



Speaking up for better care

Healthwatch Wolverhampton
Annual Report 2025/26

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Healthwatch England
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 Co-Chairs

The health and care landscape is changing rapidly. The proposed NHS Modernisation Bill highlights the scale of change taking place across the system and the evolving arrangements for patient and public involvement. Keeping up-to-date with these developments and ensuring that local people remain included in decisions that affect their health and wellbeing is more important than ever.

I would like to congratulate and sincerely thank our dedicated volunteers for their commitment, passion, and ongoing support throughout the year. Their willingness to give their time, attend events, engage with local communities, and participate in Enter and View visits has been invaluable. Through their efforts, we have been able to gather important feedback, better understand the experiences and needs of local people, and ensure that community voices continue to inform and influence health and care services. Their contribution is at the heart of everything we do, and we are extremely grateful for their dedication.



Healthwatch
Wolverhampton
Co-Chair
Suffia Perveen



Healthwatch
Wolverhampton
Co-Chair
Mandy Poonia



“Healthwatch Wolverhampton has continued to deliver value over the last year – giving people a voice, supporting them to access services, and working strategically to influence positive change. However, the changes ahead bring uncertainty. It is essential that whatever replaces or sits alongside the current model ensures the patient voice remains strong, independent, and influential. Our work has shown time and again: when we listen to communities, services improve; when we stop listening, people suffer.”

About us

Healthwatch Wolverhampton is your local independent 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

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.

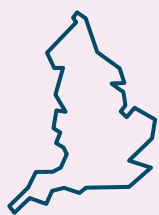
Impact. We're ambitious about creating change for people and communities. We're accountable to those we serve and hold others to account.

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 **4,430 people** to have their say and get information about their care. We employed **4 staff (2.8 FTE)** and our work was supported by **38 volunteers**.



Reaching out

2,607 people shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.

1,828 people came to us for clear advice and information on topics such as finding an NHS dentist and mental health advice.



Championing your voice

We published **6** reports about the improvements people would like to see in areas like pharmacy, adults social care, mental health and NHS access for those with sensory needs.

Our most popular report was *[People's experiences of mental health services in Wolverhampton](#)*, which highlighted the struggles in accessing help and support.



Statutory funding

We're funded by the City of Wolverhampton Council.

In 2025/26 we received **£152,100**.

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 across Dorset. Here are a few highlights.

Spring

We hosted an Ageing Well festival for over 120 residents, bringing vital information and a health screening opportunity for older adults in Wolverhampton.



We have promoted dementia awareness in targeted communities through partnerships with the African Caribbean Community Initiative and Dementia Action Alliance.

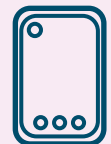


Summer

We helped develop a new specification to improve interpretation and translation services across the Black Country, ensuring they better meet language and communication needs.



We trained volunteers to use the NHS App, plus interview skills, so they could discuss audiology needs with care homes and support community use of the App.



Autumn

By listening to care home residents, we identified their audiology needs, with our report now informing improvements by the ICB and Health Overview and Scrutiny.



Our promotion of the NHS App at New Cross Hospital found high satisfaction with staff and care at the Heart & Lung Centre but more mixed experiences in other departments.



Winter

We engaged with members of the South Asian communities on a local radio station and addressed their healthcare concerns.



Our insight is shaping the West Midlands Combined Authority's work to ensure AI meets public needs and improves health and wellbeing.



Working together for change

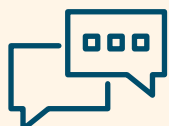
We've worked with neighbouring Healthwatch to ensure people's experiences of care across the Black Country are heard and able to influence decisions made about services at ICB level.

This year, we've worked with stakeholders, the voluntary sector and service providers across the Black Country to achieve the following:



A collaborative approach to ageing well

We led the formation of a partnership event to celebrate the contributions of older adults while showcasing services that support healthy ageing. The event provided a platform for older residents to share their experiences, engage in preventative health activities, and help shape local JSNA Healthy Ageing priorities. For example, reducing falls, tackling isolation, and supporting dementia-friendly communities.



