



Annual Report 2019/20

Guided by you

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Healthwatch Somerset is the county's independent champion for people who use health and social care services. We work with communities and organisations across the whole of Somerset to ensure local people are put at the heart of health and social care.

Message from our Chair

A productive year of change

Welcome to Healthwatch Somerset's Annual Report for 2019/20. This has been a productive year of change for us. We have an excellent new staff team who have been working hard to make a difference to health and social care in Somerset. They will soon be joined by a Young People's Engagement Officer who will support young people to share their views to influence positive change.



Judith Goodchild

“During COVID-19, we are using our expertise to provide support, linking people together, and gaining insight into the health and social care needs of people we might not usually hear from.”

We said goodbye to two Board members this year, due to family commitments, but we appointed two hard-working new Board members who bring with them a wealth of skills and experience. I am extremely proud of the work that our staff and volunteers carry out on behalf of Healthwatch Somerset.

Working together to make a difference

We have continued to work constructively alongside the Somerset NHS Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), making sure that local people are aware of and involved in their plans to change services. We supported their public engagement programme Fit for My Future, and we are currently looking at primary care in the widest sense as care moves away from hospitals into the community.

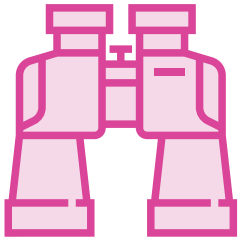
Care and support during COVID-19

COVID-19 has affected our work and will continue to do so. We are providing valuable information and signposting for local people. We are also working with a wide range of local organisations, using our expertise to support and link people together, and to gain insight into the health and social care needs of those we might not usually hear from.

The work we have planned for the coming year will undoubtedly need to be modified, to reflect the key issues highlighted during the pandemic. We are looking forward to developing our plans, and to helping improve health and social care in Somerset.

Judith Goodchild
Chair, Healthwatch Somerset Board

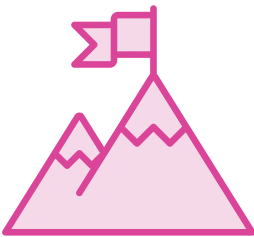
About us



Our vision is simple

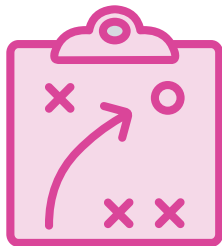
Health and care that works for you.

People want health and social care support that works - helping them to stay well, get the best out of services and manage any conditions they face.



Our purpose

To find out what matters to you and to help make sure your views shape the support you need.



Our approach

People's views come first - especially those who find it hardest to be heard. We champion what matters to you and work with others to find solutions. We are independent and committed to making the biggest difference to you.



How we find out what matters to you

People are at the heart of everything we do. Our staff and volunteers identify what matters most to people by:

- Visiting services to see how they work
- Running surveys and focus groups
- Going out in the community and working with other organisations.



Find out more about us and the work that we do

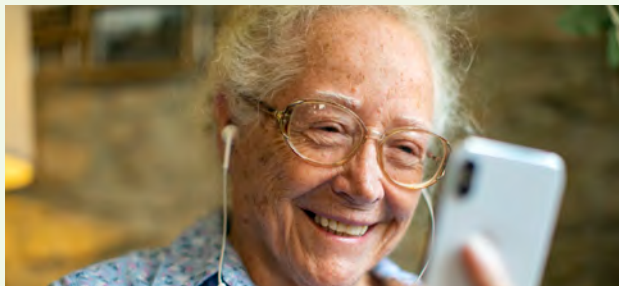
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Our priorities

Last year, over 1,800 people told us about the improvements they would like to see health and social care services make in 2019/20. These were our priorities and projects for the year based on what you told us and national and local priorities in health and social care.

Health Visiting Service

We consulted the community about their experiences and views of the Health Visiting Service to inform Somerset County Council's future development plans (see p.9).



Community information and support

We investigated how people get information and advice locally to help manage their health, and we identified the barriers that are preventing people from getting the support they need (see p.10).

Access to primary care through GPs

We looked at people's experiences of accessing primary care through their GP, identifying areas of good practice to support the development of emerging Primary Care Networks within Somerset (see p.12).



NHS Long Term Plan

We asked local people about the changes they would like to see to improve the NHS in Somerset, as part of the NHS Long Term Plan (see p.13).

