

We are so pleased to welcome you to the Healthwatch Sefton Summer 2025 newsletter.



A Warm Welcome from our Chair:

Dr John Turner

Sefton is a really great place to volunteer. Our Healthwatch Spring newsletter brings inspiring and uplifting news of some of the range of activities that provide help to Sefton's residents, from health advice at 'The Hub' at Bootle's Strand By Me, to dementia support at Southport's Botanic Gardens. We are always looking to do more, so for those who might be considering a role as a volunteer, a warm welcome is guaranteed.



I am (reluctantly) coming to the end of three very enjoyable and fulfilling years as Chair of Healthwatch Sefton and would like to say just how much I have appreciated working alongside all those staff and volunteers, who make Team Healthwatch such a valuable and worthwhile organisation.

Signposting statistics: Who we have been helping over the past 12 months.

The number of people our Signposting & Information Officer helped in 2024.

431

One example of how we helped:

Supported one resident with their adult child who lives with a disability and had been struggling with dental pain, to arrange a community dental appointment..



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Welcome to Linda, our new locality representative for Hightown.

Linda is the Healthwatch Sefton Locality Representative for Hightown.

After retiring, Linda volunteered with the Hightown Parish Council, becoming Chairman and presently Deputy Chairman. Linda currently runs the Altcar Community Centre and Library.

Before retiring, Linda worked for Barclays Bank in both Administration and Finance for a number of years and then trained as a Clinical Coder, whilst living in Ireland in Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda.

Linda said:

"I joined Healthwatch Sefton to make a difference to my local community. Hightown has an ageing population and I wanted to make sure their voice is heard and to keep all residents informed regarding the services and help available in Sefton."



34% of people in Sefton can no longer afford the cost of going to the dentist due to increased cost of living.

We conducted a survey of 103 Sefton residents to find out how the ongoing increases in the cost of living has affected their health and wellbeing and if there was a link to their ability to access their health and social care providers. For example, money to attend appointments, pay for carers and therapies or prescriptions.

Some key findings include:

- 61% told us that they either had just enough/ or not enough money for living expenses.
- 76% told us that their financial situation had gotten worse in the last 6 months.
- 58% told us that their mental health had been impacted.

- 34% avoided going to the dentist because of the cost.
- 10% avoided attending an NHS appointment because they can't afford the cost of travel.
- Ability to manage an existing long-term condition: 17% said a very negative impact.
- Avoiding buying over the counter medication they would normally rely on: 20% had already made this change.

Here are some local resources for people who need extra support:

Sefton Council cost of living support:
<https://www.sefton.gov.uk/costofliving>

Mental Health Support:
<https://www.sefton.gov.uk/public-health/support-with-looking-after-your-mental-health/>



If you are unable to get online and would like details of the above resources, please get in touch with us via the contact details on the last page of this newsletter.

How a low Carbohydrate diet can improve Type 2 Diabetes and Obesity.

Advice from Dr Unwin, a Southport based GP who undertook groundbreaking research to help reverse Type 2 Diabetes amongst his patients.

One of Dr Unwin's patients with type 2 diabetes (T2D) came off their medication after adopting a low-carb diet. Dr. Unwin, who shared his findings on the Diabetes.co.uk Forum, concluded: "The patient steadily lost a total of 16 kg over seven months and successfully stopped all four prescribed drugs."

Dr Unwin says a low-carb diet has been shown to improve blood glucose control and HbA1c levels, while it can also help with weight loss and type 2 management.

Here are some simple tips:

- **Cut out sugar** – Cakes and biscuits are a mixture of sugar and starch that make it almost impossible to avoid food cravings; they just make you hungrier!
- **Reduce starchy carbs** – If possible just cut out the 'White Stuff' like bread, rice, pasta, potato, crackers and cereals.
- **All green veg/salads** – Eat as much of these as you can, substitute veg such as broccoli, courgettes or green beans for your mash, pasta or rice – still covering them with your gravy, bolognese or curry for flavour.
- **Fruit** – Some have too much sugar, setting of carb cravings, try berries instead.
- **Eat healthy proteins** – Non-processed meat like chicken or red meat, eggs and fish.
- **Beware of 'low fat' foods** – Often have sugar or sweeteners added.

A special thank you to Linda Wright, our Locality Representative for South Southport who connected us with Dr Unwin.

DISCLAIMER: We are not medical professionals, it is important to speak with your GP/healthcare professional before making or when thinking about any changes to your diet and health choices.

