



**Annual Report 2024–2025**

# **Unlocking the power of people-driven care**

Healthwatch Brent

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"The impact that local Healthwatch have is vitally important. Healthwatch are empowering their communities to share their experiences. They're changing the health and care landscape and making sure that people's views are central to making care better and tackling health inequalities."

**Louise Ansari, Chief Executive, Healthwatch England**

## A message from our Chair

We've had a very exciting year at Healthwatch Brent. Changes in personnel normally presage a drop in engagement as new teams find their way. At HWB a seamless handover in 2024 has seen our new manager, Patricia, and her tireless team Sidrah and Ibrahim, not only complete all outstanding research but instigate high-level changes in 2025. As well as feeding the views and experiences of local residents into the national drive to improve health and care provision and to improve outcomes in our borough, we have become an assertive and active partner in local decision-making.

You will get a good sense of what that looks like in this annual report. As the NHS restructures under the eye of the new government, we ran highly successful public consultations on GP access and got answers on some of the key concerns raised. While that may not lead to instant improvements at a time when the whole service is being remodelled, it gives us the ammunition to maintain momentum as advocates, activists, and, above all, experts. Our job is to act on your concerns. We are, and will continue, doing that.

You will see that our work has been welcomed by many key leaders. We are data driven and our approach is to provide robust analysis and identifying key trends – the real stories that you share with us are researched, evaluated, and used to put forward a compelling case for positive local change.

So how do we ensure we continue to work at our best going forward? We stay rooted in our community and keep asking the hard questions. Our focus going forward is to offer a place at the table to the people who make the decisions as well as those who have to live with their consequences. It is to create a virtuous cycle connecting the providers and the users so they can speak directly with each other.



**Shyama Perera – Healthwatch Brent Chair**

## About us

# Healthwatch Brent 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've supported more than 3,749 people to have their say and get information about their care. We currently employ 4 (Part-time) staff and, our work is supported by 16 volunteers.

## Reaching out:



**1336** people shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.

**1533** people came to us for clear advice and information on topics such as GP access, Adult Social Care support and how to raise complaints.

## Championing your voice:



We published **6** reports about the improvements people would like to see in areas like General Practice (GP), Maternity services and hospital discharge.

Our most popular report was our enter & view report focusing on the quality of care in four care homes and experiences of hospital discharge.

## Statutory funding:



We're funded by Brent Council. In 2024/25 we received £121,769 which is **0.8% higher** than last year.

# A year of making a difference

Over the year we've been out and about in the community listening to your stories, engaging with partners and working to improve care in Brent. Here are a few highlights.

## Spring

The GP access report influenced North West London Integrated Care Board (ICB) to delay changes to same-day access until further engagement with patients and residents is conducted.



We strengthened our partnerships with Adult Social Care and POhWER to support closer alignment and greater impact.

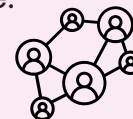


## Summer

We made six clear recommendations to improve hospital discharge to care homes. The hospital discharge teams developed an improvement plan based on some of this feedback.



We participated in eight engagement events reaching 106 people and hearing their views. Whilst also raising awareness of our service.



## Autumn

Responding to a request from Adult Social Care we gathered lived experience feedback from autistic residents. Our feedback about what really matters to them, will inform strategy development.



Our joint report on maternity services influenced community-based postnatal staff to attend wards to raise awareness of their service.



## Winter

We supported the Integrated Care Board (ICB) by gathering feedback from residents on the NHS 10 year plan. and provided residents the opportunity include the key improvements they would like to see in healthcare locally.



We supported the community engagement for the Brent Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA). Collectively we increased the feedback threefold.





# Working together for change

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

This year, we've worked with Healthwatch across North West London to achieve the following:

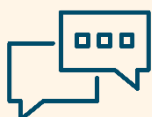
## A collaborative network of local Healthwatch:



We actively participate in meetings with the other seven Healthwatch teams that operate in North West London (NWL), to identify where we might align our efforts and share best practice.

