



Speaking up for better care

Healthwatch Hillingdon annual report 2025/26

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Acting Chief Executive
Chris McCann

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“The NHS plays a vital role in our lives, and we know it faces real challenges. Listening to people’s thoughts about their care is one of the best ways to improve services. Every comment, concern, and compliment helps health and care professionals see what works and what needs to change, so care can be safer and better for everyone.

“We want to say a heartfelt thanks to all the local people who have taken the time to share their experiences, and to the health and social care professionals who have listened and acted on that feedback. Your commitment has helped make a real difference for our community.”

A message from our chair

This year has been one of transition for Healthwatch Hillingdon. With a change in provider and Chair, my role as Interim Chair has been to provide stability and oversight while ensuring that the organisation remained focused on its core purpose: listening to local people and championing their voices within health and social care.

Despite this period of change, Healthwatch Hillingdon has continued to engage widely with residents across the borough. Over 600 people shared their experiences through our Patient Experience Programme, community outreach, and engagement in GP practices, hospitals, care homes, and local events. Their voices have shaped our priorities and directly informed our work throughout the year.

What we heard was clear. Many residents continue to face challenges accessing GP services, navigating hospital discharge, and understanding complex care systems. In response, Healthwatch Hillingdon strengthened how it gathers and uses insight, launching year-long programmes such as the Patient Experience Programme and Enter & View visits, and beginning a dedicated project on hospital discharge in partnership with Hillingdon Hospital and Age UK.

Some of this work is still ongoing, and further findings will be shared in the coming year. However, the foundations laid this year have ensured that residents' experiences are being heard by decision-makers and used to drive improvement.

I would like to thank our staff, volunteers, residents, and partners for their commitment and resilience during this period of transition. Healthwatch Hillingdon is well placed to build on this work and continue advocating for better care for all.

Rashmi Varma,
Chair (Interim)
Healthwatch Hillingdon Advisory Committee

About us

Healthwatch Hillingdon is your local health and social care champion.

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



Our vision

To bring closer the day when everyone gets the care they need.



Our mission

To make sure that people's experiences help make health and care better.



Our values are:

Equity: We're compassionate and inclusive. We build strong connections and empower the communities we serve.

Collaboration: We build internal and external relationships. We communicate clearly and work with partners to amplify our influence.

Impact: We're ambitious about creating change for people and communities. We're accountable to those we serve and hold others to account.

Independence: Our agenda is driven by the public. We're a purposeful, critical friend to decision-makers.

Truth: We work with integrity and honesty, and we speak truth to power.

Our year in numbers

In 2025/2026 we supported more than 682 people to have their say and get information about their care. We employed 3 staff and, our work was supported by 9 volunteers and interns.



Reaching out:

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

39 people came to us for clear advice and information on topics such as booking appointments for healthcare services and access to services including how to find records, test results and help with their letters.



Championing your voice:

We published 6 reports about the improvements people would like to see in areas such as GP and Hospital Services, Dentists, Pharmacies, Care Homes, and Supported Living Accommodations.

Our most popular report was the Patient Experience Report Q3 2025-26, highlighting people's struggles with appointment availability in GP and Hospital Services.



Statutory funding:

We're funded by The London Borough of Hillingdon. In 2025/26 we received £158,000, which is the same than last year.

A year of making a difference

Over the year we've been out and about in the community listening to your stories, engaging with partners and working to improve care in Hillingdon. Here are a few highlights.

Spring

The project on mental health provision for children and young people was concluded by Healthwatch Hillingdon. A significant finding highlighted low awareness of available mental health services among children and young people, with many unsure where to seek help. In response, a key recommendation was made by us: to develop clear, accessible pathways, such as a single point of access and improved information platforms to help young people and families navigate support more easily.

Summer

Healthwatch Hillingdon is now delivered by Your Voice in Health & Social Care and has transitioned to the new provider model. We launched our "Have your say in our workplan" survey, engaging residents and partners to shape our priorities for this year. The feedback highlighted key borough priorities, leading to a focus on hospital discharge and social care, including the initiation of our hospital discharge project.



