

# Inform

Issue 7 Spring 2025



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**Inform.**  
**Involve.**  
**Influence.**  
**Independent.**

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# A Message From Our Chief Officer

Welcome to the Spring 2025 edition of Healthwatch Stockport's INFORM!

It's so good to have the lighter nights and warmer weather, and we hope this newsletter finds you well.

This issue is packed with updates, highlighting the important work we've been doing and will be focusing on, including influencing better continence care, shining a spotlight on the One Stockport health and care partnerships, new work programmes, exciting volunteering opportunities and more.

We've a big year ahead of us. Our first focus continues to be around ear care, specifically looking at adult NHS hearing services, alongside preparation for our 'Access to Primary Care' work programme. This aims to improve people's experience of accessing all parts of primary care for those who have additional support needs such as neurodiverse patients, people with sensory impairments, or those facing language barriers. Both pieces of work have followed on from extensive feedback from across the community.

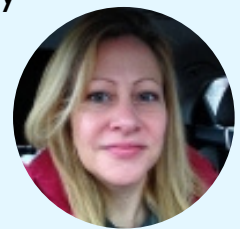
We'll be re-launching our new volunteer programme and our anticipated Lived Experience Network to amplify diverse voices in future projects.

We also celebrate our 13th birthday at the beginning of April... time flies... we'll have a few celebrations at our upcoming 'Putting the Spring into Stockport' wellbeing fun day on 8 April. Keep a look out for our posters and social media posts to see how you can join us and get involved in the day's activities and taster sessions.

As the year progresses, we'll continue to strengthen our relationships across Stockport and endeavour to meet more of our community.

As ever, let us know about your health and care experiences. It's easy to think that your feedback won't be heard, but your feedback can truly change the way local services run and improve care for us all.

*Maria Kildune*



## Contact us

For more information about us, or to access our newsletter in a printed format, email [comms@healthwatchstockport.co.uk](mailto:comms@healthwatchstockport.co.uk) or call 0161 974 0753.

Visit [healthwatchstockport.co.uk](http://healthwatchstockport.co.uk) or sign up for our weekly 'Roundup' for news, advice, events and more to help you get the best from health and care services. See page 15.



# Good To Meet You Stockport!

Over the last few months, we've been out and about across Stockport – meeting people who work and live in the borough and listened to your feedback and experiences of local health and social care. We've supported open days, pop-ups, community forums, events and more. Here's just a few:



## Library Tours

Early 2025 saw us embark on our annual 'library tour', visiting libraries across the borough. We met many incredible people who shared their experiences of using health and social care services, and we've been telling people about our current work programme including our focus on adult NHS hearing care.

Thank you to the Stockport libraries teams and to those who took the time to talk to us. We'll continue our library tours throughout the year, come and chat to us if you see us!



## #TeamHealthwatch

We're massively proud to have supported the **PACT's 'Parent and Carer SEND Information Day'** and **Age UK Stockport 'Winter Warmth'** drop in, we presented at the **Mental Health Network Forum**, Co-Chaired the **Community Voice Partnership**, joined the **Equity Network** meet up, **'Making it Real Board'**, the **'Mental Health and Wellbeing Partnership'** and engaged **SPARC** with the work around the Living Well Mental Health programme (read about 'Living Well' on pages 6 & 7).



**GET IN TOUCH**

We'll continue our efforts to be out and about with our community in every corner of Stockport. Why not get in touch (details on back page) to invite us to your meeting or event?



## We're All Ears: NHS Adult Hearing Services

In recent months we've been 'all ears' as we've focused our attention to NHS Adult hearing services in Stockport (also known as audiology).

Community feedback indicating inconsistencies between services has led to this programme of work, as well as discussions with managers who fund NHS Adult Hearing Services.

In 2022, the Adult Hearing Services provision in Stockport was moved from Stepping Hill Hospital to several different locations across Greater Manchester, including some independent sector providers; Specsavers, Scrivens and Beacon Medical Group.



In February this year, we launched a 'Have your say' campaign through social media, ran an online survey, and spoke to people at events and by listening via our usual feedback channels.

By involving you from the 'get go', and listening to your experiences, we're able to understand how people access the service, where and by whom, and how satisfied people have been with the service they received.

Throughout March we'll be visiting the providers mentioned earlier and will publish all findings in our next report. However, early findings indicate issues around the referral process, choice and waiting times.

**We've listened to your experiences!**

Thank you to everyone who has shared their experiences to date. All feedback will really help us to drill down on what's working and what could be improved.

**We'll look forward to sharing our full report and recommendations over the coming months. Watch this space!**





**FOCUS  
ON**

## Improving Community Mental Health

There's an increasing need for joined up support for people with serious mental health conditions. So, the plan to roll out a 'Living Well' mental health programme to support this is well underway.

