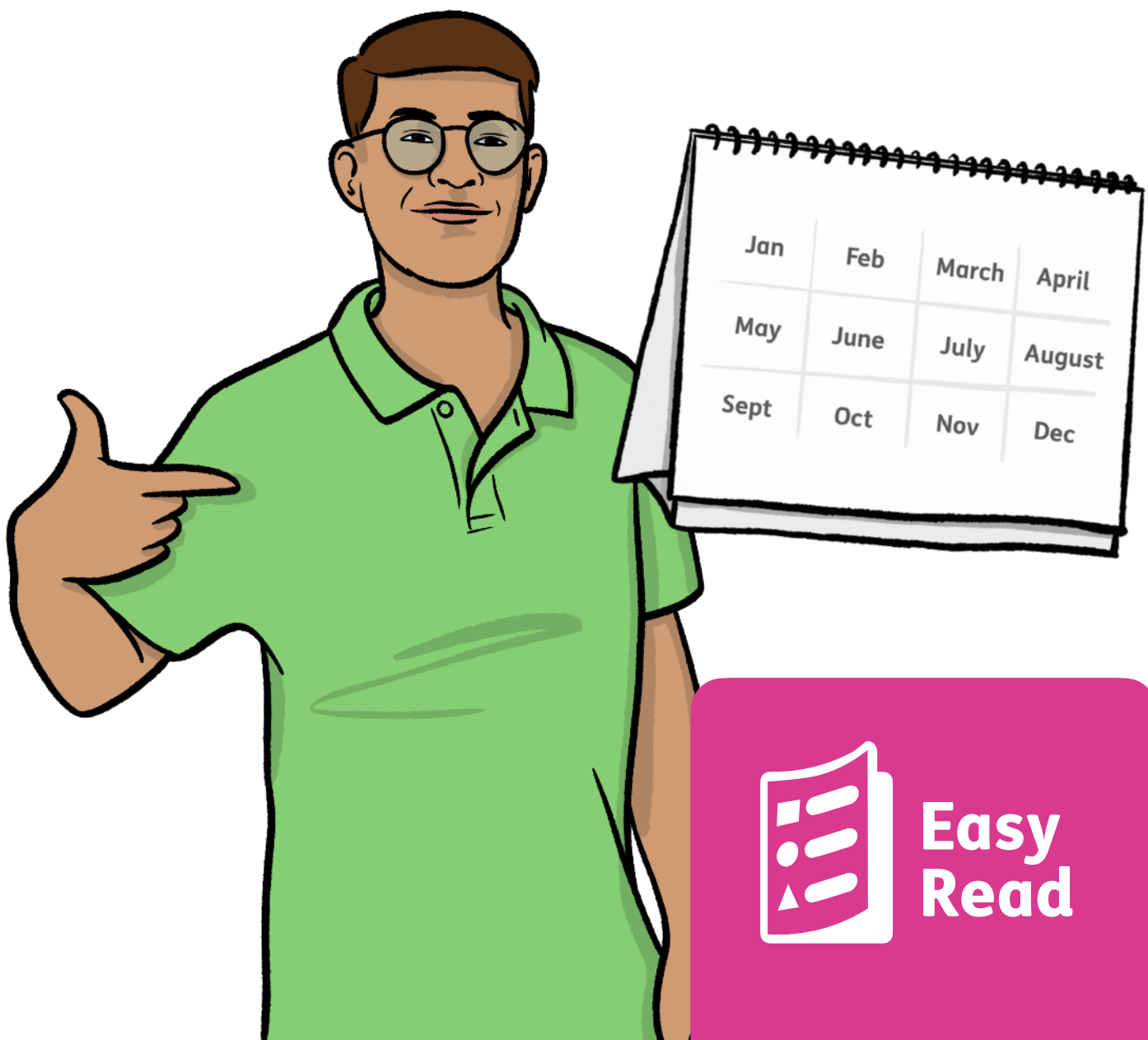




Our yearly report

2022 to 2023



Easy
Read

Easy Read



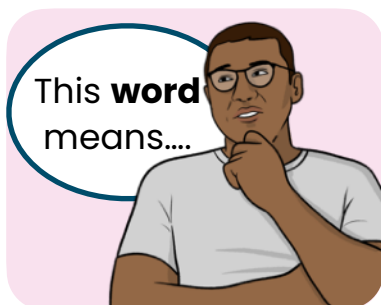
This is an Easy Read version of some information. It may not include all of the information but it will tell you about the important parts.



