



# Brent Voices

Healthwatch Brent's brand-new  
quarterly magazine

# Welcome to the Spring edition of Brent Voices, Healthwatch Brent's new quarterly magazine

Spring is finally here, and with it the chance for new beginnings and a look at the year ahead. We're excited to be sharing a few big projects this month – including the launch of our new Brent Voices quarterly magazine (you're reading it now!), the publication of our GP access report and a revamped volunteering programme with plenty of opportunities to get involved.

Looking forward to the next 12 months, we have lots planned to help you get the most out of your health and social care. Many of you have told us that you'd like to see more done to support people's mental health, so we will be taking this as our focus for the coming year. From carrying out visits to Brent's mental health wards to better understanding the experiences that different community groups have when accessing services, we see this as a crucial area to make an impact.

As ever, we welcome you to get involved! This could mean [filling out our survey](#), volunteering (see page 9) or simply spreading the word by forwarding this magazine to a friend. Whatever you do, you'll be helping make a difference to health and social care across Brent.



Follow us on social media! We'd love to see you on [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) – the best channels to find out what we're doing to improve your services

# Our year in review

Back in April 2021, our team took on running the Healthwatch Brent service. Twelve months on, we're looking back at some of our highlights.

Thank you to all our partners, and to everyone who has spoken up over the past year. Your support has been invaluable, helping to ensure that we can make a real difference to the health services that we all rely on.



## SPRING

Last Spring was all about getting our new team up and running. We brought together a number of local experts to form our Advisory Group – the people who sign off on our priorities – and started reaching out to community organisations to be a part of the Grassroots Community Voices network. There are so many great groups working within Brent to improve life for their community, and we want to make sure they get the opportunity to speak out on health and social care issues that matter to them.

## SUMMER

In summer, Covid-19 restrictions were lifted, and we were able to get out and about into the community a lot more. Hearing views from the people who live in Brent is a vital part of our work, making sure we're focusing on the things that matter to you! Although there's lots we can do to hear from Brent patients and residents online, going out on community visits helps us reach a much wider group and hear from those who don't commonly have their voices listened to.



# Our year in review

## AUTUMN

Some of our priorities in the Autumn included collecting feedback on Brent Council's new Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and working with Brent's Maternity Voices Partnership to give local women a chance to speak up about what matters to them. We also carried out follow-up work to ensure that our previous recommendations, to improve support for young carers in households with substance misuse, had been followed through. [View the report here.](#)

## WINTER

Our GP Access project kicked off in November, and we spent much of the winter finding out whether people in Brent can get a GP appointment when they need one. You can read about the results on the next page and find out what we're doing to make sure improvements are made. We also evaluated the Winter Access Fund schemes commissioned by Brent Primary Care. These have helped to ease pressure on services over the winter, and we look forward to sharing the results of our evaluation soon.



## Be a part of the story

If you want to see your concerns raised as part of our work, then please let us know. You can [fill out the Health Services Survey online here](#), or contact us at [info@healthwatchbrent.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchbrent.co.uk). We will record your views and ensure that concerns are raised with relevant services.

Every three months, we share a summary of the feedback we've received through our quarterly patient experience reports ([see the latest one here](#)). These reports go out to stakeholders across the borough, and help to make sure that residents have a voice in health and social care.

# Can you get a GP appointment when you need one?

We've been carrying out an in-depth survey into GP access in Brent – here's what we've learned.



**371 residents shared their views**

**Many of them were concerned about the difficulty of getting an appointment. We also heard compliments about the efforts of practice staff.**

With the impact of Covid-19, many GP practices have had to change the way that they deliver services and reduce face-to-face contact. GPs have found themselves under more pressure than ever, and patients have raised concerns about delayed appointments and difficulties contacting their GPs. We decided to delve deeper into the issue, using a borough-wide survey and targeted engagement work to understand experiences of GP access across Brent, and areas where GP practices may need additional support.

Many practices need to review their face-to-face appointment policies, making it easier for patients to see a doctor in person

Patients often find it difficult to contact their GP practice, and support is needed from NHS England so GPs can upgrade their telephone systems

Many patients would like the eConsult system to be reviewed, and practices need to set out realistic timescales for responding to patients

Lots of our respondents complimented the quality of care and friendliness of staff. However, some also felt that more training was needed to ensure that staff provide a good service

When patients can't access a GP appointment, they often have to turn to other services such as A&E or even private healthcare.

