



Engaging Listening Empowering

Annual Report 2022–23

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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 Chair

It's been another busy year for us, coming out of a pandemic and getting to grips with a new health and care system.

With so many changes and challenges since the pandemic, we know things have not been easy for people.

We know that accessing primary care services have been difficult for some people – that is accessing a GP and accessing an NHS dentist. We hope the work we did in partnership with Bolton GP Federation has improved the way you can access primary care services in your area, having appointments in the evening and weekends.

We are also still working to ensure your voice is heard on NHS dentistry. We know people are still struggling to access dentists and we will continue to make sure your voice is heard to help improve the situation in the near future.

My heartfelt thanks go to everyone who has shared their views with us. Your feedback really does make a difference. I also want to thank our wonderful trustees who direct our work, and our dedicated, hardworking staff and volunteers.



Jim Fawcett
Healthwatch Bolton Chair

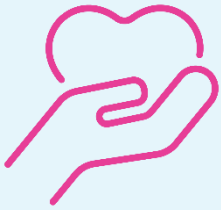


We are proud to be able to help people in Bolton to navigate the sometimes confusing health and care system. It is now more important than ever that we can continue to do this, due to the long waiting times for treatment, difficulties in accessing treatment and helping to break down some of the barriers to help people live their best lives

About us

Healthwatch Bolton is your local health and social care champion.

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.



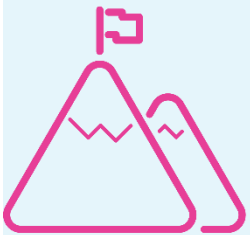
Our vision

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.

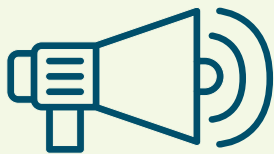


Our values are:

- **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



887 people

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

266 people

came to us for clear advice and information about topics such as access to primary care, or how to raise concerns or a complaint

Making a difference to care

We published

5 reports

reports about the improvements people would like to see to health and social care services.



Health and care that works for you



We're lucky to have

12 Volunteers

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

£151,523

We currently employ

3 staff

who help us carry out our work.

How we've made a difference this year

Spring



We asked people for their feedback to ensure the extended primary care service meets their needs



We contributed to the new Carers Strategy for Bolton, ensuring the voices of carers are heard

Summer



We worked with NHS Bolton Foundation Trust to find out people's views on virtual health care



We continued to support the Smears Means Years project, helping people to access life-saving cervical cancer screening

Autumn



We asked people for feedback about the cost of living and the impact on wellbeing, working with our Local Authority developing new initiatives



We worked with colleagues in Greater Manchester Healthwatch to gather views from the public on the Greater Manchester Integrated Care Board Priorities.

Winter



We asked people how lack of adequate access to NHS dentistry was impacting on their health and wellbeing



We submitted evidence to the Health and Social Care Select Committee Enquiry into NHS Dentistry. We used real life stories from people to show how people are struggling.

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.

How have we made care better, together?

Cervical Cancer Screening

We have helped to bring life-saving cervical cancer screening into deprived communities in Bolton, breaking down barriers and making it easier and more convenient



Carers

We listened to what carers need to help them fulfil their caring role. We have ensured those voices have fed into the carers strategy that aims to improve support for carers.



NHS dentistry

We continue to voice your concerns about accessing NHS dentistry and particularly the impact on your health and wellbeing.



Access to Primary Care

We've helped to ensure your voice is heard about your views on GP appointments, with more telephone lines being provided, more face to face appointments and better information



Coronavirus Pandemic

We asked how your physical and mental health was being affected by the Coronavirus pandemic. We fed back this information to health and care commissioners so they could tailor their information to what people needed.



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 and help them improve.

Doing Things Differently Smears Means Years Project

From the recommendations we made in our report about making cancer screening more accessible, the Smears Means Years project was initiated by Bolton GP Federation and supported by Answer Cancer and Healthwatch Bolton.

The project has been successful in reaching out to deprived and hard to reach communities to ensure people can access life-saving cervical cancer screening (smear tests).

75 Smear Tests carried out in the community

The project reached out to primary and secondary schools, street sex workers, people with disabilities, carers, refugees and asylum seekers, people engaged in drug and alcohol services and people deemed as vulnerable.. In addition to the smear testing, the project has also carried out health checks including blood pressure checks and Covid vaccinations.



- 259 health checks were carried out in community settings
- 168 Covid vaccines were administered
- 63 conversations were had to alleviate worries and anxiety

We are proud that our work on this was recognised by Healthwatch England by awarding us a Highly Commended Impact Award



I think the 'pop up' cervical smear tests are a really good idea. The client group that we have at Fleet House have often led chaotic lifestyles, so things like regular appointments and check-ups are often missed. So bringing the service to the residents rather than telling the residents to 'go somewhere else' for their health matters is making sure that the residents are not missing out on essential health appointments and check-ups

Virtual Health Care

Virtual (telephone & video) healthcare appointments can be hard for people who don't have access to technology or are unable to use it effectively

For people who are offered these types of appointments from their GP or other health care provider, these can sometimes be problematic and can lead to having to make follow up appointments, thus wasting resources and time.

