



Annual Report 2024–2025

Unlocking the power of people-driven care

Healthwatch West Berkshire

Contents

A message from our Chair	3
About us	4
Our year in numbers	5
A year of making a difference	6
Working together for change	7
Making a difference in the community	13
Listening to your experiences	16
Hearing from all communities	21
Information and signposting	25
Showcasing volunteer impact	27
Finance and future priorities	29
Statutory statements	31



“Healthwatch West Berkshire are proud to work hard and strive to ensure any changes are made for the benefit of our community. We’re here to make sure the residents of West Berkshire are truly listened to and heard by the services that support their health and care needs.”

Fiona Worby, Lead Officer, Healthwatch West Berkshire

A message from our Chair

Welcome to the Healthwatch West Berkshire Annual Report for 2024/2025.

I am pleased to report that we have continued to capture people's experiences and opinions on their healthcare provision. As is often the case, we work in a changing and challenging environment.

Indeed, here in the UK the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has announced that NHS England is being 'taken back into direct government control' and spoke of this reform as being "the biggest decentralisation of power in the history of the NHS". Quite what this means for front-line operations is currently unclear, but what is clear is that Integrated Care Boards (ICB's) will have to reduce running costs by 50% by the third quarter of 2025/26. Whatever the future holds, the residents of West Berkshire can rely on HWWB to continue to be the conduit for collecting patient feedback, sharing their health and social care experiences and working to influence the decision-making processes of relevant bodies on issues that impact them.

Among previously identified health priorities were pharmacies. It would seem that there have been improvements in waiting times. Pharmacy First, whereby pharmacists are able to prescribe medication for some common ailments (thus taking pressure off GP surgeries) has been introduced into most of the area's pharmacies. Initial reaction to Pharmacy First appears to be positive, and HWWB will keep a watching brief to how this develops.

Our two major pieces of work concerned unpaid carers, particularly those caring for individuals living with memory loss and our investigation into the healthcare challenges faced by the bargee community of West Berkshire. We are here to make a difference, and that is what we are determined to do.



"HWWB has continued to collect, collate and direct the views of patients to relevant stakeholders so that services can better reflect their needs. Some groups experience difficulties having their health entitlements met.

I am proud, therefore, that this year we sought the views of some of the "Seldom Heard" members of our community."

**[Mike Fereday, Chair Advisory Group,
Healthwatch West Berkshire]**

About us

Healthwatch West Berkshire 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 via the following link:

<https://healthwatchwestberks.org.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 **2000** people to have their say and get information about their care. We currently employ **3** staff and, our work is supported by **4** volunteers.

Reaching out:



Over 250 people shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.

2,033 people came to us for clear advice and information on topics such as **access to services** and **specific health awareness information**

Championing your voice:



We published 3 reports about the improvements people would like to see in areas like GP Access, the Bargee Report and Unpaid Carers.

Our most popular report was **GP Access**, highlighting people's struggles in **accessing appointments in GP surgeries**.

Our key impacts:



We are continuing to improve women's health services in West Berkshire by working with The Berkshire West Primary Care Alliance.

Our recommendation that the invoicing system for Unpaid Carers be reviewed has been agreed by West Berkshire Council.

We have improved access to GP registration for those in the GRT bargee communities along the canals in West Berkshire.

Statutory funding:



We're funded by **West Berkshire Council**; In 2024/25 we received **£97,000** 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 West Berkshire. Here are a few highlights.

Spring

We raised Women's Health Hub funding with the BOB ICB, leading to a new pilot offering vital pessary care and menopause support for local women



We audited our stakeholder profile of West Berkshire and designed a new engagement tool to improve communication between us.



Summer

Access to healthcare for travelling communities was improved, with GP surgeries reminded that proof of address isn't needed to register or receive care.



We improved our reach to the public by joining new Social Media sites such as Nextdoor, Blue Sky and TikTok.



Autumn

Our insight on how Unpaid Carers struggle highlighted how simple changes to things such as invoices, and how having someone to speak to can make huge changes in their lives



We developed an infographic card for Young People to help them know their Health Rights at 16+ and are starting to work with public health to expand this project further.



