



# Speaking up for better care

Healthwatch Bolton Annual Report 2025/26

# Contents

A message from our chair	3
About us	4
Our year in numbers	5
A year of making a difference	6
Working together for change	7
Listening to your experiences	8
Hearing from all communities	17
Information and signposting	22
Showcasing volunteer impact	25
Finance and future priorities	27
Statutory statements	29



**Julie Darbyshire**  
Chief Officer

*On behalf of Healthwatch Bolton, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to everyone who has taken the time to share their experiences, as well as to our wonderful staff team and volunteers. I would also like to thank the health and social care professionals who have listened to that feedback and acted upon it. And I also extend my thanks to all the organisations we have worked in partnership with this year and supported us. Your openness, commitment, and collaboration are helping to make a genuine difference to the quality of care and support available across our community.*

*This coming year is uncertain for us due to the Government plan to abolish Healthwatch in 2027. Until that happens, we will continue to be here for you, to listen to your feedback and to provide you with information, advice and guidance in this complicated health and care system. We will work with system leaders to ensure that there is a smooth transition into whatever replaces us in the future. I extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone who has supported us.*

## A message from our chair

This year, Healthwatch Bolton has continued to listen to local people and to champion their experiences of health and care services. We have heard from thousands of residents, shared evidence of what is working well and where improvements are needed, and worked collaboratively with partners to influence change for the benefit of our community.

At the same time, the national landscape for patient voice organisations is changing. In 2025 the UK Government announced plans to abolish Healthwatch – both the national body and local Healthwatch services – with its functions set to be absorbed into Integrated Care Boards and other bodies in the future. These changes are expected to take some time to put in place and will require legislation before they can take effect.

While the future structure for patient involvement is evolving, the purpose that underpins our work remains constant: to ensure that the voices of patients, carers and communities are heard, understood and acted upon by those who plan and deliver health and care in Bolton. We remain proud of what we have achieved this year and grateful to all those who shared their experiences with us.

As we look ahead, our focus continues to be on amplifying local voices, providing insight that supports better services, and ensuring that the transition to any new arrangements preserves meaningful involvement for the people of Bolton.

Once again, I thank our dedicated board of trustees, staff team and volunteers who make Healthwatch Bolton what it is.



***Despite the forthcoming possible abolition of Healthwatch, for now, we will continue to be the independent voice for you to speak up and ensure your views are represented***

**Jim Fawcett – Chair**

## About us

# Healthwatch Bolton is your local health and social care champion.

We ensure that NHS leaders and decision-makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care. We can also help you find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.



### Our vision

To bring closer the day when everyone gets the care they need.



### Our mission

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



### Our values are:

**Equity:** We're compassionate and inclusive. We build strong connections and empower the communities we serve.

**Collaboration:** We build internal and external relationships. We communicate clearly and work with partners to amplify our influence.

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

**Independence:** Our agenda is driven by the public. We're a purposeful, critical friend to decision-makers.

**Truth:** We work with integrity and honesty, and we speak truth to power.

# Our year in numbers

We supported more than 11,506 people to have their say and get information about their care. We currently employ 3 staff and, our work is supported by 4 volunteers, as well as six volunteer trustees.

## A collaborative network of local Healthwatch:



**1455** people shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.

**263** people came to us for clear advice and information

## A collaborative network of local Healthwatch:



We published **7** reports about the improvements people would like to see including experiences of using **the NHS App, Knowing where to go for appropriate healthcare, Living well with Dementia and the Prostate Cancer project.** We also produced **4** intelligence reports.

## Statutory funding:



We're funded by Bolton Council. In 2025-26 we received £125,000 which is the same as last year.

# 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 **Bolton** this year:

## Creating empathy by bringing experiences to life



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

We were finding that many patients were struggling to receive a reply from the local Patient Advice and Liaison Service at Bolton Hospital. We raised this with the hospital and measures were put in place to ensure that we could escalate concerns effectively to get a timely outcome for the patients concerned.

## Getting services to involve the public



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

We worked with our local Integrated Care Board, to ensure that proposed changes to the location of a GP surgery, gave the public full information and an opportunity to respond to a survey. We were invited to review public facing materials to ensure the public could make an informed choice.

## Improving care over time



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

We worked in partnership with the Integrated Care Board and Bolton CVS to find out what people knew about their local health care services. We shared information about local services, how and when to use them, and contributed to an action plan for all partners to implement which helped to avoid unnecessary A & E visits.

