



# Together

we're working to make  
health and social care  
better for everyone

Annual Report 2022–23

**healthwatch**  
Liverpool

# Contents

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Message from our Chair	3
About us	4
Highlights from our year	5
Listening to your experiences	10
Hearing from all communities	16
Advice and information	19
Volunteers	24
Finances and future priorities	26
Statutory statements	28



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**“In the last ten years, the health and social care landscape has changed dramatically, but the dedication of local Healthwatch hasn’t. Your local Healthwatch has worked tirelessly to make sure the views of local people are heard, and NHS and social care leaders use your feedback to make care better.”**

**Louise Ansari, Healthwatch National Director**

# Message from our Chair

This report marks 10 years in the life of Healthwatch Liverpool and also, for me personally, marks the end of my time with Healthwatch Liverpool as I step down as Chair after eight years.

The past ten years have been extraordinarily challenging for NHS and social care services and therefore also for local people who depend upon them. We saw increasing pressures on services even before the global pandemic that would change the lives of everybody. The impact of the pandemic is still being felt by services as they struggle to deal with the backlog of health and care needs – including in the dental crisis outlined in this report. Now the cost-of-living crisis is presenting new challenges. There are still very unequal experiences of health in this city and reducing these unfair and avoidable inequalities is a major challenge for all of us.

I'm proud of Healthwatch Liverpool's contribution to ensuring that the impact of these pressures on local people is never forgotten when decisions are being made about how these services are shaped, commissioned and delivered. As I hand over the role of Chair of Healthwatch Liverpool to Zoran Blackie, I want to thank the staff team, and the members of the public, community organisations and health and care services that make their work possible. The Healthwatch Liverpool vision of "a health and social care system that works for everyone" is as much needed as ever.



Lynn Collins, Healthwatch Liverpool Chair



Lynn Collins, Healthwatch Liverpool Chair speaking at our membership event in 2019



Zoran Blackie takes up the role of Healthwatch Liverpool Chair from 1 July 2023



"I'm really looking forward to getting started in this role and to follow in Lynn's footsteps to make sure that patient voices are at the heart of health and social care decision making in Liverpool."

# About us

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## Healthwatch Liverpool is your local health and social care champion.

We make sure NHS leaders and 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

**We want a health and social care system that works for everyone**



### Our mission

#### To the Community

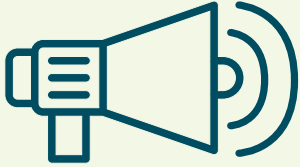
- To provide all communities with accurate, up-to-date information about local health and social care services, and activities to improve their wellbeing, through our information service and the Live Well directory;
- To help make people aware of their rights when using health and social care services;
- The opportunity for all communities to give honest feedback about local services, whether good or bad, to help shape change and improve standards;
- Empowering people to be involved in improving local health and care services

#### To providers and commissioners

- To provide honest feedback from people who have experiences of health and social care services to help identify what is working well and what needs to be improved;
- To help identify best practice as well as gaps in service provision based on feedback;
- To help ensure local people are properly consulted in relation to all aspects of commissioning, particularly less heard from groups and those who face health inequalities;

# Year in review

## Reaching out



**2844 people**

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

**122,991 people**

came to us for clear advice and information about topics such as dentistry and social care, including via our helpline, emails, website, stalls at events and the Live Well directory.

## Making a difference to care

We published

**12 reports**

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

Our most popular report was

**The State of NHS Dentistry in Liverpool** which tells the story of the NHS dental crisis and its impact locally.



## Health and care that works for you



We're lucky to have had

**15**

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

We're funded by our local authority. In 2022-23 we received

**£554,231**




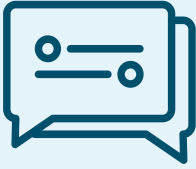


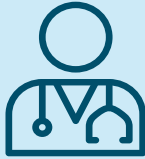

which is **0.07% more** than the previous year.

We currently employ

**18 staff (15.3 FTE)** who help us carry out our work.

This is a decrease from 17.9 FTE staff at the start of 2022/23.

# How we've made a difference this year

Spring	 <p>Held "Listening Events" at two hospital sites and a homeless healthcare clinic, to hear the voices of patients, carers and staff</p>	 <p>Began our "Inclusion Ambassador" project to help improve diversity across the Healthwatch Network</p>
Summer	 <p>Concluded our consultation project and produced our report about Mersey Care Long Covid Clinics</p>	 <p>Carried out two enter and view visits at Liverpool care homes to identify good practice and improvements which can benefit residents</p>
Autumn	 <p>Teamed up with other local Healthwatch to carry out "Listening Events" at A&amp;E services, to hear the views and experiences of patients</p>	 <p>Attended five university "freshers" events, sharing key health information with new Liverpool students, to help them stay healthy</p>
Winter	 <p>We concluded our "GP access" project, hearing the experiences of local people around access to GP care in Liverpool</p>	 <p>We made a detailed submission to the parliamentary enquiry on dentistry highlighting the challenges faced in Liverpool</p>

# 10 years of improving care

This year marks a special milestone for Healthwatch. Over the last ten years, people have shared their experiences, good and bad, to help improve health and social care. A big thank you to all our Healthwatch Heroes that have stepped up and inspired change. Here are a few of our highlights:

## How have we made care better, together?

### #ItStartsWithYou

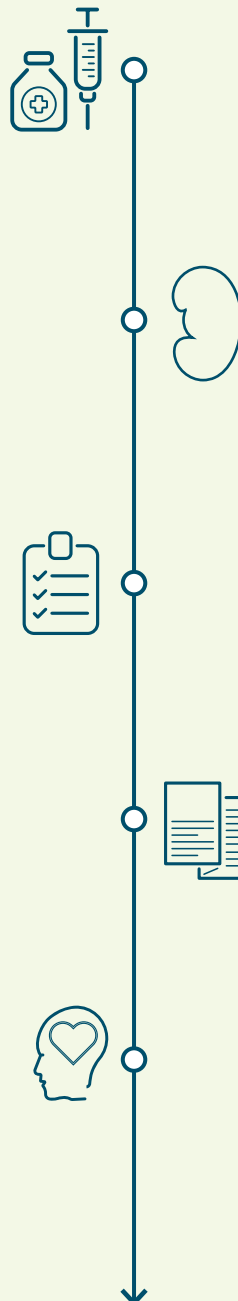
Our “It Starts With You” project put patient experience into the spotlight, as we produced a short film starring local people sharing their experiences and aiming to empower others to stand up and be heard.