Winter

Our project to explore the experiences of the bargee community in West Berkshire and accessing GP services demonstrated how we can engage harder-to-reach groups.



We took the themes of the year and designed a programme of engagement events to reach out to promote an agenda of prevention, awareness and better health in 25/26.



Working together for change

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

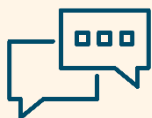
This year, we've worked with Healthwatch across Berkshire West to achieve the following:

A collaborative network of local Healthwatch:



Healthwatch West Berkshire joined forces with Reading and Wokingham Healthwatch on two key projects: GP Access and the Women's Health Hub, capturing local experiences across all areas to shape better services..

The big conversation:



Healthwatch West Berkshire's conversation this year has been about change and equity. We've been championing those who are underrepresented, and we've spoken to local services and stakeholders to hear what matters most to them. Now, together, we're working to improve access, equity, and care by ensuring every voice is heard and shared where it matters.

Building strong relationships to achieve more:



We've focused on strengthening our communications with our commissioning services (BOB ICB) and the Local Authority (WBC), which has enhanced our working relationships. This has encouraged and fostered open and honest conversations where we can ensure the public voice is always heard.

Our Achievements

GP Access – Listening together

Healthwatch working and listening together across an area can illuminate where powerful pieces of work can happen.

This year, the GP Access project listened and acted upon the feedback given to us to improve services across Berkshire West.



When we asked local people about their top health concerns, one issue consistently stood out: **Access to GP services.**

From booking appointments and receiving follow up care to managing long-term conditions, GP access affects every part of our community.

In recent years, new systems have been introduced to improve support for patients, but many people told us these changes created confusion and made it harder to get the help they need. While it's widely recognised that GP practices are under significant pressure both nationally and locally, what we were hearing in West Berkshire was more specific: people didn't understand the new ways of working and were often frustrated when their expectations didn't match their experience.



Our joint GP Access project aimed to bridge that gap, and we set out to raise awareness of these new models of care, support GP surgeries in improving communication, encourage appropriate use of NHS services, and help to reduce complaints.

Through this project, we explained how the new systems work, gathered feedback from local people on their understanding and experience and identified where communication could be improved. We also explored how tools like NHS Help can support access and understanding.

Importantly, this work has been the starting point for ongoing conversations with both the public and healthcare providers about what good GP access looks like, how it feels when it falls short, and what needs to happen to ensure everyone receives the care they deserve

GP Access West Berks



In West Berks, **132** participants took part in the project:

93 through an online survey

39 through various focus groups



Appointment Access

Many people reported long phone wait times, difficulties booking appointments, significant delay in getting appointments, and not being able to see their preferred GP



Appointment Access

Many people were unaware that care navigators have replaced traditional receptionists. This system, while intended to streamline access, left patients feeling frustrated and unclear about the process



Appointment Access

While tools like the NHS App are designed to simplify access to GP services, many patients, particularly older adults and those without strong digital skills, found it difficult to use.



Appointment Access

Lack of clear communication from surgeries about changes in how GP services operate was a common theme. Many patients felt left in the dark about new systems and how to effectively navigate them.



We supported GP surgeries to improve their communication with the public



We helped raise public awareness about other pathways for support and increase understanding of the new ways of working

Our Achievements

Women's Health Hubs – Ensuring service provision

Healthwatch working together can make immediate changes.



