



Annual Report

The Year That Has Been

Healthwatch Luton's Annual Report 2020-21

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Message from our Chair

'My heartfelt thanks go to all those involved with Healthwatch Luton, for their dedication and support over the past year in these very difficult circumstances. Let's look forward to the future and ensure that we learn lessons from the past.'

What a year!:

What a year! It is difficult to reflect and write this without using many of the cliches that have been in circulation to us all over the past year. To mis-quote a TV series of the past I think it's a case of 'That was the year that was.' Although of course, we aren't finished yet with this incredibly trying time.

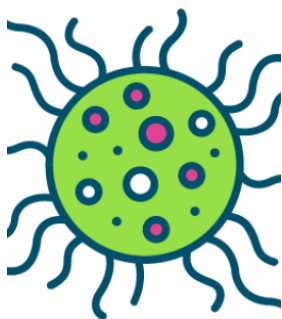
For people in all walks of life, there have been challenges never faced before, that have had to be faced. Those at home alone, sometime in fear and isolation, right the way through to those in essential work who have often had to work additional hours and days to help the rest of society through. The retired, the paid workers and the volunteers have all, in the most part, pulled together to help and support others. I have been amazed and humbled seeing the attitude and incredible resilience shown by key workers throughout society.

The one thing I have learnt is how fragile we can be. Mental wellbeing has been tested to the full. I am not sure any of us realised our vulnerabilities. It has certainly highlighted the need for social contact, and support from our friends and family. Strange, isn't it, that to go for a COVID test or a vaccination became the highlight simply because it gave you a legitimate reason to meet someone even if it was for the briefest of moments. I hope that, ongoing, we are able to change some of our ways to better support each other through life.

Healthwatch Luton:

Healthwatch Luton exists mainly to listen to the views of the general public on the provision and quality of service from the Health and Wellbeing sector providers. In normal circumstances this is achieved by meeting and engaging with people.

This of course has not been possible over the past year, but Healthwatch Luton adapted their approach and have continue to gather nearly 1000 Luton resident views, through online engagements, forums, surveys, interviews and website and social media snapshots. It is a measure of the flexibility and adaptability of the organisation and staff that has allowed us to continue to gather those essential views. The Board, Volunteers and staff at Healthwatch Luton have risen to the challenges of these difficult times. All have been working from home, and juggled work and home environments. As one person I heard said, 'It is not working from home, as living at work.'



Integrated Care System (ICS) has come with its own challenges during this time. Healthwatch Luton continues to raise Luton experiences and has used these to help shape the new Integrated Care Systems priorities over the next few years..

Healthwatch Luton has been involved in committees and boards to influence and ensure that the direction provides the best provision of Health and Social Care for the public going forward.

Message from our Chair

Our Town:

It has proven hard to reach those under-represented communities in Luton, whilst engaging online. Highlights in our feedback show those who have been digitally excluded have experienced the pandemic very differently to those who have been included online. Those who had a clear and loud voice in face to face engagement prior to the pandemic have been harder to reach this year, although we continue to strive to adapt our models of engagement to ensure their voices are heard.

Demographics:

This year, we continue to increase our reach on those under represented communities, and have an increase on non-White British Luton residents. We have reached more Roma and Gypsy traveller communities, as well as an increase in Turkish, Black African and Bangladeshi communities providing us their feedback. Due to the pandemic many of the local community groups we engage with have either disbanded or are on hold.

Hard to Reach:

This year, we continue also to have conversations with those underrepresented with mental health inpatients, as well as those in the community. We have also reviewed our Learning Disability recommendations from 2019-2020 and are feeding into Luton’s Carers Strategy review. Our focus this year will be to continue gathering as many underrepresented views as possible to support the system in understanding how to provide support relevant to their needs and support decreasing inequalities across the town.

Moving Forward

For 2021, we continue to support the national and local effort in the pandemic, through communications to the public whether via local testing and vaccinations, as well as supporting residents who are still navigating their way through the pandemic. Alongside this, we are supporting the local health and care system in their return to ‘business as usual’ and support in many ways the transformation of the development of local NHS systems. This year we will focus mainly on Covid 19 ongoing, as well as prioritising primary care access and development, and reviewing the recommendations we have made to providers and commissioners in the last year.

We look forward to being busy, and hope people continue to share their essential feedback with us to help shape the system.

Phil Turner, Chair Healthwatch Luton



The one thing I have learnt is how fragile we can be, mental wellbeing has been tested to the full.



Case Study 1: Children's Mental Health



How we support you: Case Study 1

The pandemic has had a massive effect on many people's lives, and an exceptional strain on the health and care industry. In Luton, as across the nation, people found many services on hold, or dedicated to supporting the pandemic effort, resulting in many services not being able to provide up to date appointments or continuity of care.

Healthwatch Luton were approached by a mother whose son had been, prior to the pandemic, receiving care under the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). The mother explained that her child's therapist had been placed on sick leave during the pandemic, but no replacement therapist had been provided. The lady had proactively contacted the service on many occasions, and due to many reasons, was unable to get hold of anyone to help support her child.

As the pandemic developed, she recognised her son's mental health declining. Her attempts to encourage support were sadly unheard, and the mother felt her son's mental health needed more escalating attention.

She contacted Healthwatch to explain her situation. Healthwatch Luton contacted the CAMHS service, as well as the commissioner and her case was escalated internally. Once escalated and reviewed, the lady was contacted, and her son was provided with a relevant therapist and support. The lady contacted us to confirm her son's mental health was stabilised.

Healthwatch Luton raised this example further to the mental health provider and commissioner, as an example of how gaps in the service could lead to dire consequences. We share the experiences at System Quality meetings and with the CQC to ensure that these gaps are addressed, and other people don't experience similar support gaps. The provider has actioned our recommendations and we will review these with them directly.

About us: Healthwatch Luton

Here to make health and care better

We are the independent champion for people who use health and social care services in Luton. We're here to find out what matters to people and help make sure your views shape the support you need, by sharing these views with those who have the power to make change happen.

Helping you to find the information you need

We help people find the information they need about services in their area. This has been vital during the pandemic with the ever-changing environment and restrictions limiting people's access to health and social care services.

Our goals



1 Supporting you to have your say

We want more people to get the information they need to take control of their health and care, make informed decisions and shape the services that support them.



2 Providing a high quality service

We want everyone who shares an experience or seeks advice from us to get a high quality service and to understand the difference their views make.



3 Ensuring your views help improve health & care

We want more services to use your views to shape the health and care support you need today and in the future, and have you involved in shaping the service you receive.



