



Annual Report 2024–2025

Equity in Action: Engaging Communities to Improve Access to Care for All

Healthwatch Kensington & Chelsea, Healthwatch Westminster

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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 Chair

Our teams have worked hard to capture the key concerns of local people about health and social care services and to communicate those concerns effectively to decision makers. Our report on proposed changes to same day GP access influenced the North West London Integrated Care Board (NWL ICB) decision to allow more time in their implementation schedule to take on board the widespread concerns of local people.

We have reported on the Cost of Living Crisis and sought to bring intelligence from frontline engagement to decision makers to help inform policy to support those most in need. We shared the report findings with the Local Dentist Committee (LDC) to simplify criteria for people to access low cost or free dental care

We are proud of our accomplishments and of the impact we create which is disproportionate to the size of our small but hard-working teams. We have recruited three new members of staff this year whose knowledge and experience is helping us to improve the service we offer and reach greater numbers of people who want to have their voice heard.

We have been fortunate to recruit new members to our Joint Advisory Board to enhance the range of specialist knowledge and skills available to us in our statutory oversight of governance and our priority setting processes.

We look forward to working more closely with partners to amplify the voice of ordinary people in this coming year.



Minna Korjonen, Chair, Healthwatch Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster Joint Advisory Board

About us

Healthwatch Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster are your local health and social care champions

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

Kensington & Chelsea

We've supported more than **3616** people to have their say and get information about their care. We currently employ **5** staff and, our work is supported by **30** volunteers across the Bi-borough.

Reaching out:



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

3127 people came to us for clear advice and information on topics such as how to make an NHS complaint and **patient rights**.

Championing your voice:



We published 7 reports about the improvements people would like to see in areas like intermediate care, access to healthcare and Enter and View reports.

Our most popular report was our Intermediate Care report, highlighting people's struggles in accessing integrated support when transitioning between health and social care services.

Statutory funding:



We're funded by **Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea**. In 2024/25 we received £148,843 which is 0.84% less than last year.

Our year in numbers

Westminster

We've supported more than **3487** people to have their say and get information about their care. We currently employ **5** staff and, our work is supported by **30** volunteers across the Bi-borough.

Reaching out:



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

2761 people contacted us for clear guidance and information on areas such as mental health help, navigating the complaints procedure and seeking advocacy, and wheelchair user support.

Championing your voice:



We published 11 reports about the improvements people would like to see in areas such as primary mental health services for homeless communities, the cost of living and its impact on pharmacy and dental services, GP access, intermediate care services, eye care, and patient experience in secondary care.

Our most popular report was on cost of living, which highlighted people's difficulties in accessing their local pharmacy, dental care, and physical and mental health difficulties as a result of growing living costs.

Statutory funding:



We're funded by Westminster City Council. In 2024/25 we received £151,701 which is 1.55% less 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 Westminster, and Kensington and Chelsea. Here are a few highlights.

Spring

The GP access report influenced The North-West London Integrated Care Board (ICB) commitment to delay changes to same-day access until further engagement with patients and residents is conducted.



We published 15 recommendations published to improve the accessibility of local GP practices, through Enter & View reports.



Summer

Our collaboration with the Networked Data Lab team supported the NHS in ongoing efforts to improve intermediate care services, ensuring that they effectively meet the needs of patients and contribute to more efficient healthcare delivery.



We channeled comments from residents at the digital support hubs at local libraries into strategic meetings, which informed the council's digital support workshops and strategy.



Autumn

Healthwatch Westminster collaborated with residents who have experienced homelessness and mental health issues, as well as service providers that help homeless communities, to shape the council's homeless strategy.



Our joint report on maternity services influenced community-based postnatal staff to attend the post-natal ward and offer information about their services, helping to ensure that all women receive crucial information about post-natal support.



Winter

Healthwatch Westminster collaborated with Healthwatch England to identify gaps in access to eye care services, notably Black African-Caribbean and South Asian communities, individuals from low-income backgrounds, and those at higher risk of eye diseases due to existing health conditions.



Our cost-of-living report facilitated collaboration with the Local Dental Committee (LDC) to simplify eligibility criteria for residents seeking dental support.



