

On equal terms

Then and now

Annual Report 2020-21



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Message from our Chair

It's been a challenging year for everyone, and one in which we've all had to adapt to a new normal.

While we've had to scale back on our face-to-face engagement due to the pandemic, we've continued to be as busy as ever, gathering feedback by phone, email and online. And while some projects had to be postponed, our focus shifted to the response to Covid-19. Finding out what people thought of information, health and care services, and community support enabled us to share regular insights with providers and commissioners across the BaNES, Swindon and Wiltshire region.

Mental health continues to be a huge focus of our work, and I'm delighted that our new mental health forum is giving people the chance to speak directly to those who run services in Wiltshire, and our online mystery shopping project run by our young volunteers has led to them being involved in the future design of these websites.

I'm incredibly proud that our work helping to improve care and support for local people living with dementia received national recognition in November 2020 with [a Healthwatch England award](#). The award acknowledges the commitment of local organisations, including Alzheimer's Support and Wiltshire Care Partnership, to listen to people's views and to work together to make improvements to services and introduce more support groups across the county.

It was also fantastic to learn we'd received the [Investing in Volunteers accreditation](#) in February 2021. Our brilliant team of volunteers make such a valuable contribution to our work and I'd like to thank them all for their continued support during these tough times.

Finally, thanks to everyone who has shared their story with us over the past year. We're looking forward to getting out and about in the community again to hear about what matters to you.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gillian Leake". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Gillian Leake, Chair of Healthwatch Wiltshire



While we've had to scale back on our face-to-face engagement, we've continued to be as busy as ever.

About us

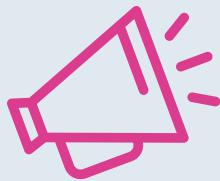
Here to make health and care better

We are the independent champion for people who use health and social care services in Wiltshire. 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 that their views make.



3 Ensuring your views help improve health and care

We want more services to use your views to shape the health and care support you need today and in the future.



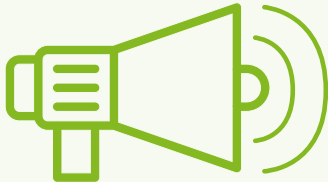
"Local Healthwatch have done fantastic work throughout the country during the Covid-19 pandemic, but there is more work ahead to ensure that everyone's views are heard. Covid-19 has highlighted inequalities and to tackle these unfair health differences we will need those in power to listen, to hear the 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.

Reaching out



We heard from

1,753 people

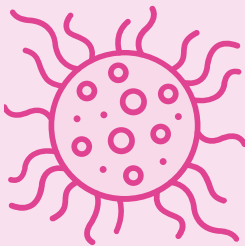
this year about their experiences of health and social care.

We provided advice and information to

8,513 people

this year.

Responding to the pandemic



We engaged with and supported

520 people

about their experiences of health and care services during the pandemic.

Making a difference to care



We published

12 reports

about the improvements people would like to see to health and social care services.

From this we made

36 recommendations

for improvement.

Health and care that works for you



36 volunteers

helped us to carry out our work. In total, they contributed 1,134 hours.

We employ 5 staff

3.8 of whom are full time equivalent. One of these FTE was on maternity leave during the year.

We received

£179,617 in funding

from our local authority in 2020-21.



Mental health



Then: Access to mental health services

Thanks to [our report](#) which asked people to set out their priorities for mental health services in Wiltshire, the commissioners and providers of these services pledged to work more closely together and listen to public feedback to find ways of improving services.

Most people we surveyed (44%) told us that access to mental health services should be the top priority, with many saying that without prompt access, problems can't be tackled early. People were concerned about long waiting lists, the tough criteria and complicated pathways often in place, particularly for children and young people, and that crisis care, although crucial, was considered inadequate.

We also heard how much people valued community support groups but they said more were needed to stop people feeling isolated. However, those who had accessed services felt these had benefited both their mental and physical health.

In response to our report, the then Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust (AWP) and Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust told us they would use the feedback and findings to inform service developments and improvements, and would continue to keep the voice of their service users at the centre of their work.



"We look forward to working with Healthwatch, service users and the public to improve and deliver the best mental health care service across our county."

Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group



Now: Wiltshire Mental Health Open Forum

Our online forum provides a unique opportunity for people to speak directly to those who run mental health services in Wiltshire, talking about their experiences and sharing their ideas for ways services could be improved.

Set up in July 2020, the forum is a collaboration between us, service users and mental health service provider AWP, and is supported by a range of organisations including Wiltshire Council, Richmond Fellowship, Carer Support Wiltshire and Citizens Advice.

As well as sharing their experiences, forum members can get involved in the shaping and development of mental health services in Wiltshire, including:

- The redesign of the Recovery and Inclusion service, which is to be set up in response to an expected increase in demand for mental health services following the Covid-19 pandemic.
- A new initiative by Citizens Advice to pilot a service providing extra support to help those with mental health to act on advice they have been given.

Forum members, many of them with lived experience of mental ill health, have also worked together to produce [their own comprehensive guide](#) to mental health and wellbeing services on offer in Wiltshire, as a way of helping people who are struggling with their mental health to find the right support for them quickly and easily.



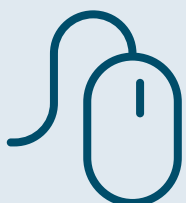
“We have been really pleased with the way the forum is going and the willingness of people to join us virtually and get their views heard.”

AWP Local Involvement Coordinators Teresa Bridges and Christina Gregory



“I have found it very helpful to think we can help others with mental health problems.”

Forum member



To find out more > > >

For more on this work, see our [Mental Health: What Matters Most? report](#) and find out more about the work of the Wiltshire Mental Health Open Forum at: healthwatchwiltshire.co.uk/wiltshire-mental-health-open-forum



Children and young people's mental health



Then: Young Listeners project

Our work to train students to become Young Listeners, hearing the views of their peers on health and wellbeing support in school, won us national recognition.

In 2016, we worked with Youth Action Wiltshire and Community First's Community Organisers, [to train a team of young people](#) in safeguarding, communication and listening skills. One of the key themes that arose was that young people didn't know where to access support for physical or mental health in schools, so we recognised more work was needed on this.

The following year, Wiltshire Council's Wiltshire Health and Wellbeing Survey found that children and young people needed more support and knowledge in mental and physical health, including coping with stress, body image and healthy eating.

Continuing to work with Youth Action Wiltshire and Community First, [we developed a different method to engage young people](#), this time in schools. We recruited 18 young people from secondary schools across Wiltshire to take part in a programme to build confidence, gain new skills and increase resilience. Some attended further training to become Young Listeners, and carried out "listening" with their peers to hear their views of health and wellbeing support within their school. Students told Young Listeners they wanted:

- More opportunities to discuss their mental health and wellbeing.
- Easily accessible and better health and wellbeing support in schools.
- To be able to talk about their issues without judgement and be respected by staff and professionals.
- Shorter waiting times for support.

This feedback was shared with commissioners so it could be used to shape future services. The project, carried out under our previous provider Evolving Communities, earned us [a Healthwatch England award](#) for Volunteering in 2018. Further work in 2019-20 saw us [engage with 197 young people in schools and colleges](#) who identified mental health support as a priority area for young people.



Now: Finding online mental health support during the pandemic

Our mystery shopping review of online mental health services for children and young people in Wiltshire has led to website changes and an invitation to young volunteers to get involved in future development.

When young people told us that being able to access information about their mental health and make informed choices was important to them, our team of young volunteers decided to review the online support available in Wiltshire in a mystery shopping project.

The [Young Healthwatch Wiltshire](#) volunteers created a series of scenarios around conditions such as depression and schizophrenia, to review the Barnardo's On Your Mind and Wiltshire Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) websites, identifying what information was useful and relevant, what was good about the websites, and what could be improved.

While the volunteers saw the information provided as a good starting point, they thought it didn't go into enough detail, particularly on some of the lesser-known conditions. They also thought the information could be more accessible, and better targeted towards different age groups.

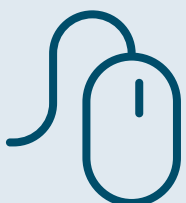
Their suggestions for improvement included a search bar to aid navigation, and a chat function to provide peer support in a safe environment. They also wanted to see young people involved in the future design and development of the websites.

