

September 2025

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September 2025 News Update

What is Healthwatch County Durham currently
working on?

Work Plan priorities for 2025 - 2026



Our Annual Report for 2024-25 is now available in hard copy

Healthwatch County Durham Work Plan 2025 - 2026

As an independent consumer champion, our main function is to understand the needs, experiences and concerns of people who use health and social care services, and to represent your voices to decision-makers - influencing positive change, so that services better meet the needs of our local communities.

Our workplan is developed in partnership between our independent Board and our staff team. Every year, to decide where we focus our efforts, we consider:

- The intelligence received through our information & signposting contacts.
- The information we gather at public engagement events.
- 'Word on the street' intelligence, which includes information that our volunteers pass on to us.
- The results of surveys and questionnaires.
- Where we can have the most influence - where our efforts can realistically lead to positive change, and what resources we have available.
- What is happening within health and care across the region and nationally.

Over the next year, we will be looking at the following topics -

- Hospital booking system - voted for by the public, you told us that this can be confusing and difficult to navigate. We want to hear what experiences you have had booking appointments, and look into where improvements can be made.
- Medication changes - we have been hearing lately that people are having their medication changed, reduced or stopped without any warning or discussion with their GP. You should always be informed or consulted about changes to your care and treatment - please let us know your experiences.
- Right to Choose and Shared Care Agreements - many people have told us that the system is very confusing, difficult to understand and isn't working for them. We want to find out more so we can help people choose the right options.
- Patient Transport - different companies with different criteria and different ways of booking make it difficult for some people to book transport to appointments. We aim to produce some guidance to help people understand and be able to use patient transport when needed.
- Care Homes - our Enter & View team will be visiting 6 care homes across the county over the next few months. They will speak to residents, staff and families or carers where possible, to find out what is working well and what could be improved. Details of the visits will be shared on our social media and in this newsletter, so please contact us if you would like to get involved.
- Mental health - we will produce our evaluation of the Community Mental Health Transformation, and we are continuing our involvement with the suicide prevention group based in Chester-le-Street, developing a suicide prevention pledge for the town.

All of our work is based on your feedback and your experiences - please get in touch with us if you have any stories to share about any of the topics; whether your experience was good or bad, your information helps us to get a clear picture of what works and what needs to be better.

Tel - 0300 1800025

Email - info@healthwatchcountydurham.co.uk

**Healthwatch County Durham
wants to hear your views and experiences
of the services in our 2025–26 work plan.**

- Have you needed to book a hospital appointment?
- Have you used Patient Transport?
- Has your medication been changed?
- Have you tried to get a Shared Care Agreement?
- Any other services you would like to talk to us about?



**Scan the QR code to
visit our website**

Tell us.....

Call 0300 1800025

Info@healthwatchcountydurham.co.uk

healthwatchcountydurham.co.uk

*Our goal is to make the services
we all use better.*

Our work starts with your story.



Enter and View

healthwatch
County Durham

Healthwatch County Durham

Enter & View Programme 2025/2026

An important part of the work Healthwatch does is to conduct 'Enter and View' visits. Healthwatch County Durham are coming to visit seven residential Care Homes in the County, between now and February 2026.

Local Healthwatch representatives carry out these visits to services to find out how they are run and make recommendations where there are areas for improvement.

The Health and Social Care Act allows Healthwatch to observe service delivery and talk to service users, their families, and carers on premises such as hospitals, residential homes, GP practices, dental surgeries, optometrists, and pharmacies.

