



On equal terms

Through the pandemic

Healthwatch Bracknell Forest Annual Report 2020-21

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Message from our Head of Healthwatch

Introduction:

It has been a year of change for all of us and at Bracknell Forest we adapted to new ways of working during the Covid-19 pandemic, along with many other organisations. Much of our planned public engagement and visits to services paused and we delivered an increased focus on providing advice, signposting and digital engagement.

To support the local response to Covid-19 we worked closely with our partners in the council and the voluntary and community sector. Early in the year we undertook a borough wide survey seeking to identify and understand the information, advice and support needs of residents impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, this is covered later in this report.



Over the coming year we look forwards to working for and with the communities and people of Bracknell Forest. It is now more important than ever for us to hear your experiences of using health and social care services so please keep contacting us". Neil Bolton-Heaton, Head of Healthwatch

In 2019, Slough Borough Council, the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (Bracknell Forest) and Bracknell Forest Council made a joint decision to commission a single Healthwatch service across East Berkshire. In January 2021 a new host provider, Help and Care, were commissioned to provide the service and we were delighted to join forces with Healthwatch Windsor, Ascot and Maidenhead and Healthwatch Slough to provide an integrated Healthwatch service across East Berkshire.

This report therefore covers the periods: 04/2020 to 12/2020 where the ARK Trust were the Healthwatch Bracknell Forest host provider and 01/2020 to 03/2020 where Help and Care were the host provider.



Neil Bolton-Heaton

Head of Healthwatch - Bracknell Forest, Windsor, Ascot and Maidenhead, Slough, Hampshire, Wokingham.

About us

Here to make health and care better

We are the independent champion for people who use health and social care services in Bracknell Forest. We're here to find out what matters to people and help make sure your views shape the support you need, by sharing these views with those who have the power to make change happen.

Helping you to find the information you need

We help people find the information they need about services in their area. This has been vital during the pandemic with the ever-changing environment and restrictions limiting people's access to health and social care services.

Our goals



1 Supporting you to have your say

We want more people to get the information they need to take control of their health and care, make informed decisions and shape the services that support them.



2 Providing a high quality service

We want everyone who shares an experience or seeks advice from us to get a high quality service and to understand the difference their views make.



3 Ensuring your views help improve health & care

We want more services to use your views to shape the health and care support you need today and in the future.



"Local Healthwatch have done fantastic work throughout the country during the COVID-19 pandemic, but there is more work ahead to ensure that everyone's views are heard. COVID-19 has highlighted inequalities and to tackle these unfair health differences we will need those in power to listen, to hear the experiences of those facing inequality and understand the steps that could improve people's lives."

Sir Robert Francis QC, Chair of Healthwatch England

Highlights from our year

Find out about our resources and how we have engaged and supported people in 2020-21.

Listening and supporting



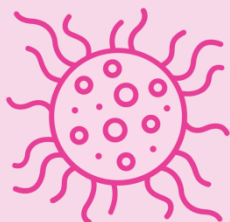
This year

1166 people shared their experiences of health and social care.

932 people participated in our surveys.

1192 people were provided with individual personal advice and information.

Responding to the pandemic



We engaged with and supported

17,610

people during the COVID-19 pandemic this year

Connecting with you digitally



44,544 impressions on Twitter and **1982** maximum followers

265,045 impressions on Facebook and **1536** maximum followers

Our website:

10,238 visitors

19,653 page views

Our e-bulletin: Subscribers **564**

Health and care that works for you



21 volunteers

helped us to carry out our work.

We employ 2 staff

100% of whom are full time equivalent.
We received

£68,860 in funding

from our local authority in 2020-21.



Theme one: Healthwatch during Covid-19



Responding

From the start of the COVID-19 pandemic we had to postpone our face-to-face engagement and adapt our plans and ways of working. This ensured that we continued to reach and provide information and support to the residents of Bracknell Forest.

Over the course of the year, we undertook the following activity to achieve this:

Supporting

- Supported the borough COVID-19 Community Hub and participated in the Boroughs community response.

Informing

- Produced and promoted COVID-19 related information and advice across all our channels and networks.
- Created a COVID-19 specific section to our website.
- Provided individual advice and signposting to residents.

