



Together

we're making health
and social care better

Annual Report 2022–23

healthwatch
Wolverhampton

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In the last ten years, the health and social care landscape has changed dramatically, but the dedication of local Healthwatch hasn't. Your local Healthwatch has worked tirelessly to make sure the views of local people are heard, and NHS and social care leaders use your feedback to make care better.

Louise Ansari, Healthwatch National Director

Message from our Manager

I'm pleased to introduce the Healthwatch Wolverhampton 2022-23 annual report and to share with you the achievements and progress made during the past year. It has been a year of change; for us as we established a new team and new offices, and for health and care services as the new Black Country Integrated Care System (ICS) came into power.

We have worked hard to raise awareness of our work and to champion the views of local people. We engaged with our diverse communities, including LGBTQ+ individuals, people who are visually impaired, people with autism, different ethnic communities, people who are homeless, young people, and older people living in care homes.

We have also provided valuable advice and information, helping people navigate the complexities of the healthcare system and access the services and support they need, including GP care, mental health support, and NHS dental care.

We strengthened our relationships with health and care organisations and partners, including the ICS, sharing people's feedback, and working together to improve services for local people and to reduce health inequalities.

Our efforts have resulted in the publication of four reports on improvements needed in local services, with a particular focus on access to GP services and enhancing the quality of care in residential homes. We have also contributed to national campaigns on maternity care and accessible information, through our partnership with Healthwatch England.

As we look forward to another productive year, I want to acknowledge the outstanding contributions of our dedicated staff, and our volunteers who have selflessly given their time to make care better for our community.



Stacey Lewis
Healthwatch
Wolverhampton Manager



I want to express my gratitude to everyone who has supported our work; your continued engagement and collaboration are vital as we strive to create a healthier future for our community.

About us

Healthwatch Wolverhampton is your local health and social care champion.

We are part of a network of over 150 local Healthwatch across England. We make sure NHS leaders and decision makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care. We can also help you to find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.



Our vision

A world where we can all get the health and care we need.



Our mission

To make sure people's experiences help make health and care better.

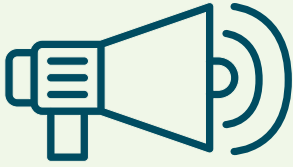


Our values are:

- **Listening** to people and making sure their voices are heard.
- **Including** everyone in the conversation – especially those who don't always have their voice heard.
- **Analysing** different people's experiences to learn how to improve care.
- **Acting** on feedback and driving change.
- **Partnering** with care providers, Government, and the voluntary sector – serving as the public's independent advocate.

Year in review

Reaching out



242 people

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

2,262 people

came to us for clear advice and information about topics such as mental health and the cost of living crisis.

Making a difference to care

We published

4 reports about the improvements people would like to see to health and social care services. We also supported Healthwatch England campaigns leading to

2 national reports on maternity care and accessible information.

Our most popular report was

Accessing GP care in Wolverhampton

which highlighted where improvements are required to GP phone appointment booking systems.



Health and care that works for you



We're lucky to have

16 outstanding volunteers who gave up

33 days to make care better for our community.

We're funded by our local authority. In 2022-23 we received

£169,000

We currently employ

1 full-time and 3 part-time staff

who help us carry out our work.

How we've made a difference this year

Spring



Healthwatch Wolverhampton joined forces with Evolving Communities CIC and we reinvigorated our work in the city, connecting with our communities and our health and care partners.



We called all GP practices in Wolverhampton to see if they had made improvements to their phone systems to help people access care more easily.

Summer



As the new Black Country ICS began work, so did our new team – sharing people's feedback, championing equality and inclusion, and creating a true partnership between services and the public to help make care better.



Earlier in the year, we asked local people to share feedback about the accessibility of healthcare information; Healthwatch England published findings to help NHS and social care decision makers understand where improvements are needed.

Autumn



We were out and about in the city, helping people to find local services and to have their say, including our ethnically diverse communities, people who are visually impaired, young people, and people who are homeless.



We conducted the third in our series of investigations to evaluate patient experience when booking GP appointments by phone and how this has changed over time; finding further improvements are needed.

Winter



We highlighted how the rising cost of living is affecting people's health and wellbeing. This informed a student awareness campaign at the University of Wolverhampton.



As part of our Enter and View programme, we visited two local care homes and spoke to residents, families, and carers to evaluate the quality of care and the environment.

