



Annual Report 2024–2025

Unlocking the power of people-driven care

Healthwatch Wolverhampton

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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 co-chairs



I'm pleased to welcome you to this report, which brings together key findings and insights gathered from our work across the community. This report reflects the real experiences of local people and highlights where services are working well and where improvements are needed.

We are continuing to strengthen how this work connects with our local Integrated Care Board (ICB) and wider system partners. By aligning our planning and priorities, we can better respond to what communities are telling us and ensure that voices are not only heard but acted upon.

A particular focus in this period has been on finding out more about how we can better support inclusion and tackle the barriers faced by Deaf and disabled communities. These barriers can include physical inaccessibility of buildings, lack of accessible communication formats such as British Sign Language or Easy Read, difficulties accessing appointments or navigating digital systems, and a lack of awareness or understanding among staff. These challenges can lead to poorer health outcomes and experiences for people who already face inequalities.

This work is ongoing, and we are committed to continuing it throughout the year. As we move forward, we will place greater emphasis on co-production by working in equal partnership with communities to inform how services are designed, delivered and evaluated. Ensuring that people with lived experience are at the centre of future service planning and analysis will be vital in building a more inclusive and accessible health and care system.

We look forward to working together to ensure this feedback drives change and contributes to more joined up, inclusive and responsive health and care services for all.

Suffia Perveen, Co-Chair



"We strive to listen to our local communities in making a difference to health and social care services. We base our work priorities on what local people are telling us about their experiences, so it is important that you share your feedback with us about accessing services in Wolverhampton."



Mandy Poonia, Co-Chair

About us

Healthwatch Wolverhampton 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 supported more than 3,093 people to have their say and get information about their care. We currently employ four staff and our work is supported by 50 volunteers.

Reaching out:



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

2,571 people came to us for clear advice and information on topics such as mental health support and finding an NHS dentist.

Championing your voice:



We published **five reports** which included the improvements people would like to see in the support for people awaiting an autism diagnosis, local mental health services and a local GP medical centre.

Our most popular report was [*People's experiences of mental health services in Wolverhampton*](#), highlighting challenges faced by some people in accessing and receiving mental health care.

Statutory funding:



We're funded by the City of Wolverhampton Council.

In 2024/25, we received **£169,000**.

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 Wolverhampton. Here are a few highlights.

Spring

We have helped to bring life-saving information and awareness sessions into deprived communities in Wolverhampton.



Our Healthwatch Oversight Group held its first public meeting and supported an outstanding recognition event for our strong and impactful volunteers.



Summer

Used the mechanism of Enter and View and partnership strategic groups, to provide better access for those with sensory loss resulting in the hospital trust responding positively to our recommendations.



We listened to 70 neurodiverse people that revealed there is inadequate communication with people while they are on the assessment waiting list, leading to uncertainty and stress.



Autumn

We worked with the Health Service Ombudsman to address key issues people have raised with us about hospital services.



Provided insight and highlighted patient's experiences to MPs and councillors through our successful influencing and relationship development with key members, such as Pat McFadden MP.



Winter

The Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust responded to our Enter and View recommendations to improve the physical environment at one of their inpatient services.



Supported underserved residents to get involved to shape the future of our NHS. Their feedback will address key issues people have raised with us about GPs and other services.



Working together for change

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

This year, we've worked collaboratively to achieve the following:

A collaborative network of local Healthwatch:



We continue to maintain strong links and regular communication with one another. As a collective, we regularly meet with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and participate in the bi-monthly Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) and ICB meetings. We meet as a group to share updates on what we are hearing from our local communities and to identify any emerging common themes across the region.

The big conversation:



Healthwatch links into the Black Country ICS by representing the public voice and helping it understand local priorities. We do this through various means, including patient feedback, Enter and View work to assess services and gather intelligence from service users, and our individual programme of priority projects.

Building strong relationships to achieve more:



As local Healthwatch organisations across the Black Country, we collaborated to submit a freedom of information (FOI) request to the NHS Black Country ICB, seeking greater transparency on key areas of public interest. The ICB has provided a [formal written response](#) to the questions posed, which is now available on each respective Healthwatch website for public access.

