



healthwatch
Dorset

A Year In Review Annual Report 2017-18



healthwatch

Dorset

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Who we are



Healthwatch Dorset is one of 148 local Healthwatch organisations in England. We support local people to have a say in how health and social care services are designed and delivered. We take people's views and experiences to decision-makers (health and social care commissioners and providers) to share what people think is good and what is not good. And we work with them to make improvements.

We also provide people with information and advice about local health and social care services, helping them to find their way round the system and making them aware of their rights and the choices available to them.

The Healthwatch Dorset service is delivered by a partnership between three well-established local community organisations: [Help & Care](#), [Citizens Advice in Dorset](#) and [Dorset Race Equality Council](#). Together they have formed a new social enterprise, Healthwatch Dorset Community Interest Company (CIC).

Healthwatch Dorset CIC Board

Healthwatch Dorset CIC has a Board made up of Executive Directors (appointed by the three organisations) and Non-Executive Directors (volunteers chosen from local communities). The Board has responsibility for our governance arrangements and provides strategic direction on our priorities. More information about individual Healthwatch Dorset [Board members](#) and [staff](#) (along with their photos) can be found on our website.

Members of the Board attend the Councils' Health and Wellbeing Boards, Health and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny committees and other health forums, ensuring that decision makers are made aware of local people's concerns. The Board encourages health and social care organisations to communicate their proposals

to local people clearly and concisely, avoiding jargon. This year the Board has spent time scrutinising, questioning, and raising local people's concerns about Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group's proposals in the Clinical Services Review.

Our vision

To be the independent voice of the people

To be a high quality organisation that is well-known, independent, trusted and accessible to everyone across Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole.

To be influential and respected by decision-makers and service providers.

Our Mission

To support people by providing an Information and Signposting Service for those who use health and social care services.

To engage with and reach out to local people, communities, groups and organisations to encourage them to provide feedback on local health and care services.

To use local people's experiences and views to influence providers and commissioners of health and social care services.



A message from our Chair



Joyce Guest (Healthwatch Dorset Chair)
with Frank Bruno

Where does the time go? Another year, and we are as busy as ever ensuring the voices of Dorset residents are heard by our health and care professionals. This is an important time for us with our contract ending in March 2019, so we will be working on our tender hoping we will be recommissioned.

Mental ill health is still our number one priority. The highlight of the year for me was meeting Frank Bruno, the former boxer, at Bournemouth University discussing how he continues to overcome his mental health issues through exercise, refusing medication. He gave a passionate delivery and received a standing ovation. At the same event I met young people who, with help from us and the University, had produced their own video [#LifeUnfiltered](#) examining their life experiences, providing more real stories for health and care decision makers.

Another highlight was receiving three highly commended awards at the National Healthwatch Conference in Nottingham. Jane Mordue, Chair of Healthwatch England, said "Healthwatch Dorset have worked hard to reach every area of the community to make sure people know where to go to get information about health and care".

We continue to make an impact with our volunteer champions carrying out mystery shopping surveys of GP Practices. This identified patient registration difficulties for those with no fixed address, large variations in waiting times to see a GP and out-of-date information about surgery opening times. [Our report](#) has been sent to Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and all the GP practices in Dorset. The CCG has responded, setting out how they are supporting GP practices in Dorset to implement our recommendations.

The "[Baby Steps](#)" report highlighted the experiences of over 100 local women and their families in Dorset using maternity services - both good and bad. We are delighted that the maternity services have accepted our recommendations for change and we look forward to helping them make future experiences even better.

Our "[Fobbed Off](#)" report has also had an impact with all the hospitals involved and Royal Bournemouth Hospital are changing their complaints procedure as a result.

We had over 100 applications to our "[Community Investment Fund](#)" this year. If only we had more resources to help all the worthwhile ideas. We had a difficult time selecting 17 projects and I am looking forward to hearing about the success of the projects we are supporting.

We have continued to work with Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group on the Clinical Services Review and we are pleased that they have taken note of the concerns of local people - but there is still a long way to go.

Praise to the Healthwatch Dorset team who continue to be enthusiastic, innovative and inspirational in their work. Thanks to them, the Board and the volunteers for another great year where we have made a real difference for local people and we hope we will continue to do so.