# Working together for change

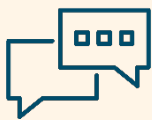
We've worked with neighbouring Healthwatch to ensure people's experiences of care in Greater Manchester are heard at the Integrated Care System (ICS) level, and they influence decisions made about services across Greater Manchester.

This year, we've worked with 9 Healthwatch across Greater Manchester to achieve the following:



## A collaborative network of local Healthwatch:

At the start of this collaboration, in 2022, we set out a 3 year All Age Strategy. Over the lifetime of the strategy, we have met and exceeded all objectives set and agreed. This achievement reflects not just activity, but meaningful progress in how public voice is understood, valued, and used across Greater Manchester. Importantly, this progress has been achieved while maintaining the independence of local Healthwatch and strengthening our collective voice at a Greater Manchester level.



## A big conversation:

We listened to thousands of people across Greater Manchester on a wide variety of topics across health and social care. These insights were shared at both local and ICS level to inform strategy, consultations and influence service design.

Our promise to champion the experiences of people and communities throughout Greater Manchester is as strong as ever.



## Building strong relationships to achieve more:

The All-Age Strategy has created a clear and practical legacy. We have established a credible, trusted and independent public voice model that complements local statutory delivery while enabling collective influence across the system.

The landscape around us may be changing, but we're still looking ahead and are committed to evolving, strengthening, and championing independent public voice across Greater Manchester.

We've also summarised some of our other outcomes achieved this year further on in this report.

# 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.



*Healthwatch Bolton has been an invaluable partner, bringing vital information and support to our parents and carers, and the wider local community during our Family, Finance & Food events. Yasmin's positive presence and dedication in promoting Healthwatch services has been highly impactful and we really appreciate Healthwatch's continued support. (ME, Ladybridge High School)*

# Listening to your experiences

## Getting to Know Where To go for Healthcare

Last year, in partnership with Bolton Community and Voluntary Service, we championed the voices of our community to help improve information about local healthcare services.

People told us that they did not always know how to use their local healthcare services such as GPs, pharmacies, NHS 111, urgent treatment centres and Accident and Emergency.

### What did we do?

We held focus groups in different parts of the borough to share important information and to educate people on the different choices they have to access the most appropriate healthcare service.

We also produced [videos](#) narrated in Gujarati, Punjabi and Urdu describing the different healthcare services and how to use them.

### What difference did this make?



- ❖ More people have access to information about different healthcare services and how to use them.
- ❖ People whose first language is not English also have access to information, both written and verbal.
- ❖ Education sessions take place in community settings to help people understand how to use the NHS App.
- ❖ More people have access to emergency dental treatment after receiving information about this service.
- ❖ Information has also been shared in schools and community events to ensure more people have the right information.



Read the report here: [GTKWTG](#)

# Listening to your experiences

## Living Well with Dementia

Over the past months, together with our Project Lead – Leah, we have been working hard to gather the experiences of people living with dementia, carers, former carers and professionals. We have also been working with partners on the Dementia Partnership Group.

### What did we find?

We received **166** responses to our survey, we held 8 focus groups and information events and 6 case studies where people shared their experiences of their dementia journey.

We extend our **heartfelt thanks** to everyone who has shared their experiences with us, and especially those who gave their time in our case studies



*Our Project Lead, Leah, with her late mother – Lucille, who lived with dementia*

- ❖ Among other things, we found that people needed much more **information and support** around diagnosis, symptoms, and what to expect as the condition progresses.
- ❖ People needed **clearer communication** and more integrated and joined up services
- ❖ Person-centred and simple and clear information **without jargon**
- ❖ Emotional and practical **support**

### What difference did this make?

Our findings have fed into the work of the Dementia Partnership (Local Authority, Greater Manchester Mental Health Trust, and other partners). From this, partners are devising action plans to help improve the lives of people living with dementia and their carers with the development of a dementia hub in 2026.

# Listening to your experiences

## Living Well with Dementia

We planned and arranged the Let's Talk About Dementia sessions, and we were privileged to be able to work with many community groups including Bolton Dementia Support, Bolton Hospice, Bolton Carers Support, Dementia Carers Expert Reference Group, the Memory Assessment Team and many others.

