

PRESS RELEASE

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HEALTHWATCH DARLINGTON ‘HIGHLY COMMENDED’ IN PRESTIGIOUS NATIONAL AWARD

- **Local health champion highly commended for ‘Celebrating our volunteer team’ category in major national awards scheme**
- **Judges recognise Healthwatch Darlington’s team and volunteers for improving the provision of information and awareness for young people and mental health.**

Healthwatch **DARLINGTON** has been recognised in a prestigious national awards scheme for **their volunteering programme Youthwatch Darlington** which has helped **improve the provision of information for young people and mental health** across Darlington.

Healthwatch Darlington was ‘highly commended’ in the ‘Celebrating our volunteer team’ category in the Healthwatch Awards 2020, which were run by [Healthwatch England](#) this week.

This virtual event celebrated the difference Healthwatch’s 4,400 staff and volunteers made over the past year and Healthwatch Darlington was one of only 12 local Healthwatch to be highly commended by judges, out of a total of 152 across England.

Commenting on the recognition, Healthwatch Darlington Chief Executive, Michelle Thompson BEM said:

“A charity’s greatest asset is its volunteers and we are so incredibly proud of Youthwatch Darlington. This award not only recognises the hard work and dedication of our young people at a national level, but demonstrates how listening to and supporting young volunteers to use their voice and encourage new ideas can influence services at a local level. They have made a difference to Darlington and their input has been acknowledged by local commissioners and providers, what a fantastic accolade for our Healthwatch family!

Jemma Austin, Senior Volunteer & Outreach Coordinator from Healthwatch Darlington said:

“Our young volunteers have become well respected representatives for young people in Darlington. They have been recognised for their creative awareness raising ideas as well as working with local health services to improve information for young patients in the town. Our work with our volunteers recognised at a national level is a very proud moment for everyone at Healthwatch Darlington. A huge well done to all of our volunteers from Youthwatch Darlington they truly deserve this. ”

Sir Robert Francis QC, Chair of Healthwatch England, said:

"I never stop being inspired by the dedication of local Healthwatch staff to making care better for their communities.

"Whether reaching out those whose views are not being heard, helping people to find the support they need or making sure NHS and social care services act on the improvements that the public want to see, the award entries highlight the difference local Healthwatch make."

For more information about Healthwatch Darlington and how its team continue to support people throughout the pandemic, click here.
www.healthwatchdarlington.co.uk

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About Healthwatch:

We are the independent champion for people who use health and social care services. We exist to ensure that people are at the heart of care. We listen to what people like about services, and what could be improved and we share their views with those with the power to make change happen. We also help people find the information they need about services in their area.

We have the power to ensure that people's voices are heard by the government and those running services. As well as seeking the public's views ourselves, we also encourage services to involve people in decisions that affect them. Our sole purpose is to help make care better for people.