The year at a glance

This year we've
reached
124,000 people
on social media



Our hundreds
of volunteers
help us with
everything
from mystery
shopping
services to
writing blogs



We've visited

26

local services



Our reports
have tackled
issues ranging
from
maternity
services to GP
services



Hello

Hi

We've spoken to
3285
people



We've given

2196 people
information and
advice



Your views on health and care



Survey highlights mums' experiences of maternity care

Healthwatch Dorset has carried out a survey of mums and their families, to find out what they think about Dorset's maternity services.

To add to the feedback the NHS in Dorset had already gathered, Healthwatch Dorset focussed particularly on people from varied ethnic and cultural backgrounds. We gathered the views of over 100 people through a Facebook survey, two public events and face-to-face meetings with people who work with people with disabilities and with vulnerable women who have experienced homelessness, domestic abuse or sex trafficking and refugees, and meetings with groups of young parents at a Children's Centre. We also made phone calls and email contact with black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) community groups.

“While much of the feedback about the NHS maternity staff was very positive, there were some people who felt patronised and that they weren't listened to or respected”, says our report, entitled [“Baby Steps”](#).

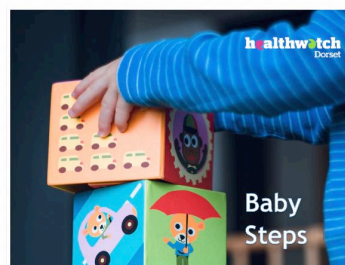
A member of the travelling community said they had been told not to ‘bring your big family’ and that a security guard was called when they raised concerns about being treated fairly. The Muslim Contact group mentioned that ‘Regarding [the women's] faith and their will to wear the headscarf during labour (as there may be a male present), midwives and other staff did not understand why the ladies would want to wear (the headscarf) and why they did not want male doctors (and other staff) in the room whilst in full labour’.

There was a general feeling from young parent respondents (aged 17-21 years) that the health visitors can be a bit ‘old school’ and ‘judgemental’ and ‘they need to try to understand young mums more’.

And a woman from Eastern Europe, who had previously been sex-trafficked said: ‘I don't mind talking to the police, they understand I'm the victim, but when I speak to the social workers and midwives they think I'm the one that's bad’.

The report makes 12 recommendations to Dorset's maternity services, including providing better support for breastfeeding, home support and assistance for people with complex needs.

Joyce Guest, Chair of Healthwatch Dorset, said: “Our project was about listening to people who don't always have the loudest voice. We're delighted that our local maternity services have accepted all of the recommendations in our report and we look forward to seeing the actions they take in response, to make maternity services across Dorset even better.”



To find out more, and to download both Healthwatch Dorset's report and the response to it from local maternity services, click [here](#).

An interview with Gwen Scolding, our Project Lead for Baby Steps

What's it like to work with Healthwatch Dorset?

In my previous community work I wrote reports but never knew if they had any impact. What excited me about working with Healthwatch Dorset was that I knew my work would be read and acted upon - there's a real potential for change.

What did you learn from working on this project?

I learned a lot, as you always do when you speak to a range of people from a variety of backgrounds. I met people from different communities and listened to their experiences. Most of the feedback was incredibly positive which reflected my own experience of local maternity services. However, I also learned that there are many people out there who require more support due to their individual circumstances, and some small changes could make a big difference to their overall healthcare experience.

Did it affect your own recent experience of maternity services?

At the beginning of this project I found out I was pregnant with my second child, which gave me an extra insight into recent procedures and made it easy for me to talk to other parents as I was in the same situation. I have to say that my maternity experience in Bournemouth was brilliant, but it's been interesting to reflect on my own access to services along the way, and consider how this might differ for other people from different circumstances.

What did you enjoy most?

I really enjoyed the Mini Moments events we ran in the Sovereign Centre, Boscombe. They gave me the opportunity to talk to people

in a relaxed environment and to help parents meet other local parents. I was overwhelmed by how many different backgrounds were represented at those events; people from all over the world chatting openly about their experiences. I really enjoyed gathering people's views in a fun way, providing crafts & games for the children and giving parents the chance to reflect on their recent maternity experiences.

How do you feel about the report "Baby Steps"?

I feel really pleased that the report reflects the experiences of such a variety of people throughout Dorset, and I think it's great that the NHS have listened to these views and have responded. This can be quite empowering for people. Healthwatch Dorset has been able to give a voice to those people who deserve to be considered.



If you could change one thing about maternity services, what would it be?

Specific changes would help different people, as the report shows. Really I'd like everyone to have the maternity experience that I had recently, and the best way to try and make this happen is to ensure that equality is always a priority.

