 has supported Healthwatch County Durham in a voluntary capacity over the past 12 months. Their support, dedication and determination have not gone unnoticed.

[Read Our Special Report Here](#)

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Annual Event 2026



We are an independent champion for people who use health and social care services in County Durham.

Join us for our free annual event where you will hear about some of the important work we have been involved with over the past year.

 Registration from 10am

 Thursday 9th July 2026

 Bishop Auckland
Football Club, DL14 9AE

Book Now!

For more information email:
info@healthwatchcountydurham.co.uk

Book Your Space Now!

Do you use NHS patient transport services?

The North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB) is working with the North East Ambulance Service (NEAS) and partners to review NHS patient transport services in the North East.

Patient transport helps people get to and from hospital if they cannot travel safely on their own because of their health or mobility needs.



Have you used patient transport?

Share your views...

Feedback indicates the service does not always work well, with people saying:

**Waits can be long and the rules are not always clear +
Services can be different depending on where you live**

The ICB are looking at ways to improve the service and proposing some changes to the rules of who can use the service in line with NHS England guidelines.

Healthwatch County Durham is helping to make sure users of the service can have their say.

If you do use the Patient Transport Service, you can have your say now. Complete the ICB's survey online or contact us if you want to discuss your use of the service and how changes might work for you.

Complete the ICB Survey Online Now

Please complete the survey by 3 July 2026.

Durham Dementia Action Plan

People living with dementia, their families and carers are being invited to help shape future support and services in County Durham.



As part of the Dementia Action Plan, a series of conversations will explore how care can better meet individual needs and improve support across the county.

The first discussion, 'Preventing well', is now underway and focuses on reducing the risk of dementia and staying well for longer.

Responses need to be submitted before th 17th June.

Have Your Say Now



County Durham Advice & Guidance Service

Delivered by Groundwork NE & Cumbria



Empowering County Durham residents to overcome challenges.

Our Advice and Guidance Service is here to help you navigate life's challenges.

We provide free, confidential support on a wide range of issues, including **housing, benefits, money management, consumer, and energy advice**. Whether you need help understanding your options or accessing local services, our friendly team is ready to assist you.

Get in touch

This service is **completely free**.

0330 441 6515

Monday to Friday 10am to 2pm

You can call outside of these hours and leave a voicemail, we will call you back.

Online referral

You can refer yourself or someone you know, quickly and easily using our online form.

Once a referral is received, a member of our team will make contact within 5 working days to assess and provide appropriate support.

Scan the QR to get support or visit our website:

groundwork.org.uk/advice

DROP IN FOR SUPPORT STARTING 8TH JUNE 2026

Horden Hub House
54 Seventh Street, Horden
Mondays 10am to 12pm

No appointment needed – just drop in!

In person appointments are available at other community venues across the county; contact us to discuss your options.



**NEW ADVICE
DROP IN @ HORDEN HUB**
Starting 8th June, Every Monday 10am to 12pm

SCAN ME

Share your experience with us

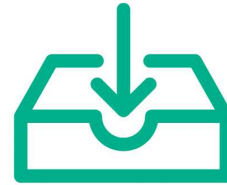
Our work starts with your story. You can share your feedback with us at any time — anonymously if you prefer.

- Telephone: 0300 180 0025

- **Email:** info@healthwatchcountydurham.co.uk
- **Website:** www.healthwatchcountydurham.co.uk

If we're not available straight away, please leave your details and a member of the team will get back to you.

Thank you for reading!
Next month's edition will be in your inbox soon



Contact us:










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New Road
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County Durham
DL15 8QX

Call: 0300 180 0025 between the hours of 09:00 - 17:00 Monday to Friday

Email: info@healthwatchcountydurham.co.uk

Making a complaint: Find out about our [complaints process](#)

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