



Speaking up for better care

Healthwatch Portsmouth
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

In the last year we have continued our work with the local ICB, ensuring meetings with the relevant people who have responsibility for matters such as primary care, dentistry, and integrated neighbourhoods.

We have made sure that citizen feedback is shared at each of these meetings:

- whenever we meet with both the ICB and our local providers of health and care services, such as our local health trusts
- through other mechanisms, such as our membership of the Portsmouth Health and Wellbeing Board

We pick up trends and always feedback the top 3 issues raised by local people to the local system at a bi-monthly meeting.

Our ability to offer that 'critical friend' feedback from local people has made changes to how services are provided. This impacts on how local people access services and use services to their benefit. Lots of work has happened with one local health trust around coproduction.

In our local ICB, there are four local Healthwatch. We have worked collaboratively for many years, forming a partnership based on trust and mutual respect.



Chair
Roger Batterbury



"We are continuing to be the independent patient voice with our local health and care provider organisations. We feedback patient's comments as the critical friend."

About us

Healthwatch Portsmouth 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 **6667** people to have their say and get information about their care. We employed **5** staff and, our work was supported by **13** volunteers.



Reaching out:

1474 people shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.

5193 people came to us for clear advice and information on topics such as **accessing General Practice (GP)** and **finding an NHS dentist**.



Championing your voice:

We published **10** reports about the improvements people would like to see in areas like **mental health**, **hospital**, **pharmacy** and **accessing healthcare**.

Our most popular report was **children and young people's mental health experience**, highlighting people's struggles in **seeking mental health support**.



Statutory funding:

We're funded by Portsmouth City Council. In 2025/26 we received **£138,066**, which is **3% 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 Portsmouth. Here are a few highlights.

Spring

We heard about digital exclusion and accessibility barriers through our inequalities research project, which prompted us to launch face-to-face helpdesks within Portsmouth's most deprived communities.



Sharing patient feedback helped the hospital address British Sign Language access gaps and staff guidance in the Emergency Department, resulting in improved communication support.



Summer

We influenced regional frailty and falls prevention discussions, ensuring patient experience, prevention, accessibility and voluntary sector involvement were considered in future planning.



Our study helped NHS leaders and GP practices understand the barriers trans and non-binary people face, allowing them to improve care for this underserved group.



Autumn

Through our feedback on the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment, we ensured residents have clearer information on when they can access urgent medication across the city.



Listening to our patient voices, the hospital updated medical escalation rights' (Martha's Rule) posters, ensuring translation and communication support details are now included.



Winter

Our wider community engagement with underserved groups, including disability, dementia, autism and culturally diverse communities, ensured broader lived experiences informed local health and care discussions.



We promoted urgent NHS dental availability information helping patients access treatment, while raising system awareness of accessibility, waiting time and communication barriers to improve services.



Working together for change

We've worked with neighbouring Healthwatch to ensure people's experiences of care in Portsmouth, Hampshire, the Isle of Wight and Southampton are heard at the Integrated Care System (ICS) level, influencing decisions made about services in Hampshire and Isle of Wight Integrated Care Board.

This year, we've worked with Healthwatch across Hampshire, the Isle of Wight and Southampton to achieve the following:



A collaborative network of local Healthwatch:

We have a strong partnership to support public engagement, funded by the Hampshire & Isle of Wight ICB. Together, we contribute to key system forums including the System Quality Group, Integrated Care Partnership, and a range of Transformation Boards.



A big conversation:

Along with the three other local Healthwatch, we have aligned our activity to gather, analyze and present patient feedback at scale. This includes, for example, joint insight-gathering work on NHS dental appointment availability, supporting the ICB's flexible commissioning approach, and providing specialist patient and public involvement (PPI) support to system stakeholders.



Building strong relationships to achieve more:

Our collaboration has driven Accessible Information Standard (AIS) work, supporting four priority workstreams and a dedicated steering group established in response to our collective findings. Across all of this work, we share insights with ICB leadership—who attend our quarterly meetings—using a combination of quantitative data, lived experience stories, and direct quotes from residents.

We've also summarised some of our other outcomes achieved this year in the Statutory Statements section at the end of this report.

Working together for change

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

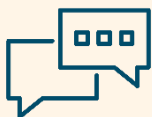


This year, we've worked with seven Healthwatch under The Advocacy People's infrastructure across Hampshire, Portsmouth, Reading, Somerset, Southend, West Berkshire and Wokingham Borough to achieve the following:



A collaborative network of local Healthwatch:

The Advocacy People have provided consistent infrastructure, governance, and operational support to the seven hosted Healthwatch, enabling them to work both locally and collectively. This includes shared leadership, senior guidance, and coordination across contracts. We have created space for collaboration, ensured consistency where needed, and supported each service to retain its distinct local voice.



