

# Update and key themes

## June 2022



[www.healthwatchnorthtyneside.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchnorthtyneside.co.uk)

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## 1. September 21- April 22

It's been another busy six months for us at Healthwatch. A copy of our annual report that provides an overview of our activity in 2021/22 will be available at the meeting. We have also launched our new strategic plan -

<https://healthwatchnorthtyneside.co.uk/report/strategic-plan-2022-25/> .

We have been successful in securing additional funding for additional commissioned work, using our skills in engagement and analysis alongside our independence to deliver different projects and we are in the process of expanding our team.

Our Business Administration Apprentice, Faye Gamble, joined our team in November and works one day a week supporting the Living Well North Tyneside website. Our core Healthwatch team is currently at 4.5 FTE. We have a fantastic team of volunteers, who have dedicated approximately 1,000 hours of volunteering time between September and March. Our volunteers help us by supporting engagement events, interviewing people over the phone or in person about their experiences of services, administrative support in our office, running focus groups and being our Trustees. Without them we would not achieve what we do.

2,482 people shared their views and experiences in 2021/22



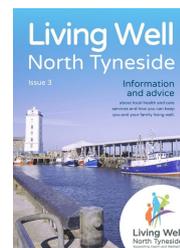
2,990 people talked to us at 56 events across North Tyneside



235 residents told us about their experiences of dental services



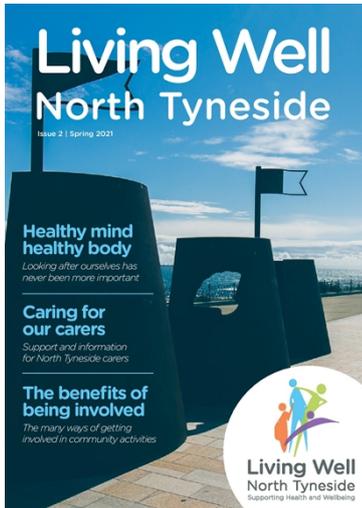
98,000 Information booklets were distributed in March 22



## 2. Providing Information

Healthwatch North Tyneside is commissioned to provide Information and signposting for local health and care services. Alongside providing an information service (available 5 days a week by phone, email, website and social media) we also lead particular campaigns to respond to gaps in information local people highlight to us.

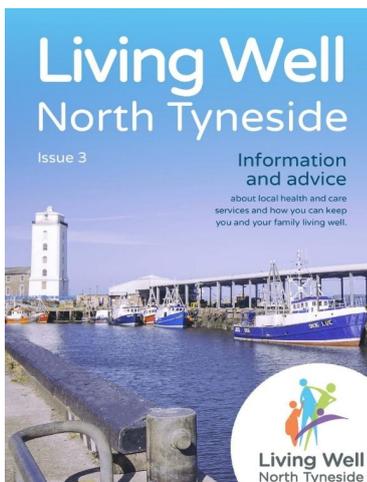
### 2.1 Living Well North Tyneside booklets



We have continued to lead the drafting, development and distribution of the Living Well North Tyneside booklets. These provide residents with information and advice about local health and care services and key messages from providers and commissioners. This work is supported by the CCG with funding also coming from the Public Health team at North Tyneside Council, Age UK, the Carers' Centre, Community Healthcare Forum and our own funds.

55,000 of the second edition were handed out at vaccine centres and other community settings between April and October 2021.

98,000 copies of the third edition were posted through letterboxes of every house in North Tyneside in March 2022 and April 2022 (slightly delayed due to members of the delivery team getting covid). A further 3,000 are being distributed via community and healthcare settings.



These booklets seem to be well received by many residents, particularly those who are less likely to access information online. We also hear positive feedback from residents about the range of information provided.

We are working with the CCG and others to develop a longer term plan for this activity and considering a fourth edition in Autumn 2022 depending on the appetite of the system and availability of funding.

### 2.2 Living Well North Tyneside Website

Healthwatch North Tyneside is also an active member of **The Living Well North Tyneside Partnership**. The website was launched in September and we have been working closely with VODA and other partners to create content and promote the website to residents and professionals within the borough.