Our recommendations:

1. Ensure the needs of older people are fully considered when offering virtual appointments
2. Ensure that virtual appointments do not become the 'default' method of consultations with patients
3. Consider providing some useful communication materials for patients about what to expect from a virtual appointment and what is needed from the patient. Also provide some information as to why a virtual appointment is being offered and not face to face.
4. Take into account the cost of living and that some people may no longer have an internet connection, landline or mobile phone.
5. It is important to understand the individual needs of the patient when determining the type of appointment. Particularly people who may have disabilities, hearing issues and older people unfamiliar with modern communication devices.

What difference will this make?

Thanks to our recommendations, our Integrated Care Board and NHS Foundation Trust responded to say they are committed to ensuring that patients and the public do continue to see the benefits to a virtual consultation. A video is due to be commissioned that will include some of this detail.

However, a virtual health care appointment will never be a 'default' option and patients will always have the option of a face to face appointment when necessary.

A telephone or video consultation does have an allocated time slot that is comparable with face-to-face appointments, so there is no disadvantage to patients when given a virtual appointment.

During initial consultation, clinicians at Bolton Hospital will provide some pre-education about the video consultation process. Bolton Hospital has undertaken a patient survey to assess the effectiveness of material sent to patients to support video consultations – the survey results produced positive user feedback.



"Not suitable for people who have no access to WIFI. Also limited access to the person due to telephone restrictions"

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.



We raised concerns from a client who had applied for Continuing Health Care but was hitting a brick wall with delays and lack of communication which was greatly impacting them and the person they cared for. Finally after our intervention, the client managed to get the issues resolved to their satisfaction:

"I believe that your involvement and that of [the MP] has shone a light on their failings in this case and hence their willingness to engage (finally!) I cannot thank you enough. With best wishes."

Getting services to involve the public

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



The Bolton Prostate Cancer support group asked if screening for prostate cancer could be made available for men from ethnically diverse backgrounds. We investigated this and now free PSA (Prostate Specific Antigen), screening sessions have started to take place in the Farnworth and Westhoughton areas of Bolton, which will help to save lives.

Improving care over time

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



Over the years, we have been monitoring access to NHS dentistry and how this is impacting on people's lives. We will continue to monitor the situation and ensure that the voices of our community are heard and that decision makers hear those voices when planning services.



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:

- Engaging with students to plan health and wellbeing events
- Visiting local foodbanks and sharing information and gathering feedback
- We have shared all the feedback in our intelligence reports with our integrated Care Board

Supporting Students

We have worked with Bolton University students to arrange health and wellbeing events in the university. Community interpreters and community ambassadors arranged the events as part of accreditation for their courses. We helped to arrange speakers on cancer awareness as people from ethnically diverse backgrounds had asked for this to be available due to them have little information or knowledge.



*I really enjoyed helping Macmillan cancer and Answer Cancer with womens health... Healthwatch were amazing too. They came into college to answer our questions a few times and helped a lot with getting in touch with people from different companies... if it wasn't for Yasmin and Mary at Healthwatch we wouldn't have had Macmillan or Answer Cancer there. They helped us a lot in organising the event. **Local Student***



Connecting Communities

Through our community engagement, we meet many groups and we focus on those that are seldom heard. Over the past year we have presented to and engaged with mental health service users, Asian women's groups, support groups for people with long term conditions. We also visited food banks, men's wellbeing groups, substance misuse support groups, Bolton Hospice, and secondary and primary schools, to name a few.

We have picked up a myriad of different information from all the engagement work we do, and we like to share this with other groups, but also to connect groups to schemes and initiatives that would benefit them. Many groups have found this extremely helpful and have helped them to move forward.

"The links you helped make last year with the University are still going strong, so thank you"



Again, thank you very much for getting me the opportunity. We aim to benefit more community in Farnworth and Kearsley be benefitted by this project



Advice and information

If you need help navigating the health and social care landscape, and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch Bolton is here for you. We can provide free and confidential information to help you understand your options. We also signpost to additional sources of support so you can get the help you need. Whether it's registering with a new GP practice, how to make a health or social care complaint, or choosing a 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
- Signposting professionals to local health and care support organisations

Help to find dental care in Bolton

A Bolton resident, who is living with long-term health conditions was struggling to find a dentist for herself and children. Before the resident contacted Healthwatch Bolton, she had managed to find an NHS dentist for her children, but she still needed an NHS dentist for herself because the health conditions are having a very detrimental impact on their oral health and ability to maintain a varied diet.