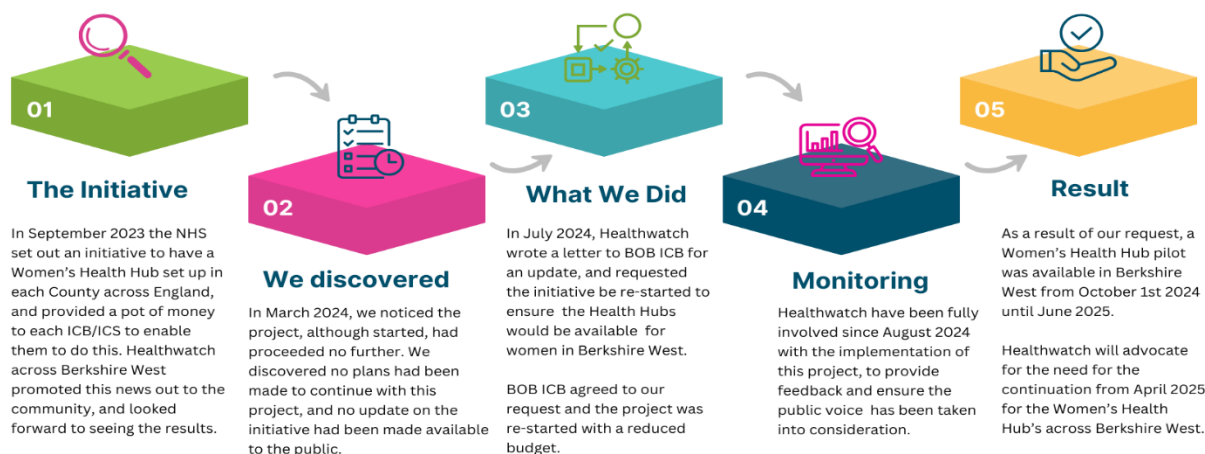
In March 2024, a conversation between Healthwatch West Berkshire, Healthwatch Wokingham Borough and Healthwatch Reading about a local women's health project in Wokingham made us reflect on something we hadn't heard about in a while, the Women's Health Hubs proposal from 2023.

This initiative, put forward by the NHS to the BOB ICB, and shared with the public by Healthwatch, aimed to create dedicated spaces to support women's health across the area.

But since then, there had been no news, and no hubs had been set up in Berkshire West. We were concerned. It felt like a big gap was being left in support for women's health, and with no clear progress or updates, we wanted to understand what was happening and ensure that the funding from NHS England was being used as it should be.

So, we asked for it to be re-started, with the result that a 6-month pilot would begin, and a review to continue the services. Healthwatch West Berks is continuing to advocate for health services for women in West Berkshire and the establishment of an effective women's health strategy.

We discovered



Women's Health Hub Initiative

healthwatch
West Berkshire

healthwatch
Reading

healthwatch
Wokingham Borough

Our Achievements

Nurturing Beginnings: Listening to Parents, Shaping Better Care



Healthwatch West Berkshire launched the Nurturing Beginnings pilot to capture the voices of local parents and better understand their experiences of maternity and postnatal care.

We heard from families who had given birth in the last two years, mapping their journey from pregnancy through to the early weeks of parenthood.



This feedback highlighted many positive aspects of care, but also revealed inconsistencies in postnatal support and access, especially as families often use services across four major hospitals; Royal Berkshire, Basingstoke, Oxford, and the Great Western.

To address this, we recommended a more joined-up approach, led in partnership with local Maternity Voices Partnerships (MVPs)

With their strong community links and deep understanding of local maternity systems, MVPs are ideally placed to take this work forward.

This recommendation has helped shape a new, collaborative way of working across the region, bringing together parents, providers and partners to ensure maternity services are inclusive, responsive and built around what families really need in West Berkshire..

Sharing and learning from colleagues

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



Making services better together:



Healthwatch West Berkshire listen 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.

Even though we get centralised help, Healthwatch West Berkshire still makes its own decisions based on what local people need.

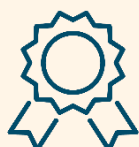
Learning and working as a team:



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 West Berkshire.

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 **Healthwatch West Berkshire** 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.

By collecting personal stories from local people about difficulties accessing GP services, Healthwatch West Berkshire gave a human voice to the data. These experiences were shared with NHS and Primary Care Network leaders, highlighting the real impact on patients.

As a result, several GP practices improved phone access and introduced hybrid booking systems, showing how listening to a few individuals can lead to positive changes that benefit the wider community.

Getting services to involve the public



Healthwatch West Berkshire work for the public as your collaborative voice to our local services.

We have built strong relationships with the NHS, West Berkshire Council and lead providers to ensure public voices are heard in service planning and delivery.

Every meeting we attend we ensure your voice is heard and help services understand the impact of their decisions from a patient and carer point of view., and that by always involving local people, services help improve care for everyone.

