



As 2019 draws to a close we'd like to thank all our volunteers and the people who have shared their views about health and care in Dorset over the past year - it is your enthusiasm and support that will help improve services in our county.

We started the year with the publication of Healthwatch England's priorities list. After engaging with over 400,000 people across the country, the top three issues were primary care (including access to GPs), children and young people and mental health.

Here's a quick recap of some of the highlights from our year at Healthwatch Dorset:

- On 1 April, Evolving Communities CIC took over the contract to deliver Healthwatch Dorset.
  - We asked people in Dorset to share their views about how they want local health services to improve in the NHS Long Term Plan and over 306 Dorset people completed the online surveys. The team visited five local groups and engaged with 195 people to gather their views. We collated your feedback into a report which we shared with Healthwatch England and other partners in early Summer.
  - Quicker and easier access to GPs; speedier diagnosis and treatment options; annual health checks and more regular support for those with long-term conditions, were the top four things people in Dorset would like to see implemented.
  - A new report from Healthwatch England which draws on the research undertaken by Healthwatch Dorset, explored the experiences of women with mental health problems during the journey to parenthood. It found that many people are not experiencing the consistent support they should expect if services were following NHS guidelines.
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- Healthwatch Dorset supported Bournemouth University to produce a series of short films to raise awareness and bring local people's real-life experiences direct to health and care students.
- Recruited five local volunteers to make up our Healthwatch Dorset Steering Group, along with four Special Advisors.
- Lucy Cribb our Engagement Officer helped students run a week of assemblies at Oak Academy during Diabetes Week in June & worked with young volunteers to create a blog and videos for World Diabetes Day in November.

All in all, it's been a busy year. We celebrated our sixth birthday in April and we have welcomed Holly Drinkwater as our Volunteer Officer and Melissa Ballantyne as Team Administrator. It has been a great privilege to support the people of Dorset and make sure you have the opportunity to share your experiences of health and care.

We wish you the all the best for the Christmas season and the coming year.

**The Healthwatch Dorset team.**

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## Public Health Dorset urges all healthcare workers to get their free flu jab

**Last year we saw high numbers of flu outbreaks in care homes, and Public Health Dorset is urging all health and social care staff to receive their flu vaccination to protect the most vulnerable people in our community.**

Public Health Dorset is asking care homes to:

- Encourage ALL staff to take up the free flu vaccine – to protect patients and staff
- Ensure that all eligible residents are encouraged to have the free flu vaccine
- Remind visitors to stay away if they have flu-like-symptoms and when visiting to practice good hand hygiene to avoid the spread of infection.

Flu is very different to a normal cold and confines the fittest of people to bed. We know that for older people or those with long-term health conditions, the effects of flu can be much more serious, and in some cases even fatal.

Vaccination helps to reduce spread to the wider public and demand on the wider health system at a time when services are already under pressure.

For more information about the flu and information about people who may be eligible for a free flu vaccine visit [www.nhs.uk/conditions/flu/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/flu/). [Read more...](#)

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## Office opening hours at Christmas

The Healthwatch Dorset office will be closed from Monday 23 December for a Christmas break and staff will be back in the office on Thursday 2 January.



## Share your views with us

**Staff and volunteers will be out and about in Dorset to listen to the health and care experiences of local people.**

### **Bournemouth**

*Friday 31 January*

Dorset Mind Fitness and Wellbeing event: 12-2pm  
The Bridge, Chaseside, BH7 7BX

### **Poole**

*Wednesday 5 February*

Dorset Cancer Partnership Meeting: 2.30-4.30pm  
Dorset Cancer Centre, Seminar Room, Poole Hospital

[Find out more...](#)

**Healthwatch Dorset** is the county's independent health and care champion. We exist to ensure that people are at the heart of care.

Our dedicated team of staff and volunteers listen to what people like about local health and care services, and what could be improved.

These views are then shared with the decision-making organisations in the county, so together we can make a real difference.

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