“Healthwatch is an important member of the Somerset Health and Wellbeing Board. The voice of the local population is a really key component of the work of Healthwatch, and their membership on the Board ensures this feeds into our work.”

Lou Woolway, Deputy Director of Public Health

Highlights from our year



Find out about our resources and the way we have engaged and supported people in 2019/20.

Health and care that works for you



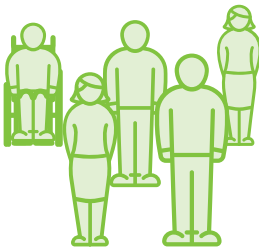
41 volunteers helped to carry out our work. In total, they gave up **1,285 hours** of their time, which equates to **100 hours** each month.

We expanded the Healthwatch Somerset local Board; we now have **6 Board members**.

We employed **4 staff**, including three new members of our team.

We received **£190,000** local authority funding.

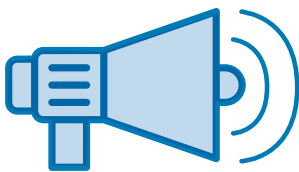
Providing support



Over **1,400** people shared their health and social care story with us.

2,066 people contacted us for information, advice and support over the phone, by email, online and at community events.

Reaching out



21,106 people engaged with us through our website.

We reached **212,305** people through social media.

We attended **361** community events across the county and spoke to **1,980** people.

Our e-bulletin was sent to over **220** people each month to share our news, information and feedback.

Making a difference to care



We published **8 reports** about the improvements people would like to see with their health and social care, and we made **45 recommendations** for improvement.

How we've made a difference



Speaking up about your experience of health and social care services is the first step to change. Take a look at how your views have helped make a difference to the care and support people receive in Somerset.

Highly valued Health Visiting Service

In April 2019, the Health Visiting Service moved from Somerset NHS Partnership to Somerset County Council (SCC), and the Council announced cuts to support for young children and families with additional needs. There was more pressure and fewer resources to achieve positive outcomes for young families in Somerset. We provided SCC with community insight to help them develop the service effectively.

We gathered feedback through an online survey and community engagement, including 23 events. Over 440 people who cared for a child or children under the age of five shared their experience of the Health Visiting Service and told us about the support they would like to see.

- Over 66% were satisfied or extremely satisfied with the Health Visiting Service, particularly breastfeeding support.
- Common concerns were around communications and key contact points being missed or delayed.
- Areas for improvement were more accessible and flexible drop-in groups, and more information about children's health and development at local groups.
- Most common sources of information about children's health and development were the Health Visiting Service (60%), GP surgery (58%), friends and family (54%), NHS Red Book (48%), and Facebook (40%).



“I have sought reassurance several times from the health visiting team and every time received excellent responses.”

“The only time we came into contact with the health visiting team was when I took my baby to the clinic to be weighed. We have to travel eight miles to clinic, which is not really at a convenient time for us, and only twice a month. Several times I made the effort to go and it had been cancelled, just with a note on the door.”

For more information

Visit our website to read the full project report: healthwatchsomerset.co.uk/reports-publications/



Improving access to community information and support

We wanted to understand where people go to get the information, advice, and support they need to help manage their health, and how this could be improved. Over 230 people responded to our survey, online and at events in the community.

- Most common sources of information are GPs, online, friends and family; most people use more than one source.
- Many people would like one central place where they can go for reliable information.
- People prefer to receive information face-to-face or from leaflets/books and online.

46% of those who shared their views had experienced difficulties getting information and support. The main reasons for this were:

- Problems accessing GP appointments and referrals to discuss their condition
- Unreliable information online
- inadequate or costly transport to get to GP appointments and support groups
- Lack of signposting and support for people with a long-term condition.

We shared our findings with Somerset County Council, Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group, and Somerset's Fit for My Future Board, as well as our voluntary and community partners.

“Trying to get through on the phone at the local surgery, then obtaining an appointment that can only be 2-3 weeks away. I could be dead by then!”

“Almost every working day I am frustrated, as are millions of other professionals across the country, at the thousands of wasted hours trying to find accurate up-to-date information.”

