



healthwatch
Herefordshire



Annual Report 2024-2025

Unlocking the power of people-driven care

Healthwatch
Herefordshire

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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 past year, Healthwatch Herefordshire has powerfully demonstrated that even amidst uncertainty and challenge, the voices of local people can drive real and meaningful change.

Our work is rooted in a fundamental belief: everyone deserves to be heard, regardless of their background or circumstances. We've dedicated ourselves to listening more broadly and deeply than ever before. We've heard from individuals struggling to access urgent care, people experiencing homelessness, families navigating ADHD, as well as members of the Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities and newly arrived Ukrainian residents. Their stories have been pivotal. These personal narratives have directly shaped policies, improved services, and instilled greater humanity into the way care is delivered across Herefordshire.

Our volunteers have been truly exceptional, dedicating thousands of hours. They've been instrumental in gathering vital insights, supporting vulnerable individuals, and influencing how services respond. Their unwavering compassion and commitment remain the beating heart of our organisation. I am particularly proud of the continued expansion of our Community Health Champion Programme, and the impactful work of Lee's Place. These initiatives powerfully illustrate how empathy, active listening, and strong partnerships can rebuild trust, foster wellbeing, and reconnect individuals with their communities.

As the national health and care landscape continues to evolve, our unwavering focus remains on ensuring that the people of Herefordshire are not only represented but truly respected. This means maintaining a strong presence in our communities, amplifying local voices where they matter most, and ensuring that lived experience continues to shape and improve care.



I also want to acknowledge the dedication and exemplary leadership of our senior team, not least our Chief Executive, Christine Price, who continues to guide the organisation with remarkable energy, integrity, and care.

On behalf of the Board, my sincere thanks go to our exceptional staff team, our dedicated volunteers, our valued partners, and most importantly, the many individuals who generously shared their stories with us this year. You are instrumental in building a health and care system that genuinely begins with listening.

Dr Andrew Watts – Chair, Healthwatch Herefordshire

About us

Healthwatch Herefordshire 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

A world where we can all get the health and care we need in the way that we need it.



Our mission

- To help make people's experiences of health and care better.
- Listen to the people who live and work in Herefordshire.
- Work in partnership to build a strong community voice.
- Champion the involvement of the public in shaping health and care services.
- Contribute to the development of an Integrated Care System.
- Support Healthwatch England to shape national policy.



Our values are:

- **Independent** – working on behalf of all to challenge those in power to design and deliver better health and social care services
- **Inclusive** – working for everyone, not just those who shout the loudest
- **Influential** – working with other local Healthwatch and Healthwatch England to make an impact locally and nationally
- **Credible** – holding ourselves to the highest standards and gathering authentic experiences
- **Transparent** – reporting our findings and the difference we have made back to the public
- **Collaborative** – working with the public, health, social care and the voluntary and community sector

Our year in numbers

We've supported more than **4,500** people to have their say and get information about their care. We currently employ **8** staff and, our work is supported by **over 75** volunteers.

Reaching out:



3,214 people shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.

183 people came to us for clear advice and information on topics such as **GP appointment access, care assessments** and **finding an NHS dentist**.

Championing your voice:



We published reports about the improvements people would like to see in areas like **support for unpaid carers, menopause, learning disability health checks, proactive care, health research barriers**, and **ADHD**.

Our most popular publication was our **Learning Disability Health Checks Report**, highlighting people's reasonable adjustments needed in their vaccine and health check appointments.

We were highly commended in the **National Healthwatch Awards** for this work.

Statutory funding:



We're funded by **Herefordshire Council**. In 2024/25 we received **£140,000**, which was the same amount 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 **Herefordshire**, here are a few highlights.

Spring

We have gathered views of children and families on **childhood immunisations** and developed video and media content to reduce vaccine hesitancy.



We have recruited the first 36 **Community Health Champions** who are volunteers working with the public to understand people's views, and barriers on cardiovascular prevention and early cancer screening.



Summer

Our engagement with people with a learning disability resulted in supporting them to make videos for primary care for other people when having their **learning disability health check or vaccines**.



Publishing the living with **ADHD** report highlighting the issues faced by people with ADHD in the workplace and in education, in advocating for reasonable adjustments.



Autumn

We establish our yearlong engagement role working with **Gypsy Roma Traveller** families across Herefordshire.

Working in partnership with other services to connect this marginalised group to support services they need.



We started our engagement on **Menopause and Me project**, which has shaped the development of services in primary care, with a pilot on group consultations and webinars.



