



Annual Report 2024–2025

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

Healthwatch Bracknell Forest

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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 Head of Healthwatch

This year, Healthwatch Bracknell Forest has continued to ensure that people's voices remain central to health and care decisions. Our dedicated staff and volunteers have worked hard to reach out to a wide range of communities—especially those we don't usually hear from—building trust and strong relationships.

We've gathered views through face-to-face conversations, surveys, Enter and View visits, and research projects, focusing on key areas like Primary Care, Urgent Care, and Accessible Information. Listening to people from all backgrounds is essential to making services equitable and effective.

Our engagement has helped influence strategic decisions locally and contributed to national policy change. We are proud to maintain our independence while building collaborative relationships that lead to lasting improvements in health and care. This year's work has shown that when people are meaningfully involved, change happens.

We've welcomed new Advisory Group members and volunteers, bringing fresh energy and ideas. Our achievements are a testament to the commitment of our team, our volunteers, and the many residents who shared their experiences with us.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to advocating for a responsive, inclusive health and care system. In 2025–26, we'll continue pushing boundaries, embracing innovation, and working to ensure that everyone in Bracknell Forest has access to high-quality, person-centred care.

Thank you for your continued trust and support.



When we listen to every voice, especially those often unheard, we drive real, lasting change. Your shared experiences have shaped more compassionate, inclusive services, proving that people-powered insight is the key to transforming health and care for everyone.

Neil Bolton-Heaton – Head of Healthwatch

About us

Healthwatch Bracknell Forest 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 26,716 people to have their say and get information about their care. We currently employ 6 staff and, our work is supported by 13 volunteers.

Reaching out:



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

25943 people came to us for clear advice and information on topics such as **finding an NHS dentist** and advice on how to make an **NHS complaint**.

Championing your voice:



We published **10** reports about the improvements people would like to see in areas like **Dementia**, **Urgent Care** and **Accessible Information**

Statutory funding:



We're funded by **Bracknell Forest Council**. In 2024/25 we received **64,439**, 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 Bracknell Forest. Here are a few highlights.

Spring

Shared feedback about care in hospital resulting in improved patient experience.



We followed up on our Enter and View at Bracknell Care Home by connecting the manager with community dentistry, leading to improved access to dental care for vulnerable residents.



Summer

Shared information with the public and providers about what to expect during GP collective action.



Led a discussion session at the Frimley Primary Care briefing, encouraging GP practices to share ideas about improving experience for carers of people with dementia.



Autumn

We heard that some people who have a learning disability were not receiving their health action plans following annual health checks. We raised this at the Bracknell Forest GP Council.



Supported Frimley's community engagement project by sharing feedback from people in care homes and people with sight and hearing loss.



Winter

Listened to women about their experience of women's health services, sharing their thoughts on how women's health services and information could be delivered in the future.



Helped people to understand the NHS complaints process and access advocacy support.



Working together for change

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

This year, we've worked with Healthwatch across **Frimley** and with the **Frimley ICS** to achieve the following:

Frimley Re-connect, Re-set, Re-build



We held a range of group discussions and fed back key themes to the ICS as part of an effort to Reconnect, Reset, and Rebuild priorities for health and wellbeing together. The recent Darzi review, Grenfell recommendations, and work towards a new 10-year plan for the NHS, all provided an opportunity to open up a new conversation that could encourage a deeper understanding of our local communities and identify what matters to them. We ensured young carers had a voice in this strategy development.

Representing residents



We have represented resident's views and experiences of healthcare at the Frimley ICS System Quality Group. Healthwatch is a member of this strategic forum, and we have provided quality and intelligence reports and shared case studies of resident's experiences of care and support provided by Frimley services. This has ensured that patient and public voice is at the centre of quality improvement.



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 **Bracknell Forest** 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.

This year we [published findings](#) of the experiences the public shared with us during 12 Months of visiting Frimley, Heatherwood and Wexham Park hospitals. NHS Frimley Integrated Care System (ICS) will use the information to improve service, giving this response- "We commend the dedication of Healthwatch in capturing these voices and highlighting areas for improvement. This patient-centred information will guide our ongoing efforts to enhance delivery within our system."

Getting services to involve the public



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

We worked with an urgent care centre to better understand people's decision making and choices when seeking urgent care. We wanted to find out more and to share people's experiences to help the system learn and plan, ensuring people can get the best possible care in the most efficient and accessible way. Jane Figg, one of our Bracknell volunteers who has sight impairment, was present at the visit. Read the report [here](#).

Improving care over time



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

Enter and View is one of a range of options available to Healthwatch to enable us to gather information about health and social care services and to collect the views of service users, their carers, and their relatives.. You can read our summary Enter and View report [here](#).