This Easy Read booklet uses easier words and pictures. Some people may still want help to read it.



Some words are in **bold** – this means the writing is thicker and darker. These are important words in the booklet.



Sometimes if a bold word is hard to understand, we will explain what it means.



Blue and underlined words show links to websites and email addresses. You can click on these links on a computer.

What is in this report

About this report	4
About us.....	5
What needs to improve.....	7
What we did in 2022 to 2023.....	8
Getting the services people need	12
Checking on changes.....	22
Listening to people	26
Finding problems	32
Improving people’s lives.....	35
Next year	36
Find out more.....	37

About this report



Every year Healthwatch England writes a report to explain what we have done and what we plan to do next.

We are an organisation that:



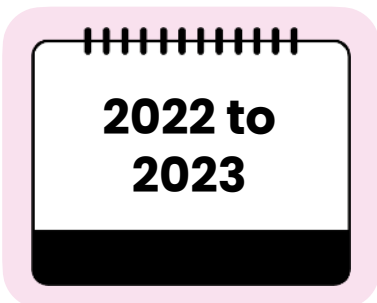
- Helps people who have a problem with their health or care services.



- Looks into health and care services and writes reports which say how they should improve.



- Tells health and care managers what people think about their services.



This is our report for 2022 to 2023.

About us



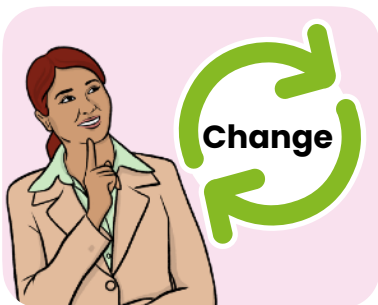
We want to make sure that everyone can get the care they need.



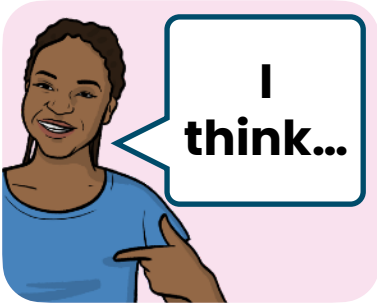
We listen to what people think about health and care services.



We listen to everyone, especially people who find it difficult to be heard.



We think about what people say and work out how health and care services should change and get better.



We tell managers of health and care services:

- What people think about their services.



- What changes they should make so their services get better.



We give people advice and information about health and care services.



We work with other organisations, like the government and community groups to improve health and care services for everyone.



There are many local Healthwatch groups around the country. We, at Healthwatch England, work closely with these groups.

What needs to improve

There are 5 main things that health and care services need to improve:



1. Making sure that people can use the health and care services they need.



2. Making sure that everyone gets the same good chances to get good health care.



3. Talking to patients and other health and care services.



4. Listening to patients.



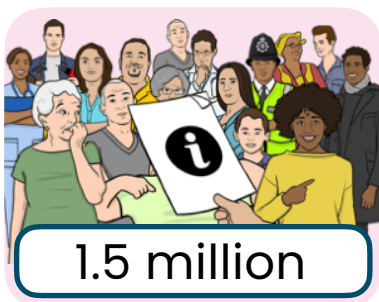
5. Helping people to feel like health and care services can help them.

What we did in 2022 to 2023



This year:

- 11,615 people told us what they think about health and care services.



- We gave more than 1.5 million people information about health and care services.

We also:

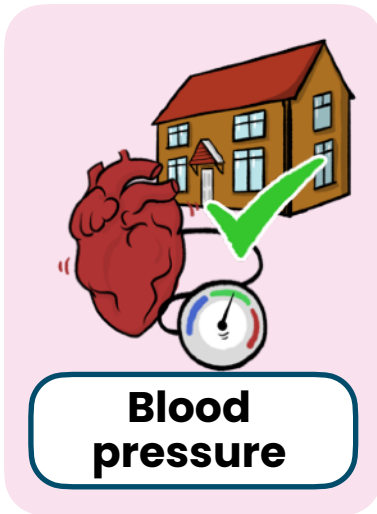


- Supported people who were waiting for care.