For more information

Visit our website to read the full project report: healthwatchsomerset.co.uk/reports-publications/

“Somerset County Council and Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group are developing a new neighbourhood approach to health and care that aims to strengthen individual and community resilience and wellbeing, and help people stay as independent as possible for as long as possible in their own home and community. The information and recommendations gathered have provided us with valuable insights that will be used to help make changes across the whole health and care system to ensure that access to information and support is in the right time, place and proportionate to people’s needs.”

Strategic Manager of Commissioning, Adult Social Care at Somerset County Council



Access to care through your GP

We receive a lot of feedback from local people about difficulties accessing GP appointments. We investigated the challenges and obstacles that people face, and highlighted ways to make it easier for people to get the care they need.

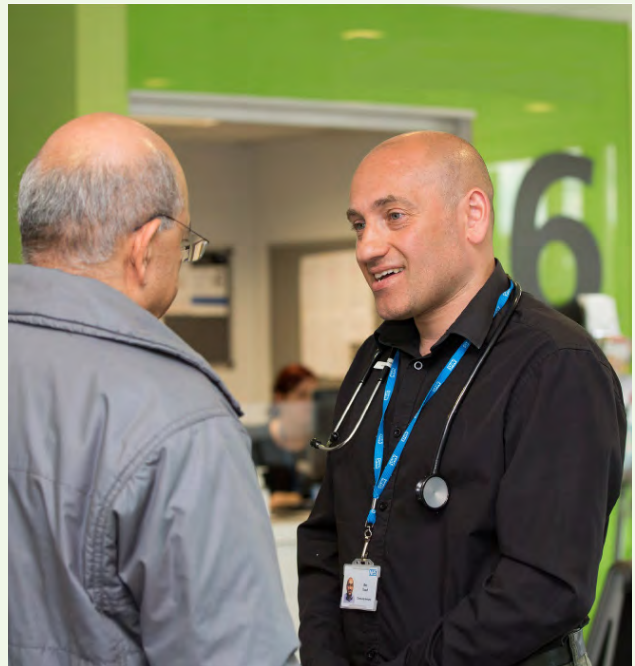
355 people shared their views through our online survey, and we were able to speak to patients and staff at one GP surgery before the coronavirus outbreak. Our findings will help to inform those who provide GP services in Somerset and guide our future work to support the ongoing development of GP Primary Care Networks.

What people liked:

- Most people said the booking process worked well.
- 70% booked appointments over the phone, followed by booking at the surgery.
- Those satisfied with continuity of care had mainly seen the same medical professional.

What could be improved:

- More appointments
- Surgery phone to be answered sooner
- Appointments with the same GP, especially for mental health issues.



“More appointments need to be available. Getting through at 08.30 to be told all appointments have already been booked is not acceptable.”

“I manage to see the same doctor who remembers what treatment, tests and why. We are able to have meaningful conversations as a result of this understanding.”

For more information

Our full report was delayed due to COVID-19, it will be published later in the year and available on our website.



Share your views with us

Tell us about a recent health or social care experience, or share your views about local services to help make care better. Get in touch. Healthwatch Somerset is here for you.

 healthwatchsomerset.co.uk

 01278 264405

 info@healthwatchsomerset.co.uk

Long

Term

Plan

#WhatWouldYouDo

NHS Long Term Plan

Following a commitment from the Government to increase investment in the NHS, the NHS published the **Long Term Plan** in January 2019, setting out its key ambitions over the next 10 years. In the summer of 2019, Healthwatch launched a countrywide campaign to give people a say in how the plan should be implemented in their communities.

We asked people #WhatWouldYouDo to improve the NHS locally? Here is a summary of our work and what we found.

What do people want?

These are the top issues people told us they want services to focus on:

- Quicker and easier access to GPs
- Active involvement in decisions about their own health
- Earlier referral to specialist care
- Access to more help closer to home.

What are we doing about it?

The insight and feedback gained during the course of this engagement has heavily influenced our priorities for the coming year and we will look to explore all of the top issues identified in more detail.

For more information

Visit our website to read the full report: healthwatchsomerset.co.uk/reports-publications/

Highlights



More than **400** people shared their views with Healthwatch Somerset.



We held **5** focus groups reaching different communities across Somerset.



We attended **18** community venues across the county, including GP surgeries, district and community hospitals, local markets and supermarkets.