Acting and influencing

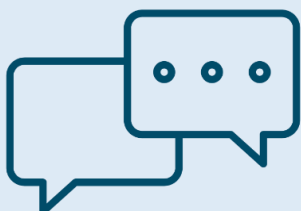
- Shared insight and intelligence about health and social care services to providers and commissioners across East Berkshire.
- Launched a survey to understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health.
- Launched a survey to understand What Matters Most for Bracknell Forest residents in terms of health and social care services.

Representing

- Attended meetings to represent the views and health and social care experiences of residents.



"My mental health problems are 100 times worse now and services offer no help at all." Survey respondent



Share your views with us

If you have a query about a health and social care service, or need help with where you can go to access further support, get in touch. Don't struggle alone. Healthwatch is here for you.

www.healthwatchbracknellforest.co.uk

0300 0120184

info@healthwatchbracknellforest.co.uk



Theme two: What Matters Most

In addition to the insight we have received over the year, in February 2020 we started our What Matters Most project to understand what matters most to the people of Bracknell Forest in relation to their Health and Social Care.

We launched a survey, and **155** residents shared their views and experiences with us. We asked which services people thought Healthwatch Bracknell Forest should be focusing on in the coming year.

36% said GP services.

21% said Mental Health services.

19% said improving overall access to health and social care services.



What matters most

We also asked residents about their experiences of local services:

133 negative experiences were shared with us, with the following factors influencing the experience:

- Difficulties making appointments.
- Waiting times upon arrival at service and to get an appointment.
- Negative staff attitudes.
- Lack of follow up care.
- Poor communication.
- Expensive parking.
- Heavy reliance on technology.

206 positive experiences reported with people valuing health and social care services that had:

- Professional, kind, and friendly staff/volunteers.
- Easy to book appointments.
- Short waiting times upon arrival.
- Were efficient and well organised and accessible.
- Good communication and information.
- Variety of appointment types on offer.



“Blood test at Heatherwood are quicker and more efficient now that you book.” Quote from survey respondent

The report has supported us to identify our priorities for the year ahead and we look forward to working with residents, providers and commissioners on the issues that have been raised.

The report will be shared with the relevant service providers, and other external stakeholders, to support local health and social care services in providing improved care to its users.



To read the full report please go [here](#)

Top four areas that people have contacted us about:



48% on GP services



7% on Hospitals



15% on Pharmacy



31% on other health and social care

Case study



We received a call from a member of the public who explained that every time they picked up their medicines, they discovered they were incorrect. The caller was diabetic and often the prescription did not contain needles and syringes for administering the medication. The caller told us that they would like help with moving GP practices. Our helpdesk provided detail of alternative GP practices in her neighbourhood.



Contact us to get the information you need

If you have a query about a health and social care service, or need help with where you can go to access further support, get in touch. Don't struggle alone. Healthwatch is here for you.



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Volunteers



Healthwatch Bracknell Forest were supported by 21 volunteers to help us find out what people think is working, and what improvements people would like to make to services.

This year our volunteers:

- Supported the Healthwatch Bracknell Forest board.
- Helped with the local volunteer response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Make a difference to Healthwatch Bracknell Forest and become a board member.

Healthwatch Bracknell Forest is looking for new voluntary Board Members for its local leadership board. As a Board Member, you will have a responsibility for contributing to policy and strategic direction, helping define goals and targets as well as evaluating performance. You would also represent Healthwatch Bracknell Forest at key meetings and help influence change in services based on insight reports.

We are looking for people with relevant knowledge and experience and a commitment to want to see better outcomes in health and care for the residents of Bracknell Forest. To find out more and to apply contact us or visit the board section of our website by clicking [here](#).

For our other volunteer roles

Are you feeling inspired? We are always on the lookout for new volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering, please get in touch at:

[**www.healthwatchbracknellforest.co.uk/content/get-involved**](http://www.healthwatchbracknellforest.co.uk/content/get-involved)

