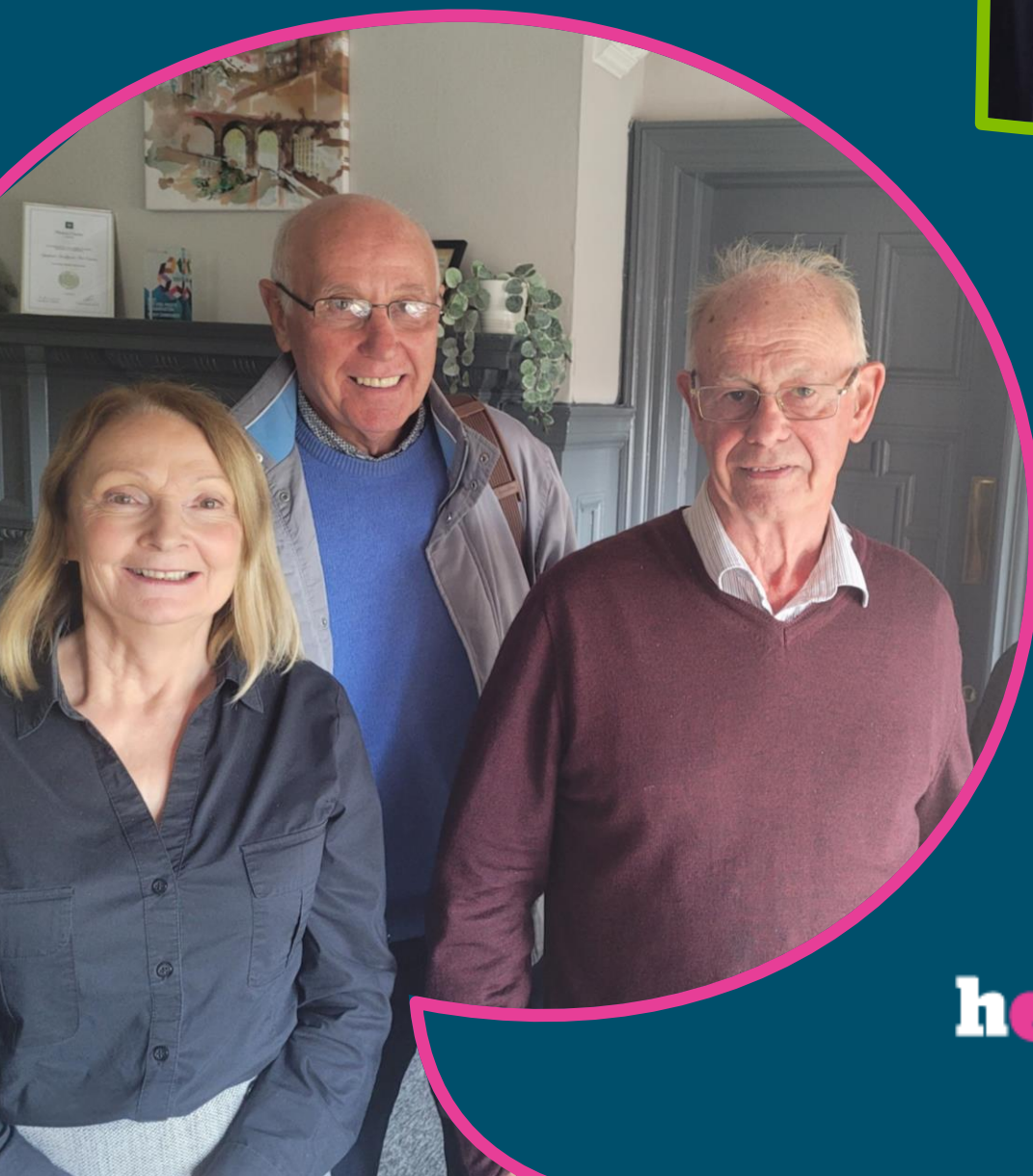


The value of listening

Healthwatch Stockport
Annual Report 2023-2024



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"Over the last year, local Healthwatch have shown what happens when people speak up about their care, and services listen. They are helping the NHS unlock the power of people's views and experiences, especially those facing the most serious health inequalities."