10 years of improving care

This year marks a special milestone for Healthwatch. Over the last ten years, people have shared their experiences, good and bad, to help improve health and social care. A big thank you to all our Healthwatch Heroes who have stepped up and inspired change. Here are a few of our highlights:

How have we made care better, together?

Access to primary care and digital exclusion

Our research championed the views and needs of people who were likely to be digitally excluded when accessing primary care during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Black Country children and young people's mental health services

Working as part of the Black Country Healthwatch partnership, we investigated children's experiences of mental healthcare to inform the look and feel of services.



Urgent care at New Cross Hospital

We carried out an evaluation of patient experience at the urgent care centre to inform improvements in service delivery of patient care.



Social isolation and loneliness in Wolverhampton

By listening to people who were confined at home, including new mothers and older people, we were able to identify their needs and how services could develop to better support them.



Accessing dental care in Wolverhampton

We asked local residents about the issues and challenges they faced finding and using NHS dentists in Wolverhampton to raise awareness and understanding of their concerns.



Healthwatch Hero



Celebrating a hero in our local community

Olivia Simpson, the health check practitioner at the University of Wolverhampton, is our Healthwatch Hero. She gives us regular feedback, always follow things up, and works with us to ensure that students have access to good healthcare information and advice.

We have worked closely with Olivia this year on problems students have faced with accessing GP healthcare such as rude receptionists, lack of access and negligence in care. Following feedback, we arranged a meeting with Olivia and the Primary Care Commissioning Manager for Wolverhampton. This led to meetings with the practice manager at a GP surgery resulting in no further negative feedback to date.

Thanks to Olivia and everyone who shares their feedback with us to help make care better.



Listening to your experiences

Services can't make improvements without hearing your views. That's why over the last year we have made listening to feedback from all areas of the community a priority. This allows us to understand the full picture, and feed this back to services to help them improve.

Improving access to GP services

NHS England directed £250 million to help GP practices increase appointments offered by March 2022, but difficulty accessing appointments continues to be a widespread issue.

Since December 2021, we have been carrying out a series of investigations, independently on behalf of Wolverhampton's Health Scrutiny Panel (HSP), to help improve access to GP care. We have been monitoring how easily people can access GP services over the phone and evaluating whether patient access and experience has improved or worsened over time.

This year, we carried out research on two occasions, six months apart, in spring and winter 2022. We called all GPs in the city, asked them a series of questions, reported on changes, and made recommendations for further improvement.

Our recommendations focused around:

- How quickly phones are answered
- Number of staff available at busy times to cover calls
- Number of GP practices providing an effective call waiting system
- Quality of answer phone messages
- Quality of information and advice given by practice staff
- The availability of different type of appointments.

What difference will this make?

We presented our reports to Wolverhampton's Health Scrutiny Panel, and shared data about GP practices with each Primary Care Network to help them improve patient experiences.



The Black Country Integrated Care Board (ICB) attended the Health Scrutiny Panel meeting and presented a report on access to GP services, including actions it is taking with GP practices to improve telephone and digital access for patients. The Health Scrutiny Panel will look again at access to GP services during 2023 and the ICB will work with Healthwatch to support development and implementation of a further survey if that is requested.

Paul Tulley, Wolverhampton Managing Director, Black Country ICB

Improving the quality of care homes

One of the ways we meet our statutory responsibilities is by using our legal powers to Enter and View publicly funded health and social care services, to see them in action and speak to people about their experience of using the service.

As part of our partnership working with City of Wolverhampton Council and the Care Quality Commission (CQC), we carry out these visits to support quality monitoring of residential care homes in the city.

In February 2023, we visited two care homes in Wolverhampton, to speak to residents, family, carers, and staff. We observed the standard of care provided, the environment and facilities, activities for residents, and interactions and communications.

We collected evidence of what works well and where changes are needed, and we produced reports to share people's views and examples of good practice, as well as recommendations for improvement.

Our recommendations:

We made six recommendations to inform improvements at Anville View Care Home, around facilities, and residents' activities and engagement at the home and in the community.

““ The home has helped me regain strength to become independent.
He needs to be with more people, not surrounded by walls and a TV.

We made seven recommendations to inform improvements at Penn Care Home, including changes to ensure appropriate care for residents with complex needs including dementia, improvements to facilities, patient safety, resident activities and engagement.

““ I enjoy being here, it feels like a family.

What difference will this make?

