

What is Healthwatch?

Healthwatch is an initiative that was brought about by the Health and Social Care Act 2012, and has been around for 6 years. Healthwatch is the “consumer champion” for health and social care services, which means that it’s our job to find out about people’s experiences of health and social care services, and to make sure that the public’s views are reflected when commissioners and providers make decisions to change services. There is a local Healthwatch in each local authority area, and a national body, Healthwatch England. What Healthwatch does is governed by 8 key functions outlined in the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

People talk to us about any health or social care service that they or a family member are using or might use, such as GPs, care homes, hospitals and home care providers. People approach us with concerns or compliments, and sometimes we go out to ask people specific questions to gather their views on particular issues or topics.

Each local authority has a statutory responsibility to provide a local Healthwatch, and Healthwatch England offers advice and support to those local Healthwatch. Funding for Healthwatch is allocated to local authorities through their core grant and the Local Reform and Community Voices Grant, but is not ring-fenced for the delivery of Healthwatch. As funding for Healthwatch is at the discretion of the local authority, investment in Healthwatch varies hugely across the country.

Who is delivering Healthwatch in Kirklees?

Since April 1st 2013, the contract for Healthwatch in Kirklees has been delivered by the independent charity, Healthwatch Kirklees. Since April 2016, Healthwatch Kirklees has also delivered the contract for Healthwatch in Calderdale.

In Kirklees, the Healthwatch team is made up of 6 staff members all working part-time for the organisation, working in the roles of Chief Executive, Team Manager, Senior Engagement and Information Officer, 2 x Engagement and Information Officer and Volunteering and Engagement Officer (Enter and View Lead). The team are based at Empire House in Dewsbury but travel across Greater Huddersfield and North Kirklees to gather the public’s views.

The work of the charity “Healthwatch Kirklees” is governed by the organisation’s Trustee Board. A mix of community representatives and senior staff from local voluntary sector organisations across Calderdale and Kirklees take seats on the Board, and utilise their expertise and understanding of the local area to help define the strategic direction of the organisation.

How does Healthwatch Kirklees work?

Healthwatch Kirklees delivers project work centred on particular services, themes or challenges. When the team does a piece of project work, they do it in 3 key stages:

- *We listen* - we spend time talking to people to get an understanding of their views and concerns.
- *We learn more* - if we think that there is a wider issue that could affect more people, or we have heard some very concerning and serious feedback, then we do more to learn about what the issue is. We do this through talking to more members of the public to gather their views, and speaking to service providers and commissioners to understand what the problem might be.
- *We make change happen* - Healthwatch is about making sure that when people tell us something isn’t right, we take what we have learned and make sure that change happens. This might be a commitment from a service to improve something, a change to the way that a service is contracted or commissioned, or a new initiative being put in place.

We learn a lot about what people think of services in Kirklees through our website, www.healthwatchkirklees.co.uk, where people can leave reviews of the services they use, in a way that is similar to TripAdvisor. We offer outreach to our local communities, visiting different special interest and community groups to deliver basic health checks, and to ask for people's experiences of health and care. We do work on lots of different levels:

- Offering support for individuals to find out about services available to them through our advice and information service
- Engaging proactively with the community to understand their views ahead of a change, such as recommissioning of a service
- Challenging the health and care system where there is inequity or poor quality in the delivery of care
- Strategic work to find out what people think of new ideas and initiatives being proposed by the NHS and social care

Wherever we can, we involve volunteers in the delivery of our work. We have a dedicated and well supported group of volunteers who assist us by supporting the programme of outreach, reviewing surveys and reports, attending meetings to represent Healthwatch, and bringing in intelligence about health and care experiences from people they know. A crucial way in which volunteers support us is in delivery of our Enter and View visits. Under the Health and Social Care Act 2012, Healthwatch has the right to go in to any publicly funded health and care setting to speak to the people using that service, whether they are residents, patients, visitors, or staff.

Our current work priorities

Our work priorities change regularly in line with what the public is sharing with us. We assess any potential priority or piece of work through a decision making tool which helps us to consider the amount of feedback we hold on an issue, whether anyone else is looking in to it and working on it, what we can add to the picture and how much influence we can have.