Winter

We published the **behind the care report** which has shaped the new carers strategy for Herefordshire with authentic carers' voices, and also informed the development of the new carers service specification in the county.



We gathered the stories of people living with multiple complex disadvantage such as; **homelessness, mental health, substance misuse and experience of the criminal justice**. This is shaping the rough sleeper homeless prevention strategy.



Working together for change

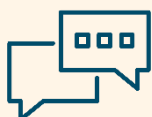
We've worked with Herefordshire Council and other agencies and charities to provide a homelessness forum for Herefordshire. To ensure that homeless people are at the heart of the services they need.

A collaborative network of local organisations:



We led the formation of a **homeless hub** open 6pm-8pm seven days a week called **Lee's Place** over winter. This volunteer led hub has seen 20-30 people every day and up to 118 separate individuals. This was achieved through the support of Herefordshire Council providing premises and outreach workers working alongside the volunteers, the contributions from other charities such as Salvation Army, St Peter's Church and No Wrong Door.

The big conversation:



As part of the work of Lee's Place we have been able to gather the views, experiences and stories of this marginalised group of people experiencing poor outcomes.

This has enabled us to ensure that this voice is at the heart of the council's **Rough Sleeper and Housing Prevention Strategy** development for the coming five years.

Building strong relationships to achieve more:



Working every day to support this group of people, listen and understand their lives, provide a trusted social connection and place of safety, we have been able to assist them to access health checks, primary and secondary care and opticians. In addition to appropriate mental health support, benefits and housing support, and general life admin.

Making a difference in the community

We have coproduced a volunteer-based Community Health Champion model.

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

Improving care for Learning Disabilities People



We knew that people with learning disabilities were missing annual health checks due to confusion and past negative experiences. Working with local groups, we gathered personal stories using easy-read surveys and supported interviews. We shared these insights with Primary care, highlighting barriers to access. This led to a co-produced video resources, and improvements, including clearer communication, staff training, and better support. As a result, more people attended checks, showing how lived experience shaped change and improved care for a marginalised group.

Getting services to involve the public



We collaborated with **our GP federation Taurus** to improve communication between GP services and asylum-seeking families. Many individuals struggled to understand how to register with a GP or book appointments. Through listening sessions, we supported service users to share their experiences directly with primary care staff. Taurus responded by creating simplified, translated registration forms and offering cultural awareness sessions for frontline staff. This strengthened trust and improved healthcare access for newly arrived communities.

Creating empowered health champions



We worked closely with the ICB to support improved uptake of cancer screening and promote early prevention, particularly among communities where access, hesitancy and awareness are an issue. While this work hasn't resulted in immediate, large-scale changes, we are gradually making progress through our **Community Health Champion model**. By training and supporting trusted local voices to share information and gather feedback, we're identifying real barriers and feeding insights into ICB planning. It's steady, ongoing work that's laying the foundations for more inclusive, targeted healthcare.

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

Taking the Chatty Van around the county to hear local voices from everyone

Over the last year we have taken to the road and gathered 1000 stories to find out what people love about Herefordshire and what they would like to change.

This has opened the door for us to find out about people's experiences of living in their community, and their health and wellbeing needs and experiences.

What did we do?

We use our Chatty Caravan to reach people in their own communities and listen to their views. We take the caravan to local shows, housing estates & parks, community events, and areas identified as deprivation hotspots, often working alongside other local services. It is a welcoming, informal space where people feel comfortable sharing their experiences. Through these conversations, we gather valuable insights into both individual and wider community needs, helping ensure all voices are heard in shaping local services.

Key things we heard:



47%

Transport & accessibility around the county

32%

Housing, living conditions & financial issues

21%

Literacy & Communication

What difference did this make?

Unlike traditional engagement approaches that often rely on people visiting clinics or attending formal meetings and events, Healthwatch Herefordshire's Chatty Van brings the conversation directly to communities, especially those who might not typically engage with health and social care services. By meeting people in familiar, informal settings we create a relaxed environment where individuals feel more comfortable opening up about their experiences and challenges. This approach uncovers deeper insights and reaches voices that might otherwise be missed, ensuring a richer, more representative understanding to inform better service design.

Hearing from all communities

We're here for all residents of Herefordshire. 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:

- Visiting Gypsy Roma Traveller communities all year
- Hearing from people with neurodiversity
- Hearing from people with a learning disability
- Hearing from people for whom English is a second language
- Hearing from people who have multiple complex disadvantages



Improving understanding of Gypsy Roma Traveller communities

We investigated access to healthcare and prevention services for the Gypsy Roma Traveller community.

