

Healthwatch Oxfordshire outreach visits across Oxfordshire 2022-23 - summary report



- Getting access to a GP
- Booking appointments
- Access to NHS dentistry
- Earwax removal
- Rural and social isolation
- Digital exclusion
- Waiting times for medication in pharmacies
- Access to mental health services

Templars Square Shopping Centre – June 2022

During our outreach to Templars Square in Oxford we spoke to **125 people**. Many of them were not aware of Healthwatch Oxfordshire and were interested in hearing how they could leave a review with us of a health and care service they had used. We took the opportunity to highlight Healthwatch Oxfordshire translated materials and patient rights to an interpreter when seeking NHS care.



We heard from one lady that there was an issue being able to get a podiatry appointment and another who said that she had to pay privately to have her earwax removed. She wasn't aware of the new over 50's 'hearing loss service' in Oxfordshire.

*A gentleman told us how he had asked for an appointment with his GP but was told to go to the pharmacy to get medication He explained that he **'couldn't afford to pay for medication'***

Speaking to **young people** gave insights into how Healthwatch Oxfordshire can better engage with under 25's. Their suggestions included:

- Marketplace on Facebook
- Doing a Live session on social media

- Linking into pages about house swaps/council house pages
- Investigate local pages that younger people might look at
- Tik Tok
- Instagram stories

We gave information leaflets out about Healthwatch Oxfordshire to people on request in Arabic, and Urdu.

Oxford Eid Extravaganza – May 2022

In July we held a stall at the Eid Extravaganza held at Cheney School in Oxford. This celebration attracted more than 3,000 people and gave Healthwatch Oxfordshire the opportunity to have conversations with people about our work, and to hear about their concerns. We **spoke to 50 people** about their health and social care experiences. One conversation led to recruitment of a new Enter and View volunteer for Healthwatch Oxfordshire.



Castle Quay Shopping Centre Community Space, Banbury – July 2022

We spoke to **75 people** during our visit to Banbury in August. People were happy to tell us about their experiences. Comments included getting a GP appointment and getting an NHS Dentist appointment:

"... have two disabled children, and its increasingly hard to see a GP".

"Can't get a GP appointment unless you can get through at 8 a.m. you have no chance for the day as the slots go so quickly. When you do get to speak to a doctor they are brilliant, just have to get past the 'barriers'"

Two people mentioned they had a concern about the lack of carers for home care and how little time that they could spend with clients.

A Ukrainian lady was very concerned that she and her friends were finding it very difficult to find dental care - she said, 'there are no NHS dentists locally who are willing to accept them as patients and that they can't afford to pay privately'. This was needed for both adults and their children.

One lady told us: *"Boots Chemist has stopped doing automatic repeat prescriptions, now have to walk to get a prescription"*
(No information was given to patients about this, she found out by chance when picking up a friend's prescription.)

We also heard from **nine young people** between 16 and 18 years, living in Banbury area about their views on health and social care. Comments from young people highlighted the importance of access to **mental health**



support, and the importance of being listened to and taken seriously by their doctor.

"Listen to me, I would rather see the same Doctor"

"Doctors are always busy...not being able to see a doctor"

"Not enough care, and people are being neglected because of their mental state or wellbeing"

"It is important to me because it's important - and they don't have time and it's got to be serious to see them"



Faringdon Town Square - September 2022

Seventeen people spoke to us during our morning at Faringdon in September. Two people mentioned that they had recently had to use the ambulance service and the care from the paramedics was:

"Brilliant and so re-assuring' and 'were absolutely superb".

A number of people commented on and digital exclusion and access to GPs:

'I think it is unfair and discriminatory the way people are being directed to use online services. A lot of people are not able to afford computers. It is creating an inequality - it is wrong'.

"I think it is unfair the way people are being directed to use online services. A lot of people are not able to afford computers"

“Have given up with the GP practice, can't get an appointment. Everything is targeted at people online and I am not computer literate”

Six people commented about the challenges of seeing a GP face-to-face. One commented on need for better continuity of care.

“Unable to get face-to-face appointments. Always phone calls and how can they diagnose you by telephone without examining you?”