This year we jointly raised concerns to the ICB about the low level of engagement on their same day GP access plans which resulted in them extending the consultation period to ensure that resident voices are reflected in decision-making processes.

## The big conversation:



Across the Healthwatch teams we supported the ICB to raise awareness of the NHS 10-year plan consultation, especially to seldom heard groups and those more likely to face health inequalities.

We also attend the NWL Integrated Care System meetings with the aim of nurturing collaborative working, sharing information and exploring effective strategies that yield positive tangible impacts.

## Building strong relationships to achieve more:



We attend key strategic meetings including the Health and Wellbeing Board, Co-production and patient experience meetings where health and social care representatives come together with the aim of feeding back residents views to support alignment of efforts and resources that have the greatest positive impact. We look forward to continuing to collaborate to make care better.

We've also summarised some of our other outcomes achieved this year in the Statutory Statements section at the end of this report.

# 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 Brent this year:

## Creating empathy by bringing experiences to life



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

We worked with the Brent Autism Navigator and Adult Autism Diagnostic Service at Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust to capture the experiences of Brent residents living with Autism. We shared details of the daily health and care barriers they face with Brent's Autism Partnership Board and key health and care decision makers.

## Getting services to involve the public



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

We met with people with dementia and their carers to understand their experience of Brent's Customer Care team and care needs assessments. The director of Adult Social Care said the feedback was critical in helping understand the needs and concerns of residents. The recommendations were fully accepted and used to improve the services.

## Improving care over time



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

Our partnership with the London North West University Healthcare patients experience and discharge teams that started in 2023/24, continues to support improvements. Improvements have included improving communication on discharge aiming to discharge patients earlier in the day.



# 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 many 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.



# Listening to your experiences

## Exploring access to Adult Social Care (ASC)

Last year, we worked in partnership with the ASC team to take a deep dive into the experience of accessing services from the perspective of residents with dementia, their carers, care home professionals and residents with learning disabilities and autism.

### What did we do?

At the request of our Adult Social Care team (ASC) we organized a number of community engagement visits to better understand the lived experience of our residents and what matters to them in respect of ASC. As always, we created a safe and independent environment for our residents to speak up and for feedback to be delivered anonymously.

### Key things we heard:

89%

of service users rated their experience between neutral or mixed which indicated an inconsistency in the quality of delivery



15%

stated that the lack of support for residents with hearing loss was a barrier.

52%

reported that residents felt unsupported as they did not fall under the care act and were not redirected to other services that could help them.

Our work showed how individual and complex service users' requirements are (even compared to the rest of London) and the impact this has on the perception and expectations of services. It demonstrates that "one size fits all" approach is not helpful.

# Listening to your experiences

## Exploring access to Adult Social Care (ASC)

### What difference did this make?

Over the period of this work we have established a strong partnership with the ASC team and although it's difficult for them, to hear negative feedback they have remained resilient and taken our residents views on board.

#### **Listening to People in Brent: Working Together to Improve Adult Social Care**

Thank you to Healthwatch Brent for your important work in helping us listen to the voices of local people and carers. Your support has played a big part in helping Brent Council understand how people experience Adult Social Care – especially those with learning disabilities, autism, and sensory impairments.

We have listened closely to what people have told you, and we've already made some key changes based on that feedback:

- We have set up a new Sensory Disability Service to give better support to people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have sight loss.
- We've introduced new ways to carry out timely assessments, including Community Assessment Days, and we're now expanding this into Brent Hubs and GP surgeries.
- We've refreshed our website to make it easier for people to find the information they need.
- We've launched a new tool called "Ask Sara", an online app that gives reliable information and advice about care and support.
- We've introduced co-production in way we work, so that residents are fully involved in shaping and improving the services they use.
- Brent Council has also asked Healthwatch Brent to carry out focused work to gather feedback from people who have recently used Adult Social Care. This is helping us learn directly from residents and carers so we can keep improving.

