

# Together

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

**Annual Report 2022–23**

**healthwatch**  
Bracknell Forest



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**"In the last ten 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 Head of Healthwatch

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I hope this report finds you well. This year has remained one of a transition as we move forward from the COVID pandemic and find new ways of working.

It is also a year where we have been made aware of the difficulties you have experienced especially in respect to accessing services in the NHS and Social Care. All these services have come under pressure due to the pandemic and the NHS specifically is undergoing organisational change as Integrated Care Boards were established in the summer of 2022.

As your independent champion the Healthwatch Bracknell Forest team has worked hard to make excellent connections with the new emerging organisations and partners. Your voice continued to be heard by your health and social care services.

I would particularly like to extend thanks to the staff team and our wonderful volunteers whose hard work and commitment enabled us to achieve so much.



**Neil Bolton-Heaton**  
**Head of Healthwatch**



**Our team are delighted to have been able to recruit a new Strategic Advisory Group to support our strategic planning and representation. Our new members bring a wealth of experience and commitment in supporting residents in Bracknell Forest.”**

# About us

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## Healthwatch **Bracknell Forest** 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.

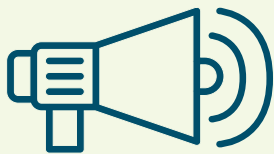


### Our values are:

- **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

## Reaching out **1127 people**



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

## **567 people**

were signposted to advice and information through our helpdesk and engagement work

## **26449 people**

of our clear advice and information about topics such as mental health and the cost of living crisis

## Making a difference to care

We published

## **2 reports**

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

Our most popular report was

## **Access to primary care**

which highlighted the struggles people face **accessing primary care services**.



## Health and care that works for you



We're lucky to have

## **20**

outstanding volunteers who gave up **17 days** to make care better for our community.

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

## **£64,438**

which is **the same as** the previous year.


We currently employ

## **2 staff**

who help us carry out our work.



# How we've made a difference this year

<b>Spring</b>	 <p>We engaged with seven small community groups reaching 139 people</p>	 <p>We commenced a volunteer recruitment drive to enhance our volunteering offer</p>
<b>Summer</b>	 <p>We published our report on people's experiences of access to primary care services</p>	 <p>We published our hospital; waiting times report that explored people's experiences of waiting for hospital-based treatment</p>
<b>Autumn</b>	 <p>We increased our community engagement to extend our reach to seldom heard communities</p>	 <p>We undertook extensive engagement across Bracknell Forest to raise the profile of Healthwatch</p>
<b>Winter</b>	 <p>We became aware that people who are entitled to accessible information may not be receiving it. We began engagement with those with a sensory impairment to understand the issues</p>	 <p>We started a project looking at what "good would look like" for anticipatory care services</p>

# 10 years of improving care

This year marks a special milestone for Healthwatch. Over the last ten years, people have shared their experiences, good and bad, to help improve health and social care. A big thank you to all our Healthwatch Heroes that have stepped up and inspired change. Here are a few of our highlights:

## How have we made care better, together?

### Vaccine confidence

Nationally Healthwatch listened to over 15,000 people's views, including people from African, Bangladeshi, Caribbean and Pakistani communities. Based on this we shared vital lessons for future public health campaigns with over 1,000 front-line staff.

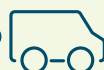


### Safer hospital discharge

During the pandemic, hospitals were given the green light to discharge patients more quickly. Although this helped free up beds, it also affected care quality and safety for some patients. Thanks to your feedback, people discharged from hospital can now expect better support, including welfare checks that consider psychological and financial need.

### NHS dentistry

People across the country tell us they can't find an NHS dentist, and paying for dental care is a struggle, leaving them in pain. This issue has hit people on low incomes hardest. We are determined to keep this issue front and centre. Our work to highlight public concern has received widespread media coverage and helped to secure changes which the NHS will be introducing soon.



### Patient transport

NHS England announced improvements to non-emergency patient transport services thanks to public feedback.



### Waiting list support

After we and other organisations called for an urgent response to hospital waiting lists, and better interim communication and support, the NHS set out a recovery plan to address the backlog.



## Healthwatch Hero



### Celebrating a hero in our local community.

#### **Jane**

Jane runs a macular society support group in Bracknell that is highly valued by her local community. The group is a welcoming space for people to come together, build confidence and share their experience with others who understand what sight loss is like. As part of running this busy group she often hears about members difficult experiences with health or social care.

Jane also volunteers for Healthwatch and regularly puts us in touch with members who need extra support, information, or signposting. Because of Jane's caring actions more people are able to share their experiences and services can learn from the challenges faced by local people with sensory impairments.





# 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.

# Access to primary care services

Timely access to locally available clinical support when peoples' health needs have gone beyond the scope of self-care and community pharmacy is an essential part of maintaining individual wellbeing.