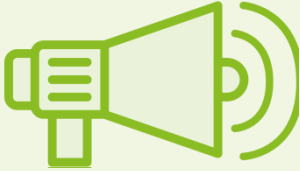
“Local Healthwatch have done fantastic work throughout the country during the COVID-19 pandemic, but there is more work ahead to ensure that everyone’s views are heard. COVID-19 has highlighted inequalities and to tackle these unfair health differences we will need those in power to listen, to hear the experiences of those facing inequality and understand the steps that could improve people’s lives.”

Sir Robert Francis QC, Chair of Healthwatch England

Highlights from our year

How we have engaged and supported people in Luton in 2020-21.

Reaching out



We engaged with over

33,000 Luton residents this year

regarding their experiences of health and care.

We spoke directly to over

890 people

this year in Luton, which we could review and measure impact on.

Engagement



Our main model of engagement this year was through online forums and surveys, interviews and phone calls. We reached

16,091

residents, who returned to our website as a leading source of information throughout the pandemic. In January 2021, we had a high usage per month of over

2,140

residents who returned to our website pages, engaged online and sought information advice or guidance from our pandemic pages.

Making a difference to care



We published over

20 reports

about the improvements people would like to see to health and social care services. From this, we made nearly 30 measurable recommendations for improvement.

32% of recommendations

we made last year have been acted upon, at the point where we reviewed progress, as the pandemic has meant many providers have not been able to move forward as much as they had hoped. We will continue to review this.

Health and care that works for you



10 volunteers

helped us to carry out our work. In total, they contributed 879 number of hours, which is equal to 2 full time employees!

We employed 5 staff

Which equates to 3 full time equivalents, however, we did lose our Engagement Officer in August 2020 so have had 4 members of staff working throughout the year.

We received

£119,325 in funding

from our local authority in 2020-21.



What have Healthwatch Luton done in 2020?



Healthwatch Luton have continued to support residents with information, advice and signposting throughout the pandemic

This year more than ever before, Healthwatch Luton were seen supporting Luton residents, and the Luton health and care system on navigating through a global pandemic. We spoke directly to nearly 1000 residents over the year, supporting them through this unprecedented time.

Luton is a large town, borough and unitary authority situated in Bedfordshire, south east England. It has a population of 213,052 (mid-2019 estimate) and is one of the most populous towns without city status in the UK. Since the 2011 census, Luton has had a white British population less than 50% (one of three towns in the UK along with Leicester and Slough) and 81% of Luton's population define themselves as British ('White Britons a minority' Telegraph, Archived from 2013, A. Philpson). Luton's diverse population is seen as one of its greatest assets, with around 150 different languages and dialects spoken across the town according to the latest census details. It has a mainly younger generation but with an older demographic growing. The pandemic has had a large impact on the town, both with its disproportionately affected population as well as its economy. 33% of Luton's employees work in more vulnerable sectors such as aviation, retail and construction, and around 17% of Luton's population were furloughed during the pandemic.



Alongside the Pandemic

The global pandemic has dominated the health and care system for well over a year now, and Healthwatch Luton have been supporting the system both nationally with the Healthwatch network and Healthwatch England, as well as local teams such as Public Health, the BLMK CCG and Luton Council communications.

Alongside the pandemic and general concerns raised to us, Healthwatch Luton carried on gathering as much feedback on general health and care as we could. As soon as possible, we continued to attend meetings, provide patient voice on a range of services, and ensured providers and commissioners were kept informed about general experiences.

The main feedback we received over the last year (aside from COVID-19 related feedback) was:

- **On GP Access** and difficulty with continuity of care; referrals and medication
- **Mental Health feedback**; both from inpatient wards and community support; including those without a diagnosis or on a care plan, but from the general public concerned about their own or families mental wellbeing
- **Hospital feedback** around discharge and continuity of care; as well as support during the initial months of the pandemic; including issues around communications whilst in hospital from the hospital to families.



“I was unable to get support for my son which affected my son and myself – I was having sleepless nights and my son’s wellbeing was being compromised.

Thanks to Healthwatch Luton and their quick action, my son is being offered appointments and is being supported”

All of the feedback we receive we either provide individual information, advice, guidance or signposting.

We also feed each feedback into our informatic systems to provide themes, which we report on to the commissioners and providers of services in Luton – sharing the experiences of patients and make recommendations to those bodies to help influence and shape their service delivery.

Over the year, we continued to provide up to date and monthly reports to providers on both COVID issues and concerns, as well as general feedback, ensuring patient voice was carried throughout the pandemic in health and care across Luton. All of our reports to providers were used in shaping service design, using your voice and our recommendations to provide better quality of care.





Observation Reports



During the year we ran a series of observational reviews on provider websites. Some of these were on specific issues around the pandemic, and some, such as pharmacies, dental care and GP's were observing what information was available to the public from the providers, and how people could access information.



Impact: The difference it made:

GP Observations Report – In this report Healthwatch reviewed all of the GP websites in Luton, specifically reviewing what cancer information was available to those people with cancer, as well as contact information, COVID-19 information and changes to appointments,. Information on the cancer services fed into a wider East of England network cancer review on how GPs provide information on cancer care. We also provided the Clinical Commissioning Group an overview of the surgery responses regarding what information they were providing on their websites, which their quality teams will review. We hope to re-do these observation reports as part of the work on GP Access Group across BLMK.

Our other Observation Reports fed into commissioner reviews from NHS England and Department of Health and Social Care (Care Homes). Our recommendations were also used in local discussions with primary care providers and commissioners, who discussed and used our recommendations to raise patient views across Luton. This led to providers being asked to update their website information. We will review these observation reports in 2021 and report back to providers and commissioners on progress.



Mental Health and Learning Disability Reviews



Mental Health and Learning Disabilities were our focus in 2019 – and we wanted to review our recommendations and actions this year. Our reports and recommendations have been reviewed, and we continue to develop using patient and service user voices to shape the service delivery in Luton



Impact: The difference it made:

Mental Health – Our Mental Health (MH) report and recommendations were reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Board (Health and Social Care Review Group) in 2019 and 2020. We will update them in 2021. We also have our recommendations reviewed by the new System Quality Group in BLMK – which highlights patients views of mental health support in the community as well as inpatient views. We also share our intelligence of experiences with the CQC who review the MH providers quality of care. Our report is also being reviewed at the Adult Safeguarding Board, and with NHS England on the Quality Surveillance Group. We have had tangible responses to our recommendations, such as providing inpatients with welcome and discharge packs, and more strategic input into transformation of mental health across Luton.

Learning Disability – Our Learning Disability (LD) report and recommendations have been placed on hold during the pandemic. However, we have done some further work with service users and parents – and will take our report and recommendations to the Transforming Care Board for Learning Disabilities – which will review a new action plan for the system and partners to progress on our recommendations. We also update the commissioner with progress from the providers ongoing.