““ CQC takes into account the valuable insight Healthwatch Wolverhampton shares with us on local services. We use this insight to corroborate the evidence gathered as part of our regulatory work. The unique patient experiences collected by Healthwatch Wolverhampton support CQC to hear from people at the point at which they are using services and help us to assess what is working well for people and what could be improved.

CQC Inspection Team

Three ways we have made a difference for the community

Throughout our work we gather information about health inequalities by speaking to people whose experiences aren't often heard.

Creating empathy by bringing experiences to life



It's important for services to see the bigger picture. Hearing personal experiences and the impact on people's lives provides them with a better understanding of the problems.

Patients are encouraged to use online services to access GP care, but digital services can create barriers. Mr H, whose first language is not English, tried to book an appointment in person, but he was told to book by phone. He felt too upset and ashamed to say he didn't understand. We shared his feedback with the One Wolverhampton Health Inequality Lead and the ICB to advocate for change.

Getting services to involve the public



Services need to understand the benefits of involving local people to help improve care for everyone.

We heard that the Patient Participation Group (PPG) in Wolverhampton Primary Care Network has not been as effective as it should be. This feedback was gathered at ICB People Panel events, PPG meetings, and through phone calls. We raised people's concerns with One Wolverhampton Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) and ICB, which led to training for practice managers and patients to support better PPGs.

Improving care over time



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

We work with various steering groups to improve care. For example, we asked for the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment to improve adult mental health support; we're bringing patient voice to the city's autism strategy; and we're ensuring safe and dignified care in our hospitals by working with the Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust and the Maternity Voices Partnership. We've also informed the ICB's Healthier Future Strategy.



Hearing from all communities

Over the past year we have worked hard to make sure we hear from everyone within our local area. We consider it important to reach out to the communities we hear from less frequently, to gather their feedback and make sure their voice is heard and services meet their needs.

This year we have reached different communities by:

- Running focus groups with people who are blind or visually impaired.
- Working with our minority ethnic communities.
- Engaging with our LGBTQ+ community.
- Connecting with people experiencing homelessness.
- Attending university events to meet and listen to young people.

Listening to our LGBTQ+ community

We want to understand the health and social care experiences of our LGBTQ+ community, so we spoke to people at Rainbow Oasis, a social community group. Difficulty getting a GP appointment was the most common issue raised. We told the group that concern around accessing GP services is a recurring problem for local people and explained our ongoing investigation to monitor the situation and influence positive change.

By attending the Rainbow Oasis group we were able to raise awareness among the LGBTQ+ community of our work and the support we provide. We extended this further by attending Wolverhampton Pride in June 2023, where we engaged with people from across our vibrant community.



Macular Society and Visual Impairment (VI) Forum

We gathered valuable insight from members of our community who are visually impaired, by attending the Macular Society and the Sight Loss Council's VI Forum.

At the Macular Society, we heard feedback about the eye infirmary at New Cross Hospital and the need for staff training around giving instruction and support to people who are visually impaired. For example, staff should not tell patients to 'sit on the green chair over there', or say 'follow me', but they should provide appropriate support to direct people who need assistance, for example by using volunteers. Difficulty getting NHS dental care and the cost of private dentistry was also raised by everyone in the group.

As the Sight Loss Council's forum, the main themes we identified from people's feedback were around the lack of accessible services, negligence in care, and people not feeling heard. We were delighted to attend this event and to be part of a community committed to improving health and social care services for people with visual impairments and their families.



Advice and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch Wolverhampton is here for you. In times of worry or stress, we can provide confidential support and free information to help you understand your options and get the help you need. Whether it's finding an NHS dentist, how to make a complaint or choosing a good care home for a loved one – you can count on us.

This year we've helped people by:

- Providing up-to-date information people can trust.
- Helping people access the services they need, including GP care and NHS dentistry.
- Listening to people's concerns and sharing their feedback with system partners and decision makers.
- Supporting people to look after their health during the cost of living crisis.

Supporting students during the cost of living crisis

We attended several open days and events at the University of Wolverhampton. We provided students with advice about how to look after their mental health, and shared information about mental health services and support groups in the city. We worked with health and social care students supporting them to share resources with other students about how to keep well during the cost of living crisis, and we took part in a university radio programme on the topic, along with local mental health organisations.