Louise Ansari, Chief Executive at Healthwatch England



Message from our Chair



Welcome to our Healthwatch Stockport Annual Report 2023–24. This year, we proudly celebrate 11 years of championing health and social care for the people of Stockport.

This year has been incredibly productive for Healthwatch Stockport, thanks to the dedication of our staff, volunteers, and board members. I welcome our newest Board Members Jan Kitching and Steve Gear, whom I have no doubt will be an asset to Healthwatch Stockport. We now have retrained members on Enter and View and have incorporated their skills and efforts into our home after hospital project, a key priority for the year.

Our main project has focused on social care, inviting people to share their experiences of using social care services and transitioning home after hospital. The feedback has been invaluable in shaping the work we continue to do into next year.

Our partnership work has gone from strength to strength. We have collaborated closely with groups such as the Mental Health Carers Group Stockport, jointly producing the 'Not One Size Fits All' report. This report has been presented to our Health and Care Locality Board and is now being championed by the newly established Mental Health & Wellbeing Partnership.

As we approach two years into the integration of health and social care, Stockport has been a leadership partner within the One Stockport Health and Care Locality Board and Health & Wellbeing Board. We are proud to have helped establish and chair the Community Voice Partnership, which feeds into the Locality Board ensuring the voices of local people are heard.

Additionally, we continue to work with our Healthwatch colleagues across Greater Manchester, securing funding for a Greater Manchester Healthwatch Coordinator and administrative support to progress our joint priorities.

Our achievements this year would not have been possible without the hard work and commitment of our dedicated staff, volunteers, and board members. Their unwavering dedication has been instrumental in driving forward our mission and making a tangible difference in our community.



"I am immensely proud of our Healthwatch team in Stockport. We are dedicated to listening to the voices of our residents and taking action based on their feedback. Your experiences and feedback guide our work, so please continue to talk with us and share your experience."

Sue Carroll,

Chair Healthwatch Stockport



About us

Healthwatch Stockport is your local health and social care champion.

We make sure NHS leaders and decision-makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care. We can also help you to find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.

Our vision

A world where we can all get the health and care we need.



Our mission

To make sure people's experiences help make health and care better.



Our values are:

- **Listening** to people and making sure their voices are heard.
- **Including** everyone in the conversation – especially those who don't always have their voice heard.
- **Analysing** different people's experiences to learn how to improve care.
- **Acting** on feedback and driving change.
- **Partnering** with care providers, Government, and the voluntary sector – serving as the public's independent advocate.



Year in review

Reaching out:

We provided **881 people** with clear advice and information about topics such as dentists and how to make a complaint about services.

We provided **351 articles**, Information Round Ups, newsletters and posts about health and care.

169 people shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.

We have

5341 Followers

Across all our social media platforms



Making a difference to care:

We created

5 reports about the way in which Healthwatch Stockport has engaged, supported and raised the voices of people using health and social care services.

Our main report was

'One Size Does Not Fit All'

which highlighted the challenges people with serious mental illness and their carers face when accessing services.



Health and social care that works for you:

We're lucky to have

42 outstanding volunteers who gave up their time to make care better for our community.

We're funded by our local authority. In 2023 - 24 we received

£165,000

which is £18,500 more than the previous year.











We currently employ

3.4 FTE staff

who help us carry out our work.

How we've made a difference this year

Spring	 <p>We hosted a Dementia Awareness Event to Launch our Dementia Report at Stockport Town Hall</p>	 <p>We supported the coordination and facilitation of health workshops at Stockport's Annual Learning Disability Conference</p>
Summer	 <p>We published and presented (by people with lived experience) our joint mental health report to One Stockport Health and Care Board</p>	 <p>In partnership with Stockport Advocacy, we undertook a review of Day Care Service provision</p>
Autumn	 <p>We became a Targeted Practice Education Programme partner helping to raise Healthwatch profile and develop the future of the local Health and Care workforce</p>	 <p>We began to be involved in reviewing and re-establishing health checks for people over 40</p>
Winter	 <p>We undertook recruitment for new Healthwatch Stockport Directors increasing and strengthening our current membership</p>	 <p>We ran online and in person focus groups, listening to the experiences of families trying to access children's mental health services</p>

Your voice heard at a wider level

We collaborate with other Healthwatch to ensure the experiences of people in Greater Manchester influence decisions made about services at Greater Manchester Integrated Care System (ICS) level.