Because the resident has health and/or care needs, Healthwatch Bolton liaised with the Greater Manchester Dental Team and was able to secure an NHS dental appointment for the patient.

 *"Thank you very much. I am very grateful for your help. I really appreciate it."*

Helping with GP Access in Bolton

A mother was struggling to get her son a GP face-to-face appointment or telephone consultation to discuss concerns about her son's deteriorating mental health. Healthwatch Bolton escalated the concerns to the Greater Manchester Integrated Care Board, who facilitated a conversation between the patient and their GP.

As a result of Healthwatch Bolton's intervention, the patient's mother confirmed that the GP contacted her son, reviewed his medication and her son's mental health was improving.

 *"Thank you so much for your help. I would still be facing a brick wall if it were not for you. Warmest regards."*



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:

- Visited communities to promote their local Healthwatch and what we have to offer
- Collected experiences and supported their communities to share their views
- Assisted with improving data collection systems

Mary

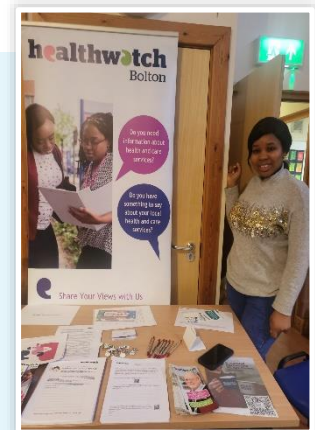
Mary was an extremely valued member of staff for nearly a year with us. After Mary left, she decided she would continue to work with us a volunteer which we are extremely happy about! Mary loves talking to people and helps out with community engagement whenever she can.



Ekoyen

"Volunteering with Healthwatch Bolton has been an enriching experience for me. From the moment I embarked on the journey, I found myself drawn to the organisation's noble mission of advocating for the community's healthcare needs. I was initially attracted to Healthwatch due to its commitment to empowering individuals and ensuring their voices are heard in matters of healthcare.

My time as a community engagement volunteer with Healthwatch Bolton has been incredibly rewarding. The supportive nature and passionate team have made it an enjoyable experience from the start. Volunteering with Healthwatch Bolton has been an incredibly fulfilling and fun experience, allowing me to interact and meet with many kinds of people at events and contribute to the betterment of the community while fostering my personal growth."



Do you feel inspired?

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



www.healthwatchbolton.co.uk



01204 394603



info@healthwatchbolton.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 Government	£151,523	Expenditure on pay	£113,957
Additional income	£0	Non-pay expenditure	£25,257
		Office and management fee	£3,727
Total income	£151,523	Total expenditure	£142,921

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 tackling inequalities that exist and work to reduce the barriers you face when accessing care, regardless whether that is because of where you live, income or race.

Top three priorities for 2023-24

1. Engaging with D/deaf community and exploring barriers to health and care
2. Information on Menopause
3. Maternity Services.



Statutory statements

Healthwatch Bolton, 27 Silverwell St, Bolton, BL1 1PP.
Managed by VOICE Local 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 8 members who work on a voluntary basis to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny to our activities. Our Board ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community. Throughout 2022/23 the Board met 4 times and made decisions on matters such as agreeing the workplan and ensuring the budget is on track

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, provided a webform on our website and through social media, as well as attending 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

Responses to recommendations

We are working with our ICP on a process to ensure we receive timely responses to our recommendations. There were no issues or recommendations escalated by us to 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 Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, MPs, Local Councillors

We also take insight and experiences to decision makers in Greater Manchester Integrated Care Partnership. For example, we share insight with the Strategy, Planning and Delivery Committee and the Place Based Quality Committee. We also share data at the Greater Manchester Mental Health System Quality Group and Greater Manchester Mental Health Trust along with colleagues from other Healthwatch in Greater Manchester. 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 Jim Fawcett, Chair.

Healthwatch Bolton is represented on Bolton Integrated Care Partnership by Jim Fawcett (Chair) and Julie Darbyshire (Operations Manager) and Leah Payne (Information Advice and Guidance/Communications Officer) on the Placed Based Quality Committee. Ann Schenk (Trustee) also represents Healthwatch Bolton on the Adult Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Bolton Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust Governors Committee and the Quality and Patient Experience Group

2022–2023 Outcomes

Project/ activity	Changes made to services
Primary Care Extended Hours Consultation	Weekend and evening primary care appointments systems implemented taking into account the feedback from our recommendations
Dentistry and health and wellbeing	Further discussion to be held as dental commissioning is now falling to Greater Manchester Integrated Care Partnership. The Partnership will be doing some work on prevention and working with schools to improve dental health. They will also be working with social prescribers. Better communication on the urgent dental care service will be available to the public to ensure people know how to use this service.
Impact of cost of living on health and wellbeing	This work has fed into work the Local Authority have been doing on looking for ways to support people in the community. Further engagement on specific projects will be done throughout 2023.



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