



**Together**  
we're making health  
and social care better

Annual Report 2022–23

**healthwatch**  
Solihull

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"In the last 10 years, the health and social care landscape has changed dramatically, but the dedication of local Healthwatch hasn't. Your local Healthwatch has worked tirelessly to make sure the views of local people are heard, and NHS and social care leaders use your feedback to make care better."

Louise Ansari, Healthwatch National Director

# Message from our Chair

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There have been big changes in health and social care services since Healthwatch Solihull was established as the independent voice for patients 10 years ago, yet listening to people's views of the services they use and acting on their concerns remain the core reason we exist.

Understanding what people tell us about their experiences enables us to be a watchdog over the myriad of services providing health and social care across Solihull, allowing us to give credit when services are performing well, alongside highlighting areas that need to be improved.

Crucially, by advocating for the views of patients and the public, we help them to shape the way services are delivered in future. The importance of our role as an independent public champion was recently demonstrated when we helped expose serious problems at University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust (UHB).



**Richard Burden**  
Healthwatch Birmingham and  
Healthwatch Solihull Chair

Staff at UHB have always shown amazing dedication to their lifesaving work – not least during the Covid-19 pandemic. As a local resident myself, I have good reason to thank UHB staff for my own recovery from serious illness. However, patients have been failed in key areas and Trust leaders have presided over a bullying culture that has no place in the NHS. Healthwatch Birmingham and Healthwatch Solihull were among the first to call for an independent investigation and commitment to substantive changes at UHB, which we will be holding the Trust accountable for delivering.

We have also been working hard across many other areas of health and social care in Solihull. We have investigated access to urgent care and dentistry – the services where most people experience how well the NHS is working in their daily lives. We have helped to instigate important changes to GP services and are advocating for people of all ages to get the support they need.

We have given young people who have self harmed and their families an important say in how vital services work for young people. Plus, we are continuing to fight health inequalities by going directly into Solihull's diverse communities to listen to the people most likely to experience barriers to health and social care.

**The fact we can make a difference is due to all the local people who have shared their experiences with us, and testament to the hard work and commitment of the incredible Healthwatch Solihull staff team, volunteers and my fellow board members. For whatever issues arise in health and social care in Solihull, Healthwatch Solihull will always be on the side of local people helping to secure the quality care they need and deserve.**

# About us

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## Healthwatch Solihull is your local health and social care champion.

We make sure NHS leaders and decision makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care. We can also help you to find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.



### 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.



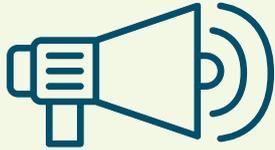
### Our values are:

- **Listening** to people and making sure their voices are heard.
- **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 care providers, Government, and the voluntary sector – serving as the public's independent advocate.

# Year in review

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## Reaching out



**2,500 people**

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

**1,458 people**

came to us for clear advice and information about topics such as mental health and the cost-of-living crisis.

## Making a difference to care

We published

**4 reports**

reports about the improvements people would like to see to health and social care services.



## Health and care that works for you



We're lucky to have

**13**

outstanding volunteers who gave up their time to make care better for our community.

We're funded by our local authority. In 2022-23 we received

**£155,322**

which is the same as the previous year.

We currently employ

**4 staff**

who help us carry out our work.

# How we've made a difference this year

Spring



Following restrictions, we recommenced full community engagement ensuring we spoke to all communities.



We started to visit care homes and speak to residents and their families about their experiences.

Summer



We worked with local PCNs to ensure residents understood the pathways to getting appointments.



We supported the #BecauseWeAllCare campaign which saw 54,000 people come forward to tell us about issues they faced with services.

Autumn



We ensured we were sharing informative and locally targeted information for people regarding the cost of living crisis.



We worked with providers to improve dental care in Birmingham and Solihull.

Winter



We published our GP Access impact report and continued to work with GPs to ensure people could access appointments via technology.



We worked with mental health services to ensure children who have self harmed and their families have patient-centred support that works for them.