“You can never get to see one in person - the answer from the reception staff is always - 'oh we don't deal with that here' ”

UN Older People's Day, Oxford – October 2022

During our visit to the UN Older People's Day in Oxford Town Hall, we spoke to **75 people**. We heard common themes about GP access and not being able to get an appointment as well as not being able to access podiatry services and having to pay for **earwax removal**.

Several people also mentioned that they had to pay for dental services as they weren't able to **access NHS dentists**, with some people just not attending a dentist as they couldn't afford to pay privately.

Rural and social isolation and lack of **reliable public transport** both in rural areas and in Oxford was raised as a concern by two people. The first commented that *rural isolation was assumed to be those who live in villages, but they said it also affected those who lived in quieter parts of*



towns with the second highlighting 'social isolation affected older people due to the reduction of many bus services.'

Continuity of care and lack of communication between GP surgeries and hospitals was also raised as a concern by two people, with another lady saying she found that there were no services locally to help people with neurological conditions, particularly around administration (letter writing etc.).

One gentleman explained he had 'met the Healthwatch Oxfordshire team at the Oxford University Hospitals Annual General meeting and was given advice and guidance and that, he had followed the advice and had been given the appointments he needed.'

We received seven enquiries regarding **earwax and hearing loss**, which were followed up by providing information for the Oxon Bucks NHS Audiology service. Information about this service via this link below: [NHS Hearing Aids | Oxon / Bucks NHS Audiology Service | England \(oxonbucks-nhs-audiology.com\)](https://www.oxonbucks-nhs-audiology.com)

Translated leaflets about Healthwatch Oxfordshire were provided in Polish on request.



Keble College, Oxford – October 2022

Our first visit to a Freshers Week at an Oxford University college saw us speak to **102 students**. As most of the students were new to the area, we decided to ask them what was important to them within the healthcare service.

Several students commented that it was important in having **good and easy access for making appointments** and seeing doctors.

“Modernise GP booking systems”. Others said that they would like to see surgeries being more flexible and responsive to social circumstances. This was also highlighted by two overseas students one who told us they would like a clear guide with explanations as to how NHS health services work in the United Kingdom. Examples included needing information when using Accident and Emergency, as well information on how to complete forms around health care.

“Easy to book appointments – not just a phone call before 8am only”.

One overseas student said that **menstrual hygiene products** should be free for people who couldn't afford them with another saying that there should be good and easily available information on **sexual health**, contraception and STD testing.

Several students mentioned that support and access, either online or in person, around **mental health** (including eating disorders) was important and those delivering the service face-to-face should be approachable.

Someone who we can trust and feel safe around giving the service

Wallingford Market Square – November 2022

During our visit we spoke to **44 people**. Several people told us about the wait for prescriptions; even when people seen by the GP and prescribed medication there can be long wait for medicines to be dispensed. One person told us they *“had to wait for one week for the prescription – Boots is the only **pharmacy** in the town and the queues are regularly over half an hour long and sometimes out of the door”*.



We also heard comments that there was little support for **Long COVID**, one patient had received medication following a phone call with a doctor but had received no face-to-face contact.

“Given an inhaler without seeing a GP face to face”

One person commented: “I’ve not had a good experience of social care...delays of care have been due to staff shortage. There have been improvements since 2021”.



Watlington Christmas Fair - December 2022

We spoke to **164 people** about their experiences of using health and care services on a busy Saturday morning in Watlington. Many commented on the supportive community in Watlington, especially since COVID when the community came together to support each other, with food deliveries, and since thriving community events and activities.

“Watlington is a very caring community - the coffee shop brings young and old together”.

Overall people were very positive about their health care in the area. **Continuity of care** and communication across and between health systems was mentioned by four people. Comments included having to repeat information around health history and medication to several different people during clinical appointments. One person gave experience from Europe where all medical information was held on a credit type card, it didn’t matter which GP, hospital or pharmacy you used all the information was there.

One person commented that she felt “abandoned” post breast cancer.

The volunteer driver service was praised by two people who said it ‘*provided an invaluable service.*’

The majority of people were positive about their local GP surgery and the support given. However, several people mentioned they had had difficulties with getting a GP appointment whereas others had had no problems.

‘The online appointments have been great - wish more would do them, it stops me having to drive into Oxford.’

We heard that there was concern over the long waiting list for **Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services** (CAMHS) and paediatricians, together with three people saying that there was a lack of support for young people around their mental health.