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

Championing community concerns to improve access to primary care

Last year, we championed the voices of our community to support improvements for people with dementia and their carers when accessing primary care

Being able to access services and appointments via Klinik on a surgery website, in addition to accessing appointments via Klinik over the phone and in person, has increased options and is beneficial to large parts of the population. However, more than 80% of carers of people with Dementia don't have the skills or tools to take advantage of the new access options and can feel left behind.

We received feedback from residents regarding access to primary care services and decided to undertake engagement to understand more about their concerns.

What did we do?

Healthwatch Bracknell Forest were invited to the Bracknell Dementia Forum on 23rd October 2023. The forum was attended by carers of people with Dementia and the cared for along with various service providers. Part of the forum was a tabletop exercise in which the carers and cared for were asked 'What would make them feel safer.' One of the top three answers was 'easier access to primary care'. The other two answers were 'safety in the community' and 'roads and pathways.' Regarding the 'easier access to primary care', Healthwatch Bracknell Forest wanted to explore this further, to understand why carers of people with Dementia raised it as an issue for them. You can view the report [here](#).

"One month I had a phone bill of almost £20 just for the calls to the surgery and waiting on the phone. I can't afford that and worry about phoning and the cost if I am waiting on the phone too long" - carer

"I tried the call back option and waited and waited, trying to make sure I wasn't too far away from the phone whilst also caring for my partner, no one called back. I don't trust that anymore" - carer

Listening to your experiences

Championing community concerns to improve access to primary care, cont'd

Key things we heard:

Carers told us that this added to the stress of their caring responsibilities.



Carers told us that this created concerns for them about the health of those they cared for but also about their own health and the implications on those they care for should they as the carer become too unwell.

Carers told us that they themselves and those they care for, would greatly benefit if reasonable adjustments could be made for them when accessing primary care.

The Equality Act 2010 places a legal duty on health services to make changes to their approach or provision to ensure that services are as accessible to people with disabilities as they are for everyone else.

What difference did this make?

NHS Frimley Integrated Care Board (ICB) will use the information to improve services, the ICB gave the following response:

This report by Healthwatch has been helpful for practices to better understand how changes to their appointments system can affect patients, and importantly patient carers as well. Some of our practices have already taken steps to support this group of patients, for example a dedicated line for carers being set at one of our practices, and no doubt the information shared in this report will help all our practices to further refine their access models to address the specific needs of carers of people with Dementia.

NHS Frimley run a wide range of communications campaigns throughout the year, and we will continue to work closely with primary care colleagues to ensure that there is awareness of the reasonable adjustment digital flag programme. We will also continue to ensure that we have supporting resources and materials to support carers and a wide range of information about local services available on our Frimley Health and Care website.

Listening to your experiences

Accessible Information

The accessible Information Standard aims to ensure that people with disabilities, impairments, or sensory loss receive information in formats they can understand and communicate effectively with health and social care services.

Healthwatch in East Berkshire (Healthwatch Windsor, Ascot and Maidenhead, Healthwatch Slough and Healthwatch Bracknell Forest) undertook a piece of work to find out if the standard is being delivered as it should be to those residents in East Berkshire who need accessible information. We delayed the release of our [2023 report](#) to include a deaf resident's account of issues with accessible information, presented as a Patient Story at the end of the report. The report highlights widespread problems in the provision of accessible information across health services.

Key things we heard:



Face-to-face interaction aids communication.

Many services don't ask about patients' information needs.

Some individuals avoid disclosing their needs due to lack of awareness or discomfort.

Even when information is provided, it often doesn't meet people's needs.

Inadequate information access negatively affects health and service use.



People often rely on family or friends for communication.

There's limited awareness of rights under the Accessible Information Standard.

Health settings rarely promote the standard or provide complaint guidance.

"I doubled up my blood pressure pills as was not sure about the amounts as I didn't understand the information" – person with learning disability

"Had a big heart attack and aftercare offered afterwards was difficult for me to understand it all because of my sight and communication need." – person with sight loss

Listening to your experiences

Accessible Information, cont'd

What difference did this make?

In the response provided by Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust and the NHS Frimley Integrated Care System they told us about the following actions -

The Trust is in the process of creating a new website, and the design phase will include exploring options for how our information will be accessible for people with varying communication needs. We have updated the current website to include information about the Accessible Information Standard.

Patient information has been identified as a key area for improvement this year, with additional resource being dedicated to this. Ensuring compliance with the Accessible Information Standard will be part of this workstream.

NHS Frimley work closely with a wide range of health and care providers including primary, secondary and community care. We are committed to ensuring that we continue to raise awareness of the Accessible Information Standard and, as a result of this report, will share further information through our internal staff and stakeholder networks.