GP Access



For the last five years accessing a surgery for a GP or health professional has been the highest feedback we have received. The pandemic made this even harder for patients, and now we are working in a pandemic, as well as trying to reclaim business as usual, Luton residents still find it hard to see a professional



Impact: The difference it made:

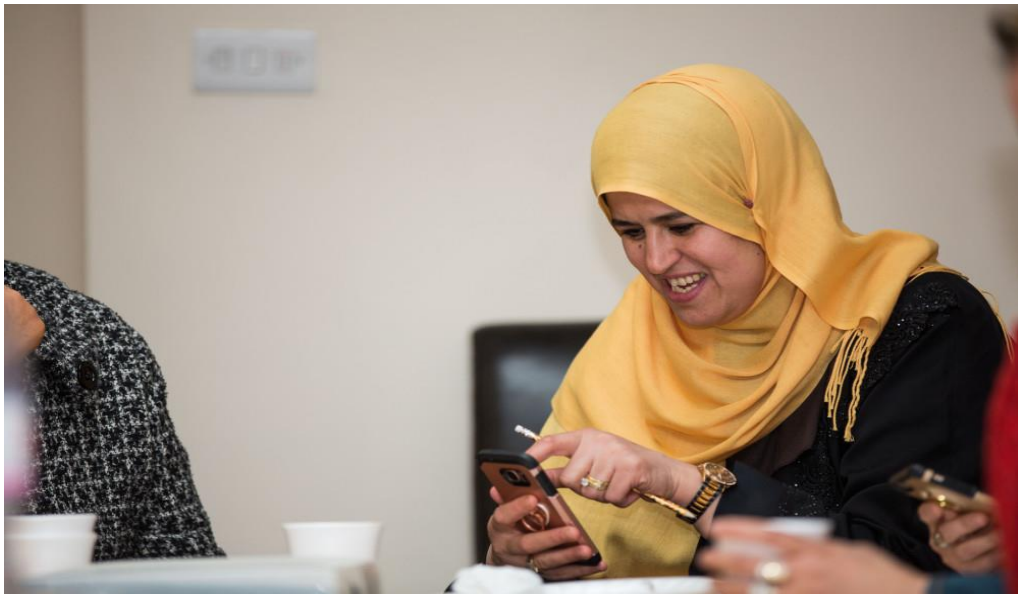
GP access in Luton has continued to be the largest feedback we have received, but during the last year, this has increased substantially. Working with clinicians and the NHS to understand patient needs, in line with the increased workload felt by GP's, we have supported raising the patient views and needs across Luton – to ensure people can access their doctor or surgery in the appropriate way.

In 2020 and now in 2021, we send the feedback we receive to the Clinical Commissioning Group in BLMK, and we address personal concerns on an individual basis by providing signposting, information and support. We raise thematic views of GP access across BLMK to relevant Boards where commissioner and clinicians address patient concerns, and we feed this back to the patients.

We are focusing in 2021 to develop this work further with the THIS Institute on monitoring GP Operational Failures to ensure learning can be provided to the BLMK CCG and patient views of access and support can be addressed. NHS England have responded to the Healthwatch England reports on GP access, which we fed into and have asked all GP surgeries to increase their face to face appointments and open reception areas. We are awaiting to learn local timescales on this.



Transformation and System Changes



The pandemic meant the health and care system was extremely hard working and dedicated on supporting our general lives. Now we are moving back to business as usual, we have continued to review patient views on 'locking in' services, communicating with the local population, and being informed on changes taking place



Impact: The difference it made:

Healthwatch Luton have continued to attend meetings and represent the views of Luton residents as the health and care system moves through transforming their delivery of care, highlighting patient views.

Our Clinical Commissioning Groups in Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes (BLMK) merged on 1st April 2021 to become the newly formed BLMK CCG. We have supported their developments and communications throughout the pandemic, and will continue to do so as they progress into the newly formed Integrated Care System (ICS) on 1st April 2022.

Many services have also developed transformation plans over the last year, including mental health, primary care, learning disability and cancer services. Healthwatch Luton have continued to represent Luton resident views in all these changes, signposting to local community groups or individuals willing to have their voice heard and fed into these system changes.

If you have feedback on changes to the services you have experience of, then please talk to us on info@healthwatchluton.co.uk



Prevention Agenda



"Sometimes it isn't what you are planning to do now, but it is supporting people to prevent getting there in the first place. Prevention is key"



Impact: The difference it made:

Healthwatch Luton have continued to attend meetings and represent the views of Luton residents at many Boards and meetings. We do this so the views of patients can be embedded in the planning and provision of services.

We have continued to attend many meetings online with health care providers and commissioners, ensuring prevention is a key focus for many services. We have attended Targeted Lung Health Check pilots and roll out for early cancer diagnosis, attended workstreams on the frail and elderly with complex needs as part of the Bedfordshire Care Alliance, Population Health Management meetings on measuring and qualifying activity across Luton and BLMK, and many more. Our attendance at meetings such as Overview and Scrutiny and Health and Wellbeing Board ensure the Luton system is aware of and adapts to the population needs within our town, and highlights gaps where prevention can be focused and resourced.

The Prevention Agenda has been a key focus for Luton Council and Luton Public Health for a while, and this is also being prioritised as the Clinical Commissioning Group merge and become the Integrated Care System next year. Health education, information and advice and guidance is a focus for all of the health and care system, and we take Luton's feedback to these Boards and ensure the views of Luton residents are used in shaping service delivery.

For example, our Chair not only attended and supported the pilot for the Targeted Lung Health Check but continued to support its roll out in Luton. We shared communications and invites to Luton residents and our Chair was also able to contribute and take part as a service user and provide invaluable feedback. Without your experiences shaping services, we would not be able to shape the service design. His views and others tailored the communications and roll out to Luton residents.



Underrepresented Experiences



“We are not seldom heard, we are just seldom listened to or asked.”



Impact: The difference it made:

Healthwatch Luton focus on gathering views from those who are underrepresented in many areas of health and social care. Our remit requires us to ensure our views are representative of the community and town we serve, and we focus on gathering these views to help shape their delivery across the town.

As well as working on Health Inequalities Board and sub groups, we also aim to capture views of those the health and care system cannot easily find or are harder to attain due to access, availability, condition or other barriers.

Our Chair, alongside his role with Healthwatch, Chairs the ELFT (East London Foundation Trust – mental health provider’s) LGBTQ+ steering group over the year, supporting people in their mental health, as well as producing and running transgender awareness courses and presentations for organisations across Luton. We continue to gather feedback from those with Learning Disabilities or Learning Difficulties, including discussions with the Parent Carer Forums and also with running forums and interviews. We have also run some individual engagement with those currently staying on the Mental Health Inpatient wards, to ensure their voices are fed into the system, and we are focusing now on rolling this out to all inpatient wards across Luton.