While Gwen is on maternity leave, we are pleased to welcome Ebi Sosseh as our Equality & Diverse Communities Officer.

(Left: Gwen and Amelie)

Turning the spotlight on young people's mental health

Students from Weymouth College worked with Healthwatch Dorset to turn the spotlight on young people's mental health.

In September 2017, Dorset HealthCare NHS Trust hosted a day of events focusing on children's and young people's mental health. And, thanks to Healthwatch Dorset, local young people were able to share their first-hand perspectives.

A group of students from Weymouth College took part in a workshop, led by Healthwatch Dorset, asking "what is mental health?".

They discussed what they think the NHS, education and care services can do to help raise awareness of the issues, and the kinds of support young people need.

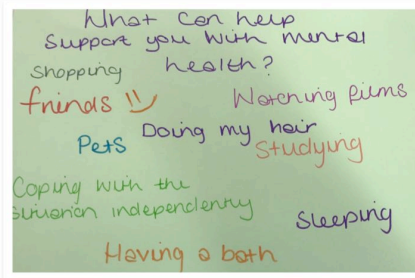
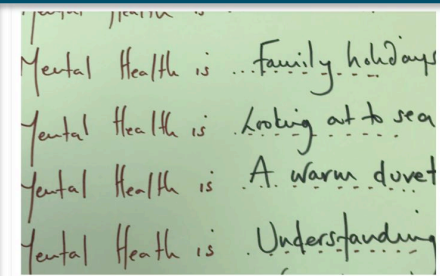
We made a film of the workshop on the day, which was shown to other guests at the end of the day.

Martyn Webster, Healthwatch Dorset Manager, said: "This was a great opportunity for young people to share their experiences and views on mental health issues, and make a real difference to local services.

"Everyone who saw the film at the end of the day was affected by their insights and the power of their personal stories."

Since the workshop, Healthwatch Dorset and Dorset HealthCare NHS Trust together have been taking forward the insights gained and making sure that they become an integral part of the planning for the future of services in Dorset.

This is the film made on the day (click on it to watch):



Making a difference together



Concerns over ID request at GP practices after mystery shopper exercise

Vulnerable people in Dorset are at risk of being excluded from the care they are entitled to because they're being asked for ID when joining their local doctor's surgery, it is warned.

It comes after a 'mystery shopper' exercise on GP practices by Healthwatch Dorset volunteers acting as "mystery shoppers".

The aim was to explore whether new patients are facing barriers registering by having to provide photo ID.

Whilst identification can be requested and is preferred, it is not required and registration should not be refused on this basis.

Figures for Dorset show that, in total, 88 practices wanted some sort of identification (either photo ID or proof of address) before a patient could register with them. Only seven surgeries said no identification was required. One was not accepting new patients and one declined to give information.

Four practices advised that patients "must have" photo ID in order to register and 23 practices advised that proof of address or another form of ID was required if no photo ID was available.

Healthwatch Dorset is concerned that by asking for identification some patients may incorrectly assume that it is compulsory to provide it, when it is not.

As a result of our investigation, we have made four recommendations to GP practices in our report, including that practices either adopt a policy of not asking for any identification at all, or that they ensure all staff are adequately trained to explain to newly registering patients that identification is preferred but not essential. We also recommend updating their practice information.

Healthwatch Dorset Manager Martyn Webster said:

"Patient satisfaction with GP services is high, but at the same time some people find difficulty actually getting those services in the first place. This has been highlighted by the 'mystery shopper' project."

"Although NHS England states 'you should not be refused registration or appointments because you don't have a proof of address or personal identification', we discovered that, for example, out of the 97 GP surgeries in Dorset only seven did not require ID or proof of address to register a patient."

"This has an impact on people generally, but also particularly on a number of potentially vulnerable people, including former armed forces members, students in temporary accommodation, older women and people who are homeless."

Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) has responded to Healthwatch Dorset's report, setting out how they are supporting GP practices in Dorset to implement Healthwatch Dorset's four recommendations.



Both Healthwatch Dorset's report and Dorset CCG's response can be read on this page on Healthwatch Dorset's website:

<https://www.healthwatchdorset.co.uk/resources/reports>

The Critical Friend

Local Healthwatch is independent of both the NHS and local councils, and our role in relation to them is often likened to being a “critical friend”. We want all those organisations to be providing the best possible services for the local population. When the local NHS or local authorities propose significant changes to services, they have a legal duty to involve the public. We monitor how they do that. We also advise them on how to make their consultations as effective as possible.

