



Speaking up for better care

Healthwatch Brent annual report 2025/26

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Acting Chief Executive
Chris McCann

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“The NHS plays a vital role in our lives, and we know it faces real challenges. Listening to people’s thoughts about their care is one of the best ways to improve services. Every comment, concern, and compliment helps health and care professionals see what works and what needs to change, so care can be safer and better for everyone.

“We want to say a heartfelt thanks to all the local people who have taken the time to share their experiences, and to the health and social care professionals who have listened and acted on that feedback. Your commitment has helped make a real difference for our community.”

A message from our chair

Each year we work with you to collect, collate, and amplify your concerns around NHS delivery at all levels. This includes mapping services in care homes. Our remit is not to name or shame, but to advocate on behalf of service-users; to ensure that there is a fit between their needs and local health provision.

The smallest changes can impact lives. In this report we not only tell you who we have represented this year, but to whom, and how. We share the data, the main findings from reports, and the responses to our recommendations.

For optimum impact we follow up constantly with the Public Health team at Brent and the heads of services from mental health to social care. We report to our Integrated Care Board and scrutinise the work of surgeries, pharmacies, and hospitals.

Behind the scenes, it's been a difficult time with an impending reorganisation of Healthwatch England impacting staffing. Conversely, it has sharpened our focus.

We have streamlined key objectives and outputs. In this coming year we will further raise the bar on services in Brent. Our doors remain open to our community, to seldom-heard groups, to activists, advocates, and practitioners. Please join us on our journey. Share your concerns, your experiences, and your ideas. Our doors remain open to *you*.



Chair
Shyama Perrera



“Our doors remain open to our community, to seldom-heard groups, to activists, advocates, and practitioners...Our doors remain open to *you*”

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

In 2025/2026 we supported more than **18,531** people to have their say and get information about their care. We employed **5** part-time staff and, our work was supported by **13** volunteers.

Reaching out:



1,471 people shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care. **Healthwatch Brent engaged with 783 residents face to face, 668 via phone: e-mail and webforms and 15,589 residents through our website and social media.**

17,060 people came to us for clear advice and information on topics such as endometriosis, finding / accessing local services, General Practitioner (GP) complaints and extreme temperatures.

Championing your voice:



We published **7** reports about the improvements people would like to see in areas like **pharmacy, adult social care, and GP complaint process.**

Our most popular report was '**Resident views on adult social care: Autistic people and people with learning disabilities**' highlighting people's suggestions on potential improvements.

Statutory funding:



We're funded by **Brent Council**. In 2025/26 we received **£127,765**, which is **3.89%** more 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

Our partnership with Adult Social Care (ASC) saw us contacting over 31 residents to conduct in-depth conversation about their experience and outcomes. Our recommendations were used to support service improvements.

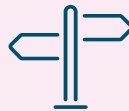


Partnering with the Brent Autism Care Navigator, we successfully advocated for continued funding for 2026/27. Brent Council have now created a post which focuses on support for the Brent neurodivergent community.



Summer

Community engagement with seldom heard groups saw us attending 9 engagement events, including food banks, Autism cafe and the council's disability empowerment event.

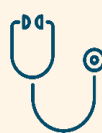


We served as a voting member of the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment working group. Supporting greater resident engagement which resulted in gaining 389 responses from residents compared with 53 in 2022.



Autumn

Our engagement work led us to identify GP access and raising complaints as an issue for our residents. This led us to undertake two enter & view visits, with another two organized for 2026/26.



We promoted NHS 111 and Pharmacy First services in an effort to raise awareness of alternative channels of support and avoid a visit to A&E.



Winter

We launched a communications refresh aiming to build a greater social media presence to promote engagement, with our younger / more IT literate residents. Our average reach on Instagram is 2.9k.



Attended and actively participated in 13+ council / NHS or other decision-making meetings / boards in order to amplify residents' voices, share our research and identify opportunities for partnership working, bringing our residents voice closer to decision makers.



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 Northwest London (NWL)

This year, we've worked with Healthwatch across NWL to achieve the following:



A collaborative network of local Healthwatch:

We strengthened collaboration across local Healthwatch during this period of rapid change, ensuring residents' voices continue to shape health and social care. By coordinating insights, supporting shared priorities, and representing the resident collective experiences at Integrated Care Board (ICB) level, we hope to preserve the community voice and influence decision-making across NWL.



A big conversation:

Along with other local Healthwatch teams we published information on the NHS 10-year plan and asked residents to continue to provide feedback on their experience and recommendations for improvements.