## Healthwatch Heroes



**We are proud to be awarded the Investing In Volunteers quality mark again this year. It shows that we value our volunteers and demonstrates our commitment to volunteering within the organisation.**

Investing in Volunteers is the UK quality standard for all organisations involving volunteers. Awarded by the UK Volunteering Forum, Investing in Volunteers aims to improve the quality of the volunteering experience and demonstrates that organisations value the enormous contribution made by their volunteers. Healthwatch Birmingham and Healthwatch Solihull were assessed against six quality areas and proved to excel in all aspects of working with its volunteers.

1. Vision for Volunteering
2. Planning for Volunteers
3. Volunteer inclusion
4. Recruiting and welcoming volunteers
5. Supporting volunteers
6. Valuing and developing volunteers

### **Speaking about the award, our Volunteer Board Representative Tim said:**

'This has been my second involvement in the Investing in Volunteers process, and I have found it to be engaging and interesting. Volunteering with Healthwatch is full of varied experiences and I enjoy meeting the diverse community of Birmingham.'

### **Healthwatch Birmingham and Healthwatch Solihull Volunteer Coordinator Georgina paid tribute to our volunteers, saying:**

'We could not achieve all that we do without the help and support we get from our dedicated volunteers. Our volunteers bring many skills with so much knowledge and enthusiasm to everything they do, and they are really appreciated by the whole team. We are proud to offer a welcoming and supportive volunteering journey and we are pleased that the achievement of the Investing in Volunteers Award reflects this. The Investing in Volunteers process has helped us learn even more about the volunteers' perspective and I am very thankful for all the volunteers input with the process.'



# Listening to your experiences

Services can't make improvements without hearing your views. That's why over the last year we have made listening to feedback from all areas of the community a priority. This allows us to understand the full picture, and feed this back to services and help them improve.

# University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust

Healthwatch Birmingham and Healthwatch Solihull led calls for an urgent investigation into University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust (UHB), following reports that a culture of bullying was affecting patient safety.

We have been concerned for some time by poor public feedback about the four hospitals (Queen Elizabeth, Heartlands, Good Hope and Solihull Hospital) that make up one of the largest Trusts in England, meeting regularly with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and senior figures at UHB to raise the issues people were telling us about. Due to our role as the independent champion for local patients, Healthwatch Birmingham and Healthwatch Solihull Chair, Richard Burden, was invited onto BBC Newsnight to comment on allegations from former and current UHB staff members about a toxic management culture impacting the quality of care at the Trust.

Stressing the importance of patient safety and confidence, we subsequently demanded an independent investigation into UHB. In response, Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care Board (NHS BSOL) has commissioned three reviews into UHB examining:



1. Patient safety
2. Staff culture
3. Leadership

Since the reviews were announced we have been speaking to whistleblowers and patients keen to share their experiences with us and help to influence important improvements at UHB. We are also working with local MPs and other stakeholders to ensure the reviews are independent and transparent, and using regular media appearances to act as the voice of everyone who relies on UHB for care.

The first review by Professor Mike Bewick has already concluded with some important recommendations for UHB, including:

- External reviews of 'never events'
- Changes in governance and leadership
- Better staff welfare support
- Ensuring staff are confident in coming forward to report concerns

We will hold the Trust accountable for implementing those and any actions from the further reviews. However, the fact that issues at UHB went unaddressed for so long also raises questions about the current effectiveness of oversight in the NHS. Healthwatch Birmingham and Healthwatch Solihull are determined to play our role in improving scrutiny throughout the health and social care system so issues can be identified and addressed before they become serious problems for staff and patients.

# The experiences of Solihull residents who try to access Urgent Care

We investigated Solihull residents' experiences of trying to access urgent care. The key topics that people told us about included the quality of communication, the distance to services and waiting times.

Most of the urgent care services we heard about included A&E, NHS 111 and the ambulance service.

The report also found that the most important thing for Solihull residents when choosing an urgent health service included:

- location (it is easy to access/close to get to/from).
- accessing a healthcare professional on the same day.

## Key issues

- **Communication** – What is the impact of poor communication and how can it be improved between NHS 111, urgent care providers and patients?
- **Awareness** – How can the public be made more aware of how to access urgent care and what is available?
- **Distance** – For those patients concerned about the cost of travel, what can be done to support them to access urgent care? Until Solihull Minor Injuries Unit (Solihull MIU) opens in June 2023, how will inequalities be addressed for those who cannot afford to travel to other urgent care centres?
- **Waiting times** – What is being done to address waiting times in urgent care? How can this be improved for Solihull residents and how will it be communicated to residents?
- **Using urgent care if can't get GP appointment** – While we acknowledge the amount of work taking place in primary care to improve access, how can signposting be improved for alternative access to avoid unnecessary attendance to A&E or other parts of the urgent care pathway?
- **The development of the new Solihull MIU** – How are the ICB keeping residents up to date, involving residents and raising awareness?