**[READ THE FULL PUBLIC REPORT HERE](#)**

# GP access: patient feedback

“During the pandemic, we can’t see GP face to face. It is all telephone. You are given a three-hour slot for your appointment, and it’s easy to miss the call. Miss it twice and that’s it, you don’t get another appointment. I have gone private now.”

“I believe the doctors, nurses and pharmacist are effective and professional. I have reasonable confidence in the advice they give. However, it is very difficult to build any perception of continuity of care because different doctors make telephone calls and seldom is there any knowledge of patients or what has been filled in on the eConsult.”

Go to the Healthwatch Brent website to [read the full public report](#) and see our results in more detail. We have also contacted individual GP practices with more detailed results and recommendations, allowing them to make improvements based on the specific feedback of their registered patients.

## What happens next?

We will be revisiting the GP practices in 6-12 months to ensure that improvements have been made in line with our recommendations. This will involve carrying out ‘Enter & View’ visits, and speaking to patients about their experiences.



# Healthwatch Brent out in the community!

## Find us at a community event near you

Have you spotted us out in the community? From Daniel's Den parent and toddler groups to the Brighter Health Easter African Market, we take every opportunity to visit local events and meet people.

If you see us out and about, come and say hi – and if you have an event or community group that you'd like us to visit, email Cleo Chalk:

[cleo.chalk@healthwatchbrent.co.uk](mailto:cleo.chalk@healthwatchbrent.co.uk) These events are a great opportunity for local people to share any concerns they have about local services.



## Monthly lecture series Building Better Health Equalities

We're running a new monthly lecture series all about building better health equalities, in partnership with Brents Councillor Ketan Sheth and our host organisation The Advocacy Project.

Head to [The Advocacy Project's website](#) to watch our previous events, covering topics such as children and young people's mental health, food inequalities and gender health taboos. And watch your inbox for details of our upcoming May event, to be announced soon.

# Could you be our new Insights & Outcomes Officer?

**We're hiring!** We're looking for someone to lead on data analysis and outcomes for Healthwatch Brent and our host organisation The Advocacy Project, recording and analysing insights shared by local people. You'll build trusting relationships with key stakeholders, and follow up on outcomes where we've been able to influence those responsible for planning and delivering services. Sound interesting? [Find out more & apply here.](#)

## What's on in Brent



### Join the LNWH Patient and Carers Participation Group

If you've received care from LNWH – for instance at Northwick Park Hospital – then why not join their Patient and Carers Participation Group to give feedback? Email [lnwh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net](mailto:lnwh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net) for more information.



### Free mental health and suicide prevention training

Free training for anyone who lives or works in Brent, run by The Jen Group in partnership with Brent Council. Upcoming sessions on 3 May and 10 May. [Book here.](#)



### You Decide Health & Wellbeing Grants

Do you have a great idea for improving your local neighbourhood? Apply for a You Decide Health & Wellbeing Grant by 20 May for funding. [Details here.](#)



### Ask the midwife

Every Friday at 9.30am, maternity voices partnership hosts ask a midwife – an opportunity to ask questions about your antenatal, birth or postnatal care with senior Northwick Park midwives. Find out more [here.](#)



### Be a patient representative for CLCH

Central London Community Healthcare NHS Trust (CLCH) are looking for Patient Representatives to help them listen to people who use their services. If you're interested in taking part, [go to the website to find out more.](#)

# Make a difference to healthcare in your neighbourhood

## Would you like to be a part of Healthwatch Brent?



Life as a volunteer is never boring. Whether you sign up because you want to make a difference, to build your experience, or to benefit from the social opportunities, volunteering is a great way to get out and about and make a difference to your local area.



Here at Healthwatch Brent, we've recently revamped our volunteering programme, offering even more opportunities and making it easier for anybody to get involved. You can find micro-volunteering roles such as social media support, community engagement and information & signposting on our website, as well as lots more details about what it means to be a volunteer. If you live in Brent and you want to improve health and social care then we would love to hear from you – get involved!

### Introducing Young Healthwatch Brent

Are you a young person that wants to make a difference? We don't think age should be any barrier to volunteering and being a champion for your community! Our new Young Healthwatch Brent programme will be packed with opportunities to go out and gather views from other young people, ensuring that your voices are heard. This programme is being developed by young people for young people. If you'd like to be a part of it, please get in touch.



Adults and young people interested in volunteering can contact Ibrahim Ali for more information:  
[ibrahim.ali@healthwatchbrent.co.uk](mailto:ibrahim.ali@healthwatchbrent.co.uk)