Working together for change

We've worked with neighbouring Healthwatch to ensure people's experiences of care in Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster are heard at the Integrated Care System (ICS) level, and they influence decisions made about services at North West London Integrated Care System level.

This year, we've worked with Healthwatch across North West London (NWL) to achieve the following:

A collaborative network of local Healthwatch:



We are actively participating in regular network meetings alongside other NWL Local Healthwatch organisations and representatives from the Integrated Care Board (ICB). These meetings aim to foster collaborative working and explore effective strategies for meaningful Local Healthwatch representation within the Integrated Care System (ICS).

The big conversation:



In 2024-2025 we have supported local residents in engaging with consultations conducted by the North West London Integrated Care Board (NWL ICB). For example, we amplified community concerns regarding proposed changes to same-day GP access, ensuring that resident voices are reflected in decision-making processes. Our feedback also influenced the consultation process for secondary mental health care services.

Building strong relationships to achieve more:



We collaborated with the North West London ICB, representatives from the voluntary and community sector (VCS), and local authorities to support community engagement at a series of local events. These efforts contributed to the co-development of a set of community-defined outcomes to measure progress against the Bi-borough Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

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 Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster 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 engaged with individuals experiencing homelessness to understand their access to primary mental healthcare services.

Findings from this project indicated a need for enhanced support to improve service accessibility and to improve integration between primary care and specialist services tailored for people experiencing homelessness.

Getting services to involve the public



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

After publishing our maternity report, we met with key stakeholders to discuss next measures. We met with representatives from participating hospital trusts and Maternity Voice Partnership groups. Community-based postnatal personnel will now provide information about their services to women in the post-natal ward, ensuring they receive support.

Improving care over time



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

In 2024 we visited GP surgeries using our statutory power of Enter & View to review patient's experience of care delivery. We produced reports including recommendations such as improving the complaints procedures and access and quality improvements for patients with disabilities. These reports are available to the general public and were shared with GP providers to support service improvements.

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

How the cost of living has affected people's access to healthcare

Last year, we engaged with the community in Westminster and Kensington & Chelsea to explore how the rising cost of living has impacted their ability to access healthcare services.

A national report by Healthwatch England highlighted that financial barriers significantly hinder access to healthcare, particularly for the most vulnerable members of society.

What did we do?

We engaged with 281 residents across the bi-borough, through in person at GP surgeries and other public spaces. We promoted an online survey, in addition to focus groups supported by local community organisations including Age UK and Citizen's Advice.

Key things we heard:



44%

Of people reported that the cost of living had affected their health through avoiding dental treatment.

38%

stated that digital costs were a barrier to online healthcare access.

56%

Reported that the cost of living has affected their mental health.

Our work showed that locally people's ability to access healthcare has been impacted by the cost of living, including reduced access to routine dental appointments and basic treatment, and barriers to booking appointments and online healthcare due to associated costs.

What difference did this make?

The findings of the report were raised at the local Health and Wellbeing Board, and with the Local Dental Committee, who have taken on board the highlighted access issues and have shared resources with Healthwatch to support people to access dental care.

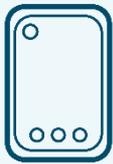
Listening to your experiences

Exploring patients and carers experiences with intermediate care services

Residents express that more is needed to overcome challenges to high quality intermediate care.

We collected the data by conducting interviews with 15 respondents, including patients and carers with experience of using step down care. Their experiences highlighted a need for improved communication between medical providers and carers to ensure that sufficient information is provided about what intermediate care services will entail.

Key things we heard:



60%

of respondents told us they felt they'd benefit from better involvement of patients and carers in the decision-making process.

40%

of respondents said they'd benefit from better staff training.



"The discharge process was very frustrating. I couldn't be discharged for an extra 10 days because of the confusion over who would take responsibility for my care."

We collaborated with Imperial's Networked Data Lab team to create a film that informs residents about intermediate care and their rights while also summarising the study findings. Residents are now more informed about the discharge intermediate procedure.

What difference did this make?

Our report supported the ongoing efforts of the NHS to improve intermediary care. Since the publication of the report, the key findings was published in a Health Foundation briefing and was shared widely through Health Foundation digital newsletters, social media, and direct stakeholder emails. Nearly 1,100 people have viewed the publication online.