We publicise consultations when they take place and encourage local people to get involved. We also attend any public meetings being held, so that we can hear what views are being expressed.

But that does not mean we support the proposed changes to health or care services. Our interest is in making sure the public is informed, can have their say and that their views are recorded and taken into account when final decisions are made about service changes.

Among the general public, there will be lots of different views about any proposals for changes to health or care services and what the priorities should be. Our interest is in trying to get all views heard - but we don't express a preference ourselves. Nor do we support any one campaign group rather than another.

There are numerous examples of how we fulfil this role, some of them public and reported in local media, and some of them behind the scenes. We have taken, and will continue to take, an active interest in the many proposals for changes and developments to local services in recent years - notably the Dorset Clinical Services Review (CSR), the Dorset Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STP) and the Dorset Integrated Care System (ICS). And we have stood up for the rights of local people to have their say and to be heard.

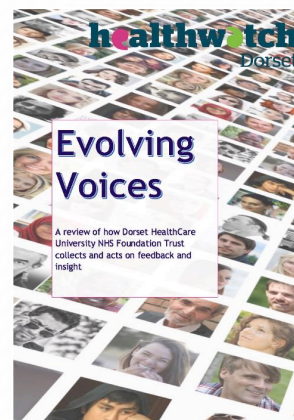
Evolving Voices

Over the past year, we have been commissioned by Dorset HealthCare University NHS Foundation Trust to carry out a review into the effectiveness of the Trust's arrangements for systematically collecting and acting on service user feedback and insights, including participation and engagement opportunities.

Our review involved us both reviewing current policy and practice and meeting face-to-face with 38 teams of staff.

The Trust is the largest single healthcare provider in the county. It is a diverse and complex organisation, employing over 5,000 staff and delivering community and mental health services from over 300 sites through almost 400 teams.

What we found is that the Trust is doing a great deal to gather feedback and insights, but it could improve the ways this is done - and how the resulting information is recorded and used to drive forward improvements to services. Our findings are set out in a report entitled “Evolving Voices”, which includes a number of recommendations for how the Trust could take forward our findings.



The Trust has responded to the report, and both documents will be on our website [here](#).

Andy Willis, Chair, Dorset HealthCare University NHS Foundation Trust, said “I’m pleased that we’ve worked closely with Healthwatch Dorset this year to look at how we use patient feedback to improve our services. It’s vital that the voice of patients is at the centre of everything we do and the Evolving Voices report will help us to improve the way we use the valuable insight we receive.”

Making more voices heard

We are particularly keen to hear from people whose voices aren't as loud, or as often heard, as others. To help us achieve this goal, we set aside funding to support local voluntary and community group projects which help us to reach communities and people with "protected characteristics", as defined in the Equality Act 2010. That means working with, for instance, people from varied ethnic and cultural backgrounds, people with disabilities, people of different sexual orientations and people with varied beliefs.

Through our Community Investment Fund, we gain knowledge and understanding of more people's experiences of local services, and the groups we work with are able to do more and also, in some cases, become more sustainable as our support leads to funding from other bodies too.

Over the last 18 months we've funded and supported 14 local projects, covering a wide range of communities, from school and disability groups to homeless support and carers' groups.



You can read a short report on what those projects did, and what we learned from them, by clicking [here](#).

In February and March 2018, we launched a new round of funding and invited interested groups to send in short descriptions of their project ideas and the amount of funding they were asking for.

"We had over 100 applications from local groups and projects, ranging from support for baby & toddler groups, dementia awareness, long-term health conditions, carers, homelessness and mental health," said Healthwatch Dorset Chair Joyce Guest.

"Every one of them had great ideas and we would have loved to have been able to support them all. It was really difficult to choose between them. In the end we stretched the funds we had available from £10,000 to over £11,000 and we've chosen 17 different projects which will work with a diverse range of people right across the county."

The 17 projects that will be supported include a Cake Concert for people with dementia in Blandford, crèche facilities at a mental health support group in Poole and an art project for people living with cancer in the Purbecks.

One of the successful applicants, Eileen Franklin from Harlequin Care, said: "It was just so easy to apply, no complicated forms to fill in and Healthwatch has been so helpful. I wish more community funding took this approach. We've been unable to apply for grants in the past because we're a small group without a professional fundraiser."

