

# Championing what matters to you

Healthwatch Swindon  
Annual Report 2021-22



# Contents

Message from our chair	3
About us	4
Highlights from our year	5
Listening to your experiences	7
Advice and information	11
Volunteers	13
Finances and future priorities	15
Statutory statements	16

# Message from our CEO

Last year I spoke about ‘placing health inequalities at the heart of decision making’ and I am proud to say that I think we’ve held this as our vision over this period of time. We have diversified our volunteers, have a new staff team with an incredibly creative, solution focussed and clear way of working and we have delivered reports, engagement and system leadership that has placed people’s views at the centre of the discussion. Whether this was in our existing strategic and community based commitments or as we stood up to the challenge of embedding and visioning the Integrated Care System (ICS’s) approach .

We have seen 29,980 page views on our website during the same time. Being able to share important news articles that supported the understanding of vaccination rollout, Dentists appointments, system changes and helpful resources is a vital part of our role so I am pleased to see that alongside our face to face engagement, people can access information in a way that fits with their needs.

This coming year, the Health and Care Systems will continue to evolve at pace, with the way decisions and frameworks are conceived being more collaborative than ever. Our commitment is that we will continue to place your voice, your views and your needs at the heart of these discussion.

Kevin Peltonen-Messenger, MSc  
CEO, The Care Forum



“The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown long-standing health inequalities into stark relief. With NHS and social care facing even longer backlogs, the unequal outcomes exposed by the pandemic are at risk of becoming worse. Local Healthwatch play an important role in helping to overcome these adversities and are uniquely placed to make a positive difference in their communities.”

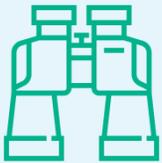
**Sir Robert Francis QC, Chair of Healthwatch England**



# About us

## Your health and social care champion

Healthwatch Swindon is your local health and social care champion. From Wroughton to Highworth and everywhere in between, we make sure NHS leaders and other 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.



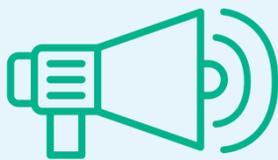
### Our values

- 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.

# Our year in review

Find out how we have engaged and supported people.

## Reaching out



**2,005 people**

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

**3328 people**

came to us for clear advice and information about topics such as mental health and COVID-19.

## Making a difference to care



We published

**6 reports**

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

Our most popular report was

**Experiences of patients at Great Western Hospital**

## Health and care that works for you



We're lucky to have

**25**

outstanding volunteers who supported us in carrying out our work.

We're funded by our local authority. In 2021-22 we received:

**£107,500**

Which is 24.4 % less than the previous year.

We also currently employ

**3 Staff**

who help us carry out this work. The previous year we employed 5 staff.

## How we've made a difference throughout the year

These are the biggest projects we worked on from April 2021 to March 2022.

Spring



Alerted the public on - what to expect for patients using the STEAM vaccination centre with physical and neurodiverse disabilities



Updated advice and information regarding what you need to know when visiting a care home (new guidance for COVID-19)

Summer



We investigated why people have been excluded by looking at digitally excluded people's experiences of remote GP appointments



We supported the NHS Stop the spread this winter campaign—with the latest Flu vaccination guidance

Autumn



We worked with Swindon Borough Council at the annual Transitions Roadshow, offering support to our young people with SEND as they transition in to adulthood.



We alerted and signposted people which were unable to access NHS dental appointments for dental complaints to the dental emergency access centre

Winter



Up-to-date Guidance for new arrivals to the UK it can be confusing where to go if you need medical assistance. We outlined refugee rights, where to access emergency help and how to register for a GP etc.



We promoted the local offer from Swindon Borough Council '**Grab a Cab**'. A free taxi to COVID-19 vaccinations available to those who need it

# 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 feedback to services to help them improve



## Experiences of patients at Great Western Hospital

**Thank you to everyone who shared their views with us. We listened to the experiences of people that had used the Emergency Department (ED), Urgent Care and four inpatient wards at the Great Western Hospital.**

A joint Healthwatch project looking at the experiences of patients using the Great Western Hospital (GWH) in Swindon has revealed that while most people were satisfied with the care they'd received, there were areas where improvements could be made.

