



Speaking up for better care

Healthwatch Blackpool annual report 2025/26

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Acting Chief Executive
Chris McCann

“

The NHS plays a vital role in our lives, and we know it faces real challenges. Listening to people’s thoughts about their care is one of the best ways to improve services. Every comment, concern, and compliment helps health and care professionals see what works and what needs to change, so care can be safer and better for everyone.

“We want to say a heartfelt thanks to all the local people who have taken the time to share their experiences, and to the health and social care professionals who have listened and acted on that feedback. Your commitment has helped make a real difference for our community.”

A message from our chair

Listening to local voices, acting on lived experience, and driving improvements in health and care across Blackpool.

Over the past year, we have continued to ensure that the voices of local people in Blackpool are genuinely heard, including those who are often least likely to be engaged.

Through our projects, such as Conversations about Cancer and Proactive Care, we have reached into communities through door-knocking and outreach in neighbourhoods. We have consistently connected with hidden and unheard voices to understand their experiences of care. Importantly, we have then worked in collaboration with partners, commissioners, and providers to turn this learning into meaningful action. This has strengthened relationships across the local health and care system and supported improvements in how services are shaped and delivered.

At both place and Integrated Care System level, we have ensured that community voices are represented in discussions with NHS partners, working alongside other local Healthwatch to share insight, influence priorities, and strengthen collective impact.



Healthwatch
Blackpool Manager
Amy Butler



“Time and again, people have told us they feel genuinely listened to, valued, and better supported as a result of our work, demonstrating the real difference that listening and acting on lived experience can make.”

About us

Healthwatch **Blackpool** 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

In 2025/2026 we supported more than **4,467** people to have their say and get information about their care. We employed **15** staff and our work was supported by **5** volunteers.



Reaching out:

4,009 people shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.

458 people came to us for clear advice and information on topics such as **communication with the hospital** and **finding an NHS dentist**.



Championing your voice:

We published **15** reports about the improvements people would like to see in areas such as **end-of-life care**, **the support available to disabled people in Blackpool**, and **smoking cessation services**.

Our most popular report, **Conversations about Cancer**, explored **cancer awareness** and **early diagnosis** in Blackpool, capturing the views of **1,906** local people.



Statutory funding:

We're funded by **Blackpool Council**. In 2025/26 we received **£64,630**, which is **£3,080 more** than 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 **Blackpool**. Here are a few highlights.

Spring

We engaged with **Cabinet Members** at Blackpool Council's scrutiny committee to champion community perspectives and support their influence on **strategic priorities**, including the future of patient and public engagement.



We worked in close partnership with the **Gynaecology Department** at **Blackpool Victoria Hospital**, ensuring resident voices were heard to improve access, strengthen patient experience and support service improvement.



Summer

Our partnership with **Blackpool HDRC** has integrated residents as Community Co-researchers. They continue to influence research across early years, housing, mental health and employment, helping to advance health equity throughout Blackpool.



We created opportunities for autistic people and people with learning disabilities to influence local priorities through **Partnership Boards**, promoting inclusion, awareness and stronger community representation.



Autumn

We co-produced and delivered awareness-raising sessions for personal tutors at **Blackpool and The Fylde College**, equipping them with knowledge of local health and social care services identified by **students** as important to their needs.



We supported local parents to grow a family **Chat and Play** group in Clarendon, creating a safe and trusted environment where families can access advice for any concerns, predominantly social care support.



Winter

Through our involvement with **Move Together Blackpool**, we have promoted a holistic approach to health during our engagements, by exploring how people stay active, connect with their community, and maintain their overall wellbeing.



We worked with **The Hub at South Shore** on the **One Stop Community Shop**, bringing organisations together to provide residents with information of local health and support services in Blackpool.



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 **Blackpool** 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.

We spoke directly with people living with long-term health conditions who had not recently engaged with their GP. Residents shared barriers including difficulties accessing appointments, competing life priorities, uncertainty about the importance of regular reviews, and a belief that their condition was well managed independently. By sharing these experiences with North Primary Care Network, we brought patient perspectives to life and provided valuable insight to help shape future improvements in access and engagement.



Getting services to involve the public

By involving local people, services help improve cancer care for residents.

Healthwatch staff completed Cancer Research UK's Talk Cancer training to deliver focus groups, listening events and workshops, raising awareness of cancer signs, symptoms, screening and prevention. Participants were offered follow-up support and signposting. As a result, resident feedback was shared directly with the NHS Cancer Alliance, ensuring that lived experiences and local concerns inform service planning and improvement.