This year we've worked with Healthwatch in Greater Manchester to achieve:



Gathered opinions from across our local communities and used our knowledge to contribute towards the development of the Greater Manchester Dementia United Quality Standards, the Greater Manchester ICS People and Communities Engagement Strategy and the Shanley Report.

Undertook a Greater Manchester Children and Young Peoples (CYP) Mental Health Project, with a focus on on pathways to mental health support. This project gathered peoples lived experiences of existing service provision across Greater Manchester. Recommendations and findings will be fed back to GM and local commissioners and providers to help shape future service delivery.



The appointment of 3 key roles to the Healthwatch in Greater Manchester partnership. These include an Independent Chair of the Network, Chief Coordinating Officer and Administration and Data Officer. These roles will drive forward the leadership, coordination and delivery of the All-Age Strategy 2022-2025 alongside partnership working across the Greater Manchester Healthwatch Network.

Worked in collaboration with Greater Manchester Patient Services to co-produce ongoing reports throughout the year which identify challenges and share the lived experiences of the people of Greater Manchester. We have and will continue to ensure their voices are heard throughout the Greater Manchester ICS through their Quality and Performance Committee.





Listening to your experiences

Services can't make improvements without hearing your views. That's why, over the last year, we have made listening to feedback from all areas of the community a priority. This allows us to understand the full picture and feed this back to services and help them improve.

Let's Not Be Rash... Listening to parents of children with allergies

Last year, we published findings of the experiences that Stockport Allergy and Asthma Parents group shared with us about accessing services when they suspect allergies or asthma in their children. Thanks to this insight, the NHS has implemented the recommendations made by Healthwatch Stockport.

We partnered with Stockport Allergy and Asthma Parents to address challenges faced by parents of children with allergies. Our survey revealed critical gaps in support and diagnosis pathways. We recommended comprehensive changes, leading to meaningful improvements.

83%

of parents surveyed, who suspected their child had an allergy or asthma reported that their concerns were initially dismissed by healthcare professionals.



What did parents tell us about Allergy Care?

- Parents reported significant challenges accessing allergy services and support.
- Many felt dismissed by GPs, with concerns often attributed to 'first-time parent' anxiety or misdiagnosed as colic.
- They highlighted long waiting times for specialist appointments, inconsistent advice, and a lack of resources and support during the diagnosis process.

These issues reflect the need for better training for healthcare professionals, more streamlined referral pathways, and improved communication and support for parents navigating their children's allergy diagnoses.

What difference did this make?

- **Enhanced Training:** Allergy training was integrated into a GP Masterclass programme, ensuring GPs are better equipped to identify and manage allergies.
- **Repeat Prescriptions:** Infants with milk protein allergies can now receive specialist formula on repeat prescriptions, easing parental concerns.
- **Streamlined Referrals:** Additional investment in the Greater Manchester allergy referral pathway reduced diagnosis times, with specialist health visitors and paediatric dieticians now available.
- **Improved Support:** Changes to the dietician call-back process ensured parents received timely advice while waiting for specialist appointments.
- **Resource Availability:** An electronic allergy leaflet is being developed and designed by the Allergy and Asthma Parents Group for inclusion in new parent packs.

One Size Does Not Fit All in Serious Mental Illness

In partnership with the Mental Health Carers Group Stockport, we undertook a comprehensive review to understand the experiences of people with serious mental illness and their carers when accessing local mental health services.

Engaging over 35 individuals and families through collecting personal accounts and requesting feedback from local organisations, we identified several key areas needing improvement. The volume of detail in the case studies was such that we decided to release the report in 3 stages. The first of which is summarised below and has been presented to the Locality Board and the Mental Health and Wellbeing Partnership who have taken ownership of an action to work through our recommendations.