The tables below highlight how much sugar is in our most commonly eaten foods:

Food Item	Glycaemic Index	Serving Size	How does each food item affect blood glucose compared with one 4g teaspoon of table sugar?
Wholegrain Barley Bread	85	30g	5.5 ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡
Special K Cereal	54	30g	4.0 ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡
White Bread	71	30g	3.7 ⚡ ⚡ ⚡
Brown Bread	74	30g	3.3 ⚡ ⚡ ⚡
Broccoli	54	80g	0.2 ⚡
Eggs	0	60g	0

Food Item	Glycaemic Index	Serving Size	How does each food item affect blood glucose compared with one 4g teaspoon of table sugar?
Basmati rice	69	150g	10.1 ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡
White potato	96	150g	9.1 ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡
Pure Apple Juice	41	200ml	8.6 ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡
Cornflakes	93	30g	8.4 ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡
Coco pops	77	30g	7.3 ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡
Banana	62	120g	5.9 ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡

Sefton Welcome Spaces: Help for those struggling at home or in need of some company



Welcome Spaces are places where people can gather for free in a warm, safe, welcoming place and maybe enjoy a hot drink and some company.

Sefton CVS and Sefton Council worked alongside voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations, to establish a network of Welcome Spaces across Sefton. These include community centres, community hubs and other places offering a warm welcome and free to use for anyone struggling at home.

All 'Welcome Spaces' will be safe and friendly places where you can comfortably spend time reading, studying or chatting with others. Some venues will also offer hot drinks and food, activities, and other services such as free Wi-Fi.

Need to find a welcome space? Sefton CVS have a map with details of Welcome Spaces in your area, you can find more information by visiting seftoncvs.org.uk/warmspaces or calling (0151) 920 0726.

Community Connectors: What are they and how can they help?

We caught up with Amy, from The Community Connectors team, which is part of Living Well Sefton and works with anyone over the age of 18.

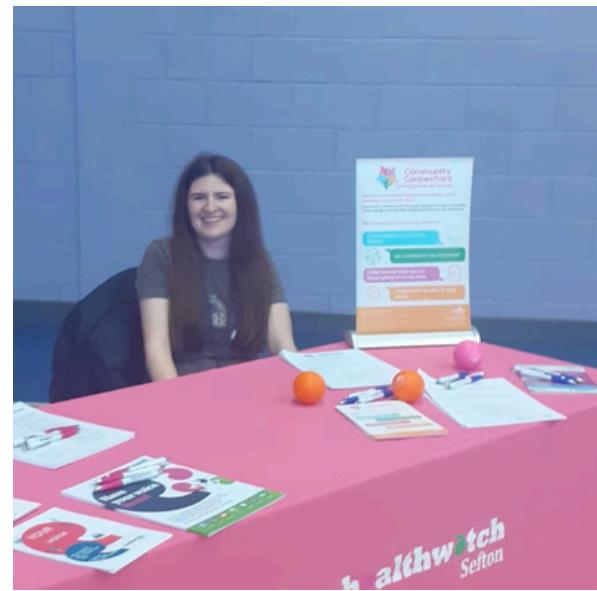
Amy Said: "The Community Connector project brings people together, offering short-term support to help individuals build confidence, feel empowered, and become the best version of themselves. Connectors can help you discover the vital local services and groups that are out there—support that can make a real difference in tackling loneliness and social isolation."

"How do we help?

Many of the people we work with tell us how life-changing it is, just to know what support is available and how that knowledge helps them avoid slipping back into difficult times."

"Who have we helped?

Take, for example, an older adult who recently lost their spouse and felt unsure of where to turn. A Community Connector stepped in, took time to understand their needs, and helped them find a local bereavement support group, join social coffee mornings, and access transport options—making them feel more connected and supported in their community."



If you or you know someone who would benefit from a referral, please get in touch.

Call on 0300 323 0181 or email connectors@seftoncvs.org.uk

Healthwatch Sefton Dental Statement:
"Healthwatch agrees that everyone should be able to access an NHS dentist when they need one, wherever they live".

In Sefton, we know that some dental practices have closed, with the majority of those based in Sefton not registering adults or children for NHS dental care. Many of the practices do not have a waiting list that you can join.

Locally, you have told us that you have found out that you have been removed from the practice list and were unaware of this. You then find that you cannot register anywhere else for NHS dental treatment.

Many of you don't know how to access emergency treatment. Some residents tell us they have had to return to the emergency team multiple times for treatment, as they have nowhere to access follow-up appointments to complete dental treatment required.