We are fully committed to making sure everyone in Brent can get the right support, at the right time, in a way that works for them. We are proud to work in partnership with Healthwatch Brent and will continue to listen, learn, and improve – so that people can live their best lives.

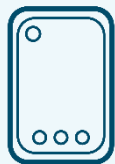
**Claudia Brown**  
**Director Adult Social Care**  
**London Borough of Brent**

# Listening to your experiences

## Action on hospital discharge to local care homes

Healthwatch Brent visited four care homes as part of a planned strategy to look at the experience of residents in the care home, with a particular focus on issues surrounding hospital discharge.

### Key things we heard:



#### Key areas of improvement included

- missing paperwork
- inadequate communication
- deadlines for discharge being missed
- residents being discharged to the care home when they are still significantly unwell



We've worked closely with the patient experience and discharge team at London North West University Healthcare NHS Trust

### What difference did this make?

'At London North West University Hospital patient experience and feedback is a core element of our service improvement work. In partnership with the Healthwatch Brent Team we gained an independent perspective on the hospital discharge process from the point of view of patients, carers and care home staff. As a result, we have improved our discharge processes and are very proud of now having a new discharge checklist, training delivered to our discharge Co-ordinators by the Dementia and Older Persons Matron and digital nursing educators, and a trusted nurse assessor who supports to facilitate our highly complex patients requiring nursing homes on discharge. Improving discharge experience for all patients remains our continued focus.'

Annika Towell  
Head of Patient Experience  
Corporate Nursing |  
Healthcare  
London North West University Healthcare

Natasha Harmsworth-Blyth  
Head of Complex Discharge  
London North West University



# Hearing from all communities

**We're here for all residents of Brent, one of the most diverse boroughs in London with around 150 different spoken languages and clear health inequalities. Over the past year, we have worked hard to reach out to those communities whose voices often 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.

**This year, we have reached different communities by:**

- Working with Ashford Place's memory cafes to hear from the experiences of people with memory loss conditions, carers and the elderly population on various research questions.
- Attending Brent health matters events to expand our reach.
- Supporting the Brent Somali organization to connect with council and health leads
- Working closely with the Brent Autism care navigator to understand what their lived experience is in Brent.



# Hearing from all communities

## Improving understanding patient choice / rights

**We developed an awareness-raising information session and delivered it to interested communities.**

People told us that they were not aware of their rights around patient choice and appreciated being informed.

### What difference did this make?

All of the community groups that we delivered this session to appreciated the awareness raising and felt more empowered as a result. The dementia support group, including carers appreciated the session delivered by Healthwatch on their rights and choice and this enabled carers to access the correct support and advice to continue to provide this valuable service which saves the NHS and council finances and resources.

## Helping young carers to express “what matters to them”

**This work commenced as an ASC review but led to a broader discussion about young carers in Brent, how we engage with them and what really matters to them” Supported by the Brent Carers Centre.**

We engaged with 14 young carers and 3 professional support colleagues and found (1) young carers not identifying themselves as carers (2) Stigma attached to saying you are a young carer and (3) Cultural values where caring is something that is expected and seen as a duty young people are happy to do this. We found that the Brent young Carers Centre provides a very supportive environment for carers to relax, have some fun and discuss issues that they face.

### What difference did this make?

The results of this work were presented at the Brent Council Young Carers working group where the key decision makers are present. The work was well received.



# Information and signposting

**Whether it's finding an NHS dentist, making a complaint, or choosing a good care home for a loved one – you can count on us. This year 687 people have reached out to us for advice, support or help finding services.**

**This year, we've helped people by:**

- Signposting people to statutory support services and local community organisations. Providing up-to-date information people can trust
- Delivered talks at local community groups on "knowing your rights", health passports, safeguarding and keeping well to name a few.
- Listening to their concerns carefully so we can suggest options / services for them to consider to help with their specific needs.



