

Championing what matters to you

Healthwatch Hillingdon
Annual Report 2021-22



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Message from our chair

At the conclusion of another unprecedented year for Healthwatch Hillingdon, the NHS and Social Care, it is hard not to become emotional when considering what has happened. We have met this challenge like no other in our history and COVID-19 has tested us all in ways that were unimaginable two years ago.

I would like to therefore take this opportunity to thank every one of our amazing volunteers, staff and my fellow Trustees for their ongoing commitment in particular, I would like to thank Daniel West, our Managing Director who is relocating to my native Derbyshire, to welcome Lisa Taylor, our new MD and as ever, I am indebted to our Vice Chair, Turkey Mahmoud for his unstinting guidance and support.

Over the last twelve months, we and our patients have seen many logistical challenges from the new ways of working and the pandemic has brought Healthwatch closer together with our partners. We continue to work in lockstep with Charities, Hillingdon Health Care Partners (HHCP), Local Authority, Acute, Mental Health & Social Care Providers and we have remained focused on our key roles as independent advocate, signposter and watchdog.

We have participated actively in the transition of our local Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) into the Integrated Care System (ICS) and have been called upon to undertake engagement on a number of topics, including the vaccination process and online consultations, which have been widely praised. As Hillingdon is a diverse borough, we continue to champion the need for digital inclusion and accessible services for all.



“On a personal level, I have continued vaccinating the local population including children, which has been an incredible experience. I remain an active Governor at The Hillingdon Hospital and I sit on the Redevelopment Board for the new hospital which is so desperately needed by the local population.”



We have continued to meet quarterly as a board using Zoom and Microsoft Teams and in preparation for a full return to our office, have adopted a hybrid approach of office and home working.



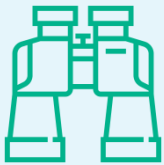
I would like to close my message this year with a quote from Gandhi – “You must be the change you wish to see in the world”. I look forward therefore with immense pride and renewed vigour to steering Healthwatch Hillingdon through the next twelve months.

Lynn Hill
Healthwatch Hillingdon Chair

About us

Your health and social care champion

Healthwatch Hillingdon is your local health and social care champion. From Harefield to Heathrow and everywhere in between, we make sure NHS leaders and other 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.



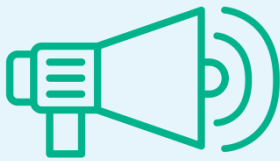
Our values

- 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.

Our year in review

Find out how we have engaged and supported people.

Reaching out



360 people

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

42 people

came to us for clear advice and information about topics such as mental health and COVID-19.

Making a difference to care



We published

2 reports and 7 videos

about the experiences of patients and improvements people would like to see to health and social care services.

Our most popular report was

Online Consultations

which highlighted the struggles people have on remote consultations with GPs.

Health and care that works for you



We're lucky to have

20

outstanding volunteers, who gave up 92 days to make care better for our community.

We're funded by our local authority. In 2021-22 we received:

£158,000

which is the same as the previous year.

We also currently employ

5 staff

who help us carry out this work.

How we've made a difference throughout the year

These are the biggest projects we worked on from April 2021 to March 2022.

Spring



We continued to assist the COVID-19 vaccination effort locally, by giving key feedback to commissioners.



We published video interviews with patients about their experiences with the COVID-19 vaccinations in multiple languages.

Summer



Our Young Healthwatch Hillingdon (YHwH) volunteers worked with North West London Clinical Commissioning Group (NWL CCG) to develop Transitions Services for young people.



Teaming up with POhWER, H4All and Hillingdon Mind, we organised a Virtual Summer Wellbeing Day with an assortment of workshops including Mindfulness Meditation, Qi-Gong, Sound Therapy, and a session on growing your own garden herbs.

Autumn



We supported over 35 residents in getting access to NHS dental appointments, with each patient given details of surgeries that had capacity according to our records.



We engaged with residents in Hillingdon about their views of Online Consultations, developing a survey with NWL CCG, which was shared among all NWL boroughs.