Early referral is vital

Mary was referred to Musgrove Park Hospital in Taunton after taking a bowel cancer screening test by post. She was seen within two weeks of her referral for scans, an endoscopy to remove a cancerous polyp, and a long discussion with a consultant. Mary opted for a five year monitoring programme rather than further surgery. She has been seen every three to six months, and so far, is cancer free. She has nothing but praise for the system and thinks that the staff at Musgrove are wonderful.

“Working together with Healthwatch Somerset has helped us to hear more of the patient and public voice in our work. From supporting individual voices to have their say on specific issues, to feedback and views sought as part of planned research and investigation on agreed topics, to helping spread the word about our consultation and engagement activities for Fit for My Future and supporting us at public listening events. We very much value our partnership with Healthwatch Somerset who are the independent voice of the public and patients in Somerset.”

Dr Jane Harris, Head of Communications and Engagement at NHS Somerset CCG



Helping you find the answers



Finding the right service can be worrying and stressful. Healthwatch plays an important role in helping people to get the information they need to take control of their health and care and find services that will provide them with the right support.

This year we helped over 235,400 people get information, advice and support by:

- Answering 2,066 queries over the phone, by email, online and at community events and venues
- Providing information and advice to 21,106 people via our website
- Promoting services and information that can help people through our social media, reaching 212,305 people.

Here are some of the areas that people asked about

<p>Coronavirus Volunteering, prescriptions, and emergency dental treatment.</p>	<p>Mental health Self-harm, advocacy, and referrals to Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).</p>
<p>Social care How to find a care home, and quality of care.</p>	<p>Pharmacies Availability of medication, accessibility, and waiting times.</p>
<p>GP care Availability of appointments, access to a female GP, and continuity of care/seeing the same GP.</p>	<p>Dentistry Finding an NHS dentist, dental access centres, and the cost of NHS dental treatment.</p>
<p>Referral for treatment Waiting times for hospital referrals and hip replacements.</p>	<p>Women’s health Hysterectomy, treatment for breast cancer, and smear tests.</p>
<p>Community services Leg ulcers, medication, wheelchair provision, NHS 111, continuing healthcare funding, and NHS health checks.</p>	<p>Hospital discharge Lack of an ongoing care plan, beds for patients with continuing needs (supported discharge), assessment for Alzheimer’s, orthotic shoes, unsuitable equipment, and quality of care.</p>





Guiding you to the right support

Over 20 years ago, Tracey's breasts were removed and replaced with implants due to mastitis. The implants have perforated and are causing health issues. A hospital surgeon advised Tracy there is a medical need to remove the implants and reconstruct her breasts, but Somerset CCG refused her GP's repeated requests to fund the procedure and closed her case. She contacted us in pain and depressed, not knowing where to go next. We guided her to the Patient Advice and Liaison Service at the CCG to make a formal complaint.



Speak up when things aren't right

Jenny was concerned that Yeovil District Hospital require surgical patients to walk through public corridors in a hospital gown - she had been asked to walk to theatre for prolapse surgery, with no underwear or pads. She felt the policy did not support a person's mental well-being at what is often a stressful time. We told Jenny about the hospital's Patient Advice and Liaison Service and she made a formal complaint.



Waiting too long for care


Tony's wheelchair needed adjusting as it was affecting his health. He was referred to a specialist Occupational Therapist at Millbrook Healthcare, which runs Somerset Wheelchair Services. After hearing nothing for a long time, he contacted the service but they would not confirm how much longer he had to wait. Tony asked us for advice. We suggested he ask for Millbrook Healthcare's complaints policy so that he could make a formal complaint, and, as the service is commissioned by the Somerset CCG, we recommended that he also make a complaint through their Patient Advice and Liaison Service.



Contact us to get the information you need

If you have a query about a health or social care service, or need help with where you can go to access further support, get in touch. Healthwatch Somerset is here for you.

 healthwatchsomerset.co.uk

 01278 264405

 info@healthwatchsomerset.co.uk

Our volunteers



Hilary, Healthwatch Somerset volunteer

At Healthwatch Somerset we are supported by 41 volunteers. They help us find out what people think is working well, and how people would like to improve services in their communities.

This year our volunteers:

- Raised awareness of our work at events, in the community and with health and care services
- Visited services to make sure they are providing people with the right support
- Listened to people's experiences to help us know which areas we need to focus on
- Helped support our day-to-day running.