This information is then made available to the Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) to inform future decision making from a bottom up / lived experience perspective.



Building strong relationships to achieve more:

We have been proactive in attempting to build close partnerships with our local council and Health service colleagues. However, given the scale of change this has proved challenging. In the complexity of change we have focused on working closely with the established Brent voluntary community support services (such as Ashford Place).

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 regularly attended Kiln Women's Group for residents with mild cognitive impairment, local food banks, public health events, ADHD and Autism centre, and memory cafes. In these settings, we find out what really matters to our residents experiencing dementia, health issues, social isolation, and bereavement. We then feed back key themes to key stakeholders / the health and wellbeing board and other decision makers to inform service improvement.



Getting services to involve the public

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

Healthwatch Brent works in partnership with the council's co-production team, adult safeguarding lead, and integrated neighbourhood teams to increase public engagement and amplify the voices of our seldom heard with the aim of reducing health inequalities through lived experience. One of our key successes this year was to significant impact we had in regard to the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA).



Improving care over time

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

Our work with the Adult Social Care team spanning 18 months demonstrates the impact close partnership working can deliver. Our reports / findings and recommendations were welcomed and used to inform service improvement and training for staff. Changes made include staff training in customer care and creating a signposting directory.

Working together to improve outcomes

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On behalf of the West and North London NHS ICB, I would like to extend our sincere thanks to the Brent Healthwatch team for your continued support, insight, and advocacy on behalf of Brent residents.

We are especially grateful for your support in delivering and co-designing the Brent Residents Forum, which successfully brought together residents, statutory services, and voluntary and community sector organisations at Chalkhill community centre to share experiences, strengthen partnerships and help shape local health and care services.

We would also like to recognise and thank Healthwatch Brent for your valuable contribution in supporting the palliative care consultation, helping to ensure that residents' voices, experiences, and perspectives were meaningfully reflected throughout the engagement process.

Your dedication, commitment, and collaborative approach continue to ensure that the voices of Brent residents are heard and reflected in the work we do across the health and care system. Thank you for your ongoing partnership and for the invaluable contribution you make to improving outcomes for our communities.

Lorraine Chang-Edwards
Involvement Manager
NHS West and North London Integrated Care Board

Working together to improve outcomes



During 2024-2026, the Brent Safeguarding Adults Board (BSAB) established a project to strengthen community engagement. Brent Healthwatch supported this project incredibly well. It meant that, as Independent Chair of the BSAB, I gained access to members of the community who would not be the usual people to raise their voices to professionals.

The Brent HW team supported the development of the project, identified the groups for me to visit, and assisted me in facilitating the groups. This project has been one of the most important areas of work I have undertaken during my two years in Brent. The voices of the people have influenced the work taken forward by the BSAB and emphasised the need for a long-term community engagement group to inform, and challenge, the BSAB.

Thank you Brent Healthwatch for all the valuable work you have achieved, both on the community engagement project, and as a valued member organisation of the BSAB.

Nicola Brownjohn
Independent Chair
Brent Safeguarding Adults Board



Listening to your experiences

Services cannot improve if they do not know what is 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 health and social care helps us know what's working and what isn't, so we can give feedback on services and help them improve. Given the diversity of the Brent population, bottom-up service improvement informed by service users is essential to making service changes that have a positive impact.



General Practice (GP) access and complaints process

This year, we took a deep dive exploring GP practices as a result of residents reaching out to us about the challenges of making an appointment and of raising complaints.

In recent years, there has been a move towards greater digitalisation, which is also a key element of the NHS 10-year plan. We set out to understand the experiences of accessing GP services and how GPs are managing complaints.

What did we do

We carried out Enter and View reviews of two GP practices: Stonebridge Practice and Park Royal Medical Practice. Healthwatch Brent representatives and volunteers show up to the GPs in person to make observations and speak with patients and practice staff. We spoke to **50** staff and patients in total.

Key things we heard:



- **Successful complaints processes involved staff training and taking a kind/compassionate approach which included listening and resolving issues quickly.**
- **Good access looked like providing several ways to book appointments and having expanded hours.**
- **Visual communication and resources needed improvement (e.g. leaflets, signage).**

We identified some best practices **in social prescribing**, service access, and complaints processes, while also spotting areas for improvement.

What difference did this make?

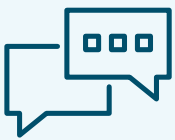
Our reports were sent to GP Practice Managers to clearly understand the good practice we identified and set out recommendations that would improve patient experience and outcomes.

Improving adult social care through lived experience

People who accessed the Adult Social Care services expressed issues in customer service and important processes.