"My son reduced his Clozaril by over half... because he could. There was nothing his psychiatrist could do, even though everyone knew it would result in disastrous and potentially life-threatening consequences."



What did people tell us about accessing services if you have Serious Mental Illness?

- People shared significant challenges accessing mental health services. They reported poor communication between healthcare providers, difficulty in obtaining timely support, and a lack of coordinated care.
- Carers emphasised the need for more consistent and reliable care coordination, better support and respite, and improved understanding of the long-term nature of serious mental illnesses.
- Many expressed frustration with the lack of integrated mental and physical health care, as well as inadequate support during transitions from hospital to community care. These insights highlighted critical gaps and the urgent need for improved, person-centred mental health services in Stockport.

What difference do we want to make?

- **Improve Communication:** We have advocated for modern reliable communication and contact methods between the Community Mental Health Team (CMHT) and patients/carers, including better use of email and text communication.
- **Support and Awareness Raising:** We highlighted the need for support for carers, and improved access to skilled support staff, ensuring carers receive the help they need to effectively care for their loved ones. We want to raise awareness about serious mental illness.
- **Care Coordination:** We emphasised the importance of reliable care coordination, the role of multidisciplinary teams (MDTs) and key workers to provide consistent and person-centred care.

Three ways we have made a difference in the community

Throughout our work we gather information about health inequalities by speaking to people whose experiences aren't often heard.

Promoting Dental Care Access

It's important for services to see the bigger picture. Hearing personal experiences and the impact on people's lives provides them with a better understanding of the problems.

Through community feedback, we have identified issues with accessing dental care from all communities. Our advocacy has led to increased awareness of availability of dental appointments and better information about dental services.



Encouraging services to involve people and communities

Helping services to understand the benefits of involving local people to help improve care for everyone.

We established collaborative oversight by creating an Oversight Reference Group with NHS colleagues and parent group members to monitor and implement recommendations, ensuring continuous service improvement.



Improving care over time

Change takes time. We often work behind the scenes with services to consistently raise issues and bring about change.

One key area we continue to monitor is improving access to GP practices, which has been a main concern for our communities over time.

We've received consistent feedback about difficulties accessing GP services, making it the most frequent issue we hear about. To address this, we work closely with our primary care colleagues to ensure this intelligence is continuously shared, enabling conversations to start to making access for patients better.



There's a summary of other outcomes we've achieved this year in the Statutory Statements section at the end of this report.



Hearing from all communities

Over the past year, we have worked hard to make sure we hear from as many people as possible within our local area. It is important to reach out to the communities we hear from less frequently and make sure their voice is heard, and services meet their needs.

This year we have reached different communities by:

- Hosting 4 annual Healthwatch Stockport Network Events about topics relating to our Work programmes, we support as many of the community groups we work with to attend and support those who struggle with transport costs.
- Attending events and regular meetings for Carers, Older People, Dementia Champions, Disabilities, Learning Disabilities, People who use Adult Social Care, SEND, Maternity Voices, Sensory Loss, Autism, Veterans, Mental Health.
- Supported people with lived experience to present our joint mental health reports at our local integrated care system board – ‘One Stockport Health and Care Board’ and the ‘Mental Health and Wellbeing Partnership Board’
- Being instrumental in supporting the recruitment of Co-chairs to the Mental Health and Wellbeing Partnership, Community Voice Partnership, Learning Disability Partnership, Making It Real Board, and preparing for Adulthood Partnership.



Advice and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch is here for you. In times of worry or stress, we can provide confidential support and free information to help you understand your options and get the help you need. Whether it's finding an NHS dentist, making a complaint or choosing a good care home for a loved one – you can count on us.

This year we've helped people by:

- Providing up-to-date information people can trust
- Helping people access the services they need
- Producing weekly Information Round-Ups (IRUs) with latest health and care updates and information about useful services, campaigns and local events.
- Helping people access NHS dentistry
- Undertaking a Library Tour of all 16 libraries in the borough which we will repeat next year.
- Supporting people to look after their health during the cost-of-living crisis especially during winter we produced a 'What to Know This Winter' Info Pack.