- Spoke up about the people waiting for their local doctor (GP) to send them to get care.

We also:



- Wrote a plan to make it easier for people to check their **blood pressure** at home.

Blood pressure measures how much blood is moving through your body.



- Spoke about how people are finding it harder to get **mental health** support.

Mental health is how you feel in your mind. People who feel sad or worried all the time might need mental health support.



- Helped the NHS to understand that they need to change how they work with dentists.

We also:



- Said the NHS should change the **Accessible Information Standard**, to help more people.

The **Accessible Information Standard** says that people must be able to get information about their health in a way that they can understand.



- Shared the stories of people with **Long Covid**, which helped the NHS to write a plan to help people.

Long Covid is an illness. People with Long Covid feel unwell for a long time.



- Helped more people to speak to us, by running a project called **Because We All Care**.

We also:



- Spoke up about improving the mental health of mums.



- Spoke up about how the NHS needs people to feel like it can help them.



- Talked about how the **cost of living** is affecting people's health.

The **cost of living** is how much it costs to buy the things you need. It is a lot more than it used to be.



We explain more about what we have done in the rest of this booklet.

Getting the services people need



Many people have to wait a long time to get health care.



And not everyone gets the same chance to get good health care.



This is making people more ill,
and less safe.

Health services must:



- Help people who need health care the most.



- Support people who are waiting for health care.



- Make big changes to how dentists help people.



- Improve mental health services.

Planned health care



People had to wait a long time for planned health care in 2022 and 2023.



The NHS is working to improve this, but it will take time.



The waiting list got longer, and many people became more ill.



Some groups had to wait more than others, like poorer households, **ethnic minorities**, disabled people, and women.

Ethnic minorities are people of the same race, in a place where most other people are a different race.

To help fix these problems, we said there should be:



- More NHS office workers to stop mistakes and help patients better.



- NHS and groups to give more support to waiting patients.



- Pay for sick people waiting for NHS care.



- Help with travel costs for patients going to different hospitals.



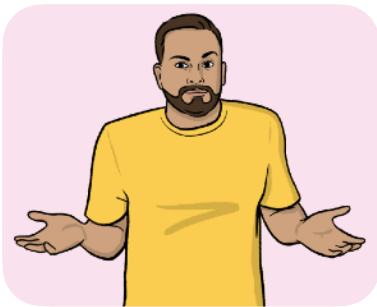
NHS England said that they will hire more staff to help patients, which is good news.

Dentists

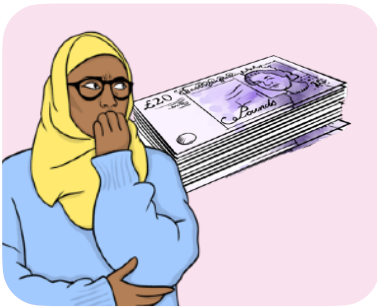


We have said a lot that NHS care for people's teeth needs to improve.

Many people told us that:



- They could not see a dentist.



- Seeing a dentist costs a lot of money.



Some people told us that their health is worse because they cannot see a dentist.



Some felt worried and found it hard to eat.



People with less money had the most problems with seeing a dentist.



In the south of England, more people said they could afford **private care** than people in the north of England.



Private care is care that people pay for. It is different to NHS care.

The NHS made some changes to improve things:



- Dentists will get more money to help people who need a lot of work on their teeth.



- Dentists must tell people if they are taking new NHS patients.



- The NHS will give less money to dentists who are not helping people.



We need bigger changes to stop people being in pain because they cannot see a dentist.



Members of Parliament (MPs) agree, after looking at the information we gave them.



We will keep asking the NHS to make changes.

Mental health

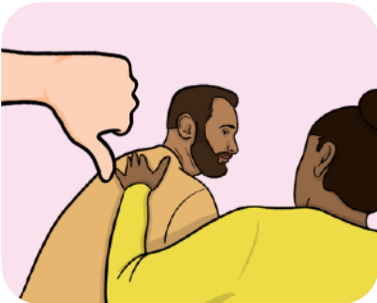


People often share sad stories with us about mental health services.

People have told us about:



- Having to wait a long time to get help.

