

# On equal terms

Then and now

Healthwatch Camden Annual Report 2020-21



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# Message from our Chair

**The past year has been exceptionally difficult for everyone. Throughout the year, we continued to focus on the COVID-19 pandemic, and the various ways we can support the community.**

We are proud of the remarkable work we have done in reaching out to seldom heard communities of the Borough and highlighting the disproportionate impact the pandemic has had on some communities.

Healthwatch Camden has worked hard to help our diverse community rise to the challenges posed by COVID-19. Moving online, we held 'question and answer' sessions which allowed the public to hear from local healthcare leaders on both hospital and GP services. We also enabled grass-roots conversations with BAME communities in their own first languages about the vaccine programme.

Our most far-reaching data gathering was a large survey asking people about 'Life in Lockdown'. The findings were translated into four languages and it was one of the first reports of its kind. It has been widely used by the health and care system.

We were delighted to have been commissioned by our North Central London partners to provide data to inform the new Integrated Care System, as well as working on several other collaborative projects. For example, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) selected us as a partner in a national review of 'Do Not Attempt Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation' orders during the COVID-19 pandemic.

For many who lost loved ones, the future may seem extra painful, but we are a strong team at Healthwatch Camden and commit to being a reliable and responsive resource across Camden as we move forward in recovery from the pandemic.



Dr Louise Jones  
**Chair**

# About us

## Here to make health and care better

We are the independent champion for people who use health and social care services in Camden. 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 can 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.



**“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**

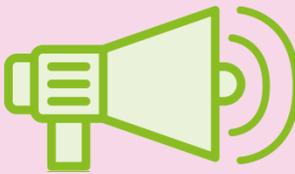
# Highlights from our year

Find out about our resources and how we have engaged and supported people in 2020-21.



## Collaborating with voluntary groups

Collaborated with a number of voluntary organisations to gather insight on the impact of COVID-19, leading us to hear the views of almost **1,900** residents (*pages 6 & 10*).



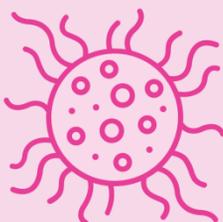
## Improving our communications

Increased our digital presence: nearly doubling our website visits with **42,000** page views, increased social media followers, regular content (*42 blogs*), a dedicated COVID-19 information page with **11,000** page views, and increased media presence (*quoted in local media 17 times*).



## Amplifying voices

We developed a better understanding of the experiences of **223** Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic residents, children with SEND, refugees, young people (*page 13*) – on COVID 19. We also raised awareness about the temporary closure of children's A&E services (*page 14*).



## Responding to the pandemic

Acted as a bridge between residents and statutory bodies, GPs, and hospitals by organising three online Q&A events attended by **480** residents which addressed residents' concerns on accessing GP surgeries and hospitals (*page 8*), and the COVID-19 vaccine (*page 13*).



## Life in Lockdown: Then and now



### Then: COVID-19 emerged as an unprecedented challenge

**We worked with the voluntary and community sector to understand people's experiences of accessing health and care services under the new conditions, and the impact the pandemic was having on people's health, wellbeing, and services.**

To find answers, we adopted a two-part process to gather insight from residents – a questionnaire conducted online and by phone, and in-depth weekly interviews over six consecutive weeks from April to July to gather detailed personal stories from 8 residents about life under lockdown.

The survey also had strong support from Camden GPs and hospitals. Between May and June, Healthwatch Camden partnered with four GP practices in Camden to send the survey link out via their text messaging system to entire GP patient lists.

We also participated in online focus groups and community meetings to discuss the experiences of different community groups, targeting those who are seldom heard.



## Now: Public bodies have a better understanding of the pandemic

**We reported sixteen key findings after surveying 1600 local residents, which provided useful insights to the health and care system to help them prepare for the future pandemics. We learned that the impacts of COVID-19 were far-reaching.**

These findings were cited in Camden Council's report 'Building Equal Foundations' which subsequently made recommendations for the health and care system to tackle health inequalities for BAME communities.

People expressed concerns about lack of clarity on COVID-19 information by government and media, changes in accessing health services, falling ill with COVID, negative impact on health and wellbeing of friends and family, challenges working and educating from home, job insecurity, food insecurity, and views on the subsequent easing of the lockdown.



