

Laying the foundations

Healthwatch Brent
Annual Report 2021-22



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Judith Davey
Healthwatch
Brent CEO

“In the first year of The Advocacy Project delivering Healthwatch Brent, I’m proud to see the service go from strength to strength. Particularly in the post-Covid world we find ourselves in, when access to health and social care services has been so severely affected, Healthwatch plays a crucial role helping people speak up for the services they need. In our first year, we’ve fostered strong connections with local communities – particularly those who are seldom heard – and built solid partnerships with key organisations. The impact is already being felt, and we look forward to seeing the changes our residents need.”

Message from our chair



Shyama Perera
Healthwatch Brent
Advisory Group Chair

This has literally been a new year for Healthwatch Brent. In the 12 months since The Advocacy Project took over the contract for the borough, we’ve been on an exciting – and concerning – learning curve.

We were all fully aware of the diminution of the offer – and the opportunities – for tailored health and social care during two years of lockdown. This was a disaster countrywide and particularly in Brent. Deprivation stalks our patchwork of a borough. Established communities struggle to be heard, and evolving new communities and cultures each require, and experience, health and care services differently.

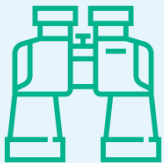
Our focus throughout has been to draw on their experiences and feed that information to the organisations and statutory bodies that advocate for change: our council, our GP services, our local hospitals, care homes, the Clinical Commissioning Group. Our data also helps them assess and address already existing areas of concern.

In addition to our own – new – research, and supporting countrywide data collection, we’ve tracked the recommendations made by the previous contract holders to measure effectiveness. It’s an ongoing process. The team has found its feet at a good moment. Local health and care services should now be returning to normal, yet we see residual and potentially long-term problems all around. We’ll be holding a magnifying glass to those problem areas, seeing them through the eyes of our most needy, and helping change that landscape over the next year.

About us

Your health and social care champion

Healthwatch Brent is your local health and social care champion. From Queensbury to Kilburn 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.

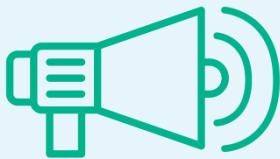
Acting on feedback and driving change.

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



- 32797** people visited our website for information and guidance
- 679** shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.
- 118** shared their views about the Brent Primary Care Winter Access schemes.
- 966** engaged with us and shared their views via social media
- 578** receive our newsletter for more info on health and social.

Making a difference to care



- We published **7 reports** about the improvements people would like to see to health and social care services.
- 125 people** came to us for clear advice and information about topics such as mental health, GP, Dentistry and Adult Social Services.

Health and care that works for you



- We're lucky to have **13** outstanding volunteers, who gave up their time to make care better for our community.
- We're funded by our local authority. In 2021-22 we received: **£134,722**
- We also currently employ **4 staff** who help us carry out this work.

How we've made a difference throughout the year

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

Spring



We spoke to key community groups about the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy interim emerging priorities, hearing their views and ensuring residents could have their say..



Volunteers engaged with excluded communities to understand vaccine hesitancy and increase vaccination take up at various locations across Brent.

Summer



We engaged with groups in Stonebridge and Harlesden to develop an in depth understanding of the communities, their specific requirements and how statutory services can best meet their needs.



We supported stage three of the Joint Health and Wellbeing consultation to understand whether different groups felt that the strategy met their needs, and to determine whether there was anything missing.

Autumn



Teaming up with the other seven North West London Healthwatch, we heard from patients of what they think of the NHS eConsult services and what improvements people may like to see.



We followed up on the recommendations made in 2018 in our report: 'Identifying Young Carers in Substance Misuse Households' to see what outcomes had been achieved.

Winter



We heard that Brent patients were struggling to see their GP face-to-face. So we produced a report with recommendations for 11 GP practices to improve their access to meet the needs of their patients.



We evaluated the Brent Primary Care Clinical Commissioning Group Winter Access Pilot Schemes, identifying how the schemes were able to support patients and take pressure of primary care services.

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.



Experiences of accessing a GP in Brent.

Thanks to people sharing their experience of accessing a GP in Brent over the last year, we've produced recommendations for 11 GPs. This will make sure GPs are aware of their need to better ensure that patients can readily access care when they need it.