Breaking the Wait: Facilitating timely access to mental health support

A young adult had been waiting for Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) for 4-5 years without progress, leading to significant frustration and a lack of mental health support. Her mother struggled to get updates on the referral status, leaving them in a state of uncertainty. This long wait and poor communication from the healthcare provider exacerbated the young adult's mental health challenges and created feelings of helplessness

Action:

Healthwatch Stockport intervened, provided advice on alternative support options, and contacted the Talking Therapies team. They facilitated direct communication between the mother and the therapy team to clarify the referral process and expedite access to CBT.

Outcome:

The young adult began receiving weekly therapy sessions with Healthy Minds. The mother expressed gratitude, noting that without Healthwatch Stockport's intervention, her daughter would likely still be waiting for the crucial support she now receives.

'My daughter is ok now, thank you, and I'm pleased to say, she has had 2 therapy sessions with healthy minds. Every Wednesday she is now speaking with a therapist. Without your help I really do think she would still be waiting.'

Simplifying Direct Payment Renewals

Mrs. B, in her mid-70s, was struggling with the direct payment renewal for her son due in September. The renewal process was becoming increasingly complex, and she could not get clear answers from Adult Social Care regarding Disability Related Expenditure (DRE) items, making the process even more challenging.

Action:

Healthwatch Stockport provided Mrs. B with a 'Social Care Charging -2023- Disability Related Expenditure' handbook from Disability Stockport and advised her that we could put her in contact with disability Stockport who were helping people with DRE applications.

Outcome:

Using the handbook, Mrs. B easily completed the direct payment review, discovering eligible DRE items. Consequently, she no longer has to pay the additional £11.28 per month previously advised, further easing the financial burden.



Volunteering

We're supported by a team of amazing volunteers who are at the heart of what we do. Thanks to their efforts in the community, we're able to understand what is working and what needs improving.

This year our volunteers:

- Visited communities to promote our Healthwatch and what we have to offer
- Represented our Healthwatch in over 40 different meetings and events
- Planned our enter and view programme and carried out an enter and view visit to a local nursing home
- Oversaw our work programme projects including the social care task and finish group
- Supported our network events by booking people in and distributing lunches
- Having a presence in the team office supporting all aspects of our work
- Gave feedback on various health and care literature as part of our Reading Panel
- Created Healthwatch specific Facebook pages and shared our social media posts



"I like the flexibility provided by the volunteering role that Healthwatch Stockport offers"

Simon has been a dedicated volunteer with us since his retirement from his role as a consultant anaesthetist.

Simon serves as a valued member of our Advisory Group and on our Board of Directors. His contributions typically range from representing Healthwatch Stockport on Stockport's Primary Care Commissioning meetings and being part of our Enter and View Team, and his medical background provides an invaluable resource to our organisation.



Simon –
Healthwatch
Stockport Volunteer



"Being fairly new to Healthwatch Stockport I was really keen to get stuck in and be involved"

As a Carer and someone with lived experience, Steve not only brings great insight to Healthwatch but also a great wealth of business experience and as such was appointed as a new Director in March.

We appreciate Steve for his common-sense approach and is always willing to be hands on to help. Whether offering to review work on our projects or helping us set up at events. Steve has been instrumental in our work around mental health, carers and social care.



Steve –
Healthwatch
Stockport Volunteer

Do you feel inspired?



We are always on the lookout for new volunteers, so please get in touch today.

 www.healthwatchstockport.co.uk

 0161 974 0753

 info@healthwatchstockport.co.uk



Finance and future priorities

To help us carry out our work we receive funding from our local authority under the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

Our income and expenditure

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from Government	£165,000	Staffing related costs	£117,702
Additional income	£6,549	Operational Costs	£34,267
Total income	£171,549	Total expenditure	£151,969

Additional income:

ICS funding

Healthwatch across Greater Manchester also receives funding from our Integrated Care System (ICS) to support new areas of collaborative work at this level, including:

Purpose of ICS funding	Amount
Funding was received from the ICB for an independent Chair and Coordinating Officer for the Healthwatch in Greater Manchester Network. This pot of money sits with Healthwatch Bury. Stockport has received £1,345.	£125,480

Next steps

Over the next year, we will keep reaching out to every part of society, especially people in the most deprived areas, so that those in power hear their views and experiences.