**... I'd like to offer our thanks to those involved in conducting the Healthwatch survey, and to the residents who took part ... we have been using and will continue to use the results of this work to help inform our strategy as we move forward. *Kat Myers, Director of Participation, Partnerships and Communications at Camden Council***

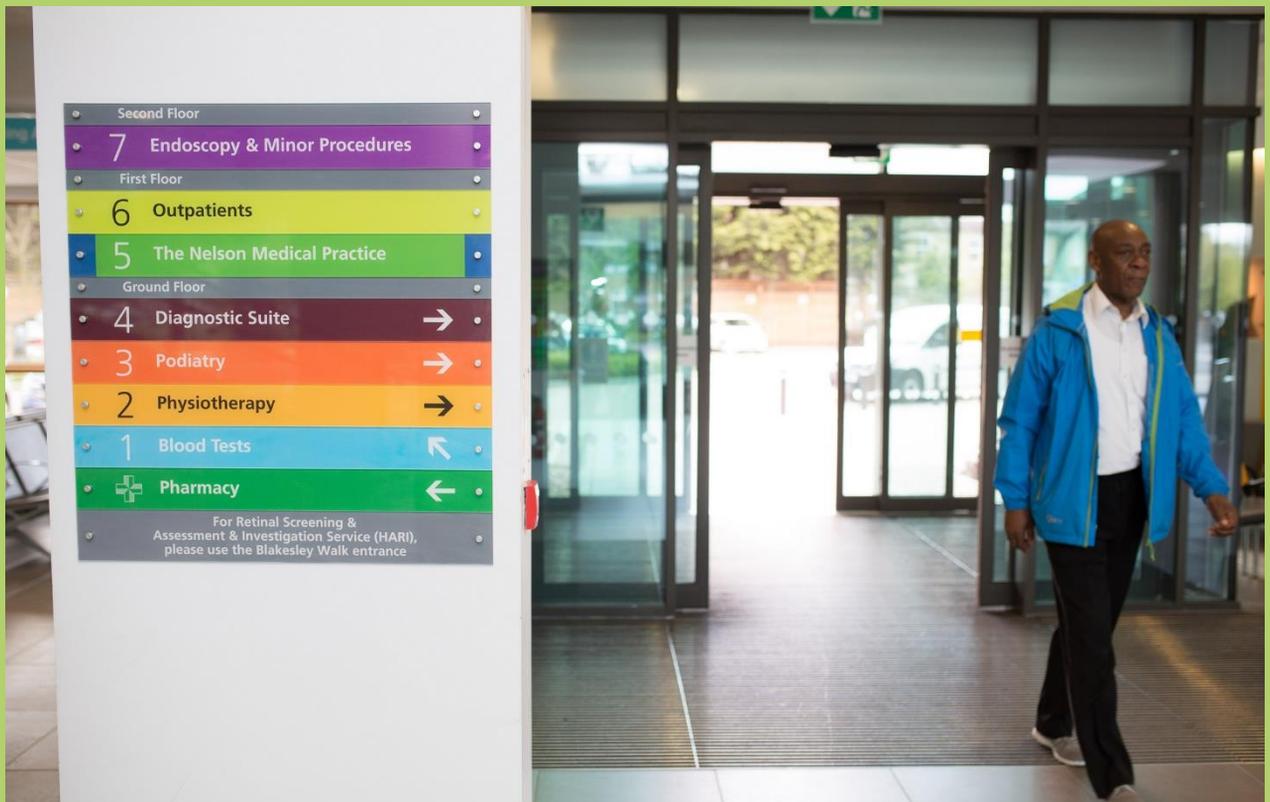
The report's executive summary was translated into the top languages spoken by the people who participated in the survey: Swahili, Bengali, Somali, and Chinese.

We communicated the findings in multiple ways:

- Sent personalised cover letters and suggested next steps to leaders within Camden Council, which they responded to, highlighting how they were using the findings.
- Presented key findings to the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- Presented the report at many other forums, including the North Central London CCG Senior Executive Meeting and its Patient Participation and Engagement Group.
- Local media highlighted the issues we raised in the report.
- Published seven [blogs](#) highlighting various issues faced by different communities especially, parents of SEND children, carers, refugees, young people, and older people.



Read our 'Life in Lockdown' report [here](#).



# Accessing health services: Then and now



## Then: Uncertainty and concerns about accessing GPs and hospitals

**Throughout the pandemic, we were hearing concerns of residents regarding accessing GP surgeries and hospitals. Concerns included:**

- Many people had routine or long-awaited appointments with NHS providers cancelled at the start of lockdown. People reported a subsequent lack of communication leaving many feeling they had been forgotten. People would have liked a phone call or remote appointments as an interim measure.
- In our 'Life in Lockdown' report, we found out that people delayed accessing care they needed for a range of reasons including feeling their needs were not a priority and fear of contracting COVID-19.
- Many people found it difficult to book appointments using the NHS online system, which was accelerated by the pandemic. This included e-Consult or other similar mobile phone Apps.