As a partnership we recognise this is a fantastic opportunity to help people access information and support and have plans to further develop the content and reach of the site. We are looking at ways to fund the creation of content for the site as, across the partnership, we don't currently have the capacity to create the public facing accessible information residents tell us they want.

## 2.3 Service information

### Why GPs are working differently

People told us that they didn't understand some of the changes GP practices introduced during covid. We've worked with North Tyneside's GP Federation TyneHealth and North Tyneside CCG to create a resource to help people understand why GP practices work the way they do and why things may have changed due to Covid-19. This has been used by GP practices on their website and in their recorded phone messages as well as in the living well North Tyneside magazine.

**Why are GP practices working differently?**

It's still a challenging time and to help protect everyone we are required to continue to maintain safe infection control and minimise unnecessary physical contact.

GP practices are working hard to provide more appointments than ever before as well as delivering essential vaccinations.

**Our practice is open and here to help you and your family**

**How is our practice working now?**  
We may need to speak to you by phone to decide how best to help you. Appointments may be triaged as this helps keep you safe and makes sure the people with the greatest need are seen first. This could result in a phone or video appointment or a wait to your appointment, whichever is best for your situation.

**Why do receptionists ask personal questions?**  
GP reception staff are a vital part of our healthcare team. By asking you questions they can help direct you to the best support. They are skilled in triaging and treat all information in confidence. We ask everyone to please respect our reception team - abuse of any kind is not acceptable.

**Where else can I get help?**  
Visit [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) for advice on symptoms and a list of local services. Your local pharmacist or optician can also advise on a wide variety of these. Brevets and provide treatments where needed.

**What is triage?**  
A trained health professional assesses your needs to decide how best to support you. They will consider:  
• who could be best to help you - a doctor, nurse, or other healthcare professional  
• what kind of appointment is best - to be seen in person or a phone or video consultation  
• whether help from another health service is more appropriate for example pharmacy, urgent treatment centre etc.

**Why am I seeing someone who is not my GP?**  
Many GP practice teams include different healthcare professionals e.g. nurses, physio, pharmacists and mental health workers. They can diagnose and treat a range of health conditions. This ensures that you can see the best person for your needs more quickly.

**What about emergencies?**  
Always dial 999 in a life-threatening emergency. If you need help with minor injuries at any time or urgent care when your GP practice or community pharmacy is closed, visit [www.111.nhs.uk](http://www.111.nhs.uk) or call 111.

**Help us to help you**  
Health services continue to be under pressure and we know at times it's difficult for us all. We appreciate everyone's understanding and support, so please continue to help by:  
• wearing a face mask in all healthcare settings  
• washing/handling your hands  
• being kind and patient with practice staff  
• being open to use our services a bit differently  
• not coming into a healthcare setting if you have Covid-19 or coronavirus symptoms

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**North Tyneside Launchpad**

**Mental Health Support in North Tyneside**

Details of groups and services that you can contact to self-refer for support with your mental health needs.

Most of the services provide free support, however some may incur charges. Please contact the service directly to find out more.

### Mental Health Support

We updated our popular mental health leaflet with contact details of support services available in North Tyneside.

### Prescription delivery

We updated our Prescription Deliveries information to let people know what services were available from all North Tyneside pharmacies. People have told us they really value a local delivery service.

**healthwatch North Tyneside**

**Prescription Deliveries in North Tyneside**  
A guide to pharmacies and their delivery options

Did you know that you can get your prescriptions delivered? During the coronavirus pandemic, people told us how helpful it would be to have clear information about how you can get a prescription delivered. The NHS in North Tyneside does not fund pharmacies to provide a delivery service so some may charge. This guide details the services that local pharmacies provide - making this involve a driver picking up your prescription from a local pharmacy. In addition to these local services, there are several online pharmacies that will deliver your medication through the post.

We produced this guide because people told us it would be helpful. As well as an overview of prescription delivery services, we have also answered some Frequently Asked Questions that provide more information - see [www.healthwatch.co.uk](http://www.healthwatch.co.uk) or ring 0191 263 5211 for details.

Please tell us about your experiences of getting prescriptions, and your other health and care experiences here: [www.healthwatchnorthtyneside.co.uk/HaveYourSay](http://www.healthwatchnorthtyneside.co.uk/HaveYourSay)

We use the information to help improve services for local people - your feedback matters.