### Students

Over the last 10 years, we have annually engaged Liverpool’s student cohort at “fresher” events. Through these events, we’ve shared key health and wellbeing information to **10,360** students, improving health and wellbeing across Liverpool’s universities.

### Mental Health Impact of the Covid Pandemic

As the reality of lockdown became clear, we began our project to understand the impact on people’s mental health. Our findings informed mental health service providers, commissioners and decision-makers, leading to further informed decision making at such a vital time.



### Kidney Transplants

Our Kidney Transplant research project saw us we conduct in-depth interviews with transplant patients to learn more about their experiences, and to make clear recommendations to Trusts, providers, and commissioners, leading to positive action.

### SEND Provision

Our project gave a voice to people’s experiences of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision within the city. Our findings and recommendations informed the city’s SEND Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), SEND Co-Production Charter and the SEND Joint Commissioning Strategy.



## Healthwatch Hero



### Celebrating a hero in our local community.

Sue contacted us with concerns over what she felt to be disability discrimination experienced by her mum, around communication barriers at The Royal Liverpool University Hospital.

Sue's mum is deaf and had a detached retina which needed an urgent operation. The hospital informed them that a BSL interpreter must be present before the operation could go ahead, to discuss the procedure and get any consent needed. On the day, the interpreter didn't turn up. Doctors agreed to go ahead, with Sue providing the BSL interpretation. However, they were then told that she wouldn't be allowed to interpret for her mum after all, and that they would have to cancel this vital operation. No one was happy about this as the eye was deteriorating. After Sue herself found a registered BSL interpreter the delayed operation went ahead, and while the care received couldn't be faulted, the circumstances, distress caused, and delay, were unfair.

Sue contacted the Trust's PALS team to view their policy, but informed Healthwatch Liverpool too because a hearing person would not have faced the same delay to treatment. There also didn't seem to be any alternative in place if patients refused an interpreter and preferred a BSL-speaking friend or family member.

Following this experience, Sue and her mum faced the issue again, when the Trust tried to cancel a CT scan for Sue's mum, because there was no interpreter, but did eventually go ahead. The scan found a potential tumour. Sue felt that delays because of issues like this could explain the poor health outcomes that deaf people experience.



## Healthwatch Hero

After liaison between Sue, Healthwatch Liverpool, and the Trust, the case was presented at the Trust's Patient Experience Operational Group, and learning points, actions and operational changes resulted, including:

- A review of administrative systems that alert clerical staff to additional communication needs and remind them of accessibility standards, including booking BSL Interpreters for appointments.
- Sue and her mum's story was used to inform a review of the Trust's "Interpretation and Translation Policy".
- A review of Deaf Awareness training for staff.
- A commitment to increase staff awareness of the need to raise an Incident Report when an Interpreter fails to attend an appointment.

We were delighted to hear from Sue again recently, informing us that their most recent experience of booking a BSL interpreter at The Royal, had been amazing, with clear communication. Sadly, once again, the interpreter did not turn up, but positive change was evident. Sue said: "You can imagine my heart sank but no... they just asked my mum if she was happy to sign a form agreeing to a non-professional interpreter, in this case me. That was it, no fuss, no stress and more importantly no cancellation!"

Sue raising this issue led to resolution not only for her mum and herself, but to a commitment to improvement from the Trust, which should benefit many deaf patients, improving equity and positive health outcomes for everybody that Sue has impacted.

**Thank you, Sue. We think you're a Healthwatch Hero.**



**The atrium of the new Royal Liverpool Hospital which opened in 2022**



A visit to the Chinese Wellbeing Evergreen club to talk about GP access with the older Chinese community

# 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 feed this back to services to help them improve.

# Shining a light on the state of NHS dentistry

**NHS dentistry is in desperate need of reform and this year the Healthwatch network has successfully moved NHS dentistry up the political agenda, advocating for the systematic improvements local people have told us they need.**

The dental crisis continues to hit Liverpool residents hard. With NHS dentists not taking on new adult patients, there is an increasing gulf between those who can afford to pay for private dental care and those who have to struggle on without care. Low incomes in Liverpool mean that few people can afford private dentistry. The dental crisis needs action both locally and nationally.

## What we did



- We highlighted these issues in our report on The State of NHS Dentistry in Liverpool in the autumn of 2022.
- We shared this with local MPs leading to a question being asked in parliament by local MP Dan Carden.
- Together with Healthwatch England and the rest of the Healthwatch network, we made renewed calls on NHS England and the Department of Health and Social care to put a reformed dental contract in place.
- We made a detailed submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry on dentistry.

From April 2023 the responsibility for dental commissioning moved to Integrated Care Systems (ICS) and in advance of this we shared the patients' experience to make sure that the new commissioners were planning ahead. This included highlighting that Liverpool was more severely affected by the dental crisis than other parts of the region, with the lowest proportion of adults having been able to access dental care (only 33.1% of Liverpool adults saw an NHS dentist in the period 2020-22). To ensure a consistent understanding of the situation locally, we presented to the Liverpool Health and Wellbeing Board alongside NHS England and Public Health Liverpool.