## Now: Residents better informed about how to access health services during pandemic

**After we raised concerns about accessing the health care services at the Health & Wellbeing Board, the Board set up a sub-group to enhance and coordinate communications about how and when to access services during the pandemic.**

We had heard about a reluctance to access health and care services, because of fears about catching COVID-19 and of 'burdening' the NHS. One of the aims of the sub-group was to alleviate fears and anxiety around accessing health care.

As part of this work, we developed partnerships with local Hospitals and GPs to setup two separate 'question and answer' (Q&A) events:

- 'Ask your Local Hospitals' in August 2020 - Chief executives of Camden's two main hospitals, Kate Slemeck from Royal Free Hospital and Marcel Levi from UCLH answered pressing concerns from residents.
- 'Ask your GP' in November 2020 – Senior leaders from NCL CCG and local GPs answered patient questions about accessing GP services impacted by the lockdown.

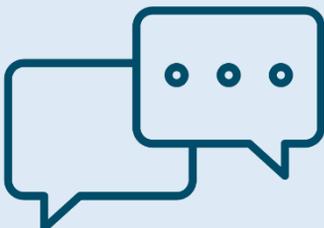


**Healthwatch Camden have played a valuable role in helping us to understand how our patients and the public have been feeling about using our services ... [and the] Q&A event hosted by Healthwatch... provided a valuable opportunity for us to hear from patients and the public and assure them about accessing our services.**

***Kate Slemeck, chief executive of the Royal Free Hospital***

Both of these events helped reassure local people about the provision of primary care and hospital services in Camden during the COVID-19 pandemic, and to provide an opportunity for members of the public to submit questions to the expert panel.

Over 340 people attended the two events over Zoom or called in to listen, and over 100 questions were submitted in advance. The panellists reassured residents that they are taking infection control seriously and have new policies in place to keep patients safe.



### Share your views with us

If you have a query about a health and social care service, or need help with where you can go to access further support, get in touch. Don't struggle alone. Healthwatch Camden is here for you.

[www.healthwatchcamden.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchcamden.co.uk)

[020 7383 2402](tel:02073832402)

[info@healthwatchcamden.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchcamden.co.uk)



# COVID & Health Inequalities: Then and now



## Then: A new vaccination programme

**When news arrived that a COVID-19 vaccination was available, we foresaw that this could present a challenge to existing health inequalities. There is a significant risk that the vaccination rollout could exacerbate inequalities by determining which groups are safe from COVID-19 and which are not.**

During various outreach activities, we noticed that there were comparatively high levels of vaccine hesitancy among several communities.

In discussion with the NHS and other local partners we identified a need to better understand the level of hesitancy, reasons for this hesitancy and potential solutions.

We worked with three local community organisations and surveyed 223 people from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic communities about their views on the COVID-19 vaccination over February 2021.

For 80% of responders, English was not their first language, and the survey was translated and conducted by representatives from local community organisations.



## Now: Timely insight into reasons for vaccine hesitancy and potential solutions

**We found that there appeared to be an opportunity to increase vaccine uptake among people from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic communities, as nearly one-third of survey responders who did not want the vaccine said they would reconsider their decision if they had more information.**

We were able to demonstrate to public health bodies the need to co-produce customised informational campaigns with those who showed greater vaccine hesitancy.

Nearly three in five Black residents in Camden indicated that they were 'unlikely', or 'unsure' about getting the COVID-19 vaccine. One of the main reasons was the lack of information, but mistrust in public bodies was also a key feature in responses.



**There were no platforms for the African community to receive any information and most of the information was provided by people who didn't look like them. *Chikwaba Oduka, Leader of the African Health Forum***

For the overwhelming majority of participants, this was the first time they had been asked about their views on the COVID-19 vaccine. This provided a unique insight into local concerns.

Some of the key findings in our report 'Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic views on the COVID-19 vaccine' were as follows:

- The more knowledge someone felt they had about the vaccine, the greater the likelihood of them wanting to be vaccinated.
- Younger people and people from Black or Black British backgrounds were less likely to get the vaccine.

We presented the report to North Central London Clinical Commissioning Group, Camden Council and Public Health teams, and urged them to consider the proposed next steps within the report. In particular, to work with communities who are vaccine-hesitant by producing targeted information campaigns.

