How have we made a difference?

Positive outcome from a complaint
A member of the public contacted Healthwatch Tameside by telephone.

This was a difficult conversation as the caller was very wary of any type of ‘official’ organisations. He only gave his name and mobile number. He wanted to make a complaint about NHS services that he had received, but was cautious in case of reprisals.

After a number of telephone conversations, he agreed to come in for a meeting. It was clear that there were several issues, some outside the remit of Healthwatch Tameside, but all interlinking. Team members offered re-assurance and assistance with ‘confidence building’. He then agreed that referral to another organisation would be beneficial.

We set up a joint meeting with the other organisation to discuss the support that they could offer. An agreement was reached for Healthwatch to work in partnership with the other organisation on resolving the NHS complaint, whilst the other organisation worked in parallel to resolve the issues that lay outside the remit of Healthwatch.

Over the time this client was being supported by Healthwatch, his confidence developed to the point where he felt able to enquire about volunteering opportunities at the Volunteer Centre (with whom we share a building). He is now volunteering with another project and attending a short training course.

As a result of the phone call to us, this person has achieved positive outcomes, not only in terms of their complaint about NHS care, but also in building confidence to the point that they can now engage with their local community.
Enter and View

Legislation allows Healthwatch to undertake ‘Enter and View’ activity in premises where health & social care is funded from the public purse.

This year we undertook a set of Enter & View visits at Tameside Hospital. The hospital has faced a number of recent challenges, and we have been part of a Quality Oversight Group monitoring how the hospital has implemented its improvement plans. Our visits were designed to see the impact of these improvement plans – particularly in the areas that local people had told us (and the LINk before us) were important to them. We were pleased to note many improvements had been made.

The hospital was very receptive to our report, including the further improvement areas we identified and recommendations we made. We have been invited back to see the changes they have made since our visits.

From what we observed and were told during this informal walk around, it was clear that the hospital leadership has placed a strong emphasis on understanding and improving the patient experience. This had been translated into action at the ward level.

Overall, we felt that the hospital has made some good changes in the areas we visited. The hospital acknowledges that they still have further improvements to make and we will continue to work with them on behalf of the local population.

“I can assure you that your comments & recommendations will feed into our Improvement and Assurance Programme.”

Karen James, Chief Executive, Tameside Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

Thanks to all our staff and volunteers who took part in these visits. Names of our authorised Enter & View representatives are listed on our website. Thanks also to the hospital staff who were very welcoming and supportive of our visits – it felt like they really wanted to hear how we thought they could improve.
Patient Opinion - a responsive system

We use an online system called Patient Opinion to share people’s experiences of NHS and social care with the people who run and pay for that care.

If someone doesn’t have Internet access, our volunteer Healthwatch Champions or a member of staff can listen to their story face to face or over the phone or people can fill a paper form in – we then post this on the system for them. We also allow people to tell their story anonymously (we think we’re the only organisation in Tameside who routinely allow this).

Once a story has been posted online the care organisation (e.g. hospital etc.) and commissioner (organisation that funds the care) can both respond to it. Quite often the response can be thanks (for positive feedback) or a request for the person to get in touch so it can be investigated in more detail. When a response is posted we forward this on to the person who told us their story, if they have given us their contact details.

There is a facility in Patient Opinion for people to tick a box to say whether or not the response was helpful. We had feedback from one of our patient stories that they had clicked the button to say it wasn’t helpful and they were frustrated that they had not had a further response. We raised this with Patient Opinion who have now changed their system.

Now there is an option which means when someone ticks the box about whether or not the response was helpful, care organisations can get an alert by e-mail which prompts them to follow it up. We will be working with our partners to make sure they know about this new feature which has been added in response to your feedback to us.

Information signposting request for a local young person

NHS staff from out of area ask for help...

Healthwatch Tameside was contacted by a ward sister from a hospital outside our area. She was enquiring about services in the Tameside area.

A young person from Tameside, had been in hospital for several months. She had been badly affected by a family bereavement 12 months previously. As she was recovering the staff were keen to put services into place, prior to discharge.

We researched specialist services who offer bereavement counselling and other services for young people.

The information required included:
- Who is eligible to access the service?
- How to access the service
- When is the best time to make a referral?
- Who is best placed to make the referral?
- What experience the service had working with young people who had experienced bereavement?

The ward sister already knew about the more well-known mental health services and organisations, so our team investigated options and identified a local voluntary organisation that provides mental health services and support to young people.