Improving care over time



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

Over the last year, we have been working with The Primary Care Alliance regarding the Women's Health Hub.

This project is ongoing, and we are working towards provision being made available for women in West Berkshire.

Making a difference in the community

Raising awareness within our community is so important, and we met with our MP Lee Dillon to chat about the work we do, how we achieve results, and what amazing differences your feedback make to our local services.

Meeting our Member of Parliament (MP)



We met with our MP Lee Dillon to chat about the work we do, how we achieve results, and what amazing differences your feedback make to our local services.

Maintaining a relationship with our MP gives us a direct channel to highlight key health and care issues, influence policy discussions, and seek support for local improvements.

It also helps to ensure the concerns of West Berkshire residents are heard by those in power.



Meeting our local MP helps raise community concerns directly with decision-makers.

This help to ensure local voices are heard in Parliament. It builds influence, drives action on key issues, and strengthens accountability for improving health and care services in West Berkshire.

Making a difference in the community

Working with Patient Participation Groups (PPGs) in West Berkshire.

Over the past year, Healthwatch West Berkshire has actively connected with Patient Participation Groups (PPGs) across the area.

Getting services to involve the public



We started by reaching out to practices, who invited us to attend their PPG meetings.

We showcased Healthwatch; listened to a wide range of views about appointment systems, communication, and how well practices meet the needs of different patient groups.

In turn, we've been able to share good practice across the area, highlight patient concerns at a strategic level, and help surgeries consider new ways of working.

Strengthening Relationships



This openness has led to more productive conversations and greater collaboration between practices and their patient communities.

By working together, and by recognising our role in supporting patient feedback, this proactive approach by surgeries has had a clear and positive impact.

It has encouraged more open dialogue, helped rebuild trust in some areas, and empowered PPGs to feel more confident and connected in their role to achieve progress in our local area.

Continuing the work



Looking ahead to the future

This is just the beginning. As we look ahead to 2025/26, we're committed to continuing and strengthening our engagement with PPGs, supporting their role, building partnerships, and making sure patients across West Berkshire are heard.

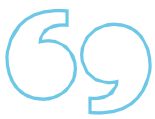


Listening to your experiences

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 you in all areas of our community.

Your experiences of care help us know what's working and what isn't, so we can give feedback on our local services in West Berkshire 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.."

Louise Ansari, Chief Executive, Healthwatch England

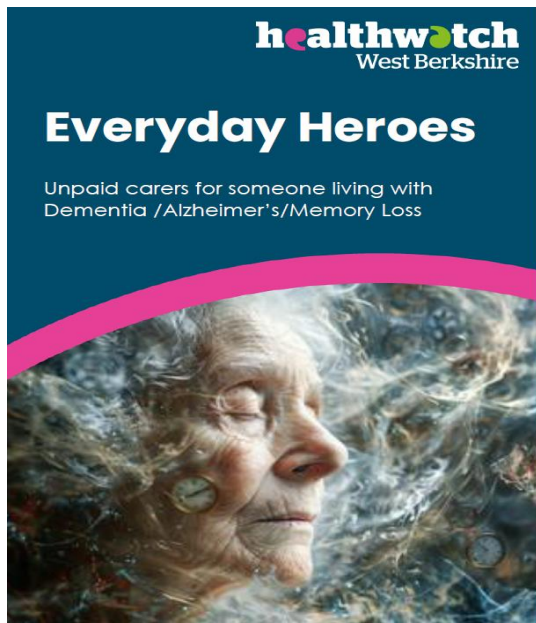


Listening to your experiences

We Listened to our 'Everyday Hero's'

Our Everyday Hero's told us of their struggles to help themselves and loved ones who live with Alzheimer's and Dementia.

What did we do?



We spoke to local carers groups and built mutual rapport with them. We also organised and hosted several community conversations for unpaid carers, ran a survey, and had several in-person conversations.

63%

Of respondents were not aware that they are entitled to a yearly carer's health check with their GP's.

5 Out of 6

Carers told us that being a carer had negatively impacted their mental wellbeing.