In response to the [young volunteers' findings](#), changes have already been made to the On Your Mind website with the introduction of a search bar, while a translation tool and chat function are currently being looked into. The young volunteers have also been invited to take part in future testing of the CAMHS website during its revamp.



"We are really grateful for the comprehensive and insightful feedback... We look forward to inviting the young people to join the future co-production and user-testing events alongside our Participation teams to look at the changes we have made in response to the report."

Viki Laakkonen, Deputy Medical Director, Oxford Health Foundation Trust



To find out more > > >

Read more on [what young people had to say about health and care services](#) in our report, and get more detail on our young volunteers' findings in our [Review of Online Mental Health Support for Children and Young People](#).



Place of Safety



Then: Gathering experiences of a Place of Safety

Our survey asked if people's care had been affected by a reduction in Place of Safety services in the area.

In 2018, we worked with Healthwatch Swindon to gather feedback from people who had been taken to the Bluebell Place of Safety, at Green Lane Hospital in Devizes, following the temporary closure of facilities in Swindon and Wiltshire.

After receiving some negative publicity because of the distance from Swindon to Devizes, the then Swindon Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) appointed us to hear from people directly affected by the changes to understand their experiences.

Our survey looked at the experiences of 13 people taken to the Bluebell Unit in times of extreme mental distress. Most of them reported that their experience was a positive one, and despite the distance to Devizes from where some people lived, most felt it was the right place for them to be at the time.

Staff were praised for their care, but some of the temporary agency staff came under fire, leading us to recommend that their training be aligned with that of permanent staff, to ensure that high standards of service were maintained.

We also recommended that staff were open with people using the service and gave them as much information as possible throughout each stage.



"We welcome the findings of the report and thank Healthwatch for their feedback and recommendations."

Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust



Now: Giving a voice to people who have gone through a mental health crisis

Experiences of people taken to the Bluebell Unit during the pandemic are set to help shape the reconfiguration of mental health services in our region.

Working with BaNES, Swindon and Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group (BSW CCG) and Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust (AWP), we conducted 32 in-depth telephone interviews with people who had been taken to the Bluebell Place of Safety in Devizes during Covid-19.

We asked people to reflect on what happened before being taken to the Place of Safety, what they thought might have prevented them needing to be taken there, and whether they thought being taken there had been an appropriate course of action.

- Most people we spoke to felt that Bluebell provided a caring and appropriate environment for them at a time of crisis.
- Most said they understood their mental health assessment and its outcomes, although not everyone agreed with these.
- More than half said they had asked for help before going to the Place of Safety and mentioned difficulties accessing the right support.

Although situations are often complex, [our findings](#) suggest there may be instances where the need for people to be taken to a Place of Safety could be avoided, and our recommendations include improving access to community mental health support to enable people to get the right support quickly when they are in crisis.



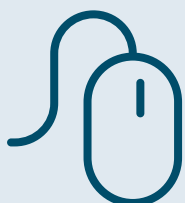
“Thank you to the team for giving a voice to people whose opinions are not often heard in a format which has the potential to improve the wellbeing of people in crisis/extreme distress.”

Caroline Mellers – BSW CCG Crisis Workstream Lead



“We are very grateful to Healthwatch for undertaking a fantastic piece of qualitative review work to help our system better understand the experience of people detained on a section 136... We will be using the report as a foundation to our system change to improve experiences and outcomes.”

Lucy Baker – Director of Planning and Transformational Programmes at BSW CCG



To find out more > > >

For more on this work, see the [Health Based Place of Safety Survey](#) report from 2018 and read our findings from interviews carried out this year in the [Experiences of using Bluebell Place of Safety](#) report.



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 people by:

- Providing up to date advice on the Covid-19 response locally.
- Linking people to reliable up-to-date information.
- Supporting the vaccine roll-out, including sharing information on the local programme.
- Helping people to access the services they need.

Top four areas that people have contacted us about:



Mental health



Dentistry



GP services



Vaccines

A greater focus on information provision

What you need to know about the Covid-19 vaccine

Advice and Information – 14 January 2021

Take a look at what you need to know about the Covid-19 vaccination programme including how you will know when it's your turn, where to go, and why it's important.



Early in the pandemic, our role quickly became much more focused on providing people with clear, consistent and concise advice and information on our website to help address people's questions and concerns. Over the course of the year, our advice and information pages have been accessed more than 8,200 times.