The Integrated Care Board (ICB) has committed to a Dental Recovery Plan. We will continue to speak up for local people on this subject until the crisis is resolved.

We need action to make it easier for people to find a new dentist taking on NHS patients, alleviating the stress and worry so many suffer when they cannot afford to go private.

“We are thankful for the invaluable work of Healthwatch Liverpool throughout 2022/23, and for their impact on Liverpool. Their dental report this year was an asset to the city. Healthwatch Liverpool's spotlight on the lived experiences of local people around dental care, put these at the heart of impactful discussions at the Health and Wellbeing Board, leading to a commitment from partners to work together for positive outcomes. I look forward to Healthwatch Liverpool's impact in the year ahead”  
**Prof Matt Ashton, Director of Public Health Liverpool**

# Assessing new Long Covid services

**In 2021 services for local people, who required Long Covid assessment and support, were transferred into a new Mersey Care service. We had heard from patients about the previous service and were keen to help the new service take a patient focused approach.**

Mersey Care asked local Healthwatch (Healthwatch Liverpool, Knowsley, Sefton, and St Helens) to engage with patients to learn from their experiences of using the service. Because we understand the challenges faced by Long Covid patients, we were careful to build in different ways for people to share their experiences with us.

## Patients told us

- They wanted to be heard and believed, having previously faced disbelief and dismissal from others.
- Some patients had experienced difficulty being referred to the service but most reported a positive experience of the service once they reached it.
- They have felt reassured and said that the staff made them feel like they have hope by believing, seeing, and hearing them, while also expressing frustration that it has taken time for health professionals to understand Long Covid and how to treat it.
- They wanted to be kept in the loop, provided with more feedback on test results to put their minds at ease and more advice and information on what they can do themselves between appointments to help their recovery. People have spent so long wondering what was wrong with them and getting told that there is nothing that can be done for them, that many are wary of feeling left in the dark about their condition.

“I was actually understood by the Covid GP. First time I felt believed that my symptoms were real. I broke down and felt less alone. ... My symptoms were recognised and understood by somebody else. Extremely open minded. I was treated as an individual in a non-judgemental way.” - **Long Covid Consultation Respondent**

## What difference will this make?

Patients who often felt in the dark, have been able to share their voices and influence change. Their feedback is being used to inform improvements as well as maintaining what is working well for service users. The service has been actively working to improve access and inclusion to help more people recover from their Long Covid.

“It provides a valuable insight into successes and challenges in care delivery across Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens & Knowsley over the last year and the information shared in the report provides essential learning to help improve areas of need, but also to highlight what’s working well, ensuring we continue to develop and deliver quality care that genuinely helps people.” - **Dr Chris Barker, Clinical Director – Long Covid, Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust**

## Return to In-Person Listening Events – Liverpool University Hospital Foundation Trust

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This year saw us return to in-person Listening Events at local hospital trusts. In May 2022, alongside our colleagues from Healthwatch Sefton and Healthwatch Knowsley, we visited Liverpool University Hospital Foundation Trust (LUHFT) sites to find out what people thought was good and what they thought needed improving.

In total, we spoke to 98 patients and family members, and what they told us about their experiences at fed into our recommendations to the Trust. This included feedback about staff, the perceived impact of Covid-19 on the care they received, waiting times, communication and language barriers, food, parking, and signage.

### Our recommendations included:

1. Providing frontline staff (both clinical and non-clinical) with a list of potential referral points for patients with mental health support needs.
2. We are aware that patients have been/will be involved in signage and 'wayfinding' development at the new Royal but it's important that this is kept under review at all sites to improve patient and family experience at what can be stressful times.
3. Investment in additional wheelchairs would improve the experience of patients, family members and staff across the site, and could be a partnership project with Liverpool Heart and Chest Hospital.
4. Ensuring staff clarity about how to order food and whether alternative options are available. If patients are being provided with particular diets, in line with their treatment, it would also be helpful if this is discussed fully with them and their families, to allay any concerns.

### What difference will this make?

We received an extensive response from LUHFT, with evident outcomes and assurances which will ensure a positive impact for patients of LUHFT. These included:

1. All wheelchairs were reviewed and surveyed, and chairs were removed for repair. In addition, wheelchairs have now been repaired with new wheels with brakes attached and these are now back on site and all porters' chairs are now back in service. This will lead to improved access and wellbeing for disabled patients and their carers.
2. Assurance of patient feedback informing changes to signage across the trust.
3. Our findings and recommendations corroborated the findings from other patient experience activities undertaken by the Trust, adding weight to the case for improvements which will benefit patients.
4. Our recommendations were reviewed at the Quality and Safety meetings at each of the Aintree, Royal and Broadgreen sites.

We received assurance that the findings will be incorporated into how the Trust monitors and improves services.



“We are extremely grateful to the Healthwatch staff and volunteers who attended our sites at Aintree, Royal Liverpool and Broadgreen Hospitals in May 2022 to speak with patients, visitors and staff about their experiences. The joint Listening Events report has given us valuable opportunity to gain insight into the experiences of both people who use our services and also our staff working across our sites.”

**Fiona Murphy MBE Director of Nursing, Corporate Services, LUHFT**



## Visiting A&E at the height of winter pressures

In conjunction with our local Healthwatch colleagues in Sefton and Knowsley we held listening events at A&E departments in December 2022. This included a visit to the Emergency Department at the newly opened Royal Liverpool Hospital.