We will also work together with partners and our local Integrated Care System to help develop a culture where, at every level, staff strive to listen and learn from patients to make health and care better.

Our top three priorities for the next year are:

1. Work with Adult Social Care Colleagues to promote awareness of where to find good quality and reliable social care information.
2. Highlight the variation in Eye and Ear Health Care Services
3. Patient Choice – are people being given the best possible options and support about their care?



Statutory statements

Healthwatch Stockport, Land o Cakes, 48 Middle Hillgate, Stockport, SK1 3DL.

Healthwatch Stockport uses the Healthwatch Trademark when undertaking our statutory activities as covered by the licence agreement.

The way we work

Involvement of volunteers and lay people in our governance and decision-making

Our Healthwatch Board consists of five members who work on a voluntary basis to provide organisational direction, oversight and scrutiny of our activities.

We have an Advisory Group that ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community.

Throughout 2023/24, the Board met four times and made decisions on matters such as policy updates and changes, and staffing issues. The Advisory Group met nine times.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities we renew, refine, and identify new strategic priorities and project areas during our annual planning where we invite people and communities to contribute to our work plans at events, on social media and through surveys and feedback.

Methods and systems used across the year to obtain people's experiences

We use a wide range of approaches to ensure that as many people as possible can provide us with insight into their experience of using services. During 2023/24, we have been available by phone, and email, provided a web form on our website and through social media, as well as attending meetings of community groups and forums.

We ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. We will publish it on our website and circulate to our membership.

Responses to recommendations

We did not have any providers who did not respond to requests for information or recommendations. There were no issues or recommendations escalated by us to Healthwatch England Committee, so, no resulting reviews or investigations were made.

Taking people's experiences to decision-makers

We ensure that people who can make decisions about services hear about the insights and experiences that have been shared with us.

In our local authority area, for example, we take information, insight and experiences to the Health & Wellbeing Board, the One Stockport Health and Care Locality Board, statutory partner's Patient Experience Meetings and the Quality Improvement Collaborative. We also take our information, insight and experiences directly to heads of services such as the Director of Adult Social Care and Place Leads.

We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

Enter and view

This year, we made one Enter and View visit.

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
Care Facility – Abney Court, Cheadle.	It was courtesy practice visit which the home kindly allowed newly trained Enter & View Members practice their new skills.	Wrote a report which we shared with the home.

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Stockport is represented on the Stockport Health and Wellbeing Board by Sue Carroll, Chair of Healthwatch Stockport. During 2023/24 our representative and deputy representative has effectively carried out this role by attending all the relevant meetings and sub-meetings, sharing our reports and contributing to discussions, providing challenge and positive feedback where appropriate.

Healthwatch Stockport is represented on the Stockport Integrated Care Partnership and the One Stockport Integrated Health & Care Board by Maria Kildunne, Chief Officer, Healthwatch Stockport.


2023 – 2024 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
Allergies in Children	Final report completed in 2022 with recommendations.. All but one of the recommendations have been implemented at March end 2024.
Serious Mental Illness Experience	Full engagement taken place in 2022. Report 1 (of 3) has been completed with recommendations, presented to Locality Board. Action plan produced based on the recommendations and is now owned by the Stockport MH & WB Partnership. Report 2 & 3 to be presented in 2024/5.
Learning Disability Experiences	Final report completed in 2020 with recommendations. Progress report in 2023 still had outstanding recommendations in 2023. Further progress Report due in 2024.
Day Care Services Review	Review undertaken during the summer of 2023. Final Report with recommendations was submitted in 2024 and we are awaiting a response.
Lived Experience Panel	Now creating a Lived Experience Network with health and social care support groups



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