The COVID-19 pandemic fundamentally shifted the way we use GP practices, both nationally and locally. Following NHS guidance, from 2020 GP practices changed the way patients could access appointments

Our research showed that the guidance had made little difference to the patient experience in Brent. They were still struggling to book appointments and faced long waiting times. We used the feedback from our survey to produce recommendations for the GP practices, showing what changes can be made to ensure their services are meeting the needs of patients.



69% of people

we heard from were dissatisfied and found it difficult to book an appointment at their GP practice.

Our recommendations included:

- GP practices to review processes of not offering face-to-face appointments
- Further support from NHS England to upgrade phone systems so that they meet the demands of local people
- Further help to support the training of surgery staff
- Reviews to appointment booking policies
- Better support for patients with particular needs

By tailoring our recommendations to specific GP practices, we have been able to be more specific about improvements that are needed, while also acknowledging the pressures that practices are under.

A better experience of accessing primary care

The aim of this project is to improve patients' experiences of accessing care. We will follow up in 6-12 months to ensure changes have been made.



"The GPs are OK but it is almost impossible to get an appointment. They also did not answer the last eConsult I tried."

Patient feedback, GP Access Survey



Influencing the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy

People in Brent were given the opportunity to influence the Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy to ensure it meets their needs and community needs.

The strategy will determine how health and wellbeing issues are tackled in Brent until 2025, so it's important that it focuses on the right areas. Those who are most affected by the strategy should be at the heart of its development.

We worked with Brent Council, Clinical Commissioning Group and NHS Trusts to ensure that residents could have their say. Community groups were invited to share their views throughout the development process by highlighting the issues that they would like to see included commenting on the priority areas and giving feedback on the draft proposals.

Some of the key areas identified by our community were the need for a stronger focus on healthy eating, more accessible facilities in our outdoor spaces and support for people to grow their own food. We are pleased to see that each of these areas – and many other priorities raised by Brent residents – have been accounted for in the strategy.

It was important that many different groups of people had an opportunity to comment on the strategy. We shared it with Brent residents online, and met with faith-based communities, mental health service users, people with disabilities and learning disabilities, older adults and people from seldom-heard groups within the borough.

What difference did this make?

Thanks to the feedback we shared, Brent's Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy focusses on areas that matter to local people.

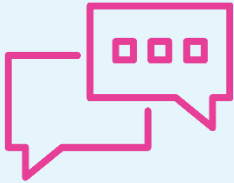
Groups we spoke to were pleased with the direction of the strategy, and highlighted key areas such as more funding for local people to run their own health & wellbeing events, more accessible facilities in local outdoor spaces, and an emphasis on healthy eating. These themes echoed the feedback people shared during earlier stages of the consultation.

Using the local community's views to help shape the strategy will not only ensure that health & wellbeing initiatives are fit for purpose, but also help to build up trust in the local authority.

Ways we've made a difference for the community

Working together

Services and providers need to understand that working together reduces barriers and inequalities.



It was important for us to review the recommendations from our 2018 report identifying Young Carers in Substance Misuse Households and understand the current situation. Because of the pandemic, children were much more involved in the problems they faced at home. We wanted to ensure that social care services had the opportunity to step back and learn from our recommendations, and to highlight where there are still gaps for young carers. Our findings and recommendations helped provide a deeper understanding that working together is a good way for providers and services reduce the pressures for young carers in substance misuse households.

Getting services to involve the public

Services need to understand the benefits of involving local people to help improve care for everyone.



We gave advice to a local NHS Trust to improve the way they engage with diverse, seldom heard groups who use their maternity services. This has enabled them to review their engagement strategies to involve local people and improve their maternity services directly as a result.

Improving care over time

Change takes time. We often work behind the scenes with health and care services to consistently raise issues and push for changes.



We know there are disparities for people living in Brent when accessing services, including vital safeguarding services. This year our CEO has been championing safeguarding and ensuring people's voices are heard. Now, we have called on the Adult Safeguarding Board and system partners to look into the inequalities that may exist for certain community groups who may be under-represented in the safeguarding concerns that are raised. This will be a continued area of focus for us over the coming years.