Board members, who are also all volunteers, represented Healthwatch Somerset at meetings with partner agencies.

At the heart of the local community

Anne began volunteering in a variety of health and care settings three years ago when she retired from a long career in early years teaching and development. She joined us in 2019, holding regular drop-in sessions in libraries, right at the heart of the local community. She has a wealth of experience and skills and has recently moved into a new role as a local Board member for Healthwatch Somerset.



Anne, Healthwatch Somerset Board member

“I've gathered feedback in the community about people's health and social care experiences, and I've visited health and social care premises to speak to people using the services provided. I had no prior knowledge of the NHS, but the training and support has been excellent. I've seen the real difference we can make to the quality of health and care services by listening and reporting on people's experiences.”

Anne, Healthwatch Somerset Board member



Volunteer with us

Are you feeling inspired? We are always on the lookout for new volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering, please get in touch with Healthwatch Somerset.

- 🌐 healthwatchsomerset.co.uk
- ☎ 01278 264405
- ✉ info@healthwatchsomerset.co.uk

Spotlight on our volunteers

We could not do what we do without the support of our amazing volunteers. Meet some of the team and read what they get up to.



Rena wants to help young people speak up

After a year volunteering with Healthwatch Somerset, Rena recently joined our local Board. She wants to use her experience of working in education, and of being a mother of three and grandmother of five, to encourage young people to share their views about health and social care.

“I have met many Somerset residents at roadshows, in care settings and at local community events, and they have provided great feedback on the services they have used and ways those services could be made even better.”



Christine is a good listener

Retired bereavement counsellor Christine enjoys talking to people and is a good listener. Volunteering with Healthwatch Somerset gives her plenty of opportunities to talk to people about their health and social care experiences and to help influence positive change in services.

“I’ve only been a volunteer for a few months, but I feel really included. I’ve been to community events which helped me better understand how health and social care work together, and I’m looking forward to getting involved in the Enter and View work.”



