

healthwatch

County Durham

News update - October 2025



Autumn is here and with it comes the latest updates from Healthwatch County Durham. In this edition, we share insights from local people about health and social care services, highlight our latest reports and let you know how your feedback is helping to shape better care across the county.

From community stories to ways you can have your say, there's plenty to catch up on this month. Read on to find out more.

Working together: Healthwatch County Durham & Inclusion North



One of Healthwatch County Durham Board member volunteers has been working with [Inclusion North](#) on their development of the 'Reasonable Adjustment Flag'.

Jim Welch, who is registered blind, spent two full days with Inclusion North recently, giving his experiences and opinions.

Jim's involvement in the planning will go a long way to ensuring that people with disabilities and their families know what the Reasonable Adjustment Flag is and how it can be used.

For further information see the link below:

[Reasonable Adjustment Flag - Inclusion North](#)

You Told Us: What County Durham residents are saying

We've been listening to your feedback on health and social care across County Durham. Our latest You Told Us report highlights what's working well, where improvements are needed and how your experiences are helping to shape better services.

[Read the full report here.](#)

Have your say and help make care better for everyone in our community!



Volunteer update

We are hosting a volunteer meeting on the 2nd October to have a catch up with our fantastic volunteers who work tirelessly to support the Healthwatch County Durham team. It will be a great opportunity to exchange ideas, hear new intelligence about what people are saying in County Durham and to share an update on what the Healthwatch County Durham team are up to.

October Engagement Events

We're out and about across County Durham this month, listening to your experiences of health and social care. Come along to one of our engagement events and have your say.

Upcoming events:

- **02 Oct:** Bullion Hall, S Approach, Chester-le-Street DH2 2ES — 12:30pm to 2:00pm
- **08 Oct:** The Leanne Kennedy Centre, Queen Alexandra Rd, Seaham SR7 7NH — 11:00am to 1:00pm
- **15 Oct:** Willington Methodist Church Open Door Café, Wesley St, Willington, Crook DL15 0AG — 10:00am to 1:00pm
- **31 Oct:** Sherburn Community Café and Hub, Front St, Sherburn Hill, Durham DH6 1PA — 1:30pm to 3:30pm

Your feedback matters!

Pop by and tell us about your experiences — every voice helps improve local health and care services.

Help improve communication about medication changes in County Durham

Healthwatch County Durham is requesting your help in gathering information regarding the reduction in regular medications.

This is in response to a number of queries we have received from patients who have had their medication reduced or changed with little to no warning.

We want to improve this patient experience by hearing by inviting you to share your experience and producing a leaflet on the reasons behind medication changes. More importantly we will feed back this intelligence to the people that can make changes and ensure better communication and a better service for patients in County Durham who are facing this issue.

To share your experience please contact Lynsey Kim on:

Tel: 0191 916 9833

Email:

lynsey@healthwatchcountydurham.co.uk



healthwatch
County Durham

Have you had your regular medications reduced?

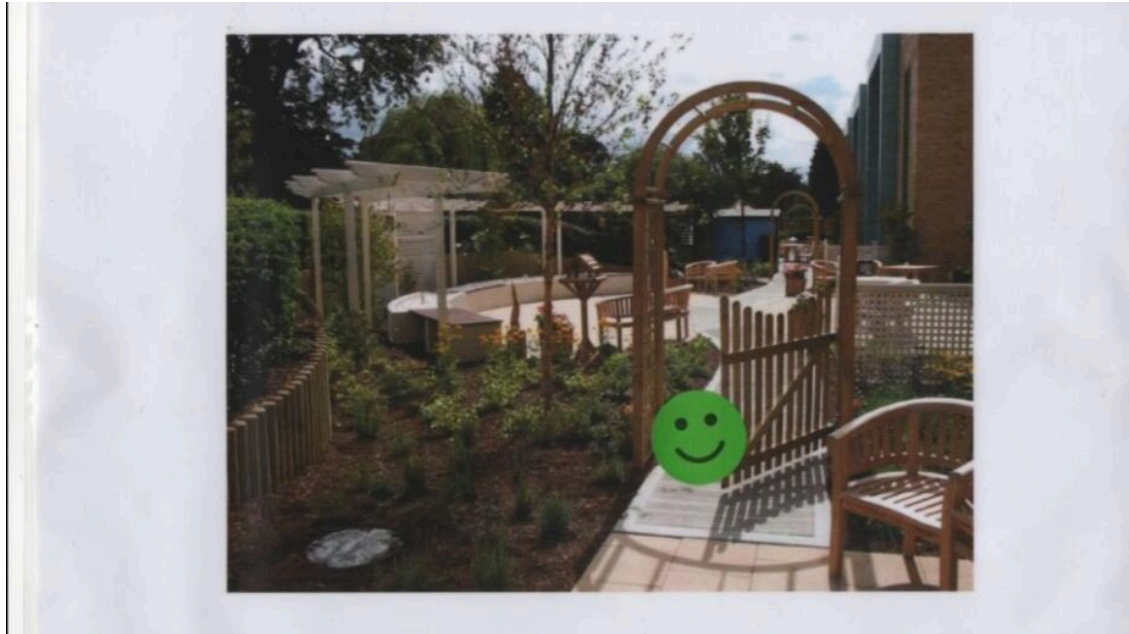
Healthwatch County Durham would love to hear your experiences if you have been affected by medication reductions or changes

Please contact us to arrange a quick phone call to chat about your experience:

Contact:
Lynsey Kim
0191 916 9833
lynsey@healthwatchcountydurham.co.uk

General enquiries: 0300 180 0025

Enter and view update



On 10th September our Enter & View representatives completed their first visit of this year's programme, when they went to [Hawthorn House](#) in Durham.