We also ran a forum for young people with mental health (CAMHS) and gathered their views, which fed into the work around stigmatisation of young people around testing and vaccinations for COVID-19. We have shared contacts and support for the Gypsy/ Traveller community on our COVID-19 Champions groups and have spent a considerable amount of work supporting the Health Inequalities Board on those from Black or Ethnic Minority groups affected by COVID-19 and the disproportionality of their experiences.

We have also focused interviews and case studies of those in Luton who have been digitally excluded through the pandemic, and created recommendations for change for all these underrepresented groups.

If you have feedback on any services, you have experience of, then please talk to us on info@healthwatchluton.co.uk



Voluntary and Community Partnerships



“I personally wouldn’t seek health advice from a professional, I turn to my community group for support.”



Impact: The difference it made:

Healthwatch Luton have always worked closely with the voluntary and community groups across the town. Building relationships with these groups who support many of our community in many forms, allows Healthwatch to gather feedback from some of the more underrepresented groups of our town.

During the beginning of the pandemic, we joined up with Luton Council’s Volunteer Team and community groups, initiating a hub of community and voluntary intelligence on what was still open and available to the public. We supported the community by calling all our community groups and providing them signposting, information and advice during the initial stages of the pandemic and ongoing throughout the year.

Mid-way through the year, we kept those community groups informed, and helped share national and local communications regarding the pandemic to them. We gathered their views on ‘How are you doing?’ campaign – and fed this into the Health Inequalities Board and sub groups and the health and care system to help raise their views and their difficulties during the pandemic.

We wrote a Community and Engagement paper with Luton Council’s Policy, Community and Engagement Team and with Community Voluntary Service (CVS Beds) to outline the joint approach to the risks and challenges facing the community and voluntary sector in Luton, and outlined some key aspects from national and local data and information. The paper proposed some recommendations to take forward for the Health Inequalities Board in Luton, to prepare for the outcomes of COVID on this sector within the town. From this, an action plan has been drawn and is being worked on across Luton Council’s 2040 strategy in supporting the local voluntary and community sector.

We also supported the Council’s approach to creating, launching and continuing a COVID-Champion (people in the community) and COVID- Leaders groups, where people in the community can feed into and be informed weekly on Covid information.



Case Study 2: Getting lost in the system



How we support you: Case Study 2

We were contacted by an elderly lady who had, prior to the pandemic, hurt her leg and had continued pain. She attempted to reach her consultant at the hospital, but as the pandemic set in, she found it harder to contact him and his PA.

Over the course of a few months, her leg became worse, resulting in her becoming bed bound and her family became increasingly concerned for her welfare and mental health, as well as her worsening physical leg issues.

They decided to contact the lady's GP, but due to the pandemic struggled to get through for an appointment. Not having a face-to-face appointment, the GP suggested going to the local hospital to get an X-ray. The lady was driven by her husband to the hospital but could not support her going in. When she arrived, she was told by the hospital that her GP had made no appointment, and she would not be able to get an X-ray. She went back home to re-call her GP – but was told no further appointments were available that day. Her husband decided to call 111 – who after a triage, a nurse called back to inform the lady she should attend the hospital for an X-Ray. Due to the activity on her leg, the lady was unable to move again that day – and they contacted Healthwatch Luton.

We raised the lady's entire story to our contacts working in primary care in the CCG. We also discussed her case with the hospital, 111 and her local GP, as well as raising with her physiotherapy team and escalating with in the CCG to their Quality teams. The system acknowledged the issue of the lady getting stuck in the system, something we see more often than not at Healthwatch, but promptly advised all involved to support the woman in her recovery. Learning lessons took place at both the GP and Hospital and it has been escalated to the System Quality Group which reflect on the processes in place between services such as 111, GP and Hospital care.



Responding to COVID-19

Healthwatch plays an important role in helping people to get the information they need, especially through the pandemic. The insight we collect is shared with both Healthwatch England and local partners to ensure services are operating as best as possible during the pandemic.

This year we helped over 30,000 people in Luton by:

- Providing factual and up to date advice from national bodies such as the Government or NHS communications, both locally and nationally
- Sharing data and information on our online platforms
- Supporting the vaccine roll-out through communications and supporting the NHS Gold Command team
- Supporting the community volunteer response; including welfare and support packages
- Helping people to access the services they need; through continuing to gather feedback from residents and feeding people's views ongoing monthly through to Health and Wellbeing Boards and other system wide providers
- In the first week of the pandemic we reverted our contact systems to online, provided phone calls, interviews, carried out surveys and set up the 'How are you doing?' campaign
- We were one of the first Healthwatch to translate COVID information into Luton's leading languages to explain changes as the pandemic took effect



Adapting to COVID-19

In the first week of the pandemic Healthwatch Luton reverted our communication and information functions online. We translated information in the first few weeks to Luton residents, three weeks prior to official Public Health England translations were provided.

We helped the Local Authority volunteer hub set up their website and joined up community groups and support groups with the local authority to support those most vulnerable and in need. We supported the national NHS 'Good Sam' app and developments and appealed for NHS responders and supports.



"In those first few weeks it was so confusing and scary. Everyone was waiting for someone to lead in how we were meant to work, but we managed to come together and try to support people as best we could. Healthwatch Luton were amazing at supporting us through this stage"

We decided in the first week to set an online poll and survey on '**How are you doing?**' – to appeal to professionals as well as residents. As changes took hold, and lockdown came into force, it was apparent there was a lot of confusion and misinformation. Communications from national and local systems were contradictory and made residents feel anxious and confused, the health and care system reverted to their Crisis Plans and many services went off line for a period of time.

We began to capture views immediately and created monthly and quarterly updates to the system. We had over 300 responses within the first weeks and found people's experiences were confused.



I have never been more aware of my own mental health, than I have been during this pandemic. It is like a rollercoaster, some days I am fine, and others, it all just feels so overwhelming"

We continued to provide Brief Summary Reports to providers on their ongoing feedback, but also supported those providers in sending communications back out to the public, such as with the hospital discharge communications, visiting hours and how to contact people's doctors.

We began to undertake observational reports so services could provide up to date COVID information to the public, as well as commissioners be informed on what provider information was being communicated.





How are you doing?

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How are you doing?

Let us know how you are feeling about COVID-19: What works well, what doesn't and how do you think it could be improved?

covid19@healthwatchluton.co.uk

01582 817 060

Twitter: @hwluton

Facebook: HealthwatchLuton

Instagram: healthwatchluton

Survey monkey: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/GVXVW3H>



It is so essential to just keep asking, how we are doing? There are so many services asking us to contribute our thoughts on how they run, but by being asked 'How are you?' allows us to just open up."



