healthwatch Cumbria

What is the Healthwatch network?

Healthwatch is the new consumer champion for health and social care in England. We give children, young people and adults a powerful voice – making sure their views and experiences are heard by those who run, plan and regulate health and social care services.

By making sure the views and experiences of all people who use services are gathered, analysed and acted upon, we can help make services better now and in the future. Healthwatch actively seeks views from all sections of the community, especially from those who sometimes struggle to be heard and not just from those who shout the loudest. We also encourage health and social care providers, regulators and planners to hear directly from people themselves.

Healthwatch has two parts; the nationally-focused Healthwatch England and 152 community-focused local Healthwatch. Together we form the Healthwatch network, working closely to ensure consumers' views are represented nationally and locally.

What does Healthwatch England do?

Healthwatch England gives a national voice to the key issues that affect children, young people and adults who use health and social care services. It develops an intelligent view of trends and consumer experiences at a national level, based on evidence gained from:

- views and experiences of people who use services locally and nationally
- views and experiences gained by local Healthwatch
- evidence gathered and shared by stakeholders and partners, including charities, professional bodies and those who support vulnerable people

All of this evidence is used to highlight major issues and seek change in the policy, regulation and delivery of health and social care services. Where very important issues arise, they are raised with the Secretary of State for Health, the Care Quality Commission, the NHS Commissioning Board, Monitor or local authorities in England. By law they have to respond to what Healthwatch England has to say.

Healthwatch England also provides leadership, support and advice to local Healthwatch so they can be strong ambassadors for local people and develop strong partnerships across their communities.

What does local Healthwatch do?

Local Healthwatch help people get the best out of their local health and social care services; whether it's improving them today or helping to shape them for tomorrow. Local Healthwatch is all about local voices being able to influence the delivery and design of local services. Not just people who use them, but anyone who might need to in the future.

Local Healthwatch:

- provides people with information, advice and support about local health and social care services
- gathers the views and experiences of local people on the way services are delivered and have the power to enter

and view adult health and social care services to get a feel for how they are delivering
- influences the way services are designed and delivered based on evidence from those who use services
- influences how services are set up and commissioned by having a seat on the local Health and Wellbeing Board
- passes information and recommendations to other local Healthwatch, Healthwatch England and the Care Quality Commission

Anna Bradley, Chair of Healthwatch England says:

"The Healthwatch network is a new kind of consumer champion in health and social care. We will make sure the voice of the consumer is heard and acted upon. With our independent statutory powers, the network as a whole has a fantastic opportunity to make a difference. Healthwatch England looks forward to making sure the public's voice is heard loud and clear by those who plan, run and regulate health and social care services."

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