

Darlington Mental Health Network

Terms of Reference

1. Introduction

The Darlington Mental Health Network is established to facilitate collaboration, communication, and partnership working among key stakeholders involved in mental health services within Darlington. Our aim is to improve the mental health and emotional wellbeing of Darlington residents over the next year, aligning with local and national plans. Good mental health and wellbeing are vital to any community, and it's our collective responsibility to provide necessary support.

This network follows a whole-system approach with three key focuses:

- **Prevention and Early Intervention:** Prioritising proactive measures.
- **Personalised Support and Services:** Offering choices and control, co-producing services with those affected and their supporters.
- **Partnership Delivery:** Collaborating across organisations for effective, cost-efficient outcomes.

Despite challenges, this plan leverages existing partnerships and good work to improve mental health and wellbeing in Darlington. The network will develop over a year, aiming to become a community fixture and seek joint funding applications for local benefit.

2. Purpose

- a) Provide a platform for sharing information, updates, and best practices related to mental health services in Darlington.
- b) Identify and address gaps, challenges, and opportunities within the local mental health system.
- c) Collaborate on initiatives to improve the quality, accessibility, and effectiveness of mental health services.
- d) Facilitate communication and partnership working among commissioners, providers, and service users to enhance the overall mental health support system in Darlington.

3. Membership

- a) The network shall consist of representatives from:
 - i. Local health and social care commissioners responsible for mental health services.
 - ii. Mental health service providers operating within Darlington.
 - iii. Service users and carers with lived experience of mental health challenges.
 - iv. Healthwatch Darlington as the facilitator and coordinator of the network.
- b) Membership may also include representatives from relevant voluntary and community organisations, advocacy groups, and other stakeholders as deemed appropriate.

4. Meetings

- a) The network shall meet bi-monthly, with additional meetings scheduled as necessary.
- b) Meetings may be held in person or virtually, depending on circumstances and accessibility.
- c) Agendas and meeting minutes shall be circulated in advance to all members.
- d) Meetings shall provide opportunities for open discussion, information sharing, and decision-making on relevant topics.

5. Roles and responsibilities

a) Healthwatch Darlington:

- i. Facilitate meetings and coordinate network activities.
- ii. Provide administrative support, including agenda setting and minute-taking.
- iii. Act as a liaison between network members and other stakeholders.
- iv. To implement and oversee 'subgroups' where necessary.

b) Commissioners:

- i. Share updates on mental health commissioning priorities, plans, and initiatives.
- ii. Seek input and feedback from providers and service users to inform commissioning decisions.

c) Providers:

- i. Share information on service provision, challenges, and innovations.

- ii. Collaborate with commissioners and service users to address identified needs and improve service delivery.

d) Service Users and Carers:

- i. Share lived experiences, perspectives, and feedback on mental health services.
- ii. Contribute to discussions on service improvement and development.

6. Decision Making

- a) Decisions within the network shall be made by consensus wherever possible.
- b) In cases where consensus cannot be reached, decisions may be made through a democratic voting process, with each member having one vote.
- c) Healthwatch Darlington shall facilitate the decision-making process and ensure that all members have the opportunity to express their views.

7. Reporting

Healthwatch Darlington shall provide regular updates on the activities and outcomes of the network to relevant stakeholders, including local authorities, health and social care organisations, and the wider community.

8. Review and Amendment

- a) These terms of reference shall be reviewed annually by the network members to ensure they remain relevant and effective.
- b) Amendments to the terms of reference may be proposed by any network member and shall be considered and agreed upon by consensus.

These Terms of Reference outline the framework for the Darlington Mental Health Network, aiming to promote collaboration, improve services, and empower service users in the journey towards better mental health outcomes in our community.