Winter



Continuing our work from the Autumn, we held focus groups on Online Consultations to understand what is most important to the patients of Hillingdon when accessing GP care online.



YHwH was commissioned by Public Health Hillingdon (PHH) to review sexual Health services, and monitor the progress of recommendations made in our 2019 review.

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 feedback to services to help them improve.

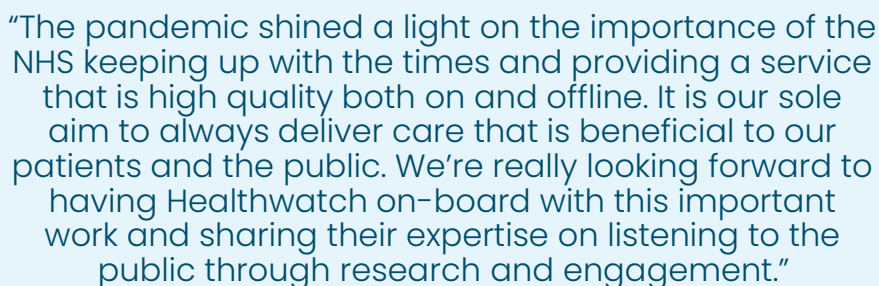


Understanding experience of Online Consultations

In September 2021, Local Healthwatch (LHW) in North West London were approached to assist North West London Clinical Commissioning Group (NWLCCG) in seeking public views on consultation services for primary care.

Online GP consultation services allow anyone registered with a GP practice to make contact with them via the internet. The service can be used for a variety of reasons, from non-urgent general medical advice for yourself or a child, requesting an appointment, seeking information and support with a long-term condition and administrative help including sick notes. To use the service, patients complete an online form via their GP practice website or through a mobile app. The practice then provides the most appropriate response, such as advice sent by text, email or online live chat, or a phone, video or face to face appointment.

This is now just one of the ways patients can contact their GP surgery when they need them. The NHS continue to provide both face to face appointments as well as online services to ensure patients can access their GP in the way that suits them. During the COVID-19 pandemic, these services became especially important and allowed practices to effectively stay open and continue helping patients safely.



“The pandemic shined a light on the importance of the NHS keeping up with the times and providing a service that is high quality both on and offline. It is our sole aim to always deliver care that is beneficial to our patients and the public. We’re really looking forward to having Healthwatch on-board with this important work and sharing their expertise on listening to the public through research and engagement.”

Professor Ian Goodman, Clinical Lead for Primary Care Digital Strategy,
North West London CCG

In order to gather the views of the public, LHW working in collaboration began engagement with patients across North West London in order to ascertain what works well, and how the systems can be improved.

The engagement activities included:

- A North West London-wide survey hosted on the Healthwatch Hillingdon Website. Over 1,600 responses were gathered from residents, 257 of which were from Hillingdon patients.
- Two focus groups were also held in January 2022 to further understand patients’ feedback.

This feedback was reported to the NWL CCG by Healthwatch Hillingdon, helping shape the future of Online Consultations in North West London.

Online Consultations: the feedback

Have you used GP online consultation (OC) services before?



40% of people

used OC because they needed an appointment with a GP or nurse.



36% of people

who had not used OC preferred to contact the surgery in person or by telephone.



58% of people

were contacted by their surgery within the stated time after using it.

Two focus groups were held to further understand patients experience of OC, focusing on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities for improvement, and threats to its ongoing use:

- Strengths – more efficient use of time, for both patients and clinical staff – with some attendees feeling that it gave GP surgeries more capacity.



“I really like OC for *[asking a quick question]*. I don't want an appointment, I don't need you to call me; just send me an email or text with the answer to my question – and they always do!”

Focus group member



- Weaknesses – referring patients to emergency services was common, with users sometimes feeling they had to work around the system to get what they needed – misuse/misunderstanding of the service was a key theme.



“I feel that there is an educational deficit; I think people haven't been taught to use this properly.”

Focus group member



- Opportunities – Clarity that OC is not the preferred way of contacting their surgery, rather an extra pathway. Ongoing engagement for improvement was requested.



