

# Impact Report: Fighting Health Inequalities

Jan 2022



## Our Impact: Fighting health inequalities

Healthwatch Birmingham is committed to ensuring all the city's diverse communities can access the best possible health and social care. Following our report into health inequalities in the Somali community, people from ethnic minority groups in Birmingham will benefit from improved engagement from health and social care services, greater involvement with the design and delivery of services and improved quality of care.

**We engaged with health and social care services in the city to tackle the negative experiences, challenges and barriers people had told us about.**

**Improvements made include:**

**Birmingham Women's and Children's NHS Foundation Trust** has recruited a Patient and Families Ambassador for Inclusion and Diversity to ensure staff have access to the latest information on equalities and inclusion. The trust has also included Somali specific cultural awareness training as part of a wider Cultural Insight project.

**Black Country and West Birmingham NHS Clinical Commissioning Group** has co-produced a cancer awareness video with people from the Somali community.

**University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust** held focus groups with Romanian and Urdu/Mirpuri speaking communities to improve the health information that the trust shares with them.



**I have seen a change in how I access services. I am now more aware about services and also what I can ask for.**  
- study participant

**Healthwatch Birmingham is fantastic at breaking barriers for an area that is traditionally very difficult for secondary care providers to engage with.**  
- Dr Jyoti Baharani, University Hospitals Birmingham



**Birmingham City Council** has begun running ESOL classes supporting women navigating public services, including healthcare.

**Birmingham Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust** engaged participants from our study in its 'Diabetes Project: Somali Community' to gain better understanding of cultural factors which impact on diabetes management. The trust also involved participants in Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) Day 2021 activities informing young people about career opportunities within the NHS.

**The Royal Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Foundation Trust** has translated PALS and complaints leaflets and posters into the top five languages spoken by patients.

**Healthwatch Birmingham will continue to listen to those most likely to experience inequality and use this to drive improvement. How to share your experiences:**

Visit [www.healthwatchbirmingham.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchbirmingham.co.uk)

Call 0800 652 5278

Email [info@healthwatchbirmingham.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchbirmingham.co.uk)

## Summary

**There is no greater illustration of the implications of health inequalities than those that were laid bare by the Covid-19 pandemic. It became clear during the pandemic that health inequalities are largely due to widely entrenched social and economic disparities, including the interconnection with race and ethnicity.**

Our study into ‘Somali people’s experiences of health and social care services in Birmingham’ aimed to identify the challenges that impact the experiences of health and social care for ethnic minority groups. In that report, published in November 2020, we found that levels of trust and engagement were being impacted by the negative experiences of health and social care, and the challenges and barriers people face when accessing services. These experiences included dismissive attitudes of professionals, lack of dignity and respect, poor diagnosis and referral to specialist treatment, cultural and language difficulties, limitations in interpretation support, stigma and discrimination.

We engaged with key stakeholders within health and social care to help improve these negative experiences, challenges and barriers. These included Birmingham City Council, Birmingham and Solihull Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), Black Country and West Birmingham CCG and Birmingham’s seven trusts<sup>i</sup>. We asked our partners how they would use the findings of the report to:

- Improve their knowledge of the issues affecting the Somali community (and/or other ethnic minority groups);
- Improve their engagement with the Somali community (and/or other ethnic minority groups) including the involvement in decision-making processes;
- Address the issues that have been raised in the report regarding diversity, stigma and discrimination, knowledge and rights, culture and language and trust;
- Design, commission and deliver improved services for the Somali community (and/or other ethnic minority groups).

Identifying the specific barriers and challenges people from the Somali community face enabled our partners within health and social care to initiate improvements to care and practice. These include:

- Linking health and social care services with the Somali community and other ethnic minority groups;
- Involving service users from the Somali community in decisions around their care;
- Improving care;
- Improving staff knowledge of issues affecting ethnic minority groups in Birmingham through recruitment, training and improved use of demographic data;
- Improving services that have a wider impact on care;
- Using the report’s findings to inform practice.