The work also highlighted the benefits of working with the local voluntary and community sector to gain trust and achieve better population health among seldom heard groups.



**To find out more [Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic views on the COVID-19 vaccine :: Healthwatch Camden](#)**



## Responding to COVID-19

**Healthwatch played an important role in helping people to get the information they need through the pandemic. We also collected insights and shared them with local partners to ensure services are operating as best as possible during the pandemic.**

### **During the pandemic we helped residents of Camden by:**

- Providing up to date advice on COVID-19 and vaccination via social media channels, e-bulletins, and website.
- Publishing guest blogs on issues concerning local residents by healthcare professionals, voluntary sector partners, and volunteers.
- Promoting our telephone line for people who are digitally excluded to be able to talk to our team about their concerns e.g. through food parcels and posters.
- By engaging with residents and the voluntary sector on a regular basis to understand their experiences of the pandemic.
- Compiling key resources in accessible formats e.g. different languages, Easy-Read, BSL.

## Q & A session on the COVID-19 vaccine

After the launch of the COVID-19 vaccine, we were receiving a lot of feedback from local people about the lack of enough information on the vaccine. Some were worried about having to make a decision and unaware of whom to approach to get their concerns addressed.

With much misinformation circulating about the vaccine, we decided to hold a 'Q&A' event on the COVID-19 vaccine in February 2021. The event was organised for the public and local partners to engage with Camden's GPs, public health specialists, and other NHS leaders.

**72% of attendees learnt something new about the COVID-19 vaccine. Around 1 in 5 reported being more likely to get the vaccine because of attending the event.**

Over 140 people attended – on Zoom or via phone – many of whom reported difficulty in obtaining answers to their questions elsewhere. Residents had a variety of questions, from understanding the ingredients of the vaccine to its effectiveness, and the potential side effects. The event was covered in local media and encouraged local residents to take up the vaccine.



**So informative and well-organised. Thank you so much to everyone for taking the time to do this. I have shared the recording to reassure people with fears and worries. A Camden resident**

### Other activities related to COVID-19

**Test, Track & Trace Campaign for Camden Council:** Camden council engaged us to run a focus group to test key messages from its Test, Track & Trace campaign, with a focus on the seldom heard groups. Our findings helped the Council in designing communication messages to encourage the residents to take up testing.

**Young people and impact of COVID on their mental health:** We surveyed 48 young people (under the age of 24 years) to understand the impact of COVID-19 on this age group. The majority (7 in 10) reported that that COVID-19 had impacted their mental health. The findings were shared with local voluntary sector to support future grant funding.

**Refugees:** We interviewed several refugees and asylum seekers on their experiences during the lockdown. We found out that the refugees found the information very difficult to understand and 1 in 4 refugees had difficulty accessing healthcare services.

**Older people and digital exclusion:** We spoke with 23 members of Age UK Camden's Older Peoples Advisory Group (OPAG) to find out about their experience of using digital services to access health and social care. We found out that the digital access to healthcare is difficult for people with disabilities - especially people with sensory impairments, learning disabilities, or mobility issues; and for people whose first language isn't English.

**Engaged with Faith Leaders around the COVID-19 vaccine rollout:** Interviewed ten faith leaders from five different faiths so that North London Partners NHS could make an informed decision about the use of religion data to monitor COVID-19 vaccine uptake.

## Top areas that people have contacted us about:



We heard from many people about the challenges in accessing NHS dental services. We decided to collaborate with local dental services and published a blog informing residents on how NHS dental services work. We have been raising this issue with the Local Dental Committee and will undertake in-depth work on the issue as the next step.

### NHS Dental Services



Enquiries about the COVID-19 vaccine have ranged from concerns about myths to the logistics involved in the uptake of the vaccine. We reported these at our weekly attendance of the Vaccine Communications Group that oversaw the vaccine rollout. We also worked with the NHS to provide and promote accurate information.

### COVID-19 vaccine

## Case Study – Closure of A&E service for children

We learnt that emergency services for children in one of the leading hospitals in Camden were temporarily closing. However, we found that only 1 in 10 people were aware of the change.

We issued 2 press releases seeking more clarity on this service changes from NHS partners, and highlighted the lack of awareness of the issue amongst local residents. The issue also was covered in local media.

We made a statutory referral of our concerns to the Health & Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee at Camden Council.