People told us about literacy barriers, a lack of cultural understanding among service providers, some failure to address concerns about standards of sites and amenity blocks. Other concerns involved struggles to get appropriate support for SEND children and the stigma surrounding Gypsy Roma Traveller people forcing marginalisation.

What difference did this make?

This has allowed us to build a trusted relationship with these people, promote and encourage earlier access to address health concerns, assist them to access health checks on traveler sites with primary care services, access energy support and grants and discuss improvements to housing related issues with the Council.

Helping Ukrainian refugees understand and access NHS care

Ukrainians adapting to life in Herefordshire told us they didn't understand how the NHS worked as it was different to the Ukrainian health system.

To help, we created a quick guide to how a GP practice works. We shared this with the local Council's "Homes for Ukraine" scheme partners and the Ukraine Network attendees. A similar resource was created for mental health services.

What difference did this make?

We produced a Ukrainian version of the guide, and this has helped Ukrainian guests feel more confident in accessing health care. Before this guide, they felt that they were being discriminated against and their needs being ignored.

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 **183** 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
- Helping people to have the confidence to speak up
- Helping people to navigate the complaints processes in health & care services



Anna

Thanks to the feedback from Anna during our Carers Project, we were able to support Anna to get the help she needed for her mum following Anna recently becoming a carer.

After receiving this concern, Healthwatch Herefordshire provided clear information and signposted the family to the appropriate social care team and advocacy services. With our support, the issue was escalated and resolved, resulting in improved care delivery and peace of mind for the family.

This has led to on going work with local providers to look at how accessible the system is to carers and how well it navigates you to get the information you need as a carer.



"I didn't know where to turn when my mum's care package wasn't being delivered properly. Healthwatch listened to my concerns and helped me understand who to contact. They guided me through the process, and now her care is being provided consistently."

Ellie

Ellie had recently been through an ADHD diagnosis with her son and was feeling very overwhelmed not knowing where to turn next without any real further support after diagnosis.

Ellie, a parent of a child recently diagnosed with ADHD, felt overwhelmed and isolated. After the diagnosis, she struggled to get clear information from her GP or other health services about what support was available locally. She felt unsure where to turn next and worried about how to navigate the complex system of care and education.

We also connected her with peer support networks where she could share experiences with other families facing similar challenges. This guidance helped Ellie feel more confident and informed, enabling her to access the right support for her child's needs and reducing her sense of isolation.



"As a parent of a child recently diagnosed with ADHD, I was overwhelmed and unsure what services were available. Healthwatch helped me understand local support options and connected me with specialist groups full of people like me, who really understand our needs."

Showcasing volunteer impact

Our fantastic volunteers have given over **5000 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 as Community Health Champions to talk to the public about prevention
- Helped us with the Learning Disability Health Check project
- A college student joined us out in the community as part of their work experience
- Supported the volunteer led homeless hub

Lee's Place



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.

Rizqa joined us several years ago after coming to Herefordshire from Indonesia. She gets stuck into any volunteer opportunities we have. She is particularly good at being a welcoming friendly face and helping us with events.

Rizqa recently joined one of our health & wellbeing marketplace events and hosted a free Zumba session for the public.

Rizqa



Doing work experience for Healthwatch was amazing if I do say so myself. From just a week being with them I could see the different aspects they do to help our communities in Herefordshire. It's been refreshing to see how kind and thoughtful this company is as they are ordinary people like us who just want to make a good impact to health & care services so they could improve.

In my week, I went to 3 different communities I met a range of people from learning disabilities to elders which gave me a good understanding of what Healthwatch does as they cover a whole variety of people and not just stick to one. Meanwhile meeting these people, it was great to see how understanding Healthwatch is as they are also people who have problems with these services, so they know what people are going through."

Helena



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.



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Finance and future priorities

We receive funding from **Herefordshire 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	£140,000	Expenditure on pay	£205,455
Additional income	£146,706	Non-pay expenditure	£11,806
Total income	£286,706	Total Expenditure	£217,261

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 continue to 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.

Throughout 2024-25 we have created a new charity called Community Power, incorporated on 31 October 2024. We have transitioned the Healthwatch Herefordshire contract and all of our existing work and staff into it from 1 April 2025.

This gives us a stronger footing to continue the work we do into the future.

Our top four priorities for the next year are:

1. To ensure the future function replacing Healthwatch is the best it can be for patients.
2. Tackling health inequalities further.
3. To reach areas of the community we don't currently hear from.
4. To ensure communities are at the heart of the prevention and wellness services they need.

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