What did Healthwatch Luton do?

In the first week of the lockdown in March 2020, Healthwatch Luton initiated a survey called 'How are you doing?' The survey was linked to our campaign on asking Luton residents and Luton professionals how they were coping during the pandemic. The initial response in March was slow, as people were consumed with concern about what was happening during the global pandemic. In April – we had received over 300 feedbacks in one month.

Professionals and Luton Residents continued to share their views with us during the pandemic. We received nearly 1000 responses to people being asked their ongoing views on how they were coping. The survey asked what was working well, what wasn't and what could be improved. From this, we wrote monthly capture reports on our findings, and created quarterly reports which we presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board in Luton. We used thematic reports to share with providers and commissioners ongoing – and highlighted people's views on how the pandemic was affecting their care.

We also fed these into Healthwatch England national reports and the Care Quality Commission, ensuring the Luton views were escalated nationally to NHS England and the Department of Health and Social Care. All of which created ongoing responses to communications, policy and campaigns nationally.

We followed up these surveys with engagement forms and observation reports, as well as tailored interviews and case studies, highlighting the views of residents to help shape the pandemic response.

If you want to tell us how you have found life in the pandemic, please let us know by telling us at info@healthwatchluton.co.uk



Supporting the COVID communications

Both the national Government and the local health and care system and Local Authority and local NHS (CCG) systems provided a lot of information to the public during the pandemic. This initially was based around rules and guidance, and then moved to how people could be tested and contain the spread of the virus. There was a lot of confusion around contradictory communication. When local lockdowns came into force, people felt increasingly confused, with those digitally excluded becoming frustrated between what they were hearing on television, to not having access to local online guidance.

We captured all the residents views monthly and then reported on them quarterly, ensuring resident views were heard as the system adapted.

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What are people telling us during COVID-19?

Key messages from our evidence – Quarter Report



“I signed up to both local support and NHS app, as I didn’t know which one was better. I then became very confused as to who I should use for what service and it all became a bit stressful.”

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How are you doing?

Gathering feedback from the public and professionals on how they are coping during the COVID 19 pandemic

Targeted Engagement: Young People

What did Healthwatch Luton do?

- We translated information on our website to support those without English as a first language
- We reported monthly and quarterly on residents views
- We supported project developments like the COVID Champions and Leaders groups to support the community response
- We supported those who were digitally excluded and signposted them to information
- We captured views from young people, care homes, care home managers and surveyed carers views
- We ran Forums inviting people to discuss issues like mental health inpatients and hospital discharge and carers
- We worked with the CCG Gold Command and communications team to support local vaccination roll outs and worked with the local authority on communications for local testing sites.
- We spoke to and reported on over 1000 people’s experiences



Targeted Engagement: Young People



There is a real misconception that us young people are 'blasé' about the whole pandemic or we are not following guidance. In fact we feel we are adhering more than those of older generations, and it feels almost like they are mocking us constantly. It is all about perception."



What did Healthwatch Luton do?

We spoke to a group of young people who were under the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), asking them a range of questions on how they felt they were coping during the pandemic. They were all between the ages of 14-25 years old, and we captured their views and reported on them to the health and care system, outlining ways in which the system could support them further.

We discussed a range of topics such as appointments, online support, staffing, PPE and communications to young people. One young person admitted that the rules imposed at school bombarded young people with guidance but they were rarely asked how they felt, or how they were coping.

We sent our report to commissioners and providers of young people's services, and reported to Healthwatch England and CQC our findings. Individuals were signposted and supported and our report fed into the wider communications groups we attend, outlining young people's views.

Engagement Forums



We ran a few online engagement forums to gather independent feedback on service provision. Adapting to the online world, and acknowledging the digitally excluded, we found the forums only worked for a select group of digitally able people.

However, we found them fruitful on subject matters such as

- Discussions on **Hospital Discharge** for Healthwatch England
- Discussions with **Young People**
- Discussions with general public on **How are you doing?**
- Discussions with **carers** and how they were coping



It has felt like we there has been no where to feed our experienced into – without Healthwatch Luton, I should think a lot of services would not know what the patients really are experiencing during this time”



What did Healthwatch Luton do?

For all our Forums we contacted the providers and commissioners linked to the topic matter, and asked them to contribute ideas or questions they wanted us to ask the public on their experiences. We gather the feedback from these cohorts of people and ensure their voices are then fed into that specific providers workplan – so they can understand and hear the patient voice when planning service care.

Our Hospital Discharge forum was accompanied with a survey and fed into a Healthwatch network (across England) report by Healthwatch England, which fed into the Department of Health and Care and helped shape the process around Rapid Discharge which was put in place during the pandemic. We also shared the findings locally with our hospital to help them understand the patient and family needs from their local population views.

Our other forums have contributed to local system planning and ensured the views of those under represented were taken into account when planning or adapting service delivery was taking place.


Observation Reports

Our observation reports were initiated by an East of England review on cancer information on GP websites, run by Healthwatch England. We adapted the approach to review how services were communicating to their patients via their website during the pandemic, and helped shape the way commissioners supported those providers with the most relevant and up to date COVID information.

Our Volunteers supported this work by mainly doing the observations, following a guidance procedure and code of conduct. They were also briefed and debriefed on the findings, and we moderated the findings with our project officer's support.

The aim of these reports was to ensure providers were displaying relevant, up to date and helpful information to Luton residents.



 **In a time of crisis, you turn to what you know – and ensuring the doctors surgeries had the right information on their website was reassuring and helpful.”**



Impact: The difference it made:



We have raised these reports and the feedback many times to both providers and commissioners, as well as Healthwatch England and the Care Quality Commission. We also send our reports to NHS England when appropriate,

In the ever changing landscape of the health and care sector, these reports have also circulated in many workstreams, groups and Boards both in Luton's health and care system and across BLMK (Bedford Luton and Milton Keynes). Many oversight boards have confirmed they will inform providers of our recommendations of what to place on the websites, and these will be reviewed throughout the year. We will also do a review of our observation reports and inform the commissioners and oversight boards of progress.



Care Home Engagement



We are just trying to get by and make sure the service users get what they need and are looked after properly"



What did Healthwatch Luton do?

We received an increasing amount of feedback from families regarding care homes and elderly parents or family members in care home or having home support. We also were receiving anonymous feedback from care home staff working through the pandemic, and struggling to have their views heard. We decided to target engage with families, care homes and care home managers to gather more of these views.

We ran a survey as well as ran interviews with care home staff and managers, asking what was working well for them, what was not working well and what could be improved. Additional questions on visiting for residents and families, testing and communications were included and all feedback was gathered anonymously. During the calls and interviews, people were invited to attend the Engagement Forum we were running to gather further in-depth feedback.

