

#SpeakUp: Burngreave Messenger

What is #SpeakUp?

#SpeakUp is Healthwatch Sheffield's micro grants programme, offering funding of between £500-£1000 to not-for-profit, voluntary, and community groups. The purpose is to run a project which will reach out to people across Sheffield, and hear what matters to them in relation to health and social care.

By working with groups which are already trusted partners in their communities, we can make sure we're hearing from even more people, including those whose voices aren't often heard by decision makers.



Burngreave Messenger

The Burngreave Messenger is an independent community based newspaper which is delivered free to over 9000 households in the Burngreave Ward of Sheffield. The Messenger aims to:

- Increase awareness of services and opportunities available to Burngreave residents
- Increase involvement by Burngreave residents in local groups and community activities
- Increase confidence and pride in the Burngreave community
- Enable greater participation in the Messenger project by Burngreave residents who might find it difficult to be involved
- Increase the capacity of Burngreave residents to identify and address problems in their community
- Increase an understanding between different sections of the community



Healthwatch Sheffield

Healthwatch Sheffield Healthwatch Sheffield helps adults, children and young people influence and improve how NHS and Social Care services are designed and run. We're completely independent and not part of the NHS or Sheffield City Council. We want to understand your experiences, and help your views to influence decision-makers in the city.



Background

Covid-19 disruption

We originally applied for a #SpeakUp grant in 2020, and this was awarded shortly before the first Covid-19 lockdown. This disrupted our original plan, which was to work more closely with particular communities in Burngreave (such as the Roma community and asylum seekers) to highlight their voices while sharing experiences of health and social care. Due to the disruption of ways of working during Covid, and the results of a rapidly changing health and care landscape, we postponed the project and completed it in 2021 instead, with a stronger focus on information-sharing.

Why did we carry out this project?

Burngreave is one of the five most deprived wards in Sheffield, according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)¹. The IMD considers income, employment, education, health, crime, barriers to housing & services, and living environment.

We know that those from more deprived communities have poorer health outcomes compared to the general population, and face additional barriers to accessing health and social care services. We suspect they are also less likely to speak up about the issues they do face, whether through formal NHS complaints systems or by engaging with other systems like Healthwatch or the Care Quality Commission.

We wanted to ensure that our community knew about where they could access help and support, where they could find information, and ways they could feed into health and social care systems. We also wanted to share information that could help people to manage their own health and wellbeing, so we dedicated several pages of the Messenger to health & wellbeing content over three different issues.

We showcased some local residents talking about their own experiences with health and social care services, or health and wellbeing more generally, in order to inspire others to talk too.

Who did we speak to?

We have a large readership; the Burngreave Messenger is delivered free to over 9000 households in the Burngreave ward of Sheffield, including Ellesmere, Carwood, Firshill, Fir Vale, Grimesthorpe, Osgathorpe, Pitsmoor, Pye Bank and parts of Shirecliffe.

¹ IMD information on the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment website:

<https://sheffieldcc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=d3358b124a964624ae2457535a1a60b4>

Content

What stories did we run?

- [Healthwatch Sheffield priorities | 23rd March 2020](#) This article introduces Healthwatch Sheffield, and invites readers to have a say in setting priority areas for the year ahead - which aspects of health & social care to people in Burngreave feel are most important?
- [As one door opens... | 14th June 2021](#) This article talks about balancing the negatives and positives of lockdown - loss and isolation, but also the opportunities to reflect and get out of a routine. A local mindfulness and yoga teacher shared a quick breathing/relaxation technique to calm the nervous system
- [Cultural barriers to vaccination | 14th June 2021](#) In this article, a local Muslim GP from an ethnic minority background spoke to us about the factors leading to vaccine hesitancy, which is a big issue for many of Burngreave's communities
- [Chronically ill find silver linings in lockdown | 14th June 2021](#) This article shares some of the upsides to lockdown for people with chronic illnesses; having to move things online has meant many activities have become more accessible to them. It also shares information about the therapeutic benefits of arts & crafts, and about Sheffield's patient support groups for those living with ME, Fibromyalgia, and Long Covid
- [Running out of excuses | 20th September 2021](#) This article is written by a local resident who talks about motivating himself to do regular physical exercise
- [Support groups can help patients access better care | 20th September 2021](#) This story is the personal experience of a local resident, who found peer support extremely helpful while her child was undergoing treatment for a complex condition.

Next steps and conclusion

After running the articles above, we also shared a Healthwatch Sheffield feedback form in the Messenger. This allowed people to write down their experiences and send them to Healthwatch directly.

We hope that this project not only shared information that may have helped local people manage their wellbeing during Covid-19, but also increased and amplified their voices, and opened a line of communication into a statutory organisation which people may not have engaged with before.