A big conversation:

The seven local Healthwatch hosted by The Advocacy People have together, worked closely in the last year. We have been proactive in our learning objective which was to understand the changing landscape for Healthwatch in response to Government proposals announced last July to transfer the functions of local Healthwatch to Integrated Care Boards and Local Authorities.



Building strong relationships to achieve more:

The Advocacy People supported the seven Healthwatch to lead meaningful community conversations by providing practical tools, coordination, and strategic oversight. This included enabling shared knowledge, supporting engagement planning, and facilitating the exchange of approaches and learning. We ensured local teams were equipped to respond to community priorities while linking these insights into a broader, coherent narrative at a regional level."

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 Portsmouth this year:



When hidden communities become visible

Since Healthwatch Portsmouth began to support unpaid dementia carers in 2024 (at the time of their greatest despair), a quiet revolution has been taking place.

With local strategic reviews of dementia care services underway, the lived experiences of **Portsmouth carers have gained a seat at the top table**, shaping the future landscape. Once without a voice, carers formed Dementia Matters a Portsmouth & Southsea charitable group, now meeting system leaders on equal terms.



When deaf communities are unheard

Portsmouth Deaf Club were updated by Portsmouth's QA Hospital staff about improvements to BSL interpreter services. Members with lived experiences asked many questions. Healthwatch sought assurances. Would there now be robust and reliable access to communication support?

Later, a club member attended 'A&E' with chest pains. He asked Reception staff to locate the 'Yello BSL information folder'. It was lost. Healthwatch Portsmouth demanded an urgent response. Eight months later we heard the problems are being fixed. **We await feedback..**



Accessing community-based help

Our Health Inequalities research (2024) identified that City residents prefer to speak to a real person about their health or social care needs – not online forms. Healthwatch Portsmouth proposed a City Community Helpdesk – a single, trusted point of contact. Portsmouth's 'P3 Board' agreed to fund **two Helpdesks**, to help reduce health inequalities with accessible information in Portsea and Paulsgrove.

"The best thing about working on the Community Helpdesk is meeting local residents and being able to support them with better outcomes".
– Suzanne, Community Helpdesk Advisor

Improving inclusive GP care

Helping local health systems better understand barriers often unheard within primary care experiences.

We listened to trans and non-binary people, alongside GP staff and community organisations, to better understand experiences of accessing primary care in Portsmouth.

An Early Insight Report was published to highlight key themes and recommendations, helping local systems reflect on barriers, improve understanding, and support more inclusive and accessible GP services.



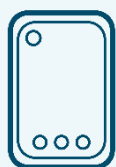
Mental health experiences of children & young people in Portsmouth

- **What factors impact mental wellbeing in children and young people?**
- **Where do young people prefer to seek support?**
- **What factors would encourage better take-up and engagement with services?**

Our study and report examines secondary data from eight sources capturing detailed feedback from 1,534 young people and 125 parents in Portsmouth.

Key things we learned:

Many young people are unsure how to seek mental health support and may be discouraged due to stigma, fear, anxiety and long waiting times.



90%

of parents said their needs were not met and had been passed from one service to another.

95%

of Portsmouth parents have met hurdles when seeking support for themselves or their children.



“Give me clear information with links to help me meet my personalized needs.” “My life should not be a crisis.”

In March 2026 we published our report. Key themes include a lack of information; confused pathways and signposting; very long waiting times for CAMHS without interim support. **Nine recommendations reflect the experiences and needs of people when they most need help.**

What difference will this make?

Healthwatch Portsmouth’s purpose is about influencing and collaborating, shining a light on where improvements are needed. There is an urgent case for action ensuring support is coordinated, responsive and timely. Rising levels of poor mental wellbeing among our children and young people make this a priority.

Having shared our report, Healthwatch Portsmouth’s plans in 2026–27 involve engaging with commissioners and stakeholders to help shape new opportunities for young people to get the vital help and support they need.

Hearing from all communities

We're here for all residents of Portsmouth. That's why, over the past year, we've worked hard to reach those communities whose voices may go unheard.

Adults with learning disabilities and autism invited us to the 'EnableAbility' Co-Production & Social Group for over 25's' at Portsmouth's super welcoming Spark Community Space.

Group members were clear, during medical appointments, that they want:

- **Reassurance by:** "medical professionals being friendlier, more approachable, and smiling more".
- **Accessible Information:** "plain English explanations about medical conditions and medications".

A chance for anybody who feels like a nobody,
to be a somebody



Small changes can make the biggest difference in daily living

Carers told us about difficulties in accessing vital NHS continence products for their loved ones.