They were made very welcome by the staff team and residents and had some valuable conversations with people about their experiences of the home.

For each of our Enter & View visits we write a report of our findings - this will be published in due course and will be available to read on our website.

Our next Enter & View visits take place in October, and are:

Monday 13th October – Unity House, Peterlee

Thursday 23rd October – Acorn Grange, West Cornforth

If you would like any more information about the visits, or our Enter & View programme in general, please contact our Volunteer Co-ordinator, Claire Sisterson, at claire@healthwatchcountydurham.co.uk

News & useful information

Upcoming changes to GP appointments

From 1st October, new changes directed by NHS England will come into force affecting how appointments are booked at GP practices. These changes aim to streamline access to GP services and make it easier for patients to get the care they need.

[Find out more and see a full summary of the changes here.](#)

💡 Tip: If you're planning to see your GP soon, check with your practice to understand how these changes may affect your appointment booking.

Would you like to see what happens behind the scenes at our local hospitals?

County Durham & Darlington NHS Foundation Trust are inviting the public to special open days this October, giving you a rare chance to:

- Meet hospital staff and learn more about their roles
- Discover how different departments work together to care for patients
- Explore areas of the hospital not usually open to the public
- Find out about volunteering and career opportunities in the NHS

It's a fantastic opportunity to see your local hospitals in action, ask questions, and get a deeper understanding of how services are delivered.



The poster is for 'Hospital Open Day Tours' by County Durham & Darlington NHS Foundation Trust. It features a group of seven diverse healthcare professionals in scrubs. The text 'HOSPITAL OPEN' is in large, bold letters, with 'DAY TOURS' below it. A QR code and a 'SCAN ME!' icon are in the top left. The NHS logo and the trust's name are in the top right. A list of three hospitals and their open day dates is on the right. At the bottom, it says 'safe • compassionate • joined-up care', 'Book via trybooking', and provides an email address. A 'LIMITED SPACES' badge is also present.

Would you like to see what goes on behind the scenes of the NHS?

HOSPITAL OPEN

DAY TOURS

safe • compassionate • joined-up care

Any questions, or you'd like to discuss accessibility or support needs, please email cdda-tr.communications@nhs.net

County Durham & Darlington NHS Foundation Trust Charity

County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust

County Durham & Darlington NHS Foundation Trust are offering the opportunity to a behind the scenes open day tour on one of our main hospital sites. Meet with some of our wonderful colleagues and members of our executive team, find out more about some of our services and take a look at some of our facilities.

Darlington Memorial Hospital
Tuesday 07 October, 1pm-4pm

University Hospital of North Durham
Friday 24 October, 1pm-4pm

Bishop Auckland Hospital
Friday 31 October, 1pm-4pm

Book via **trybooking** www.cdft.nhs.uk

LIMITED SPACES

Calling VCSE Organisations:

Share your experiences

Durham Community Action is inviting **Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations** to take part in a survey exploring the experiences of groups supporting children, young people, and/or adults with needs or at risk.



This is a valuable opportunity to:

- **Share your experiences** – highlight successes and challenges in your work
- **Shape future support** – inform improvements in information, training, and services
- **Strengthen the VCSE sector's voice** – ensure frontline knowledge informs system-wide decisions

All types of community groups are welcome, from small toddler groups in village halls to large organisations supporting adults with complex needs.

The survey takes **10–16 minutes** to complete. Every response helps build a stronger, more responsive network of support.

📄 **Take part here:** [Survey Link](#)

Alternatively, you can share your experiences directly with Durham Community Action.

Contact **Abby Weatherill** at abby.weatherill@durhamcommunityaction or **01388 742040** to arrange a chat.

Thank you for helping make a difference in our community.

BRCA Testing Free NHS



Register by 31 October 2025


People with at least one Jewish grandparent are being encouraged to register for free BRCA gene testing before the programme closes for new registrations on 31 October 2025.


Having Jewish ancestry increases your risk of having a BRCA gene fault which puts you at increased risk of developing certain types of cancer - specifically breast, ovarian, prostate and pancreatic cancer.

Knowing you have a BRCA gene fault allows you to access a range of options, available on the NHS, that help to manage and reduce cancer risk, as well as avoid passing on the gene fault to your children.

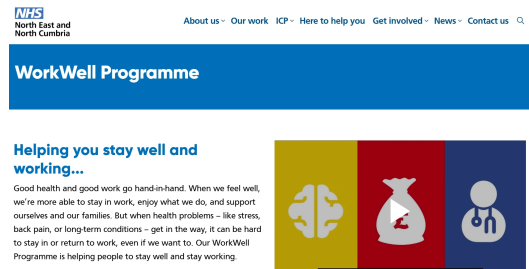
Anyone living in England, aged 18 or over with one or more Jewish grandparent is eligible for the programme and urged to sign up as soon as possible via the [website](https://www.jewishbrca.org).

Please raise awareness among your patients, families and friends.

 Registration closes on **31 October 2025**.

 Find out more and sign up here: www.jewishbrca.org

Views on WorkWell



A service to help you stay well and stay in work

WorkWell is a new service. It will help people with health problems to:

- stay in work, or
- get back to work.

We know that more people in North East and North Cumbria are out of work due to poor health than in most other parts of the country. We want to change that.

Your views can help shape the developing service. Please fill in our [WorkWell survey](#) and share it with others. The survey is open until 3rd November. If you need any help filling in the survey, please contact nencicb.involve@nhs.net

You can also find out more about WorkWell on our website: [WorkWell Programme | North East and North Cumbria NHS](#)

Thank you for reading!

Next month's edition will be in your inbox soon



Contact us:



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Crook Business Centre
New Road
Crook
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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