

# Inform

Issue 8 Autumn 2025 – Bumper issue





# Contents

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Message From Our Chief Executive	3
Unlocking The Power of People-Driven Care	4
We're All Ears: NHS Adult Hearing Services	5
Making Primary Care Accessible For All	6 & 7
Your Voice, Our Report – Continence Care	7
'Putting the Spring into Stockport' Wellbeing Day	8 & 9
Living Well: Mental Health in Stockport!	10
Good To Meet You Stockport	11
How We've Helped You	12
5K Walk For Autism Awareness	13
Farewell to Director Simon Chadwick	13
Member Spotlight: Steve Gear	14
Advice And News At Your Fingertips	15
We Are Healthwatch Stockport	16

**Inform.**

**Involve.**

**Influence.**

**Independent.**

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# A Message From Our Chief Executive

Welcome to our latest edition of Healthwatch Stockport's INFORM – a bumper issue!

It's been an eventful 2025 so far, and I'm delighted to share some of our achievements and updates supporting our residents of Stockport.

In April, we were thrilled to host our 'Putting the Spring into Stockport' wellbeing fun day. It was a fantastic day, uniting incredible organisations and services. Together, we showcased how we encourage wellbeing across the borough through engaging activities, informative stalls, and insightful training. A huge thank you to everyone who participated and made the day such a success! Read about it on pages 8 & 9.

We've also made progress with our research into NHS hearing services. We've now collated all the valuable feedback you've provided, and our findings have been published. Additionally, we've kicked off our access to Primary Care services for individuals with additional needs programme, including those with disabilities and sensory issues. Turn to pages 6 and 7 to learn more.

In other news, we're saying farewell to Dr. Simon Innes Chadwick, who worked alongside us as a member and Director for over 6 years. Thank you, you were brilliant! Best wishes Simon, we'll really miss you. Read page 13.

Before I close, I must address the announcements regarding the closure of local Healthwatch organisations. This decision raises critical questions: Who will now truly listen to local people? Who will independently amplify the concerns of those with additional needs and those of us who struggle to access services? Healthwatch Stockport has always stood up for our residents, and for the moment we'll continue to provide our services, whilst we keep you updated.

In the meantime, please explore this issue and read about all the work we've been doing, including our, Annual Report for 2024 – 2025, which reveals the impact of our work.

*Maria Kildunne*



## Contact us

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

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



# Unlocking The Power of People-Centred Care

At Healthwatch Stockport, we're proud to continue our collaborative work as your health and social care champion! Following Government announcements about changes to Healthwatch a few months back, we're still actively listening to your feedback and providing essential information and advice to anyone who needs it.

## A Year of Impact: 2024 – 2025

We have now published our Annual Report 2024-2025, which showcases the positive impact we've had within the Stockport community. From helping individuals through our Information and Advice service to making a difference for lesser-heard communities, we've advocated for local people, ensuring health and care services truly reflect what matters most.

Whether it's been about hospital discharge, continence care, mental health, or hearing services, we've listened, analysed, and acted to promote improvements in local services. Thanks to our dedicated team, amazing volunteers, and committed board members, we've:

- Supported nearly 1000 people
- Produced 12 insightful reports recommending change
- Engaged directly with often underrepresented communities

Through "Enter and View" visits and community events, we've reached all parts of Stockport. We've collaborated closely with NHS Greater Manchester and other local Healthwatch, ensuring Stockport's voice influences regional decisions around care such as ADHD, menopause and pharmacy services.

**Huge Thanks to Our Volunteers** who've given over 435 hours of their time! Together, we're building a health and social care system that truly informs, involves, and works better for everyone in Stockport.



Ready to read more about our impact? You can access our Annual Report via our website: [www.healthwatchstockport.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchstockport.co.uk)







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

We've been "all ears", focusing and listening to your views and feedback of NHS Adult Hearing Services (also known as audiology) across Stockport!

Our goal has been to understand patient experiences when using Hearing Services and use your feedback to influence local commissioning to improve service quality and support.

We've shared a snapshot of what we've found, with a full report available on our website or by contacting our office.

Our research involved visiting clinics provided by Specsavers and Beacon Medical clinic, gathering feedback through surveys (online and in-person) and listening to community groups like Walthew House. We've looked at everything, from how you get referred, to your appointments, and your aftercare.

This work comes after Adult Hearing Services moved from Stepping Hill Hospital in 2022 to various Greater Manchester locations, including independent providers and following feedback over 18 months.

### Our findings revealed:

While most patients rated services as "good" or "excellent," areas for improvement exist:



**Patient Choice:** Many weren't given a choice of provider when referred.



**Referral Confusion:** Mixed messaging as to whether you can self-refer or go via your GP.



**Communication Gaps:** Inconsistent information, especially about NHS earwax removal.



**Waiting Times:** Survey data showed a big difference in how long people waited – from a couple of weeks to over a year, depending on the provider.



**Information & Aftercare:** While some were happy, others felt there wasn't enough clear guidance on using and looking after hearing aids, leading to them not being used.