### Have you heard?

'Living Well', it's part of Greater Manchester's Community Mental Health Transformation, and is a commitment to improving access to services, the quality and impact of mental health care across all ten boroughs, including Stockport.

The programme will put steps in place to better help adults of all ages with complex mental health needs, to recover and stay well.

**The programme will put steps in place to better help adults with complex mental health needs**

### So, what does this mean?

Firstly, a joined-up and holistic approach, which means that all NHS, voluntary and community services will work together to provide extra support to people with complex mental health needs.

**'Living Well' will enable patients to have personalised care and support**

The ambition is to create a central 'Living Well' Hub of Mental Health practitioners, GPs, community and voluntary services, along with specialist support from a community mental health team and crisis team.

'Living Well' will enable patients to have improved personalised care and support and empower them to manage their own mental health.

### Shaping what's to come:

It's essential that people who have complex mental health needs are involved in the ongoing development of the programme and how it works. This ensures all services, keep delivering what they need to and helps people to get the care they need.

**Continued on page 7...**



## Continued... Meet Maya from 'Living Well'



Maya, our 'Living Well' Mental Health Engagement Officer, joined Healthwatch Stockport in October 2024.

Since then, she has been building connections with services, community groups and meeting people with complex mental health needs, to ensure lived experience is at the heart of the 'Living Well' programme.

Maya is keen to hear from people living with a serious mental illness (illness seriously impacts your everyday life), the challenges you may face, what helps you to maintain good mental health, and what could work better.

To share your experiences or to get involved, contact Maya:

- [maya@healthwatchstockport.co.uk](mailto:maya@healthwatchstockport.co.uk)
- 0161 974 0753 (Tuesday to Thursday)
- Complete our quick survey by scanning the QR code (right)



FOCUS  
ON

## A Focus on Primary Care Access

Following extensive feedback over the last 12 months and at our Network events, we'll soon be kick starting our next piece of work – looking at Primary Care access for people with additional support needs.

We're hoping to work with professionals from all parts of Primary Care – Doctors, Dentists, Opticians, Hearing services and Pharmacists for example, to identify ways in which the experience of using their services can be improved. Our current research around hearing services, planned visits to Primary Care settings by our Enter & View Team in late Spring, and the work with our voluntary sector colleagues under the umbrella of the Community Voice Partnership, will inform this piece of work.

We're hoping to learn from the good practice that we're sure is already out there but also ask services to make small changes that'll make it easier for people to use primary care. Watch this space for updates!



## Strengthening Stockport: The Power of Partnership in Health and Social Care

Stockport is committed to improving health and social care services by ensuring that the voices of those with lived experience are at the heart of decision-making. Through the One Stockport Health and Social Care Partnerships, individuals who use services work alongside professionals to shape strategies that enhance the lives of local people.

Each partnership focuses on a specific group – whether that’s older adults, autistic individuals, carers, or those with mental health challenges—and is co-chaired by someone with lived experience alongside a key member of Stockport’s health and care leadership. This ensures that policies and services are not just designed for people, but with them.

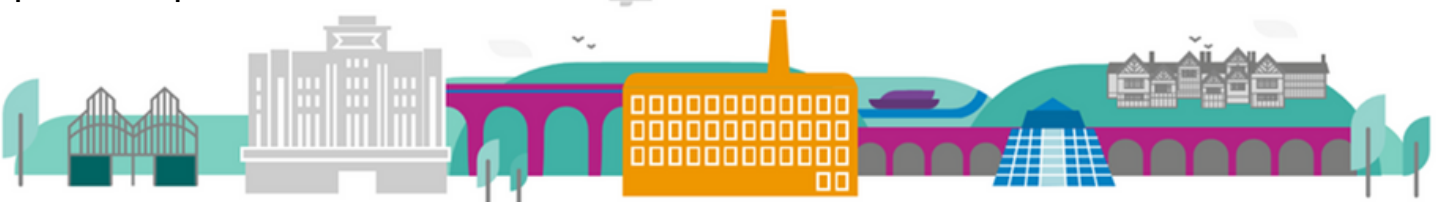
### Why Partnership Matters

Strong partnerships create stronger communities. When people with lived experience collaborate and work alongside service providers, they feel empowered and valued. This boosts confidence, strengthens social connections, and ensures that services truly reflect the needs of the community. For service providers, it also means opportunities for learning, collaboration, and building on their skills and experience.



### Giving the Community a Voice

The Community Voice Partnership brings together residents, organisations and the chairs of the Partnerships (on the next page) to ensure that local voices shape Stockport’s health and social care plans. With direct access to the One Stockport Health and Social Care Locality Board, the Partnership ensures that those making key decisions hear first-hand about the needs and challenges faced by the community through these partnerships.







