

Championing what matters to you

Healthwatch Central West London
Annual Report 2021-22



Contents

Message from our chair	3
About us	5
Our year in review	6
Listening to your experiences	8
Advice and information	12
Volunteers	14
Finances and future priorities	16
Statutory statements	17

Message from our chair

I'm delighted to share with you our 2021-22 Annual Report.

Throughout the last 12 months we have been listening to local residents, patients, and carers about their experience of using health and social care services. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the deep-rooted health inequalities that exist in our communities. It remains our mission to work to ensure that health and social care services work for everyone across Westminster and Kensington & Chelsea.

Reducing barriers to healthcare access

This year we have been working to improve the accessibility of local services. This has involved exploring how well digital healthcare tools are working for people. We held a series of focus groups and interviews with groups from across our communities and developed a comprehensive set of recommendations designed to ensure digital health services become as accessible and user-friendly as possible.

We have also expanded the membership of Young Healthwatch and worked with our young volunteers to improve access to services and tackle the mental health issues experienced by young people post-lockdown.

Reaching across our communities

We remain committed to ensuring that we hear from as many different people and communities as possible. Much of our work continues to involve connecting with groups we haven't spoken to before and ensuring that everyone can help shape local services for the better.

I'm very proud that we expanded our ground-breaking Small Grants Programme this year. We provided six grassroots community groups with support to capture their communities' experience of using health and social care services. The programme is vital in strengthening our community connections and ensuring that we are speaking to those who find it most difficult to be heard in conversations about health and social care services. You can read more about the impact of this work later in the report.

None of this work would be possible without the commitment and enthusiasm of our staff team, volunteers, and members, and I would like to thank you all for your hard work. As this is the last year we will deliver the Healthwatch contract for Westminster and Kensington & Chelsea, I would also like to mention all the special work carried out by our Local Committee, members, and partner organisations. We are proud of what we have achieved together over the past nine years. It has been a pleasure to work with you.

We will continue to contribute to improving services in the area through our work with the NHS on mental health transformation and supporting patient participation groups.

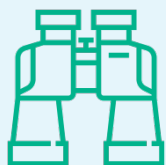


Christine Vigars
Healthwatch Central West London Chair

About us

Your health and social care champion

Healthwatch Central West London is your local health and social care champion. From North Kensington to Pimlico and everywhere in between, we make sure NHS leaders and other decision makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care. We can also help you to find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.



Our vision

A world where we can all get the health and care we need.



Our mission

To make sure people's experiences help make health and care better.



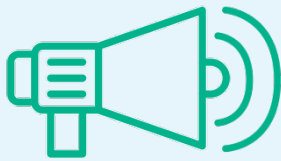
Our values

- Listening to people and making sure their voices are heard.
- Including everyone in the conversation – especially those who don't always have their voice heard.
- Analysing different people's experiences to learn how to improve care.
- Acting on feedback and driving change.
- Partnering with care providers, Government, and the voluntary sector – serving as the public's independent advocate.

Our year in review

Find out how we have engaged and supported people.

Reaching out



Over 1,000 people

shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.

104 focus groups

surveys, interviews, and public meetings held with local patients, residents, and carers.

How we made a difference to care



We published

8 reports

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

Held 129 meetings

with local Councillors, service commissioners, and other decision-makers where we reported on what people told us.

How we made it happen



We're lucky to have

49

outstanding volunteers, who give up their time to make care better for our community.

We're funded by our local authority. In 2021-22 we received:

£310,000

We also currently employ

12 staff

who help us carry out this work. previous year.

How we've made a difference throughout the year

These are the biggest projects we worked on from April 2021 to March 2022.

In the community



Small Grants Programme

We partnered with six local organisations to hear from people who find it hardest to be heard in conversations about health and care services.



Communities of Interest workshops

We piloted an innovative nationwide project to improve engagement with black African communities, and reduce health inequalities.

Care in care settings



Mystery Shopping

Through scripted calls we assessed whether different council departments could support people to get help for their safeguarding concerns.



Dental health

We engaged with care home residents, their friends and family, and staff, to find out how well dental health services are working for care home residents.

Access to services



Digital access

We listened to patients' views about accessing health care remotely and designed recommendations for services providers.



Access to GPs

We focused on taking down the barriers and ensuring that patient's choice is respected when accessing help at GP practices.

Young mental health



Young people and GPs

Young Healthwatch researched the effectiveness of GP websites in meeting the needs of local young people.