Guiding a family to the right mental health support

We were contacted by parents who were concerned about their son's deteriorating mental health. He had become very low, angry, and intimidating; he wasn't leaving his bedroom or eating, and the family were struggling to communicate with him. They were distressed and wanted to know what they could do to help their son.

We advised them to book an appointment with their son's GP as soon as possible, and suggested they contact Base 25, a local mental health support service for further specialist guidance. We also told them about St George's Hub, which is a safe space for men to get help with their mental health problems and to improve their self-esteem and confidence.

The family came to us because they had no idea how to deal with their son's mental health or where to turn for help, and we were able to guide them to the right support.



Healthwatch Wolverhampton is commissioned by City of Wolverhampton Council. The aim of Healthwatch is to give individuals and communities a stronger voice to influence and challenge how health and social care services are provided within the locality to meet need more effectively and to reduce health and social care inequalities. Healthwatch also provide signposting and information to help support local people to make informed decisions around health and social care services.

**Shen Campbell, Commissioning Officer (Adults),
City of Wolverhampton Council**



Volunteering

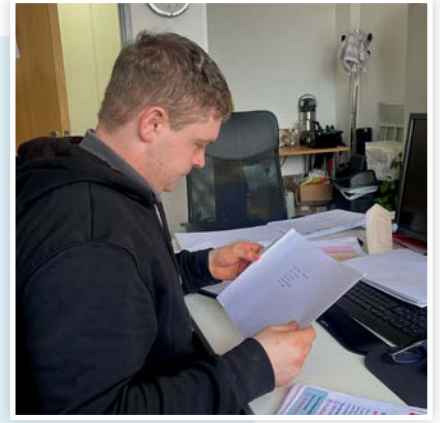
We're supported by a team of amazing volunteers who are at the heart of what we do. Thanks to their efforts in the community, we're able to understand what is working and what needs improving.

This year our volunteers:

- Collected feedback, supporting local people to share their experiences and views.
- Conducted Enter and View visits to local services to help them improve.
- Visited communities to promote Healthwatch Wolverhampton and what we offer.
- Reviewed GP phone systems to evaluate access to appointments.

Dan

"It's not just a voluntary role, it's what you do to support and empower the community. From ensuring that everyone's views are heard, to engaging with health and social care providers... and that's why I enjoy volunteering at Healthwatch and within my local community!"



Claire

"As a volunteer I have had the privilege of completing Enter and View training to enable me to visit care homes and engage with vulnerable people to ensure they are safe and well cared for. Volunteering for Healthwatch has taught me a number of skills and values which I am now able to take into the workplace."



George

"In the midst of a barrage of setbacks bedevilling the UK health sector, it has been an exciting experience to be part of the people's voice to policy makers. I'm excited about the opportunities Healthwatch has offered me to be the people's voice, rather than complaining. My fulfilment has been seeing people helped against prostate cancer – signposting men in need to available prostate cancer solutions through Healthwatch events simplifies my work as a prostate cancer champion."



Do you feel inspired?

We are always on the lookout for new volunteers, so please get in touch today.



healthwatchwolverhampton.co.uk



0800 246 5018



info@healthwatchwolverhampton.co.uk

Finance and future priorities

To help us carry out our work we receive funding from our local authority under the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

Our income and expenditure

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from local authority	£169,000	Expenditure on pay	£83,093
Additional income	£1,200	Non-pay expenditure	£38,990
		Office and management fee	£39,544
Total income	£170,200	Total expenditure	£161,627

Additional funding is broken down by:

- **£1,200** from CQC to support work on Board member recruitment and development.

Next steps

In the ten years since Healthwatch was launched, we've demonstrated the power of public feedback in helping the health and care system understand what is working, spot issues and think about how things can be better in the future.

Services are currently facing unprecedented challenges and tackling the backlog needs to be a key priority for the NHS to ensure everyone gets the care they need. Over the next year we will continue our role in collecting feedback from everyone in our local community and giving them a voice to help shape improvements to services.

We will also continue our work to tackle inequalities and work to reduce the barriers you face when accessing care, regardless of whether that is because of where you live, your income, your ethnic background or your gender.

Top three priorities for 2023-24

1. Access to GP services: phone systems and websites.
2. Mental health support for people with autism.
3. Monitoring the quality of care homes.



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 Board consists of four members who work on a voluntary basis to provide direction, oversight, and scrutiny to our activities. During 2022/23 our Board met four times.