Our collated report was given to the Adult Social Care team and discussed with the ASC Director. We also sent the report on to Healthwatch England on Care Homes as well as individual case studies being used for further work on engagement with professionals and families. This also led to a focused piece of work in 2021 on Carers and helped shape and form some of our input in to Luton Council Carer Strategy review.

We will continue to gather feedback from care home staff and residents and families and ensure their views are reviewed by the wider health and care system, and used to help shape the national picture on care homes and management during the pandemic, as well as support local reviews on managing the elderly in care during the pandemic.

Talk Listen Change: Disproportionately affected by COVID-19 in Luton



Talk Listen Change
COVID-19 health inequalities
creating solutions together

Are you from a Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Indian, black Caribbean, black African or mixed heritage ethnic/community background and live in Luton?

COVID-19 affects everyone, but local data shows that Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Indian, black Caribbean and black African communities are more likely to be affected than the White British population.

The COVID-19 **Talk Listen Change (TLC)** project aims to engage with you as individuals in these communities to get a better understanding of how you have been affected by the pandemic in order to develop services to meet your needs.

Please share your views and experiences of COVID-19 by completing an online survey at www.luton.gov.uk/covid19tlc.

For more information about the project:
 TLC@beds.ac.uk  07969 062428
 www.luton.gov.uk/covid19tlc

 University of Bedfordshire

 INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH RESEARCH

 Luton

 In Luton, data has shown that Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Indian, Black African and Black Caribbean population groups have seen the greatest impact from COVID-19

Healthwatch Luton supported the University of Bedfordshire, Institute for Health Research and Luton Borough Council in a working group developing a community engagement project.



Impact: The difference it made:

Healthwatch Luton supported this work and sat on the working group (sub group of the Health Inequalities Board in Luton) and provided links and shared communications for the groups project work. The TLC Project itself was run by the University of Bedfordshire, Institute of Health Research and Luton Council – and more details can be found here:

https://m.luton.gov.uk/Page/Show/Health_and_social_care/coronavirus/community/Pages/covid-19-tlc-community-engagement-project.aspx

This work was exceptionally important in Luton, and the project engaged with communities to gain a further understanding of how residents have been affected by the pandemic. A key goal of the initiative was to identify solutions to some of the barriers and issues raised in order to tackle inequalities. There were surveys, focus groups and interviews and the final report is still being concluded, but will be shared with the wider Luton health and care system, as well as the public. This work is ongoing and the health inequality Board will look at a wider remit of inequalities in Luton relating to being disproportionately affected by COVID-19. Healthwatch Luton will continue to support this group as they review this work and potentially develop further communities disproportionately affected by COVID-19.



Case Study 3: Vaccinations



How we support you: Case Study 3

As the pandemic has developed, so has the immense roll out of the vaccination programme. We have supported the NHS with all their national communications, as well as the Local Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) who has worked exceptionally hard in delivering vaccinations to residents across Luton (and BLMK). We met monthly with the CCG Communications teams and Gold Command on Vaccinations, feeding people's experiences on the roll out of them as well as disseminating their information out to the public.

We were contacted by a Luton resident whose nan had reached a 14 week period between her vaccinations. The resident had tried calling 119 and the GP several times. The system had attempted contact with the lady's nan on a few occasions, but it seemed there was a difficulty in organising her 2nd dose.

The lady contacted Healthwatch Luton and we raised the concern to our contacts in the Gold Command and communications teams. A pathway was produced for all Healthwatch across BLMK to raise these concerns with the CCG, and the lady was provided a next day appointment and received her 2nd dose.

We continued to monitor the 2nd dose and raise concerns when they arose. We continued to monitor 2nd doses and used patient views to highlight to Healthwatch England who influenced the narrative script for the 119 national phone line to support patients further. Healthwatch England also raised concerns of supply and demand concerns to NHSE England and the Department of Health and Social Care. With this influence and input, people in Luton have a clear pathway to ensure their 2nd doses, despite supply, can be assured.

If you would like to share your experience of vaccinations with us, we have an online survey, or you can contact us on info@healthwatchluton.co.uk



Partnerships and the health and care system in Luton

With the transformation of the health and care system, along with the pandemic, relationships with the health and care bodies in Luton has never been more important. Our role is to gather your views, and use them with providers and commissioners to help shape service delivery:

We work closely with:

- Luton Health and Wellbeing Board
- Luton's Overview and Scrutiny Board: Health and Social Care Review Group
- Care Quality Commission and Local Inspectors
- Healthwatch England, and BLMK Healthwatch Leads
- Luton Council; Adult Social Care and Carers
- BLMK Clinical Commissioning Group
- Voluntary and Community Groups
- ELFT - Mental Health Provider and CCS, Cambridgeshire Community Services
- Bedfordshire Hospitals Trust (Luton and Dunstable)



How Healthwatch Luton work with the Health and Care System

Bedfordshire Hospital Trust – Patient and Experience Manager



The Bedford and Luton and Dunstable Hospitals merged in April 2020 to form Bedfordshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. The trust has continued to work with local Healthwatch organisations, albeit at arms-length, as a result of the challenges associated with the pandemic. Regular contact and feedback has enabled the trust to be sited on issues that may have gone unnoticed due to the reallocation of resources during the pandemic. A key initiative at the trust is the implementation of the Patient Experience Council, Healthwatch have been invited as council members. Healthwatch Luton has also helped the organisation to provide information and reassurance to our local communities about the constant changing landscape over the past year and we look forward to continuing to work closely with Healthwatch when restrictions allow more face to face working.

BLMK CCG – Primary Care Development Team



We have a good working relationship with Healthwatch Luton and are working collaboratively to improve patient experience and outcomes. Healthwatch have recently joined the GP Access group meeting, where they provide the patient voice to help support how we shape and progress primary care transformation. It is important for us to have the patients view from an independent perspective so that we can work together to address any thematic issues in the town and across the Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes footprint.

ELFT –Director of Luton and Bedfordshire Mental Health and Wellbeing Service East London Foundation Trust



ELFT continue to work closely and effectively in partnership with Healthwatch Luton across our mental health and learning disability services. Luton Healthwatch work proactively to gather independent voices of patients across Luton and ensure that this is shared with us as well as being very engaged and a strong voice in the transformation of mental health services locally.

Carers Strategy, Integrated Commissioning Manager, Adults and Healthcare Commissioning, Public Health and Wellbeing



Luton Council has been working with Healthwatch to look at how unpaid carers in Luton are supported. It has been fantastic to have Healthwatch proactively engage with carers in Luton to ask that vital question: “How are you doing?”. Healthwatch have openly shared their plans and work and insight from carers in Luton with the Council, in order to support our work to improve support for carers. They have encouraged carers who have engaged in their events to join the Council’s new Carers Panel, and are a key partner in our Working Group to develop a new Carers Strategy for Luton. Healthwatch is valued partner for us and we look forward to continuing to work closely with them.