## Working Together for a Better Stockport

Across the borough, several key partnerships are working to improve the lives of different groups:

**Making It Real Board:** Focuses on improving adult social care by prioritising real-life experiences and advocating for "Gloriously Ordinary Lives."

**Stockport Age Friendly Partnership:** Supports older adults in staying active, connected, and independent.

**Autism Partnership:** Aims to enhance education, employment, and community inclusion for autistic individuals.

**Mental Health and Wellbeing Partnership:** Embeds lived experience into mental health service improvements and decision-making.

**Learning Disability Partnership:** Works to make Stockport more inclusive and accessible for people with learning disabilities.

**Preparing for Adulthood Partnership:** Ensures that young people with additional needs receive coordinated support as they transition into adulthood.

**Carers Partnership:** Strengthens the voice of carers and enhances support networks to improve their well-being.



## Looking Ahead

Through these partnerships, Stockport is building a future where everyone—regardless of age, ability, or background, has a say in the services that impact their lives. By working together, we can create a borough that truly reflects the needs of its people, ensuring **One Heart, One Home, One Future** for all.

## For more information on getting involved

Visit the One Stockport website: [www.onestockport.co.uk/](http://www.onestockport.co.uk/)  
Reach out to Healthwatch Stockport (contact details on back page)



# Let's Talk Continence...

It's estimated that 14 million people are living with bladder problems, with another 6.5 million adults in the UK suffering with some form of bowel condition. However, continence isn't something that always gets talked out.

Good continence care plays a vital role in keeping people independent and well in our communities.

In 2024 we carried out a piece of research to better understand how Stockport residents were receiving the continence care they needed – from accessing services and receiving the right products, to facing barriers when it comes to seeking treatment.

**Our findings revealed:**

- Issues predominantly with waiting times and products available.
- Once patients accessed the service, they were generally pleased with the service

## You Said, We're Doing...

Over the past year we've shared our findings with Stockport NHS Foundation Trust, whilst aiming to support the Continence Team in light of a huge number of referrals for the size of the service and team.

During this time, they've developed a Transformation Project addressing the issues raised. We hope that once this is complete, the Continence team will continue providing this vital service and waiting times to access it will be considerably reduced.

**We hope the continence team will continue providing this vital service**

In addition, by working with Signpost for Carers Stockport and more recently, Age UK Stockport, we're identifying what happens to unused continence products that cannot be returned and how these are used to fill the gap whilst patients wait to be seen.

We'll update you as we know more.





Our free Information and Advice Service helps you to find out more about local health and care services. Over the last few months, we've been contacted (via calls, emails, website, events and our pop-ups), for help, guidance and to share your feedback, here's just a flavour what you told us:

## Contacts With Our Service

Resolving issues with dermatology appointments and virtual ward equipment collection.



Positive feedback included improved access to critical information and finding support services.



Engaged 375 people via six events, including "Fit for the Future" with NHS Greater Manchester



We contacted 20 dentists in Stockport to find out if they were accepting NHS patients following your feedback

### Access and Signage Projects:

Recommendations for improved hospital signage were submitted to Stepping Hill Hospital, based on comprehensive assessments and stakeholder engagement.

## Your Feedback Matters

We gather feedback on all health and social care services in Stockport, so if you've been to see your GP, dentist, hospital or receive social care support, for example, we want to hear your experiences. Share the positives too, so we can highlight good practice!

Please contact us (details on back page) or visit our 'Feedback Centre' on our website. If we spot a common theme, we'll be able to act and create a piece of work suited to help improve that service.

Phone lines to our Information and Advice service are open 10am - 2pm Monday to Friday. Scan the QR code for the 'Feedback Centre'





## Spotlight on Suzi

Suzi joined Healthwatch Stockport in November as our Volunteer and Communications Coordinator, previously working in education for 18 years as a primary school teacher and specialising in Computing more recently. She has just completed a diploma in Digital Learning.



### Tell us about your role

My role is really multifaceted, which I love. I could be engaging with the community one day, developing our communications strategy and campaigns and helping to grow awareness of Healthwatch Stockport another. A large part is recruiting, training, and supporting our volunteer members – such an important part of our organisation.

### What attracted you to the role?

Developing and empowering people of any age is something I've always liked, along with having a keen interest in digital communications and graphic design – this role ticked lots of boxes!

I was attracted to everything Healthwatch stand for, working to improve health and care in Stockport. I felt I could be part of something that could make a difference to the people around me.

### What are you working on?

Revamping our volunteer onboarding process, to make it more streamlined and welcoming. It'll be launched very soon! This includes a new volunteer handbook, creating volunteer role profiles, and preparing to launch our Information sessions, where prospective volunteer members can find out more about us and the opportunities available. I've also been working alongside our Communications Officer, Michelle, to expand our reach and ensure people know about us and the work we do.