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 have the opportunity to provide us with insight about their experience of using services. During 2022/23 we have been available by phone, email, through social media and via our website contact form. We have also 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 to the press, on social media, and in our monthly news bulletin. We will share it with the Wolverhampton Health and Wellbeing Board and other stakeholders.

Responses to recommendations

Two providers did not respond to our recommendations. We have reminded them of their duty to respond and given them the opportunity to make a late response that we will publish. There were no issues or recommendations escalated by us to the Healthwatch England Committee, so 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 insight and experiences that have been shared with us. In our local authority area for example, we take information to the Health and Wellbeing Board, CQC, Public Health, Wolverhampton Safeguarding Together, Autism Partnership Board, Dementia Alliance, Wolverhampton Voluntary & Community Action and Maternity Voices Partnership.

We also take insight and experiences to decision makers at Black Country ICB and Black Country Healthcare NHS (mental health service). For example, we sit on the One Wolverhampton ICB and in collaboration with the three other Black Country Healthwatch, we share feedback with the ICB Involvement Team. All four local Healthwatch contributed to the ICB Healthier Futures Integrated Care Strategy. We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

Healthwatch representatives

During 2022/23, Healthwatch Wolverhampton was represented on the Health and Wellbeing Board by Board member Sheila Gill. She effectively carried out this role by attending all meetings and sharing feedback to make sure that the public, patient and service user voice has been used to shape how the Health and Wellbeing Board works with the One Wolverhampton ICP.

Healthwatch Wolverhampton is represented on the One Wolverhampton ICP by Stacey Lewis, Healthwatch Wolverhampton Manager, and on the Black Country ICB by Aileen Farmer, Healthwatch Walsall Manager. Stacey Lewis also sits on the Wolverhampton Safeguarding Together Board and the Health Scrutiny Panel.

Enter and View

This year, we made two Enter and View visits as part of our ongoing partnership with City of Wolverhampton Council and CQC to support quality monitoring of residential care homes in the city. We made 13 recommendations as a result of this activity.

Location	What we did as a result
Anville Court Care Home, Wolverhampton Read our report: healthwatchwolverhampton.co.uk/report/2023-02-07/enter-and-view-anville-court-care-home	We wrote a report with six recommendations to inform the improvement plan for the care home, including work on facilities, resident activities and engagement.
Penn House Care Home, Wolverhampton Read our report: healthwatchwolverhampton.co.uk/report/2023-02-08/enter-and-view-penn-house-care-home	We wrote a report with seven recommendations to inform the improvement plan for the care home, including work to ensure appropriate care for residents' complex needs including dementia, improvements to facilities, patient safety, resident activities and engagement.

2022–2023 Outcomes

Project/activity	Changes made to services
<p>A new reinvigorated Healthwatch for Wolverhampton</p>	<p>Following a tender process, the Council commissioned Evolving Communities CIC to run Healthwatch Wolverhampton. We established a new local team and office, and focused on raising awareness among all stakeholders. This enabled us to connect and interact with communities and the health and care system, so that public feedback and collaboration could be embedded in service development and improvement during the year.</p>
<p>Building community involvement through volunteering</p>	<p>To make sure our new Healthwatch service reaches and represents our diverse communities, we had a sustained volunteer recruitment campaign throughout the year.</p>
<p>Accessing GP care in Wolverhampton</p>	<p>We assessed the quality and accessibility of the phone booking systems used by GP practices and Primary Care Networks, to understand if patient access to GP appointments in Wolverhampton has improved over time. We shared our reports with the Health Scrutiny Panel and Primary Care Networks so they can use the findings to improve their patient's experiences.</p>
<p>Raising student awareness and engagement, including around access to GP care</p>	<p>We took part in student events at the University of Wolverhampton to raise awareness about local services and support, to gather feedback, and recruit volunteers. We provided information and advice around accessing GP services. We organised meetings with the university's Health Check Practitioner and the Primary Care Commissioning Manager, so that the concerns around quality of care at a local GP surgery could be discussed and addressed.</p>
<p>Autism: awareness, mental health and suicide prevention</p>	<p>Through attending a suicide prevention and mental health awareness forum based at the University of Wolverhampton, we engaged with professionals from different sectors. As a result we are now working with the Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust on a project to tackle the high rate of suicide among autistic people, and our Engagement Officer now sits on a panel which focuses on the lived experience of people with autism in partnership with the West Midlands Police.</p>

healthwatch Wolverhampton

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