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Healthwatch Gateshead is part of Tell Us North CIC, company no. 10394966

## The journey of the voice from patients and public

Dear Health and Wellbeing Board Members

### About Healthwatch Gateshead

Healthwatch Gateshead is one of 152 local Healthwatch organisations established throughout England on 1 April 2013 under the provisions of the Health and Social Care Act 2012. We are the independent voice and champion of users of a range of NHS services and social care for adults, children and young people. We have a dual role to champion the rights of users, and to hold the system to account for how well it engages with the public.

We collect feedback on services from people of all ages and communities. We do this through our network of voluntary and community sector organisations; during events, drop-in sessions and listening events at a range of venues across Gateshead; online through the feedback centre on our websites; via social media; and from callers to our information and signposting helplines. As part of the remit to gather views, we also have the power to 'enter and view' services and conduct announced and unannounced visits.

Healthwatch Gateshead, along with Healthwatch Newcastle are part of Tell Us North CIC (company no. 10394966).

The Healthwatch Team have spent time during this unprecedented period encouraging feedback from people using health and social care services. We felt a need to reassess our priorities for this period to help towards improving local services from lessons learnt.

Our staff are currently working from home. We needed to look at new and innovative ways to continue our engagement activities through our social media platforms and direct contacts with people. Please see over for details of our refreshed priorities.

The attached report gives you a flavour of responses to our information-gathering priority. We plan to target seldom heard groups in our next phase.

We welcome the opportunity to share this information with you and to hear from you on how this has helped in your learning moving forward.

Currently the trends coming out appear to be that people and services seem to have adapted well to the changes that have been made due to the pandemic. Some queries have been raised on Patient Transport Services and its criteria which we are following up

for clarification. Other enquiries have highlighted people's concerns about limited access to dentists and opticians.

We will continue to monitor the trends coming through and would be keen to continue dialogue with commissioners and providers on what people are telling us.

Please let us know if you wish to continue receiving our reports, which we aim to provide on a quarterly basis. We are happy to provide monthly reports relating to COVID queries should you feel this would be beneficial.

Kind regards

Cynthia Atkin  
Interim Operations Manager

Enc. Healthwatch Five Key Priorities  
**Quarterly Report showing current activities**

## Healthwatch Gateshead priorities

**Information giving** - this has been through social media, giving keys messages to the public on how to stay safe and well. How to get help for support if and when needed.

**Information gathering** - inviting people to share their experiences and stories during this COVID-19 period. To share this information with commissioners and providers to ensure people's voices are heard when planning and delivering services.

**Signposting** - supporting people to get the right help that they need at the right time. This involves receiving telephone calls, emails and messages via our social media and websites regarding enquiries.

**Troubleshooting** - helping people who are not getting the responses they need and escalating enquiries when necessary.

**Supporting local communities** - working with others in the voluntary and community sector, as well as the local authorities, to support the wider community during this challenging time. We feel it is vital to work in partnership to ensure the most effective support is available for our communities. We have been undertaking befriending calls to our most vulnerable people in the area.

Author: Healthwatch Newcastle and Healthwatch Gateshead

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