Ways we've made a difference for the community

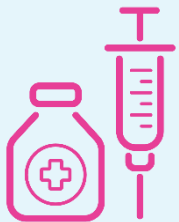
Diversity



Brent patients and residents from a diverse range of community groups have come forward to share their views

This year we have focussed on reaching communities that are not currently having their voices heard. We have worked closely with Black African and Black Caribbean communities, whose comments represented nearly a quarter of survey responses collected. Members of this community have told us that they did not feel like local health services were listening to them. However since we started our work, we've seen an increase in engagement for this group. We will continue this approach to working with diverse communities, building on the positive results.

Covid-19 Vaccine



Giving people clear and sensitive information about the Covid-19 vaccine was vital for helping to protect communities.

Healthwatch Brent staff and volunteers joined the Covid-19 vaccination bus, going out into areas with lower vaccine uptake and starting conversations with the public. They were able to help the public navigate a complicated vaccination booking system, answer questions, and encourage those who were sceptical to consider vaccination. This work also offered development opportunities for our team, with one of our volunteers being offered paid employment as part of the vaccine bus programme.

Partnering with other local Healthwatch



We teamed up with other local Healthwatch in North West London (NWL) to help improve access to online GP consultations.

Feedback from patients has shown that they want better online systems for contacting their GP. We worked with other local Healthwatch across NWL to share a consultation survey. 672 Brent residents shared feedback – the highest number of any borough – and as a result, a new system has been commissioned, offering more features for patients.

Advice and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch Brent 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:

- Making sure residents had access to NHS dental services
- Ensuring people could get vital care by helping to follow up on delayed referrals
- Supporting people to raise complaints by referring them for independent advocacy
- Helping people to access the services they need



Improving access to dental services

This year we have supported many patients to access important dental services, helping to ensure that residents in Brent are able to receive dental care when they require it.

This included finding an alternative NHS dentist for a patient who was unable to access urgent root canal treatment, as well as signposting many other patients to local services accepting NHS patients.

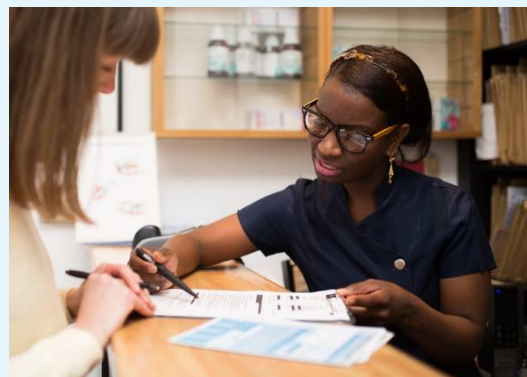


"I am left with pain in my gum and no tooth, I was wondering if someone can help."

Supporting patients to make NHS complaints

When something goes wrong, it's important for patients to have access to appropriate complaints processes and advocacy. We work closely with the Brent Independent NHS complaints advocacy provider to ensure this is possible, and have referred many patients for their services.

Last year we also supported patients who had already made complaints and weren't receiving appropriate responses.



For example, we contacted a GP surgery on behalf of a lady who had made a complaint but received no acknowledgement. In response, the Practice Manager contacted the patient and launched a full investigation.

**"Thanks for your help, you've been amazing!
Thank you so much!"**

Volunteers

We're supported by a team of amazing volunteers who are the heart of Healthwatch Brent. Thanks to their efforts in the community, we're able to understand what is working and what needs improving in NHS and social care. We are constantly looking for new volunteers if you are interested.

This year our volunteers:

- Collected views about the impact of Covid-19 and vaccine hesitancy, visiting the Brent Covid-19 vaccination bus.
- Helped us make decisions about where to focus our efforts, by sharing feedback and as members of our Advisory Group
- Co-produced our GP Access project, ensuring that our survey was asking relevant questions that could be easily understood.
- Headed out to engagement events and spread the word about Healthwatch to their communities, promoting our work and encouraging more people to have their say.



There are many reasons why people volunteer to help us collect data. These include giving back to the community, sharing experiences and skills, and influencing the improvement of local health and social care services.