Working together to cover the catchment area of GWH patients, Healthwatch Wiltshire, Healthwatch Swindon and Healthwatch West Berkshire listened to the experiences of people during July 2022.



**45% of carers thought discharge was poor** (n=22)

**The following changes have since been made by Great Western Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, based on the feedback we heard.**

### You Said We Did

**You said** We need more information when we're discharged.

**What's changed?** Safety Netting process calls patients once they've been discharged to ensure services are in place.

**You said** Carers need to feel more involved.

**What's changed?** Carers' Café relaunching; More recliner chairs on wards so carers can stay overnight; Admiral Nurses hold weekly dementia advice sessions on Teal Ward.

**You said** We want to talk more with our loved ones.

**What's changed?** Dedicated Patient and Family phones on all wards, and virtual visiting options.

**Improvements were made at Swindon's Great Western Hospital based on your feedback.**



**We will use this Report alongside other surveys, data, and feedback from patients to make improvements to deliver better care.**

Lisa Cheek, Chief Nurse, Great Western Hospital  
NHS Foundation Trust



## What local organisations think of mental health support

**Thanks to all the individuals and organisations across Swindon, Bath and North East Somerset (BaNES) and Wiltshire who shared their views on how mental health support could be provided closer to people's homes and in their communities.**

In September 2021, Healthwatch Swindon & Healthwatch BaNES and Healthwatch Wiltshire were asked by BaNES, Swindon and Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group (BSW CCG) to facilitate three online workshops, one in each locality, to hear the views of organisations across the area who support people with their mental health.

The national [Community Mental Health Services Framework](#) (CSF), published in 2019, outlines changes to adult community mental health services. The framework aims to break down barriers to accessing mental health and wellbeing services so that people can get the right support, care and treatment when they need it and from wherever they seek it. This could be from their GP, community services, self-referral to services or through digital or other routes.



People experiencing mental health problems require one-to-one and face-to-face support in order for them to receive the right help and treatment.

Workshop participant



### What difference did this make ?

The feedback from the online workshops supports earlier engagement undertaken by BSW CCG to hear people's views and experiences of community mental health support, this will be used to help shape and develop the new service.

This has reinforced Healthwatch Swindon's commitment to tackling inequalities faced by those who are suffering from mental ill-health.

## 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.



### Access to NHS dentists

**It's important for the NHS and social care services to step back and see the bigger picture.**

We sent out a Dental Survey to all NHS dentists in Swindon asking them to inform us of their capacity to see new patients under their existing NHS contract provisions in response to people searching for NHS dentists. We continue to be in regular contact with NHS England & NHS Improvements to obtain information on how best to inform and signpost, in order to keep up-to-date with the latest guidance around NHS dentistry in our locality. Feedback from these correspondences has allowed us to post on Healthwatch social media along with publishing a small report on our website. This has been useful in guiding patients to the emergency dental access provisions within Swindon.



### Shaping a Healthier Future –Together

**Services need to understand the benefits of involving local people.**

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of November, we hosted a workshop with Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group (BSW CCG) to seek people's views on the new health and care model. With the aim of:

- Raising awareness of the health and care model.
- Listening to people's views on the model, particularly those impacted by health inequalities.

This was used to shape the new health and care model, to be introduced on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022.



### Improving the voice of young people

**Change takes time. We often work behind the scenes with health and care services to consistently raise issues and push for changes.**

We are setting up a Young Healthwatch as a dedicated team of volunteers committed to listening to young people about what they think of local health and care services to find out if they meet their needs. We have started by recruiting a health and social care student on placement to work with us to help develop Young Healthwatch.

We want all young people living, working, or studying in the area to feel supported by local services so that they can always find the support they need.

# Advice and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch 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 helped people by:

- Providing up to date information on COVID-19 walk in and vaccination centres.
- Linking people to reliable information they could trust
- Helping people to access the services they need
- Signposting where support was available for NHS Dentistry.



## Supporting Our Community

The voluntary and community sector provides care for those joining our community from other countries. We wanted to offer our support by supplying information about their rights to accessing health care.