We spoke to 45 people across the Royal and Aintree sights and identified themes including praise for staff on both sites, issues around awareness of staff roles, communication with patients in the waiting areas, the layout of the waiting area and the availability of refreshments. Parking provision was identified as an issue for some – particularly on the new Royal site. We also noted that some patients were discharged without an understanding of the medication they had been prescribed and how/when to take it.

Once again, the response from LUHFT was comprehensive and we received assurance that improvements are already underway. We look forward to returning next year.



“The management teams in our Emergency Departments were extremely grateful for this feedback and have used this insight to support the improvement programme in both departments. There has been extensive improvement work that has been undertaken, and we are continuing to undertake”

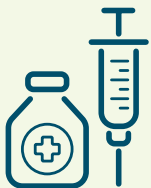
**Fiona Murphy MBE Director of Nursing, Corporate Services, LUHFT**

# Four 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.

## Local Pharmacy to continue serving community

In March 2023 we were notified that a local pharmacy was planning on closing and had applied for this to be designated as a consolidation with another site, which would mean that no other pharmacy would be able to open there. We felt that given the demographics of the area including high rates of ill health, low incomes, low levels of car ownership and language barriers, that patients may not be able to access the alternative site and could miss out on medications and care. We promptly spoke to local community groups and contacts to check people's views and formally expressed our concerns. Local councillors did the same and we heard in May 2023 that the application had been refused. For now, the pharmacy remains open and local people can access their medication conveniently.



## Breaking down barriers for patient rights

We heard from a patient with a visual impairment, who wanted to access their medical records from Liverpool University Hospital Foundation Trust. They received a written form to complete in order to access their records but were unable to read and complete this, creating a barrier in exercising their patient rights.

We raised this issue as a matter of equality and Accessible Information, both for this client and for other patients who require reasonable adjustments to communication.

As a result, not only were adjustments put in place to reach a positive outcome for this client, but the Trust also escalated this matter to their Equality, Diversity and Inclusion team, leading to improved staff awareness and training, improved processes, and a commitment to develop a Trust-wide action plan.



## Playing a 'key' role in accessible toilet access

A patient's family came to us about their experience at Aintree University Hospital, when disabled toilets at the hospital were double-locked and inaccessible without buying a key (in addition to the usual Radar key)

We raised this with the trust and received an explanation of this double-locking being in place when any toilets are out of use for maintenance, cleaning or late at night due to anti-social behaviour. Visitors could ask for a key at reception out of hours; however, this had not been signposted.

As a result the situation has now been at least partially rectified, with clear notices in place, and a clear process for this being included in a new Standard Operating Procedure.



## Highlighting the stories of Trans people In Liverpool

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In 2021, Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust began operating CMAGIC (Cheshire and Merseyside Adult Gender Identity Collaborative), a new pilot service for adults who feel their gender is different to the gender assigned to them at birth. We have previously received feedback from trans patients locally about the difficulties of accessing gender-affirming care, so we were interested in hearing more about these experiences of health and care locally in 2022, as well as learning more about CMAGIC as a new service, and the impact this has on people's experiences.

We focused on in-depth feedback from trans people broadly, voicing the impact of issues experienced while accessing either gender-affirming care, or general health care. Their personal stories highlighted the positive action trans people want and need to see.

We held semi-structured interviews and surveys, in which we heard about the impact of long waiting times for gender affirming care, people feeling that they had to go private to access treatment, and the mental health impacts of long waits. We also heard from people about negative treatment when accessing other healthcare, such as intrusive and unnecessary questions from staff.

“[...] But if I had to wait the seven years, I think that would be seven years of that nibbling away at me, seven years of feeling like well I'm wasting seven years of a life I want to lead, and seven years of the chance for that to bleed into other mental health issues.” - Interviewee

### Our recommendations

1. Trans patients who are self-medicating with hormones should be consistently offered an NHS bridging prescription as a form of harm reduction.
2. New pilot clinics should be extended and expanded.
3. More training should be offered to staff and volunteers at all levels across the NHS. Training should include working respectfully with trans patients, and the referral process for NHS care.

### What difference will this make?

We have been able to funnel these voices into decision makers. This includes influencing the local LGBTQ+ Joint Strategic Needs Assessment led by Liverpool Public Health and feeding into work around LGBTQ+ inclusivity in healthcare led by the Central Liverpool Primary Care Network. Through our work, the voices and in-depth stories of Liverpool's trans-people can lead to positive action; contributing to the wider picture of trans health and care needs.

By hearing and highlighting these voices, gender-affirming care and wider health and social care can be directed by the experiences of those whose lives are impacted by that care, leading to systematic improvement of services.





A focus group at Merseyside Society for Deaf People (MSDP) as part of our GP Access project

# Hearing from all communities

Over the past year we have worked hard to make sure we hear from everyone within our local area. We consider it important to reach out to the communities we hear from less frequently, to gather their feedback and make sure their voice is heard and services meet their needs.

This year we have reached different communities by:

- Delivering in person engagement to hear from digitally excluded people in specific communities, to ensure their voices were heard on health and social care in Liverpool
- Targeted work with a refugee drop-in service, and visits to cultural communities such as African Elders.
- Offering specific focus groups for people whose main/first language is not English, including BSL speakers, and surveys using BSL.

## Learning Disability and Neurodiversity Partnership Board

In 2021/22, we were asked by Liverpool City Council to carry out consultation around forming a Learning Disability Strategy. We met with local Learning Disability Groups, who told us they wanted to see more collaborative engagement, where people with Learning Disabilities could give feedback but also see and hear about changes made.

This work led to Liverpool City Council agreeing to establish and fund a Learning Disability partnership board and a separate partnership board focused on neurodiversity.