What's important to care leavers

We met with young people who had recently left care to listen nonjudgmentally, have some fun, and provide information and guidance.

Listening to your experiences

Services can't make improvements without hearing your views. That's why over the last year we have made listening to feedback from all areas of the community a priority. This allows us to understand the full picture, and feedback to services to help them improve.



Exploring how well digital healthcare tools work

Thanks to people sharing their thoughts and experiences of using digital healthcare tools, we've developed a comprehensive set of recommendations designed to ensure digital health services become as accessible and user-friendly as possible.

Before the pandemic, the NHS began initiating an ongoing 'digital first' strategy. From physiotherapy to GP appointments, many services are being moved online.

To find out how well this strategy is working for all people, we engaged with a range of organisations and groups from communities across Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster, including a majority of people from Black African, South Asian, Arab and Central European communities. These groups we worked with included Midaye Somali Development Network, Macular Society, Groundwork London, One You Westminster, For Women, and Age UK Kensington & Chelsea.



"If you use the online system rarely, a month later you forget. You forget how you did it. My son often guides me how to do it. We don't have enough experiences."



There were a number of recurring issues and themes which emerged over the course of the project, including:

- A clear majority of respondents do not want digital health tools to replace other modes of healthcare.
- Respondents who don't speak English, or who have English as an additional language, consistently reported serious issues with the visibility and availability of functioning online translation services.
- A majority of respondents told us that they have concerns about security and privacy when using digital health tools. Respondents were concerned about sharing personal information via the internet, and about having confidential conversations with medical professions at home without being overheard.

What difference did this make

We have presented our findings to the Westminster Health and Social Care Select Committee, the Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee (Kensington & Chelsea), and to Anne Reighly, Bi-Borough Director of Public Health.

Improving dental health and care in care homes

We have been carrying out engagement with care home residents, their family and friends, and staff across Westminster and Kensington & Chelsea, to find out how well dental care services are working for residents.

Maintaining dental health is essential to the wellbeing of care home residents. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we were concerned that care home residents would not be able to properly communicate any concerns about their dental care. We also felt there was a lack of clarity around dental health provision for residents while access to care homes was restricted.



“Throughout COVID, none of the residents could see a dentist”

Care home staff member



What did we find out?

Our engagement revealed a mixed picture. While there was an acceptance that delivering good dental health services to care home residents had been particularly challenging during the pandemic, many residents were not getting the care they needed.

We found that care homes need more home visits from dentists. It can be challenging for many residents to visit a dental practice in person, which is preventing residents from receiving care. This is particularly the case for people receiving end of life care, or those with dementia. We also found that residents did not see a dentist often enough. Many residents told us they only saw a dentist if they had a problem, rather than receiving routine check-ups.

Residents told us that most care home staff are knowledgeable about dental health and support them to maintain good dental hygiene daily. They also told us that many staff were doing their best under very difficult circumstances. However, we found that many care homes did not have dental health policies and even where care homes did have relevant policies, many staff were unaware of them. This is a key issue which needs addressing.

Three ways we have made a difference for the community

Throughout our work we gather information about health inequalities by speaking to people whose experiences aren't often heard.



Listening to care leavers

We reached out to a group comprised of young people aged 16+ of varying nationalities, including Eritrea and Sudan.

We contacted the group and arranged to run an inclusive and creative activity that encouraged the young people to think about how a *fictional* young person might find help. The young people had some compelling ideas and we offered further routes to explore.

We were commended by the North West London Clinical Commissioning Group for this engagement and explicitly asked what more could be done to support this group, and groups like them.



Improving safeguarding pathways

We carried out a mystery shopping exercise to find out how well safeguarding pathways are signposted by council departments in Westminster and Kensington & Chelsea.

Over a four-week period, we called a range of local council departments to find out how well staff were able to identify safeguarding concerns and signpost callers to relevant sources of help, support, and advice.

We reported our findings to the council to help them improve their safeguarding procedures for the future.



Improving GP websites

We conducted a comprehensive website mapping exercise to establish what mental wellbeing support there is on local GP practice websites for young people.

After our Young People's Survey highlighted a distinct lack of connection between young people and their GP practices, we carried out this work to identify the barriers to connection between young people and GPs.

Advice and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch Central West London is here for you. In times of worry or stress, we can provide confidential support and free information to help you understand your options and get the help you need. Whether it's finding an NHS dentist, how to make a complaint or choosing a good care home for a loved one – you can count on us.