Thanks to those who shared their experiences! This feedback is so valuable and has helped us to learn what's going well and make recommendations for better care. We'll be sharing our full report with relevant organisations and commissioners, as well as being published on our website.



## Making Primary Care Accessible for All

Our NHS Primary care services – local GPs, dentists, pharmacies, and opticians are our first port of call when we feel unwell and living with health conditions. That's why it's so important that these services are easy to use for everyone, no matter their ability, background, or circumstances.

Over the past year, we've heard that accessing primary care can be trickier for people with additional needs. This includes those facing physical challenges, mental health concerns, neurodiversity, language barriers or other hurdles faced by vulnerable individuals. As a result, we felt it crucial to take a closer look to understand these issues.

That's why we're thrilled to have teamed up with the Stockport Community Voice Partnership and formed a small group to drive this important work. Their fantastic members represent the very groups

we're looking to help, and their insights are incredibly valuable.

**We've heard that accessing primary care can be more difficult for those with additional needs**

Right now, we're focusing on understanding the current situation. We know 'survey fatigue' is real, and people are tired of answering the same questions if nothing changes, so we're gathering existing information and views from other Stockport Partnerships and organisations that support these vulnerable groups to build on what's already known.

The first project briefing has been presented to the Community Voice Partnership and Stockport's Locality Board.

**What's Next?** Now we've collected this initial information, we're pinpointing any gaps and reaching out directly to share this valuable insight with our Primary Care services. Finally, we'll work closely with these services to co-create a practical 'toolkit'. This will help them to easily spot these challenges and make vital reasonable adjustments.

Continued on page 7...





## Continued.... Primary Care Access



**Our goal?** Advocate for change that not only meets the needs of these services but, crucially, will significantly improve healthcare experiences of vulnerable people across Stockport.

We're really looking forward to making a positive difference together!

To share your experiences, contact our team:

- [info@healthwatchstockport.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchstockport.co.uk)
- 0161 974 0753 or 078710 89100 (text service only)
- Visit our Feedback centre on our website (scan or click QR code)



## Your Voice, Our Report: Improving Continence Care in Stockport

We've heard your stories, the challenges you face and the frustrations about continence care in Stockport. We have worked alongside Stockport Signpost for Carers and the NHS to capture your experiences in our new Continence Care Report.

Your feedback has been crucial in showing where things are or aren't working. While clinical care pathways are clear, you told us about inconsistent access to essential products like pads and pull-ups, confusing criteria, and a general lack of support. Though once patients were able to access the service, feedback became more positive.

This report is a call for change and we're now working directly with local health services to help them act on our findings. Taking part in their improvement workshops and helping them review their patient information leaflets.

Your stories are not just heard—they're leading to real change, including fair and consistent access.

You can access our report via our website:

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

If you need it in a different format, just get in touch.





## Putting the Spring into Stockport

Back in April, we threw open the doors of Stockport's Masonic Guildhall for our Spring Wellbeing Fun Day: "Putting the Spring into Stockport!" Our mission? To create a super fun, interactive, and informative event celebrating all the incredible local organisations that help keep our Stockport community well.

The Guildhall was buzzing with excitement! We had three fantastic rooms – one packed with vibrant stalls from local community services, another featuring insightful presentations from 'Daisy First Aid' and 'Free From Families', and a third dedicated to exciting interactive activities running all day long.

We were thrilled to welcome over 150 people including members of the public, local groups, and Stockport Council's Chief Executive, Michael Cullen! And a huge shout-out to the over 42 amazing organisations and community services, such as Age UK Stockport, Fikawelie, ARC (Arts for Recovery in the Community), Stockport County and Banter & Brews.



We were joined by over 40 services eager to showcase what they do to bring you best of health and social care





## The Highlights!

A massive thank you to everyone who came and took part! The day was full with highlights:

The wonderful team from 'Wiltshire Farm Foods' served up delicious hot food samples, the Stockport Women and Girls Network brought beautiful henna hand-painting, we had a blast with shuffleboard fun from Life Leisure, Dementia Disco had everyone up dancing and singing. And of course, it wouldn't be a Healthwatch Stockport birthday celebration without lots of cake, (fruit!) and refreshments!

The feedback was truly fantastic, with one guest exclaiming:

Best event I've been to so far – really enjoyed all the activities and was great to learn about all the different services in Stockport!





**FOCUS  
ON**

## Living Well: Mental Health in Stockport!

We're excited to update you on the fantastic 'Living Well' Programme! This initiative is part of a bigger plan across Greater Manchester to make mental health services better and easier to access for people with serious mental health conditions. It's about helping you stay well and connected.

'Living Well' will offer more holistic, person-centred care, bringing together community networks and truly valuing lived experience. The idea is a central hub combining mental health professionals, GPs, and community teams for tailored support.

### What's new?

Our 'Living Well' Mental Health Engagement Officer, Maya, has been

**Maya**

busy connecting with groups and gathering insights from over 40 people with complex mental health needs. Her findings already highlight key themes and suggestions for where support can be improved and for the 'Living Well' programme. Your feedback has so far influenced job descriptions for new Peer Support and Recovery Workers – prioritising those with lived experience and knowledge of complex mental health challenges.