We also supported information sessions with the Alzheimer's Society and the Admiral Nurse – David Neilson, and Carolyn Wong – Palliative Care Clinical Educator, who provided much needed information and advice which was very well received and appreciated.

## Let's talk about dementia – awareness sessions



# Listening to your experiences

## Living Well with Dementia

### Carers Assessment Social Worker's Training session

In 2025, the Local Authority's Principal Social Worker invited Leah to share her lived experience as a former carer for Social Worker's training on the new Carers Assessment Portal. Across four sessions, Leah spoke to more than 180 local social workers, helping practitioners take a more holistic approach to Carers Assessments. Feedback included:



*Leah's story was very powerful and what she said about making every contact count...*

*Leah's story was very powerful and really makes you reflect on the support we need to provide to carers thank you...*



### Dementia Congress – Bridgewater Hall, Manchester

Sarah Fox PhD (University of Manchester) invited Leah to co-facilitate an interactive workshop at Dementia Congress on 19th November 2025, alongside occupational therapy specialists from NHS Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Trust. The workshop explored how getting to know a person living with dementia can enhance bespoke care.

Sarah shared her work on Care Aesthetics, the occupational therapists showcased their Personal Sensory Biographies work, and Leah shared lived experience showing care aesthetics in practice. Attendees also created collages about the things in life that bring them joy, reinforcing the value of understanding personal interests to improve dementia care.

### Dementia Information Resource

Healthwatch Bolton is part of the Dementia Partnership's Dementia Information Task and Finish Group, which aims to improve dementia information in Bolton and make it more accessible for people living with dementia, carers and professionals.

# Listening to your experiences

## Living Well with Dementia

### Development of Dementia Hub in Bolton

In 2026, we will be working with colleagues from the Dementia Partnership Group, and other organisations, to talk about the development of a dedicated place for information and support for people living with dementia and their carers.

Starting in the neighbourhood of Brightmet, and building on work started under the [Live Well](#) initiative, we hope to be able to assist in co-designing a dementia hub. We are very excited about this initiative and how it will change the lives of people living with dementia and carers, and we are pleased that our work on living well with dementia has contributed to this.



\*These pictures are for illustrative purposes only

# Listening to your experiences

## Prostate Cancer Project

### Listening to the experiences around diagnosis, information and support

We have worked with the Greater Manchester Healthwatch Network on a prostate cancer project, focusing on diagnosis, information and support. The following is a snapshot of what the project found, see below for full report:

- **146** survey responses across all 10 Greater Manchester localities
- **88%** rated care as Excellent/Good
- **72%** felt involved in treatment decisions



Read the full report here: [Prostate Cancer Project](#)

# Listening to your experiences

## Prostate Cancer Project

### Listening to the experiences around diagnosis, information and support

#### Key Findings

- Diagnosis often depends on chance or self-advocacy; **53%** had no symptoms before diagnosis.
- **88%** rated their care as Excellent/Good, but **49%** received no follow-up support.
- Awareness of risks and symptoms is low, especially among high-risk groups.

#### Recommendations



Standardise clear, consistent information and support



Proactively offer PSA testing, especially to high-risk men



Improve outreach to underrepresented groups and routinely signpost to peer/community support

## Be Prostate Aware

Are you showing any of these common symptoms of suspected prostate cancer?



Needing to rush to the toilet to pass urine



Passing urine more often than usual, especially at night



Difficulty in passing urine



Feeling that your bladder has not emptied fully



Blood in urine or blood in semen

0800 085 6663 [www.check4cancer.com](http://www.check4cancer.com)

**CHECK4  
CANCER**  
It could save your life

# Listening to your experiences

## Experiences of Using the NHS App

We asked Bolton residents about their experiences of using the current NHS App, what was good and not so good about it, and what, if any, barriers it posed.

This information was fed back to the Department of Health and Social Care to feed into their consultation on the new NHS Online Trust being developed which will allow people to receive planned care through the NHS App. Many people found the App **useful for ordering prescriptions, medical appointments and test results**, but many also faced barriers either when using the App or not being able to use it at all.



### Key Findings

**Accessibility and Digital Exclusion:** Users with visual impairments, disabilities, or limited digital skills face challenges. Some GP surgeries disable key functions, and incomplete medical records are common.

**Usability and Integration:** Technical issues, inconsistent updates, and lack of integration with hospital records frustrate users. Plain-language summaries and easier navigation are needed.