My son was left in a side room in agony. No pain relief, when he was written up for morphine, they just kept saying the doctors hadn't written it up, [then] the doctors said they had, contacting the ward was difficult and very little update as to what was going on. They were [evasive] and difficult despite me being my son's next of kin, they wouldn't talk to me.

# The experiences of Solihull residents who try to access Urgent Care

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## What difference will this make?

### Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care System and University Hospitals Birmingham:

- Acknowledged that barriers listed in the report make effective communication difficult and this will feature in their emerging strategy.
- Agreed that there is a need to raise public awareness of the urgent and emergency care options available so that patients can access the right care, in the right setting, at the right time.
- Acknowledged that they need to do more to tackle waiting times in urgent and emergency care. They described the key to continuing to improve waiting times and flow through the system will be to constantly challenge themselves to look at whole system solutions wherever possible.
- Work will begin in February 2023, to develop a new system wide approach to patient, community and stakeholder engagement to ensure that they are listening, as a system, when making important decisions.
- Are building their engagement team within BSOL ICS. They acknowledged they have a unique opportunity to break down barriers and put in place a shared and open approach to engagement. NHS BSOL have been taking a collaborative approach with UHB on the re-opening of the Solihull MIU in June 2023.

UHB assured us that they have been active in engaging with local people, patients and stakeholders and know this work will continue. We will continue to liaise with NHS BSOL and UHB to ensure that we are able evaluate the impact this report has on urgent care for Solihull residents.



# Three ways we have made a difference for the community

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Throughout our work we gather information about health inequalities by speaking to people whose experiences aren't often heard.

## Offering our service within the community



**During and following COVID we found it harder to get out and speak to all communities.**

This year we have ensured we are back out in the community every week, across the whole of Solihull and across different communities.

One resident told us: "It's great to see you face to face, I have spoken to you over the phone a few times but I am so glad I can now speak to you in person as it is much easier for me to explain my story."

## Improving Urgent Care In Solihull



**In response to our investigation BSoI ICB and UHB agreed:**

They need to do more to tackle waiting times in urgent and emergency care. They described the key to continuing to improve waiting times and flow through the system will be to constantly challenge themselves to look at whole system solutions wherever possible. They assured us they would begin work in February 2023 to develop a new system wide approach to patient, community, and stakeholder engagement to ensure that they are listening to people when making important decisions as a system.

## Improving care over time



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

Over the year we have stayed in close contact with adult social care and local care homes to ensure that residents and their families can have their say. We have visited homes as well as piloting 'drop box' schemes where families can anonymously leave feedback in a locked box. Our ongoing engagement with adult social care allows us to raise issues quickly and deal with concerns immediately.



# Hearing from all communities

Over the past year we have worked hard to make sure we hear from everyone within our local area. We consider it important to reach out to the communities we hear from less frequently, to gather their feedback and make sure their voice is heard and services meet their needs.

## This year we have reached different communities by:

- Building a new partnership with Solihull College and University Centre, who have helped us engage with more young people, giving them the opportunity to voice their opinions on services in Solihull and signposting them to services available to them.
- We have engaged with various community groups and charities in North Solihull to ensure that people from lower socio-economic communities are listened to and have their experiences recorded.
- Continuously monitoring who we are hearing from so we can target our engagement activities to ensure we hear from a diverse range of residents.

## Supporting Men

Only 30% of the feedback we receive at Healthwatch Solihull is from men and we have made it a priority to engage with more men in the community. Through building relationships with local charities and organisations we have been able to gather feedback at weekend events including football matches, increasing feedback of the experiences of men in Solihull. We have heard that for some men accessing health and care services can be hindered by work commitments and that, due to the current cost of living crisis, income has taken priority over their health. We have been able to signpost men to extended hour services in Solihull.



"It's much easier to get an appointment in person by attending the surgery. This is not convenient when you work, and I cannot afford to have time off."