The key information people were looking for included:

- Latest Government and NHS advice on Covid-19
- Support available in the community
- Q&A on the Covid-19 vaccine



Contact us to get the information you need

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 is here for you.



healthwatchwiltshire.co.uk

01225 434218

info@healthwatchwiltshire.co.uk



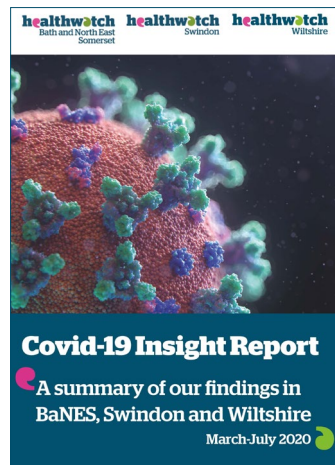
Highlighting care home good practice

Keeping care home residents in touch with their families and getting them involved in activities has been a huge challenge for care homes during Covid-19. We heard about the commitment of care home staff in caring for their residents and the strong relationships they've formed with them, and we received feedback about some of the innovative ways that care homes were keeping their residents in touch. [Our report](#) describes the initiatives put in place by local care homes to help residents stay connected and engaged.



Signposting to community support

During the early stages of the pandemic, our helpdesk received a call from Mrs S* who said she didn't have any food and that no one was able to get any shopping for them. They gave Mrs S two numbers for local community groups that offered support with shopping and sent further details by email. The helpdesk followed up the call and Mrs S said she had used the information, and someone was now collecting her shopping and medication. She thanked the helpdesk for their help.

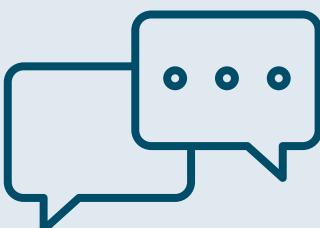


Providing ongoing insight

Between March and July 2020, we worked with Healthwatch Swindon and Healthwatch BaNES to collect feedback on what people thought about information, services, community support and their wellbeing. [Our series of Covid-19 Insight Reports](#) detail our findings, which were combined with those from the CCG's Citizens Panel. Our latest survey asking for people's general views on services during the pandemic closed in March 2021 and had over 140 responses. We are now analysing the findings.

*Name has been changed

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 is here for you.



healthwatchwiltshire.co.uk



01225 434218



info@healthwatchwiltshire.co.uk



Volunteers

At Healthwatch Wiltshire we are supported by 44 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:

- Promoted Healthwatch Wiltshire and our role within their local communities.
- Passed on advice and information and helped us gather feedback.
- Helped people have their say from home by carrying out interviews over the phone.
- Reviewed documents for us and our partners.



Maddie, Young Healthwatch Wiltshire volunteer

“I took part in the online mystery shop as work experience when my exams were cancelled by Covid-19. I have personally felt quite empowered as a young person taking part in this study. It often feels that information for children is more information for parents, or the information is not accessible for young people. So, by taking part in this study as a young person I feel that I can hopefully make a difference for young people in my area.”

Margaret, Board Member

“We have all learnt a great deal since March 2020 and consequently many changes have been made in health care provision. Being part of Healthwatch Wiltshire has supported my understanding of the challenges faced by both Wiltshire residents and health and social care staff. Finding out from the people of Wiltshire what works well, what needs to be improved, who may be missing out and how to report this information is key to supporting improvements in services.”



Readers' panel

Our volunteer readers' panel reviews documents and other materials to make sure they're accessible to the public. This year, documents reviewed include the Clinical Commissioning Group's Engagement strategy and new Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire (BSW) partnership website, Great Western Hospital's Diversity Strategy and Wiltshire Council's Safeguarding flyer. Our partners have told us they find the panel's feedback helpful and have been able to incorporate many of the suggestions made into their documents.



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 us at Healthwatch Wiltshire.