**Patient Choice and Support:** Many prefer face-to-face care, especially those with sensory or mental health needs. Human support, tutorials, and alternative non-digital routes are essential to prevent exclusion.

### Response from the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC)

The DHSC responded to each consultation theme by committing to make **NHS Online accessible and inclusive**, ensuring compliance with accessibility standards and exploring further improvements such as translation and support for carers or interpreters. They emphasised addressing health inequalities and engaging stakeholders to improve digital inclusion and usability. DHSC confirmed that NHS Online will remain optional, with face-to-face care always available, and will not replace existing services.

The department is developing practical plans for community-based digital skills support and will work with partners to deliver this. Communication will be clear and accessible, with a comprehensive engagement plan and ongoing user research, while data security is prioritised. Clinical safety will be ensured through robust governance, CQC regulation, and thorough pre-launch testing. Finally, NHS Online is being **co-designed with patients and experts**, with embedded user research, transparent evaluation, and effective complaints handling to ensure accountability and continuous improvement.



Read the full report here: [NHS App Report](#)

## Hearing from all communities

**We're here for all residents of Bolton. 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.

***"A small connection can have a big impact"***



# Hearing from all communities

## Working with South Asian Communities

We worked with community partners – the Sunnyside club and Sahara – which is a specialised dementia support service for South Asian Communities. We ran a workshop with a senior men’s group. We talked about dementia awareness and provided information and advice.

### What difference did this make?

By working collaboratively, we were able to use all our networking skills to organise this important work. Bringing information directly to communities has ensured that people are more knowledgeable, and know where to go to seek help and advice



*Working with Yasmin and her team has been a great experience for Sahara. Their communication and welcoming approach made it easy for us to plan and deliver a session with a local men’s group which was valuable. It has been a pleasure working alongside the team and we look forward to future opportunities to collaborate. **HB – Team Sahara***



# Hearing from all communities

## Promoting health and wellbeing

Improving access to health information remains central to our work. During the year, we supported several initiatives aimed at reducing health inequalities and helping residents make informed choices about their healthcare.

We actively supported winter health campaigns, sharing multilingual vaccination information, promoting vaccination van schedules, contributing to Warm Space consultations, and encouraging participation in the Greater Manchester "Fit for Winter" survey.

### What difference did this make?

By sharing accessible health information through trusted community networks, we helped increase awareness of local health and care services, enabling residents to make more informed decisions about accessing support and care.



*I just wanted to let you know that with the piece of work around 'Fit for Winter' there is a survey which all localities are delivering to understand how people feel about winter and what, if anything, they do to stay well during this period. With the tremendous help from Yasmin, Bolton have the highest number of respondents from across Greater Manchester. This helps us massively and it is such a pleasure working with her. **MA**  
**Engagement Co-ordinator - NHS Greater Manchester Integrated Care***



# Hearing from all communities

## Empowering women and reducing isolation

We attended health and wellbeing events organised by the **Khidma Ladies Group**, whose work helps women overcome social isolation, build confidence, form friendships, and access health information. Monthly NHS health check events organised by the group have successfully encouraged greater engagement with preventative healthcare services.

**The Harmony Youth Project** also launched its "Unfiltered" Women's Coffee Mornings, creating a welcoming space where women can connect, access support, and discuss issues affecting their lives and wellbeing.

## What difference did this make?

These initiatives helped reduce social isolation, increase confidence, strengthen community connections, and improve access to health and wellbeing support for women across Bolton.



# Thank you to our community

As community engagement continues to grow, we are seeing increasing demand for information, presentations, partnership working, and involvement in local events. Communities continue to show interest in previous projects, including menopause awareness, Choosing Health resources, and our annual reports, demonstrating the value of sustained engagement and trusted relationships.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to reducing health inequalities, amplifying community voices, improving awareness of health and care services, and supporting residents to live healthier, more connected lives.