***“I have shared the report to all the community and I have used it when using health services. When I contact healthcare professionals I forward the report and they know that I am aware. They treat me better. Things are improving.”***

**Hassan (Study participant)**

<sup>i</sup> Birmingham Women’s and Children’s NHS Foundation Trust, University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust, Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust, Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust, The Royal Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, Birmingham Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, and West Midlands Ambulance Service University NHS Foundation Trust.

## Actions Taken

### Linking health and social care services with the Somali community and other minority ethnic groups

**Black Country and West Birmingham CCG** held two focus groups with members of the Somali community to discuss the CCG's project plan to develop cancer videos for Birmingham's Somali population in May 2021. The CCG's project resulted from our findings in the initial report that health literacy and poor referrals to specialist treatment were leading to worse health outcomes.

The focus group discussed their experiences of cancer, barriers they face when seeking help, the content of the videos and how the videos can be shared. Two GPs who are cancer specialists were present at the meeting and they spoke about the work needed to educate the workforce in order to improve cultural and linguistic competency. A video in the Somali language about cancer symptoms and the importance of presenting at the GP, including information on how to overcome barriers, has now been produced.

***“The Black Country and West Birmingham CCG are undertaking a piece of work to support the earlier diagnosis and screening of cancers. One of the projects within this is to create videos in the most common community languages spoken across the Black Country and West Birmingham; - Polish, Somali, Bangladeshi, Urdu, Punjabi, Arabic & Latvian***

***In order to make the videos as successful as possible, the CCG wanted input from the communities themselves into what the content of the video should look like. The focus groups with Healthwatch Birmingham provided really valuable insight into how a video would best resonate with the Somalian community; we learnt that they would like to hear about the facts on cancer signs and symptoms in the Somalian language and having pictures and videos so that people can watch this in private. They said they would also like to hear stories of local people who have had cancer, sharing their lived experience and seeing familiar faces that they know and can relate to.***

***This insight gives us a great starting point when planning the content of the videos to ensure that we can improve earlier screening and diagnosis of cancers. This feedback will be collated with the feedback from the other communities to begin the planning and production of the videos.”***

**Emma Peters**

**Engagement, Communications and Marketing Officer**

**Black Country and West Birmingham CCG**

**Birmingham Women's and Children's NHS Foundation Trust** recorded the patient story of one of the study participants to be used during the trust's Board meeting, as a start to ensuring more diverse stories are taken to the Board.

**University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust** held four workshops with people from the Romanian and Urdu communities living around Heartlands Hospital in July 2021, as part of a health literacy project aiming to understand the barriers these groups face. Our report has informed this engagement. Various health literacy materials will be developed in community languages on renal related conditions, diabetes and cancer.

**Birmingham Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust** engaged with participants from our study for its 'Diabetes Project: Somali Community', to gain feedback on accessing diabetes services and improve understanding of cultural factors which impact on diabetes management.

*“Since the study, I have been involved in a number of projects with hospital trusts and the CCG. The co-production of cancer videos with Black Country and West Birmingham CCG; and the Diabetes Project with Birmingham Community Healthcare Trust. I was also involved with the Birmingham Community Healthcare Trust to run an information day for young people from our community. It was good to let young people from our community see the different careers in the NHS. I am happy that health and social care is involving. It’s good to make sure that our voices are heard. But I still think health and social care need to improve how they communicate the outcome of engagement.”*

**Anonymous (Study participant)**

## **Involving service users from the Somali community in decisions around their care**

**Birmingham and Solihull CCG** used our report alongside the CCG’s own report into its work with the Somali and other communities to ensure its communication and engagement is impactful and effective. This has been used alongside other activities to change the way the CCG engages the Somali and other under-represented communities.

**University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust** is developing a patient experience strategy which will include ensuring that all sections of the communities they serve have the opportunity to be listened to, including working with external partners.