Improving care over time

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

Following our menopause report, we have chaired a collaborative menopause group in Blackpool to drive forward the recommendations and maintain momentum for change. This ongoing partnership work has contributed to improved access to menopause training for local healthcare professionals, progress towards changes in commissioning, and the development of menopause policies. We have also continued to improve awareness and support for women across Blackpool.

Listening to your experiences

Services cannot improve if they don't know what's wrong. Your experiences shine a light on issues that may otherwise go unnoticed.

This year, we have listened carefully to the voices of our community. People's experiences of care provide invaluable insight into what is working, what needs to change, and where services can do better. By amplifying the voices of people who use services, we can provide meaningful feedback, influence positive change, and support services to deliver better care for everyone.



Conversations About Cancer: Resident insights on local cancer care

Healthwatch Blackpool were commissioned by NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria ICB (Blackpool Population Health) and the Cancer Alliance to explore cancer awareness and barriers to early diagnosis in Blackpool, in response to higher local cancer prevalence and mortality rates, with the aim of identifying key barriers to early detection and improving community understanding.

What did we do

We engaged with 1,906 residents across Blackpool to explore cancer awareness, experiences, and barriers to care through an online survey, focus groups, door knocking, and community events. During engagements, we provided information and education using the Talk Cancer approach, raising awareness of cancer signs and symptoms, ways to reduce cancer risk, and the importance of vaccinations and screening programmes.

Key things we heard:



54%

Reported a lack of awareness and knowledge about cancer support.

61%

Identified access to GP appointments as a key barrier to timely cancer diagnosis and treatment.

72%

Highlighted the benefit of a cancer drop-in clinic, without the need to book a GP appointment.

Many residents reported timely diagnosis, compassionate care, and good communication, whilst others experienced delays, misdiagnosis, and difficulty accessing GP services. Awareness of symptoms, screening, and the HPV vaccine were limited, with calls for better education and faster access.

What difference did this make?

Resident insight helped shape the introduction of the Living Well Bus, providing mobile cervical screening services across Blackpool, as well as the implementation of a dedicated cancer drop-in clinic in Blackpool South. This clinic offers residents an opportunity to discuss cancer-related concerns and access advice and support, helping to support earlier diagnosis.

Understanding the impact of extreme weather on care homes

Working alongside Blackpool Council and Hull University, we explored how prepared local care homes are for extreme weather, with a particular focus on heatwaves, identifying opportunities to improve resilience and support climate adaptation.

Through surveys, interviews, focus groups and preparedness checklists, we heard from 51 residents, 29 staff members and 9 care home managers across 11 care homes in Blackpool. We explored how heatwaves, storms, flooding and cold weather affect residents, staff and care delivery. Overall, feedback showed that homes generally respond well to immediate weather challenges, but longer-term climate resilience planning remains less developed.

Key things we heard:



77%

of residents felt extreme weather events are becoming more common.

80%

of care home staff were interested in receiving support to improve their approach to extreme weather.



“The home already has things in place to make me feel comfortable. We have thermostats in our rooms, blankets, fans, shaded areas.”

Residents generally felt well cared for during periods of extreme weather, praising staff for providing additional cooling measures, hydration support, blankets and regular wellbeing checks. Despite this, concerns were raised about ventilation, a lack of awareness of what extreme weather is, temperature control, building design, and the limited availability of air conditioning. Staff and managers also highlighted the need for greater investment in long-term climate adaptation and building resilience, identifying a gap in preparedness.

What difference did this make?

Findings highlighted opportunities to strengthen preparedness planning, improve resident awareness of extreme weather, support staff development, and improve temperature management within care homes. The findings and recommendations are now helping to inform local resilience, adaptation and preparedness planning for future extreme weather events through local and national health, care and climate forums.

Hearing from all communities

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

- We have listened to young people about the HPV vaccine, exploring barriers to uptake, improving understanding of its link to cancer prevention, and addressing common myths and misconceptions. This helped ensure that young people's views were heard in local health promotion activities.
- We connected with residents affected by concerns about autism assessments and access to support, ensuring their experiences were heard and represented in discussions with the NHS to help improve access to care.
- We reached members of the Armed Forces community, ensuring veterans, serving personnel, reservists and their families had opportunities to share their experiences of health and care services, whilst helping them enhance their wellbeing, stay connected to their community and live well.



Transforming community health through proactive support and early intervention

We worked with the NHS and local partners to explore how preventable hospital admissions could be reduced through earlier, community-based support in Blackpool's priority wards.