**We would like to thank all our community partners, volunteers, local organisations, and residents who have supported this work throughout the year. Together, we continue to strengthen communities, improve access to information, and help ensure that people's experiences shape the future of health and care services in Bolton.**

**Below are some quotes from some of our wonderful partners:**



*And it was just to thank you again for both you and your team's efforts. I just absolutely love working with you because it's always results driven, it's always really solution orientated and it's a breath of fresh air. So thank you. Thanks so much for your efforts and the outreach and the support that you've provided to the community so far. Really, really heart-warming and really encouraging to know that we're on a positive engagement trajectory.* **AS – Programme Manager, GMICB**

*Because Healthwatch attended, there was a much more open and honest conversation. They could hear the frustrations and manage those – it was that middle ground for Healthwatch to bring the intel to commissioners. The information that was shared was really beneficial to the group.* **A T-B – group leader**

*Your passion for people of Bolton really shines through and that's so inspiring!* **GM – Neighbourhood Leader**

*It's been a real pleasure working with Yasmin and Leah from Bolton Healthwatch. They have been a vital point of contact for us, helping to establish and strengthen our connections within the Bolton community. From delivering awareness presentations at established groups to attending health and networking events, their support and collaboration have been invaluable.* **HB – Team Sahara**



# Information and signposting

**Whether it's making a complaint, changing a GP, or help to find a support group– you can count on us. This year 263 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



# Information and signposting

## Accessing Dental Care for a Veteran

An individual was referred to a dental practice in Bolton for urgent treatment but had a distressing experience. They had multiple serious dental issues, including broken and decayed teeth and loose lower front teeth, which had affected their ability to eat for over five years and caused ongoing pain, anxiety, and loss of confidence in public.

The patient, who lives with Autism, PTSD, ADHD and BPD, had requested reasonable adjustments in advance. Despite this, the practice only addressed one issue and did not provide a full assessment or NHS treatment plan. The individual made clear they were seeking essential treatment to restore basic function, not cosmetic care, and were willing to pay the NHS Band 3 charge. As a veteran, they felt dismissed and unsupported.

Healthwatch Bolton intervened by contacting the Greater Manchester Dental Advisor, who successfully secured appointments at an alternative NHS dental practice within the borough for a full course of clinically necessary treatment.



*"I am extremely grateful... I can finally see an end to the pain and sleepless nights. This will make a huge difference to my life."*

## GP Complaints Process & Communication

A patient raised a formal complaint after a GP failed to acknowledge a treatment error, instead attributing it to a trainee doctor. Despite repeated attempts to seek a response from the practice, including contacting the practice manager, the patient received limited communication and no clear guidance on the complaints process.

The patient escalated concerns to NHS England and the Greater Manchester Integrated Care Board, but the complaints process was further hindered by poor communication, lost correspondence, incomplete medical records, and slow responses.

Healthwatch Bolton supported the patient over a six-month period, making multiple requests to the GP practice for medical records and liaising with the Greater Manchester Patient Services Team to progress the case.

Given the constant barriers the patient faced when raising their formal complaint, they decided not to pursue matters but stated they intend to **write a book** about their experiences of raising a formal complaint about their GP practice. They stated they intend to include the very positive experiences they had of working with Healthwatch Bolton.



*"Thank you for listening and acting. Communicating with you has been a pleasure."*

# Information and signposting

## What are people telling us?

Our Information, advice and guidance service remains as busy as ever. This year we helped 263 people find information about health and care services, signposted people to the right service that could help them and advised people about their rights to health and care.

This year we have noticed that our enquiries are becoming more complex and time consuming, and people are coming to us when they have exhausted all other avenues. While of course we are happy to always provide the best service we can, we are concerned that people are more frustrated and dissatisfied with their health and care services.

## The main themes



**Lack of access to NHS dentistry sadly remains a continuing theme**



**Difficulty accessing the Patient Advice and Liaison Service at Bolton Hospital has also been a recurring theme this year**



**Issues with prescriptions and medication management**



**GP appointments and negative attitudes**

## What we do with what you tell us

We share every piece of feedback (anonymously), with service commissioners and providers in our quarterly intelligence reports. We ask that they provide us with feedback and comments. These reports feed into the health and care system intelligence to bring about improvements to services.

# Showcasing volunteer impact

**Our fantastic volunteers have given more than 250 hours 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 and engaged with communities to promote our work
- Worked on a new project with us.
- Provided us with news updates about what is going on in the community



## 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.**

I love being part of volunteering for Healthwatch Bolton as I feel that I am able to help by talking to people, taking part in events and distributing helpful information. Volunteering is good for me, and I feel that helping others is also helping me too.

I feel valued and supported by the team at Healthwatch Bolton and this has helped with my confidence. Volunteering has opened up other opportunities for me in the community. I have enjoyed the dementia event as I feel strongly about the need to support families caring for loved ones living with dementia and to help raise awareness of the condition and the impact it can have on families.