*“At University Hospitals, we serve a diverse population and it is important to ensure we are addressing health needs for individuals regardless of the language they speak and their ethnic background. Having read the report from Healthwatch Birmingham on ‘Health Inequalities: Somali people’s experiences of health and social care services in Birmingham’ based on interviews with members of the city’s Somali community, we approached the HWB team to help us facilitate similar conversations with the Romanian and Urdu speaking communities around our hospital.*

*We have been very impressed by the entire Healthwatch Birmingham team in helping us enable this work from sourcing members of the relevant communities to interview, to organising online focus groups and workshops and gathering much needed intelligence to move our work forward. The team is fantastic at meeting deadlines and breaking barriers for an area that is traditionally very difficult for secondary care providers to engage with.*

*We will continue to work with the HWB team to develop solutions on how better to communicate with the hard to reach communities around our hospital and implement guidelines for the same once we have completed the initial scoping exercises.”*

**Dr Jyoti Baharani PG Cert Med Ed (Dist) FHEA FRCP**

**Consultant Physician and Nephrologist**

**University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust**

## **Improving care**

**Birmingham and Solihull CCG** is using the Healthwatch Birmingham study alongside its own reports to inform how the CCG works through the backlog of patients to ensure there is appropriate engagement and that the patient voice is heard. Our report is supporting ongoing work at the Integrated Care Services (ICS) level around designing and commissioning services to ensure that the needs of Somali people and other communities are not overlooked.

**Black Country and West Birmingham CCG** has reviewed its commissioned translation services and the quality of service available to the Somali community to ensure that interpreters are knowledgeable, reliable, and able to explain medical terminology in simple terms.

**The Royal Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Foundation Trust** has translated its PALS and complaints leaflets and posters into top five languages spoken by patients, and will also reach out to more communities to better understand their needs.

**Birmingham Women's and Children's NHS Foundation Trust** has communicated the availability of BrowseAloud on the trust's website to its users. BrowseAloud enables the translation of information into Somali and many other languages. More of the trust's teams are being encouraged to increase their information directly on the trust website so that it can be accessed anywhere in the required language.

*"I have seen a change in how I access services. I am now more aware about services and also what I can ask for. I was always reluctant before to change my GP but I recently changed my GP to Babylon. There has been a change in how the GP treats me. The problems with normal GP's is still there, that's why I decided to change.*

*With Babylon, it's easy to book, they call back when they say they will, you get assigned the right person to be seen by, there is a clear distinction between Doctor, Nurses and who you see and there is no limit to how long I speak to the GP. They seem to take time to listen to me, asks me questions and gives me more than 10 minutes. I feel like now I can express everything am struggling with to the Doctor. There has definitely been a change in how the Doctor treats me.*

*However, Babylon is perfect for me but it's not for everyone in my community. We still need change. Since the report, I have been involved in various projects, like the cancer."*

**Anonymous (Study participant)**

## **Improving staff knowledge of issues affecting minority ethnic groups in Birmingham through recruitment, training and improved use of demographic data**

**Black Country and West Birmingham CCG** is taking a sense check of Primary and Secondary care staff (both clinical and non-clinical) to get assurance that they are accessing cultural and religious awareness training and information so that they treat all the communities they serve with dignity and respect.

**University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust** has improved the knowledge and skills of staff to ensure there is an inclusive environment for providing care and treatment to patients. The trust is developing cultural intelligence competency master classes targeting senior staff that oversee the workforce, clinical and patient facing staff.

**Birmingham Women's and Children's NHS Foundation Trust** has recruited a Patient and Families Ambassador for Inclusion and Diversity. This will be a senior person who will be ensuring that all parts of the Trust have access to the latest information on equalities and inclusion. The trust has also improved knowledge and skills of staff by including Somali specific cultural awareness training as part of a wider Cultural Insight project which will offer training workshops.

***“We work closely with Healthwatch Birmingham and the relationship is so valuable because they have a reach and scope across the whole city. The diverse nature of Birmingham and the wealth of voluntary and community sector activity is essential to access and understand in order to make service improvements.***

***Healthwatch Birmingham have prepared a number of reports that have really focussed our attention on making the improvements that our communities need and expect. They have also encouraged us to explore what changes our other local NHS providers are making and how we can improve pathways, for example children and young people coming into our ED department may be referred by GP in Primary Care but come by ambulance provided by West Midlands Ambulance Service. Our recent joint forum allowed discussions about getting it right for people across the NHS and Social Care.***