Hearing from all communities

We're here for all residents of Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster. 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:

- Working with community organisations to create and deliver free tailored advice and signposting services (our Know Your Rights Programme)
- Engaging people in a variety of community and healthcare settings to make sure we reach people affected by socio-economic deprivation.
- Sharing our findings in reports and at forums and boards e.g. the Health and Wellbeing Board.



Working with digitally excluded communities in Westminster

We identified gaps in digital support accessing online healthcare services.

Residents expressed concerns about their lack of confidence in sharing data on the NHS app, their inability to adapt to new application modifications on the NHS app, and their lack of assistance for using new systems such as PATCHS.

What difference did this make?

We provided feedback at strategic meetings, including the Digital Partnership meetings, and our feedback helped shape the council's digital strategy and the support areas within the community, with a focus on assisting residents with language barriers, low confidence in data security, and NHS app training.

Working with community organisations in Kensington and Chelsea

In 2024-2025 Healthwatch Kensington and Chelsea has worked with a number of organisations to engage with people who face barriers to sharing their views on health and social care services.

We have worked collaboratively with organisations such as Equal People Mencap, the Pepper Pot Centre, Action Disability Kensington and Chelsea, The Dalgarno Trust and others to make sure everyone can be heard.

What difference did this make?

Through working with a range of organisations and producing translated and accessible versions of our surveys, we have engaged with residents from diverse backgrounds to ensure feedback collected is representative of the local community.

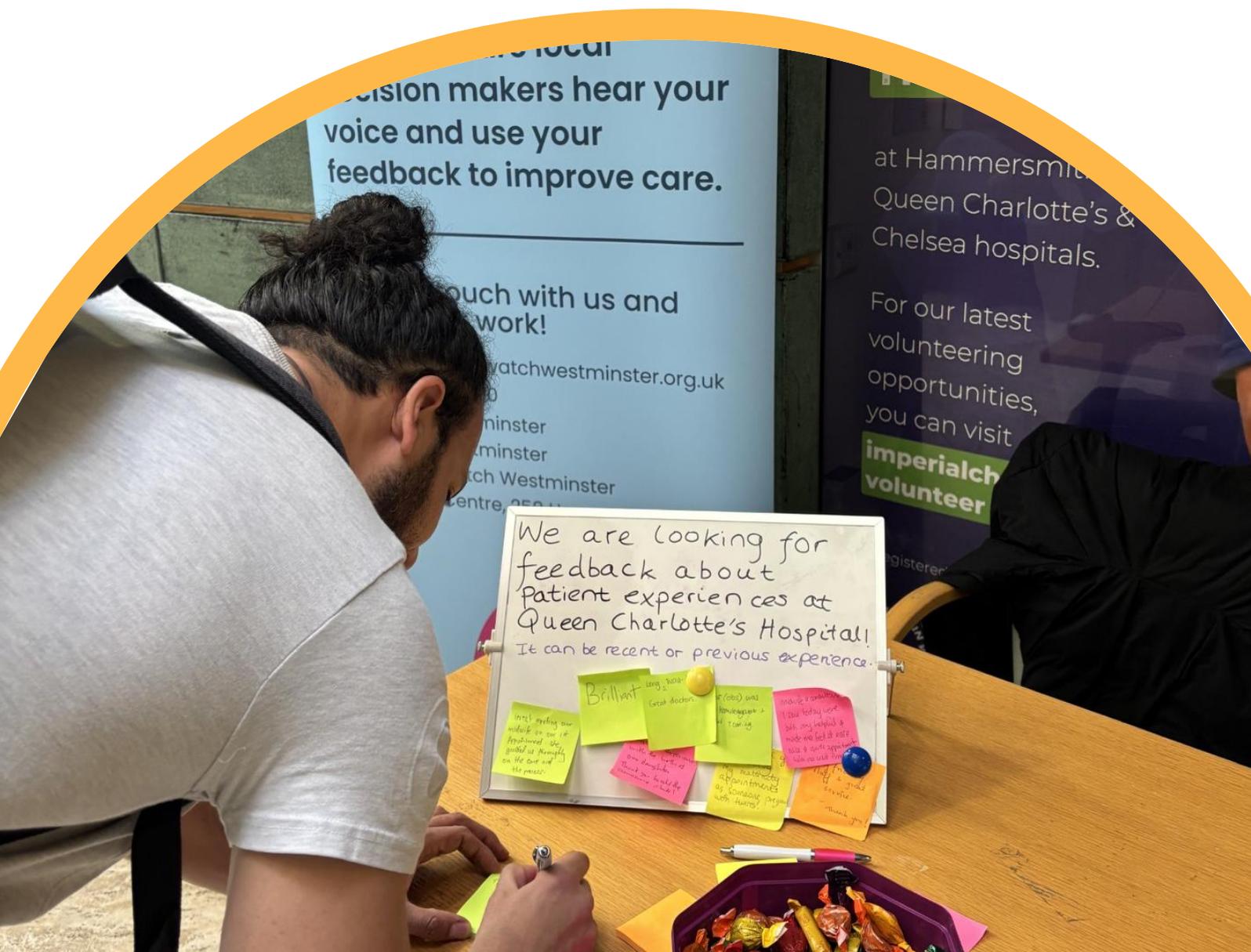
Developing positive relationships with organisations has provided a strong foundation for our Know Your Rights programme, new for 2025.