**Carol**

Volunteering at Healthwatch Bolton has been a very positive experience for me. It has given me the opportunity to be part of a team and maintain important skills without the pressure of working in a full-time role, which can be challenging due to the multiple disabilities I live with. Along the way, I have also made some lifelong friends who I regularly socialise with. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to volunteer with your organisation. **Anon**

# 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 Government	£125,000	Expenditure on pay	£118,025
Additional income	£10,467	Non-pay expenditure	£21,079
GM Healthwatch (see below)	£2,000	Office and management fee	£3,809
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£137,467</b>	<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>£142,913</b>

## Additional income is broken down into:

- £50 received from Bolton CVS for taking part in an event
- £197 bank interest
- £10,220 Project income (March 2025–May 2025)

## Integrated Care System (ICS) funding:

Healthwatch across Greater Manchester 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
The GM Healthwatch Network	£2000

# Finance and future priorities

## Next steps:

**Over the next year, we will be working with the Greater Manchester Integrated Care Partnership and our Local Authority, to ensure that there is a smooth transition if Healthwatch is abolished by the Government in 2027.**

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 priorities for the next year are:

1. Healthwatch legacy, what can be built on and what cannot be lost.
2. Ensuring we continue to hear your voices, and these are fed back to system leaders.
3. Continuing our Living Well with Dementia project, building on the great work done over the past two years.

# Statutory statements

**Voice Local, PO Box 822, Wigan, WN1 9XF hold the contract for hosting Healthwatch Bolton. Charity number 1157070.**

**Healthwatch Bolton 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 **6** members who work voluntarily to provide direction, oversight, and scrutiny of our activities.

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

Throughout 2025/26, the Board met **7** times and made decisions on matters such as human resources, finance, recommendations in reports and health and care intelligence. 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 and through social media, 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.

# Statutory statements

## Responses to recommendations

We had **0** 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 Locality Board, Strategy, Planning and Delivery Group, the System Quality Group, Adult Safeguarding Board, Safeguarding Effectiveness Group, Adult Health and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Voice and Influence Group, Quality and Patient Experience Forum, Women's Health Network, Safeguarding Collaborative, Quality and Patient Experience Forum.

We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in Greater Manchester Integrated Care Partnership. For example through the Greater Manchester Healthwatch Network, we share information on the Quality and Performance Committee. We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level

## Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Bolton is represented on the Bolton Health and Wellbeing Board by Julie Darbyshire, Chief Officer.

During 2025/26, our representative has effectively carried out this role by taking an active part in setting the priorities for the Health and Wellbeing Board and providing Healthwatch intelligence.

Healthwatch Bolton is represented on Greater Manchester Integrated Care Partnerships by Julie Darbyshire, Leah Payne and Ann Schenk.

# Statutory statements

## 2025 – 2026 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
<p>We worked with Bolton Neighbourhood Mental Health Service on their quality improvement project: <i>Improving Identification of Menopausal Symptoms in a Community Primary Care Mental Health Service</i></p>	<p>The project aim was achieved. Overall screening uptake reached <b>83.3% (40/48)</b>, with <b>100% uptake among new referrals</b> and <b>75% uptake within the existing caseload</b>. A high proportion of those screened (<b>85%</b>) reported menopausal symptoms. This led to appropriate clinical actions, including <b>19 GP letters</b>, shared monitoring plans, or documented decisions when no further action was required or screening was declined.</p> <p>Staff knowledge and confidence improved following training, with <b>80% of the workforce attending education sessions</b>. Service users reported that the screening questions were clear, acceptable, and relevant. Importantly, the screening tool added minimal burden to appointments, with a <b>mean completion time of 2.4 minutes</b> and <b>no significant disruption to clinical workflow</b>.</p> <p>Overall, the findings suggest that embedding a structured menopause screening tool within routine mental health assessments improves consistency, reduces reliance on individual clinician initiative, and supports earlier identification of potential menopausal symptoms. While the tool identifies symptoms rather than making diagnoses, it provides a structured opportunity to consider menopause as a contributing factor in mental health presentations.</p>



*I would like to sincerely thank you for your time, encouragement, and support, which were integral to the successful completion of this project. (ML: Bolton Neighbourhood Mental Health Service)*

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#healthwatch Bolton



#healthwatchbolton/bsky social