“As is the usual circumstance deaf people give up and don’t bother.” – person who is deaf

Hearing from all communities

We're here for all residents of Bracknell Forest. 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:

- Listening to people with macular degeneration.
- Hosting a women's wellness afternoon for the Nepali community in partnership with Bracknell Forest Public Health team.



Hearing from all communities

Listening to those with macular degeneration

We partnered with Frimley Integrated Care System to support their engagement project- Reconnect, Reset, Rebuild

We attended the Bracknell Macular Group to listen to people's experiences of health and social care services. Some of the priorities people told us about included: Improved access to GP appointments for those who can only use a phone as method of contact, shorter waiting list/times for secondary treatment and Improved transport options for health appointments.

What difference did this make?

The findings have been shared with Frimley Integrated Care System to be considered alongside other feedback received as part of the project and will be presented to their board for consideration.

Hosting a women's wellness afternoon for the Nepali community in partnership with Bracknell Forest Public Health team

This year, we prioritised women's health to amplify women's experiences and influence local services. To address the under-representation of Asian women in the national survey, focus groups were conducted to ensure their perspectives were included.

Thirty-five women attended to take part in our listening corner hear about healthy eating and local wellbeing services. We spoke to women about issues such as translation, GP access and getting information about health and care as well as listening to their ideas for how care could be improved.

Many of the women attending did not speak English so we used an interpreter and shared written information in Nepalese.

What difference did this make?

These reflections will form part of our Women's Health report and will help to shape the delivery of services going forwards. The full Women's Health Report will be published shortly and will be available [here](#).

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 25,943 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



Sharing information for a better night's sleep

Tiredness contributes to around 20% of accidents in the workplace and poor sleep is a major source of health and wellbeing challenges for many.

In support of the Sleep Charity's annual Sleptember campaign, Healthwatch Bracknell Forest shared communications on a wide range of free support and resources available locally as well as promoting the Safe Sleep Programme.



“Sleptember raises awareness of how to get a good night's sleep and why it is important for our health. Think you need better sleep? Take a look at the free support available across Frimley Health and Care, including Sleepio.”

Complaints and advocacy support

Jack had been removed from his GP practice list due to an isolated altercation with a COPD nurse and felt this was unfair. Our support gave him options for what to do next.

Jack wished to be reinstated at his GP Practice but felt worried about this. We talked Jack through how to appeal the original decision and signposted to advocacy support for practical assistance. As Jack was also concerned that his current housing provision was unsuitable, we directed him to his Housing Association and suggested asking to speak with his Housing Officer to request an update on potential re-housing options.

Citizen's Advice was also signposted to as a potentially useful source of support if Jack wished to explore his legal rights. Following the call Jack had a clear plan for how to move forwards and advocate for himself.

Showcasing volunteer impact

We're supported by a team of 12 amazing volunteers who are at the centre of everything we do. They help us to reach more people and communities. Our fantastic volunteers have given 829 hours of their time.

This year our volunteers have:

- As Authorised Representatives taken part in Enter and View visits, helping us to fulfil this important function.
- Collected experiences and helped communities to share their views.
- Attended meetings and groups, raising awareness of Healthwatch and the feedback we have received.
- Provided strategic decision making and advice via our Strategic Advisory Group.



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 have been a volunteer for Healthwatch right from the beginning, I went along to the launch of Healthwatch England, was inspired by the event and joined.

I enjoy talking to people and listening to the problems they have with local services. I get satisfaction from helping people solve issues via Healthwatch.

I am proud to be a Healthwatch volunteer, it gives me joy, and I am pleased I can help the local community. I also enjoy Enter and View, especially when they act on our recommendations. I feel happy and worthy.

Dolly



I started volunteering for Healthwatch around 10 years ago. I didn't know anything about it before, but I received an invitation and went along to an event where I found out it was all about helping the community, I was interested!

Since then, I have gained a lot of knowledge and have attended events at varied places including community centers, care homes, libraries and hospitals.

I most enjoy speaking to people and helping to guide them to the information or care they need. My main passion is helping the community.

Misbah



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.healthwatchbracknellforest.co.uk



0300 0120184



info@healthwatchbracknellforest.co.uk

Showcasing volunteer impact

At the heart of what we do

Jaspreet – one of our Strategic Advisory Group Volunteers
(Photography has been changed to maintain confidentiality & privacy)

What brought you to Healthwatch volunteering?

I was drawn to Healthwatch because of my passion for patient advocacy and healthcare policy. With my background in medicine and experience in both clinical and non-clinical healthcare settings, I wanted to contribute to improving patient experiences at a local level. Healthwatch provides a great opportunity to engage with communities, understand their challenges, and ensure their voices are heard in shaping healthcare services.



What have you enjoyed being involved in this year?

