

TITLE OF REPORT: Healthwatch Gateshead Interim Update

REPORT OF: Report of Gateshead Healthwatch

Summary

1. To inform the Care Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee about the priorities set for Healthwatch Gateshead in 2018/19 and to update the Committee on progress achieved since last year.
 2. The OSC is asked to receive this interim report for information with a view to receiving a further report at the March 2019 meeting.
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Background

3. Tell Us North CIC (TUN) is a community interest company which was successful in securing the contract to deliver Healthwatch Gateshead from 1 April 2017. TUN also holds the contract for Healthwatch Newcastle, and this allows us to work across Gateshead and Newcastle when required, sharing resources, skills and knowledge whilst ensuring that both geographies remain distinct.
4. The joint Healthwatch Gateshead and Healthwatch Newcastle conference was repeated in April. The venue this year was St Mary's Heritage centre and the focus was the work of both Healthwatch as well as involving delegates in the creation of an engagement plan/resource for Newcastle Gateshead Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). The engagement plan focused on engaging with service users with learning disabilities, their relatives and carers.
5. As with last year the Healthwatch Gateshead committee had developed a short list of possible priorities. This list was informed by comments, concerns and points of view gathered from residents during 2017/18 as well as input from local health and social care officers and organisations. The list was consulted on publicly and the committee then established the key 2018/19 priorities as :
 - Lack of funding for social care
 - Mental Health (joint with Healthwatch Newcastle)
6. The Healthwatch Gateshead committee has also agreed that the priorities for engagement during 2018/19 should be:
 - Young people

- The West of Gateshead borough

Progress to date.

7. Lack of funding for social care

Healthwatch Gateshead project manager, Kim Newton, has spent the summer speaking with various officers and voluntary and community sector leaders to scope this project. We developed a survey for Gateshead residents to support them to participate in the consultation on the LGA green paper on social care. This was submitted to Gateshead Council so that elements could be incorporated into their response to the consultation and council officers decided to include the full Healthwatch Gateshead report as an appendix to their response.

The final design of this project is still to be agreed by the committee however, it is likely to include a survey with service users to establish what, if any changes, they have seen in services since the last round of changes under the council's budget. We also intend to hold a consultation event on this year's budget proposals to mirror work we did a few years ago.

This project will be complete by the end of the financial year and a report will be submitted to this OSC.

8. Mental health

As there has been a lot of engagement and consultation on mental health in Gateshead in recent years, we decided to take a different approach to this project. Our work will focus on people who were not fully involved in the Deciding Together and Expanding Minds, Improving Lives engagement processes. We have identified the following groups from conversations with officers and voluntary and community sector leaders and are prioritising them for engagement:

- Lesbian and transgender communities
- Black African and Afro-Caribbean communities
- Veterans
- Homeless people
- Students (particularly overseas students)
- People on Universal Credit

We approached voluntary and community sector organisations to invite them to bid to undertake engagement with their service users and have commissioned a veterans organisation, Gateshead Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and Fulfilling Lives. They will work with male and female veterans, people on Universal Credit and people who are homeless respectively.

We are also currently undertaking a survey of the lesbian and transgender communities. We have a Northumbria University student working with us on placement who will be supervising the work focussing on students.

This project will also share its report with this committee following publication of the report in March 2019.

9. Engagement

Victoria Clarke, Volunteer and Outreach Coordinator, is leading a programme of engagement, supported by a core group of volunteers. We will shortly be recruiting for volunteers to help expand this work. Our main methods of engagement are focus groups, working with community groups to ensure we reach people who would not necessarily come to a Healthwatch event, and our feedback centre, where people can review health and social care experiences online, by phone or via a feedback card.

We have been out and about at large community events including Pride, Newcastle Mela and Chinese New Year, as well as doing smaller scale engagement in venues such as care homes and Gateshead College.

Victoria is tracking all engagement activity by type and location to ensure that we get a representative demographic spread across the borough.

We have seen great indirect benefits of Victoria's engagement work. She has been working closely with the Roma community, building up trust and links. As a result of this work, Gateshead CAB have been able to engage with the community to ensure that they are getting access to benefits they are entitled to.

10. Last year's projects

- We are still waiting to have a conversation with Newcastle Gateshead CCG about our report on NHS Continuing Health Care. We hope that this will take place within the next month.
- We understand that the council and CCG have recommissioned Carers' support services and we are awaiting an update to see what elements of our report have been incorporated into the new support available.

11. Organisational update

Over the last year the Healthwatch Gateshead team has changed. The part-time administrator has been replaced by a full time administrator and full time administrative apprentice working between Gateshead and Newcastle. Our part time project manager was also made redundant, however we have increased our flexible associate funding to allow us to bring in the necessary expertise where required, e.g.

project management, volunteer support, marketing etc.

Unfortunately, Wendy Hodgson, our Operations Manager, has decided to leave us after 18 months. Steph Edusei, Chief Executive, will be taking on some of her role until a suitable replacement can be found. Other elements of her role will be undertaken by the staff team, with additional hours, and contractors. Unfortunately, a number of committee members have resigned. This has predominantly been due to changes in work commitments or life changes. We are currently recruiting for new committee members.

Recommendations

1. The OSC is asked to note the contents of this report.
2. That the OSC agree to receive a further report to be included at their March 2019 meeting.