Key things we heard:

- Adult Social Care Invoicing was confusing
- There is a lack of knowledge about early recognition of Dementia symptoms
 - Information overload at Diagnosis
 - Gaps in training and medical support
- Health Checks for Unpaid Carers were not known about

What difference did this make?

By listening to and amplifying the voices of the unpaid carers across West Berkshire, we've helped drive real lasting improvements.

- Billing errors were swiftly addressed by Adult Social Care, with clearer, more personalised invoices now in place.
- A dedicated West Berkshire Co-Ordinator has been introduced, and communications between hospitals and services has improved.
- Carers will now have better access to up-to-date information, improved training, and greater promotion of annual health-checks.

Most importantly, Unpaid Carers now feel heard, supported, and better connected to the services they rely on.

Listening to your experiences

Waterway Struggles were Heard

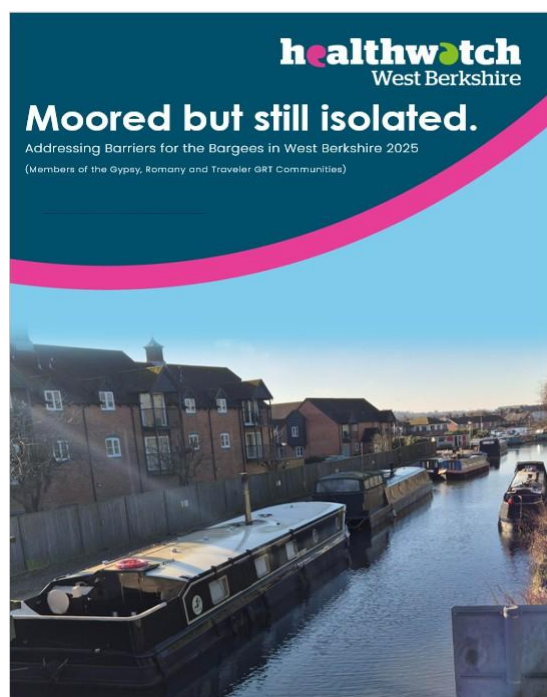
During the year, we reached out to the seldom heard from Bargee community. This group of people are part of the travelling community on the waterways, and due to their mobile lifestyle, their healthcare is often a challenge for them.

What did we do?

We set out to understand how Bargees access healthcare while moving along the waterways.

We visited key mooring points, made boat calls, and spoke with Bargees in person.

By doing this we gathered insights through surveys and informal chats and listened to their stories about how they register with a GP, and how they get their prescriptions. We discussed about what works well for them, what challenges they face and how they manage long-term conditions while living a mobile lifestyle.



Key things we heard:

52%

found it difficult to use digital services for appointments and registration.

39%

struggled due to lack of ID or proof of address

30%

cited additional barriers, such as financial constraints and geographical challenges.



What difference did this make?

Our report showed that the bargee community has ongoing health needs. As a result, local GP services and West Berkshire Council got in touch to work with us and explore how we can better support communities by working together."

Listening to your experiences

Empowering Young People to Understand Their Health Rights at 16+

We regularly speak to young people through outreach, engagement events, and school visits. During these conversations, a concerning theme began to emerge.

Many young people **didn't realise** they had the right to make decisions about their health care from the age of 16.

Key things we heard:

Some young people **were unaware** they could access contraception or mental health support without a parent.

All the young people we spoke to didn't know their medical information had to remain confidential unless they were at risk.



They want to find out this information from a trusted source, but online in a friendly easy to understand format.



This lack of awareness is leaving young people feeling unsure, anxious, or reluctant to seek help when they needed it most.



“Nobody really tells you at 14 or 15 what you are entitled to when you get to 16, it's like you're supposed to already know.”

Young People need:

Young people told us they need and want this information to be easier to find and available in ways that work for them, such as:

- seeing it on social media
- picking up a flyer at their local youth club, gym, or activity centre,
- hearing about it at school or college.
- Being told about it at school/college



Our aim was simple: to empower young people with the knowledge they need to take charge of their health, make informed decisions, and feel confident seeking care when they need it.

Listening to your experiences

Empowering Young People to Understand Their Health Rights at 16+

What We Did:

We developed a clear, youth-friendly information campaign to bridge the knowledge gap.