We were able to employ a new member of staff to support the development of the boards. Our new Learning Disability & Autism Lead has met with local groups supporting people with Learning Disabilities and Neurodiversity to promote these boards and build trust with these communities who haven't had a voice in local decision making.

The partnership boards will launch in Summer 2023 and will lead to co-produced policy and strategy to help improve the lives and wellbeing of people with Learning Disabilities & Neurodiversity in Liverpool.



"Thanks (again) for keeping in touch and allowing me to contribute in a way I feel capable of at the moment. ... I am really happy to hear you're open to alternative methods of communication. I find that anything voice related (phone calls, video calls etc) are a nightmare but I would be more than happy to remain in dialogue with you and potentially the group by written word, wherever that was possible." – **Laura, Learning Disability Partnership Board member**

## Communication needs with GP Access

We regularly hear about the difficulties of accessing GP services in Liverpool. In 2022, we set out to find out more about what the specific difficulties were, especially for those who may already face barriers in communication.

We engaged with Merseyside Society for Deaf People (MSDP) for input from BSL speakers and for people who are hard of hearing, and with a Chinese Wellbeing group for Chinese people over 55.

At Chinese Wellbeing we heard the GP access difficulties of the general population echoed, including not getting through when phoning, however, with an additional language barrier making this much harder. We heard of interpreters not always being available for same-day appointments, a lack of presence of employed Chinese link workers in practices, and the impact of these issues, with some people choosing to register with GPs outside of Liverpool due to a lack of support available to enable them to visit a Liverpool GP.

At MSDP we were told of the significant difficulties in getting through to GP practices due to the barrier of telephone calls for people who are deaf or hard of hearing, and how reasonable adjustments were not always made. We also heard about staff awareness and knowledge issues, and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on how patients are required to make appointments.

These findings are being reported to providers and commissioners, to influence positive change to GP access, and outcomes of reduced health-inequality for these communities.



# Advice and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch Liverpool is here for you. In times of worry or stress, our free, confidential enquiry service can provide support and information to help you understand your options and get the help you need. Whether it's finding an NHS dentist, sharing your story about an NHS service or choosing a care service for a loved one – you can count on us.

This year we've helped people by:

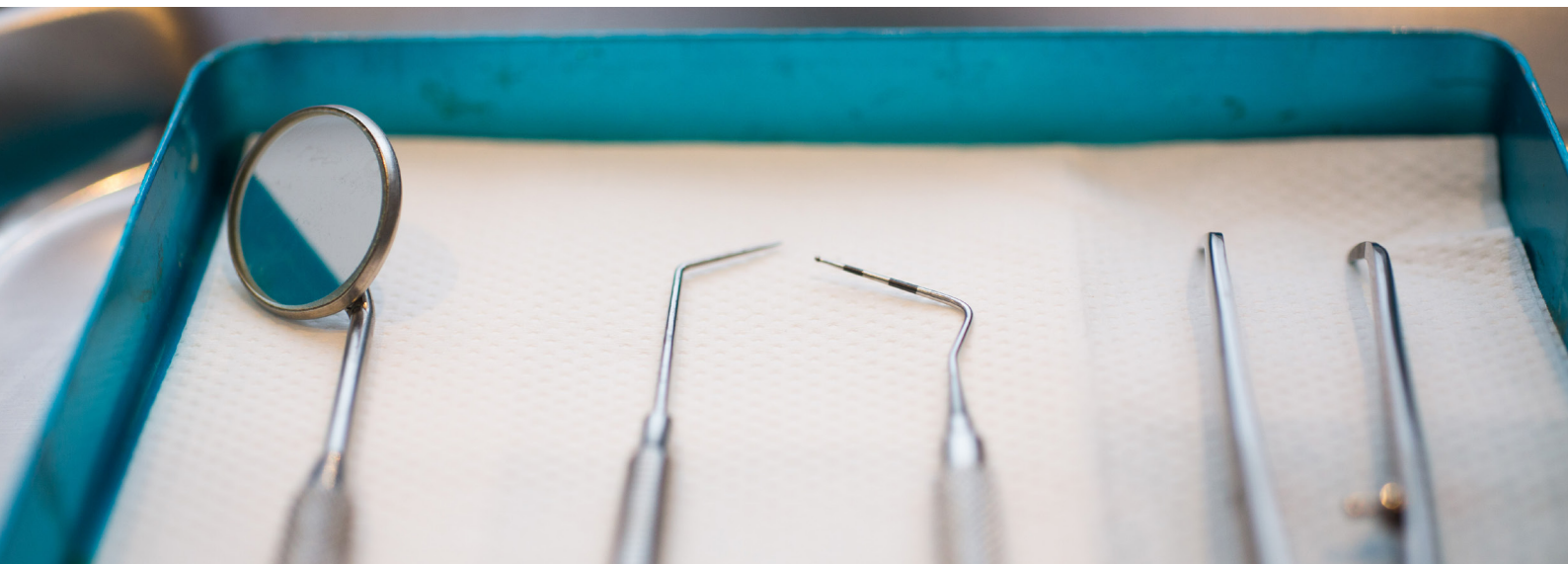
- Providing up to date information people can trust
- Helping people access the services they need
- Helping people to navigate the NHS Complaints process

## Providing information and advice about NHS dental services

**2386** people contacted our advice and information service this year, looking for help around dental services. Many of these people had not been able to access dentistry since before the pandemic, had on-going dental issues or emergency dental needs, were facing additional physical and mental wellbeing issues as a result of their ongoing dental issues, and nearly all had searched endlessly for available dental services.

We continued to be a source of clear information for thousands despite the frustrating situation. However, the information we could provide was limited as, for the majority of the year, absolutely no dental services were taking on new adult NHS patients in Liverpool.