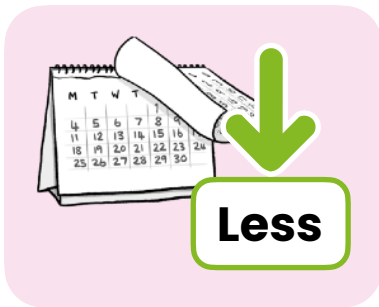


- Not getting support while they wait.



The NHS is trying to improve, but there are still a lot of problems.

We want the NHS's big new plan for caring for people to explain how they will:



- Shorten mental health waiting times.



- Improve mental health care for children who are becoming adults.

We also want a new law, called the Mental Health Bill to:



- Give patients more say.



- Make sure doctors listen to patients.

Checking on changes



Helping to make rules that help patients is important.



But we must also listen to patients to check if new rules work.

Mental health care for mums



In 2019, we worked on new rules to improve how health services check if mums are healthy and happy.



But when we looked at this in 2022, we found that many mums still do not get mental health help.



This work helped the NHS plan better mental health services for new parents.

Information



It is very important that people get health information that they can understand.



This helps people to make good choices about their health.



Missing out on important information can harm people's health.



The **Accessible Information Standard** says that people must be able to get information about their health in a way that they can understand.

We asked NHS to improve the Accessible Information Standard by:



- Checking that services use it.



- Having a person, called an **accessibility champion**, in each health and care service.

They will check that information is easy to understand.



- Providing better ways for patients to tell health services what they need.



- Listening to people who need help to understand health information.



- Making sure all staff get training on this.



We wrote a letter to the NHS asking why they had not made these changes to the Accessible Information Standard.



They said they will write the new Accessible Information Standard soon.

Listening to people



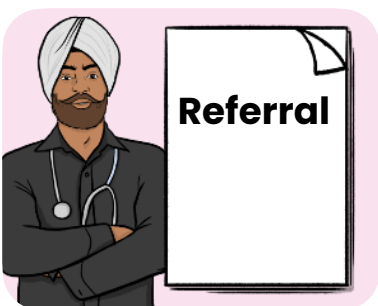
Listening to what people say helps find hidden problems and improve care for everyone.

Local doctors (GPs)

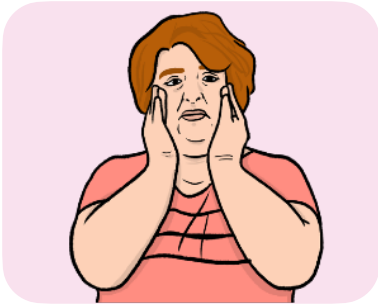


People often wait a long time for **specialist help**.

Specialist help is help from a doctor who knows a lot about certain illnesses.

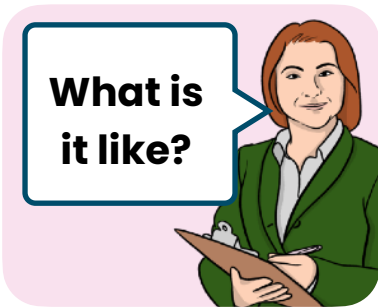


To see a specialist doctor, you need your GP to send you to see them. This is called a **referral**.



Getting a referral from a GP can be confusing and take many appointments.

We had ideas to improve GP referrals:



- Ask patients about what it is like to get a referral.



- Share more information with patients.



- Give patients choice over appointments.



- Train more office staff to help doctors with referrals.



The NHS plans to improve GP services.



This includes making it easier to see a doctor and easier referrals.

Tech



Tech is gadgets and equipment that help people.



Many people use tech to check their blood pressure at home.



The NHS asked us to look at this, to see if it was working well.



People told us that it helps them to feel relaxed, and gives them choice.

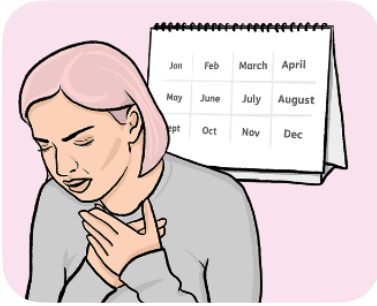


But other people told us that they did not know how to use the tech, and did not hear enough from doctors.



We told the NHS about ways to help people check their blood pressure at home better.

Long Covid



People shared their Long Covid stories, to help improve support and care by the NHS in England.

We found that:



- GPs needed more help to spot Long Covid.



- People with Long Covid needed more information about the help they could get.



- Services needed to work together better.