0300 0120184

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

Finances

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

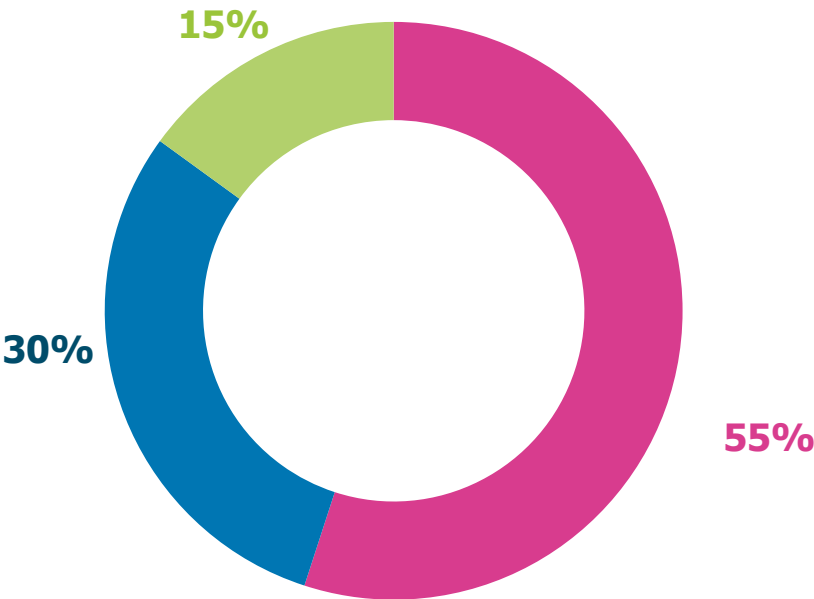
Income

- Funding received from local authority



Expenditure

- Staff costs
- Operational costs
- Support and administration



Next steps & thank you

Top three priorities for 2021-22

1. Access to GP Services
2. Social Care
3. Mental Health

Next steps

- Refreshing our volunteer offer and development of new volunteer roles.
- Developing a Healthwatch Ambassador Programme to increase our reach to seldom heard communities.
- Delivering our Enter and View Programme as Government COVID-19 guidance allows.



“COVID-19 has highlighted and multiplied many of the inequalities that existed pre pandemic and increased health inequalities are a central part of that. We need to further reach out and understand the experiences of seldom heard individuals and communities in order to address this”.

Neil Bolton-Heaton – Head of Healthwatch - Bracknell Forest, Windsor, Ascot and Maidenhead, Slough, Hampshire, Wokingham.

Thank you

- Members of the public who shared their experiences and views with us.
- All our amazing staff and volunteers.
- Bracknell Forest Community & Voluntary organisations.
- Health and Social Care service providers and commissioners within Berkshire.
- Our other local Healthwatch neighbours.
- Bracknell Forest Council.
- Help and Care for providing us with infrastructure, backup and support.



Statutory statements

About us

Help and Care, A49, Aerodrome Studios, Airfield Way, Christchurch, Dorset, BH23 3TS.
Registered Company No. 3187574 | Registered Charity No. 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 consisted of 5 members who worked on a voluntary basis to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny to our activities. Our board ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community. Through 2020/21 the board met twice and made decisions on matters such as supporting COVID-19 response.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities and in 2021 we ran a prioritisation survey asking the public what they would like us to prioritise. We interrogate our data and intelligence on a monthly basis to identify common themes and concerns that we need to address. We regularly attend a variety of forums to hear directly about the health and social care experiences of patients and the public.

Methods and systems used across the year's work to obtain people's views and experience.

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 care services. During 2020/21 we have been available by phone, by email, provided a webform on our website, 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 care decision makers. This year we have done this by, for example, undertaking 2 surveys and regularly attending forums in the borough such Disability Advisory and Access Forum and Berkshire Cancer Support Network.

We ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. We publish it [here](#).

2020-21 priorities

Project / activity area	Changes made to services
Prioritisation Survey – What Matters Most	Not yet known due to informing priorities for the 20/2021 year.
COVID-19 response	Ensuring essential access to medicines and local foodbanks.
Increase digital reach and monitoring	Increased digital communications and improved intelligence collection e.g. monitoring social media to identify concerns with health and social care.
Survey to understand the impact on mental health of the COVID-19 pandemic	Shared findings with statutory and voluntary sector providers

Responses to recommendations and requests

All providers responded to requests for information or recommendations.

This year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we did not make use of our Enter and View powers. Consequently, no recommendations or other actions resulted from this area of activity.

There were no issues or recommendations escalated by our Healthwatch to Healthwatch England Committee and so no resulting special reviews or investigations.

Health and Wellbeing Board

Healthwatch Bracknell Forest is represented on the Bracknell Forest Health and Wellbeing Board by Rafal Nowotynski, Healthwatch East Berkshire Manager. During 2020/21 our representative has effectively carried out this role by communicating the voice of Bracknell Forest residents in respect to Health and Social Care experiences and patient and public involvement.



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