### What's Next?

The plans are to roll out 'Living Well' over the coming months!

**We're really looking forward to the positive difference 'Living Well' will make!**

## Advice & News in Brief



### Cancer Screening Factsheets:

We've published six handy fact sheets on our website for Abdominal Aortic Aneurism, Breast, Bowel, Cervical, Diabetic eye screening and the Prostate Cancer Risk Programme.

[Visit the Advice & Information section of our website](#)







## Good To Meet You Stockport!

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



## #TeamHealthwatch

We're massively proud to have supported the **Community Wellness Festival** at Vernon Park, **Signpost for Carers – Carers' Rights Day**, the **Community Mental Health Fair**, 'The **Big Health Day**' for people with Learning Disabilities in Stockport and **joined forces with NHS Greater Manchester, Stockport Council and S.P.A.C.E** to listen to your views of ADHD and Primary care services.

We've supported the **Mental Health Partnership** and presented our vital 'Information and Advice' Service to the '**Breathe Easy**' community group and ventured to the **Wellspring** homeless charity to listen to their mental health experiences.



**GET IN TOUCH**

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



**FOCUS  
ON**

## **5K Walk For Autism Awareness**

**Did you know 8 out of 10 autistic people often struggle with their mental health? Masking behaviours and trying to 'fit in' to society can be incredibly tiring. That's why, in April, our team stepped out for Autism Awareness Month and walked the paths of Woodbank Park to raise awareness!**

We've been championing empathy and understanding, highlighting how small adjustments in communication and the environment can make a huge difference for autistic colleagues, friends, and family. Download a handy toolkit from the National Autistic Society website!

**If you or a loved one has lived experience accessing primary care with Autism, get in touch! Currently, Autism is a key focus in our research around accessing Primary Care services with additional needs. See page 6 for more details.**



## **Haere rā (Farewell) to Simon!**

**A big 'Haere rā' and 'good luck to Simon Chadwick as you leave us for a new adventure – living the #KiwiLife in stunning New Zealand.**

Simon joined us over 6 years ago since following retirement from his role as a consultant anaesthetist and liked the flexibility offered by volunteering with us. Simon served as a valued member of our Advisory Group and on our Board of Directors. His contributions typically range from representing Healthwatch Stockport on Stockport's Primary Care commissioning board and Enter and View Team. His medical background provided an invaluable resource to our organisation.

On behalf of all of the Healthwatch Directors, team and members, thank you for your outstanding contribution over the past five plus years. You've been a valued Director and member, bringing not only your wisdom, clarity, and clinical insight, but also your great humour. We will miss you very much! Wishing you and your growing family all the very best for this exciting next chapter in New Zealand.





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

## Contacts With Our Service

90 enquiry contacts from Stockport people

Signposting parents to support services or groups for older children with mental health illness.

### Top Themes

- Treatment & care received
- Access to local services
- Administration (referrals, booking and cancelled appointments)

### Benefits:

In response to changes to benefits we've signposted people to the right support and enlisted one of our volunteers to contact 27 organisations in Stockport to find out what help is available. Details to be shared on our website.

## Your Feedback Matters

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

Please contact us (details on back page) or visit our 'Feedback Centre'. If we spot a common theme, we'll be able to act and create a piece of work suited to help improve that service. Phone lines to our Information and Advice service are open 10am - 2pm weekdays. Scan the QR code for the 'Feedback Centre'





Steve has been a valued volunteer at Healthwatch Stockport since 2023, participating in various roles including the Advisory Group, our Board and as an active Community Champion!



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

On hearing about Healthwatch Stockport's work through local Carers Groups, I felt the opportunity would be a good fit personally. The chance to help others in the same situation as myself, and hopefully avoid pitfalls, was the motivation I needed.

### **What do you enjoy about volunteering with Healthwatch Stockport?**

The diverse topics and situations we deal with! They give everyone the opportunity to not only offer knowledge from their own experiences and backgrounds but develop knowledge in so many other fields, which is so valuable.

### **How does your volunteering make a difference for your community?**

I'm fortunate to support Healthwatch Stockport and other community groups and collaborate with local authorities on many projects.

The nice thing is that not only do I use and share my knowledge from Healthwatch Stockport, I bring experiences and important topics from the groups back. We all share and more importantly, benefit from each other's work for the greater good of our local community.

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

When volunteering for a project, I decide whether I can bring something worthwhile which will be effective. All projects are so important, and I'm honoured to get involved.

**One of my proudest moments was being asked to join the Board of HealthWatch Stockport – a total honour!**

This means that I can help shape what we do as an organisation but look to our future – ensuring we're relevant and doing what we can to support our community, services and authorities in being the best we can be.





## Advice & News at Your Fingertips

### Sign up for our Weekly Information Round up

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

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

Sign up by scanning the QR code, visit our website or call our office.



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

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

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

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

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

### Follow our socials and share our posts

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

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



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



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

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

### **We inform**

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

### **We involve**

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

### **We influence**

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

## **Contact us**

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