A big conversation

From 2027, NHS England will introduce NHS Online, a virtual hospital model integrated into the NHS App, offering optional digital referrals to national specialist teams for certain long-term conditions. We enabled residents to contribute directly to the consultation, highlighting critical gaps in the proposals and raising concerns about the risk of widening inequalities for already disadvantaged communities.



Building strong relationships to achieve more

We partnered with Wolverhampton Safeguarding Together to help shape support for hoarding, leading to a multi-agency Wolverhampton Hoarding Improvement Programme symposia and a new Healthwatch volunteer-led Psychosocial Intervention & Peer Support Group launching later this year.

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

Making a difference in the community

We bring people's experiences to healthcare professionals and decision-makers, using their feedback to shape services and improve care over time. Here are some examples of our work in Wolverhampton this year.



Creating empathy through lived experiences

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

Patient engagement with Wolverhampton University has successfully integrated patient feedback and lived experiences into an updated BSc nursing curriculum. The programme now looks beyond clinical skills to focus on the human story behind care, by addressing real-world challenges shared by migrants and chronic illness patients – such as language barriers, isolation, and cultural misunderstandings. Future nurses will receive specific training in communication, cultural competence, and person-centred care to ensure more respectful and deeply empathetic patient outcomes.



Getting services to involve the public

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

Through workshops with Macmillan in Walsall and Wolverhampton, volunteers and community representatives shared insights on the challenges and priorities of people living with cancer. This collaboration successfully identified key complex issues and increased local motivation to work together to address them. This work is ongoing.



Improving care over time

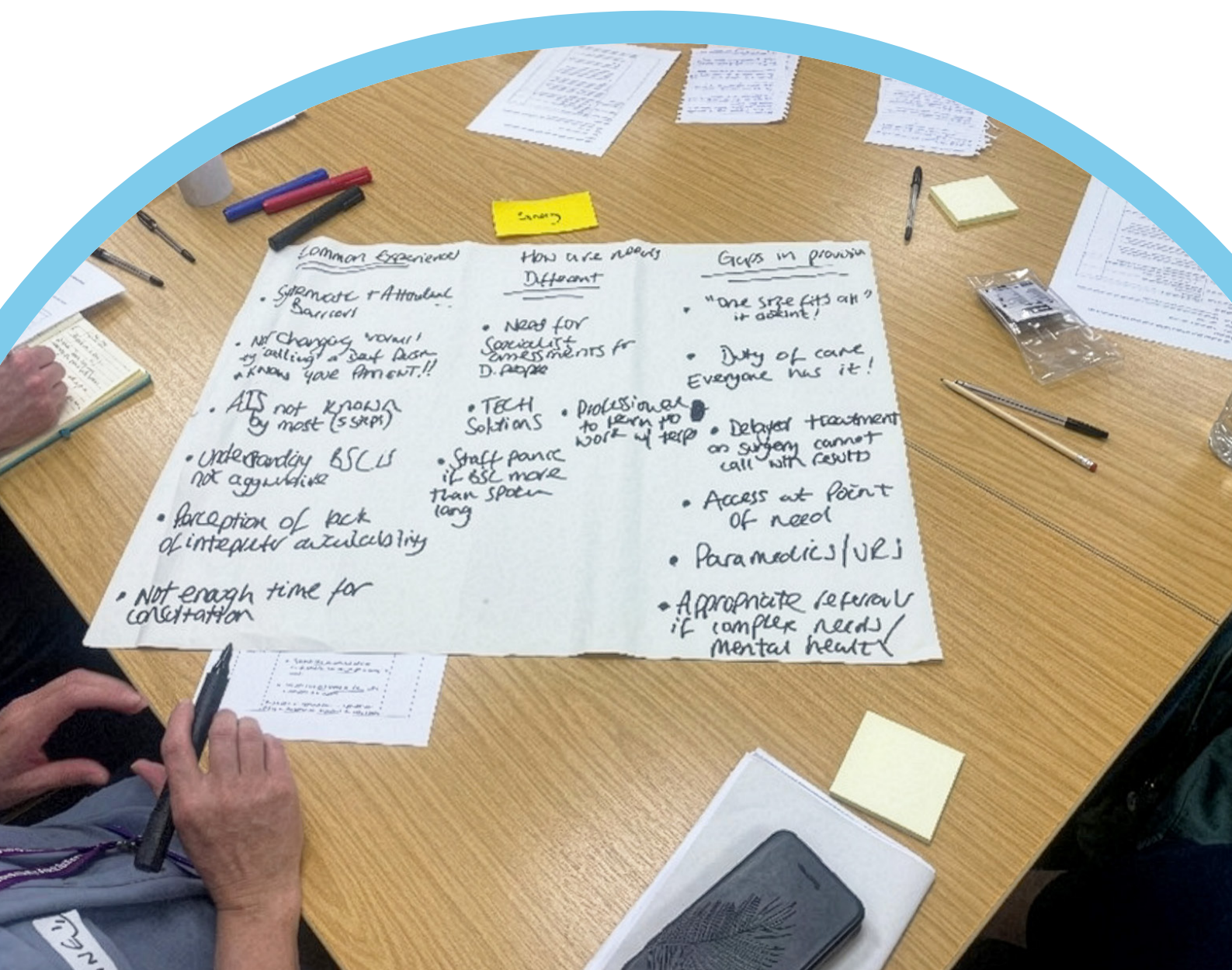
Change takes time. We work behind the scenes with services to consistently raise issues and bring about change.

