



Annual Report 2024–2025

Unlocking the power of people-driven care

Healthwatch Swindon

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"The impact that local Healthwatch have is vitally important. Healthwatch are empowering their communities to share their experiences. They're changing the health and care landscape and making sure that people's views are central to making care better and tackling health inequalities."

Louise Ansari, Chief Executive, Healthwatch England

A message from our CEO

It is with great pride that I present this year's Annual Report for Healthwatch Swindon. 2024–2025 has been a year of deep listening, collaboration, and meaningful change. From championing young people's voices in mental health and substance use services to supporting asylum seekers and refugees, we've worked to ensure no voice goes unheard.

We published 11 reports this year, covering topics such as eating disorders, adolescent vaping, and access to sexual health services—insights that have shaped local strategies and improvements.

Our achievements are thanks to our dedicated staff and incredible volunteers, who contributed 998 hours—equating to £16,891.14 in social value. Their work in community engagement, research, and Enter and View visits has been vital.

We also welcomed student placements, whose fresh perspectives enriched our work and strengthened our future. Looking ahead, we remain committed to improving access, quality, and equity in care.

Kevin Peltonen-Messenger
Chief Executive Officer, The Care Forum



"Our achievements are thanks to our dedicated staff and incredible volunteers, who contributed 998 hours—equating to £16,891.14 in social value."

Kevin Peltonen-Messenger, CEO, Swindon

About us

Healthwatch Swindon is your local health and social care champion.

We ensure that NHS leaders and decision-makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care. We can also help you find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.



Our vision

To bring closer the day when everyone gets the care they need.



Our mission

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



Our values are:

Equity: We're compassionate and inclusive. We build strong connections and empower the communities we serve.

Collaboration: We build internal and external relationships. We communicate clearly and work with partners to amplify our influence.

Impact: We're ambitious about creating change for people and communities. We're accountable to those we serve and hold others to account.

Independence: Our agenda is driven by the public. We're a purposeful, critical friend to decision-makers.

Truth: We work with integrity and honesty, and we speak truth to power.

Our year in numbers

We've supported more than 11,097 people to have their say and get information about their care. We currently employ 3 staff and, our work is supported by 22 volunteers.

Reaching out:



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

10,812 people came to us for clear advice and information on topics such as prescriptions, out-of-hours healthcare and accessing your GP records online.

Championing your voice:



We published 11 reports about the improvements people would like to see in areas like sexual health services, dementia and cancer care.

Our most popular report was our [investigation into eating disorders](#), highlighting people's struggles in accessing vital care.

Statutory funding:



We're funded by Swindon Borough Council. In 2024/25 we received £111,237.00 which is the same as last year.

A year of making a difference

Over the year we've been out and about in the community listening to your stories, engaging with partners and working to improve care in Swindon. Here are a few highlights.

Spring

Attended a health conference put on by The Harbour Project. Supported female asylum seekers and refugees to help improve their access and awareness of health care in Swindon.



We supported New College students to work with the local Public Health team to improve understanding of how sexual health services were working.



Summer

One of our Young Healthwatch volunteers highlighted the rise in vaping among adolescents and the reasons behind this.



We highlighted a number of improvements that could be made to eating disorder services for young people.



Autumn

We worked with NHS partners to run a diabetes awareness event, attended by over 60 people.



Our Insight day with students allowed us to hear what areas of research are important to young people.



Winter

Our report on young people's access to substance use and mental health services was published.



We launched our new Local Advisory Group to improve public involvement in Healthwatch Swindon.



Working together for change

We've worked with neighbouring Healthwatch to ensure people's experiences of care in Swindon are heard at the Integrated Care System (ICS) level, and they influence decisions made about services across B&NES, Swindon and Wiltshire.

This year, we've worked with Healthwatch across these areas to achieve the following:

A collaborative network of local Healthwatch:



Healthwatch across B&NES, Swindon and Wiltshire work collaboratively to highlight issues affecting populations across the ICS area. This year, several collaborative projects have been carried out, including:

- Eating disorders
- Vaping in adolescents
- Digital access to healthcare

The big conversation:



Increased engagement with carers, and the services supporting them across the ICS area has hugely increased our understanding of their needs and the importance of amplifying their voices. This had led to us carrying out a major piece of work looking at the experiences of looking after loved ones, which aims to be published later in 2025.

Building strong relationships to achieve more:



In March 2024, Healthwatch services in B&NES, Swindon and Wiltshire started discussions with the ICB to plan how to better understand two priority areas for the health system. Plans were developed to increase the public's awareness of hypertension, as well as how we can gain better understanding for the reasons people attend Accident and Emergency departments.

We've also summarised some of our other outcomes achieved this year in the Statutory Statements section at the end of this report.

Making a difference in the community

We bring people's experiences to healthcare professionals and decision-makers, using their feedback to shape services and improve care over time.