***Healthwatch Birmingham’s Somali Healthcare Report gave us a chance to think in more depth about how a young, diverse community who are relatively new to the city feel about their healthcare needs. We held some in-depth interviews with members of the Somali community to gather more feedback. In order to understand motivations and behaviour we needed to know more about family structure and the migration path that many Somali people had taken. We are now seeking Somali members for our engagement groups and targeted volunteer recruitment. We have designed a new patient-facing role to ensure that we seek further ways to improve our services in relation to race and disability - this role is called a Patient and Families Ambassador. We are also designing a programme of awareness sessions to help our staff understand our diverse communities and their needs, these have included Deaf Awareness, Autism Awareness and Gypsy, Roma, Traveller Awareness sessions so far.”***

**Mark Hillier**

**Patient Experience Manager**

**Birmingham Women’s and Children’s NHS Foundation Trust**

## **Improving services that have a wider impact on health**

**Black Country and West Birmingham CCG** is exploring, alongside Birmingham City Council, the provision of ESOL classes and how these are accessed by the Somali community across the city.

**Birmingham City Council’s Equalities & Cohesion Division** is commissioning ESOL classes, specifically targeted at women, in the most deprived areas of Birmingham with high ethnic minority resident populations. This will help women improve their conversational English skills, empower them to engage in their local communities and to navigate public services, including healthcare, independently. Our study findings will also inform the revision of the council’s Equalities Impact Assessment process to ensure that health inequalities are incorporated.

**Birmingham Women’s and Children’s NHS Foundation Trust** has targeted recruitment to NHS Cadets in disadvantaged, inner-city and communities with minority ethnic groups. NHS Cadets is a national programme helping young people gain skills and experience for employment in the NHS and social care.

## **Using the report’s findings to inform practice**

**Birmingham and Solihull CCG** is using our report as a source of data and insight to inform its approaches. The report has been shared internally and through the CCG’s governance structure - particularly the BAME alliance group who deal with a range of BAME related issues. Healthwatch Birmingham met with the CCG’s personalisation team to support the development of approaches to improve its focus on inequality issues.

**Birmingham City Council** is using the report as evidence for the joint Birmingham and Lewisham African and Caribbean Health Inequalities Review (BLACHIR), exploring inequalities experienced by Black African and Black Caribbean groups. The council's Health and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee was also given a presentation on the report's findings.

**University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust's** 'task and finish group' is using the report to inform a health literacy project aimed at ensuring that information about health conditions is tailored to the needs of different groups. The report has also been shared with key clinical leads in the trust's diabetes service and been discussed at the trust's Patient Experience Group, chaired by the Chief Nurse and attended by Directors of Nursing across the trust.

**Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust** has revised its Quality Accounts report to ensure that there is increased focus on health inequalities, an area that was previously missing.

## Next Steps

Healthwatch Birmingham will continue to engage and hear the experience of those most likely to experience inequality and use this to drive improvement. We will use the findings of this report and other intelligence to influence wider discussions around inequalities. We will support the work in localities and neighbourhoods to support Health and Social care to understand their local communities and reduce inequality.

You can share your experiences by:

- Visiting our Online Feedback Centre at [www.healthwatchbirmingham.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchbirmingham.co.uk)
- Calling Healthwatch Birmingham on 0800 652 5278
- Emailing [info@healthwatchbirmingham.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchbirmingham.co.uk)

The feedback we hear will be shared with key stakeholders such as the Care Quality Commission and Clinical Commissioning Groups.

Healthwatch Birmingham would like to thank Birmingham's NHS hospital trusts, Birmingham City Council, service users and community and voluntary organisations for their participation and involvement in this investigation.

## About Us

Local Healthwatch were established in every local authority area across England following the Health and Social Care Act 2012. Our key role is to ensure those who commission, design and deliver health and social care services hear, and take into account, the public voice. Healthwatch Birmingham listens to and gathers public and patient experiences of using local health and social care services such as general practices, pharmacists, hospitals, dentists, opticians, care homes and community-based care. We hear these experiences via our Information and Signposting Line, our online Feedback Centre, and through our community engagement activity led by staff and volunteers.

You can read more about the work of Healthwatch Birmingham here:  
<https://healthwatchbirmingham.co.uk/about-us/>

# healthwatch

Birmingham

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