Enquiries we receive have included residents having problems with dentures and eating, dental issues in pregnancy and those who require a dental check up, to access medical treatment for conditions, including cancer.

NHS dental care is the most common issue that people share their feedback on, with Healthwatch. Lack of access to NHS dental care and the unaffordable costs of private dental treatment, are the most reported issues.

In Sefton, we had already noticed prior to the pandemic, that we had a shortage of dental practices/ dentists undertaking NHS treatment, across the Southport and Formby localities and were in discussion with NHS England about this.

Although we can't fix this issue locally, we do share the feedback you share with us with our national body Healthwatch England, who have been collecting all of the feedback across England and are supporting us to get this issue discussed by the government.

If you want to know more about our work or if you need guidance, please visit our website or contact us through the details on the contact us page at the end of this newsletter.

Have you accessed the Living Well Bus Service Yet?



The Living Well Bus, delivered by Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, operates on a fully drop in basis and provides COVID-19 and flu vaccines, health checks and supports our communities to live well through:

- Cervical Screening Test
- Blood pressure
- Pulse checks
- Cholesterol check
- Blood glucose check
- BMI check
- Direct referrals to talking therapies

For more information visit:
<https://www.cwp.nhs.uk/livingwellservice>

Healthwatch Sefton Report: People First Merseyside members talk to us about their GP services – January 2024

We spoke to and heard from 17 People First Merseyside members, representing people with a learning disability. We talked about how they access their GP services.

Questions and comments from members included:

- How are patients with a learning disability told that they can ask for longer appointments?
- It was suggested that staff in the GP reception need to be willing to show patients who struggle to use the patient self-check-in system. It was shared by members that some patients with a learning disability cannot use the check-in system and that they felt staff were not trained to help patients with a learning disability.

- Are staff being trained to recognise patients with a learning disability or other hidden disabilities?
- Booking appointments online, members shared that this is great for patients who can use it but asked because of this system, why there are no appointments left when they ring?
- Medication reviews for patients with a learning disability – is there a policy in place for this?

Outcome: People First Merseyside offered to train GP surgery staff. Educating how to support patients with learning disabilities and/or autism. We make the training fit what each surgery needs and cover topics like health action plans, reasonable adjustments and patient experiences.

Have you heard of “Think Jessica” ?

Think Jessica is a registered charity to make people aware of the danger, and financial implications, of scams which prey on people in their own homes, particularly those who are elderly and vulnerable.

Founded by Marilyn Baldwin after her mother Jessica, who was in her late seventies became victim to postal fraud on a huge scale, it started very small with continuing her late husbands subscription to Readers Digest. Eventually she was receiving over 30 scam letters every day and giving all of her pension and life savings to criminal gangs.

If you believe that you or someone you know is a victim of fraud:

- If you or someone else is in immediate danger or risk of harm dial 999 now.
- Report it online: <https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/reporting-fraud-and-cyber-crime>
- Or call the Action Fraud team on 0300 123 2040
- For advice email advice@thinkjessica.com



Mersey Care report: Litherland Urgent Treatment Centre – What You Told Us, July 2024.



Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust supported us to visit Litherland Urgent Treatment Centre. We sat in the waiting area and talked to patients, their family members and staff about their views and experiences of care in the centre, also asking the reason for their visit and providing information leaflets. We collected 111 feedback forms in total.

We asked – How would you rate your overall experience?

- 68% of patients (75 responses) and those attending with them rated the service as being good, very good or excellent.

We asked – Was there a reason you chose to attend this time of day?

- 71% of patients (76 responses) said they chose to attend at the time of day which suited them best. (Patient choice).

If you would like a copy of the full report please get in touch with us via the contact details on the last page of this newsletter.

Get in touch with our signposting service!

Do you need help finding details for either NHS or health and social care provider? Or do you need help to contact a provider? Or are you looking for a local support group?

Email us: info@healthwatchsefton.co.uk
Or visit: www.healthwatchsefton.co.uk/services
Freephone: 0800 206 1304

Concerns shared with us:

- Clinical staffing levels.
- Triage to treatment – lengthy waiting times.
- Patients attending for wound dressings or stitches removal told us of long waiting times and on occasion being told the service is triage only and to call back the following day.

Concerns we raised through our own observations:

- Staff calling patients from the doorway and not entering the waiting area.
- No patient well-being checks offered in the waiting area.
- Lack of understanding when the service becomes triage only and patients are in the waiting area.
- TV screen in the waiting area not kept up to date with waiting times.