Despite these frustrations, throughout 2022/23 we worked tirelessly to ensure we were an accurate source of up-to-date information on the dental picture in Liverpool. We maintained a database of dental availability and waiting times, regularly contacting services to ensure accuracy and transparency for the people of Liverpool



## Enabling At-Risk Families to Meet The Dental Care Needs of Vulnerable Children

We were contacted by a professional working with two at-risk families. As part of social services' involvement, these families were required to evidence that they were taking care of the children's health and wellbeing needs, including dentistry. Unfortunately, this was proving challenging, leaving these children without dental care and limiting the families' chance of fulfilling and evidencing this requirement.

Healthwatch Liverpool were able to supply immediate up-to-date information on two dentists taking on new child patients, due to our strong commitment to maintaining reliable dental service status information. We also liaised on this matter, with consent, with NHS England. As a direct result, dental care for the children was secured for both families, leading to improved oral health for these children, as well as enabling these families to meet this requirement.

## Accessible Medications and Maintaining Independence

**When a local pharmacy informed a patient that they were no longer providing blister packs, we were able to bring about positive action for all.**

We were contacted by a professional regarding blister pack services at a local pharmacy. The professional was supporting a blind client who lived in supported accommodation and had been able to maintain their independence around medication management thanks to the provision of blister packs. Medication dispensed in this way meant they didn't have to ask anyone else for help and it minimised the risk of error, enabling them to administer their medications independently. Unfortunately, the pharmacy had previously written to some of their patients to inform them that their blister pack provision was ending.


We considered that this clients need for blister packs was a reasonable adjustment, and the removal of this adjustment may have breached equalities legislation if alternative arrangements could not be made.

With consent, we liaised with the pharmacy on behalf of the patient and as a result they reinstated the vital blister packs for them and gave an explanation as to the circumstances. The pharmacy had come under new ownership, and the communication about blister packs had happened before this change. The new provider had not been aware that this had happened. The person's blister packs were reinstated and the pharmacy also took steps to contact the provider who looks after the other residents at the property, to check whether anyone else may have been impacted by this, to ensure their blister pack needs were also met. Our work on this case therefore not only led to a positive outcome for this client, enabling their independent medication administration to continue, but also helped others; reducing potential harm from medication errors, enabling independence and esteem, and ensuring clear communication.

“

Your assistance has been invaluable and helped us get to the bottom of the situation and reach a positive outcome not only for our service user but also other residents with needs. You responded to my initial query about the circumstances really quickly and kept me updated with all appropriate developments as they arose and I really can't thank you enough”

Professional Enquirer to our Information and Advice Service



Repeat  
Prescriptions

## Welcoming Students to Liverpool

Liverpool is home to over 70,000 students; some already Liverpool residents, and many coming to the city for the first time. At Healthwatch Liverpool we engage annually in welcoming these students as they embark on a new chapter. University is often the first time students have been away from their homes, families, friends, and local healthcare systems – it can be a daunting but exciting time. Healthwatch Liverpool is there to ensure those students have the information they need to stay healthy and know where to turn.

In Autumn 2022 we attended 5 university Freshers events, sharing key information on: accessing GP and dental services, walk-in and A&E settings, and mental health services; as well as Covid specific messages, information on health care charges, specific information for international students, vaccination information, sexual health, and many more.

This year we spoke to 662 students to share this information and advice, helping students find their way through the maze and ensuring they know where to turn when they need support.



## The Live Well Directory

A key part of our work is keeping the Live Well Directory up-to-date as a trusted source of information for professionals and members of the public in Liverpool. It is home to information about more than 1500 services in Liverpool.

**In 2022-23, more than 100,000 people viewed more than 400,000 pages on the directory.**

The information on Live Well also feeds through to our Wellbeing Liverpool directory which supports the work of social prescribing in Liverpool. Wellbeing Liverpool helped an additional 18,500 visitors access 56,000 pages this year.

## NHS Complaints Advocacy

**In 2022/23, Healthwatch Liverpool provided the Independent NHS Complaints Advocacy service in Liverpool; providing information and advice on the NHS Complaints process, as well as direct advocacy support.**

This year, our Complaints Advocacy service supported 57 open cases, with 32 of these being brand new cases for the year, and 24 continuing from the previous year. This advocacy support included complaint letter writing, Local Resolution Meeting support, escalation to the Parliamentary and Health Ombudsman, and more.

In addition to our direct advocacy support, we also provided information and advice about the NHS Complaints process to 119 people. This included the provision of our Self Help Information Pack, which we provided to 92 people, to help them navigate the complaints process themselves.



### Improving patients' experiences at Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) meetings

We provided Independent Complaints Advocacy to a client who had been previously assessed as requiring ongoing support from Mersey Care, but who had repeatedly not been accepted by the Community Mental Health Team (CMHT).

The client felt they not been made aware of outcomes of Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) meetings which had been held about them, and despite poor mental health, continued to not be accepted by the CMHT.

As a result of our direct advocacy for this client throughout the process, the client was able to clearly voice their experience and complaint, significant points of which were upheld following complaint investigation proceedings. With our support the patient was able to achieve outcomes for themselves and others.

The complaint resulted in systematic recommendations within the service, including: patients being copied into letters sent to GPs from MDT meetings, outlining reasons for not being accepted and suggestions of how clients can access appropriate services for support, and that patients should be contacted to discuss any changes to clinical interventions including withdrawal of support, and alternatives explored.

Due to concerns for the clients' welfare, our advocacy service also made referral to the client's GP, and due to this intervention by Healthwatch Liverpool, the CMHT accepted the GP's referral, and the client is now receiving the CMHT support they required.



