



**Annual Report 2024–2025**

# **Unlocking the power of people-driven care**

Healthwatch Reading

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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 Chair

This year has been another busy and impactful one as we continue to ensure your voices are heard, and health and social care services are improved. On behalf of the Advisory Group, I am delighted to introduce our annual report.

We have delivered a full and diverse engagement programme in 2024/25, centred around our core projects: **Language Matters**, **NHS Eligibility to Treatment**, **GP Access**, **Improving Sexual Health Awareness and Services for Young Women (16–24)**, **Oral Health and Dentistry (Core20PLUS5 project)**.

## Highlights of the Year

- **NHS Eligibility to Treatment:** initial session held with Royal Berkshire Hospital explored the impact of NHS billing on patients. A follow-up event confirmed that changes were done, and further improvements are underway. This is a clear example of residents' voices being heard and acted upon.
- **Language Matters:** This widely attended event brought together people affected by language barriers in healthcare, alongside professionals from GP surgeries, hospitals, pharmacies, and the council. The insights shared are now being considered at both regional and national level
- **Women's Health Hub – A Community-Led Movement:** a major development this year has been our work on **women's health**, particularly the push for a **Women's Health Hub** in Reading.

**Working Together for Greater Impact:** we continue to listen and signpost residents across Reading, while feeding back and advocating for improvements in health and social care.



"We are grateful to our dedicated volunteers; residents of Reading who share their experiences and help promote Healthwatch. Our passionate team works closely with Healthwatch Wokingham and West Berkshire. By collaborating we amplify our collective voice and drive greater change."

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Luke".

Luke Howarth, Chair, Healthwatch Reading

## About us

# Healthwatch Reading 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.

To stay informed about our latest projects, community feedback, and developments in local health and social care, subscribe to our free newsletter:

<https://healthwatchreading.co.uk/#subscribe>



### 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 1683 people to have their say and get information about their care. We currently employ 5 part time staff and, our work is supported by 17 volunteers.

## Reaching out:



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

1368 people came to us for clear advice and information on topics such as access to services and complaints.

## Championing your voice:



We published 3 reports about the improvements people would like to see in areas like children's oral health, GP access and young women's sexual health and wellbeing.

All our reports were well received and have made an impact with the community and service providers.

## Our key impacts:



Our insights and recommendations informed the local oral health strategy and funding was allocated for delivery of an oral hygiene campaign.

We worked with RBFT to ensure eligible adults and children will no longer receive bills for free NHS treatment.

We have improved access to translation and interpretation services for people with language barriers.

## Statutory funding:



We're funded by Reading Borough Council. In 2024/25 there was no change to our funding.

# 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 Reading. Here are a few highlights.

## Spring

Our insights into the Oral health of children aged under 10 highlighted the urgent need for an oral health strategy in Reading.



We brought ICB, RBH, RBC Public Health and community together to discuss access to women's health services and the need for women's health hub.



## Summer

We facilitated a community conversation to address concerns about children and eligible adults being charged for free NHS treatment.

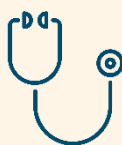


Following a review of the Lost for Words report, we worked with the ICB/hospital and local authority to address gaps in translation and interpreter services.



## Autumn

GP Access report was launched. Key findings (appointment shortage, long waits, digital services confusion and communication gap) were shared with BOB ICB.



Our youth team raised awareness and highlighted a need for better education and access to young women's sexual health services.



## Winter

We raised awareness of Whitley Ville Surgery closure proposal, encouraged patient feedback, and shared consultation details to ensure community voices were heard.



We contributed to the NHSE actionable recommendations to improve access and quality of community interpreter and translation services.





# Working together for change

**We've worked with neighbouring Healthwatch to ensure people's experiences of care in Reading are heard at the Integrated Care System (ICS) level, and they influence decisions made about services at BOB ICB.**

This year, we've worked with Healthwatch across Berkshire West to achieve the following:

## A collaborative network of local Healthwatch:



Funded by the ICB, we collaborated with Healthwatch Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire to find about the oral health of children under 10 years of age. Survey questions were reviewed by Healthwatch England. We recruited Community Connectors (volunteers) in local areas to interview 25 families. Our findings and recommendations, shared with the ICB and Public Health, are already informing the local Oral Health Strategy and actions.