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 Wolverhampton this year.

Creating empathy by bringing experiences to life



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

An application form previously used for registering refugees and asylum seekers for a GP in Wolverhampton is no longer in use due to the inappropriate nature of the questions it contained. As a result of our partnership work, this form will not be used in future assessments. This would help to reduce trauma and restore patient dignity.

Getting services to involve the public



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

We supported the NHS Black Country ICB in Wolverhampton to ensure that a wide range of residents had the opportunity to share their opinions. For example, we shared information about groups they should involve, and our volunteers attended a focus group to gather insights from women about how to improve their health. We also helped distribute a survey.

Improving care over time



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

We work continuously with various organisations to improve the quality of services for all local people. For example, we had an extended period of engagement listening to the experiences of those who are homeless and using NHS services. As a result, we have been able to give valuable insight to the NHS Black Country ICB. We have also contributed to identifying key priorities for enhancing peer mentoring programmes as part of an ongoing project.

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

Improving support for people with autism

Last year, we highlighted significant challenges faced by people waiting for an autism diagnosis and those living with autism in Wolverhampton.

We wanted to understand how long people are waiting to be diagnosed with autism, what support they are receiving while they are waiting, and whether the waiting time is affecting their mental health.

What did we do?

In March 2024, we engaged with the community by hosting in-person listening groups and attending peer support meetings. We also launched a survey to understand the impact of barriers on people's needs.

Key things we heard:



Many people wait significantly longer than the recommended time for autism assessments.

We heard there is inadequate communication with people while they are on the assessment waiting list.

There is a lack of easily accessible information on autism and the diagnosis process.

There is stigma around autism, which continues to contribute to the challenges people experience in their lives.

Our work showed how a complicated process and poor communication can leave people with autism without access to basic healthcare support.

What difference did this make?

We presented our report, [*Improving support for people with autism*](#), to Wolverhampton's Autism Board and shared our findings with the NHS Black Country ICB to inform them about their work looking at health inequalities, coordination of autism services and policies at the Black Country level. Our recommendations are being taken on board.

Listening to your experiences

People's experiences of mental health services in Wolverhampton

People have highlighted the challenges in accessing and receiving mental health care support in Wolverhampton.

What did we do?

We launched a survey to understand the experiences and challenges of mental health service users, conducted an [Enter and View visit](#) at a local NHS hospital, and participated in interviews and listening groups.

Key things we heard:



We heard people are passed between services without clear direction or support.

People reported negative experiences with some staff.

We were told service users felt uninformed about their treatment options and lacked opportunities to engage in decision-making about their care.



"We will take the spirit of the feedback and ask our Lead Experience Consultants to look at this feedback and consider additional improvements." Stakeholder response

Since publication of our findings, we've worked with One Wolverhampton to further support engagement around physical health checks for individuals with serious mental illness (SMI). They have also invited us to be part of their mental health steering group who are doing extensive work addressing many of the issues raised in the report.

What difference did this make?

We shared [our report](#) with the Black Country Healthcare NHS Trust to support their efforts in enhancing mental health services in Wolverhampton. Through our continuous collaboration with public health teams, our recommendations are being considered.

Hearing from all communities

We're here for all residents of Wolverhampton. 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:

- Partnering with organisations who are very active in equality and diversity.
- Working with the voluntary sector and local authority through initiatives, such as Help at the Hubs, to reach people struggling with socio-economic deprivation to provide information and signposting.
- Our reports shared people's experiences as part of the ICS strategy review and primary care transformation model.



Hearing from all communities

Improving understanding of healthcare needs within South Asian communities

We investigated access to social care for the South Asian community.

People told us about language barriers, a lack of cultural understanding among service providers, and failure of services to address preventative measures by working together with them.

What difference did this make?

We will be better equipped to help services tailor staff training that includes cultural responsiveness, religious literacy, and to learn more from this community what they need as preventative measures.

Helping refugees understand and access NHS care in an accessible way

We heard how isolating and frustrating refugees can feel when they are not able to share their experiences in a way accessible to them.