As a result of our longstanding partnership with the Adult Social Care (ASC) team, we set out to anonymously capture the in-depth stories / views of residents who had recently accessed the service. We spoke with 31 residents or their carers. Their stories showed some discrepancies in service delivery quality, process gaps, and communication shortfalls. They also shared stories of where services had been good and they had, had a good experience / outcomes.

Key things we heard:



17%

of respondents told us it was difficult to find information on ASC.

30%

of respondents said they felt they did not have enough choice over their care or the care of someone they care for.

62%

of respondents said they felt respondents said that they were satisfied with the service they received.

“I feel that parts of the system are great, and other bits do not work well... I am sure a simpler process can be put in place.”

Our recommendations focused on four key areas of improvement 1) communications, 2) improve process for changing a care package/timely change, 3) quality of care, 4) signposting. We shared our report with the Adult Social Care Senior Leadership team.

What difference did this make?

The ASC team welcomed our recommendations and considered them carefully as part of their ongoing service improvement project. This included investment in staff customer care training, investing in Brent Carers Centre, creating a directory for signposting, and implementing a Brent customer promise.

Hearing from all communities

We're here for all residents of Brent, one of London's most diverse boroughs. 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 (especially the seldom heard) 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:

- Highlighting the rights to healthcare and process, in an appropriate way to access / navigate health services .
- Sharing local resources with residents such as asylees, Somali, Latinx, and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, Intersex, Asexual and plus community (LGBTQIA+) youth centers, groups, guides and advice lines.
- Collaborating to help deliver the Brent Residents' Forum, an opportunity for the community to give feedback on the future of their healthcare



Partnering with the Somali resident's group

The Somali community can face culturally-specific barriers to accessing health care. In partnership with The Almis Association, we developed critical communication channels (outreach, drop-in, face-to-face sessions) for Brent's Somali community to get support and bring to light their priorities and feedback.

What difference did this make?

Key community-based resources were rolled out, including a Brent Somali mental health support group, parents' support group, and women's support group that help Somali residents overcome culturally specific barriers to health care and bolster mental health.

Listening to Brent's dementia residents

Our discussions with residents attending Brent's dementia and memory cafes, their carers and the volunteers revealed a number of common issues in terms of navigating and accessing health and social care services. Issues included the challenges of keeping up with technological advances in accessing healthcare. As a key focus of the NHS 10-year plan, this indicates that additional barriers to access are being established.

Concerns were also raised around being scammed, or taken advantage of from a community who do not clearly understand the new world of informational technology (IT) and artificial intelligence (AI).

What difference did this make?

We have raised issues at the patient experience group around having several forms of communication in place, including letters and phone lines. Brent council are also investing in development sessions for residents who are able / would like to improve their technical skills.

Information and signposting

When you're struggling to find an NHS dentist, looking for help about how to make a complaint, or need advice about a good care home for a loved one – we're your first port of call.

This year **17,060** people have reached out to us for advice, support or help finding services. These conversations also help us to understand where, and how, your care can be made better.

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



Access to essential wheelchair for teenager

Thanks to Tom's advocacy for his son, future wheelchair users should face fewer barriers.

Tom has a teenage son who requires a wheelchair update as he grows. Without the correctly-sized wheelchair, Tom's son's quality of life was being negatively affected, including a potential drop-off in school attendance.

After several months of contacting the supplier directly and unsuccessfully, Tom contacted Healthwatch Brent. Our team shared resources and escalated this case to the Integrated Care Board and commissioner of the supplier contract. This intervention resulted in the clear communication of when the wheelchair would be delivered.

Additionally, Healthwatch Brent asked the commissioner to review the service delivered by the supplier to ensure Brent residents are receiving the service expected under the agreed contract.

Shining a light on resources for carer

Mary was busy championing care for her daughter in a mental health crisis; she needed resources to draw on.

Mary has an adult daughter who suffers from anxiety, depression and autism. Mary's daughter attempted suicide and was later discharged.

Mary had been in contact with adult social care (ASC) and the National Health Services (NHS) to chase support for her daughter, which she deemed inadequate. Mary felt unheard and that her daughters' issues were not taken seriously. Mary also felt there were not enough resources available in Brent.

Mary left her full-time job to become her daughter's carer and continued to seek support she feels her daughter should be getting.

Healthwatch Brent was able to put Mary in touch with local charities and services for both herself and her daughter. We also provided some free education links for Mary, as she felt she did not know enough about her daughter's illness to provide the best carer support possible.