# Volunteering

We're supported by a team of amazing volunteers who are at the heart of what we do. Thanks to their efforts in the community, we're able to understand what is working and what needs improving.





## This year our volunteers



- Took part in the Healthwatch England Inclusion Ambassadors project, helping other local Healthwatch to improve the diversity and accessibility of their volunteer programme.
- Attended online external focus groups and engagement activities, including a workshop by the new Royal Liverpool hospital, regarding their new ITC system which was under development.
- Supported our report writing process.
- Liaised with local dental surgeries to keep our dental services status information up to date.
- Marched with us at Liverpool Pride 2022.
- Attended and co-facilitated student freshers events at Liverpool's universities. Helping to signpost students to local health and social care services, boosting GP registration within the new student cohort, and sharing key information on health care charges, vaccinations and more.
- Took part in PLACE (Patient Led Assessment of the Care Environment) visits.



### Do you feel inspired?

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

 [www.healthwatchliverpool.co.uk/volunteer](http://www.healthwatchliverpool.co.uk/volunteer)

 **0300 77 77 007**

 [enquiries@healthwatchliverpool.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@healthwatchliverpool.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.

## Our income and expenditure

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from Government	£554,231.04	Expenditure on pay*	£497,129.46
Additional income	£30,560.40	Operational expenditure	£57,473.28
		Administrative expenditure	£9,246.33
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£584,791.44</b>	<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>£563,849.07</b>

\* We learned in this year that our income from the local authority would be significantly reduced in 2023/24 and began making savings to accommodate this. This accounts for the reduction in the staff team over the year as shown on Page 6.

Additional funding is broken down by:

- **£10,000 funding** received from Healthwatch England for work on a project
- **£17,060.40 funding** received from local authority for co-production work
- **£3,500 funding** from ICS for input into developing their engagement framework

## Top three priorities for 2023–24

**Our overarching priority this year is tackling health inequalities and the way in which NHS pressures hit some groups harder than others. As part of this, our top focus areas are:**

1. Primary care (dental, GP and pharmacy). Ensuring we know and can share how pressures and demands are impacting on people's lives and health.
2. Providing routes for people with learning disabilities and neurodiverse people to influence the shape of NHS and care services
3. Trauma informed care – working with partners to develop a local evidence basis for the need for this and with providers to start to make it a reality.

# Next steps

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**Our overarching priority area for 2023–24 remains equality, diversity, and inclusion – including health inequalities. Health inequalities in Liverpool mean that some local people can expect shorter lives and fewer years of good health than others, and that our local health experience is much worse than elsewhere in the country.**

We know that health inequalities are ingrained and were exacerbated by the pandemic, and that the cost-of-living crisis continues to deepen them. We also know that the way that services are delivered makes it difficult for some groups of people to access and engage with them. 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, how you identify, whether you are disabled, your age, income, race, or any other factor.

We are committed to making a positive impact on equality within health and social care, and ensuring every voice can be heard. We know that well intentioned plans that don't consider the reality of people's lives and personal circumstances, will fail to address these inequalities.

In previous years we have undertaken focused projects to better understand people's experiences on subjects like the impact of the pandemic on people's mental health or on access to GP care. We feel these issues are now well understood but action to address them is still needed. Rather than write more big reports we want to ensure that decision makers have clear information on people's experiences to know whether their work is proving effective and to highlight where further change is needed. With the NHS and social care facing lots of challenges, it's important we meet people where they're at to hear their experiences and help them resolve issues.

We have established routes with health and care providers and decision makers in Liverpool and at the Cheshire and Mersey level. We want to focus this year on hearing all the voices and experiences of our communities so that we can ensure these are heard by these partners in order to influence:

- service design - making sure that they meet the needs of as many people as possible.
- the steps needed to prevent further deterioration in health levels.
- action on the social determinants of health.

## We will:

- Have a programme of community engagement (at community groups, events and NHS services) to strengthen connections with local communities feeling disconnected after the pandemic and gather as many experiences as we can.
- Apply what we are learning from our work with people with Learning Disabilities and Neurodiversity to improve accessibility and make sure our diverse communities can be heard as part of the important decisions about services.
- Illuminate and champion learning from people's lived experiences in all health inequality decision making.



# Statutory statements

Healthwatch Liverpool is delivered by Liverpool Advocacy Rights Information Development and Equality (Laridae) CIC, a Community Interest Company limited by guarantee and registered in England & Wales (company no 8254903) at 151 Dale Street, Liverpool, L2 2AH.

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

# The way we work

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## Methods and systems used across the year to obtain people's experiences

We use a wide range of approaches to ensure that as many people as possible have the opportunity to tell us about their experiences of health and care services.

During 2022/23, people have been able to contact us by phone, email, text, WhatsApp, and via a webform on our website. We have also attended focus groups both online and in-person, held Listening Events at multiple health and care sites including A&E, visited local GP practices, attended in-person meetings of local community groups, and created online and paper surveys to gather people's feedback. We have used BSL surveys and attended community groups for people whose first language is not English with interpreters, to make sure we can hear from people who might not otherwise have been heard.

We learn a lot about the issues people are facing from engagement, from our information and signposting enquiries and from the NHS complaints we support patients with. This informs our priorities for future work, including our continued focus for 2023-24 on equalities.

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 and link to it on social media and in our member newsletter.

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

We have a Community Interest Company board with 6 directors who work on a voluntary basis to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny to our activities. In 2021-22 they met 8 times and made decisions on matters such as our budget, policies and hybrid working arrangements. They are assisted by a parallel Community Engagement Board with 11 members in this year representing local communities to ensure that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community. Through 2022-23 the Community Engagement Board met 10 times, influencing the direction of particular projects for the year and setting our priorities for 2023-24.