**Male, 52, Solihull**

## Engaging with younger people

In the past less than 1% of the feedback we have received has been from people under the age of 25. It has been a priority of ours to hear from younger people through community engagement and building partnerships with local education providers. This year we began working with Solihull College's Health and Social Care Department. We delivered presentations to hundreds of young people studying to be health and social care professionals to educate them about the work that Healthwatch do to help improve services in Solihull. We were also able to inform them of their rights as service users. Through engaging in this way, we were able to open-up discussions about their own personal experiences and offer our information and signposting services. The new partnership has proved very successful, we recruited a new young volunteer to our team and have been invited back to work with the new students in September.



"I found the presentation from Healthwatch Solihull very informative, and it inspired me to join the team as a volunteer. I want to help make a difference for the people in the community. My first engagement event went really well, and I'm looking forward to attending more events in the future."

**Dylan, 19, Solihull**



## Information and Signposting Service

Contact our free, friendly and confidential service

### How can we help you?

- Get links to health, social care and support groups near you.
- Get information about what to do when you have concerns or a complaint.
- Find out how to get support, including links to advocacy services, safeguarding and patient rights.
- Get local and accurate news about health and social care.

# Advice and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch is here for you. In times of worry or stress, we can provide free and confidential information to help you understand your options and get the support you need. Whether it's finding an NHS dentist, how to make a complaint or finding out more about your patient rights – you can count on us.

### This year we've helped people by:

- Providing up to date information people can trust.
- Providing people with the correct pathways for further advice or complaints.
- Helping people access the services they need.
- Helping people access NHS dentistry.
- Supporting people to look after their health during the cost of living crisis.

## Help to find advocacy support in Solihull

Healthwatch Solihull has heard a great deal of information and signposting requests regarding UHB Pals and GP practices. A major part of what we have heard revolves around lack of contact or referrals.

The impact of lack of contact or delayed referrals have left people feeling alone and helpless without anywhere to turn.



"I had hospital treatment months ago, and I've waited so long for a referral or a follow up appointment without any contact that the issue is beginning to flare up again"

**Sarah, Solihull Resident**

Healthwatch Solihull have been able to provide residents with the correct pathway to make complaints and get advocacy support



"I would like to thank your team very much for helping me find the right people to take my case forward, I have now been seen and I have the correct consultant, 10/10 service"

**Alison, Solihull Resident**

Healthwatch Solihull have worked with Healthwatch Birmingham to alert services to issues, so more residents get the answers they have been waiting for.

## Helping residents find solutions to the cost-of-living crisis and medical needs

**We ran a poll that asked whether residents of Solihull would avoid collecting prescription medication due to the cost-of-living crisis and the expense associated with prescriptions. 133 members of the public answered this survey and around 50% said they were struggling to afford their prescriptions.**

One resident of Chelmsley Wood admitted that they would actively avoid visiting the doctors as they know the cost of medication for them would cost too much. We were able to help them contact NHS England and find a financial solution for them to receive the care they need.

Another resident admitted that they are currently spending £50 a month on medication and was worrying about how they can afford to keep going on with rising energy bills. We were able to offer them some information regarding pre-paid certificates, they were very thankful and now they are able to get all their medication for a fraction of the monthly price.



# Volunteering

We are supported by a team of amazing volunteers who are at the heart of what we do. Thanks to their efforts in the community, we're able to understand what is working and what needs improving.

## This year our volunteers:

- Visited communities at over 51 events to promote their local Healthwatch and what we have to offer.
- Helped collect 662 experiences and supported their communities to share their views.
- Helped us achieve Investing in Volunteers status.

## Jenny

“Volunteering for Healthwatch Solihull has really opened my eyes to the struggles of many people accessing health services in Solihull.

I was prompted to volunteer having witnessed my father’s poor treatment in various care homes and having struggled with long term health conditions myself.

I enjoy meeting people from all walks of life and listening to their experiences.

I have visited various hospitals, GP surgeries, libraries, support groups and care homes, and recently a large college where the team were able to gain feedback from young people in the community.

Volunteers are supported by a great team and relevant training.”



## James

James has been attending board meetings as Healthwatch Solihull Volunteer board Representative since 2020. His support ensures the volunteer team have been kept well informed and represents their views at board level.