This collaborative project highlights the importance of addressing the social, economic and community factors that influence health. Using innovative approaches such as door knocking, community outreach, and locally based Engagement Officers, it connects with residents who may otherwise not seek support and identifies barriers to accessing health and social care services, including isolation, lack of trust in services, and difficulties attending appointments, helping individuals access the support they need.

What difference did this make?

The project shapes a more proactive and inclusive model of care, focused on prevention and early intervention. The approach strengthens understanding of how community-led engagement can support those most at risk, whilst contributing to the development of a holistic care model that addresses the root causes of poor health and reduces avoidable hospital admissions.

Trinity Hospice: Your voice matters

We partnered with Trinity Hospice to gather feedback from patients, families, and carers about their experiences of hospice care.

Care was consistently praised as compassionate, respectful, and professional, with high quality end-of-life support provided through inpatient, hospice-at-home and counselling services. The inpatient unit was described as welcoming, supported by dedicated staff and high levels of patient satisfaction. Opportunities for improvement were limited, focusing primarily on strengthening feedback mechanisms and enhancing bereavement follow-up support.

What difference did this make?

Insights from patients, families, and carers helped identify key strengths and areas for development, particularly around feedback, communication, and coordination. Trinity Hospice are actively working to implement the recommendations, with ongoing improvements to how individuals share feedback, access information, and receive support, ensuring the continued delivery of high quality hospice care across Blackpool and the Fylde Coast.

Information and signposting

When you're struggling to find an NHS dentist, looking for help about how to make a complaint, or need advice about a good care home for a loved one – we're your first port of call.

This year, **458** people have reached out to us for advice, support or help finding services. These conversations also help us to understand where, and how, your care can be made better.

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.



Working with a GP to improve patient experience

Thanks to a local resident's feedback, issues around access to GP services, communication, and appointment booking were reviewed and addressed.

An individual made contact after becoming increasingly worried about a mole on her face. Having previously undergone surgery for facial skin cancer, she felt her concerns had not been taken seriously, despite several visits to her GP. Following advice from her dentist, she was referred for an urgent dermatology appointment.

When we spoke with her, she shared wider concerns about her experiences with healthcare services. She felt rushed during appointments, struggled with digital booking systems, had concerns about her medication, and wanted support with feelings of loneliness and isolation.

With her consent, we contacted her GP practice and raised these concerns, asking for them to be reviewed. As a result, the Practice Manager contacted her directly to discuss the issues. Her records were updated to show that she was digitally excluded, making it easier for her to access appointments. A medication review was arranged, she was referred to social prescribing support, and her concerns about appointment times and communication were heard.

Escalation of urgent concerns leads to earlier diagnosis for infant

Thanks to our support, a family's 11 month old child's investigations were expedited, leading to an earlier diagnosis.

A family raised concerns about their 11 month old son who had repeated admissions to Blackpool Teaching Hospitals due to ongoing viral infections, with deterioration shortly after discharge requiring emergency readmission. Although Blackpool Teaching Hospitals liaised with Manchester Children's Hospital for further investigation, a planned scan was scheduled for a later date, which the family felt was too long given his decline, and initially requests to expedite were declined.

We contacted both hospitals to highlight the urgency and repeated admissions. As a result, Manchester Children's Hospital expedited the referral and arranged admission within days for scanning and further investigations, enabling earlier diagnosis, treatment planning, and improved health outcomes and wellbeing for the child.

Showcasing volunteer impact

Our fantastic volunteers have given **16 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:

- Engaged with the community through focus groups and door-knocking initiatives, listening to residents' views on health and social care.
- Supported our Conversations about Cancer project by gathering residents lived experience of cancer care through 1:1 conversations.
- Carried out Enter and View visits to care homes and The Harbour to assess service quality, resident experience, and identify areas for improvement.



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.



Mike

"I have been volunteering for Healthwatch for almost 10 years now and I am treated like part of the team at Blackpool.

This year, I've been involved in several Enter and Views and door to door interviewing of residents in priority wards.

I really enjoy meeting and talking to a wide variety of members of our community and helping to support their needs, but in particular, I feel very lucky to work with such a dedicated team of people within Healthwatch."

"Having completed a work placement with Healthwatch, I was keen to stay on as a volunteer to stay involved with the amazing team.

Volunteering has offered me a range of opportunities to encourage both my personal and professional development, helping me to understand the lived experience of our community.