## How to raise an issue about their GP

**We identified a trend pertaining to residents who felt uneasy about raising a complaint with their GP practice as they were not clear about their rights and feared reprisals from their practice.**

We explained clearly the process for raising issues as a way for the practices to learn how to improve their service. We reviewed GP websites to ensure the correct information is available to patients and made the complaints escalation process as clear as possible.



“Healthwatch helped me to be clear about the process of raising an issue and doing it in a constructive way”

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## Improving support for people with autism

**Ned felt that he was being passed around services and kept falling through the gaps.**

Over the time that we have known Ned he has expressed that he has not been supported by housing, mental health and adult social care services. He says he is not coping but is not unwell enough to get help – he feels abandoned ! At one point Ned was paying £40 for one hour of telephone befriending services.

Understanding Neds experience and having a good network in the community we were able to locate some free, face-to-face befriending support.



“Many of us have previous trauma or other conditions but don’t do anything about them because we are waiting for a diagnosis. Services that raise awareness of support in the community are so valuable.” NED



# Showcasing volunteer impact

**Our fantastic volunteers have given 320 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:**

- Carried out enter and view visits to local care homes to support an improvement in hospital discharge.. As well as improvement in the adult social care provision.
- Collected experiences and supported all our residents to raise "What matters to them".
- Attended key meetings/ events with the Council and NHS to ensure the views of our local population were represented.

## **How our volunteers represent the very diverse community we serve**

- Our volunteers reflect the diversity of our community and speak over 15 languages.
- The age range of volunteers is 17 yrs to 74 years and collectively they focus on supporting local people to be heard.
- They support key community events such as the NHS 10-year plan consultation, disability forum and raising awareness about health and social care.



# Showcasing volunteer impact

## 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.

"Having completed my Master's in Nutrition for Global Health, I was unable to secure the type of role I wanted due to lack of experience in the field.

I joined Healthwatch in November 2024 and have gained insight into health and social care and the needs of residents. I attended community engagement activities and fed back the residents' views. The most interesting were the workshop for underrepresented groups in research and resident sessions on nutrition and malnutrition.

I have now secured a role in public health research and continue to volunteer"



Claudia

"I joined Healthwatch as a volunteer in November 2023 and enjoy being able to support my local community to speak about the improvements they would like to see and the difference it would make to their lives.

I supported the adult social care Mystery Shopping project which helped the council to identify and implement positive changes to their customer services process.

My ambition is to go into the medical profession; the opportunities volunteering has given alongside supervision and support is helping me realise the goal"



Akshaya

### Be part of the change.

If you've felt inspired by these stories, contact us today and find out how you can be part of the change.



[www.healthwatchbrent.co.uk/volunteer](http://www.healthwatchbrent.co.uk/volunteer)



020 3869 9730



[info@healthwatchbrent.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchbrent.co.uk)

# Finance and future priorities

We receive funding from Brent Council under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to help us do our work.

## Our income and expenditure:

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from Government	121,768	Expenditure on pay	90,478
Additional income	1,100	Non-pay expenditure	8,233
		Office and management fee	24,677
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£122,869</b>	<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>- £519*</b>

\* Overspend was made up by the Advocacy Project

## Additional income is broken down into:

### Integrated Care System (ICS) funding:

Healthwatch across North West London 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
NHS 10-year plan engagement	£1,100

# Finance and future priorities

## Next steps:

**In 2025/26, we will keep a clear focus on engaging with our residents , especially people in the most deprived areas, so that the decision makers from Brent and national health and social care services hear their views and experiences.**

We will also work together with partners and our adult social care team, local Integrated Care System and community organisations to help develop an NHS and social care culture where, at every level, staff strive to listen and learn from patients to make care better.