How Healthwatch Luton work with the Health and Care System

Safeguarding Adults Board in Luton (LSAB) Strategic Business Manager, LSAB & LSCB



The Luton Safeguarding Adults Board (Board) and Healthwatch Luton have over the last couple of years increased their collaboration, and that has been of benefit to the Board in its work on safeguarding. For example, Healthwatch's work on mental health over the last year, has been invaluable in enabling the Board to be better sighted on the patients and carers experiences of services. It has also led to some important conversations and sharing of information, which on the one hand has enabled Healthwatch staff to be able to provide better advice to families on specific issues, and on the other enabled the Board to have a greater insight into how mental health provision currently supports the level of need in Luton. Another example is the invaluable insight gained at Board meetings from staff feeding back concerns on other issues such as care homes or hospital discharge. In this coming year, we will be working with Healthwatch Luton on a joint audit which demonstrates the progress that has been made in collaboration, and that will over time, have an impact on improving the quality of care people receive in Luton.

Carers Central, Carers Support Officer (Partnership working with Healthwatch Luton on Carers)



Carers Central work closely in partnership with Healthwatch Luton to support unpaid carers. We are able to refer our clients to them secured in the knowledge that their enquiry will be dealt with promptly and in confidence. We also receive referrals from Healthwatch and as partners are happy to promote each other's services.

Healthwatch Luton Commissioners: Luton Council, Public Health Service Manager (Healthcare)



As commissioner, Luton Borough Council have an excellent working relationship with Healthwatch Luton and have valued their input over the last year, ensuring that the voices and views of Luton's residents were heard. Of note, Healthwatch Luton have been instrumental in shaping the conversation on Covid recovery within many areas of health and social care locally, in particularly ensuring health inequalities amongst our most vulnerable are not widened and health messaging is suitable to our local communities. We are looking forward to continuing our work with Healthwatch Luton. This especially applies to delivering against Luton's 2040 vision, working on the four priority areas identified in Healthwatch Luton's plan and working towards the Quality Framework.



Volunteers

At Healthwatch Luton we are supported by 10 volunteers to help us find out what people think is working, and what improvements people would like to make to services.

This year our volunteers:

- Carried out observation website reviews for local GP practices, pharmacies and dentists and the observations were published in a report along with recommendations.
- Helped with the local volunteering efforts by delivering food parcels and helping out at the local vaccination centre.
- Helped by carrying out surveys over the telephone or interviews and providing case studies.
- Created blogs and case studies for our website and reports.
- Supported staff and the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) by reviewing reports, patient information leaflets, new policies and surveys.
- Helped by carrying out surveys over the telephone by contacting NHS funded care home providers and asking care home managers their views on the pandemic and support they were receiving.
- Met weekly for quizzes, information updates, created the Advisory Sub Group (to support staff and sub group to the Board) as well as bi-weekly Volunteer Discussion groups



Active volunteers - Maureen

"Before the pandemic arrived, I was heavily involved with the volunteering work: visiting mental health units, gathering feedback from targeted engagements, attending meetings & helping with information stands. However, life as normal stopped and everything changed. I accepted a new advisory role created during lockdown, which allowed me to scrutinise policies, patient information, surveys and proofread reports prior to publishing. Although, not the same as before, I do feel involved and that I am making a positive contribution."

Board members - Pat

"I have been on the Healthwatch Board for four years now. Previously I was involved in attending meetings, visiting health and social care settings and community events gathering people's views. However, this has all changed over the past year. I still attend all the active meetings online. Instead of going to events to gather people's views, I have done observational reviews of GP and care home websites to improve services for those with less digital skills. I am sure this new technology has supported us through difficult times being able to keep in touch with people."



New volunteer- James

"As a carer I have always had an interest in health and social care and got involved with the PCN/PPG at my GP practice. During lockdown I came across Healthwatch and asked to join them as a volunteer mainly because Healthwatch is not publicised enough. As I speak to people of various ages that use the NHS services to which I gather feedback, I wanted to share with them as an organisation that they may be able to forward possible changes to the NHS. I have already referred people to Healthwatch, and they have had a positive result from using them."



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 Sudha, our Volunteer Officer at [Healthwatch Luton](mailto:info@healthwatchluton.co.uk).



www.healthwatchluton.co.uk



01582 817 060



info@healthwatchluton.co.uk



Finances

Healthwatch Luton are a public funded organisation, receiving a small budget to reach the whole of Luton residents to gather views on the health and care in Luton

We use our money to employ staff with expertise to work with people, on projects, on engagement and online expertise in order to support people in Luton sharing their experiences, which helps shape the services they receive.

The public are involved in all decisions we make on the spending of our budget – and feed into all our work through the feedback they provide us, becoming a volunteer Champion, joining our Board or by completing our stakeholder involvement surveys. We run workstreams ensuring our volunteers help shape all the projects we organise and prioritise, and we use our funds to ensure we are capturing as many views of the public and those underrepresented as well can.

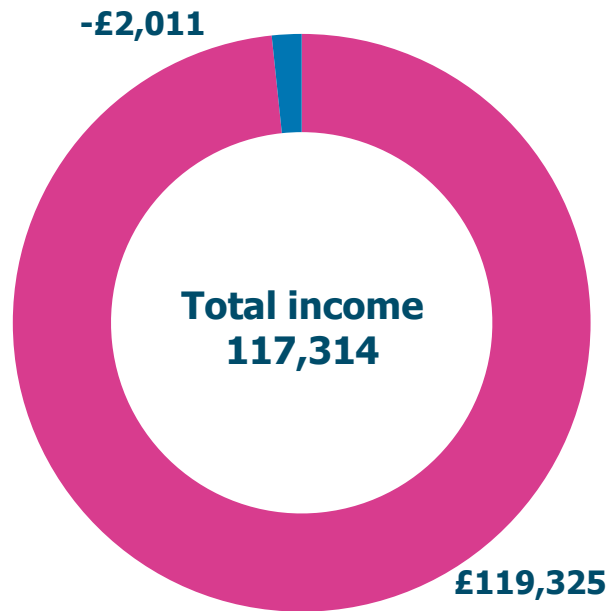
We run a weekly Finance workstream with the Chair, CEO and Vice Chair to ensure we use our funds appropriately and report these findings to the Board meetings quarterly which are open to public scrutiny.