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 5888 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



Supporting residents in finding mental health support in Westminster

Thanks to Mr. Adeyemi's feedback, service providers are aware of the mental health impact on relatives who are carers.

We were contacted by Mr Adeyemi* because he wanted to find support to improve his mental health impacted by the day-to-day responsibilities of caring for his grandmother outside of the working hours of approved carers. In response, Healthwatch staff provided him with information about a range of local mental health resources in Westminster to help improve his mental health and self-management techniques.



“I'm grateful I could get the right support at the right time.”

Supporting access to medication through the emergency pharmacy service in RBKC

Amy, a Kensington and Chelsea resident, felt distressed that she couldn't access her medication as usual because of supply problems.

Amy's GP and pharmacy had been unable to supply the medication as it wasn't in stock. This caused Amy to feel significant distress, and she urgently needed assistance as she would be running out of her medication in a few days.

We spoke to Amy about the emergency pharmacy service and with her consent, we were able to contact the GP practice and speak to them about arranging a prescription through this service. By liaising with the GP and emergency pharmacy service, it was possible to identify a location where the medication would be available. Amy was able to access her medication without further delay.



Showcasing volunteer impact

Our fantastic volunteers have given their time 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
- Provided extensive feedback on project scope and engagement
- 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.

“My name is Jacqueline, and I’ve been volunteering with Healthwatch Kensington & Chelsea for over 10 years. I first got involved when I was caring for a dear friend who sadly passed away. After that experience, I felt a strong urge to give back and support others in my community, and that’s what led me to Healthwatch.

One of the things I enjoy most about volunteering with Healthwatch is taking part in the Enter and View visits. Over the years, I’ve had the opportunity to visit a number of care homes and GP surgeries, where we go in as part of Healthwatch’s statutory duty to speak to patients and residents. It’s such an important role because we get to hear directly from people using these services—understanding their experiences, their concerns, and their suggestions for improvement. We then feed this back to the practice managers who then make improvements based on our recommendations. Volunteering in this way has been a rewarding experience.”

Jacqueline



“My experience with Healthwatch Westminster has been enriching. Maria has been incredibly supportive, patient, and helpful with article writing.

I’ve enjoyed researching NHS initiatives like Stress Awareness Week, deepening my understanding of patient experience. I joined to learn its importance and how to contribute meaningfully. I’ve developed skills in writing advice articles, using the right tone and ensuring relevance and clarity.”

Parthi



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.healthwatchyourname.co.uk



0123 456 78



Email@email.com

Finance and future priorities

We receive funding from Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, and Westminster City Council Local Authorities under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to help us do our work.

Our income and expenditure:

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from Government	£300,543	Expenditure on pay	£194,232
Additional income	£3000	Non-pay expenditure	£27,246
		Office and management fee	£67,506
Total income	£303,543	Total Expenditure	£288,984

Additional income is broken down into:

- £1,000 received from Healthwatch England for work on a project
- £2,000 received from the local ICS for joint work on a project

Integrated Care System (ICS) funding:

Healthwatch across North West London 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
Engagement for Government 10 Year Health Plan	£2000

Finance and future priorities

Next steps:

Over the next year, we will keep reaching out to every part of society, especially people in the most deprived areas, so that those in power hear their views and experiences.