This was achieved by supporting groups such as the Harbour Project and Swindon City of Sanctuary. In particular Swindon City of Sanctuary's 'show your heart', where by we wrote words of welcome and kindness to show we stand together with our refugees.

In addition, we also showcased this information on our website, as a part of our ongoing line of engagement to support those joining our community and ensure their voices are heard.



## Time to Talk

With mental health being so prevalent, we joined local mental health charities to raise awareness and help break down the stigma of mental health.

Not only was this used as a time to talk, but also a time to listen. Holding our own pop-up mental health café, allowing members of the public to come forward and share their experience of accessing mental health services along with working alongside carers to hear the impact the pandemic has had on their mental health.

We interacted with **229** people to hear their lived experiences. This is a long term project working with NHS England and Improvements and Care Quality Commission to help shape the future of how we access services.



# Volunteers

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

This year our volunteers:

- Helped people have their say from home, carrying out surveys over online.
- Created digital content on our website and social media.
- Carried out website and telephone reviews for local services on the information they provide and assessing their accessibility.
- Went out into the community to ask people about their experiences of health and social care.





### Harry

“The difference at Healthwatch for me is that it is the voice of the patient, and is not affiliated to any of the health providing organisations, so it truly represents the views of the patient and service users.”



### Abigail

"In my opinion being a college health and social care student and volunteer at Healthwatch is an amazing opportunity and has opened my eyes to so many different things. It is also great as it gives you a chance to make changes and make everyone's lives that little bit easier even if it is as simple as making it easier to book a GP appointment "



### Phil

“My work as a volunteer with Healthwatch Swindon allows me to express myself and enhance my social skills.

These assets are required in the field of health work and essential to develop through. So, I thankyou Healthwatch Swindon for giving me the opportunity.”



### Do you feel inspired?

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



[www.healthwatchswindon.org.uk](http://www.healthwatchswindon.org.uk)



01793 497777



[info@healthwatchswindon.org.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchswindon.org.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.

Income	
Funding received from local authority	£107,500
Additional funding	£0
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£107,500</b>

Income	
Staff costs	£77,664
Operational costs	£14,490
Support and administration	£7,519
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>£99,673</b>
<b>Balance B/Fwd</b>	<b>£7,827</b>

## Top three priorities for 2022–23

1. Inclusion for all to fight the inequalities of health and social care in Swindon
2. Mental Health provision in Swindon
3. Young Healthwatch - developing a program to gather the views of young people on a range of health and social care issues

## Next steps

The pandemic has shone a stark light on the impact of existing inequalities when using health and care services, highlighting the importance of championing the voices of those who all too often go unheard.

Over the coming years, our goal is to help reduce these inequalities by making sure your voice is heard, and decision makers reduce the barriers you face, regardless of whether that's because of where you live, income or race.

# Statutory statements

## About us

The Care Forum, Vassall Centre, Gill Avenue, Bristol, BS16 2QQ

Healthwatch Swindon 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 5 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. Through 2021/22 the board met in person and made decisions on matters such as access to GPs and reviewing digital technology being used in primary care settings.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities. We use are using the feedback we have gathered over the last year through engagement events about mental health provision to inform our future priorities.

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 health and care services. During 2021/22 we have been available by phone, by email, provided a webform on our website, provided a feedback centre/rate and review system, attended virtual meetings of community groups and forums, provided our own virtual activities and engaged with the public through social media.

We are committed to taking additional steps to ensure we obtain the views of people from diverse backgrounds who are often not heard by health and care decision makers. This year we have done this by visiting communities that are not regularly heard including refugees.

We ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. We publish it on our website and all our social media platforms.

### Responses to recommendations and requests

This year we made direct recommendations to the Great Western Hospital based on the Enter and View we carried out In July 2021. Healthwatch Swindon, Wiltshire and West Berkshire heard the experiences of patients that had used the Emergency Department (ED), Urgent Care, and four inpatient wards at Great Western Hospital (GWH).

There were no issues or recommendations escalated by our Healthwatch to Healthwatch England Committee and so no resulting special reviews or investigations.



# healthwatch

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