“With the right input from groups like this, I think *[online consultations]* is the way forward.”

Focus group member



- Threats – Patient data safety was a consistent theme, especially with the rise of remote working. Equitable access to OC was also raised, including accessible information standards, and available languages. Finally, concerns with OC becoming more prevalent, potential reduced access to face to face appointments was raised.

Review of Sexual Health Services for young people in Hillingdon

In June 2019, in partnership with Hillingdon Council’s Public Health service, Young Healthwatch Hillingdon conducted a mystery shopping exercise to review and evaluate the quality of sexual and reproductive health services for young people in Hillingdon. A full report of findings was presented to the Local Authority and service providers with recommendations for improvement.

Two years on changes to the service have been made as a result of this review, delivering improvements in the form of a new sexual health hub, as well as improved online and telephone services to meet service-user needs during the COVID-19 pandemic and related social restrictions, designed to reduce in-person consultations.

Given the changes to services, we were keen to carry out a follow-up review to ensure sexual and reproductive health services are continuing to meet the needs and expectations of young people, and the standards defined in the 2017 ‘You’re Welcome’ quality framework.



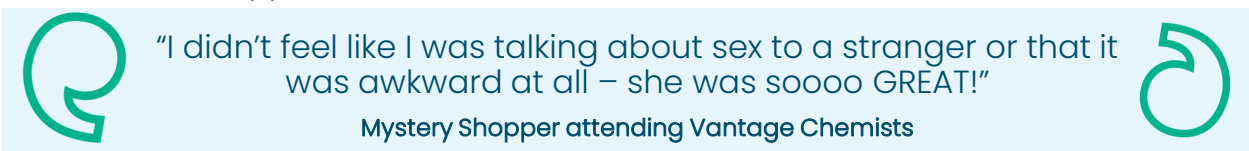
“We, Young Healthwatch Hillingdon, are on a mission to make sure services for young people are meeting our needs. In 2019 we carried out a review of sexual health services in Hillingdon and made recommendations for improvement so, two years later, we were interested to find out what had changed and how well services have coped during the pandemic too.”

Dilpreet, Isra & Melba – Young Healthwatch Hillingdon

We agreed that mystery shopping, carried out by volunteers that fit the service-user profile, would be the most effective way to gain insight into the customer journey and experience of sexual and reproductive health services. 10 assessments were carried out, including 6 online services, 1 telephone service, and 3 pharmacies. The criteria these assessed against were:

- Ease of access
- Warm welcome
- Confidentiality & consent
- Safeguarding
- Clear referral pathways
- Making every contact count

Scenarios were created in order to learn from each service about STI testing, contraception, sex and relationships, and what clinics are available in Hillingdon. Initially, eight young volunteers came forward to take part, however due to the nature of the services being mystery shopped, five volunteers didn’t feel they were able to continue and dropped out.



“I didn’t feel like I was talking about sex to a stranger or that it was awkward at all – she was soooo GREAT!”

Mystery Shopper attending Vantage Chemists

Review of Sexual Health Services for young people in Hillingdon

Following our review of services, the following recommendations were made:



Signposting & Awareness

Whilst we've concluded that the sexual health services available online in Hillingdon are an excellent resource, we're not confident that young people are aware of them. We'd like to suggest 'champions' within schools and colleges to promote and signpost young people to services.

- An awareness raising campaign would be welcomed within schools, colleges, and in local communities, with posters and leaflets, to advertise sexual health services.
- In addition to websites, perhaps there could be more information available on social media through blogs, and short films about stories that we can relate to.



Inclusivity

We have some concerns that, whilst websites are a great way to provide information and advice to the general population of young people, there may still be some groups of young people that are digitally excluded, or who don't have access to their own mobile phone, and that may be at a 'high risk' of sexual exploitation and abuse.

We were considering unaccompanied asylum seekers, looked after children or those from deprived homes. In these situations, some young people would be unable to access services such as SH:24 for STI tests. An informal drop-in service in the community could be an alternative.