## Responses to recommendations

No providers failed to respond to our requests for information or recommendations. We resumed Enter and View visits to care homes partway through this year after an enforced pause due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and four Enter and View visits were carried out. There were three recommendations or other actions resulting from these. There were no issues or recommendations formally escalated by our Healthwatch to Healthwatch England Committee and so no resulting special reviews or investigations.

# Taking people's experiences to decision makers

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We ensure that people who can make decisions about services hear about the insight and experiences that have been shared with us. In our local authority area, we take information to providers and Liverpool decision makers for example presenting on the dental crisis to the Liverpool Health and Wellbeing Board

We also take insight and experiences to decision makers in Cheshire and Mersey Integrated Care System. The nine Cheshire & Merseyside Healthwatch Organisations are represented on the Integrated Care Board (ICB), the Primary Care Commissioning Committee, the Quality and Performance Committee, the Transformation Committee, the Women's Services Committee, subcommittees and Task and Finish groups and the Health Care Partnership to ensure public voice is represented and heard. Individually we are each active partners of ICB groups at our own 'Place' level (Liverpool in our case).

These nine local Healthwatch organisations have a trusted and effective relationship of over ten years. Our processes for joint work, designed to fit local needs, allow us to work proactively and responsively to ensure local people's lived experience influences decision making. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been written, and endorsed, by all nine Healthwatch Organisations to underpin our joint work and promote openness, honesty and flexibility. We use a wide range of approaches to ensure that as many people as possible have the opportunity to tell us about their experiences of health and care services.



"During the first year of NHS C&M, our Healthwatch partners have engaged and supported the work of the ICS. They have worked with us and provided the right level of scrutiny and challenge on behalf of the population of C&M, asking probing questions and seeking assurance to ensure that C&M ICB and wider system partners always put the resident at the centre of our strategic and operational priorities. The 9 Healthwatch organisations are active at a C&M wide level, and particularly working within our 9 Places, which means they are able to ensure the voice of the public is heard at all levels of the ICS. I'm very grateful for their contribution and advice and look forward to continuing our close working in the future

**Clare Watson**

**Assistant Chief Executive, NHS Cheshire and Merseyside**

## Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Liverpool is represented on the Liverpool Health and Wellbeing Board by Sarah Thwaites, Chief Officer. During 2022/23 our representative has effectively carried out this role by attending meetings, sharing community insights on a wide range of health and care issues and participating in groups that report to the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Sarah also represents our organisation on the NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board in liaison with the Chief Officers of the other eight local Healthwatch in the area .

## Enter and view

This year, we made **four** Enter and View visits. We made **three** recommendations or actions as a result of this activity.

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
Stapely Care Home	To learn more about the service, and to find out from observations and speaking with people, where the service appeared to be doing especially well, in addition to finding out if any improvements could be made.	Wrote a report of our findings, including many positive observations, and 1 recommendation for improvement opportunity, which the service followed up, which can further the dementia-friendly care and environment.
Hamlets Care Home	To learn more about the service, and to find out from observations and speaking with people, where the service appeared to be doing especially well, in addition to finding out if any improvements could be made.	Wrote a report of our findings, including many positive observations, and 2 recommendations for change, which the service followed up, leading to environmental improvement.
Grace Lodge Care Home	To learn more about the service, and to find out from observations and speaking with people, where the service appeared to be doing especially well, in addition to finding out if any improvements could be made.	Wrote a report of our findings, including many positive observations, and highlights of good practice.
Oak Springs Care Home	To learn more about the service, and to find out from observations and speaking with people, where the service appeared to be doing especially well, in addition to finding out if any improvements could be made.	Wrote a report of our findings, including many positive observations and highlights of good practice.

## 2022–2023 Outcomes

Project / activity	Changes made to services
Accessible Information project and report from 2021-2	<p>A new NHS interpretation contract was introduced locally in 2021-2. We recommended the training element of this include cultural sensitivity training – a new round of training is now being planned to include this.</p> <p>We also recommended that there be a clear method, known to all staff members, how to record patients' language and correct dialect (where applicable) – this has now been included in a new Standard Operating Procedure for accessible formats and is included in new training being delivered in July/ August 2023.</p>
Difficulty accessing phlebotomy by patients without internet access	<p>We heard from a patient who had been told they needed a blood test. Because they didn't have internet access (the main booking route) staff from another trust tried to book for them but got an answerphone message that the wait time was 40 minutes. We escalated this to the provider as we felt there was a risk of patients who are digitally excluded and have limited phone credit missing out on vital blood tests. They later reported back their work to improve response time including recruitment of additional staff.</p>
Community action to tackle health inequalities	<p>We have been calling for action to address health inequalities and for local people and communities to be at the heart of this.</p> <p>In 2022-3 we were part of the Grant Panel that oversaw the award of a new Health and Wellbeing Fund awarding much needed funding to 18 community organisations to do just that, helping to direct the funds to where it could make most impact.</p>
Supporting patients through GP closure	<p>A GP practice in Speke was closing and patients were to be transferred to other practices in the area. We reviewed the draft letters being sent to patients by the NHS and suggested changes based on our knowledge of the local communities and the enquiries we had received. When some patients didn't receive or read their letters and were left not knowing who their new GP was we liaised with the NHS to find out and ensure they were able to access their care.</p>





# healthwatch Liverpool

Healthwatch Liverpool  
151 Dale Street  
Liverpool  
L2 2AH

[www.healthwatchliverpool.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchliverpool.co.uk)

t: 0300 77 77 007

e: [enquiries@healthwatchliverpool.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@healthwatchliverpool.co.uk)

 [@HW\\_Liverpool](https://twitter.com/@HW_Liverpool)

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