**Key to table of pharmacies**

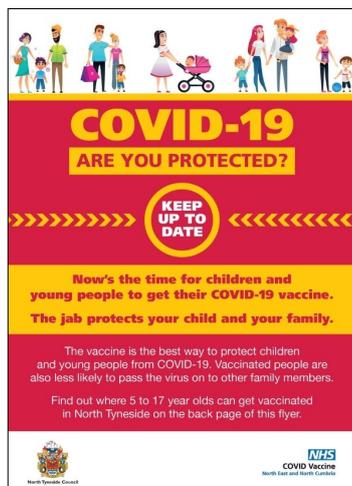
- Prescriptions delivery available
- Delivery service offered but may be full to capacity or in operation
- Conveniently located delivery service

Name and contact details	Delivery available	Cost	How to arrange	Details
<b>Backworth</b> Backworth Newline Pharmacy 0191 262 8832 Unit 2 Old Chapel Building, Church Road, Backworth, NE27 5JE	✓	Free	Contact the pharmacy or register on their Facebook page	One-off prescriptions and repeat prescriptions can be delivered. Contact pharmacy for areas covered.
<b>Battle Hill</b> Lloyds Pharmacy Battle Hill 0191 262 2427 Battle Hill Medical Centre Belmont Close, Wallsend, NE28 9DX	✓	£60 per year (£20 for 6 months) £5 one-off	Contact the branch by phone or in person	One-off prescriptions and repeat prescriptions can be delivered. Contact pharmacy for areas covered.

©19 produced December 2020. All information in this leaflet correct at the time of publishing. Please contact pharmacy directly for most up-to-date advice.

## 2.4 Vaccine programme information and engagement

We have worked closely with the CCG, TyneHealth, North Tyneside Council and VODA since December 2020 to provide public facing communications for the North Tyneside Vaccine programme including:



- Frequently Asked Questions for the whole system based on the questions residents have asked.
- A central website with information about the vaccine programme in one place -TyneHealth.
- Gathering feedback and raising issues with providers and decision makers to improve service delivery and residents' experiences.
- Targeting engagement activities providing information and promoting the programme - including supporting surge and pop up activity on the ground.
- Fielding and resolving individual cases which do not fit within the majority of standard circumstances.

In response, we have produced information about how to book appointments, change bookings etc that has been used across North Tyneside. Our online guidance about 'how to change your covid appointment' has had **280,000** page views and 3,000 paper copies were distributed.

Pooling the feedback gathered across the system, we prepared a report for the Covid Vaccine Board that highlighted the need for a support service to deal with complex questions and concerns that GP practices and NHS 119 were unable to address. The CCG went on to commission TyneHealth to deliver a local vaccine helpline. We have continued to support this service.

## 2.5 Supporting residents to resolve their issues

Here are some examples of how we have supported local people with their issues:

### Finding a dentist

A resident from Wallsend was struggling to find a new NHS dentist close to home, having been removed from her dentist's patient list, so she called us for advice. From our dental research we were aware of a dentist taking on new NHS patients located a short distance from her home. We put her in touch and provided her with information on the registration process. She was able to register with the new dentist and thanked us for our support.

### GP information

A patient of a Forest Hall GP practice contacted us to tell us they could not find the opening hours on the practice website. We contacted the practice on their behalf and asked for the

opening hours to be added and for them to be easy for patients to find. In response to our request, the practice has added the opening hours to their homepage.

### **Making a complaint**

We helped the host of a Ukrainian refugee to make a complaint to a Whitley Bay GP practice about their refusal to register the refugee.

We talked to the practice manager on their behalf and flagged this issue with North Tyneside CCG to make sure information about registering refugees was communicated to all GP practices.

### **Booking an retinal screening appointment**

A member of the public from Howdon contacted us because they were struggling to book a retinal screening appointment. We contacted the service on their behalf. The service arranged a call back and sent an appointment letter with information about the screening programme.

