



Making a difference to patients, carers, families and your local health and social care services in Darlington every day!

What have our volunteers been doing to support us from home?

Our Health Connectors and Youthwatch Darlington volunteers have been busy supporting us from home during the Covid-19 pandemic, with a wide range of activities:

- Planning research projects
- Taking part in Zoom training sessions
- Administrative tasks
- Assisting with the design of surveys
- Sharing information with people they know
- Distributing leaflets
- Attending online focus groups
- Helping us plan and sharing ideas

One of our volunteers has been involved with researching intelligence in preparation for our families and young people's work across the summer:

"I have been searching the internet to gather updated information/statistics regarding the impact of Covid-19 on children's and young people mental health. The impact has been far reaching. Support organisations such as CAHMS and charities have only been able to offer limited services, if any at all. There has been a huge increase in calls to the charity Childline. Many children and young people are dealing with abuse, domestic violence, isolation, and difficult family relationships"

Welcome to our new digital volunteers

The work that our volunteers do makes a huge difference to service users, carers and their families living in Darlington.

We have had to adapt to working remotely and this has been embraced by all volunteers and we are very grateful of everyone's continued support.

We have had new Health Connector volunteers join us in June 2020. We would like to welcome Bev, Cressida, Hannah, and Sue to the team.

Already they have joined our Zoom team training/planning sessions and are now working on projects alongside our established volunteers.

They have helped to:

Test our new online survey which went live at the beginning of July.

#BecauseWeAllCare

Offered some great suggestions on how we can be more inclusive so that everyone within the community can complete the survey or participate in one of our focus groups.

Involved with research into the impact of Covid-19 on families, children & young people, and the quality of the current hospital discharge process.

They are supporting focus groups via Zoom and will be making telephone calls to service users over the coming months.



Youthwatch Darlington

The young volunteers from Youthwatch Darlington have continued with their excellent work during the Covid-19 pandemic, making a big difference to health and care services for 14 to 25 year olds.

Some of the projects they have been involved with are:

- Launching a 'Looking after your mental health during the pandemic' awareness poster
- Developing a 'body image' campaign with information and advice for young people in the town
- Taking part in focus groups with young people listening to their views
- Working with CAMHS to improve the waiting area for young patients

We would like to welcome Jade who has recently joined us as a Youthwatch volunteers.

"It's been amazing learning about what Healthwatch does and being a part of that process is a great experience. You get to both meet wonderful people and help make a difference in people's lives, especially through making sure their voice is heard."

"It is important that young people are listened too just as much as any other demographic. Everyone deserves to be heard."

Coming up in next few months

We have lots of activities taking place for all our volunteers.

In the summer months we will be focussing on families and in autumn looking at shielded individuals and care homes.

Some of the projects they will support include:

- #BecauseWeAllCare campaign, encouraging the public to share their experiences, both good and not so good to help improve services in Darlington.
- Supporting focus groups and telephone calls to the community to discuss the impact of Covid-19.
- Updating the "Advice and Information" section of our website. Volunteers will compile a list of signposting options to support:
 - Getting back to normal after lockdown
 - Learning disabilities
 - The elderly/frail
 - Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic (BAME)
 - Mental health support
 - Families & young people COVID19



Volunteer interviews and inductions will temporarily not be taking place at Healthwatch Darlington. But you can still find out more about our volunteering programmes and request an application pack and there is the option for online interviews and inductions if you prefer. Contact Jemma Austin, Senior Volunteer & Outreach Coordinator via j.austin@healthwatchdarlington.co.uk