Two of our longest-serving volunteers, Mary and Margaret, shared an insight into what volunteering with Healthwatch Brent means to them.



Mary

"Luckily most of the visits we carry out are to places that offer a reasonable standard of care – but we may still see things that can be improved and recommendations for changes. It's also very interesting, having the opportunity to speak to people and hear what their views are.."



Margaret

"I've been with Healthwatch Brent since it started, all the way back in 2013. At that time, I was given the option of different roles and was really intrigued by 'Enter & View' – the opportunity to go and visit service providers and see what they are doing. As a retired care assistant, I know how important these environments are and can easily see what they lack."



Do you feel inspired?

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



www.healthwatchbrent.co.uk/volunteering



020 3869 9730



ibrahim.ali@healthwatchbrent.co.uk

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	
Funding received from local authority	£135,000
Additional funding	£2,473
Total income	£137,473

Income	
Staff costs	£101,605
Operational costs	£17,892
Support and administration	£12,363
Total expenditure	£131,860

Top three priorities for 2022-23

1. Understanding barriers and blocks when accessing mental health services for certain community groups.
2. Understanding experiences of people who have been sectioned and discharged in Brent.
3. Understanding experiences of Eastern European communities accessing health and social care support.

Next steps: influencing change

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 at Brent Integrated Care Partnerships and North West London Integrated Care Board reduce the barriers you face, regardless of whether that's because of where you live, income or race.

Statutory statements

About us

The Advocacy Project, c/o Kemp House, 152-160 City Road, London, EC1V 2NX holds the contract for Healthwatch Brent.

Healthwatch Brent 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.

The Healthwatch Brent Advisory Group consists of eight members who work on a voluntary basis to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny to our activities. The Advisory Group ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community. Through 2021/22 the board met four times and made decisions on matters such as access to Primary Care and inequalities in Safeguarding concerns raised.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities by using the insights and data gathered by patient and resident feedback collected at engagement events, such as Brighter Health in Brent targeting the Black African and Caribbean community groups. We use the information collected from our information and signposting enquiries where we support people 1:2:1 to be able to access health and social care services. We also hear from our Grassroots Community Voices network which provides more value to our community partners allowing community groups to share issues that they would like us to raise with statutory 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 are able to provide us with insight about their experience of health and care services. During 2021/22 we have been available by phone, by email, provided a feedback review system, attended virtual and face to face meetings of community groups and forums, provided 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 built up our Grassroots Community Voices network – community groups who input into our projects and share their feedback on our priorities. This includes representation from health groups, local foodbanks, neighbourhood forums, mutual aid groups and many other parts of our community.

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 healthwatchbrent.co.uk

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 Healthwatch Brent to Healthwatch England Committee, so no resulting special reviews or investigations.

Health and Wellbeing Board

Healthwatch Brent is represented on the Brent Health and Wellbeing Board by Judith Davey, CEO During 2021/22 our representative has effectively carried out this role by being a critical friend to statutory services and bring valuable insight to ensure decisions in health and social care take into account Brent residents and patients.

2021-2022 Outcomes

Project Area	Activity outcome
Understanding the experiences of accessing GPs in Brent	From the feedback gathered we are working with system partners to ensure improvements are made to GP access.
Covid 19 Vaccine hesitancy Supporting residents to understand the vaccine booking system	Working with partners we engaged with excluded communities to increase vaccination take up.
Engagement	We have successfully engaged with new community groups in the most deprived wards within Brent to ensure their voices are listened too.
Enter and View at Northwick Park Hospital	In 2019 our Enter and View team visited Edison Ward, Northwick Park Hospital, in 2021 we heard that our feedback helped improve its services for patients.
North West London E-consult consultation	We collaborated with North West London Healthwatch to gather views from patients on the eConsult service. From the views we gathered NHS Digital have recommissioned a new provider.
Brent Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee	We have amplified patient voice at the Brent Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee in particular providing testimonial evidence of patient experiences in GPs. These findings contributed to the scrutiny report and recommendations on GP access.
Grassroots Community Voices network Representation on Healthwatch Brent Advisory Group	We have developed new relationships with grassroots organisations in Brent to ensure their voices are heard at system level.



healthwatch

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