We'd also like to see more information about gender and sexuality as part of the information and advice available within sexual health services. Who can we speak to if we have concerns about our sexuality?

What difference did this make

On 14 March 2022, we were pleased to present our findings to Hillingdon's sexual health service providers and Public Health Hillingdon. They were complimentary of our work, listened to what we had to say, and we are confident that young people's views and experiences will be central to the continuous improvement of sexual health services in the borough. Young Healthwatch Hillingdon plan to continue working with providers to develop excellent online and telephone services that meet the needs of all young people in Hillingdon, and positively promote these services with our peers, schools, colleges, and communities.

Advice and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch Hillingdon 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 helped people by:

- Providing up to date information on COVID-19
- Linking people to reliable information they could trust
- Supporting the COVID-19 vaccination and booster programme
- Helping people to access the services they need



Understanding confidence in COVID-19 Vaccines

With the COVID-19 vaccine effort in full swing in the early months of 2021-22, Healthwatch Hillingdon, working in partnership with North West London Clinical Commissioning Group, set out to capture the experiences of those receiving the COVID-19 vaccines. Using the feedback gained through our Vaccine Confidence report, a set of 10 interview questions was created to address the concerns raised by patients, and give reassurance where possible through lived experience. The questions were as follows:



- Did you have any concerns about being vaccinated?
- How were you contacted to book your appointed vaccine and were you happy with the booking process?
- Were you given enough information on the day about the vaccine?
- How did you find the actual vaccine vaccination process?
- Have you been informed about possible side effects after your vaccination?
- Did you have any symptoms or side-effects after the vaccine?
- Would you recommend others to take the vaccine, and why?
- Do you have any concerns about the waiting period for your next vaccine?
- Overall how do you feel about the whole vaccination experience?
- What is your advice to the community? And is there anything you would like to say to the vaccination team?

7 videos were created, with interviews conducted in English, Bengali, Punjabi, Gujarati, and Somali. The videos were published via the Healthwatch Hillingdon YouTube channel, and transcriptions were made available on the Healthwatch website.

Access to dentistry



COVID-19 also affected dentistry, with waiting times and capacity being frequently brought to our attention. With the most common issue being the inability to book NHS appointments due to lack of capacity, Healthwatch Hillingdon undertook a review of available NHS appointments in the borough, and joined Healthwatch England in a meeting with NHS England to understand the progress towards recovery.

As a result of these actions, Healthwatch Hillingdon was able to assist 50 residents with dentistry issues, signposting over 35 patients to dentists with NHS appointments available.

Volunteers

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

This year our volunteers:

- Created digital content on our website and social media.
- Carried out website and telephone reviews for local services on the information they provide and assessing their accessibility.
- Assisted as part of virtual Wellbeing days, held for both 3rd sector service users, and residents of Hillingdon.
- Continued to help with the local volunteering efforts supporting those who were self-isolating.



Dilpreet, Isra and Melba

“For most young people, and their teachers and caregivers, sex is an embarrassing topic that hardly anyone feels comfortable talking about. Many can feel very vulnerable and uneasy to openly have a discussion about sexual health. Fear of rejection, body insecurities or anxiety can make it difficult for young people to communicate freely...

...At first, although we were excited about the review, we initially felt very nervous about contacting sexual health services but during the process we gained confidence in asking questions, communicating with different healthcare professionals, and gaining new knowledge about sexual health services that are available for young people. We were really pleased to see some awesome improvements to the LNWH website...”



Volunteer Blog Excerpts

“Summer has arrived late this August. I have managed to stretch the Wi-Fi signal from the house, so that my laptop sits with me on the grass in the garden. Laughter and useful tips float across my screen as, yet again, I try to absorb the magical techniques of successful gardening.

It is my second Wellbeing Day that I have attended online with Hillingdon Healthwatch. Free, fun, and with the ability to participate as much or as little as you want – I couldn't think of anything better to invite into my garden on a lazy afternoon.”

“...Energising tones of my favourite singalongs echo out of the screen to my left and brighten my morning – I'm logged in to Healthwatch Hillingdon's online wellness day. Friends, acquaintances, colleagues, and strangers have come together to just... sing...