## The big conversation:



Last year, we initiated a community conversation regarding lack of consistent access to interpreting and translation services. In September 2024, we held a bigger conversation to include Health and social care providers that resulted in different improvements such as accessible contents on trust's website using Reachdeck webpage translation tool, piloting of patient held card to identify translation needs.

## Building strong relationships to achieve more:



We found that the Women's Health Hub initiative set up by the NHS, had no presence in Berkshire west. We contacted BOB ICB to start the initiative locally. This was agreed and a Women's Health Hub was piloted from the 1st of October 2024, until June 2025. We will continue to lead on this through our upcoming initiatives like the women's hour focus group.

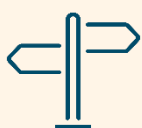
We've also summarised some of our other outcomes achieved this year in the Statutory Statements section at the end of this report.

# Sharing and learning from colleagues

The Advocacy People hold the service contract for 7 Healthwatch; Hampshire, Portsmouth, Reading, Somerset, Southend, West Berkshire and Wokingham Borough.



## Making Services Better together:



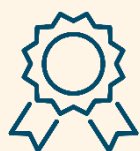
Healthwatch Reading listens to what people think about local health and care services, like doctors and hospitals. We work with 6 other local Healthwatch teams, and we all get help from an organisation called The Advocacy People. They help us with things like training, HR and paperwork, so we can spend more time talking to people in Reading and helping to make services better. Even though we get centralised help, Healthwatch Reading still makes its own decisions based on what local people need.

## Learning and working as a team:



We work closely with other Healthwatch teams to share ideas and learn from each other. This helps us all get better at talking to the community, doing research, and checking how well services are working. By working as a team, we can make sure people's voices are heard and help make real changes in health and care services.

## Speaking up for the community:



One of our most important jobs is to listen to what local people are saying and share those ideas with the people in charge. We work with Healthwatch England and other local groups to make sure everyone's voice matters. Together, we speak up for people to help improve services now and in the future. We're proud to keep working for better care for everyone in Reading.



# 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 **Reading** 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.**

In August 2024, we hosted a "Community Conversation" with RBNHFT and the local communities. The issue of eligible adults, and children being billed for free NHS treatment was discussed. We then worked with the Trust to make the overseas patient website more accessible, including the translatable factsheet.

## Getting services to involve the public



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

BOB ICB Digital Access Lead has taken on board the feedback and recommendations from our GP access report, published in Oct 2024. Digital sessions are now being held at community centres to explain how the NHS app works, and to help people register and access the app where English is not the first language.

## Improving care over time



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

Insights and recommendations shared from our Core20PLUS5 project have informed the local oral health strategy. Funding was allocated to deliver an oral hygiene campaign, this includes: advice to parent carers about oral and dental health; free floss, apple mint toothpaste and toothbrushes for 3- 6-year-olds.

# 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.



"The feedback local Healthwatch hear in their communities and share with us at Healthwatch England is invaluable, building a picture of what it's like to use health and care services nationwide. Local people's experiences help us understand where we – and decision makers – must focus and highlight issues that might otherwise go unnoticed. We can then make recommendations that will change care for the better, both locally and across the nation." **Louise Ansari, Chief Executive, Healthwatch England**



# Listening to your experiences

## Providing insight to address oral health issues

**Last year, we provided insights into the experiences of oral health and hygiene of families with children under 10.**

As part of the Government's Core20PLUS5 initiative to reduce health inequalities for children and young people, Reading needed an Oral Health strategy to address the higher than national average (29%/32%) of 5-year-olds enamel and/or dentinal decay.

### What did we do?

- We interviewed 25 families with children under 10, living in most deprived areas of Reading. This included children with additional needs.
- Families were encouraged to share their experiences – successes, barriers and failures accessing local dental services between 2022 and 2024.

