

**An independent evaluation
of the service provided by
Healthwatch York
During the period
April 2022 to March 2023
from the
Stakeholders' Perspective**

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1. Executive Summary

Healthwatch York continues to achieve its aims by making health and social care work better for the residents of the city. It offers a conduit for people living in York to influence local health and social care services and for those managing services to consider residents' perspectives. Its presence is valued and, despite budgetary reductions, it remains a strong, respected partner that is advocating for some of the most diverse and under-represented voices across the city of York.

Healthwatch York has been welcomed into the York Health and Care Partnership and the wider Humber and North Yorkshire Integrated Care System as a trusted partner. Using the expertise and experience of the team, it has developed a variety of methods that allow residents to express themselves through listening, proactively seeking views, gathering data, preparing reports, championing co-production, and representing the public and patient voice at strategic meetings. It is respected as a critical friend to strategic decision-makers during the design, delivery and review of services.

By working across the city's diverse communities, Healthwatch York continues to address inequalities. Its reports concentrate on key issues facing the city, including the cost-of-living crisis, dentistry and mental health services, using the words and stories of local residents to demonstrate impact. It also offers a range of accessible information, advice and support on what is available.

2. Context

Healthwatch York provides the means for local people to influence health and social care services – hospitals, care homes, GP surgeries, home care services and many others. Healthwatch York helps people to become involved in shaping these services. It provides information about local services, improving and increasing access; signposts to independent complaints advocacy; listens to views about local services and makes sure these are considered when services are planned and delivered.

Healthwatch York has been in place since 2013. It is a project that sits within the independent charity that is York CVS, with a 'Steering Group' that acts as an advisory board. Ultimate accountability sits with the Trustees of York CVS.

Healthwatch York operates under a contract from City of York Council, with the equivalent of 3.3 full time equivalent paid staff and 29 volunteers, who carry out roles as Engagement Volunteers, Research Volunteers, Readability Volunteers, Representatives, Enter and View Volunteers, Communications Volunteers, and members of the Steering Group. Healthwatch York also has volunteers who are Care Home Assessors, though this programme has been on hold since the pandemic.

Healthwatch York's Mission Statement is:

“Healthwatch York puts people at the heart of health and social care services, enabling you to be heard. We believe that together we can help make York better for everyone”.

The aims are;

- Healthwatch York is responsive to the needs of York residents.
- Healthwatch York understands what is happening in relation to health and social services in York.
- Healthwatch York speaks up about the provision of health and social care services in York.
- Healthwatch York uses the reviews, words, and stories of service users to show the impact of health and social care services in York.
- Healthwatch York involves the public in the work they do.
- Healthwatch York advocates for people's active involvement in their health and social care.
- Healthwatch York provides an effective service for the people of York using health and social care services.
- Healthwatch York understands what is happening in relation to health and social services in York.
- Healthwatch York reaches new people and partners.

The purpose of this evaluation is to explore:

- the value that stakeholders have placed on Healthwatch York's contribution to the local health and care system
- how Healthwatch York has been able to meet its aims
- suggestions from stakeholders for Healthwatch York's focus in the coming year

Healthwatch York provided a list of key stakeholders with whom they have worked during the past year. The sample came from statutory and voluntary and community sector organisations within health and social care. Interviewees are listed in Appendix A.

Information has also been taken from this year's publications which are listed in Appendix B.

3 Reflecting on progress made

The key recommendations from the 2021-2022 stakeholder evaluation report have been embedded within Healthwatch York's work throughout the year.

a) Continue to develop Healthwatch York's presence within the Humber and North Yorkshire Integrated Care System

Healthwatch York is now embedded in the Humber and North Yorkshire Integrated Care System. There is a willingness by statutory partners to create the optimum conditions for Healthwatch York to be a truly strategic partner and to be involved right at the beginning of new pieces of work rather than being brought in once projects have begun.

"Healthwatch York is a critical friend, a source of really constructive critique. They help us to hold a mirror up to ourselves and highlight how the wider impacts of our decisions might affect the population". (Sarah Coltman-Lovell, Director of Place for NHS Humber and North Yorkshire Integrated Care Board)

b) Maintain the focus on co-production.

It is clear from the interviews that Healthwatch York's stakeholders recognise the team's expertise in co-production. One example was the joint work with public health on the cost-of-living crisis, which was a good opportunity to gather data and combine the statistics with real-life experiences that brought the report to life. One respondent commented that Healthwatch York listened, involved residents, and was a co-production partner, really bringing the voice of the patient into the work.

c) Continue to address inequalities.