### Exciting opportunities in the pipeline!

Yes, I'll be sharing the volunteering opportunities, including the Healthwatch Community Champions and Enter & View team. See page 13 for details of our Reading Panel and more. I'm looking forward to growing our volunteer member database! Follow our socials to see how you can get involved.

### Finally, what about life outside of work?

I'm a proud mum of two girls. I enjoy keeping active by running, and I also take a street jazz dance class!



# Get Involved With Us

If you're keen to try something new and make a difference, there are ways that you can get involved with us and the variety of work we do.



## Volunteer for our Healthwatch Stockport Reading Panel

Ever read health and social care information and not quite understood the messaging or terminology?

Currently we have 20 Reading Panel members who voluntarily review materials (posters, leaflets, letters etc) from the NHS, Stockport Council and other local services on an adhoc basis to ensure they're people friendly and jargon free. Would you like to volunteer?

Scan or click the QR code or visit our website to get involved.



## Become a Healthwatch Community Champion

We're hugely excited as we'll soon be launching our Healthwatch Community Champion role!

This is a fantastic opportunity to help us to connect and get out amongst our local community. Not only will you get the chance to speak to local residents about their views on local health and care services, you'll also help us to boast about who we are and what we do at community events and more.

More details will be coming soon so be sure to watch this space and follow our socials for details.



## Member Spotlight: Rosemary

Rosemary has been a valued volunteer at Healthwatch Stockport since 2023, participating in various roles including the Advisory Group, Task Groups, and as the lead member of the Enter and View Team.



### So, what initially drew you to volunteering with Healthwatch Stockport?

I started volunteering with Healthwatch in January 2023. I have a background in community health services, working and living in Stockport for over 40 years. I also have personal experiences in accessing health and social care services for my mother, long distance and locally, and for my son who has a hearing loss and mobility issues.

### What's been your most memorable or impactful experience as a volunteer?

I really enjoyed the Enter and View visits to Stepping Hill Hospital last year, I'm so proud to be the volunteer Enter and View lead.

### What motivates you to continue volunteering?

I wanted to be part of an organisation which gives everyone a voice in shaping and accessing local health and social care services.

Personally, I was able to access services for others as I knew 'the system'; how and who to access but I'm very aware this isn't the case for the vast majority of people. Friends and family often ask me what services are available and how to access them.

Healthwatch has given me the opportunity to continue to use my knowledge and skills.

### What are your interests or hobbies outside of volunteering?

I enjoy yoga, walking, birdwatching and reading. I quite regularly look after grandchildren. I'm also a befriender with Age UK Stockport.

### That's quite a lot, Rosemary, finally, is there anything else you'd like to share with our readers?

The staff and volunteers at Healthwatch are all friendly and encouraging, Healthwatch has given me the opportunity to continue to use my knowledge and skills.



## Advice & News at Your Fingertips

### Sign up for our Weekly Information Round up

Did you know that we produce a weekly 'Round up' packed with health and social care news, information, community events, training and so much more?

Our weekly bulletin is designed to help you and your loved ones get the best out of local health and care services by sharing what's happening across Stockport and enabling you to get the info you need at the click of a button.

Sign up by scanning the QR code:



### Check out our website for blogs, reports & news

We regularly update our website to share news, advice articles, blogs, reports and more to help you, your families and friends stay on top of your health and wellbeing.

Articles include 'how to get the best from your appointments', 'advice if you're a carer', and how we and Healthwatch across England are influencing better care in response to feedback.

We're also reviewing our website to include more signposting to local services and support.

Visit: [www.healthwatchstockport.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchstockport.co.uk)

### Follow our socials and share our posts

Did you know that we're on social media? We're on Facebook, Instagram, Linked In and X (formally Twitter). Give us a 'follow', 'like' and 'share' our posts.

This helps to spread the word about local health and social care and how we, Healthwatch Stockport, can help you.



Share your experiences or find advice at [healthwatchstockport.co.uk](http://healthwatchstockport.co.uk)

# healthwatch

## Stockport

We are your local health and social care champion.

If you use GPs, hospitals, dentists, pharmacies, care homes or other support services, we want to hear your feedback and experiences, so we can enable you to get the best health and social care and create better services for all.

To us, you come first – especially if you find it hard to be heard elsewhere. How can we be there for you?

### We inform

We provide information and signposting about local health and social care services so you can get the best support.

### We involve

There are many ways you can get involved and share your feedback. Your views help us to better understand what's going well, what isn't and hear what's most important to you.

### We influence

Your feedback helps us to shape services across Stockport for the better. We've already published many reports (see our website) which have positively influenced key decisions and improved services in Stockport.

## Contact us

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