### Key things we heard:



**30%**

**of families visiting a dentist in the last 2 years went for an extractions/emergency treatment.**

**32%**

**did not visit a dentist or had any check up between 2022 – 2024.**

**28%**

**of the children had additional/special needs.**

We found, since the pandemic, there was reduced access to dentists, lack of information and help in education settings. Disabled children faced significant challenges maintaining oral health and accessing specialist dentists.

### What difference did this make?

- Our insights and recommendations have informed the local oral health strategy.
- Public health invited us to contribute to service specification content for the Targeted Supervised Toothbrushing Programme for 3–5-year-olds in early years setting.

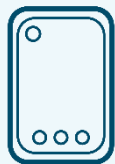
# Listening to your experiences

## Language matters

**Last year, we reviewed the impact of “Lost for words” (2022) report related to language barriers, to see how people’s communication needs were met.**

We hosted a collaborative conversation for people to share their experiences of accessing interpreter services. Their stories indicated there were gaps, the recommendations of the report were not fully actioned..

### Key things we heard:



**Lack of consistency in provision of translation and interpreters across all settings. Patients feel “not listened to”.**

**Delayed interpreter provision resulted in delayed diagnosis and subsequent treatment.**

**Change in staff approach and attitude on intervention by Healthwatch/other organisations.**



“I don’t feel listened to – I know my situation; my previous doctor was very helpful, and I don’t understand why they don’t want to listen to me; why will they not get an interpreter for me to explain

Since the community conversation in September 2024, we have been working with health and social care provider to address the gaps in meeting people’s communication needs. Significant improvements have been made to date.

### What difference did this make?

- Information on how to request an interpreter for hospital appointments has been added to RBNHFT’s website
- Information on how to use the ‘Reachdeck’ tool for translating webpages can now be easily found on RBNHFT’s website.
- A patient held card identifying people needing translation is being piloted.
- RBH is piloting a new service called ‘Wordstix on Wheels’, that offers virtual interpreters.
- RBH is preparing to launch a campaign regarding a self-referral process for individuals who need an interpreter.

# Listening to your experiences

## Empowering Young Women; Improving sexual health awareness and services

**Our youth team investigated young women's sexual health (SH) and wellbeing across Reading and Wokingham Borough**

Youth team discussions and experiences revealed inconsistencies in sexual health education, gaps in information and support, barriers accessing services.

### What did we do?

Listened to young women's experiences using an online survey and:

- In-person engagements at colleges, universities, and community centres.
- Social media engagement: WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram and X.

### Key things we heard:



**84%**

**were unaware they could call 0118 322 7202 for free contraception.**

**70%**

**young women aged 16–25 have never attended any sexual health check-up/screenings.**

**30%**

**were very/extremely comfortable discussing sexual health with healthcare professionals.**

### What difference did this make?

- Raised awareness, young voices to influence changes in SH services.
- Florey clinic will work with youth team to amplify young people's voices
- Public Health (PH) has agreed to explore feasibility of establishing collection points for improved access to STI testing kits.
- PH to develop a comprehensive SH information pack.
- PH will explore education session contents review and refinement.



"We value the insights provided by Healthwatch Youth and are eager to explore future opportunities for collaboration. We would welcome the chance to work with Healthwatch Youth and young people in Reading, Wokingham through focus groups. Such an initiative could provide valuable insights and serve as a constructive approach to identifying areas for improvement in sexual health and contraception services." **Rachael Smart – Clinical Lead Nurse, Florey Clinic**

# Your Feedback

"Thank you for this insightful report. This has been positively received and welcomed by the Public Health and Wellbeing Team at Reading Borough Council. It is methodical, thorough and addresses a pressing health protection priority which is acknowledged by local politicians, system partners, stakeholders and impacts directly on the lives of young people in Reading.

It is a strength that the report is based on experiences and input of young people who took part in the survey. We would like to thank the Healthwatch Youth Team who led this project."

