

healthwatch

The year ahead

Our business plan
2022-23



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About us

Healthwatch is your health and social care champion. We make sure NHS leaders and other health and social care decision makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care.

There is a local Healthwatch in every area of England. At Healthwatch England, we support local Healthwatch to listen to what people like about services, and what could be improved, and we share these views with those with the power to make change happen. We also help people find information about health and social care services nearby.

Our strategy: 2021-2026

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 approach – what's important to us?

- **Listening** to people and making sure their voices are heard.
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- **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 the Government, health and care services and the voluntary and community sector to make care better whilst retaining our independence.

Our objectives

- To find out the experiences of people needing or using health, public health and social care services.
- To seek the views of those who are seldom heard and reduce the barriers they face.
- To build a sustainable and high-performing network of local Healthwatch services.
- To act on what we hear to improve health and care policy and practice.
- To build on and share our expertise in engagement.
- To be strong, well-governed and use our resources for the greatest impact.

Introduction

Louise Ansari, National Director

The COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath have affected us all.

However, the impact on communities already facing unequal health outcomes has been particularly hard.

With NHS and social care staff exhausted, and over six million people waiting for treatment, we're determined to help overcome the immediate challenges and play our part in building a future health and care service that meets the needs of all people.

Doing our bit to improve care

Since joining Healthwatch, I've been impressed by the strength of our network and our achievements in improving care. With services across England, our dedicated staff and volunteers help decision makers understand when you can't access care, when your needs have been overlooked, or where your journey between services has broken down. We highlight what is and isn't working, using views from every community.

Building a better service for all

But we have ambitions to go further. Equality was one of the founding pillars of the NHS. Yet, factors like where you live, your income and your race can contribute to unequal health outcomes. The impact of COVID-19 made existing health inequalities worse, and the cost of living crisis risks magnifying the problem even further. So, we will do more to:

- Reach out to people who are not being heard, and whose needs are not being met
- Ensure our service is accessible and reflects the communities we serve
- Use our power to ensure decision makers act to reduce the barriers you face.

With the introduction of Integrated Care Systems (ICSs), services will coordinate across regions to meet the needs of their populations – aiming to improve your experience. We will do all we can to ensure that your ICS listens to and acts on your feedback. We want a healthcare service that genuinely meets the needs of everyone.

Being your champion

Despite some local Healthwatch services facing significant funding cuts last year, we supported two million people to share their experiences or access the advice they needed. Our independence, depth of insight, and strong partnerships enabled us to quickly bring the best and worst experiences of health and care services to policymakers' attention and find solutions that work. Amongst many other issues we highlighted access to NHS dentistry and GP appointments – areas that still need improvement.

Under my leadership, I am determined to build on this foundation, ensuring we have the skills and resources to make a tangible difference for the communities we serve.

Our plans

1. Making it easier for the public to share their feedback

Our objective

To find out the experiences of people needing or using health, public health and social care services.

Steps along the way

- National and local campaigns focus on important policy changes.
- Public campaigns encourage more people to share their experiences.
- Continue to provide accessible and trusted online advice and information.
- Systems enable us to highlight the issues different communities tell us about at a national, regional and local level.

Signs of success

- More people share their experiences with us.
- People can access our advice and information on every website we support and rate it useful.
- More local Healthwatch share their data with us in near real-time.

2. Supporting local Healthwatch services

Our objective

To build a sustainable and high-performing network of local Healthwatch services.

Steps along the way

- Help local Healthwatch access and understand the available support to be effective and have an impact.
- Local Healthwatch understand and adopt our new brand purpose, values and guidelines.
- Focus on equality, diversity and inclusion, with greater confidence to work with specific communities.
- Support local Healthwatch boards, staff and volunteers to be more diverse and inclusive.
- Build good relationships so that Commissioners and ICSs value and invest in our network.
- Healthwatch are included and resourced to be formally part of emerging regional structures, so they can continue to hold services to account.

Signs of success

- More board members, CEOs, and staff highly rate our support.
- More local Healthwatch have equality, diversity and inclusion at the heart of their policies, plans and priorities and actively involve people from diverse communities.

- More local Healthwatch feel confident raising public views with their Integrated Care System.

3. Reducing barriers for people not being heard

Our objective

To seek the experiences of people whose voices are seldom heard, reduce barriers, and act on their views to improve care.

Steps along the way

- Use new approaches to make our campaigns more accessible to a wide range of groups.
- Continue to ensure every policy and research project has a focus on equalities.
- Use insights from our 'Your care, your way' campaign to drive tangible changes in the Accessible Information Standard review.
- Digital upgrades will include more focus on demographic data to better report on the disparities some groups face using care.
- Continue to build strong links between decision makers and people with real-life experiences. We will be a facilitator, helping those from seldom heard groups to have their voices heard by those in charge.

Signs of success

- Our website is accessible, so more people can get the support they need.
- More local Healthwatch will record demographic data.
- We will encourage more people from diverse backgrounds to share their experiences through our web form.

4. Improving health and care services

Our objective

To act on what we hear to bring about improvements in health and care policy and practice.

Steps along the way

- Secure significant policy changes on existing topics on which people have shared their feedback.
- Support the Healthwatch network to secure local impact using key national policy wins.
- Start one in-depth research project on new policy area looking to address health inequalities. We will select the topic based on people's feedback, opportunities for influencing national policy and the potential for external funding.

- Build on near real-time evidence reporting to reach more decision makers and highlight our impact.
- Continue to improve analysis, using new data streams and external data sources. Where possible, we will also identify insights by region to support the new Integrated Care Systems.

Signs of success

- Media reach growth.
- Increase in people accessing our evidence online.
- Increase in stakeholders who value our work.
- Increase in stakeholders who believe our work improves health and social care.

5. Promoting better public engagement in care

Our objective

Be leaders developing public engagement methods, which we share with the health and social care sector.

Steps along the way

- Plan and develop the engagement skills of local Healthwatch.
- Increase the profile of local Healthwatch as engagement leaders and build connections with other engagement professionals.

Signs of success

- Create a benchmark of local Healthwatch reporting that their engagement has been informed by including people with direct experience of the issue.
- Create a baseline of stakeholders who view local Healthwatch as engagement experts.

6. Building a strong organisation

Our objective

A strong and well-governed organisation, using our resources for the greatest impact.

Steps along the way

- Review governance to ensure our procedures are as effective as possible.
- Staff have the skills to support our strategic aims, through our learning and development programmes.
- Annual budget allocations and contracts will demonstrate value for money and efficiency.
- Report regularly on the difference we make to health and social care.
- Projects will start with an equality assessment to ensure they are inclusive.

- Equality policies provide opportunities for staff and promote diversity through recruitment.
- Robust data protection processes to support our research and insight.
- Encourage and facilitate better work across the organisation.

Signs of success

- Good risk management including of financial risks
- More staff feel they make a difference through their role.
- All projects are assessed for data protection and equality.



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