Here are some examples of our work in Swindon this year:

Creating empathy by bringing experiences to life



Hearing personal experiences and their impact on people's lives helps services better understand the issues people face.

Following a call for evidence, the CQC were able to use our case study highlighting the experience of a carer and their loved one living with dementia at their staff training day.

The case study was used to shape their dementia strategy and future ways of working to ensure the voice of carers and people living with dementia are heard.

Getting services to involve the public



By involving local people, services help improve care for everyone.

We supported 5 students to carry out a visit to review the sexual health services in Swindon. The review was done in partnership with the local Sexual Health Service and the British Pregnancy Advice Service, allowing students the opportunity to feedback their findings directly to the services.

Improving care over time



Change takes time. We work behind the scenes with services to consistently raise issues and bring about change.

Healthwatch Swindon has been developing a relationship with the Nelson Trust throughout 2024/25. This service offers vital trauma-informed, gender responsive, and holistic support for women and their families. By working in partnership with them, we are looking to jointly amplify the voices of a group whose experiences often go unheard

Listening to your experiences

Services can't improve if they don't know what's wrong. Your experiences shine a light on issues that may otherwise go unnoticed.

This year, we've listened to feedback from all areas of our community. People's experiences of care help us know what's working and what isn't, so we can give feedback on services and help them improve.



Listening to your experiences

Lived Experiences of Young People navigating substance use and mental health support

We highlighted the urgent need for integrated services that address both mental health and substance misuse.

Young people told us they needed a collaborative, trauma-informed approach that can address these interconnected issues effectively.

What did we do?

We worked with young people using substance use services to find ways to make mental health support easier to access and more responsive to their needs.

Key things we heard:

59%

of young people in substance use treatment also had co-occurring mental health conditions.

35%

of young people may avoid seeking mental health support due to stigma from family or peers.

25%

of young people may disengage from services due to poor fit with assigned professionals.

This work revealed that young people in Swindon who use substances face major barriers to mental health support, including stigma, fragmented services, and poor service fit – highlighting the urgent need for integrated, youth-centred, and trauma-informed care.

What difference did this make?

Following the report's publication, services committed to implementing monthly case management meetings, embedding trauma informed practice, and mapping the local mental health offer.

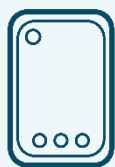
Listening to your experiences

Vaping amongst young people

E-cigarette use among adolescents in Bath and North East Somerset and Swindon is rising, with figures above the national average

These trends raise public health concerns, particularly around nicotine addiction, respiratory health, and the need for targeted prevention and education strategies. Key drivers that were identified included curiosity, stress, peer pressure, and easy access, raising concerns about addiction and long-term health risks.

Key things we heard:



34%

of surveyed youths having used an e-cigarette at least once.

26%

reported to be vaping regularly or more often.



“it is a huge issue that schools do not talk about, all we get is vaping is bad, we need more information”

What difference did this make?

A workshop with young people and the public health smoking cessation team was held in June 2025. The event, co-produced by Healthwatch and the Public Health team, enable young people to give further insights around vaping including that it's not just a habit but often a coping mechanism tied to mental health and social pressures.

Following further recommendations being developed, work is planned to follow up their impact.

Hearing from all communities

We're here for all residents of Swindon. That's why, over the past year, we've worked hard to reach out to those communities whose voices may go unheard.

Every member of the community should have the chance to share their story and play a part in shaping services to meet their needs.

This year, we have reached different communities by:

- Building a relationship with female asylum seekers and refugees, to ensure their voice is heard and provide signposting to women's services in Swindon.
- Continuing our work with community cafes to support people living in areas of socioeconomic deprivation.
- Strengthening our relationship with primary care networks to ensure the feedback we receive is heard at a local level.



Hearing from all communities

Improving engagement with marginalised communities

This year we set up a new Local Advisory Group to improve our connection with the communities experiencing the greatest health inequalities.

The group will support Healthwatch to set priorities and plan projects that will amplify the voices of seldom heard and marginalised groups, ensuring our work includes those whose need is greatest.

What difference did this make?

The launch of Local Advisory Groups has sharpened our focus on tackling health inequalities. Going forward, we'll prioritise projects and engagement that elevate the voices of marginalised and seldom-heard communities, ensuring their experiences shape our work.

Gorse Hill Community Fridge

At Gorse Hill Community Fridge café, we regularly engage with individuals facing food insecurity.

We listen to people's experiences with health and care services and offer tailored advice and guidance to help them navigate and access appropriate support.

What difference did this make?

This initiative has built trust and empowered individuals to seek timely care. Several attendees have been successfully referred to GPs, mental health services, and social care support. By meeting people where they are, we can reduce barriers and support healthier, more connected lives.

Information and signposting

Whether it's finding an NHS dentist, making a complaint, or choosing a good care home for a loved one – you can count on us. This year 10,812 people have reached out to us for advice, support or help finding services.