Designing a bright, accessible resource that outlines the key rights at age 16+. both in printed and digital versions for young people to inform them of their health rights when they reach 16.



“I didn't know I had these health rights when I turned 16, I always thought everything changed when I turned 18.”

“More information should be made available to us, how we want it”

And now?

Healthwatch West Berkshire will be continuing this work into 2025/2026, utilising both digital and the printed versions, and will share it with schools, colleges, youth services and community groups across the area.

We have also reached out to West Berkshire Council for a collaboration around Young People's health going forward.

Young People can take charge of their health

Hearing from all communities

We're here for all residents West Berkshire. 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:

- Speaking to people from the Bargee community
- Listening to stories from the racing community
- Visiting our local mosque, and speaking to the Muslim community.
- Talking about Health Rights to Young People
- Held drop-in sessions at Newbury Library
- Spoke to Unpaid carers about the challenges they face



Hearing from all communities

Highlighting the health needs of West Berkshire communities

We spent time building relationships and listening to what matters

Healthwatch West Berkshire aims to be a Healthwatch for every resident of the borough. A key theme of ours is that 'we want to hear from you' and we wanted to make sure this message reached every community in West Berkshire.

What difference did this make?

The team spent time over repeated visits and engagement listening to and seeking out the experiences of various communities.

The difference this made is that not only did communities start reaching out to us, but partners in the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector collaborated with us on engagement.

Reaching out to the racing community in West Berkshire

The racing community has challenges in accessing quality health services.

We wanted to know more about how this impacted the community in West Berkshire and understand what those challenges were and how they could be overcome. We want health services to be accessible to people when they needed them.

What difference did this make?

Alongside reaching out to people in the racing community and partners in the West Berkshire area we could work with to build links, we didn't wait to highlight the issues we were hearing about.

West Berkshire Council reached out to us to collaborate on some further work to support the community, which we see as a good example of services and partners working together.

Hearing from all communities

Case Study: John's Story – Living Afloat, Struggling Ashore



John* has lived on his narrowboat for over 10 years, travelling the canal network that winds through West Berkshire. He values the peacefulness, independence and connection to nature that comes with this way of life. But when it comes to accessing healthcare, John's lifestyle presents real challenges.

He told us how, without a fixed address, registering with a GP had been nearly impossible.



"I tried a couple of times, but I kept being asked for proof of address or ID. I live on a boat; I don't have a utility bill"



This meant John often relied on walk-in-centres, NHS 111, or simply went without when he was feeling well.

Last winter, John experienced chest pain while moored in a remote area. He hesitated to seek help, unsure where to go or whether he'd be taken seriously without registration. Eventually, he made his way to A&E but described the experience as stressful and isolating.



"I felt invisible, like I didn't belong in the system."



John's experience is not unique. It reflects the wider issues faced by many in the bargee community: a lack of continuity in care, limited access to repeat prescriptions, poor digital connectivity, and the stigma or misunderstanding they can face when approaching services.

His story helped shape our bargee healthcare report, offering first-hand insight into what needs to change. We shared these findings with local commissioners and NHS partners to push for greater flexibility in how services are delivered, such as clearer guidance on GP registration without a fixed address, better awareness among frontline staff, and outreach approaches that meet Bargees where they are.

Thanks to John and others who kindly shared their stories, their voices are being heard, and small but important steps are being taken to improve healthcare access for those living life afloat.

*Name changed for privacy.

Hearing from all communities

How we use what you tell us to make a difference

Helping members of the bargee community have a voice about their health and wellbeing



When your home is not always fixed in one place, it can be difficult to know how to get access to care when needed, especially if it is urgent.

We talked with members of the bargee community about how isolation and not knowing what is available in health services can impact their care.

We also wanted to make sure that people were aware of their rights around accessing services, and work with services themselves, most commonly GP practices, to build communication so that care was appropriate and timely.

Part of the process for understanding what people know about with respect of their rights is discovering the gaps, and helping to fill them in.

What difference did this make?

Our report about the bargee community shone a light on a group often overlooked in healthcare planning.