**Dr Matthew Pearce, Director of Public Health, Reading**

"It's been great to work with Alice and the Reading / Wokingham Healthwatch Team and see their commitment and values for engaging with local people and communities. SCW's links with the Healthwatch group on Community Languages Translation and Interpretation has really benefitted the quality of insight going into the NHSE Improvement Framework, through the local event, Language Matters: Thinking Together Community Conversation held in September 2024"

**Andrew Fenton, Transformation Director (Population Health & Inequalities), NHS South, Central and West CSU**

"Attending the excellent Thinking Together Community Conversation in Reading highlighted the vital role interpreter and translation services play in making health and social care truly accessible. For us in Healthwatch Somerset, this resonates deeply with our ongoing commitment to inclusive care, especially through our work with the deaf community. The team was also able to inform the Community Languages Translation & Interpreting Framework (CLTI) for Action for the NHS which was published in May 2025."

**Gill Keniston-Goble, Manager HW Somerset**



# Your Feedback

"Zainab was very understanding and very friendly. It was pleasant to communicate with her. She gave me advice which I will follow. Thank you"

**A community member**

"Thank you for sharing this important report and its recommendations with us. The voices and concerns expressed by young people in this report are of utmost importance to us. We value the insights provided by Healthwatch Youth and will carefully consider and implement recommendations where feasible."

**Dr Matthew Pearce, Director of Public Health, Reading**

"The Trust's strong and valued partnership with Healthwatch has proved especially rewarding this year with a number of key achievements bringing benefits to patients and ensuring the services we provide to our hugely diverse communities are as safe, accessible and of the highest standard.

Over the course of the year, we have met regularly to initiate changes to the way we communicate and engage with overseas patients around their eligibility to NHS treatment. The national framework around this is extremely complex so it's important to ensure people understand the complexities. Healthwatch and other key partners like Reading Refugee Council have shared the views of a wide range of service-users to help us ensure information on our web site is up to date and as clear as it can be.

Similarly, Healthwatch have monitored the Accessibility content on our website and made valuable recommendations which have resulted in a number of improvements. For example, information about the Accessible Information Standard, our accessibility resources and instructions on how to use the Reachdeck tool for translating webpages are now easier to find, and we've added information on how to request an interpreter for hospital appointments. We are also currently piloting a patient held card which identifies people needing translation and is the result of a suggestion from Healthwatch.

# Your Feedback

Access to healthcare within the community and close to home is another key focus for the Trust and a number of our gynaecology consultants are now working closely with partners in Primary Care and Healthwatch on a pilot Women's Health Hub covering nine GP practices providing additional menopause and other support.

Specific support around how to shape sexual health services for young people was also provided by Healthwatch. Working with our sexual health service, the Florey Clinic, we ran a focus group to gain insights in to how we can improve services. In addition, the Florey team valued the input from Healthwatch Youth who provided a good understanding about young people's sexual health education.

And Healthwatch provided welcome support in co-hosting a briefing with local community leaders to consider the impact of the Royal Berkshire Hospital moving to an alternative site. This was part of wide-ranging public engagement carried out over the year as the Trust considered options for a new hospital site. This work, carried out before the Government announced the hospital redevelopment was being delayed until late 2030, attracted more than 10,000 responses.

So, a year of meaningful and positive engagement with Healthwatch, in which we have benefitted from participating in their Learning Matters Programme and from which we have compiled a comprehensive action plan which we hope will lead to an equally rewarding and collaborative year ahead."

**Katie Prichard-Thomas, Chief Nursing Officer, Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust**

# Hearing from all communities

**We're here for all residents of Reading. 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:**

- Collaboratively working with other local organisations to identify key concerns of local diverse communities.
- Listening to young (aged 16-24) women's sexual health services experiences using face-to-face and virtual (social media) engagement methods.
- Convening diverse stakeholders to create a platform where lived experiences shaped the agenda, local voices are heard and acted on.