Showcasing volunteer impact

Our fantastic volunteers have given 434 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 communities to promote our health information, such as prostate cancer and men's health.
- Attended council events such as the disability forum and disability empowerment event to build partnerships and raise what really matters to residents.
- Carried out enter and view visits to local GPs to evaluate access and complaints process.



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.



Mary, Ibrahim,
& Margaret at
Healthwatch England
Awards

Mary Evans has been a crucial part of our Enter and View Team. Mary and Margaret were part of the volunteer team that won the Healthwatch England award 2021.

Mary shares, "I've been volunteering with Healthwatch Brent for about 10 years. When I retired from my job working with carers I knew that I wanted to continue to do something that would be of use in the community. I

I was introduced to a great team of volunteers, some of whom are still volunteering with Healthwatch today. I was given an induction and training in safeguarding and confidentiality. The work with Healthwatch has proved varied and interesting; I have interviewed people in care homes, GP surgeries, mental hospitals and in many and varied community settings. I love talking to people and I have met hundreds of people in my time with Healthwatch.

As a volunteer I have always had great support from the Healthwatch team and especially from Ibrahim, the volunteers' manager who is always there when you need him. I would recommend anyone who enjoys meeting people and who wants to make a contribution to the community to think about volunteering with Healthwatch Brent."

Thank you to Mary and all the Healthwatch Brent volunteers for making a real difference.

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



020 3869 9730



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	£127,756	Expenditure on pay	£89,664.32
		Non-pay expenditure	£7,489.96
		Office & management fees	£36,711.07
Total income	£127,756	Total Expenditure	-£133,865.35
Deficit			-£6,109

Over the next year, we will keep reaching out to every part of society, especially people in the most deprived areas, so that those in power hear their views and experiences.

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. Examine if all residents experiencing HIV, including seldom heard communities, are receiving appropriate care.
2. Review state of A&E care in the borough, including experiences of corridor care, services that appropriately divert residents, and discharge.
3. Seek to understand and make recommendations around the state of GP access, quality of service provision, and complaints procedures.
4. Review all apps, systems, and technologies being introduced and understand how digitalisation is going well and how it could be improved.

Statutory statements

Healthwatch Brent, hosted by the Advocacy Project. 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 **9** 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 **4** times and made decisions on matters such as seldom heard groups we should aim to engage with, signing off our work priorities. . 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, e-mail it to local community leads and share it with key Council and National Health Service leader.

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 the Health and Wellbeing Board, Co-production strategy group, Integrated Care Board (ICB), Safeguarding Board and Mental Health and Wellbeing Board.

We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in North West London (NWL) Integrated Care System. For example, we attend the North West London patient experience meetings. We meet and share information with the other 7 Healthwatch's in NW London. Most closely with Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster Healthwatch's.. 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 2025/26, our representative has effectively carried out this role by presenting our workplan and sim monthly updates. We also share research / recommendations to help support more informed decision making.

Healthwatch Brent is represented on North West London Integrated Care Partnerships by Patricia Zebiri Healthwatch Brent Manager. However, given the significant systemic changes these meeting have not been scheduled on a regular basis. Patricia Zebiri also represents Healthwatch Brent at the Primary and Community Services Executive Group

Statutory statements

Enter and view

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
Stonebridge Practice, Hillside Primary Care Centre, 150 Hilltop Avenue, NW10 8RY	Issues raised by residents about GP access and issues with raising complaints across Brent.	Report, including recommendations were sent to the Practice Manager who responded to the findings (this was included in the published report)
Park Royal Medical Practice Central Middlesex Hospital, Acton Lane, London, NW10 7NS	Issues raised by residents about GP access and issues with raising complaints across Brent.	Report, including recommendations were sent to the Practice Manager who responded to the findings (this was included in the published report)

Statutory statements


2025 – 2026 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
Adult Social Care (ASC)	Reports delivered to the ASC leadership team. Our findings were used during service improvement meetings and shared with team members to support learning.
GP access / complaints process	Review of complaints procedures across our GP's followed up with two enter and view visits. Reposts were developed and recommendations made.
Integrated Neighbourhood Teams (INT) – Wembley	Attend the Wembley INT, as one of the patient voice groups to share our knowledge of "what matters to our residents" . This can then help shape the decision making. It also ensures we stay up to date with key health and care issues / statistics.
Council co-production board / meetings	Attend board and associated meetings to advocate for residents and support their involvement.



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 www.healthwatchbrent.co.uk

 020 3869 9730

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 @hw_brent

 @hw_brent

 Healthwatch Brent