## **3. Key issues people have told us about**

### **3.1 Overview**

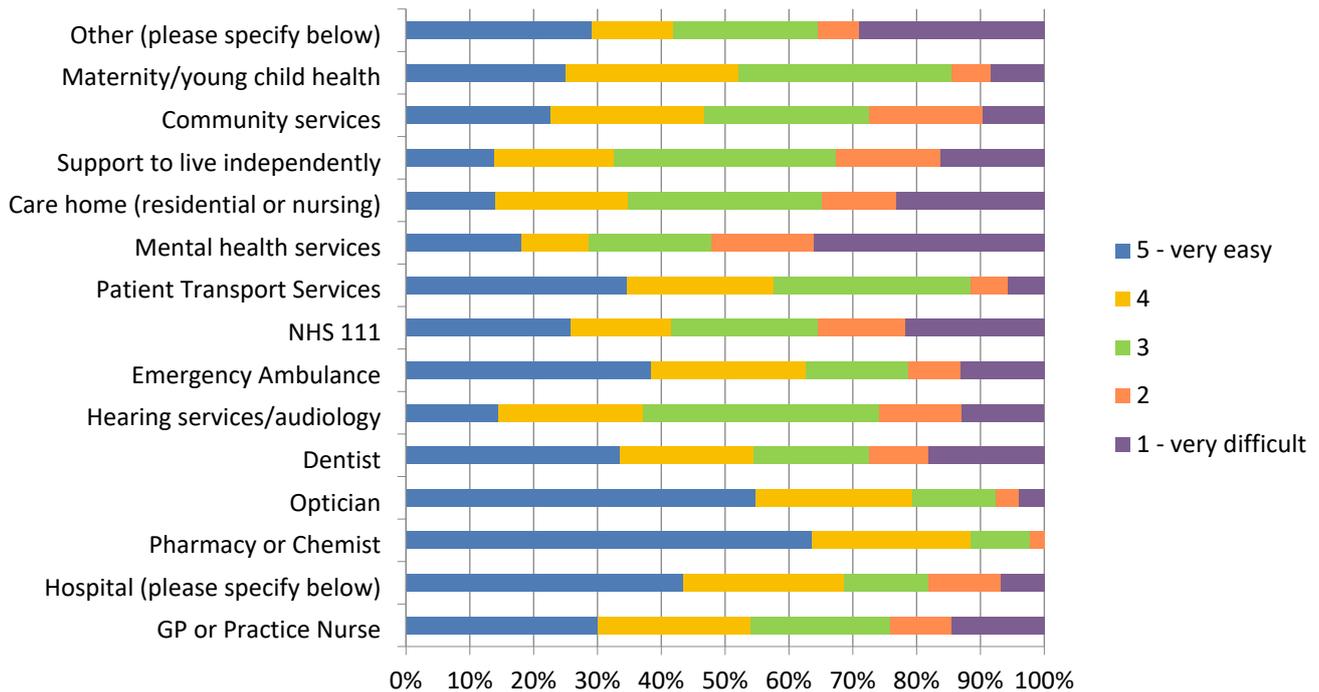
As well as gathering feedback from our engagement activities and people contacting us throughout the year, we use our annual survey to gather feedback from local residents. Our annual survey ran between January and April. We are pulling together the detailed feedback we received by service area and will share with providers and commissioners.

From this feedback we can see the following themes:

- Health and care staff are generally great and they go above and beyond to support.
- People feel they often struggle to get the support they need - talking about fighting to get a service.
- People recognise that the health and care system is under pressure and covid has had a massive impact.
- A sense that we are lucky to have the NHS and some of the best performing services in the country.
- Increasing comments about paying for private treatment rather than accessing NHS treatment, including scans, operations and dentistry - still small numbers but our sense is that this has grown noticeably for people who can afford to pay for private treatment.
- Access to trusted information is still a challenge for some.
- Remote or virtual appointments work for some people but choice is important.
- As services have opened up following covid restrictions, we are seeing issues we heard about pre-covid re-emerge - transport issues