# Presence in the community

## Engagement snapshot, 2024/25

Mental Health Day,  
Acre 7/6/24

Oral Health Event  
RBC Weller centre,  
10/6/24

Sudanese  
community Eid  
Celebration,  
16/7/24

Celebrating Mayor  
of Reading,  
23/7/24

Language matters,  
12/9/24

CHC open day,  
14/9/24

University fresher  
week, 24/9/24

Loneliness and  
mental health, RVA  
Reading, 24/9/24

Older People Day,  
1/10/24

Utluvu  
Community Award  
Ceremony,  
31/10/24

Caring for migrant  
families, 05/11/24

University of  
Reading  
Community forum,  
14/11/24

Men2men  
conference,  
30/11/24

The Dialogue  
Society, 11/12/24

McMillan Cancer  
Research, 19/12/24

South Reading  
Community  
Networking,  
13/02/25

Parenting children  
with special needs,  
16/02/25

Reading  
Integrated Board  
meeting, 19/02/25

RVA AGM,  
25/02/25

Community Led  
Research Pilot  
University of  
Reading, 10/03/25

Heath inequalities  
Conference,  
28/03/25

# Hearing from all communities

## Improving access to health and social care for local diverse communities, Reading West

### Identifying health and well being concerns of the local community

Through regular community engagement at venues like the Oxford Road Community Well being Hub, we identified key concerns such as poor hotel food, language barriers, digital exclusion, and difficulties accessing health services.

### What difference did this make?

- Collaborative work by local organisations helped improve food quality.
- Distribution of free SIM cards with data has enabled digital access, use of the NHS app thus improving GP registrations and appointment bookings.
- Overall, this has strengthened trust in local health services.

## Helping communities access NHS digital services, Reading South

### Members at the Whitley community centre told us they struggled accessing GP services and were confused with questions from care navigators.

To help, our staff and volunteers used a specially designed infographic that we previously created, and a video from Dr. Amit Sharma to communicate the new ways of working at GP surgeries.

### What difference did this make?

- Multilingual volunteers educated people with the new ways of working.
- People understood that Care navigators have replaced receptionists.
- Care navigators ask questions to redirect people to appropriate services/professionals.
- Our staff and volunteers also helped raise awareness of the NHS app.

# Hearing from all communities

## How we use what you tell us to make a difference

### Raising awareness of eligibility to free NHS treatment

**At the Alliance for Cohesion and Racial Equality (ACRE) and Utulivu health inequalities conference, awareness was forming about eligible adults and children being incorrectly receiving bills for free NHS treatment.**

We investigated this further by inviting feedback from impacted individuals and voluntary sector support organisations in Reading.

We facilitated a community conversation between RBFT's senior management team, voluntary sector organisations and community leaders to discuss our findings and how they can be addressed.

At the conversation, the trust immediately acknowledged the impact of these bills and offered a commitment to address the issue and make improvements.

### What difference did this make?

- We worked with the Trust to improve their "overseas patient" webpage. It clearly explains how NHS treatment billing works, and the page is now more accessible.
- An impacted family has confirmed that no further bills were received for their child's treatment. This was shared with the trust.
- RBFT has since produced a draft fact sheet for the public explaining how charging for NHS treatment is applied. Once finalised, the document will be used to raise awareness about this issue.



"Over the course of the year, we have met regularly to initiate changes to the way we communicate and engage with overseas patients around their eligibility to NHS treatment. [...] Healthwatch and other key partners like Reading Refugee Support have shared the views of a wide range of service-users to help us ensure information on our web site is up to date and as clear as it can be." Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust.



# 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 1407 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



# Information and signposting

## Access to GP care after two painful years

**MJ wanted help to access GP services while needing an interpreter.**

We signposted MJ to two service providers. One of them intervened with the practice MJ was trying to register with and ensured MJ was properly registered.

MJ is now well treated, attends regular appointments with the support of an interpreter, and was finally able to discuss the diagnosis of a painful condition he had shared with his previous GP surgery in April 2023.



“Before I came to you, I was feeling low in myself and disappointed about the way I was treated by some of the health services, I felt ignored. But now I feel like the **“GREEN LIGHT of HELP”** was switched on. I get the help I need, and everyone is very nice towards me”

## A voice heard, cancer patient story

**P felt overwhelmed with escalating fines after being wrongly billed for NHS treatment**

A GP error left vital exemption forms unsigned. Despite proof and repeated contact, the NHSBSA persisted with fines. P struggled alone and felt overwhelmed—until we stepped in.