The NHS in England has written a plan to improve support and care for people with Long Covid.

People who live in care homes



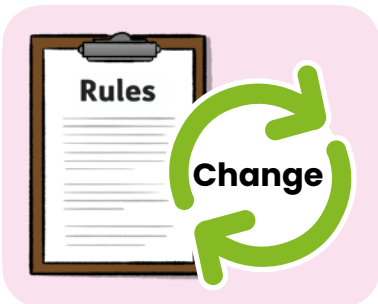
COVID-19 changed care homes.



Many people could not have visitors. This meant that they felt lonely.



In many care homes, people can still not get visitors.



We have worked in a group to make changes to rules about visiting people in care homes.

Finding problems



Listening to patients helps us find problems early.



This helps those in charge to make choices that stop those problems.

Cost of living



The cost of living can make people more ill.



People did not go to appointments, or get medicine that they needed because they were worried about the cost.



This affects women more than men.

We had ideas to help:



- GPs should help make sure that people can get medicine for free, if they cannot afford it.



- The NHS should tell people about ways to get to appointments for free.



- Dentists should offer to check people's teeth if they need a lot of help.



- The NHS should make all phone calls to NHS services free.

Feeling good about the NHS



Many people feel worried that the NHS cannot help them.



This means that they might not ask for the help they need.



We said that the NHS should do more to let people know about the ways it can help them.



This includes telling people about the **NHS App** – this is a way of getting help on your mobile phone.

Improving people's lives

**Because
We All Care**



We worked on a project called **Because We All Care**.

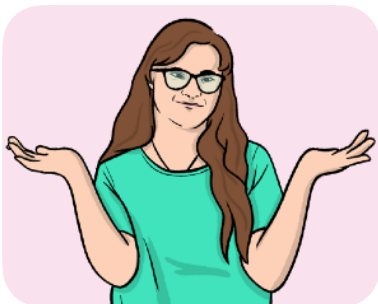
**You
should
speak up**



We told people about why it is important to speak up about what it is like to use health and care services.



We asked people with long-term illnesses about what it is like to use health and care services.



Many said that they had not been asked about this before.



It is very important that the NHS finds out what people think of their services.

Next year

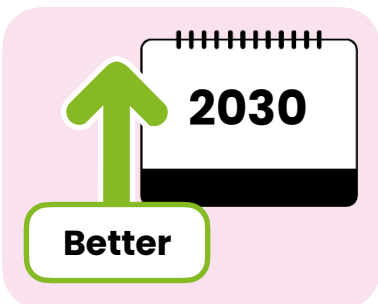
Over the next year, we will:



- Keep listening to people across the country.



- Think about how we can improve the things that worry people the most, like waiting times.



- Think about how health and care services could be better by 2030.



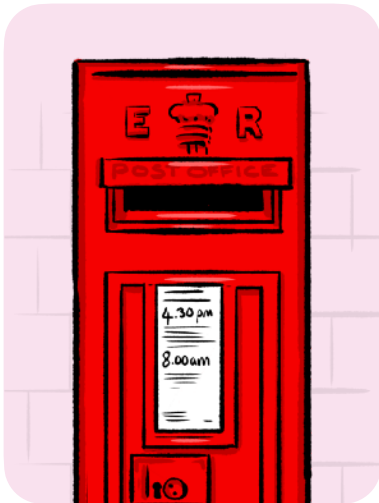
- Work with the NHS to help staff to listen to patients.

Find out more

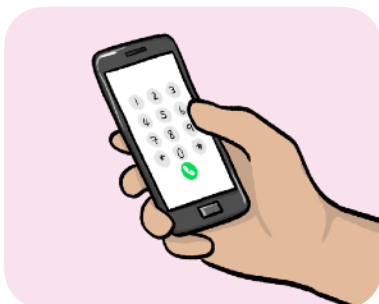


You can look at our website here:
www.healthwatch.co.uk

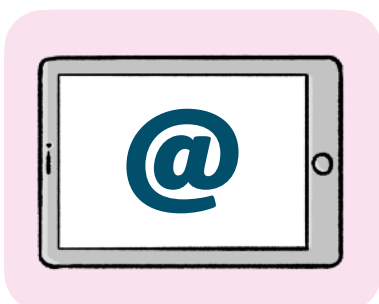
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