Work we began in 2023 with the local Autism Board is progressing well towards a new all-age strategy from July 2026, strengthened by co-production with autistic people and focused on improving identification, assessment and early support. We will continue to monitor the deliverables.

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.



Improving communication for Deaf and Hard of Hearing people in hospitals

We highlighted that Deaf and Hard of Hearing people continue to face significant communication barriers in hospitals and primary care settings.

Our team also collaborated with the ICB commissioning group to help define requirements that the new interpreting service provider should meet.

What we did

We gathered feedback from members of the Deaf community to amplify their voices. We also collected feedback at community events and professional meetings, and we created an online survey to better understand people's experiences.

Key things we heard



84%

want more tailored communication approaches to better support Deaf and Hard of Hearing patients across all hospital services.

89%

told us there is not enough accessible and inclusive information provided to Deaf and Hard of Hearing patients.

70%

said there is an apparent lack of Deaf awareness and training among NHS hospital staff.

Our work shows that without tailored communication methods, accessible information and interpreters available at appointments, communities can be left unable to access basic healthcare, further worsening health inequalities.

What difference did this make?

We shared our report, [*Unheard and underserved: Improving communication for Deaf and Hard of Hearing people in hospitals*](#) with NHS Royal Wolverhampton Trust who responded: *"The Trust will look to work with yourselves on the best course of action to assist in resolving/mitigating these issues for our Deaf community."*

Improving Adult Social Care in Wolverhampton

We have heard from local people experiencing difficulties accessing Adult Social Care services, including challenges finding information and communication barriers.

To better understand these issues, we conducted one-to-one interviews to capture residents' experiences and developed an online survey, also available in paper format, to gather wider feedback.

Key things we heard



- Some people said they experienced difficulties with communication when trying to access Adult Social Care services.
- People reported struggling to access online information and getting information in person.
- Many of the people we spoke to live alone, rely on another person or have limited contact with others.



“There was a lack of communication from the council, and I didn't receive many updates regarding the home adaptations I needed. I attempted to look elsewhere for support, but looking by myself was difficult.”

What difference did this make?

Following our report, [*Through the eyes of the service user. Improving Adult Social Care in Wolverhampton*](#) we worked with local providers, including the local authority and One Wolverhampton, to host an Adult Social Care awareness event, with signposting to information and resources and addressing people's concerns about accessibility.

The public who attended the event expressed feeling more confident about finding the essential information and resources they need. As a result, there is enthusiasm amongst our collaborators and Public Health teams to host further awareness events throughout Wolverhampton.

Hearing from all communities

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

Every member of the community should have the chance to share their story and play a part in shaping services to meet their needs.

This year, we have reached different communities by:

- Partnering with organisations active in equality and inclusion, such as the Ethnic Minority Council and the Global Diabetes Initiative.
- Listening to people experiencing homelessness and those who support them.
- Ensuring that our communication methods remains varied and inclusive.
- Diversifying our volunteer bank so they can reach a wider group of people.



