



What Matters Most?

healthwatch

Bradford and District



Identifying community priorities for health and care needs in Bradford and District

May - August 2026

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Executive summary

Healthwatch Bradford and District attended Ilkley Pride and the Bradford Dragon Boat Festival to speak with local people about health prevention, neighbourhood health and digital health.

427 votes were submitted and multiple people engaged with outreach staff to share their experiences and preferences.

Findings show strong support for fair access to health and care, services closer to home and better opportunities to stay well. People also recognised the benefits of digital health but were concerned about exclusion, loss of human contact and digital services becoming the only option.

This paper summarises what people chose, and what they told us and suggests questions Healthwatch Bradford and District may explore through future engagement.

What the findings tell us

The votes show which issues people prioritised, while the conversations helped us understand why these issues mattered.

Together, they suggest that neighbourhood health should be prioritised in our work across Bradford and District.

Digital inclusion should also be considered across all our work, alongside an exploration of the need to protect non-digital ways of accessing health and care.

Ilkley Pride event: A Pilot

We attended Ilkley Pride on 27 June to test a new priority-setting activity in a welcoming and inclusive environment.

People voted on three statements about neighbourhood health, casting 77 votes in total. Fair access to services was the strongest priority, receiving 42 votes.

The simple voting activity worked well as a conversation starter, encouraging people to explain their choices, share experiences and learn more about Healthwatch.

We used what we learned at Ilkley Pride during the Dragon Boat Festival, adding health prevention and digital health. As we only covered neighbourhood health, the results are not directly compared.

NEIGHBOURHOOD HEALTH PRIORITY	VOTES	SHARE
Everyone should have the same opportunity to live a healthy life, regardless of where they live or who they are	42	54.5%
People should be able to access health and care services in their local community	21	27.3%
More should be done to prevent illness and support wellbeing in our neighbourhoods	14	18.2%
Total	77	100%



Dragon Boat Festival

July 2026

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Dragon Boat Festival.

Healthwatch Bradford and District attended the Bradford Dragon Boat Festival at Roberts Park, Saltaire, on 3rd and 4th July 2026. The busy community event brought together families, local residents and visitors from across the city, giving us an opportunity to introduce Healthwatch Bradford and District and hear what matters to people.

We invited visitors to vote on statements covering three themes: health prevention, neighbourhood health and digital health. People placed a vote next to the statements they felt were most important. The activity was designed to be quick and easy, but it also acted as a starting point for wider conversations about people's experiences of health and care.

Across the two days, the activity received 350 votes. The findings that follow combine the voting results with comments and reflections recorded by our outreach workers during these conversations.

What the numbers say

Across the two days, people cast 350 votes. Neighbourhood health received the largest share, with 151 votes (43.1%). Health prevention received 104 votes (29.7%), while digital health received 95 votes (27.1%).

More votes were cast on Saturday across all three themes, reflecting the higher level of engagement that day. Although digital health received the fewest votes, it prompted some of the strongest conversations, particularly about digital exclusion and the importance of keeping non-digital ways to access care.

PRIORITY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	TOTAL	SHARE
HEALTH PREVENTION	47	57	104	29.7%
NEIGHBOURHOOD HEALTH	57	94	151	43.1%
DIGITAL HEALTH	44	51	95	27.1%

What people prioritised within each topic

Equal opportunity for a healthy life was the most popular individual statement, receiving 66 votes and 43.7% of all neighbourhood health votes.

Within health prevention, healthy lifestyle support and access to checks, screening and vaccinations were equally prioritised, with 37 votes each.

Digital health votes were more evenly spread, although self-management and monitoring received the most support, closely followed by digital inclusion and trust.

Topic	Statement (shortened)	Votes	Within topic
Health prevention	Healthy lifestyle support	37	35.6%
Health prevention	Checks, screening & vaccination	37	35.6%
Health prevention	Fair access to prevention	30	28.8%
Neighbourhood health	Local access to services	40	26.5%
Neighbourhood health	Prevent illness & support wellbeing	45	29.8%
Neighbourhood health	Equal opportunity for a healthy life	66	43.7%
Digital health	Easier access through technology	23	24.2%
Digital health	Digital inclusion & trust	35	36.8%
Digital health	Self-management & monitoring	37	38.9%

What people told us about neighbourhood health

Discussions highlighted the practical difficulties of travelling to Bradford Royal Infirmary and Airedale General Hospital, including transport, parking availability and cost.

Bringing suitable services closer to where people live was seen as a way to make care easier and more affordable to access.

We also heard that people made strong connection between neighbourhood services and prevention. They felt that people may be more likely to attend health checks, screening, vaccinations and wellbeing support when these are available nearby, particularly in familiar and trusted community settings.

People felt that bringing care into local communities is about building trust, understanding the needs of different communities and offering support in places where they already feel comfortable.

Accessible local services could help people seek advice earlier, identify health problems sooner and potentially avoid the need for more urgent or hospital-based care.

PARTICIPANT VOICE

“If services are close, you’re more likely to use them.”



“In COVID when we had to get everyone vaccinated quickly it was great to see nurses in mosques, where are they now? They need to be doing diabetes tests with our community as lots of men won’t go to the doctors” [participant discussing the need for neighbourhood health]



What people told us about digital health

Digital access: convenience, but not at any cost

Digital health provoked the strongest reaction in discussion. People recognised the value of remote monitoring, virtual wards and other technology that can help people stay well and avoid hospital. At the same time, they were concerned about:

- older people and others being left behind
- the cost of internet access and differing literacy levels
- the loss of face-to-face, personal contact
- families carrying too much responsibility for accessing appointments and letters
- the pace of technological change and whether today's users will cope in future

PARTICIPANT VOICE

“We’re losing human contact. I want to see and speak to a person.”



“We’re losing human contact. I want to see and speak to a person. It’s personal and I want to look someone in the eye when I’m sharing details of my health worries” [participant talking about their views of digital health]



Conclusions and implications

1. Make neighbourhood health the leading priority

Neighbourhood health was the most important topic. It led across each event and received 43% of all votes. Work should focus on whether people can access useful services close to home and whether existing neighbourhood models respond to local need.

2. Put equity at the heart of the work

The equality statement was the most popular individual option at both events. Future engagement should explore who is least able to live a healthy life, what barriers they face and whether neighbourhood services reduce or reproduce existing inequalities.

3. Treat digital inclusion as a cross-cutting priority

Digital health did not win the vote, but it produced the strongest emotional and practical concerns on the day. Healthwatch Bradford and District should examine digital routes across appointments, communication and care while advocating for accessible alternatives and meaningful human contact.

4. Link neighbourhood health with prevention

People we spoke with did not experience these as separate ideas. Bringing screening, checks, vaccination and wellbeing support into accessible community settings may improve uptake and reduce avoidable ill health.

Next steps

The findings suggest that our next phase of work should focus mainly on neighbourhood health, exploring what people want from services closer to home and how these could improve access, prevention and fairness.

Digital health will run throughout this work as a cross-cutting theme: although it received fewer votes, people shared strong views about both the opportunities offered by technology and the risk that some people could be left behind.

We will also continue to consider exploring citizen views around prevention, particularly how accessible local services could help people seek support and stay well earlier.

How should digital technology be used within neighbourhood services, and what non-digital options should remain available?

Where in your community would you feel comfortable accessing health checks, advice or support?

Which health and care services would you most value having closer to home?

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