Wendy cares about local services

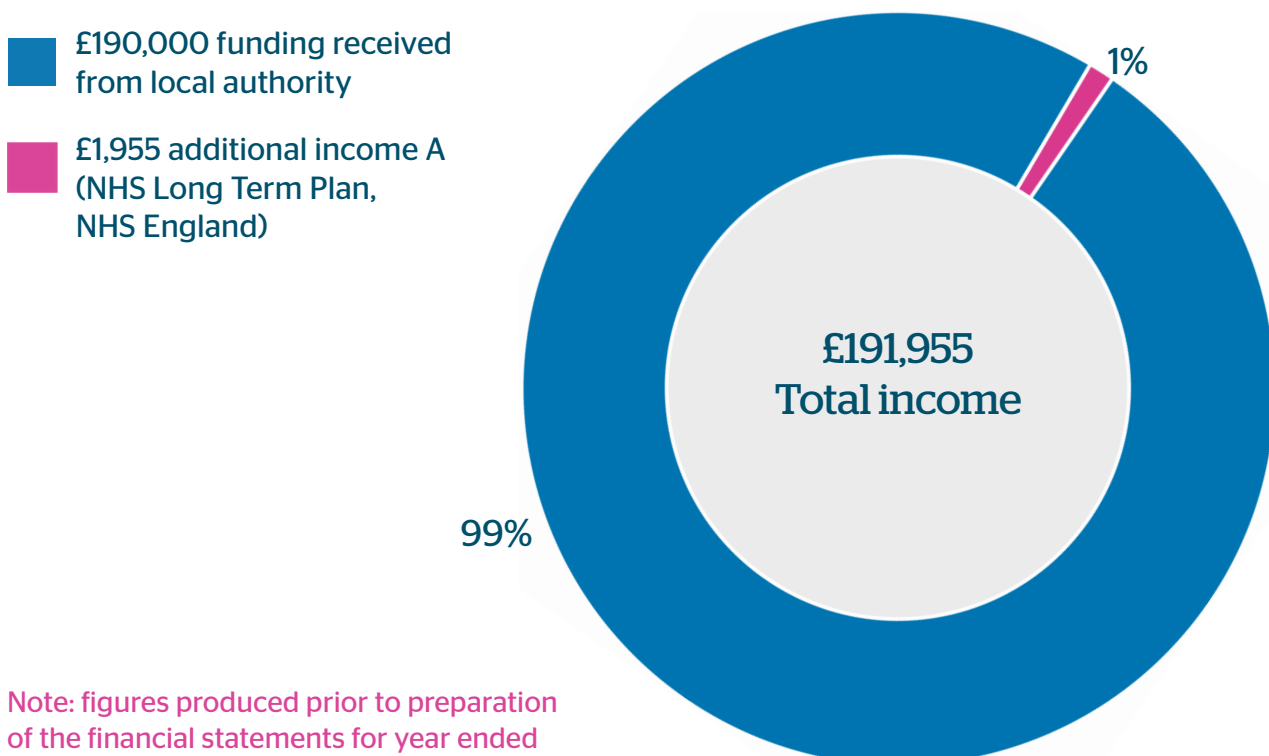
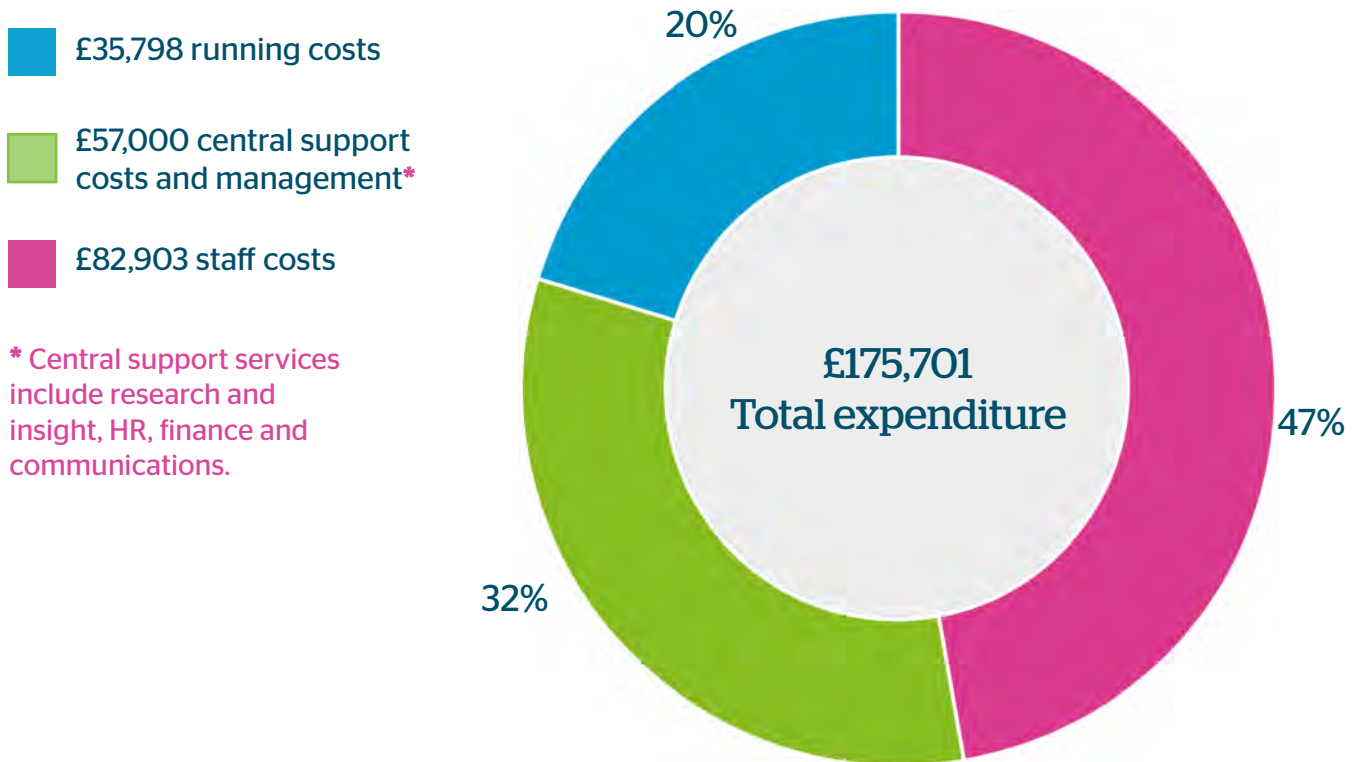
Wendy is one of our local community volunteers, keeping us up-to-date with issues that affect people’s access to health and care in her local area of West Somerset. She was involved in health services for many years, as a pharmaceutical rep and a GP receptionist.