This project emerged because Healthwatch was receiving a high level of feedback from the public regarding primary care. Healthwatch managers met to discuss this emerging trend and decided that it was a sensitive issue that required a measured and balanced response. Staff and Bracknell Forest Patients View on Access to GP-led Services, July 2022. We agreed that involving and understanding the way practices had been asked to respond and change during the pandemic was critical to establishing a conversation between practices and the people they support.

## What we did:

- We set up a regional working group to look at the issues of accessing primary care
- We ran a survey for staff working in primary care services
- We ran a survey of the general public asking them their experiences of accessing primary care services
- We produced a [report on our findings](#)



- Our report proposed several recommendations covering: phone systems, appointments and consultations, information technology and communication.
- Primary care staff also made recommendations that would help both patients and staff.

## What difference will this make?

This level of partnership and collaboration, on this scale, was a new approach for us but one that was necessary to deliver on this important agenda.

We have developed trusting and collaborative relationships with primary care and the broader system partners that we can build on going forwards – this is a great achievement and will help us in supporting services to improve in the future.



**"... we are working to ensure that the feedback is being utilised to inform transformation work across our Primary Care services."** NHS Frimley Clinical Commissioning Group

# Hospital Waiting Times

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**In August we reported the findings of our survey that asked people to tell us about their experiences of waiting for hospital treatment in East Berkshire.**

The five Healthwatch in Frimley Integrated Care System worked together to collect 171 responses (35 from Bracknell Forest) from people waiting for treatment at local hospitals. These responses aimed to assist local services to understand current issues around waiting times, and to help provide insight on how to improve patients' experiences.

The survey results highlighted the impact that waiting for treatment had on people's physical and mental health.

Many people felt they lacked the information and support they needed to manage their condition effectively whilst waiting. They also spoke about not being given the details of someone to contact if their condition got worse whilst waiting for treatment. A majority of those who responded also felt they had not been given adequate information about how long their wait would be.



**"Very frustrated. My husband is in so much pain and to see him like this makes me cry." (Still waiting 1-2 years for knee surgery)**

**"Excellent. I was referred under the two week wait and I had an appointment, and on a Saturday too!, 8 days after the smear test that found the polyp." (Waited 1-2 months for cervical outpatient – treatment received)**

## Our recommendations

- Patients should be provided with the information and support contacts they need to stay well, manage their condition, and prevent avoidable deterioration while waiting for treatment.
- To improve trust and communication, and to reduce patients' anxiety, they should be regularly informed (ideally every 12 weeks minimum) when their appointment is due or likely to be due. Reasons for delays should be made transparent. [Report on our findings.](#)

# Two ways we have made a difference for the community

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

## Creating empathy by bringing experiences to life



It's important for services to see the bigger picture. Hearing personal experiences and the impact on people's lives provides them with a better understanding of the problems.

We regularly share case studies with the Frimley Integrated Care Board Quality Committee. This brings people's experiences to life and gives the NHS and Social Care providers and commissioners insight so that services and people's experiences of them can be improved.

## Improving care over time



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

We are aware that access to NHS dentistry is a problem for some people. We will continue to work with the Frimley Integrated Care Board to develop short, medium and long term solutions and ensure that people's experiences are communicated.

**Tell us about your health and social care experience**

**Please get in touch with us:**



 [www.healthwatchbracknellforest.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchbracknellforest.co.uk)

 0300 0120184

 [info@healthwatchbracknellforest.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchbracknellforest.co.uk)





# 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 confidential support and free information to help you understand your options and get the help you need. Whether it's finding an NHS dentist, how to make a complaint or choosing a good care home for a loved one – you can count on us.

This year we've helped people by:

- Providing up to date information people can trust
- 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 dental care in Bracknell Forest

This year we have continued to receive requests from people who were finding it difficult to find an NHS dentist.

Access to NHS Dental treatment is an ongoing issue, and we are hoping to continue to work with other local Healthwatch and the Frimley Integrated Care System to learn more about the current barriers to access and explore and identify solutions.



"I struggle with the cost of dentistry for my 3 children."

**Bracknell Forest resident**

Healthwatch Bracknell Forest have shared information with NHS England dental commissioning team and the Frimley Integrated Care System.

## Support for people with long term conditions

We were contacted by a resident who was having difficulty accessing a Parkinson's Disease nurse specialist due to transport and geographical location issues. We liaised with the neurology team on behalf of the resident.

We were successful in the resident being assigned a nurse based on the location of the residents GP practice rather than their address.

## Signposting people to services that they need

We advised a resident who was suffering from anxiety and depression and waiting for support from trauma therapy services. The resident was unable to access other psychological services in the meantime.

We signposted the caller to additional support services and provided requested advice on how the resident could utilise the Patient Advise and Liaison Service.

## Signposting people to make complaints

We were contacted by a resident who could not identify the complaints process on the website of their GP practice as they wanted to make a formal complaint. We advised the resident to contact the practice manager directly. We also advised the caller on how to make a formal NHS complaint.