As a result of this enquiry to our information signposting service the patient’s ongoing care plan was changed to include referral into a specialist local young persons’ mental health support service.
Engaging with local people who use health and care services

Here at Healthwatch Tameside, we provide a range of ways in which people can give us feedback on any health or social care service they have used.

Alongside conducting surveys and ‘Tell your Story’ forms on our website - www.healthwatchtameside.co.uk/content/your-story - we also get out and about in the community, to events and groups, with paper copies of our forms. Local people then have the option of taking a form to fill out with a freepost envelope, or alternatively, can tell their story to someone who will record it for them.

During the last few months, we have attended a number of fun days and health-related events to promote our work, some of which have included a trip on the New Charter bus, helping to raise awareness of local dementia services, fun days for Tameside Pride and Copperas Fields and had our own very windy corner of Ashton Market where we gave out information and spoke to more than 500 local people.

Healthwatch were also invited to a health and well-being event, run during lunchtime, for students at Denton Community College. The students were asked which local health or care services they had used over the previous 12 months, and then asked to think about which the best and worst of those were. The results of this feedback were then formed into their own mini report.

In addition to attending events, lots of community and voluntary groups are now contacting Healthwatch with requests for us to come and talk to their members about our work and to record the health and care experiences they have had recently. Usually, we will talk for about 20 minutes and then allow time for individuals to come and talk to us on a 1:1 basis. Groups we have visited recently include a Prostate Cancer support group, Diabetes Concern, Heartlink, OPT-IN mental health service users groups, and the Women’s group at Cavendish Mill who gave us a huge amount of feedback on services they had used recently!

If you are a member of a group, or holding an event, and would like Healthwatch to come along, contact Sue Pomfret: email: info@healthwatchtameside.co.uk tel: 0161 667 2526
Ways you can help

Healthwatch Tameside listen to, and record local people’s experiences of using health and social care services and use these stories to help commissioners and providers maintain and improve the quality of care they provide.

All of us, at some point, will need to use a health or care service and so we can all play our part in making them as good as they possibly can be.

So how can you get involved?

• Follow us on Twitter @healthwatchtame
• Check out our website www.healthwatchtameside.co.uk
• Volunteer some of your time with us! Our volunteers play a vital role in ensuring local residents get the opportunity to have their say about local health and social care services. The Healthwatch Champions are out and about in the local community, talking to people in the hospital, supermarkets, libraries, GP surgeries and recording their experiences of using local services. Our team of volunteers include people who have worked in health or social care and maintain an interest in local services, people who have experience of using services and are interested in helping them improve, some are pursuing a career in health or social care and want to gain an appreciation of what good care looks like from a patient perspective, whilst also acquiring an excellent addition to their CV.

You can do this in a number of ways:

• Online via our website www.healthwatchtameside.co.uk
• By telling your story to a Healthwatch Volunteer in one of our community venues (you can find out where they are here www.healthwatchtameside.co.uk/content/healthwatch-champions or ring the office on 0161 667 2526)
• Ring our office and we can send you a paper form with a freepost envelope
• Invite us to tell your friends about Healthwatch

If you attend, or are a member of any group or organisation, we are happy to come and talk to you about our work and to record your compliments or concerns about local health or social care services.

Contact us if you need information or support in order to choose the best health or care service to meet your needs, or if you want to make a formal complaint about an NHS service.
How have we made a difference?

Big Health and Care Debate

At our AGM in June we launched our Big Health and Care Debate.

We know there are lots of challenges ahead for the people who plan and run health and care services in Tameside. They are working hard to find new ways of providing support to people. More people are needing support more of the time (we’re able to live longer with some illnesses than we could before) but the amount of money available to provide services isn’t increasing. There are also national shortages of staff in some key areas (e.g. emergency medicine consultants).

The aim of our Big Health and Care Debate is to help you, our local population, to understand what some of these challenges are. There are some big projects coming along that we want to help you to be able to influence and we hope our debates will help you have the knowledge you need to do this.

Topics discussed in our first Big Health and Care Debate included:

- 7 day access to GP services
- The national shortage of GPs
- More joined up working between health and social care
- The challenge of most NHS care being free for the patient but social care having a financial assessment attached to it
- How to tackle the problem of people not turning up for medical appointments
- What people can do when they are not happy with their care
- How ‘expert patients’ can help and support other people with the same medical condition
- How people can be encouraged and supported to live healthier lives - and how this can help them to live longer and more happily

The projects coming along that you can have a role in influencing are:

- **Care Together** - changes to the way that local health and care services work together in Tameside and Glossop
- **Healthier Together** - focusing on changes to A&E and General (stomach) surgery for people needing the most risky/specialist services (we think this is less than 5% of A&E and around 100 planned operations per year)
- **Greater Manchester Devolution** - looking at how some plans and priorities can be set at a Greater Manchester level rather than by national bodies.