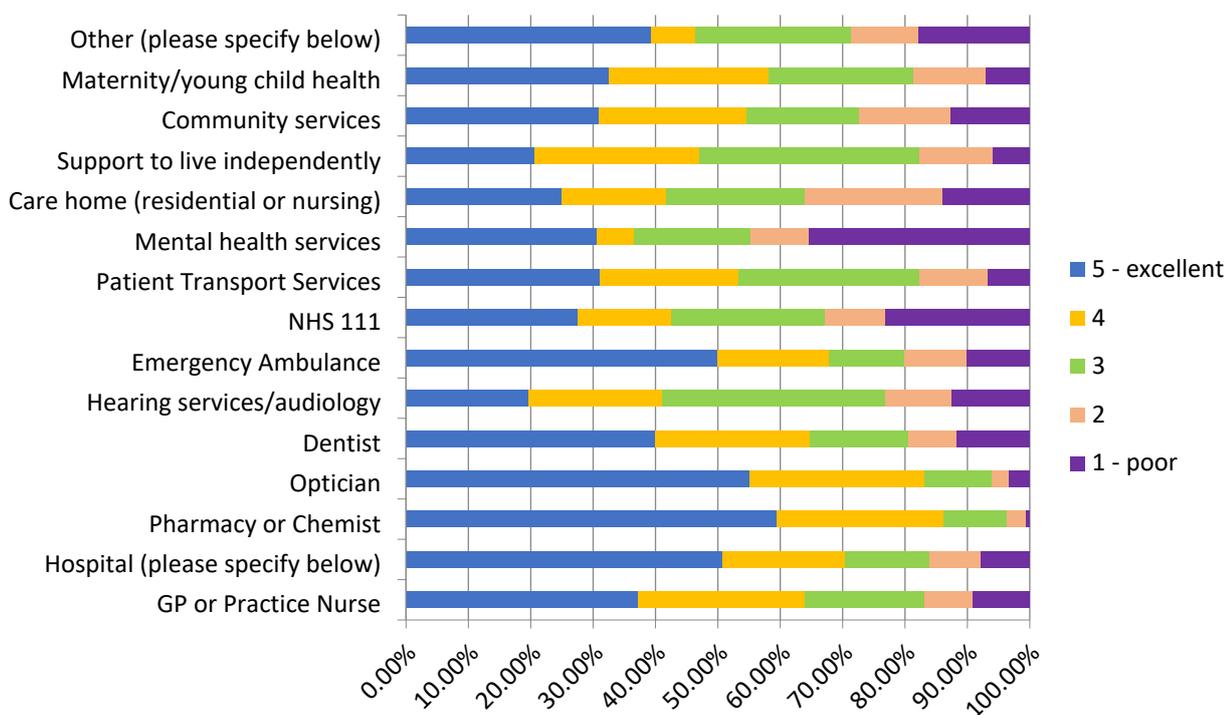
In our annual survey, we asked people to rate how easy it was to use different services and the chart below (showing the responses of 466 local residents) reflects what we have heard generally. GPs and primary care continues to be the service area we hear most about.

## How easy was it to use this service?



We also asked people to rate their overall experiences of the services they use. We asked for feedback on their experiences too, but many people chose not to share too much detail.

## Rate your overall experience of the service



## 3.2 Dentistry

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Healthwatch has seen an increase in the number of people sharing their experiences of trying to access NHS dental care.

Healthwatch North Tyneside worked with eight regional Healthwatch in the North East and Cumbria to gather feedback from people across the region on local dental care. In total 795 people responded, from late November 2021 until early January 2022. During the same period, the local Healthwatch volunteers contacted dental practices in their catchment, with a series of questions, to understand the availability of services. This regional report can be read [here](#).

235 people in North Tyneside told us about their experiences of dentistry in this borough since the start of the pandemic to date.

We have published our findings and recommendations for North Tyneside in this report 'Key issues of dentistry in North Tyneside' - Annex 1. We shared these with the Living Well Locally Board and these will be revisited as responsibility for dentistry commissioning moves from NHS England to the ICS.

### Key findings

- Finding a dentist has been very difficult. Information on the NHS website about dentists taking on NHS patients has not been kept up to date.
- Urgent treatment was prioritised during the pandemic but getting any kind of appointment was a struggle for some.
- There is a need for a clear definition of 'urgent'. Our data suggests a significant mismatch between the clinical definition and users' interpretation.
- Generally speaking, people want to be seen within a month for routine treatment or check-ups and within a week or less for urgent issues.
- The cost of both NHS and private care presents a barrier to equal access.
- There is a lack of understanding about the organisation and funding of NHS contracts and the implications for provision of NHS appointments. This has given the impression that private care has been prioritised for the financial gain of dentists.