We will also work together with partners and our local Integrated Care System to help develop an NHS culture where, at every level, staff strive to listen and learn from patients to make care better.

Our top three priorities for the next year are:

1. Developing our two new core programmes.

Our Patient Experience Programme is delivered by trained volunteers in health settings, and aims to capture patients experiences of healthcare so that we can make recommendations to the people who pay for and provide healthcare services.

Our Know Your Rights Programme is delivered by Healthwatch Officers at community groups in partnership with local VCS organisations. We deliver advice, information and signposting sessions to support people to know their rights under the NHS constitution, how to access healthcare, and how to make a complaint and get advocacy support when things go wrong.

2. Young People's Mental Health:

Following our previous research on Young People's Mental Health, we plan to support wider efforts on action for young people's mental health. We will facilitate co-production sessions with young people to create information and signposting resources for young people to support awareness and access to mental health services.

3. Supporting public involvement in consultations:

North West London Integrated Care Board are currently making changes following consultation to how palliative care and secondary mental health services are delivered in Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea. We are dedicating time to provide independent scrutiny and ensure that public involvement is at the heart of any changes to services.

Statutory statements

**Healthwatch England, 2 Redman Place, Stratford, E20 1JQ
The Advocacy Project, Stowe Centre, 258 Harrow Road, London, W2 5ES**

Healthwatch Kensington & Chelsea and Healthwatch Westminster 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 Joint Advisory Board consists of 15 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 2024/25, the Board met 4 times and made decisions on matters such as approval of focused projects such the Cost of Living and Eyecare access. 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 services.

During 2024/25, we have been available by phone and email, provided a web form on our website and through social media, and attended meetings of community groups and forums.

We will 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. We will also promote in our newsletter, and provide hard copies upon request.

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 Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee, Health and Wellbeing Board and the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in the North West London Integrated Care System. For example, we attend the Bi-borough Place-Based Partnership meetings to share what we are hearing from residents on relevant topic areas. We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Kensington & Chelsea, and Healthwatch Westminster is represented on the Joint Health and Wellbeing Board by Gina Aston, Impact & Involvement Manager at The Advocacy Project.

During 2024/25, our previous representative effectively carried out this role by attending the board and raising concerns such as support for people who have a learning disability and also do not speak English.

Healthwatch Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster is represented on NWL Integrated Care Partnerships by Gina Aston.

Statutory statements

Enter and view

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
St Charles Hospital, Mental Health Unit	Second Enter & View visit following initial visit and recommendations.	Report due to be published in July.
Chelsea & Westminster Hospital, Eye Clinic; Plastic Clinic; 2 x General Clinic waiting area	Opportunity to scrutinise care to improve experiences of waiting at the hospital.	Recommendations made regarding in, signage improvements, accessibility improvements and appointment letters.
Ellesmere House Care Home	Part of a series of reviews of local care homes.	Report due to be published July.
Loveday Kensington	Part of a series of reviews of local care homes.	Report due to be published in July.

Statutory statements

2024 – 2025 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
Parliamentary Health Service Ombudsman event	Engagement event, with POhWER and PHSO to share information regarding improving knowledge around complaints escalation, and enhancing support within local community.
NHS Ten Year Plan engagement events	Engagement events with Kensington & Chelsea, Westminster and Brent Healthwatch to gather community feedback to contribute to the development of the Ten Year Health Plan.
Primary Mental Healthcare Co-production session	Joined by representatives from the Marylebone Project, Turning Point, CNWL NHS Trust Adult Mental Health Service, to disseminate the findings from the report and to discuss ways to improve access to primary care support for people experiencing homelessness.
Community Defined Outcomes Framework;	Partnership work with WCC and RBKC local authorities, Kensington and Chelsea Social Council, and NWL ICB to develop a co-produced framework with residents for measuring progress of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment	Participating in working group, advocating for public involvement and disseminating the consultation.
Health and Wellbeing Board Updates	Updates to the board including PNA

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