Through direct conversations and listening to lived experiences, we uncovered key gaps in access to services, particularly around registration with GPs, continuity of care, and digital exclusion.

As a result:

- **Services and commissioners now have a clearer understanding** of the specific challenges faced by this community.
- The report led to **increased awareness among local health partners**, with discussions about how to make services more flexible and inclusive.
- It also **opened doors for further collaboration** and tailored outreach, ensuring Bargees have a stronger voice in decisions that affect them.

Most importantly, it **put the needs of this community on the agenda**—helping to bridge the gap between being heard and being helped.



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 **149** 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



Transport Problem Solved!

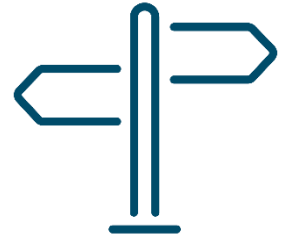
Thanks to Debbie contacting us, a review of transport provision for those with similar needs was made.

A concern was raised from a welfare officer from a local service for an elderly lady with Dementia whose transport to get her weekly groceries was suddenly changed. New travel options were identified to better meet her needs. Which ensures she can continue her regular trips to the supermarket

The situation was also escalated to the local authority to raise awareness of those with similar needs.



"I don't think anything would have been done if you hadn't stepped in and helped"



Health Complaint Resolution

Trevor received the help he needed, by using information from a leaflet.

Trevor had an operation at a hospital but had to have surgery again a few months later after it was found a piece of equipment had been left in his operation site. He tried complaining but was sent to another hospital to have his next operation, and again to another one resolve the issue.

Trevor tried to complain, but felt brushed off, and that he had no options left but contacted Healthwatch as he saw a leaflet about us and hoped we would be able to help him.

Signposting Trevor to our local Independent Health Complaints (IHCA) ensured he was listened to and helped with his case.



"If I hadn't seen the leaflet, I don't know what I would have done. I felt very unheard and very upset."

Showcasing volunteer impact

Our fantastic volunteers have given 20 days 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:

- Attended various events with us to promote our work
- Delivered our posters and Have Your Say Forms to dentist surgeries around West Berkshire
- Attended meetings
- Supported us in our decision making.



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 sit on the Healthwatch Advisory Board, providing advice and feedback to those delivering the Healthwatch contract in West Berkshire. However, I also like, where possible, to help out at functions and events so I can hear about the experiences of patients and the public more directly.

We are all responsible for managing our own health, but all too often, health services are done 'to' us rather than 'with' us. It is important, therefore, that bodies like Healthwatch listen to the public and make their views known to health and social services.

Adrian



Celebrating Our Volunteers – and Calling for More

Finding volunteers isn't always easy, like many organisations, we've seen how hard it can be to recruit people with the time and energy to spare. But those who do come forward make a real difference, and we are so grateful. That's why we're working with The Advocacy People to make it easier and quicker for people to get involved, and to ensure volunteers feel recognised and supported from day.

If you've ever thought about volunteering, even just a little time can go a long way.



Come and be part of something that matters.

Be part of the change.

If you feel this could be something you could enjoy, contact us today and find out how you can be part of the change.



www.healthwatchwestberks.org.uk



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Finance and future priorities

We receive funding from West Berkshire 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	£96,322	Expenditure on pay	£86,804
Additional income	£16,667	Non-pay expenditure	£11,600
		Office and management fee	£22,294
		Reserves	-£7,709
Total income	£112,989	Total Expenditure	£112,989

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

Finance and future priorities

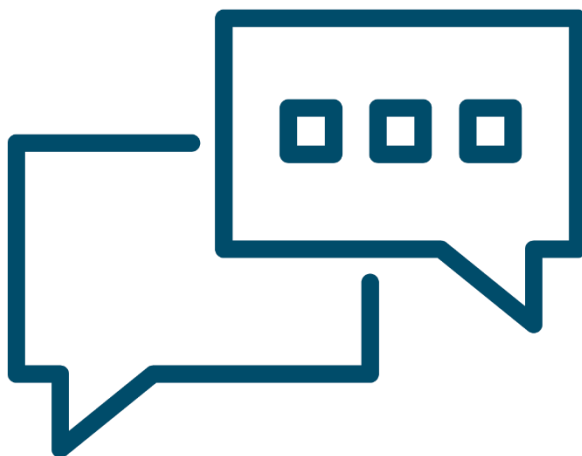
Next steps:

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. We will be hosting informative Talk To Us' events in Theale, Greenham, Hungerford, and Newbury, which will give our residents the opportunity to meet Healthwatch West Berkshire. They will be able to share their views about their local health and wellbeing services, find out more about what local services are available to them and discuss their local health and care service provision.
2. We aim to continue to champion the voice for women in West Berkshire by working with the Primary Care Alliance, RBHFT and BOB ICB to ensure much needed health services for women will become available in our area.
3. Continue working with the Lambourn Racing Community to discover more about their unique lifestyle and how they deal with their healthcare issues and access health provision within their fast-paced lifestyle.



Statutory statements

Healthwatch England, 2 Redman Place, Stratford, E20 1JQ Healthwatch West Berkshire contract is held by The Advocacy People.

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

The way we work

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

Our Healthwatch West Berkshire Advisory Group consists of 4 members who live locally, and who work voluntarily to provide direction, oversight, and scrutiny of our activities.

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

Throughout 2024/25, our Advisory Group met 4 times and gave advice and direction on matters such as our annual work plan, and projects we are considering throughout the year. We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities, and we capture all the feedback we receive, along with signposting requests to see if any themes emerge for future work or investigation.

Independent Health Complaints Advocacy (IHCA)

Healthwatch West Berkshire responsibilities also include the IHCA, and we look at the Health complaints made to see if there are thematic issues for us to look in-depth.

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, our Social Media, and send copies to West Berkshire's public libraries, all key stakeholders, Parish Councils, Patient Panels, voluntary groups, and schools and colleges.

Larger print and easy read versions can be made available if required.

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.

For example, in our local authority area, we take information to the Health & Wellbeing Board, The Scrutiny Board and West Berkshire Council.

We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB), Royal Berkshire Hospital Foundation Trust (RBHFT) and The Primary Care Alliance. We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch West Berkshire is represented on the West Berkshire Health and Wellbeing Board by Fiona Worby – Lead Officer, and Mike Fereday, Advisory Group Chair)

During 2024/25, Fiona has effectively carried out this role by attending all meetings and attending the sub-group meetings that feed into the Health and Wellbeing Strategy Group.

We share how Healthwatch work, our future workplans and by asking questions from the public perspective to ensure the public voice is considered in decision-making.

Healthwatch West Berkshire is represented on the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire (BOB ICB) board by Fiona Worby, Lead Officer.

Statutory statements

Listening Matters: How Healthwatch West Berkshire Makes a Difference

At Healthwatch West Berkshire, we may be a small team, but our strength lies in listening.

Taking the time to hear from people about their experiences with health and social care is what enables us to make a real difference.

Reaching out to communities doesn't happen overnight, it takes time, effort and trust, but it's essential, and we know that if we don't ask, we risk missing voices that matter. That's why listening remains at the heart of everything we do. It's how we spot problems, highlight what works well, and push for the changes people want to see.

By staying connected to local people, we help ensure that services are shaped not just for our residents, but by them.

We don't just gather feedback; we do something with it.

Your experiences help shape our reports and recommendations, which we share with the NHS, local councils, care providers and national bodies like Healthwatch England and the Care Quality Commission. That's why we'll keep reaching out, keep asking questions, and keep speaking up, to make sure every voice counts.

2024 – 2025 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
Requested Commissioner Engagement.	Two commissioners were assigned to Healthwatch West Berkshire. We are now monitored to ensure we are fulfilling our role effectively.
Stakeholder Approaches	Have now been asked to sit on new strategic meetings at Council and BOB ICB meetings.
Mapped out projects for 2025/2026, including	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Set a template for reaching out to other seldom heard communities.• Devised a plan for our new digital strategy.• Start a new monthly bulletin for residents.
Raising awareness of Healthwatch.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Surgeries are now actively inviting us to meet with their PPGs• Drop in events held at local libraries.

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