If you are interested in giving us your feedback regarding any of the following homes, or any other home in County Durham, please let us know and we will contact you in order to do this or you are welcome to pop in on the day and time of the visits below:-

Hawthorn House (St Godric's Close, County Durham DH1 5PJ)-Wed. 10th September

Unity House (Wescott Road, Peterlee SR8 5JE)-Mon. 13th October

Acorn Grange (Vicarage Road, West Cornforth, Ferryhill DL17 9HU)-Thurs. 23rd October

Kensington Hall (Front Street, South Hetton DH6 2TG)-Thurs. 20th November

Beaconsfield Court Care (112 Galgate, Barnard Castle DL12 8ES)-Mon. 8th December

Dr. Ashdown's Stockton Lodge (Seaton Park, Stockton Road, Seaham SR7 0HJ)-Thurs. 29th January 2026

Brandon Lodge (Commercial Street, Brandon DH7 8PH)-Tues. 17th February 2026

(All visits will happen between 9am and 12 noon)

**For any questions, please call Claire Sisterson on 0191 9169834 (Tuesday-Thursday)
email claire@healthwatchcountydurham.co.uk**

Download Reports



You Told Us Report July 2025



We have produced our second monthly update 'You Told Us' report. This will be a regular feature highlighting the intelligence and experiences we are hearing from the people of County Durham.

Click below to download a copy of the report from our website:

[You Told Us Report - July 2025](#)

Our Annual Report for 2024-25 is now available in hard copy

****Limited availability****

We have a limited number of hard copies available of our Annual Report 2024-2025.

If you would like a copy please contact us at: info@healthwatchcountydurham.co.uk, or
tel: 0300 180 0025.

Alternatively, you can still download an electronic copy, or printable PDF version from
our website:

[Annual Report 2024 - 2025](#)

Engagement Activities



We have been out and about doing some outdoor events over the summer, including the Stanley Activity Week and The Auckland Project Wellbeing Fair in the beautiful surrounding of Auckland Castle.

Healthwatch County Durham will be engaging with the communities on the following dates and venues:

- Tuesday 2nd September 10:00- 12:00pm at The Venue, Stanley DH9 6AH.
- Wednesday 10th September 10:00am - 1:00pm at The Leanne Kennedy Centre (formerly Dawdon Community Centre) Seaham, SR7 7NH.
- Friday 12th September 11:30am -12:45pm, Fresher Fair at Durham Sixth Form, The Sands, Durham DH1 1SG.
- Wednesday 17th September at Willington Methodist Church, DL15 0AG.
- Monday 22nd September 10:30am - 12:30pm, Sliver Talk engagement event , Bullion Hall Chester-le-Street, DH2 2DW.

We're just getting started - more exciting engagement activities are coming soon!

Please check out our [Facebook](#) page for the most up-to-date venues, dates and times.



Update from Healthwatch



Thank you to everyone who has contacted us with messages of support, following the publication of the NHS 10 year plan, and the news that, at some point in the future, Healthwatch will no longer operate in its current form.

Although there is little detail about the future at the moment, we will keep people updated with further news when we can. And in the meantime, please feel free to contact us with any questions or comments about the future changes. Thank you for your support.

Many of you have told us you are concerned about whether there will continue to be a local, independent voice representing and supporting people who use health & social care services, their families and carers.

We want to reassure you that, even though the Healthwatch name will no longer exist, we are all committed to doing the very best we can for our communities, now, and in the future. That includes our aim to be involved in developing what comes next and ensuring that it is the best possible option for local people.

We are aware that a national petition has been created asking the government to:

- Invest in and strengthen independent public voice.
- Engage with local Healthwatch leaders and the public to co-design a future that puts people first.
- Recognise the role independent voice can play in supporting the delivery of the NHS 10 Year Plan - by providing constructive challenge and supporting coproduction, particularly with those communities facing the greatest health and care needs.

If you are interested in signing the petition, you can do so here:

<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/732993/>

In the news and useful information...



Well done Tony and all the team working on

supporting Veterans to access cancer information



Great to hear that this piece of work we were involved in, through our Inclusion Lead (& veteran) Tony, has been shortlisted for an award 🏆



County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust ✓

13 August at 19:00 · 🌐

🎉 We're delighted to share some exciting news! 🎉

The Trust's Supporting Veterans to Access Cancer Information project has been shortlisted for the Military and Civilian Health Partnership Award at the prestigious 2025 HSJ Awards! 🏆

Selected from over 1,250 entries, this recognition celebrates the dedication of our amazing team in tackling cancer health inequalities among veterans. 💙 🏆

[#HSJAwards](#) [#VeteransHealth](#)

New crisis text service in North East and North Cumbria



**HERE
TO
HELP**

NHS
North East and
North Cumbria

Feeling sad or lonely?
Text '**CALMER**' to **85258**
for free, confidential support, 24/7

shout
here for you 24/7

Free, 24/7 confidential text support is available from Shout.