### Key recommendations

- A single central list of dentists taking on patients that dentists are contractually obliged to keep up to date.
- Better Information for service users to improve transparency and understanding focusing on:
  - what being 'registered' with a dentist means
  - NHS contracts and funding of appointments versus private care
  - triage, the definition of 'urgent' and timescales for treatment
  - costs of NHS and private treatment and support available to manage these costs
  - timing of check-ups and advice on maintaining dental health.
- Greater strategic coordination of provision across the borough:
  - to give an overview of the services available to residents of North Tyneside
  - to share good practice and what works well
  - to facilitate signposting to other practices when appointments are limited
- Focus on barriers to accessing dental care to address Health Inequalities.

### **3.3 Pharmacy and prescriptions**

Whilst most people tell us they are very pleased with pharmacy services in North Tyneside, we did hear a lot about pharmacy services during the pandemic. In addition, we were asked by North Tyneside's Health and Wellbeing Board to gather people's views to contribute to the review of the statutory Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA).

We gathered feedback from service users throughout the year and ran a survey to gather evidence to inform the development of the PNA. We heard from over **XX** people about their experiences of pharmacy services and prescriptions.

We have published two reports:

#### **Views of pharmacy Services - Evidence Gathering for the PNA**

The evidence gathered for the PNA is presented in this report and has been used in the drafting of the new PNA.

#### **Insights into people's experiences of pharmacy services in NorthTyneside**

This separate report covers broader issues relating to pharmacy and prescriptions based on evidence we have gathered over the last 2 years. These do not fit within the PNA. This shows that people are generally very happy with the pharmacy services in North Tyneside. Based on what people have told us, we made the recommendations below and you can read our short summary report in annex 2 .

- Access to pharmacies could be improved, particularly for those working office hours, by ensuring a spread of pharmacies across the borough that provide extended opening, lunchtime services and publicising these.
- Wider promotion of the range of services offered by pharmacies.
- Staff should be aware of people's concerns over privacy, especially at busy times, and offer use of consulting rooms.
- Where possible, synchronise prescriptions for people with multiple items on different repeats or collecting for those they care for.
- Monitoring medication/stock shortages and setting up processes to facilitate access to alternatives.
- Ensure busy times are managed effectively and seating is available. Consider fast track queue for prescription collection, query box for later response etc.
- Consider suggestions for provision of additional services including: dressing changes, trials of health monitoring devices and disability equipment, C-Card for young people to access free condoms, B12 injections, mental health support, free dosette service.
- Consider supporting local pharmacies to offer a free delivery service.

These recommendations have been shared with the PNA steering group and the Living Well Locally Board. The Living Well Locally Board have agreed to review these recommendations when responsibility for commissioning pharmacy services moves from NHS England to the ICS.

### 3.4 Young Carers - ' I feel I have missed out on my childhood'

We have been working with North Tyneside Carers' Centre to gather feedback from young carers about their experiences over the last 2 years. 104 young carers (aged between 5 and 21) completed a survey. We reviewed the findings and workshopped the following key messages and recommendations with a group of 8 young carers. These young carers spoke to Jaqui Old (Director for Children's and Adult's services at North Tyneside Council) about the what's important to them during Carers' week.

This information has been presented to the Carers' Partnership Board in June 2022 who have committed to develop an action plan to respond to the recommendations.