To help, we created an opportunity to meet with a small group using accessible activities as an ice breaker and as a tool to develop discussions. We gained rich information around barriers they face and how primary care could improve. This is a starting point in a series of engagement to come.

What difference did this make?

We helped them to feel more confident in accessing health care. We also helped promote and explain the process of raising a complaint and have done this through activities helping their mental health.

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 2,571 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.



Raising awareness about appointment letters resulted in positive change

Thanks to our continuous highlighting of the Deaf community's needs, providers are taking on board ways to address matters.

Over the last year we had a strong focus on hearing from the Deaf community and ensuring their voices are inclusive at all meetings and through our statutory boards. Furthermore, our Information and Signposting Officer went to a special awareness day to gain a better understanding about the struggles that Deaf people face. One of the reoccurring themes we heard was around the poor accessibility of appointment letters resulting in high numbers of Deaf people missing appointments.

Some actions taken so far have included the formation of a working group led by the ICB, primary care and Healthwatch. As a result, appointment letters from the NHS Trust have been reviewed. Also patients and Healthwatch have been invited as experts to a reference panel for the new commissioning of an interpretation provider.

Improving communication and joined-up care for patients

Denise felt her daughter's care had slipped through the net as nobody within professional teams would take responsibility for a blood test.

Her daughter had autism and other challenges with her mental health, including a phobia of leaving the house and a fear of needles.

Denise raised concerns that the some of the professionals didn't understand autism and weren't putting in place reasonable adjustments. Her daughter struggles in a clinical environment and it was helpful to have the phlebotomy service visit her at home.

In addition, a lengthy time had passed where the blood test had not been done as neither CAMHS nor the GP would take responsibility for it to happen. We liaised with the practice manager, CAMHS and Social Services as part of a multi agency meeting to try to find a resolution.

The outcome was that the blood test has been done and Denise can now focus on getting the mental health treatment her daughter needs. We will continue to review the process of how agencies work with GP surgeries to request phlebotomy services, as in some cases this is causing patients to experience long waiting times and a lack of ownership from teams.

Showcasing volunteer impact

We have 50 fantastic volunteers, and this year they have given 332 hours to support our work. Thanks to their dedication to improving care, we can better understand what is working and what needs improving in our community.

This year, our volunteers:

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



Showcasing volunteer impact

At the heart of what we do

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



“As a healthcare professional, volunteering with Healthwatch Wolverhampton has been a great opportunity to use my skills beyond clinical work. Taking part in cancer awareness events, PLACE assessments, training sessions, and public health discussions has been both meaningful and rewarding. I've learned a great deal about patient experiences and how the local healthcare system operates, while also being able to contribute in a positive way. This experience has deepened my passion for community health and making a difference. A big thank you to Andrea and the whole Healthwatch team for your support, kindness, and for making this such a welcoming experience.” Mafaza



“Being a volunteer with Healthwatch Wolverhampton was a completely different experience for me.

“I learned many things from talking to people during volunteering on the Cancer Bus. It was good to talk to people to let them know about the health check-up and its benefits.

“I always feel a valued member at Healthwatch Wolverhampton. We always meet for a get-together and do different activities, and this gives me a sense of belonging in my tough days.” Ravi



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.



healthwatchwolverhampton.co.uk



0800 246 5018



info@healthwatchwolverhampton.co.uk

Finance and future priorities

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

Our income and expenditure

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from City of Wolverhampton Council	£169,000	Expenditure on pay	£96,907
Additional income	£400	Non-pay expenditure	£24,737
		Office and management fee	£47,320
Total income	£169,400	Total Expenditure	£168,964

Additional income

- £150 received from Healthwatch England for work on a project.
- £250 bursary funding received from Healthwatch England to attend their national conference.

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 ICS 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. Continue working to address access needs for those with sensory loss.
2. Tackling health inequalities further by reaching areas of the community we don't currently hear from.
3. Ensuring a positive and joined up experience for those receiving adult social care by working with partners implementing integrated neighbourhood care.

Statutory statements

Healthwatch Wolverhampton, Regent House, Bath Avenue, Wolverhampton, WV1 4EG.