“We need more mental wellbeing support to young people from early on, giving them mental health literacy and tools to manage”

Thame Market – February 2023

The visit to Thame Market was to promote the work of Healthwatch Oxfordshire and hear about the experiences patients of Thame, at the same time as providing support to the Patient Participation Group (PPG) from The Rycote Practice (to find out more about the PPG please click on the following link [The Rycote Practice Patient Participation Group](#)).

As with many PPGs across Oxfordshire the COVID pandemic saw membership drop, so a day of outreach on Market Square provided an ideal opportunity to talk to people and promote the PPG.



Two GP practices in Thame share one building but cross county boundaries. The Rycote Practice is an Oxfordshire practice, the other led by Unity Health is a Buckinghamshire practice.

We spoke to **74 people**. Many patients of the Rycote Practice told us that the care they received at the practice was 'really good'. Several commented about not being able to get appointments when they wanted them but were understanding of the changes the practice had made.

Two people commented about the exceptional care they had received from the John Radcliffe **Maternity Unit**, with one lady saying.

'Without the care we received neither my baby nor I would be here today.'

Signposting

Speaking to people during outreach visits is an important opportunity to let them know about how health and care services work, what is available and to actively signpost people to a range of different services in the county.

During these outreach visits signposting has included to: Patient Participation Groups, Older adults audiology services, Oxford Polish Association, OxTalk news for visually impaired, Interpreting support, PoWHER advocacy, Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS), local health walks, and Social Prescribers among others.

Visits to other groups and organisations

Age Friendly Banbury

Healthwatch Oxfordshire attended a partnership event showcasing the good work of local organisations in providing services to support mental health and wellbeing in later years organised by Age Friendly Banbury in November 2022. Age Friendly Banbury is a partnership between local organisations committed to making Banbury an age-friendly town. It brings together older people, community leaders, local charities, businesses, and local councils. [HOME | Agefriendlybanbury](#)

Banbury Rotary Club

The Banbury Rotary Club members invited Healthwatch Oxfordshire to talk about our work and more specifically how people can provide feedback about health and care services that they had used. You can find out more about the work of the rotary club here [Banbury Rotary Club](#)



Donnington 50+ group

Healthwatch Oxfordshire visited the Donnington 50+ Group to talk about how their role and how people could leave feedback with regards to health and care service they had used as well as how they could get involved in their local Patient Participation Group.

This group provides support and reduce isolation for older people with friendship and varied program of activities. [Over 50's \(donnington-oxford.org.uk\)](#)

Oxford City Council Community Champions

Healthwatch Oxfordshire recently supported the Oxford Community Champions in gaining better insight into the way health and care services work. We attended three face-to-face sessions in Oxford. Topics we covered included how to provide feedback to health care providers, as well as how to raise concerns and complaints. We also highlighted how patients can become involved in Patient Participation Groups within GP surgeries to help to improve the service their surgeries offer. We also spoke about the rights to an interpreter in NHS care.



What is the Community Champion programme?

Oxford City Council have recruited 83 Community Champions most of which are from the 7 Anchor Organisations (Asylum Welcome, Turning Point, LEAF, Refugee Resource, Transition Lighthouse, AfiUK and Oxford Community Action (OCA)).

The Community Champions have the flexibility and autonomy to design their approach to best suit their community – whether that’s through running a workshop with health colleagues, picnics at nearby park, or having conversations on social media. These Champions will be a long-term voice for their communities who will be fully involved not just in collecting insights to the barriers, but also being part of creating practical solutions to address these challenges, which will increase confidence and self-esteem.

[Oxford Community Champions Programme | Oxford Community Champions Programme | Oxford City Council](#)

With thanks to all who spoke to us and shared their views and experiences of NHS health and care services in Oxfordshire. What you tell us is shared with the health and care services, commissioners and providers to help drive improvement and change.



Healthwatch Oxfordshire - our friendly staff are here for you to help answer questions or give you information on health and care services in Oxfordshire. If you need more information or advice, call us on **01865 520520** from 9-4 pm Monday to Friday

To find out more about Healthwatch Oxfordshire please see

www.healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk

If you would like a paper copy of this report or would like it in a different format or language, please get in touch with us:



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