This year, I've really enjoyed working on youth engagement and introducing young people to Healthwatch. Many young people aren't aware that they have a voice in shaping healthcare services, so being able to bridge that gap and get them involved has been incredibly rewarding.

Are there any local communities that you are passionate about hearing from or are involved with through other work or volunteering?

I'm particularly interested in hearing from young people and underserved communities who may face barriers to accessing healthcare. Through my work with Healthwatch and my role as a secondary school governor I've seen firsthand how important it is to ensure these voices are included in decision-making. I'm also passionate about understanding the experiences of those navigating the NHS as first-time users, whether that's migrants, students, or individuals with complex health needs.

Be part of the change.

If you would like to be part of our Strategic Advisory Group, please get in touch with us.



www.healthwatchbracknellforest.co.uk



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Finance and future priorities

We receive funding from Bracknell Forest under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to help us do our work.

Our income and expenditure:

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from Government	£64,439	Expenditure on pay	£54,915
Additional income	£2998	Non-pay expenditure	£11,260
		Office and management fee	£5000
Total income	£67,437	Total Expenditure	£71,174

Additional income is broken down into:

- £998 received from Frimley ICS – Re-connect, Re-set, Re-build project.
- £2000 received from Healthwatch England for the project – The importance and experience of ‘choice’ when people use their GP.

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. Supporting patient and public involvement in the design and delivery of primary care services.
2. Children and Adult Mental Health services.
3. Waiting for treatment.

Finance and future priorities

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Statutory statements

Help & Care hold the contract to deliver the Healthwatch Bracknell Forrest contract. Help & Care, Airfield Way, Christchurch, Dorset, BH23 3TS.

Healthwatch Bracknell Forest 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 Strategic Advisory Group (SAG) consists of **5** members who work voluntarily to provide direction, oversight, and scrutiny of our activities.

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

Throughout 2024/25, the SAG met **5** times and made decisions on matters such as our strategic priorities and our Enter and View programme. We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities such as undertaking an annual prioritisation survey with the public.

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, promote it through social media and provide copies to commissioners and providers of Health and Social Care services locally.

Statutory statements

Responses to recommendations

We had 0 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. Our priorities are informed by the intelligence we collect, an annual public prioritisation survey and by our Strategic Advisory Group.

For example, in our local authority area, we take information to the **Health and Wellbeing Board and Place Committee**.

We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in Frimley **Integrated Care System**. For example, we attend the Patient Experience Forum, Frimley ICS Quality Committee and we share all our reports and findings with the ICS. We also share our data with Healthwatch England and the Care Quality Commission to help address health and care issues at a national level.

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch **Bracknell Forest** is represented on the **Bracknell Forrest** Health and Wellbeing Board by **Claire Shropshall – Healthwatch Bracknell Forest Manager**.

During 2024/25, our representative has effectively carried out this role by **attending Health and Wellbeing Board and associated subgroups and focus groups**.

Healthwatch **Bracknell Forest** is represented on **Frimley** Integrated Care Partnerships by **Claire Shropshall** and **Frimley ICS Quality Committee** by **Claire Shropshall**.

Statutory statements

Enter and view

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
Bracknell Care Home	<p>Rated as 'requires improvement' by CQC in 2022 and had been taken over by new provider in May 2023.</p> <p>Follow up visit to review recommendation implementation.</p>	<p>Published report with recommendations. Report can be found here.</p> <p>Follow up visit to verify recommendations acted on. Report can be found here.</p>
Heathlands Care Centre	Last CQC Inspection was rated 'requires improvement' in 2023. In addition, we were in liaison with the local authority.	Published report with Recommendations. Report can be found here .
* Dormy House Care Home	Rated as 'inadequate' by CQC in 2023 and had been taken over by new provider in May 2023.	Published report with recommendations. Report can be found here .
* Longlea Nursing Home	Rated by CQC as good in 2017.	Published report with recommendations. Report can be found here .

* indicates a home outside of Bracknell Forest that have been included as they had a minimum of one Bracknell Forest resident at the time of the visit.

Statutory statements

2024 – 2025 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
Coproduced information resources for young people accessing primary care.	Young people are better able to manage own healthcare resulting in independence, self-esteem and improved health.
Presented on our Enter and View program to Care Home Support team across Berkshire.	Raised awareness of Healthwatch and its impacts.
Raised concerns with the ICB regarding lack of communication regarding pharmacies during GP call to action.	Improved planning and communication between providers allowing them to prioritise public care.
Identified care home residents not receiving timely care for community dentistry. Met with dentistry lead to escalate.	Improved access to community dentistry.
Undertook engagement with learning disability and sensory impaired communities.	Enabled feedback from people with communication needs to be included in council strategy.

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