Healthwatch Wolverhampton is hosted by Evolving Communities CIC, a community interest company limited by guarantee and registered in England and Wales with company number 08464602. The registered office is at Unit 2, Hampton Park West, Melksham, SN12 6LH.

Healthwatch Wolverhampton 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 Oversight Group consists of 10 members who work voluntarily to provide direction, oversight, and scrutiny of our activities.

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

Throughout 2024/25, the Oversight Group met four times and made decisions on matters such as signing off our 2025/26 work plans and collaborating with us on feedback to the NHS 10 Year Plan national consultation. We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities.

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

We use a wide range of approaches to ensure that as many people as possible can provide us with insight into their experience of using health and care services.

During 2024/25, we have been available by phone, email and via an online form on our website, maintained our social media presence, 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, announce it via our news channels and share it at the Health Scrutiny Panel and Health and Wellbeing Board meetings.

Statutory statements

Responses to recommendations

We had no 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 Scrutiny Panel, Health and Wellbeing Board, the Wolverhampton Safeguarding Together Partnership, Dementia Action Alliance, One Wolverhampton and CQC quality information sharing meetings. We also have representation on various public health and mental health trust working groups.

We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in the Black Country ICS. For example, we share information with the Black Country Involvement Advisory Assurance Group and, in collaboration with Healthwatch Dudley and Healthwatch Walsall, share information with the Local Dentistry Network and the NHS Black Country ICB. We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Wolverhampton is represented on the Wolverhampton Health and Wellbeing Board by Mandy Poonia, Oversight Group Co-Chair.

During 2024/25, our representatives have effectively carried out this role by attending meetings and sharing the views and experiences of people with the Board. We have had three recommendations at Health Scrutiny Panel approved.

Healthwatch Wolverhampton is represented on One Wolverhampton Placed-Based Partnership (PBP) Board by Stacey Lewis, Healthwatch Wolverhampton Manager, and on the NHS Black Country ICB by Aileen Farrer, Healthwatch Walsall Service Manager.

Statutory statements

Enter and View

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
Penn Manor Medical Centre	Patients raised concerns around communication and access to appointments.	Wrote a report with recommendations. The Practice produced an action, followed up on some of the recommendations and patient access improved.
Penn Hospital	Patients and partners raised safety concerns and lack of patient involvement.	Wrote a report with recommendations. The Trust produced an action plan, followed up on some of the recommendations and patient environment improved.
Wrottesley Park House Care Home	Partners raised concerns around the suitability of some aspects of the home to meet residents needs.	Wrote a report with recommendations. The home produced an action plan, immediately implementing all our recommendations. See quote below.
Atholl House Nursing Home	Intelligence received around concerns and deterioration in standards.	Report to follow.



“Thank you to all of the staff who attended our review over that day. My residents felt truly valued. This was a great opportunity as a new manager to establish our baseline to see where we are and where we are going. I thank you for your valued feedback and we have addressed any issues raised straight away.

“An impact residents have made was to have more say and choice with the menus. They have weekly 'fakeaways' which have gone down a storm as they have been homemade. Furthermore, they have had a takeaway of KFC which was very well supported and appreciated. I also arranged a surprise the other day when it was really warm for an ice cream van. All residents and staff joined in. One resident said: *“It has been years since I sat under a tree in the summer watching the world go by with a lovely cold ice cream.”* Moving forward the residents have much more say over the menu, the takeaways and the events that happen.”

Manager, Wrottesley Park House Care Home, Wolverhampton

Statutory statements

2024 – 2025 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
1. Improving patient experience of mental health services	We produced report recommendations that supports our Health Scrutiny Panel to get an independent account of people experiences.
2. Making hospital care more accessible	We carried out impactful engagement activities and provider collaboration to address concerns across the Black Country.
3. Improving the quality of care homes	We used our statutory powers to Enter and View two publicly funded care homes in the city to speak to people about their experience of using the service.
4. Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment	We supported the local authority with the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment to ensure the public have a say in how accessible pharmacies are. An outcome of our contribution ensured the survey questions reflected access needs for those with sensory loss.
5. Achieving the Healthwatch England Quality Framework	We are working to a high standard against the Framework, particularly in the areas around community engagement and in learning and development around impact.



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