Finances

To help us carry out our work we receive funding from our local authority under the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

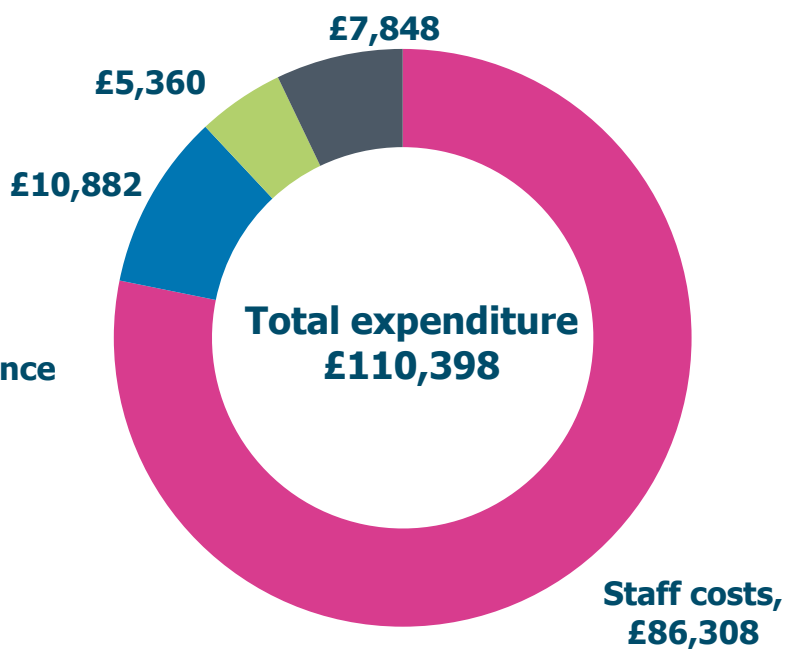
Income

- Funding received from local authority
- Carry forward from 2019-2020



Expenditure

- Staff costs
- Operational costs
- Governance, Insurance and Accounting
- Carry Forward





NEXT STEPS - 2021

We have created and agreed our 2021 workplan with our Board, Stakeholders and Volunteers. We have created a priorities list of focus areas for this year including:

1. PRIORITY 1 – COVID 19 Ongoing

We will continue to support gathering views from Luton residents and feeding into the system to ensure resident views are heard in service delivery

2. PRIORITY 2 – Mental Health, Learning Disability and Carers

We will continue to review our mental health, learning disabilities and carers work from 2019, supporting developments in changes in the system and ensuring our recommendations from reports prior to the pandemic are actioned.

3. PRIORITY 3 – Primary Care, GP Access

Our leading feedback shows us people are still struggling to access their surgery before during and post the crisis of the pandemic, and we want to support residents and clinicians in improving this for Luton residents

4. Priority 4 – Internal development – we will focus on ensuring Healthwatch Luton are a quality and sustainable Healthwatch within the network

Thank You and Next Year

Top four priorities for 2021-22

1. Ongoing COVID-19 experiences – continue to gather views from the public on how the system is reacting to the pandemic and patient needs
2. Reviews of mental health and Learning Disability services in Luton; as well as Carers Strategy
3. GP Access and Primary Care; informing of patient concerns and reviewing primary care developments
4. Internal Development: Ensuring we run a sustainable and quality Healthwatch organisation

Next steps

- We will continue to follow up and review our recommendations to services and commissioners – ensuring those views and experiences you share with us help shape the care you receive
- We will continue to support the system as we move through the pandemic, along side the introduction of business as usual.



"I cannot thank the Luton public enough for continuing to share their views and experiences through one of the hardest years of our lives. Without these views, we cannot help support people and shape the services in Luton. It has been a massively stressful year, for all the health and care staff, and for all the Luton residents. There are some amazingly wonderful achievements we should be proud of – and some horrendously difficult times we have experienced.

I am massively proud of my team – my internal staff have been flexible and adapted all our services as needed, and continue to do so for the needs of the Luton residents. Without their resilience and hard work we would not be able to write such a commendable Annual Report – we would not be able to help as many people as we have. Our Volunteers, both Champions and Board Directors have continued to support us – either by carrying out work such as with our observation reports, or with representing views at meetings and events, and we are lucky to have kept and gained new members of our Healthwatch family team.

Thank you for all the support everyone has given us this year.

If you would like to be involved in Healthwatch Luton – please contact one of the team. Without Luton residents sharing their views, or working alongside us, we cannot help achieve change in the services you receive. Contact one of the team on 01582 817 060



Methods and systems used across the year's work to obtain people's views and experience.

We use a wide range of approaches to ensure that as many people as possible have the opportunity to provide us with insight about their experience of health and care services. During 2020/21 we have been available by phone, by email, provided a webform on our website, provided a feedback centre/rate and review system, attended virtual meetings of community groups and forums, provided our own virtual activities and engaged with the public through social media. We have also run interview phone calls with individuals if needed.

We are committed to taking additional steps to ensure we obtain the views of people from diverse backgrounds who are often not heard by health and care decision makers. This year we have done this by, for example, by working with public health Luton and the University of Bedfordshire in targeting information from communities who have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. We have also targeted our audience communications throughout the year in different languages when appropriate and worked with partner organisations, such as Carers Central, to inform those attending our Forums of the wider system support. For those digitally excluded we have used telephone interviews and adapted more recently to text and mobile support forms of communications.

2020-21 priorities

Project / activity area	Changes made to services
Observational Report: Pharmacy	The Local LPC will recommend to all pharmacies to update their websites and keep them updated, and encourage them to have their own information
Carers Forum with Carers Central	Carers have been invited to contribute to the review of the carers strategy
Mental Health	Discharge and Admission Packs have been created and implemented on wards
Vaccinations	Pathway created to help support the public on receiving 2 nd doses within 12 weeks; and escalation process to ensure this happens in BLMK
GP Access	We have joined the BLMK GP Access Group offering thematic views of patients across BLMK; and the system responds with either communication, access or quality changes they make

We ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. We publish it on our website and send copies to all those concerned in our work.

Responses to recommendations and requests

Due to the pandemic, our recommendations have been placed on hold however we have continued to review these recommendations. We have also escalated concerns to the Health and Care Review Group when required, as well as set review meetings with providers to keep an ongoing review of actions.

This year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we did not make use of our Enter and View powers. Consequently, no recommendations or other actions resulted from this area of activity.

There were no issues or recommendations escalated by our Healthwatch to Healthwatch England Committee and so no resulting special reviews or investigations.

Health and Wellbeing Board

Healthwatch Luton is represented on the Luton Health and Wellbeing Board by Lucy Nicholson, CEO and Phil Turner, Chair. During 2020/21 our representative has effectively carried out this role by attending all meetings, including those held Extraordinarily, and provided quarterly updates of Luton resident feedback to the Board for consideration in health and care system work.



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