You can see the full list of projects we are supporting in 2018 by clicking [here](#).

Supporting patients to have a voice in GP practices

Under the banner of Wessex Voices (a partnership between local Healthwatch in Dorset, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight and NHS England in the region), we held a conference for members of Dorset GP practices' Patient Participation Groups (PPGs). Over 90 people attended, from across the county.



The purpose of the conference was to:

- Share information and knowledge about PPGs and how they fit in to the bigger picture
- Bring people together from across the county to share ideas and experiences on how to make PPGs successful
- Enable people from PPGs to network and to develop ongoing working relationships
- Look at what is working well and what could be improved
- Provide an opportunity to access practical help and advice.

Feedback was very positive: *"A really good event, a great opportunity to meet lots of people & share ideas"*.

Many PPG members who attended the day spoke about how difficult they found it to recruit new members. Healthwatch Dorset believes that something that would help recruitment would be for there to be more readily available information about Patient Groups in each practice. So, our volunteers carried out a Mystery Shopping exercise and reviewed what information was available on every GP practice website.

We found that in 73% of practice websites the names of PPG members were not published and that in 63% of the practice websites there was no link to the notes or minutes of the PPG.

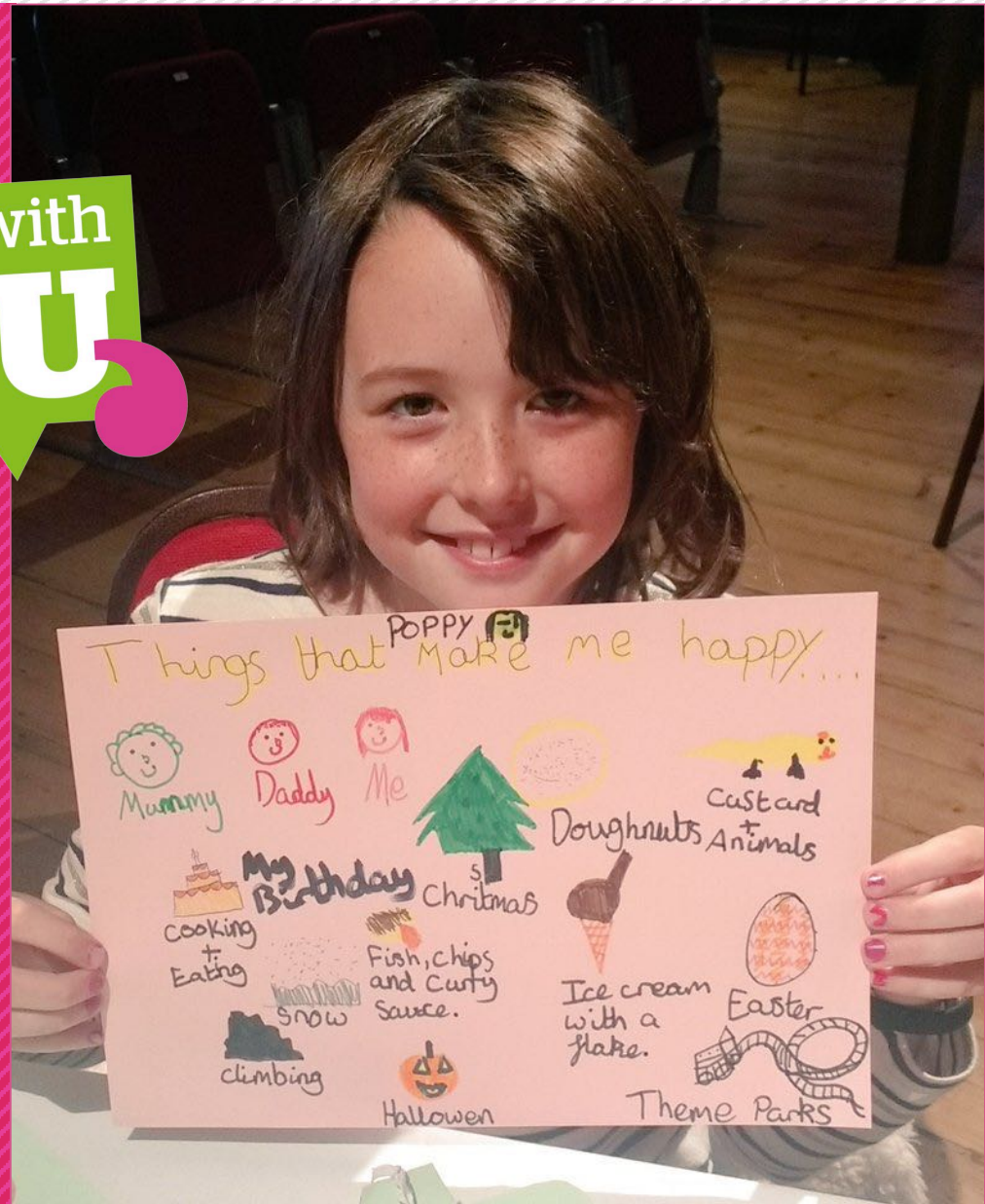
We have put our findings into a short report, which has been shared with all GP practices in Dorset and can be found [here](#).