This year we helped people by:

- Providing up to date information on COVID-19
- Linking people to reliable information they could trust
- Supporting the COVID-19 vaccination and booster programme
- Helping people to access the services they need



Raising awareness of Patient Groups

We continued talking to GP practice patient participation groups (PPG) who told us that most practices suspended patients' group activities during the pandemic, and many were still not up and running.

During that time significant changes took place in GP practices. Remote access and digital consultations replaced traditional ways of looking after patients.



PPG members felt that communicating and actively seeking patients' feedback about those changes was particularly important and they asked us for support with restarting patient groups.

We held conversations with NHS borough managers and asked North West London Clinic Commissioning Group to prioritise patient engagement.

As a result, several GP practices contacted us for advice and relaunched their Patient Group post COVID-19.

Carers Forum

We partnered with the Carers Network to hold conversations about how GP practices are supporting carers.

Carers explained that a recognition of caring responsibilities is important when choosing the right treatment plan. Talking to someone who understands the needs of both the cared for person and the carer themselves helps them create a treatment plan that works for everyone.



Carers said that the continuity of care is very important to them as it builds trust and supports them in their caring role.

Most carers didn't know that GP practices keep a carers register and use it to support carers, for example by offering appointments that fit around caring responsibilities, monitoring carers' health, and offering flu vaccinations.

Volunteers

We're supported by a team of amazing volunteers who are the heart of Healthwatch Central West London. Thanks to their efforts in the community, we're able to understand what is working and what needs improving in NHS and social care.



Victoria Borwick

"I really enjoy volunteering with Healthwatch Central West London as I think that the work that we do is vital in scrutinising and improving local health services.

I have previously been an elected representative, and I continue to serve on our local GP patient liaison committee.

I have four children and sadly two of them have spent a long time being helped by the NHS. One of our children is disabled and I am always keen to make sure that everyone has access to good healthcare, especially primary care.

I appreciate that the Healthwatch team actually do practical work – surveying service delivery and getting first hand experience from patients to feed back into the system.

The Healthwatch team in Central West London are very proactive and keen to really find out how the services are delivered locally and able to take on projects. They are also very aware that not everyone has access to a computer and thus it is important to reach out to those who often need more services, but don't know what is available for them."



Do you feel inspired?

We are always on the lookout for new volunteers, so please get in touch today.



www.healthwatchcwl.co.uk



020 8968 7049



volunteer@healthwatchcentralwestlondon.org

Finance and future priorities

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

Income		Expenditure	
Funding received from local authority	£430,811	Staff costs	£412,240
Additional funding	£149,331	Operational costs	£132,762
Total income	£580,142	Total expenditure	£545,002

Top three priorities for 2022–23

1. Primary Care – access to information
2. Building bridges of trust with seldom heard groups
3. Supporting young people

Next steps

The pandemic has shone a stark light on the impact of existing inequalities when using health and care services, highlighting the importance of championing the voices of those who all too often go unheard.

Over the coming years, our goal is to help reduce these inequalities by making sure your voice is heard, and decision makers reduce the barriers you face, regardless of whether that’s because of where you live, income or race.

Statutory statements

About us

Healthwatch Central West London, 5.22 Grand Union Studios, 332 Ladbrooke Grove, London, W10 5AD.

Healthwatch Central West London 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 8 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 diverse local community.

Through 2020/21 the board met 12 times and, working with staff, volunteers and our Local Committees, made decisions on matters such as the annual work programme priorities, and a range of critical and non-critical governance matters like the scheme of delegation, staff and volunteer wellbeing programme and supporting the small grants programme.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities, Our Local Committee meet regularly and attend our trustee meetings, feeding local intelligence and lived experience directly into the organisation's planning and delivery. Our Small Grants Programme enables us to connect with local community groups, building our networks and gathering a more diverse range of experiences. Our day to day engagement with local people in forums, focus groups, signposting calls, and local events feed directly into both our work plan and the feedback and intelligence we share with commissioners and service providers to improve experiences and outcomes of local health and social care services.

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 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.

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, send it out to our network of service providers, local commissioners, councillors and to local residents and patients.

Responses to recommendations and requests

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 Enfield is represented on the Westminster and RBKC Health and Wellbeing Board by Tanya Kerno. During 2020-21 our representative effectively carried out this role by sharing the experiences of local people throughout the year.



healthwatch
Central West London

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