Please contact our office on 0161 667 2526 and speak to a member of the Healthwatch team if you’re interested in finding out more about how you can get involved.
Greater Manchester Devolution

There’s been a lot in the news about devolution of decision-making powers from central government to Greater Manchester. This will have a particular impact on health and social care.

Greater Manchester Devolution brings together a range of partners. These include all 10 local authorities, 12 Clinical Commissioning Groups, NHS England, Monitor, the Trust Development Authority and Public Health England.

The objectives are:

- Improve the health and wellbeing of all of the residents of Greater Manchester from early age to older people, recognising that this will only be achieved with a focus on the prevention of ill health and the promotion of wellbeing.
- Move from having some of the worst health outcomes to having some of the best.
- Close the health inequalities gap within Greater Manchester and between Greater Manchester and the rest of the UK faster.

They have been busy putting things together to help people to understand what it’s all about. This includes:

- An ebulletin – view and sign up, on their site www.gmhealthandsocialcareddevol.org.uk
- They are planning to run regular briefing sessions for interested people to find out the latest - we’ll let you know when we’re told more about their plans.
- They are active on Twitter (@gmhsc_devo) and are promoting the #gmdevo hashtag, as well as planning twitchats in future weeks.

Greater Manchester Healthwatch organisations are striving to work together to ensure that the public voice is heard at all levels of Devolution planning and delivery.

Healthwatch Tameside want to include the views of people who live in Tameside. If you would like to be involved, or find out more as we know it, please contact us on 0161 667 2526, or email us at info@healthwatchtameside.co.uk

Information Signposting

Healthwatch Tameside and the Healthwatch Champions have been asked about NHS Dentists on a number of occasions.

If you live in Tameside or Glossop and need help finding an NHS dentist who is taking on new patients you can:

- Ring 0161 476 9649 between 8.00am and 6.30pm, Monday to Friday
- Ring 0161 337 2246 for urgent emergency care between 6.30pm and 8.00am
- Visit the NHS Choices website at www.nhs.uk/service-search to search for services near to you.

- Ring NHS England on 0300 311 2233

There is a charge for NHS dental care, although some people are entitled to free care or help with costs. For advice on how to get help with health costs call 0300 330 1343 or go to the NHS Choices website at www.nhs.uk/healthcosts

If you would like more information, please contact a member of the Healthwatch team on 0161 667 2526, or email us at info@healthwatchtameside.co.uk
We’re a bunch of tweets!
In the last year we have worked hard to build our Twitter feed up. Twitter is a quick and easy way to get short messages out on the Internet and to people’s smartphones.

We use it to tell people about things we think will interest them in these areas:
- Signposting to sites on specific health topics
- Signposting to online or telephone support for a range of health and care related topics
- Sharing information about staying healthy
- Letting people know about other organisations’ consultation and engagement opportunities.

Some of our recent tweets include:
- Information about stroke rehab, recovery and support groups
- Exercises to help reduce lower back pain
- Information about managing hayfever
- An RNIB survey collecting stories of eye health professionals who have made a difference to someone’s life
- Healthy eating for a healthy heart
- Charity Sane’s help and support services
- Quality Watch reports on NHS performance

If you’re on twitter please follow us: @HealthwatchTame

Help with NHS complaints
Since April 2014 Healthwatch Tameside also provide “Help with NHS Complaints” as part of our information and support service.

The NHS provides good quality services to most people, but sometimes things do go wrong. Very often a problem can be resolved quickly, easily and informally, but in some cases people may choose to make an official complaint. If someone wants to make a formal complaint about an NHS service they have received, we can help. Our service supports people to ‘self-advocate’, to make that formal complaint, through the NHS Complaints process.

We do this by:
- Giving a Self Help Information Pack that helps you to understand how the process works.
- Helping to write down your experience in a clear, logical way.
- Helping you to ask for access to your medical records.
- Giving you feedback on draft complaints letters, etc.
- Supporting you to prepare for resolution meetings.
- If you need someone to speak on your behalf we can refer you to another service.

Demand for this service has increased significantly during this year. Our active NHS Complaints caseload increased from 26 to 40 during the year. In total we worked with 71 people who wanted to complain about NHS services.

This service is open to residents of Tameside, regardless of where they have received the NHS service.