#### Key messages

- Many young carers have increased caring responsibilities as a direct result of the pandemic.
- Young carers are struggling with their mental wellbeing - increase in self harm and suicidal thoughts.
- Young carers prioritised their caring responsibilities over their education.
- Young carers feel people (including their friends, teachers and professionals) don't understand what it's like to be a young carer.
- Young carers reported an inconsistent approach to supporting young carers across different schools and from individual teachers within a school.
- Young carers are feeling pressurised to achieve from their schools. As well as struggling to juggle homework alongside their caring responsibilities on a daily basis, they are also struggling to catch up on their schoolwork due to the pandemic.
- As a result of their caring responsibilities they have poorer school attendance levels than pre-pandemic. They are worried about the longer-term impact on their attainment.
- Young carers reported an increase in challenging behaviour and violence from siblings with ASD, which is impacting on their wellbeing.
- Young carers want to access support more quickly - they do not feel they are prioritised for wellbeing support and there are lengthy waiting lists.
- Young carers feel "old before time" and caring impacts on their friendships - "What my friends talk about is totally irrelevant compared to the issues I am dealing with".
- Young carers feel that they have "missed out on their childhood".
- Young carers reported doing ok at school but know that they could do better with support.
- Young carers are worried about the cost of living, the impact on their family and in work poverty.

## **Recommendations:**

### **Contingency planning for possible lockdowns**

- Plan for future lockdowns and develop a contingency plan to ensure young carers have access to support.
- Social workers must consider the impact on the young carer when services are withdrawn or refused and whether the young person is providing inappropriate or excessive levels of care.
- When teaching lessons with young carers, teachers need to recognise the impact of their caring responsibilities on their ability to be educated to home.

### **Schools - Education**

- Young carers feel they need additional support with their education to catch up after lockdown.
- All teachers must be educated in recognising and supporting young carers.
- Schools need to implement a system to help teachers know which pupils in their class have caring responsibilities.

### **Schools - Emotional wellbeing in schools**

- Dedicated emotional support within schools is critical for young carers.
- Access to peer support groups will offer young carers emotional support and help with friendships.
- Personal education sessions need to raise awareness across the whole school population about what young carers do and how it impacts them.
- When young carers are stressed, this must not be misconstrued for poor behaviour and appropriate support should be put in place.

### **Support for young carers**

- Review capacity to support young carers and reduce waiting times.
- More support generally - 1-2-1s, group activities, trips, peer support etc.

## 4. Healthwatch activity coming up

### 4.1 Key themes we will be working on during this 2022/23

Based on the feedback and issues raised with us by local residents and discussions with partners, our board have agreed that we should focus on the following key issues in our Healthwatch work. We will work with local and regional partners to understand these issues better and use user's views and experiences to improve service.

- **Access to information** - continue to work with partners and Living Well North Tyneside.
- **Inequalities and access to support** - including:
  - Women's Health - women's health clinics in primary care and breast screening
  - Audiology services
  - Long term conditions and outpatient support
  - Transport
  - Digital inclusion
  - Carers
- **Integrated and coordinated care:**
  - Hospital to home - experiences of hospital care, discharge and social care
  - Getting care when you need it - particularly NHS111 and GP extended access services.
- **Service users voice in systems**

### 4.2 Additionally commissioned activity

We are being separately funded for the following activities:

**Community Mental Health Transformation** - Funding through North Tyneside CCG for 2 years, a new Co-production and Insight Officer role has joined us in June. This will involve working with mental health service users, families and carers to help design community mental health services as part of the Community Mental Health Transformation programme.

**Adult Social Care User Experience** - North Tyneside Council funded activity to talk to service users about their experiences of services and support improvement in services. - ongoing

**Equally Well Health inequalities strategy engagement** - North Tyneside Council - to engage with local voluntary sector organisations and their users in the implementation plans for the Health and Wellbeing Board's Equally Well strategy.

**Living Well North Tyneside booklets** - Contributions from various public and voluntary sector partners towards the costs of production and delivery.

### 4.3 NHS system change and service user voice

We are working with the other 13 Healthwatch across the North East and North Cumbria ICS footprint to work with the ICS to ensure local people's voices are heard in the new

arrangements and that Healthwatch's statutory role is understood. A representative of the Healthwatch Network will have a seat on the ICB (non-voting).

We continue to work with the ICS to negotiate the role of Healthwatch and service user voice in the new system. We contributed to the Engagement and Involvement strategy published earlier this month <https://www.northeastandnorthcumbriaics.nhs.uk/get-involved/>

More locally we are working closely with our neighbours at Healthwatch Northumberland and Healthwatch Newcastle and Gateshead about common themes across our North of Tyne and Gateshead area.