In the report, we recommend that good Practice would be for all GP practice websites To include accessible and up-to- date information about their PPG, including:

- A clear explanation of what the PPG is, what it is for, what it does and how to join
- Any Terms of Reference
- In practices which have a PPG which meets physically (in addition to or in place of a virtual group) a current list of members of that group, including identifying any who hold particular roles (e.g. Chair, Secretary)
- Information about how to contact the group
- The notes or minutes of at least the most recent meeting of the group
- The most recent annual declaration from the practice evidencing that they have engaged with their PPG throughout the year and have made available to the practice population the feedback given by the PPG, including actions and reports - including where the practice has acted on suggestions for improvement.



it starts with
YOU



"If just one young person sees this film and it helps them then it's worth it. I'm really proud to have been involved"

Siobhan, Healthwatch Dorset Champion

Following on from our children & young people's creative project, "Be Yourself", we worked on a film this year, made by young people for young people, called [#LifeUnfiltered](#).

The aim of the film is to raise awareness of, and reduce the stigma of talking about, mental health. Since the launch on World Mental Health Day in October 2017, it's been watched over 12,000 times on YouTube and shown in schools, colleges, youth clubs and community events across Dorset.

The young people who developed the film have big aspirations for it and we've recently produced a [new interview film](#) with everyone involved; Bournemouth Uni, Dorset Mind, Dorset Mental Health Forum & Dorset Healthcare NHS Trust where we talk about the project and the impact it's had so far.

Interview with Siobhan, Healthwatch Dorset Champion

How did you meet Healthwatch Dorset?

I was at a local mental health support group, REACH, and they suggested I go to a meeting about a new young people's film project. That's where I first met Louise from Healthwatch Dorset.

What made you get involved in #LifeUnfiltered?

When I was 17 I got really depressed and started self harming and thinking about ending my life. I ended up spending time in various Psychiatric Intensive Care Units around the country. I was discharged when I was 18, but that made my mental health even worse, and I went into St Ann's Hospital as an adult. When I got out I wanted to do something to help young people get the right support and not end up where I did. So this project came along at just the right time for me.

What impact has #LifeUnfiltered had on you?

It's given me so much confidence, I didn't believe in myself at all when I started the project. I couldn't talk in front of the rest of the group to start with, I would write things down and Louise would say it for me until eventually I felt strong enough to speak up. My mum says I'm like a different person from who I was last year.

Before I was feeling so hopeless and thinking what's the point, but now I have hope for the future.

I started DBT therapy 6 months ago and I've recently been accepted onto an access course for a degree in art history, starting in October 2018, to help me get my dream job as a curator in a museum. I still struggle with my mental health but now I feel able to reach out to my friends and family and ask for help. So hopefully I won't go all the way back to that really dark place.



"Healthwatch Dorset are the most helpful group of people I've met. If you get a chance to work with them, even if it's just to share your story or take part in a promotion stand, I'd encourage everyone to do it."

Thank you to Siobhan and all the young people & groups who took part in #LifeUnfiltered and helped raise awareness of young people's mental health issues in Dorset.

When I learned about the tremendous work Healthwatch Dorset does supporting local people to have their say on how health care and social care services are delivered and ensuring their voices are heard by service providers, it seemed a natural progression to become a Healthwatch Dorset Champion myself, to promote their work and share information.

Sarah Holmes
Healthwatch Dorset Volunteer



Helping you find the answers



An interview with Weymouth & Portland Citizens Advice Healthwatch Dorset Lead, Ann McDonald

Tell us about your work at Weymouth & Portland Citizens Advice

I have several roles: I run weekly advice sessions in 3 local GP Surgeries and at Portland Community Hospital. I also do a weekly advice session at one of the local Children's Centres.