We learned: supplies of essential healthcare products from the newly formed community trust was a postcode lottery. **Portsmouth** patients were limited to three incontinence pads per day, but **Hampshire** patients received supplies based on clinically assessed needs.

What difference did this make?

Hampshire & IoW Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust which was formed from two smaller community trusts in 2024, aimed to improve service quality and equity. Healthwatch Portsmouth highlighted internal variances to senior Trust managers. New guidance was immediately issued to frontline Bladder and Bowel Service staff. One carer told us she was no longer 'forced to buy' additional products to make up a daily shortfall of five pads and other items.

Challenging failures in community engagement before changes to services

Following social media concerns about the possible closure of the Summerlee Unit, we planned an Enter & View visit

Summerlee is a rehab ward in Portsmouth. With over 1,200 signatures to a 'change.org' petition, we met senior Trust staff to learn about its public engagement plans. Amazingly, just 72 hours before our visit, the Trust had been unaware of the public's feelings and had omitted its Portsmouth's service from community engagements about community rehab services.

What difference did this make?

Hampshire & IoW Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust quickly set up a local engagement plan about the transfer in-patient resources to 'rehab at home' services and apologized for previously omitting Portsmouth residents from its plans.

Healthwatch Portsmouth supports plans which reflect national trends and the NHS 10 Year Plan. Based on what patients told us, we are pleased that some in-patient rehab care will be retained by the Trust.

Information and signposting

Whether you need help finding services, making a complaint, or have concerns about local care—we are an independent voice that listens anonymously and shares your feedback directly with health and social care leaders.

This year 173 people have reached out to us for advice, support or help finding services. At community events, 132 people told us about what matters most to them. These conversations also help us understand where, and how, your care can be made better.

This year, we've helped by:

- Supporting residents face-to-face at local helpdesks.
- Researching and sharing accurate citywide dental and pharmacy updates.
- Ensuring hospital BSL access for deaf patients.
- Passing on trans and non-binary struggles to service providers.
- Sharing children's mental health experiences with local Health & Care system leaders.



Putting patient voices at the heart of wheelchair commissioning

By reviewing the provider's official improvement plan, Healthwatch Portsmouth stepped in as a strategic partner to champion the rights of local wheelchair users.

We actively challenged the service provider on critical local issues, raising questions regarding long waiting times and database record processing errors. Through this direct strategic oversight, we successfully secured a formal commitment guaranteeing that local service users are now integrated into the future planning process alongside the Integrated Care Board.

This key milestone ensures that upcoming wheelchair service contracts will no longer be designed or signed off without our community's direct input.



"Working alongside Healthwatch Portsmouth and Disability Advisory Group has helped ensure that the voices of disabled people in Portsmouth who are at the heart of how wheelchair services are shaped and improved." – Gina Perryman, South-East representative on The Wheelchair Collective

Working as a critical friend to improve emergency care

Following our Emergency Department walk-through visit at Queen Alexandra Hospital, we shared key findings about patient safety and communication gaps directly with hospital bosses.

The hospital Trust listened closely to our evidence and took action by setting up a dedicated safety and experience working group. They are now using our feedback to make practical, lasting improvements across the department.

This includes protecting patient confidentiality in waiting areas, updating digital information screens for families, making signage much clearer to follow, improving staff role identification, and ensuring deaf patients receive reliable British Sign Language interpreter support when they need it most.



"PHU values the information and insight that Healthwatch partners bring to learn from and improve care for our patients. We have used these insights to ensure patient voices are captured." – Portsmouth Hospitals University NHS Trust Statement

Showcasing volunteer impact

Our fantastic volunteers have given a total of **661 hours** to support our work. (That's an average of **12.7 hours/week**). Thanks to their dedication to improving care, we can better understand what is working and what needs improving in our community.

This year, Healthwatch Portsmouth's volunteers:

- Undertook **108 hours** of desktop research for our report on the Mental Health Experiences of Children and Young People in Portsmouth
- Have attended Hampshire & Isle of Wight Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust's wide ranging 'Learning from Experience' meetings and reviewed governance reports, including those covering complaints
- Gathered health and care experiences of people attending events including the **Portsea Community Helpdesk** and **Pride UK 2025** in Southsea



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.



Former Volunteer
Rukhsar

Coming from a medical background as a doctor to pursue a MSc Public Health in the UK, I was new to UK public health, the NHS and its complex structures.

Volunteering with Healthwatch Portsmouth helped me understand community engagement, patient experiences, GP and community care services, and the importance of listening to people's voices to improve health and social care services.

This experience became the foundation in my understanding of community wellbeing in the UK. It has supported my career progression through further opportunities in the NHS and progression towards senior community and public health roles."



"I initially volunteered to be a Healthwatch Portsmouth Board member. This has grown over time to include attending meetings representing Healthwatch and activities including Pride, Enter and View, plus PLACE.