...All of these sessions, whether I participate fully or let them wash over me, all contain pieces of the puzzle to help me look after myself.”



Do you feel inspired?

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

 <https://healthwatchhillingdon.org.uk/>

 01895 272 997

 office@healthwatchhillingdon.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.

Income	
Funding received from local authority	£158,000
Additional funding	-
Total income	£158,000

Income	
Staff costs	£140,486
Operational costs	£15,403
Support and administration	£4,236
Total expenditure	£160,126

Top three priorities for 2022-23

1. Continue to build on Healthwatch Hillingdon’s involvement at Integrated Care Partnership level, and maintain the working relationships to ensure patient representation following the move from Clinical Commissioning Groups to Integrated Care System.
2. Revisit past service reviews and areas of focus, to assess the impact of COVID-19, and the progress of recommendations made by Healthwatch Hillingdon.
3. Understand and address inequalities within health and social care, with a particular focus of children and young people’s mental health.

Next steps

With a changing health and social care landscape, it is vital that Healthwatch Hillingdon remain at the forefront of any changes to service provision, and keep the patients’ voice at the heart of care.

With the adaptations made during the initial lockdown of 2020, continued development of digital outreach and engagement is imperative, with a safe return to face to face, in person services in order to ensure equity of access.

Ongoing development of intelligence gathering and reporting, to remain a reliable source of patient feedback for providers and commissioners alike – and scrutinising engagement carried out by health and social care systems locally to ensure fair and equal representation of our residents.

Thank you

Healthwatch Hillingdon would like to thank the NHS in Hillingdon for all their hard work in an extremely difficult year, and including us in the scrutiny and design of services. Healthwatch Hillingdon hopes to continue to develop our relationships to ensure the voice of the patient is heard, and services designed with them at the centre. We would like to thank:

- North West London Integrated Care System
- The Hillingdon Hospital Trust
- Central and North West London Trust
- Hillingdon Health and Care Partners
- The London Borough of Hillingdon
- H4all; Mind Hillingdon, Age UK Hillingdon, Carers Trusts Hillingdon, Harlington Hospice, and DASH
- POhWER Hillingdon

Statutory statements

About us

Healthwatch Hillingdon, 20 Chequers Square, The Pavilions Shopping Centre, Uxbridge, UB8 1LN.

Healthwatch Hillingdon 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 consists of 7 members who work 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 2021/22 the board met 4 times and made decisions on matters such as the working arrangements for Healthwatch Hillingdon in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, our response to the pandemic and priorities for residents.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities. Our work is guided by feedback and intelligence from three distinct sources:

- Patient led emerging themes from direct engagement, either through our Insight and Signposting function or outreach.
- Partner led issues raised to us by commissioners and providers of health and social care services and 3rd sector organisations through the committees and boards we are members of.
- Healthwatch led priorities also are decided from the combined intelligence of our board, volunteers, staff, and support given by Healthwatch England.

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 2021/22 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, interviewing patients in a range of languages to understand their experience of COVID-19 vaccinations.

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, share it with health and social care partners, and provide paper copies to the public upon request.

Responses to recommendations and requests

We had no providers who did not respond 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 Hillingdon is represented on the Hillingdon Health and Wellbeing Board by Lynn Hill, Healthwatch Hillingdon Chair . During 2021/22 our representative has effectively carried out this role by updating the board on our COVID 19 response, raising emerging themes and issues from the patient population, and sharing the results and insight of our engagement work.

Project / Activity Area	Changes made to services
Integrated Sexual & Reproductive health services review	Continuation of the previous review carried out by Young Healthwatch Hillingdon, the findings of the review were presented by our young volunteers to Public Health Hillingdon, and the providers of these services – feedback has resulted in continued improvement and development of online services, and addressing issues raised regarding telephone services, and Pharmacies.
Online Consultations	Information gathered as part of this project was reported directly back to the North West London Online Consultation Reference Group – and formed the basis of patient feedback during the procurement process for new online consultation services.



healthwatch Hillingdon

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