The various reports published over the year (appendix B) evidence Healthwatch York's commitment to addressing inequalities. They include a report completed in June 2022 on accessible informationⁱ and a follow-up report in November 2022.ⁱⁱ Reports on mental health, dentistry and the cost-of-living crisis demonstrate the wide reach that Healthwatch York has across the city. The experiences of residents who are disproportionately affected by the cost-of-living crisis have been highlighted.

One participant spoke about Healthwatch York's persistence in raising the importance of equality, diversity and inclusion during meetings.

4 Findings

4.1 The value that stakeholders have placed on Healthwatch York's contribution to the local health and care system

Respondents regard Healthwatch York as a practical, knowledgeable, and experienced partner that is proactive, responsive and committed to change. The staff are valued for the challenge that they bring to the health and social care system in York, putting residents and their health and well-being first. Their willingness and enthusiasm to support partners has been recognised.

“Healthwatch York are a small team who punch above their weight. We are incredibly grateful for their support and willingness to help us to improve the experience for our patients.” (Hannah Gray, PPI Lead, York & Scarborough Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust).

Stakeholders' perspectives indicate a professional and friendly culture with a team that is eager and willing to work collaboratively to achieve its aims. In addition to Healthwatch York's proactive approach to gathering evidence and data, partners appreciate having a central point to feed into any issues with the certainty that these issues will be listened to and acted upon.

“They are open and transparent about feedback statistics. They are a very valuable and trusted resource”. (Savanna Thompson, Community Mental Health Project Officer, Adult Social Care Transformation Team).

From those interviewed who work at a strategic level, Healthwatch York is regarded as an ally and is considered to be a vital partner, acting as a bridge between the residents of York and health and social care strategic decision-makers. This ensures that service experience feeds directly into service development. The reports are regarded as timely and of high quality. They do their work in a 'kind' way which we interpret to mean constructive and understanding of partners' own challenges.

A number of those interviewed used the word 'trust' or 'trusted' which is testament to the strong, objective relationships that the team has developed.

"Healthwatch York is a clear, respected voice in the city" (Susan Wood, City of York Welfare Benefits and strategic partnership manager).

4.2 How Healthwatch York has been able to meet its aims:

The evaluation provided good evidence that Healthwatch York achieves its aims, and the respondents shared evidence of a wide range of collaborative activities that are working towards improved outcomes for the residents of York.

4.2.1 Healthwatch York is responsive to the needs of York residents.

Healthwatch York is an active member of the Connect Our City partnership which aims to improve the mental health and wellbeing of York residents. The organisation is a vital resource as it has been able to carry out independent research that informs the work of the partnership. As a result of Healthwatch York's open and impartial approach, the team has been able to ensure that some residents, who may not otherwise have been able to voice their thoughts and feelings, have been heard by those who are designing, reviewing and delivering services.

"Healthwatch York provides a valuable platform for collating and sharing people's lived experience of what is working well and what may work better. It does this through facilitating an honest and transparent dialogue between residents, service users, statutory services and the VCSE organisations, which together form the pathway of support available. Having this 'voice' is a crucial step in striving towards increased availability of these services and that they

that both reflect and continue to adapt to the changing needs of the communities across York.” (Helen Fairburn, York Mind Wellbeing Manager)

4.2.2 Healthwatch York understands what is happening in relation to health and social services in York.

Healthwatch York has been recognised for collaborating in very practical ways. York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust’s public and patient involvement project (PPI) had been dormant during Covid. Healthwatch York has been instrumental in supporting their re-engagement. For example, they have re-introduced the PPI group to partners in the voluntary sector and brought them back into their wider work with City of York Council and the Humber and North Yorkshire Integrated Care Board. When the hospital introduced a new text messaging service for patients, Healthwatch York supported this by promoting it to their members, encouraging volunteers to share their views and by taking a seat on the patient experience steering group.

One respondent spoke about Healthwatch York’s central role in raising patients’ concerns regarding the crisis in dentistry, not just locally, but nationally tooⁱⁱⁱ They identified that it was helpful for them to write not just one report but to continue with follow-up reports too.

Healthwatch York has worked with the welfare benefits team at City of York Council on information distribution through the Talk Money campaign. The welfare benefits team reciprocated by promoting the cost-of-living survey^{iv} that Healthwatch York carried out this year.

“Working with them has supported our learning.... Learning from them about impacts on particular health conditions has fed into our financial inclusion planning and support” (Susan Wood, City of York Welfare benefits and strategic partnership manager)

One stakeholder highlighted that Healthwatch York is an effective instrument for information sharing by providing regular updates and distributing information from the Health and Wellbeing Board meetings via Advice York.