Are you struggling with your mental health but find it hard to talk? Simply text '**CALMER**' to **85258** to get free, 24/7 confidential text support.

If you find yourself in a mental health crisis, you can now get urgent support by TEXT, thanks to a new partnership between regional NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board and a national mental health provider.

Anyone in the North East and North Cumbria experiencing anxiety, stress, loneliness, depression, self-harm, suicidal thoughts, or other mental health challenges can use the service by texting the word '**CALMER**' to 85258 at any time of day or night.

The service is for all ages, and it's funded by NHS North East and North Cumbria, and innovative digital service called Shout, which is powered by the charity Mental Health Innovations.

This text service does not replace other mental health support such as the NHS 111 mental health service or Talking Therapies.

Need to talk? Text 'CALMER' to 85258 to connect with Shout for a text conversation that's free, confidential and available 24/7.

Open consultation - Corridor Care in A&E departments



The Patient Association are seeking patients who have experienced corridor care in A & E Departments and would like to share their experiences to take the following survey which has been created by IPSOS. It should only take 5 minutes to complete so please do circulate to anyone you feel may wish to contribute. The link and further information are set out below:

[Corridor Care in A&E departments Survey](#)

We're working with the Royal College of Emergency Medicine (RCEM) to help inform an important piece of work outlining the prevalence and impact of corridor care in A&E departments. We're interested in hearing your views and experience, and all responses will be kept completely anonymous. Testimonies collected through this survey will be brought together with findings from two other strands of research:

- A nationally representative Ipsos poll exploring public attitudes towards emergency care

- A survey of RCEM members capturing the perspectives of frontline clinicians.

Together, these insights will form the basis of a comprehensive report, which will highlight both patient and clinician experiences and set out recommendations for the future.

By sharing your views, you will play an essential role in ensuring that patient voices are heard alongside those of clinicians and the wider public.

Health Awareness Campaigns in September



Urology Awareness Month is observed every September to raise awareness about urological conditions and encourage people to take charge of their urological health. This includes conditions like urinary tract infections (UTIs), kidney stones, prostate issues, and bladder cancer.

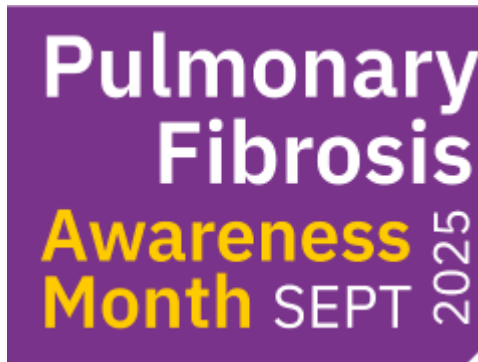
The month also focuses on raising awareness for urological cancers, such as bladder, kidney, prostate, and testicular cancer. Early detection and treatment of these cancers can significantly improve outcomes.

1 in 5 people in the UK are impacted by bladder problems. 1 in 3 women are living with

bladder leakage. With an ageing population, we expect this figure to continue to rise in the coming decade.

For more information visit:

[Urology Awareness Month - The Urology Foundation](#)



Every September marks Pulmonary Fibrosis Awareness Month – a time to raise understanding of this life-limiting lung disease, highlight symptoms, and call for more research and support.

[PF Awareness Month Sep 2025](#)

[Pulmonary rehabilitation :: County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust](#)



Every September, blood pressure checks are taken by thousands to prevent heart attacks and strokes.

Know Your Numbers! Week reaches those who have high blood pressure and don't know it, so they can get the treatment and support they need to bring it under control.