## **Our top four priorities for 2024/25 are:**

1. Community engagement and continue listening to what matters to our residents.
2. Pharmacy services and supporting the Brent Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA) to ensure residents of Brent are aware of the services available to them locally through their pharmacist.#
3. General Practice (GP) assess, improvement and ability to feed into improvements from lived experience.
4. Raising awareness of health and wellbeing support, especially in seldom heard communities.



# Statutory statements

**The Advisory Project holds the contract for Healthwatch Brent. Registered office:- The Advocacy Project c/o, Stowe Centre, 258 Harrow Road, London, W2 5ES**

**Healthwatch Brent 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 **10** 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 2024/25, the Board met **4** times and made decisions on matters such as key priorities, engaging more strategically with the ICB and supported the team to stay focused, fair and independent. 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 2024/25, 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 through our newsletter and website as well as forwarding copies to our commissioners and key Health and social care leaders.

# Statutory statements

## Responses to recommendations

We had no 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 various meetings and committees such as the safeguarding adult's board, Patient experience executive committee, NWL ICB meetings, Health Inequalities and Vaccination Executive Group, Brent co-production advisory board and the disability forum.

We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in NWL Integrated care system. For example, we attend and raise awareness of the Brent Residents forum which are facilitated by the Integrated Care Partnership (ICP). We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

## Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Brent is represented on the Brent Health and Wellbeing Board by Patricia Zebiri – Healthwatch Brent Manager.

During 2024/25, our representative has effectively carried out this role by **attending and participating in meetings as well as providing a 6 monthly update on our work and sharing our plans for 2025/26 for their feedback.**

Healthwatch Brent is represented at North West London Integrated Care Partnership level by Patricia Zebiri – Healthwatch Manager – Brent.

# Statutory statements

## Enter and view

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
Ogilvy Court Care Home – DMP Healthcare	<p>The aim of the visits were both to collect feedback from the residents about their experiences of living in the homes, and to find out more about challenges faced by residents and staff after discharge from hospital.</p> <p>We collected experiences from residents, staff, management, family/friends and relatives. The visits were conducted so that patients and staff were empowered to speak up if things were not working adequately.</p>	<p>All four care homes received their feedback and an opportunity to comment. Three received recommendations for improvements</p>
Meera House, 146–150 Stag Lane, Kingsbury, London, NW9 0QR		
Riverview Lodge, Birchen Grove, Kingsbury, London, NW9 8SE		<p>A collective report was developed bringing together the views of all four care homes on hospital discharge which led to a bigger project to support improvements in hospital discharge.</p>
Willesden Court, 3 Garnet Road, London, NW10 9HX		

# Statutory statements

## 2024 – 2025 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
Customer experience report: Access to adult social care – Mystery shopping	Findings and observations provided to the Director of Adult Social Care as part of a wider community engagement project that has been extended into 2025/26
Resident feedback on the NHS 10 Year plan	Resident views uploaded onto the NHS portal. Discussion with the ICB about the benefit of an independent and inclusive engagement and how much depth of experience and ideas for change it yields – ICB confirmed they could see the benefits.
Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA)	Voting member of the working group, supporting public engagement and raising awareness of the consultation.
Capturing young carers views on adult social care.	Presented our research to the Young Carers working group to help inform their strategy decisions. We are not regularly attending this group.
Resident views on adult social care: Autistic people and people with learning disabilities	Research and recommendations provided to the Director of Adult Social Care as part of a wider community engagement project that has been extended into 2025/26
GP access in North West London perspectives from patients in Brent and Westminster	Discussion with the ICB about delaying the implementation of plans until further consultation and engagement was undertaken. The ICB commissioned local Primary Care Groups to undertake engagement and via their on-line method over 10,000 views were captured.
Resident views on adult social care: People with dementia and their carers	Research and recommendations provided to the Director of Adult Social Care as part of a wider community engagement project that has been extended into 2025/26
Council co-production board / meetings	Attend board and associated meetings to advocate for residents and support their involvement.

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