Here is a selection of our current work priorities:

- **Adult Social Care** - it's important to us that we gather feedback about both health and social care services, but often we receive very little feedback about social care. We have opted to set adult social care as a key focus for 2019, and have delivered a case study project across 6 months, and are now working with local communities to get an understanding of whether people know what to do if they think someone might be needing some social care support.
- **Engaging with children and young people** - another priority area for 2019, but will certainly go on in to 2020. We have been taking a variety of approaches to delivering engagement with children and young people, including in school workshops and outreach at young people's groups. We have used creative approaches, games, and digital opportunities to engage young people, and we are still refining our approach.
- **Single Point of Access for mental health services** - the SPA is the service we receive most unprompted feedback about, and as such, we opted to do a more in-depth piece of engagement to understand people's experiences. Key challenges highlighted to us were around the difference in expectation and action from the service; although the service is called the "single point of access", it is not able to offer some of the crisis support and assistance that people are looking for. This is a significant gap. We are working with South West Yorkshire NHS Partnership Foundation Trust to examine the feedback and deliver events asking people about how the service could change.
- **Hypermobility Syndromes** - Healthwatch Calderdale led this piece of engagement across Yorkshire and the Humber, speaking with people who have diagnoses of [Hypermobility Syndromes](#) (such as Ehlers-Danlos) about their experience of getting a diagnosis, accessing treatment, and getting social care support. Over 240 responses make this one of the biggest collections of patient experience feedback for people with hypermobility syndromes. The work has been debated in Parliament, with Calderdale MP Craig Whittaker championing the recommendations of the work.

- **Outpatient Transformation at CHFT** - Healthwatch continue to work with Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Foundation Trust to assist them in understanding how changes to the delivery of outpatient services might impact people with protected characteristics or vulnerabilities. The Trust are very open to working with us to ensure the transformation is inclusive.
- **Experiences of caring in Kirklees BAME communities** - we are building up links with community groups that support people from different ethnic backgrounds who have caring roles for loved ones. We want to understand whether there are specific differences that should be reflected in our local strategies for carers, so that they are respectful of diversity and inclusive of everyone.

How does Healthwatch influence?

Healthwatch Kirklees takes a seat on the Health and Wellbeing Board, and we utilise this seat to make sure that people's views are being considered in decision making in health and social care. We are also involved in other key strategic meetings in Kirklees, such as the Kirklees Integrated Provider Board, Kirklees Safeguarding Adults Board and Primary Care Commissioning Committees. Presence at these meetings allows us opportunities to utilise feedback we hold to influence commissioning and strategic decisions; to emphasise the importance of engaging with the public and gathering their views when taking decisions; and helps us to understand key local priorities and demands for local organisations.

It is stated in the legislation governing Healthwatch that the organisation has a right to ask questions and make recommendations of providers and commissioners, and the organisations are obligated to respond. It's rare that Healthwatch Kirklees uses or enforces these authorities as we work closely with health and care organisations to ensure that they are aware of our work and keen to receive it.

How can I engage with Healthwatch Kirklees?

If you have heard about an issue with health or social care from the people you represent, please get in touch and tell us. We might already be hearing feedback about it and it could be something that we are looking to escalate, or it might be something we start looking in to. We might be able to offer some information and signposting to individuals if they need pointing in the right direction.

If you would like to leave a review of a service you have used, or if you would like to encourage someone you are supporting to leave a review, you can do this on our website at this link

<http://www.healthwatchkirklees.co.uk/services/>

If you know of a group or forum that might benefit from us going along to give an introduction to Healthwatch and talk about our work, then please let us know so we can make arrangements to come along.

These are our contact details:

Tel: 01924 450379

Email: info@healthwatchkirklees.co.uk

Text: 60777 - start your message with XK4C9

Website: www.healthwatchkirklees.co.uk

Address: Units 11-12 Empire House,

Twitter: @hwkirklees

Facebook: [facebook.com/HealthwatchKirklees](https://www.facebook.com/HealthwatchKirklees)