### Contact us to get the information you need

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# Volunteers

**At Healthwatch Camden we are supported by 18 volunteers who help us find out what people think is working, and what improvements people would like to make to services.**

## **This year our volunteers helped us:**

- Analyse the high amounts of qualitative data from the survey we undertook to understand the experiences of residents during 'lockdown'. This led to our report, 'Life in Lockdown.'
- With survey outreach including posting in Facebook groups and other online groups, and also printing flyers and posting them around council estates.
- With a project commissioned by North London Partners to find out if NHS should be using religion data in their measurement of taking up of the COVID-19 vaccine.
- Conduct interviews with refugees and shared the findings in a blog: [Refugees finding Covid-19 information 'very difficult' to understand.](#)

### Young volunteer - Sharon

"During the pandemic I felt I wanted to help out and get involved with my community in some way. I have always wanted to volunteer for Healthwatch and this felt like the perfect time. I also wanted to develop more skills, as an university student, being able to volunteer on the side is a great way to learn and develop new skills that complement your studies."

### Promoting Survey - Caroline

"I first volunteered with Healthwatch Camden to help promote a survey about people's health experiences during the pandemic. I volunteered because I think Healthwatch's work is important. Especially right now, given the last year and continuing impact of Covid. I've also really enjoyed it. The team have always been friendly and given very clear information on what to do. It's been interesting work and I feel I've contributed to something valuable."

### Supporting engagement - Julie

"Already planning to volunteer in the health sector on 2020, I wanted to volunteer for Health Watch Camden, partly because I already work with different communities in the borough, but also because of the important role they play in listening to local views, ideas and experiences about health and social care in Camden to help influence change. I performed a variety of tasks from phoning GP surgeries to checking answerphone messages, making connections with local residents in relation to completing a COVID-19 survey, to note taking at webinars and focus groups and qualitative data analysis."



#### 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 Camden](#).



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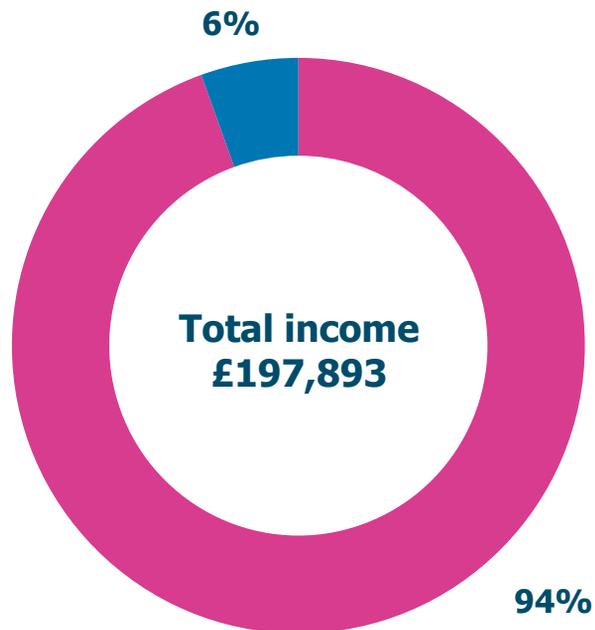
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# Finances

**We are funded by Camden Council under the Health and Social Care Act 2012.**  
 Our core grant this year was £187,000.

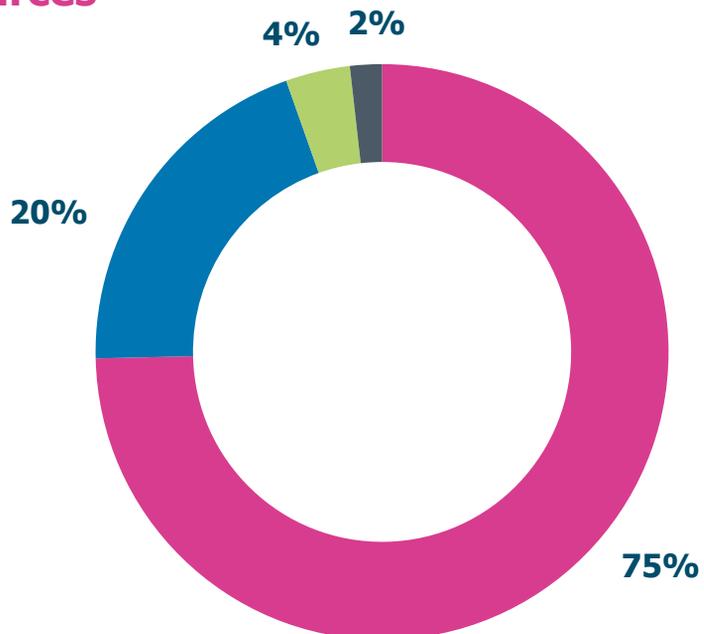
## Income

- Funding from Camden Council
- Additional funding<sup>1</sup>



## Allocation of resources

- Staff costs
- Overheads
- Other costs
- Surplus



We ended the year with a small surplus of 2% of our income (£3,557).