4.2.3 Healthwatch York speaks up about the provision of health and social care services in York.

Healthwatch York has supported local people to influence services by helping them to have their views raised in the research at the cost-of-living summit.

The numerous quotes and case studies that appear in their reports, particularly the Breaking Point mental health crisis and care report^v clearly demonstrate Healthwatch York's ability to speak up about residents' experiences. Both these reports are hard-hitting and difficult to read in parts but clearly speak for those most impacted by challenges accessing crisis care, and the cost-of-living crisis.

“Qualitative analysis allowed us to capture the stories of people with all of the human subtlety, detail and complexity, uncovering topics that otherwise could have been missed by a quantitative approach”.

4.2.4 Healthwatch York uses the reviews, words, and stories of service users to show the impact of health and social care services in York.

The range of detailed reports^{vi} prepared in 2022/23 provides a clear indication of the vast amount of information that has been gathered from carers, families, patients, professionals, residents and other stakeholders within the health and social care community in York. Using people's own words is important for decision-makers and residents to fully understand the context.

Healthwatch York approached York Carers Centre to make sure that the views of family carers were gathered and included when preparing the recently published mental health crisis care report^{vii} This reflects a wider partnership approach to actively seek views through trusted partners. Healthwatch York attends the carers' strategy group meetings to hear issues that directly affect them.

4.2.5 Healthwatch York involves the public in the work they do.

Nearly all respondents to the evaluation acknowledged Healthwatch York's expertise in citizen engagement and championing everyone using health and social care services across the city. In addition to connecting and co-producing with people using services, they sit on

strategic boards, thus ensuring the vital flow of information between users and decision-makers.

Healthwatch York has supported the hospital to fulfil its legal duty of involving the public and patients as some of this work had ended during Covid. The PPI lead recognised Healthwatch York's enthusiasm and willingness to help, for example, by offering their contributions to the priorities in the PPI five-year plan. They also appreciate the contribution made by the readability panel's ability to scrutinise documents prior to publication.

4.2.6 Healthwatch York advocates for people's active involvement in their health and social care.

The reports are shared widely and one example from the evaluation highlighted that the dentistry report^{viii} was used by Rachael Maskell MP to inform the questions that she presented at Westminster.

Healthwatch York is recognised for its ability to reach and engage with diverse communities across the city.

“There are many changes happening around neurodiversity and coproduction, in York. Healthwatch York are helping us to carry out an independent evaluation on this area as they can scope much wider than the working group.” (Savanna Thompson, Community Mental Health Project Officer, Adult Social Care Transformation Team).

4.2.7 Healthwatch York provides an effective service for the people of York using health and social care services.

One of the respondents emphasized the value of Healthwatch York's reports on mental health crisis support and dementia^{ix} which were presented at the Health and Wellbeing Board. Both reports provide a clear outline of what is available to residents as part of their information service.

“In relation to dentistry, Healthwatch York has been central to raising patients' voices to help increase awareness, not just locally, but nationally too.” (Peter Roderick, Acting Director of Public Health, City of York Council).

4.2.8 Healthwatch York reaches new people and partners

Healthwatch York regularly attends events to ensure that they are working across all services. One respondent noticed their presence at the Lollipop event for deaf children, young people and their families^x.

Healthwatch York actively involved carers as well as patients in the recent work on mental health crisis support.

Its involvement in the development and opening of the new emergency care building at York Hospital will be crucial to ensuring that residents can be partners in its development.

Their willingness to work in partnership across the Humber and North Yorkshire health and social care landscape was recognised by Healthwatch North Yorkshire.

“I value their professionalism and honesty, and the fact that they are willing and eager to work collaboratively”. (Ashley Green- CEO, Healthwatch North Yorkshire).

4.3 Suggestions from stakeholders for Healthwatch York’s focus in the coming year

A number of recommendations have been made for Healthwatch York’s programme next year. They include the following areas:

Mental Health Services

Following publication of the mental health **crisis care** report, Healthwatch York should continue with their exploration and consider what the next steps are. This will also link to ongoing challenges faced by mental health services as a whole as well as the recent changes to neurodiversity services in York.

Healthwatch York is asked to focus on the lack of **mental health provision for children, young people and families** in York. Existing support is under-resourced and disjointed. One respondent would like to see Healthwatch York become involved in the family hubs that are being set up in the city.

Neurodiversity service development

Healthwatch York is encouraged to influence neuro developments across the city, aiming to encourage commissioners to offer increased provision in this area. For **Autism** there is no pre or post-assessment service. After diagnosis, families are looking for practical support to find out what they can do and there is no existing support available.