The issue was raised with Royal Berkshire Hospital, prompting urgent investigation. The cancer services team liaised with NHSBSA, and the billing error was resolved.

P can now focus on healing, not fighting bureaucracy. Healthwatch Reading ensured his voice was heard when it mattered most.



“Thank you for all your help with my issue and I hope my case will put a stop to this happening to anyone else in the future”

# Showcasing volunteer impact

Our fantastic volunteers have given 999 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



# 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.

"Volunteering with Healthwatch Reading provides valuable hands-on experience, especially for students and professionals who want to make a real difference in community health."

Bibi joined us to gain real-world experience and understand how public health initiatives are implemented at the community level.

"My experience has been incredibly rewarding. I have had the chance to be involved in a variety of events and projects, from community health checks to university engagement events. Each activity offered a unique perspective on how public health work intersects with everyday lives."

Bibi



"My participation in oral health projects for Healthwatch as a community connector was an amazing chance for me to work with others and build a good relationship with my local community "

Saadia joined us as a community connector to gain experience and new skills such as planning events, leadership, communication and problem solving.

"I definitely recommend people to volunteer with Healthwatch as this will be a golden opportunity for everyone to enhance their experience and gain new skills"

Saadia



### 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.healthwatchreading.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchreading.co.uk)



0118 214 5579



[info@healthwatchreading.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchreading.co.uk)



# Finance and future priorities

We receive funding from Reading 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	£99,771	Expenditure on pay	£95,757
Additional income	£16,667	Non-pay expenditure	£16,014
	£486	Office and management fee	£20,927
		Reserves	-£15,774
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£116,923</b>	<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>£116,923</b>

Additional monies were transferred from reserves to balance the budget – this was generated from previous years' underspend.

## Additional income is broken down into:

□ £16,667 received from BOB ICB Capacity Building

### □ Integrated Care System (ICS) funding:

□ Healthwatch across **BOB ICB** also receive funding from our Integrated Care System (ICS) to support new areas of collaborative work at this level, including:

Purpose of ICS funding		Amount
PPG (Patient Participation Group) engagement programme across Berkshire West		£16,667
BOB ICB Core20PLUS Connectors Programme		£486

# Finance and future priorities

## Next steps:

**Over the next year, we will keep reaching out to every part of society, especially people in the most deprived areas, so that those in power hear their views and experiences.**

We will also work together with partners and our local Integrated Care System to help develop an NHS culture where, at every level, staff strive to listen and learn from patients to make care better.

## Our top three priorities for the next year are:

- 1. Primary care:** we will follow up with communities to understand how things have changed for them since our GP Access, Core20PLUS5 and Pharmacy first projects.
- 2. Women's health:** ensure there are no Women's health inequalities in BOB ICB, women across Reading and Berkshire West remain at the heart of health and care planning.
- 3. Men as carers:** male carers generally do not access services at early opportunities. We will be listening to these hidden carers and the issues they encounter.



# Statutory statements

Healthwatch England, 2 Redman Place, Stratford, E20 1JQ  
The Advocacy People, PO Box 375, Hastings, East Sussex, TN34 9HU.

Healthwatch Reading uses the Healthwatch Trademark when undertaking our statutory activities as covered by the license agreement.

## The way we work

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

Our Healthwatch Advisory group consists of three members who work voluntarily to provide direction, oversight, and scrutiny of our activities.

Our Board ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community.

Throughout 2024/25, the group met **4** times and made decisions on matters such as **work plan and engagement activities**. We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities.

## 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 can provide us with insight into their experience of using services.

During 2024/25, we have been available by phone and email, provided a web form on our website and through social media, and attended meetings of community groups and forums.

We ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. We will publish it on our website, social media and newsletter.

# Statutory statements

## Responses to recommendations

We had **zero** providers who did not respond to requests for information or recommendations. There were no issues or recommendations escalated by us to the Healthwatch England Committee, so there were no resulting 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 take information to **local Health and well being board, Adult and Children Education committee (ACE)**.