### Do you feel inspired?

We are always on the lookout for new volunteers, so please get in touch today.



[www.healthwatchsolihull.org.uk](http://www.healthwatchsolihull.org.uk)



0808 196 3912



[volunteer@healthwatchsolihull.org.uk](mailto:volunteer@healthwatchsolihull.org.uk)

# Finance and future priorities

To help us carry out our work we receive funding from our local authority under the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

## Our income and expenditure

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from Government	£155,322	Expenditure on pay	£170,767
Additional income	£0	Non-pay expenditure	£12,385
		Office and management fee	£19,422
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£155,322</b>	<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>£202,574</b>

## Next steps

In the 10 years since Healthwatch was launched, we've demonstrated the power of public feedback in helping the health and care system understand what is working, spot issues and think about how things can be better in the future.

Services are currently facing unprecedented challenges and tackling the backlog needs to be a key priority for the NHS to ensure everyone gets the care they need. Over the next year we will continue our role in collecting feedback from everyone in our local community and giving them a voice to help shape improvements to services.

We will also continue our work to tackling inequalities that exist and work to reduce the barriers you face when accessing care, regardless whether that is because of where you live, income or race.

## Top three priorities for 2023-24

1. Ensure BSOL ICS uses patient feedback in all aspects of service development
2. Hold UHB accountable for implementing wide ranging changes for patients
3. Increase our work with communities who experience the biggest inequalities



# Statutory statements

Healthwatch Solihull, Enterprise Centre, Solihull, B37 7TP

Healthwatch Solihull uses the Healthwatch Trademark when undertaking our statutory activities as covered by the licence agreement.

# The way we work

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## Involvement of volunteers and lay people in our governance and decision-making

Our Healthwatch board consists of nine members who work on a voluntary basis to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny to our activities. We also have two Volunteer representatives on our Board.

Our board ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community. Through 2022/23 the board met formally four times and made decisions on matters such as, tackling inequalities, cost-of-living crisis, ensuring we are well placed within the Birmingham and Solihull ICS, and the Reviews of University Hospitals Birmingham.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities. People's experiences prompt and lead our activity and investigations, with our reports focusing on improving services for everyone. People's experiences collected through our feedback centre, community engagement and information and signposting are collated and themed. Key issues go through our Topic Identification and Prioritisation (TIPS) process where our volunteers and members of the public help us select issues for us to investigate.

## 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 have the opportunity to provide us with insight about their experience of health and social care services. During 2022/23 we have been available by phone, by email, provided a webform on our website, provided a feedback centre/rate and review system, attended virtual meetings of community groups and forums, provided our own virtual activities and engaged with the public through social media.

We are committed to taking additional steps to ensure we obtain the views of people from diverse backgrounds who are often not heard by health and social care decision makers. This year we have done this by, for example, working with community groups who have direct access to the people we need to reach.

We ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. We publish it on our website.

## 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 Healthwatch England Committee, so no resulting reviews or investigations.

# The way we work

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## Enter and View

This year, we did not make use of our Enter and View powers. Consequently, no recommendations or other actions resulted from this area of activity.

## Health and Wellbeing Board

Healthwatch Solihull is represented on the Solihull Health and Wellbeing Board by Andy Cave, Chief Executive. During 2022/23 he has effectively carried out this role by championing the involvement of local people in decisions and supporting the Board to understand residents' experiences. This year we presented our findings from our Cost-of-living Survey to support the wider system approach to support Solihull people.

## Taking people's experiences to decision makers

We ensure that people who can make decisions about services hear about the insight and experiences that have been shared with us.

In our local authority area for example we take information with Local Authority commissioners, NHS BSOL and the CQC on a quarterly basis. We also utilise our seats on decision making boards and committees to share insight we have gathered. These meetings include Solihull Health and Wellbeing Board and the Health and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

We also take insight and experiences to decision makers in BSOL ICS. For example, we utilise our seats at the Integrated Care Partnership, Integrated Care Board, Solihull Place Committee and the Quality Stakeholder Group.

We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

## Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care System

Healthwatch Solihull is represented in the following ways:

- Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care Partnership – Richard Burden (Chair)
- Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care Board – Andy Cave (CEO)
- Solihull Place Committee – Andy Cave (CEO)

# healthwatch Solihull

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