Co-production and citizen engagement

Recognising that co-production takes time which is a limited resource for everyone, one respondent highlighted that it is not always evident at Integrated Care Board level and suggested that Healthwatch York has the influence needed to lead on an improved engagement strategy.

There was a request for Healthwatch York to support the Integrated Care Board with a clearly documented approach to citizen engagement and co-production that all health and social care partners can sign up to.

Healthwatch York is encouraged to help support conversations with the public about **GP access** and the two-week target for waiting times.

Welfare benefits

Healthwatch York is asked to take the learning forward from the recent work with welfare benefits and continue to highlight issues relating to particular health conditions and the link to the **financial inclusion work**.

5 Recommendations

Healthwatch York is recognised and commended by respondents for its diligence and hard work in striving for continual improvement on behalf of York's residents. This report highlights three specific areas that have been identified by respondents as areas for focus over the following twelve months:

1. **Continuing to remind statutory services of the importance of putting the public first.** Healthwatch York can be a catalyst for integration, bringing all PPI strands together. Given that their independent role is not limited to any specific provider but covers the full range of health and care services in York, they are uniquely placed to support the development of integrated service delivery models, and identify the gaps that currently exist. One respondent commented that funding priorities linked to specific pieces of work

can constrain Healthwatch York and prevent it from having the freedom to fulfil its role fully. By having the Humber and North Yorkshire Integrated Care System fully on board, and understanding what Healthwatch York does, it can provide support with the work and help them to fulfil that role.

2. In the light of budget reductions, to consider how, together with the other five Healthwatch organisations, they can come together for specific pieces of work, pool each organisation's expertise and skills, and **do things at scale across the whole ICS region**.
3. To continue to be aware of, and responsive to, changing needs in the city, making sure that services are joined up, using resources most effectively, and ensuring that residents' voices are listened to and acted upon. Continuing to **act as a driver for change and collaborating with partners** to build capacity by sharing the learning and taking the research further.

Appendix A

List of stakeholders who took part in the evaluation.

Sarah Coltman-Lovell, Director of Place, NHS Humber and North Yorkshire ICB

Helen Fairburn, York Mind

Hannah Gray, Patient and Public Involvement Lead, York & Scarborough Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Ashley Green, CEO Healthwatch North Yorkshire

Michael Pavlovic, Senior Caseworker to Rachael Maskell MP

Rebecca Robinson, Carer Support Worker, York Carers Centre

Peter Roderick, Deputy Population Health and Consultant in Public Health, City of York Council and ICB

Savanna Thompson, CMH project officer, York Council

Susan Wood, Welfare Benefits and Strategic Partnership Manager, City of York Council

Mel Woodcock, General Manager CAMHS and LD, TEWV NHS

Appendix B

<https://www.healthwatchyork.co.uk/our-work/hw-york-publications/>

[Accessible information report – June 2022](#)

[What's out there for people with dementia, their families and carers – June 2022](#)

[Healthwatch York Awareness Survey 2022-June 2022](#)

[What we've heard so far in 2022-November 2022](#)

[Accessible Information Update Report – November 2022](#)

[Children's Mental Health - A Snapshot Report – November 2022](#)

[Cost of Living – December 2022](#)

[Support services in York over festive period – December 2022](#)

[Healthwatch York submission for the Health & Social Care Select Committee call for evidence on dentistry – January 2023](#)

[Listening to people with dementia – March 2023](#)

[Children's Mental Health update report – March 2023](#)

ⁱ <https://www.healthwatchyork.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Accessible-Information-Report-June-2022.pdf>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.healthwatchyork.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Accessible-Information-update-report.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.healthwatchyork.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/HWY-dentistry-submission-for-Health-Select-Committee-January-2023.pdf>

^{iv} <https://www.healthwatchyork.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Cost-of-Living-Survey-Dec-22-report.pdf>

^v <https://www.healthwatchyork.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Breaking-Point-Mental-Health-Crisis-Care-June-2023-updated.pdf>

^{vi} <https://www.healthwatchyork.co.uk/our-work/hw-york-publications/>

^{vii} <https://www.healthwatchyork.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Breaking-Point-Mental-Health-Crisis-Care-June-2023-updated.pdf>

^{viii} <https://www.healthwatchyork.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/HWY-dentistry-submission-for-Health-Select-Committee-January-2023.pdf>

^{ix} <https://www.healthwatchyork.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Listening-to-people-with-dementia.pdf>

^x <https://www.lollipopork.org.uk/charityevent/deafservicesfair2022/>