We also take insight and experiences to decision makers in the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care System and work with other Healthwatch within this area to ensure voices are heard from all parts of the community. For example, we have a seat at the System Quality Group and BOB ICB Health Inequalities Board. We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

## Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch **Reading** is represented on the **Reading** Health and Wellbeing Board by Reading Health and Wellbeing Board by Alice Kunjappy-Clifton, Lead Officer, Healthwatch Reading.

During 2024/25, our representative has effectively carried out this role by sharing our work and future workplans, as well as asking questions from the public perspective and ensuring the public voice is considered in decision-making..

The 3 Berkshire West Healthwatch (Healthwatch Reading, Healthwatch West Berkshire and Healthwatch Wokingham Borough) delivered through representation at place level which was and continues to be shared between Alice Kunjappy-Clifton (Lead Officer, Healthwatch Reading and Healthwatch Wokingham Borough), Fiona Worby (Lead Officer, Healthwatch West Berkshire) and Jamie Evans (Area Director, Healthwatch in Berkshire West).

# Statutory statements

## Enter and view

We made no Enter and View visits the year. Other methodologies better suited our work priorities such as reaching out to communities through focus groups. For 2025/2026 we'll be thinking about the best ways to ensure our primary care recommendations are actioned, as well as focusing on gathering views for our other projects. We don't expect these themes to require Enter and View methodology.

## 2024 – 2025 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
Core 20 plus five – oral health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A proportion of the Household Support Fund has been allocated to deliver an oral hygiene campaign.</li><li>• This includes the promotion of oral health, with advice to parent carers about oral and dental health.</li><li>• Free floss, apple mint toothpaste and toothbrushes for 3- 6-year-olds.</li></ul>
GP Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The GP Access report is being used by BOB to launch discussions about patient engagement around the digital strategy.</li><li>• Digital sessions are now held at community centres to demonstrate how the NHS app works and help people register with it, particularly those who do not have English as their first language.</li></ul>
Language Matters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Information on how to request an interpreter for hospital appointments has been added to RBNHFT's website</li></ul>

# Statutory statements

## 2024 – 2025 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Information on how to use the Reachdeck tool for translating webpages can now be easily found on RBNHFT's website.</li><li>• A patient held card identifying people needing translation is being piloted.</li><li>• RBH is piloting a new service called 'Wordstix on Wheels', that offers virtual interpreters.</li><li>• New Directions colleague has been commissioned by the local authority to train community interpreters</li><li>• RBH is preparing to launch a campaign regarding a self-referral process for individuals who need an interpreter.</li></ul>
Eligibility to NHS treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We worked with the Trust to improve their "overseas patient" webpage. It clearly explains how NHS treatment billing works, and the page is now more accessible.</li><li>• An impacted family has confirmed that no further bills were received for their child's treatment. This was shared with the trust.</li><li>• RBFT has since produced a draft fact sheet for the public explaining how charging for NHS treatment is applied. Once finalised, the document will be used to raise awareness about this issue.</li></ul>

# Statutory statements

## 2024 – 2025 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
Empowering young women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Florey Unit at the Royal Berkshire Hospital is planning to co-design work with young people this summer.</li><li>• Bracknell and Wokingham College welcomed the findings as relevant and timely.</li><li>• The Children and Young People Partnership Lead recognised its value in addressing local priorities.</li><li>• Reading Borough Council Public Health has accepted the joint report positively, will be sharing the findings at strategic forums including the Health and Wellbeing Board, HOSC, and the BOB ICB Health Inequalities Board.</li><li>• Through our working with Healthwatch England, these local voices are also being heard at national level, including to Parliamentary Select Committees.</li></ul>
Women's health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Following our request, a women's Health Hub pilot was made available in Berkshire west from October 2024 until June 2025.</li><li>• A survey will be launched to gather input for women's health hub requirements.</li><li>• Going forward, a women's hour focus group will be conducted to discuss women's healthcare needs.</li></ul>



**Healthwatch Reading**  
Oxford Road Community Centre,  
344 Oxford Road,  
Reading, RG301AF



[www.healthwatch.readingco.uk](http://www.healthwatch.readingco.uk)



0118 214 5579



[info@healthwatchreading.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchreading.co.uk)



/HealthwatchReading



@healthwatchreading