I wanted to give something back to my community, letting health and care providers know peoples' views were being heard and that changes would be made in response to their feedback."



Volunteer
Roger

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.healthwatchportsmouth.co.uk



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info@healthwatchportsmouth.co.uk

Finance and future priorities

We receive funding from Portsmouth City 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	£3,377,309	Expenditure on pay	£162,128
Additional income	£4,800	Non-pay expenditure	£124,456
		Office and management fee	£95,217
Total income	£382,109	Total Expenditure	£380,869

Additional income is broken down into:

- £2,000 received from Healthwatch England for work on a project
- £2,000 received from the local ICS for joint work on a project
- £800 funding received from a local charity to support their project

Integrated Care System (ICS) funding:

Healthwatch across Hampshire and Isle of Wight Integrated Care Board 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
Annual grant from government	£138,066
Additional Income (from Hampshire and IOW ICB for Engagement in best practice advice & supporting community engagement activity)	£1,500
Total ICS funding	£139,566

Finance and future priorities

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. Improving patient access to and experience of primary care
2. Improving patient access to NHS dentistry
3. Improving patient experience of hospital Emergency Department



Statutory statements

Healthwatch Portsmouth, C/O The Advocacy People, PO Box 375, Hastings, East Sussex, TN34 9HU.

Healthwatch Portsmouth 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 Board consists of 8 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 to make decisions on local NHS services, including dentistry access and patient experience. The public insight we gathered through engagement and community discussions directly informed these decisions, ensuring wider public involvement in setting our 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 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 are committed to taking additional steps to ensure we obtain the views of people from diverse backgrounds who are often not heard from. This year we have done this through outreach and partnership working, including engagement with dementia carers and communities experiencing accessibility barriers.

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 with hard copies being made available at our information stalls and at events and meetings that we attend during the year

Statutory statements

Responses to recommendations

We had two providers who did not respond to requests for information or recommendations. We escalated three critical issues to Healthwatch England including private sector surgery cancellations due to funding issues, restricted podiatry access for non-diabetic patients, and hospital Equality Delivery System deficiencies, and these evidences are currently under national policy review.

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 forums and decision-making groups including the Portsmouth Dementia Steering Group, Portsmouth Disability Advisory Group, VCSE partnership meetings and Local Operational Care Board meetings, where public feedback and lived experience help inform service improvement, accessibility and local priorities.

We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers across the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Integrated Care System through partnership working with local Healthwatch organisations, helping inform service improvement and access. We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Portsmouth is represented on the Portsmouth Health and Wellbeing Board by Roger Batterbury, Healthwatch Portsmouth's Chair.

During 2025/26, our representative effectively carried out this role by providing constructive feedback on draft strategic reports affecting Portsmouth residents, helping improve clarity and accessibility, and bringing public insight and user experience including mental health perspectives, to support local decision-making and system discussions.

Healthwatch Portsmouth is represented on Hampshire and Isle of Wight Integrated Care Partnerships by Healthwatch Area Director Siobhain McCurrach. We are also represented on the Portsmouth Health and Care Partnership Board by Roger Batterbury, Chair of Healthwatch Portsmouth.

Statutory statements

Enter and view

Location	Reason for visit	What we did as a result
Summerlee Unit, PO1 5LU	To understand • how patient's personal rehab plans achieve successful rehab outcomes • patient experiences and views about change plans in the service.	Presented our report to Unit managers with four recommendations for change Presented responses to our survey highlighting the value of retaining an in-patient rehab service.
Admiral Jellicoe House, PO4 8JW	A follow-up visit to review the implementation of recommendations in our report.	Considerable and impressive improvements have been made to the building and service as a result of our visit report and recommendations

2025 – 2026 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
Enter and View – Admiral Jellicoe House	Our recommendations were mostly fully implemented, with notable improvements to the environment, accessibility, storage and person-centred care. Wider discussions are influencing future service developments.
Emergency Department Walk-Through & Joint Systems Review	Joint reviews with PHUT secured agreements for key waiting room improvements, including enhanced registration desk privacy, expanded wayfinding boards, optimized digital information displays, and more regular patient refreshment provisions.
Dementia carers engagement and system influence	Lived experiences from dementia carers informed wider dementia strategy and service discussions, contributing to system wide reviews and future planning.
Reducing Inequalities in Secondary Care	We worked collaboratively with QA Hospital to reduce inequalities for underserved patients, securing a virtual BSL link rollout, explicit travel reimbursement guidance, updated disabled parking information, etc.
Trans and Non-Binary inclusion research	Community and staff insight improved understanding of barriers to accessing GP services and informed recommendations for more inclusive primary care.

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