Improving understanding audiology services in care homes

We were asked by the City of Wolverhampton Council Health Scrutiny Panel to survey care home managers on the state of audiology care for residents.

Our report highlights gaps in access to community audiology services, a reliance on the private sector, and the need for routine audiology care in these settings.

“It is sometimes difficult for our residents to access community services, usually due to a change in their environment, dementia, a lack of capacity, and a lack of support from families.” Care Home Manager

What difference did this make?

The Health Scrutiny Panel approved the recommendations in our report, [*Hearing lost: The challenge of audiology care for care home residents*](#), and The ICB will review our findings.

Engaging with people experiencing homelessness

Since 2025, we’ve been speaking to people experiencing homelessness, people who are vulnerably housed and the people and groups who support them.

The primary barriers facing homeless and vulnerably housed individuals when accessing health and social care in Wolverhampton include a lack of fixed administrative details, systemic digital exclusion, rigid appointment structures, and pervasive institutional stigma. We continue to raise concerns that these barriers often force vulnerable individuals into escalating health crises.

“I never feel prioritised when I visit the hospital. I feel staff are dismissive of me when they find out I’m homeless.” Service user

What difference did this make?

We regularly share our findings with service providers, and continue to work with those individuals who shared their stories to raise awareness and challenge systemic barriers to access care.

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 over **1,828** people 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 have 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.



Patient feedback is driving meaningful change across the system

Thanks to patient feedback about issues such as poor communication and a lack of person-centred care, a broad range of statutory and non-statutory organisations have been made aware of the urgent need for change.

Carefully selected and anonymised data is now being used in university teaching, while desktop research has also been shared with the Integrated Neighbourhood Team to support engagement and improvement. One patient was willing to speak directly to students, which powerfully highlighted why this work matters (see cover photo):

“Hearing from students directly and seeing them visibly moved by why good patient care matters was well worth the effort. It is important to patients that their feedback is used in many different ways to improve care.” Marie

“

Thank you for the valuable contribution made to the development and review of our undergraduate nursing curriculum, including the BSc Nursing and Nursing Associate programmes. Your insights have been greatly appreciated and informed for meaningful curriculum development.”

Dr Juliet Drummond, Head of Nursing

Improving care for people through a Patient Participation Group (PPG)

PPGs are an important way for patients, carers and GP surgery staff to meet to discuss local practice issues and patient experience to improve the service.

However, we have been hearing that many PPGs are not working to best practice. Through our signposting service we focused on supporting one of these groups in Wolverhampton that had the willingness and cooperation of their Chair and practice to improve.

We supported them by providing guidance and connecting them with a senior ICB team, who also offered additional resources and support. The outcome was that since our involvement over 300 patients responded to an offer to join the PPG and the first meeting will be held soon.

“

I was really pleased with how Healthwatch responded and engaged with my practice. Without Healthwatch’s intervention the practice would not have been held accountable.”

Service user

Showcasing volunteer impact

Our **38 volunteers** have given **378 hours** to support our work this year. Thanks to their dedication to improving care, we can better understand what is working and what needs improving in our community.

This year, our volunteers:

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



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.



Manaz

“Volunteering with Healthwatch Wolverhampton has been a truly valuable experience for me. Through visiting healthcare services, care homes, and community settings across Wolverhampton, I gained a deeper understanding of the diverse health and social care needs within the city.”

“One of the most meaningful parts of this experience was working within such a multicultural community and hearing people’s different experiences and perspectives. It showed me how important listening, inclusion, and culturally sensitive care is in improving health and wellbeing. This experience strengthened my passion for public health and community wellbeing.””

“Volunteering with HWW has been a rewarding and enriching experience. It has provided a valuable platform to apply my medical and public health knowledge in practice. I have been fortunate to take part in training sessions, PLACE assessments, focus groups, and community activities including work at Newcross Hospital, the Beacon Centre, the Cancer Bus, and the Ageing Well Festival.”

“This journey has strengthened my passion for health promotion while developing my skills. I am grateful to be part of such a supportive and dedicated team, whose commitment is truly inspiring. Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the community.””