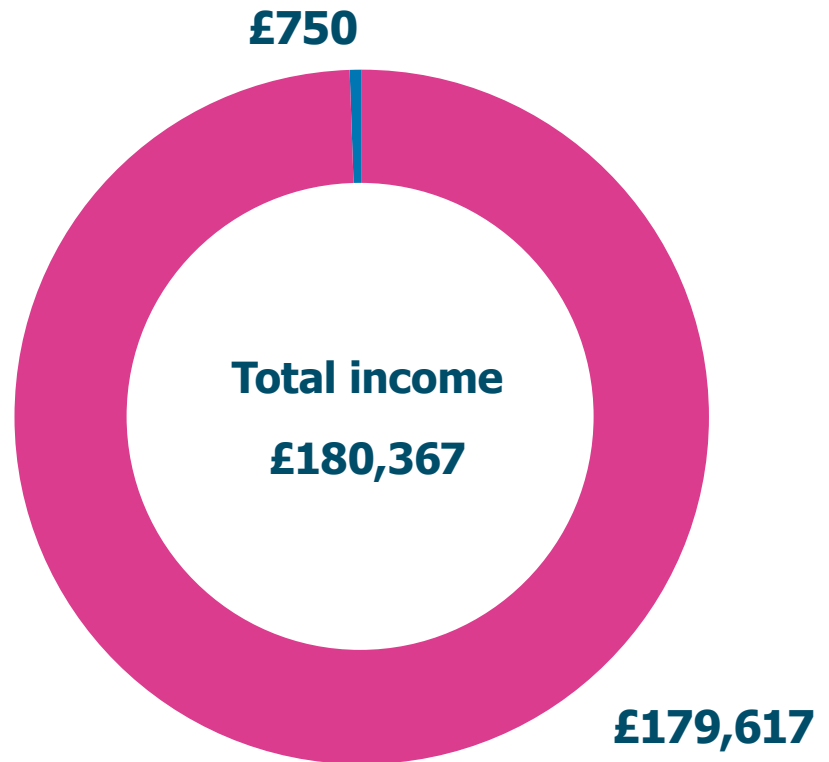
-  healthwatchwiltshire.co.uk/volunteer
-  **01225 434218**
-  info@healthwatchwiltshire.co.uk