“I joined Healthwatch because I am committed to the public’s voice being heard about services. I am also a member of my GP surgery’s Patients Group and a governor of the Ambulance Trust.”

Our finances



We are funded by our local authority under the Health and Social Care Act (2012). In 2019/20 we received £190,000.



Note: figures produced prior to preparation of the financial statements for year ended 31 March 2020.

Our plans for next year



Message from our Manager

Looking back

Since joining Healthwatch Somerset in October 2019, I have seen a lot of positive change - we have new staff, new offices, and new Board members. We have continued to work on our key priorities and, although coronavirus restricted our ability to have face to face conversations, we have reached out and listened in other ways and provided valuable support to our local communities.

A highlight this year was our programme of Enter and View visits to care providers. Our trained volunteers carried out this work to support Somerset County Council's ongoing care quality monitoring. This is an important and effective way to bring people's experiences of care to the attention of the providers, the local authority, and the Care Quality Commission.

Looking forward

We ended this year by launching our online survey to gather people's experiences of accessing local health and care during the COVID-19 outbreak. As our services move towards recovery, we will ensure your experiences are used to make improvements reflective of people's needs.

We are also planning to investigate the following areas, although we will develop our plans during the year to make sure they are meaningful in the context of coronavirus.

- Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
- Access to primary care services (following up on the findings from our project this year)
- Supported discharge process for patients with continuing health care needs (Pathway 3)
- Accessing transport to health and social care services
- Waiting times from GP referral to treatment.



Hannah Gray, Healthwatch Somerset Manager

Thank you

The work we do would not be possible without our volunteers who work so hard to ensure the public voice is heard across the county, and at the highest level in strategic meetings. I would like to thank you personally for your continued support. I would also like to thank everyone who has shared their story with us. Your feedback is vital, and we are determined to hear from more of you next year and to make sure your voice is represented.

Hannah Gray
Healthwatch Somerset Manager

“The rich and varied personal and professional experience of our Board members will enable us to represent the voices of people in Somerset at a strategic level across the county.”

About Healthwatch

Here to make care better

The network's collaborative effort around the NHS Long Term Plan shows the power of Healthwatch in giving people who find it hardest to be heard a chance to speak up.

The #WhatWouldYouDo campaign saw national movement, engaging with people all over the country to see how the Long Term Plan should be implemented locally. Thanks to the thousands of views shared with Healthwatch we were also able to highlight the issue of patient transport not being included in the NHS Long Term Plan review - sparking a national review of patient transport from NHS England.

We simply could not do this without the dedicated work and efforts from our staff and volunteers and, of course, we couldn't have done it without you. Whether it's working with your local Healthwatch to raise awareness of local issues, or sharing your views and experiences, I'd like to thank you all. It's important that services continue to listen, so please do keep talking to your local Healthwatch. Let's strive to make the NHS and social care services the best that they can be.

Sir Robert Francis, Healthwatch England Chair



“I've now been Chair of Healthwatch England for over a year and I'm extremely proud to see it go from strength to strength, highlighting the importance of listening to people's views to decision makers at a national and local level.”

Thank you

Thank you to everyone helping us put people at the heart of health and social care, including:

- Members of the public who shared their views and experience with us
- All of our amazing staff and volunteers
- The voluntary organisations that have contributed to our work
- Our partners including Somerset NHS Clinical Commissioning Group; Somerset County Council; Somerset Health and Wellbeing Board; Somerset NHS Foundation Trust; Yeovil District Hospital NHS Foundation Trust; and South Western Ambulance Service.

Contact us

Tell us what you think of health and social care services in Somerset and help make health and care better for everyone in our community.

☎ 01278 264405

✉ info@healthwatchsomerset.co.uk

🌐 healthwatchsomerset.co.uk

Healthwatch Somerset
Woodlands House
Woodlands Business Park
Bristol Road
Bridgwater
TA6 4FJ

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The registered office is at:
Unit 4, Hampton Park West, Melksham, SN12 6LH.

☎ 01225 701 851

✉ info@evolvingcommunities.co.uk

🌐 evolvingcommunities.co.uk

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