This year, we've helped people by:

- Providing up-to-date information people can trust
- Helping people access the services they need
- Supporting people to look after their health
- Signposting people to additional support services



Supporting Culturally Sensitive Care Choices

A local resident reached out after struggling to find care providers who could meet her request for female-only staff.

When a woman contacted Healthwatch seeking care that respected her cultural and personal preferences, she was frustrated by the lack of clear options.

Understanding the importance of dignity and choice, Healthwatch staff provided tailored information and contacted local providers to identify those offering female-only care. This proactive support helped her access the care she needed—on her terms.

Helping Dennis Access Urgent Dental Care

Dennis was in pain and couldn't find an NHS dentist accepting new patients, despite trying multiple times

Dennis contacted Healthwatch after struggling to access dental care. He was signposted to the NHS Find-a-Dentist service, but staff didn't stop there.

Understanding the urgency, they phoned around local practices on his behalf to identify one accepting new patients. Thanks to this extra support, Dennis was able to register and receive the treatment he needed.

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Showcasing volunteer impact

Our fantastic volunteers have given 998 hours to support our work. Thanks to their dedication to improving care, we can better understand what is working and what needs improving in our community.

This year, our volunteers:

- Visited communities to promote our work
- Collected experiences and supported their communities to share their views
- Carried out enter and view visits to local services to help them improve



Showcasing volunteer impact

At the heart of what we do

From finding out what residents think to helping raise awareness, our volunteers have championed community concerns to improve care.

"I've really enjoyed my time at Healthwatch. It gave me the chance to connect with communities and gather meaningful feedback on health and care.

"I built up my research skills through a project I was genuinely interested in and felt supported every step of the way.

"Volunteering here has helped me grow and given me a better understanding of how social research can make a real difference."

Ella

"I've always been interested in public health, and volunteering with Healthwatch let me apply my academic interests into real-world settings.

"I was supported throughout, given the freedom to shape my own project, and gained hands-on experience with public health systems, charities, and lived community experiences.

"The role deepened my understanding of the sector and strengthened both my studies and career readiness, giving me a strong foundation for a future in the health and social sector."

Ryan

Be part of the change.

If you've felt inspired by these stories, contact us today and find out how you can be part of the change.



www.healthwatchswindon.co.uk



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info@healthwatchswindon.co.uk

Finance and future priorities

We receive funding from Swindon Borough Council under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to help us do our work.

Our income and expenditure:

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from Government	£111,237.00	Expenditure on pay	£82,322.00
Additional income	£0	Non-pay expenditure	£19,661.00
		Office and management fee	£5,103.00
Total income	£111,237.00	Total Expenditure	£107,086.00

Integrated Care System (ICS) funding:

Healthwatch across BSW received no funding from our Integrated Care System (ICS) in 2024/25

Statutory statements

Healthwatch Swindon, Sanford House, Sanford Street, Swindon, SN1 1HE.

Healthwatch Swindon is hosted by The Care Forum, The Vassall Centre, Gill Avenue, Fishponds, Bristol, BS16 2QQ

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

The way we work

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

Our Local Advisory Group (LAG) consists of members who work on a voluntary basis to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny to our activities. Our LAG ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our local community.

Our work priorities are driven by what people have told us is important to them, through our surveys and feedback forms, information and signposting enquiries, web page views, and our review of localised strategic data.

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

We use a variety of channels to ensure people can share their experiences of health and care services. In 2024/2025, we've been available by phone, email, webform, and social media, and have engaged through virtual events, community forums, and our online feedback centre.

We're especially focused on hearing from underrepresented voices. This year, we've worked with Changing Suits, the Community Fridge, young people aged 11–24, and the Nelson Trust.

Our annual report is widely shared—published online, sent to our mailing list, and circulated to key partners including the Integrated Care Board and Health and Wellbeing Board.

Statutory statements

Responses to recommendations

All providers responded to our requests for information and recommendations.

There were no issues or recommendations escalated by our Healthwatch to Healthwatch England Committee and so no resulting special reviews or investigations.

Taking people's experiences to decision-makers

We ensure that people who can make decisions about services hear about the insights and experiences shared with us.

For example, in our local authority area, we share information with the Health and Wellbeing Board and Integrated Care Board. We also share information with relevant commissioners and service providers to ensure recommendations are visible and acted upon. A new system of following up on recommendations has been introduced in 2024/25 to ensure we are able to routinely measure the impact of future work

We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Swindon is represented on the Swindon Council Health and Wellbeing Board and the ICB Board by varied Healthwatch Swindon staff,. During 2024/25 our representative has effectively carried out this role by regularly attending the meetings and workshops.

Staff also attended relevant HOSC, ICB, Inequality Committees and VCSFE Alliance Meetings throughout the year.

Statutory statements

Enter and view

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
Community Maternity Services at Eldene Health Centre and Swindon Health Centre	We were invited to visit by the maternity	We shared our report with the services, which recognised the high quality of care being provided to service users.

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