I am proud to support such a valuable service and excited to see how it continues to grow in the future."



Vanessa

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.healthwatchblackpool.co.uk



0300 32 32 100 (option 1)



enquiries@healthwatchblackpool.co.uk

Finance and future priorities

We receive funding from **Blackpool 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	£64,630	Expenditure on pay	£355,858
Additional income	£363,689	Non-pay expenditure	£9,821
		Office and management fee	£32,379
Total income	£428,319	Total Expenditure	£398,057

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. Improve dementia support across Blackpool and the Fylde Coast by amplifying lived experiences to increase awareness, strengthen service coordination, and improve access to support and opportunities for people living with dementia and their carers.
2. Develop more engaging and accessible ways to share our findings, including greater use of video and digital storytelling.
3. Explore access to orthodontic services in Blackpool by gathering the experiences of young people and parents to better understand waiting times, barriers to treatment, and inequalities in access.

Statutory statements

Healthwatch Blackpool is based within Empowerment Charity, 333 Bispham Road, Blackpool, FY2 0HH.

Healthwatch Blackpool 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 Volunteer Advisory Board consists of **5** members who work voluntarily to provide direction, oversight, and scrutiny of our activities.

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

Throughout 2025/26, the Board met **4** times and made decisions on a range of matters, with a particular focus on strengthening our engagement approaches to ensure local communities are meaningfully involved in shaping our work. This included developing new ways to better understand community needs, address health inequalities, and improve how we involve the public when influencing decision-making.

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 2025/26, 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 have also carried out door knocking in local neighbourhoods to engage directly with residents, gather feedback, and ensure we reach those who may not engage through digital or formal channels.

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, and we will share it widely with local partners.

Statutory statements

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 **Blackpool Place Based Partnership Board, Health and Wellbeing Board, Blackpool Safeguarding Adults Board and Fairness Commission**.

We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in **NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care System**. For example, **in collaboration with Healthwatch Together, we share information at the ICS level to the Quality Committee and NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board**. We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch **Blackpool** is represented on the Health and Wellbeing Board by **Amy Butler, Healthwatch Blackpool Manager**.

During 2025/26, our representative has effectively carried out this role by **sharing feedback into local community experiences and influencing the neighbourhood development agenda**.

Healthwatch **Blackpool** is represented on **NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board** by **David Blacklock, on behalf of Healthwatch Together**. Amy Butler has also had a guest speaker slot to discuss our proactive care community engagement at NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board, alongside the Associate Director Population Health and Place Delivery (Blackpool).

Statutory statements

Enter and view

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
Glenroyd Care Home 25/4/25	Latest CQC report rated as requires improvement. Selected as a routine visit.	Wrote a report with recommendations to improve food quality, communication, and activity inclusivity. The service actioned these where possible.
Glenholme Bispham Gardens 28/5/25	Latest CQC report rated as requires improvement. Selected as a routine visit.	Wrote a report with recommendations to improve the timeliness of staff support for wheelchair users and promote equitable, responsive care. The service actioned these where possible.
Austen Ward, The Harbour 25/6/25	The visit was arranged as part of ongoing work with The Harbour.	Wrote a report with recommendations to improve patient experience, including reducing night-time disturbance, enhancing communication, and increasing accessibility. The service actioned these where possible.
Harmony House Care Home 3/9/25	Not been inspected by the CQC as new provider of service in place. Selected as a routine visit.	Wrote a report with recommendations to improve maintenance, menu visibility, activities, resident engagement, salon services, and outdoor space access. The service actioned these where possible.

Statutory statements

Enter and view

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
Churchill Ward, The Harbour 12/11/25	The visit was arranged as part of ongoing work with The Harbour.	Wrote a report with recommendations to further personalise patient activities. The service continues to support this through wellbeing provision, tailored activities, and community meetings.
Nightingales Nursing Home 26/11/25	Latest CQC report rated as good. Selected as a routine visit.	Wrote a report with recommendations to explore access to an Admiral Nurse, improve menu communication, and maintain staff consistency and positive agency relationships.
Amber Court Care Home 28/1/26	Latest CQC report rated as good. Selected as a routine visit.	Wrote a report with recommendations to improve mental health support, outdoor use, and food variety, addressed through existing provision, outdoor activities, and seasonal menus.
Park View Care Home with Nursing 4/3/26	Latest CQC report rated as requires improvement. Selected as a routine visit	Wrote a report noting a positive, welcoming environment, with recommendations to extend personalisation across all rooms and continue improving communication and quality.

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