# Volunteering

We're 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 to promote Healthwatch Bracknell Forest and what we have to offer
- Collected experiences and supported Bracknell Forest communities to share their views
- Proof-read reports and external communications
- Supported Healthwatch staff at engagement events



## Marian

Marian is a long-standing volunteer and has participated in every part of Healthwatch's activities over the years. She brings her experience as a retired nurse and mediator to the volunteer team and has helped facilitate a carers event. Recently she engaged with students at Royal Holloway University about their experiences accessing mental health support.



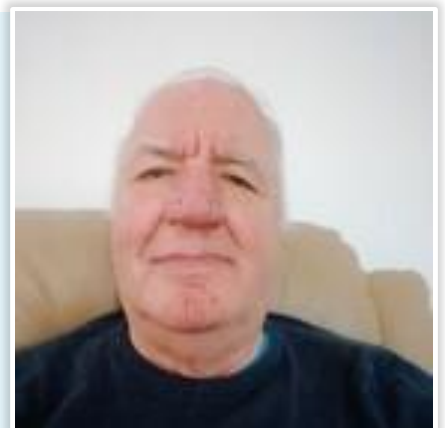
## Kevin

Kevin has worked in social care as well as being an unpaid carer for a family member. He is passionate about ensuring that citizen and patient voice is central to the planning, commissioning, and delivery of services – and that they will meet the needs of a diverse community such as Bracknell Forest. In his role on our advisory board Kevin will be helping to ensure the smooth delivery of the Healthwatch service to people in East Berkshire.



## Dermot

Dermot is a retired community dentist, who during his career, was passionate about ensuring good dental care was available to people in communities who usually find it difficult to access standard services. He joins Healthwatch as an advisory board member, helping to shape our strategic direction.



### Do you feel inspired?

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

 [www.healthwatchbracknellforest.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchbracknellforest.co.uk)

 **00300 0120184**

 [info@healthwatchbracknellforest.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchbracknellforest.co.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	£64,438	Expenditure on pay	£53,697
Additional income	£0	Non-pay expenditure	£7,798
		Office and management fee	£9,500
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£64,438</b>	<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>£70,995</b>

## Next steps

In the ten 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 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 priorities for 2023-24

1. Primary Care
2. Dentistry
3. Mental Health
4. Cost of Living
5. Enter and View Programme



# Statutory statements

Healthwatch Bracknell Forest, Help and Care, A49 Aerodrome Studios, Airfield Way, Christchurch, Dorset, BH23 3TS. Company registration number 03187574, Charity number 1055056.

Healthwatch **Bracknell Forest** 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/Strategic Advisory Group consists of **three** members who work on a voluntary basis to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny to our activities. Our Board/Strategic Advisory Group ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community. Throughout 2022/23 the Board met once and made decisions on matters such enter and view. N.B. the Board/Strategic Advisory Group was newly formed in early 2023. The Board/Strategic Advisory Group will meet for a minimum four times per year in the future. 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 have the opportunity to provide us with insight about their experience of using services. During 2022/23 we have been available by phone, email, provided a webform on our website and through social media, as well as attending 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 **and by circulating to key stakeholders, partners and our volunteers.**

We are committed to taking additional steps to ensure we obtain the views of people from diverse backgrounds who are often not heard from. This year we have done this by engaging with the street homeless, Ukrainian refugees and those experiencing drug and alcohol problems

## 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 Healthwatch England Committee, so 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 insight and experiences that have been shared with us.

In our local authority area for example we take information to **the Health and Wellbeing Board and Health and Social Care providers.**

We also take insight and experiences to decision makers in **the Frimley Integrated Care System (ICS)**. For example, we attend the **ICS Quality Committee and Place Committee**. We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

## Enter and view

This year, we made 0 of Enter and View visits..

### Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch **Bracknell Forrest** is represented on the **Bracknell Forest** Health and Wellbeing Board by **Nick Durman Healthwatch East Berkshire Deputy Manager**. During 2022/23 our representative has effectively carried out this role by **representing residents' concerns accessing GP services**.

Healthwatch **Bracknell Forest** is represented on **Frimley** Integrated Care Partnerships by **Neil Bolton-Heaton** and **Frimley** Integrated Care Boards and Quality Board by **Neil Bolton-Heaton**.




## 2022–2023 Outcomes

Project/ activity	Changes made to services
Elective Care (Frimley Integrated Care System)	Recommendations to improve support for those waiting for hospital; treatment
Access to primary care services	Recommendations to improve access to primary care
Increased community engagement following Covid pandemic	We met with 35 community groups for direct engagement and met 540 individuals during community engagement sessions
Delivered enter and view training	Preparing for our Enter and View programme of activity
We ran a focus group with people regarding anticipatory care	Shared findings with providers to consider improvements
We worked with sensory impaired community groups regarding accessible information	Findings may be utilised to do a larger piece of work on the Accessible Information Standard



**Tell us about your health and social care experience**

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# healthwatch

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