Previously, hundreds of organisations took part, setting up Pressure Stations in public places across the UK. From hospitals and health centres to offices, car parks and supermarkets. Even the Royal Albert Hall. Today, the Know Your Numbers! Week focus is on home blood pressure monitoring, as it's the easiest way to find out your blood pressure numbers. Take a look at the highlights from past campaigns.



Chloe from Healthwatch County Durham has been working hard alongside other partners in the Suicide Prevention Group to work on a suicide prevention pledge in Chester-le-Street. This is vital work as we have an average of 74 deaths from suicide per year in County Durham. This is equivalent to 1 death by suicide nearly every 5 days.

World Suicide Prevention Day, is a time to show everyone that talking about difficult feelings, including suicidal thoughts, doesn't have to be scary.

A recent poll found that only 45% of people feel comfortable talking to family and friends about suicidal thoughts, compared to 74% who said they feel comfortable talking about mental health.

Let's help change this. By talking more openly about suicide, we can give people the chance to express how they feel and get the support they need. It could even save a life.

For further support visit:

[World Suicide Prevention Day | Campaigns | Samaritans](#)



48,000 people in the UK died of sepsis last year the theme is "5 Facts × 5 Actions," emphasizing truths about sepsis and five vital steps to save lives. The day aims to raise awareness of sepsis impact, promote its prevention, and highlight p towards the 2030 Global Agenda for Sepsis.

[Home - The UK Sepsis Trust](#)

[2025 WorldSepsisDay_Media_Policy_Brief.pdf](#)

What is National Inclusion Week®?

National Inclusion Week® offers an opportunity to sp conversations and inspire thinking about inclusion across your organisation. It serves as a platform for discussion, generating ideas, or launching new initiatives. What makes National Inclusion Week® unique and exciting is that is involves everyone. It's great week to discuss intersectional issues and includ all your communities - across gender, race, religion, LGBTQ+, disabilities, carers and social mobility.



For more information visit:

[National Inclusion Week® 2025 | Inclusive Employers](#)



Right now more than **7000 people** are waiting for an organ transplant.

> You can save up to nine lives when you die as an organ donor and transform many more by also donating tissue.

Add your name to the NHS Organ Donor Register, and let your family know what you've decided.

Sadly, someone will die today waiting for a transplant, and most of us would accept an organ if we needed one. It takes just 2 minutes for someone to confirm their decision on the NHS Organ Donor Register.

[Turn the skies pink for Organ Donation Week - NHS Blood and Transplant](#)



World Patient Safety Day

The theme for World Patient Safety Day 2025 is "Safe care for every newborn and every child" according to the World Health Organization (WHO), emphasizing the need for stronger measures to protect children from preventable harm. This theme is aligned with the WHO's Global Patient Safety Action Plan 2021-2030, which recognizes the importance of paediatric and newborn safety according to Patient Safety Learning. The slogan for the day is "Patient safety from the start!".

...and last but not least



Worlds Biggest Coffee Morning MacMillan

The official date for Macmillan's World's Biggest Coffee Morning in 2025 is Friday, September 26. While this is the designated date, Macmillan Cancer Support encourages people to host their events anytime that best suits them. The event is a chance to gather with friends, family, or colleagues, enjoy coffee and treats, and raise money for Macmillan's vital work supporting people affected by cancer.

C

Share your News

If you have anything you would like to share with us to put in the e-bulletin, please get in touch and we will be able to include it in the future. This can include upcoming events, important information on health and social care and support around County Durham.

Email info@healthwatchcountydurham.co.uk if you would like your information to be considered for the e-bulletin.



Contact us:

Healthwatch County Durham

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Crook Business Centre

New Road

Crook

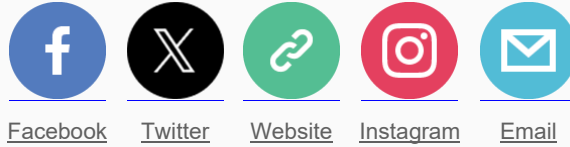
County Durham

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