Healthwatch Sefton Report: Listening to residents living in Seaforth talk to us about Seaforth Village Surgery March – May 2024

We spoke to and heard from residents living in Seaforth during outreach. We were also invited to a sheltered housing scheme to talk to residents about the ongoing closure of Seaforth Village Surgery and the impact this was having on them.

We talked with residents individually and as a group and asked them what impact it was having on them with the ongoing closure of Seaforth Village Surgery. We have compiled a summary of the main issues raised:

Difficulties travelling to Litherland Practice, this included:

- No direct public transport to the Litherland Practice.
- Patients with mobility issues or no personal transport.
- Difficulties and safety for residents to cross the busy dual carriageway.
- The subway – although this can be used, residents shared safety reasons for not wanting to use this during the evening.
- Patient safety.

Lack of reasonable adjustments, this included:

- Patients having to travel to the Litherland practice to put in prescriptions. This impacts patients with no access to remote services.
- The NHS app has been down – patients with access to remote services have also experienced issues ordering and receiving medication on time.



Healthwatch Sefton has listened to the residents of Seaforth and have put forward the following areas to be considered for improvement, to commissioners and providers:

- Be open and honest in a timely manner with Seaforth residents and send out regular communications (including to patients with no IT access) with an update on progress and when Seaforth Village practice will open.
- Ensure front line staff at the Litherland practice are briefed so that they are able to answer patient questions on the opening of Seaforth Village practice.
- Put into place reasonable adjustments for Seaforth patients and ensure they are aware they can ask for this.

POSITIVE OUTCOME: We are pleased to say following our campaign of perseverance and determination to support local residents, Seaforth Village Surgery is now open two days per week.

If you would like to read the full report please get in touch with us via the contact details on the last page of this newsletter.

Have you heard about our community champion networks?



What is a community champion network?

A network of community groups and organisations led by Healthwatch Sefton.

There are two networks; one covering South and Central Sefton and another for Southport and Formby.

The organisations and groups who are members of the networks play a vital role in the health and well-being of local people.

What do they do?

- Bring local community groups and organisations together to network and support each other.
- Members benefit by networking with other organisations and promoting their own services.
- Community Champions raise awareness of our goals and help local residents to have their say in the design and delivery of health and social care services.
- Work together to share ideas and actions that benefit the local community.

Volunteer with Healthwatch Sefton!



What is in it for me?

- Meet new people
- Try something new and build your confidence
- Be a member of the team and part of your community
- Make a positive difference in your community
- Take on a challenge and have fun!

Interested? To apply please:

Email
info@healthwatchsefton.co.uk

Or call 0800 206 1304

Sign up to our weekly digital newsletter and keep up to date!

Do you want to know what is happening in the world of NHS and health and social care in Sefton? Our weekly newsletter featuring updates from the region and from Healthwatch Sefton.

Sign up to our digital newsletter here:

<https://healthwatchsefton.co.uk/get-involved/newsletter-sign-up/>



Your feedback is important!

Healthwatch is your health & social care champion. We make sure NHS leaders and other decision makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care.

As always, Healthwatch Sefton will ensure all feedback is fed into providers and commissioners of services to ensure the patient voice is heard and listened to. You can leave feedback in many ways using our contact details below.



A word from Diane Blair, Healthwatch Sefton Manager



This summer, our newsletter highlights the incredible work taking place across Sefton. From highlighting the continuing GP access issues reported to us by patients, to gaining feedback on the real impact of the cost of living crisis. Our team of staff and volunteers have been listening, acting, and advocating on behalf of residents. We've welcomed new volunteers like Linda and celebrated the hard work of our volunteers, whose dedication continues to inspire.

Our collaboration with initiatives such as Welcome Spaces and Community Connectors showcases the strength of partnership working in tackling loneliness and promoting inclusion. The feedback we gather continues to shape local services and inform national conversations. Thank you to everyone who has shared their experiences with us. We are here to listen and to make sure your voice helps shape the future of care in Sefton.

Contact us...

Online: www.healthwatchsefton.co.uk

Email: info@healthwatchsefton.co.uk

Freephone: 0800 206 1304

Telephone: 0151 920 0726 ext 240

Write to us:

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Sefton Council for Voluntary Service (CVS)
3rd Floor, Suite 3B, North Wing, Burlington House
Crosby Road North, Waterloo. L22 0LG

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