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Be part of change

If you’ve felt inspired by these stories, contact us today and find out how you can be part of the change.



healthwatchwolverhampton.co.uk



0800 246 5018



andrea.cantrill@healthwatchwolverhampton.co.uk

Finance and future priorities

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

Our income and expenditure

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from City of Wolverhampton Council	£152,100	Expenditure on pay	£89,528
Additional income	£810	Non-pay expenditure	£14,719
		Office and management fee	£45,632
Total income	£152,910	Total expenditure	£149,879

Additional income

- £375 received from Black Country ICB for translation services.
- £435 received from Black Country ICB for childhood obesity project support.

Planned priorities for 2026/27

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 and social care culture where, at every level, staff strive to listen and learn from patients to make care better.

Our top three priorities next year are:

1. Patient experience of GP access and appointments.
2. Strengthening Adult Social Care insight and engaging on the effectiveness of Integrated Neighbourhood Team implementation.
3. Our future healthcare. Proposals to abolish Healthwatch presents a risk to the protection of an independent voice and feedback system. This project enables the voices of all parts of society to live long through creation of legacy artwork.

Statutory statements

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

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

Healthwatch Wolverhampton uses the Healthwatch Trademark when undertaking our statutory activities as covered by the licence agreement.

The way we work

Involvement of volunteers and lay people in our governance and decision-making

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

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

Throughout 2025/26, the Oversight Group met four times and made decisions on matters such as deciding on our annual priorities and meeting format. 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 2025/26, we have been available by phone and email, provided a web form on our website, maintained our social media presence, and attended meetings of community groups and forums.

We ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. We will publish it on our website, announce it via our news channels and share it at our statutory board membership meetings, as well as community engagement events.

Statutory statements

Responses to recommendations

We had one provider who did not respond to our requests for information or recommendations. There were no issues or recommendations escalated by us to the Healthwatch England Committee, so there were no resulting reviews or investigations.

Taking people's experiences to decision-makers

We ensure that people who can make decisions about services hear about the insights and experiences shared with us.

For example, in our local authority area, we take information to the Health Scrutiny Panel, Health and Wellbeing Board, the Wolverhampton Safeguarding Together Partnership, Dementia Action Alliance, One Wolverhampton and CQC quality information sharing meetings. We also have representation on various public health and mental health trust working groups.

We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in Black Country and Solihull Integrated Care Board (ICB).

We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

Healthwatch representatives

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

During 2025/26, our representative has effectively carried out this role by attending meetings and sharing the views and experiences of people with the Board.

We have had a number of proposals approved for further discussions at Health Scrutiny Panel approved and presented two reports.

Healthwatch Wolverhampton is represented on One Wolverhampton Placed Based Partnership (PBP) Board by Stacey Lewis, Healthwatch Wolverhampton Manager.

Statutory statements

Enter and View

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
The Leylands Residential Care Home	Feedback received around concerns and deterioration in standards.	Wrote a report with recommendations. The provider did not respond. We continue to work with CQC and the local authority quality team to follow up on monitoring and improvements.
Rowlands Pharmacy, New Cross Hospital	Intelligence received around inconvenient opening times, parking charges and people having to make a second journey to collect medications.	Wrote a report with recommendations. The provider produced a detailed action plan to these with some immediate and positive changes.
Tudor Medical Centre	Patients raised concerns around patient participation meetings.	Wrote a report with recommendations. The service followed up on these, and patient involvement improved.




“As a business we value feedback from all sources and have been actioning changes in the background because of your report.” Andrew Noble, Regional Manager, Rowlands Pharmacy

2025/26 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
Unheard and underserved: Improving communication for Deaf and Hard of Hearing people in hospitals	Continuing the work to address access needs for those with sensory loss and championing their voices of lived experience to improve services.
Through the eyes of the service user: Improving Adult Social Care in Wolverhampton	Ensuring a positive and joined up experience for those receiving adult social care by working with partners implementing integrated neighbourhood care. We are confident our recommendations will be taken forward by Adult Social Care teams.
Hearing lost: The challenge of audiology care for care home residents	Tackling health inequalities further by reaching areas of the community we don't currently hear from. This fact finding work gave the Health Scrutiny Panel an insight into local service gaps.

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