That sounds busy!

Yes - and the GP sessions in particular are very busy.

What sort of advice do people ask for at the surgeries?

Well, it can be anything. Often it is about benefits. It can also include advice about aids and adaptations at home, particularly if they are unwell and claiming Personal Independence Payment or Attendance Allowance. I do a lot of form-filling. I often see families and carers, as well as patients.

What sort of specific health or care questions do you get asked?

Recently someone with a learning disability asked about how to change their GP. They did not know if they could do this, but felt their current GP didn't really listen to them. I helped them with this process.

You are the Healthwatch 'Lead' in your office - what does this mean?

I keep the team up-to-date on health and care information and current Healthwatch issues. I always have a slot at the monthly staff

meetings and I talk to the supervisors to make sure that they are helping advisers spot issues. I also go through the cases on our system where a health or social care issue has been logged, and put an anonymous summary of these issues onto the Healthwatch system so they can be used for Healthwatch's wider influencing work.

Do you think it's important that Citizens Advice is part of Healthwatch Dorset?

Yes. Some people won't know about Healthwatch, so we can highlight what is it, and make sure that their experience gets used to improve health and care services locally.

"People often don't know where to go for information or how to take action, such as make a complaint. They also want to know that someone is monitoring things and taking notice if things aren't working, which is why Healthwatch Dorset is so important"

Ann McDonald, pictured at her weekly advice session in Wyke Regis Health Centre, Weymouth



How we have helped people get better information and better services

Two examples of how we have responded to feedback about local services

Someone told us how they phoned the NHS 111 number because they were with a sub aqua diver who was experiencing symptoms of a decompression illness after a dive in Dorset. They needed advice, and quickly, as to where to take him for urgent treatment. The operator did not seem to know what



decompression sickness was and advised them not to attend a hospital because it might be contagious. Realising the advice they were receiving was incorrect, they went straight to A&E, where they were sent on to [The Diver Clinic in Poole](#), a 24/7 NHS-funded diver recompression and advice centre.

Our caller shared this experience with us because time is crucial with dive-related incidents, to avoid serious injury or death, so they wanted to make sure that people received the right advice & support in the future.

Healthwatch Dorset raised this with the NHS 111 service. As a result, they have now added the information about The Diver Clinic to their Electronic Patient Clinical Record Directory (the device used by frontline staff on scene with a patient) and their Directory of Services. NHS 111 staff now have access to better information and people who find themselves in the same position in future should get a quicker and safer service.

We were contacted by someone trying to get dental treatment at home for her mother-in-law, who is 97, frail, unsteady on her feet, prone to falling, has osteoporosis, arthritis, hypertension, is registered blind, and is housebound. She had two painful teeth remaining in her lower jaw which needed extracting to help her eat without pain. She had great difficulty in finding any dentists who would make a home visit. Then...

- She called the Dorset Dental Helpline and was advised to call 111
- NHS 111 said the dentist who had done home visits had left and had not been replaced
- They told her to contact the Community Dental Team, which she did
- They told her to contact a certain clinic, who advised her there was a 6-month waiting list, but sent her a "Referral Pack"
- 10 days later, not having heard any more, she contacted both the NHS Community Services Trust and the Clinical Commissioning Group
- They referred her on to NHS England
- NHS England told her the case had been closed
- Feeling she had exhausted all other options, she arranged for a private appointment for her mother-in-law, which cost £450
- A month later, she received a letter from the dental clinic saying her mother-in-law had been placed on the waiting list
- A month later still, no appointment had been offered.

She told us: ***"Six months to treatment without eating properly was not an option, but that was not how the local services saw it. Shame on them all".***

With the person's permission, Healthwatch Dorset took up this case with NHS England. In response, they expressed concern over the way things had been handled, about the signposting and advice the person had been given, and about the poor communication. They conducted an investigation directly themselves with the Community Trust and then sat down with us to talk through what steps were going to be taken to ensure that people in these circumstances would receive a better service in future.

"People don't know how to make their way through the system - even we find it difficult at times, with all our resources. The NHS and social care systems can be so complicated."

If you've got a question or need information about a local health or social care service, Healthwatch Dorset can help.

You can email us on enquiries@healthwatchdorset.co.uk or call our helpdesk on 0300 111 0102 to speak to someone.