Finances

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

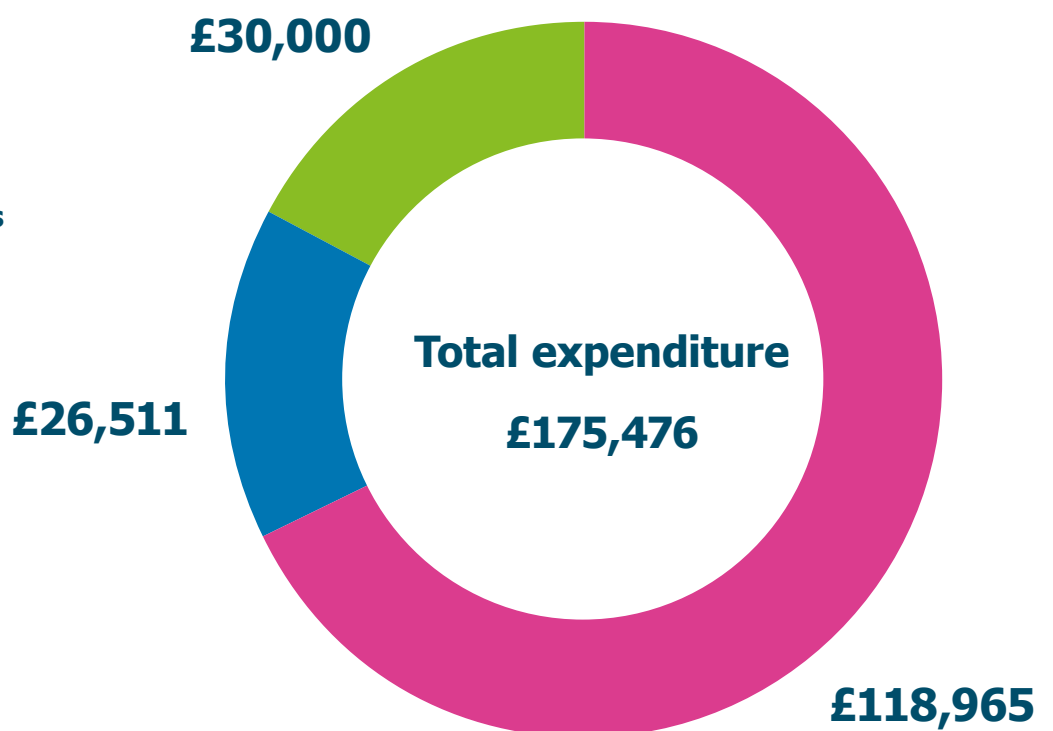
Income

- Funding received from local authority
- Additional funding



Expenditure

- Staff costs
- Operational costs
- Support and administration



Next steps & thank you

Top priorities for 2021-22

- **Mental health** – Listening to experiences of mental health services and shaping service redesign.
- **Primary care** – Gathering feedback on primary care services such as GP surgeries and dentists with a focus on access, both face-to-face and digital.
- **Children and young people** – Young Healthwatch volunteers will identify areas important to them and seek the views of children and young people.
- **Hospital discharge pathways** – Hearing experiences of the discharge process from acute hospital to home.

Next steps

As Covid-19 restrictions ease, we are looking forward to returning to face-to-face engagement and completing projects that had been delayed due to the pandemic, such as our survey asking people with autism for their views on services.

New projects on primary care and hospital discharge pathways will begin, and we'll be looking at how we can work with HMP Erlestoke to gather feedback on health services from prisoners.

We will also be launching our Community Cash Fund scheme to hear from seldom heard groups, and we'll continue to follow up our recommendations from this year's reports to see what impact changes to services have had for local people.



"We're looking forward to working with people from a variety of backgrounds, as well as having the opportunity to meet and listen to individuals and groups with important stories to tell us. We pledge to convey their message effectively to those who commission services and ensure that they are heard."

Gillian Leake – Chair of Healthwatch Wiltshire



Statutory statements

About us

Healthwatch Wiltshire, The Independent Living Centre, St George's Place, Semington, Trowbridge BA14 6JQ.

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

Help and Care hold the contract for Healthwatch Wiltshire. Help and Care, A49, Aerodrome Studios, Airfield Way, Christchurch, Dorset, BH23 3TS. Registered Company No. 3187574. Registered Charity No. 1055056.

The way we work

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

Our Healthwatch board consists of 9 members who work on a voluntary basis 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 local community.

Through 2020/21 the board met 12 times and discussions included our role and relationship with the emerging Integrated Care System, the Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire Partnership (BSW).

Our work priorities are driven by what people have told us is important to them, through our surveys and feedback forms, information and signposting enquiries, web page views, and our mental health forum.

Methods 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 and email, 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 have done this by working with [Wiltshire Service Users Network](#) (WSUN), which runs the [Wiltshire Autism Hub](#), to learn more about the experiences of adults with autism when they attend health and care appointments, and whether they feel they are getting the support and information they need from local services.

We ensure this annual report is made available to as many people and partner organisations as possible. It will be published on our website and shared with our mailing list of 800 subscribers and on social media.

2020-21 priorities

| Project / Activity Area | Changes made to services |
|--|---|
| Providing local and national information and guidance. | Our website is regularly updated with local and national information and seen as a trusted source for information. |
| Monitoring people's experiences of health and social care services as they change and adapt. | Findings from our Covid Insight reports, combined with those from the CCG's Citizens Panel, are being used to plan health services for the local people aiming to ensure future services reduce the inequity gap, highlighted during the pandemic. |
| Hearing views of people living with autism around service provision. | This work was delayed due to the pandemic and we expect it to be completed in summer 2021. |
| Listen to adults, children and young people to hear their experiences of mental health services and to ensure patients are involved in service redesign. | Our online mental health forum provides an opportunity for people to share their views directly with those who run services. Our young volunteers reviewed online mental health support for young people and have been invited to take part in the development of these websites. |

Responses to recommendations and requests

All providers responded to our requests for information and recommendations. 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 Wiltshire is represented on Wiltshire Council's Health and Wellbeing Board by our Chair, Gillian Leake. During 2020/21 our representative has carried out this role by regularly attending the meetings and workshops and reminding partner agencies about the importance of involving local people. The Health and Wellbeing Board meetings were cancelled early in the pandemic but were resumed virtually in July.

At the September meeting, we presented an update of our recent work and were pleased that two of our young volunteers were able to attend to talk about their role in the Young Healthwatch mystery shopping project and were thanked by the chair of the Board for their valuable contribution.

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