*Full and final accounts will be submitted to the Charity Commission in January 2022.*

<sup>1</sup> Grants, contracts and consultancy services with the NHS and Camden Council.

# Next steps & thank you

## Top five topics for our work in 2021-22

- Understanding the needs of survivors of Domestic Abuse.
- Access to Long COVID or 'Post-COVID Syndrome' support services.
- Access to primary care services, including dentistry and GP services.
- Promotion of early cancer diagnosis.
- Providing support and challenge to the implementation of the new Health & Wellbeing Strategy for Camden and the development of the Integrated Care Partnership.

## Thank you

**We would like to thank a number of people that have supported us this year.**

- Residents who shared their views and experience with us.
- All of our amazing volunteers, staff, and the voluntary organisations that we have been able to work with.
- Commissioners and service providers, in particular: our local GP practices, The Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust, University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Camden Council and its Public Health Team, Camden Clinical Commissioning Group and the North Central London Clinical Commissioning Group.
- Our Trustees: Dr Louise Jones (Chair), John Hoar, Keith Morgan, Paul Webley, Robert Sumerling (Vice-Chair), Sanjay Ganvir and Shahnaz Ahmed.
- Saloni Thakrar who stepped down as Chair in December 2020 having overseen a successful transition of the role to trustee Dr Louise Jones. Saloni provided dedicated service to the Trustee Board over five years and is now engaged in setting up a new charity.



**Healthwatch Camden have really helped us get detailed feedback on the impact of Covid ... [we] have a much more detailed understanding of the experiences of refugees, carers, disabled people and other marginalised groups as a result ... [t]his means that the Camden Local Care Partnership is better prepared to support vulnerable people ... Thank you Healthwatch for everything you are doing! *Sally MacKinnon, Director of Integration, North Central London Clinical Commissioning Group***



# Statutory statements

## Registered address

Healthwatch Camden, 85-57 Bayham Street, Camden, London NW1 0AG

## Charity number

1152552

## Use of trademark

Healthwatch Camden uses the Healthwatch Trademark when undertaking our statutory activities as covered by the licence agreement.

## The way we work

### **Involvement of volunteers and lay people in our governance and decision-making.**

Our Healthwatch board consists of 7 members who work voluntarily to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny to our activities. Our board ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community.

In the financial year 2020-21, the board met nine times and made decisions on matters such as our COVID-19 response plan, our risk register, and ways to develop our digital presence.

We regularly network with voluntary and community organisations in the Borough to reach as wide a range of people as possible. Our Board of Trustees, who all live or work in Camden, guide our work and make sure that what we do is led by what matters to local people.

## 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, attended virtual meetings of community groups and forums, provided our own virtual activities and engaged with the public through social media.

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 worked with three local voluntary and community organisations to reach local people, mostly from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic backgrounds. Most of these people couldn't speak English, so the voluntary organisations translated the survey into different languages that really helped us in understanding their views on the COVID-19 vaccine.

We are particularly grateful for the support of our partners: Kings Cross Brunswick Neighbourhood Association (KCBNA), the African Health Forum, and the Santé Refugee Mental Health Access Project.

## Responses to recommendations and requests

There were no issues or recommendations escalated by Healthwatch Camden to Healthwatch England Committee.

## Health and Wellbeing Board

Healthwatch Camden is represented on the Camden Health and Wellbeing Board by Matthew Parris, Director. A key concern for us has been the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities in Camden.

We presented reports on the differences in experiences of different groups, particularly Black, Asian and other ethnic minority groups (BAME). This led to a discussion among Board Members about strengthening communications with these groups. We continue to participate in this forum and utilise our communications channels to support public health messages.



**Patients and the public want to shape NHS services to local need. The NHS needs to hear that so we can co-produce something for that need. Healthwatch bridges that and keeps the debate relevant - with evidence from patients, carers and the public ... its invaluable to listen to and learn from what they say. *Graeme Caul, Borough Director, Central and North West London Foundation Trust***

*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 promote it through our social media channels, and e-bulletin. We also share the annual report with local public bodies and the voluntary and community sector. It is available in alternative formats.*



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