Interview with Crystal & Lwanga, who work on the Healthwatch Dorset phone helpdesk

What is your role in Healthwatch Dorset?

Information & Support Workers - we are the people you speak to if you call Healthwatch Dorset on 0300 111 0102.

Sometimes people call in about one thing but there might be other aspects of their life that we can help with too - signposting people to volunteer opportunities if they're feeling isolated or putting them in touch with a local support group. A lady who rang in recently wanted to raise her concerns about a social care service - the situation had left her feeling really down and she didn't have the confidence to speak up for herself. We signposted her to a volunteer befriender who was able to go along to a meeting with her and give her some support - that made all the difference.

What's the most interesting question you've been asked?

"I'd like to donate my body to science - how do I do that?" The calls are so random sometimes - I was on the phone to the High Commissioner's Office in Spain recently to find out about health insurance. But most people just want clear information and someone to talk to.

What's the best part of your job?

People tell us that they're grateful to have someone to speak to - someone who listens and doesn't dismiss them. It's interesting work, we're always learning something new and it's really satisfying when you are able to help someone.



Our plans for next year



What next?

There are big changes coming for health and care services in Dorset. The plans are to have more services in the community, closer to where people live, and so reduce the number of times people have to go to hospital. To make that happen, there are proposed changes to how some services work at the moment. For example, Bournemouth Hospital will become a major emergency centre and Poole Hospital a major planned care centre (losing its A&E department, to be replaced by an Urgent Care Centre). Also, some GP practices in the county will be merged. Throughout this process, Healthwatch Dorset will focus on helping to ensure that local people have as much information as possible and that their views are heard and taken into account by services when planning and making changes.

We're also going to be talking to people who have been inpatients in hospitals about what their experience was of being discharged - in particular, whether effective arrangements had been made for their care after they left hospital (for instance, support at home). If people are going to receive more care in the community, rather than in hospital, they need to be assured that those community services are, in reality, going to be there and are going to be effective and meet people's needs.

We will be working with People First Dorset (a group led and run by people with learning disabilities) to organise a series of visits to GP practices to see what they are doing to make sure people with learning disabilities have equal access to GP services.

We will be looking at what could be done to make it easier for people who live in care homes to get services from GPs, dentists, opticians and pharmacists.

And we will be continuing our campaign for better mental health services for children and young people.

Our top priorities for investigation in the coming year

- The involvement of local people in major changes to local health and social care services
- The experiences of people being discharged from hospital
- Access to GP services for people with learning disabilities
- Access to primary care services (GPs, dentists, opticians, pharmacists) for people living in residential care
- Children and young people's mental health services



Our finances

Each local Healthwatch is funded by the local council, using money allocated for this purpose by central government. In the case of Healthwatch Dorset, the funding comes jointly from three local councils: Bournemouth Borough Council, Dorset County Council and Borough of Poole.

In the financial year 2017/2018 this funding amounted to £402,030.

We spent £371,714 on staffing (including staff working on Community Engagement and Outreach, Research, Volunteer support and the telephone helpline, together with staff in Citizens Advice branches, administration and finance staff, including management, training and supervision); and office and running costs (overheads)

We spent £22,303 on Projects (including reviews of services and investigations); Engagement and Outreach (organising events and meeting groups and individuals to get their experiences of, and views on, their local health and social care services); Marketing and Communication (including e-bulletins, newsletters, advertising, web site etc.); the Community Investment Fund (support to local community groups); Meetings; and Reimbursement of the out-of-pocket expenses of Healthwatch Dorset volunteers.



One of our “Mini Moment” events, part of our Baby Steps project.

 **How you can help make
health and social care better**



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This annual report is publicly available on our website. We are also sharing it with Healthwatch England, the Care Quality Commission, NHS England, NHS Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group, the Dorset, Poole and Bournemouth Health and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committees, and our local authorities (Dorset County Council, Borough of Poole and Bournemouth Borough Council).

We confirm that we are using the Healthwatch Trademark (which covers the logo and Healthwatch brand) when undertaking work on our statutory activities as covered by the licence agreement.

If you require this report in an alternative format, please contact us at the address on the left.

During the year, we made Freedom Of information Requests to Dorset County Council, Bournemouth Borough Council and Borough of Poole for information concerning people waiting for care assessments or carers' assessments.

All our visits to health and care services were made without needing to use our formal power of 'Enter and View'.

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