Autumn

We attended community events, including the Uxbridge Fresher's Programme and Older People's Assembly, to hear from residents' experiences and provide tailored information and signposting support, as required.



We engaged with seldom-heard groups, including asylum seekers and refugees through REAP, to understand their experiences of health and social care and provide a trusted listening ear.



Winter

We introduced two year-long programmes: the Patient Experience Programme and Enter and View visits, to gather consistent feedback from people using local services. These approaches help us provide independent insight to service providers and health leaders. Enter and View visits focused on care homes and supported living settings, guided by CQC intelligence and local authority assurance priorities.



Listening to your experiences

Services can't improve if they don't know what's wrong. Your experiences shine a light on issues that may otherwise go unnoticed.

This year, we launched our Patient Experience Programme (PEP) to gather regular, robust insight from residents across Hillingdon.

Across Q3 and Q4, we collected feedback from over 600 residents through community outreach, in GP practices, events, and online engagement.

This insight provides an ongoing picture of people's experiences, helping us track emerging issues and influence improvements across the health and care system.



Championing community concerns around accessing GP services

Last year, we have consistently heard from residents about their experiences with health and social care services, particularly GP practices.

People told us about the challenges, around appointment availability, telephone access, and navigating online systems. These issues remained prominent across Q3 and Q4, highlighting systemic barriers affecting local people.

What did we do?

Through our Patient Experience Programme, we gathered over 600 feedback across Q3 and Q4 from residents across GP practices, community venues, and online engagement. We analysed both quantitative trends and qualitative experiences to identify recurring barriers to access and shared these insights with commissioners, Primary Care Networks, and relevant partners.

Key things we heard:



77%

of reviews that addressed getting through on the telephone were negative.

54%

of reviews that addressed appointment availability were negative (some waiting up to 2-4 weeks).

48%

of reviews that addressed the online consultation (app/form), were negative, especially for digitally excluded groups.

While challenges remain, 93% of feedback about healthcare professionals was positive, reflecting strong patient trust in clinical care.

What difference did this make?

Our findings gave decision-makers a clear snapshot of people's experiences in GP practices. By highlighting real experiences, we informed decision-makers and challenged digital-first assumptions, prompting conversations about digital exclusion, inclusive access, and better communication between services.

Enter & View: Improving care through lived experience

This year, we launched our Enter & View programme, carrying out visits to local health and social care services to understand people's experiences and identify opportunities for improvement.

We conducted visits to four services across the borough:

- Parkfield House Nursing Home
- Drayton Village Care Centre
- Hatton Grove
- Chapel Lane

What we heard:

Across all visits, residents and families shared largely positive experiences of care, staff support and home environments.

At Chapel Lane, which is a learning disability support service, we saw particularly strong practice in promoting independence and skill development, with residents supported to build confidence in daily living and decision-making.

Based on all visits, areas where improvements could strengthen care are:

- Communication with residents and families, particularly clarity and consistency of information.
- More engaging and personalised activity programmes for residents'.
- Opportunities to improve the physical environment of the home, including signage and access to outdoor spaces (observed during visits).

What we did:

During each visit, we assessed care using a combination of direct observation, conversations with residents and families, and feedback from staff and management of the service, giving us a rounded understanding of the quality of care provided, on the day. This triangulated approach helps capture both lived experience and how care is delivered in practice, based on which we then made recommendations to the provider.

What difference did this make?

Providers are now considering these recommendations as part of their service improvement plans.

Our Enter & View programme provides independent insight into care quality, helping ensure that residents' voices directly inform improvements in local services.

Learning about your experience of Hospital Discharge

Safe and effective hospital discharge is critical to preventing readmissions and ensuring people feel confident managing their care at home.

We have initiated a dedicated project to understand people's experiences after leaving hospital, focusing on how well they feel supported during the transition back home and their overall discharge experience.

What we are hearing:

So far, we have engaged with around 40 residents and primary next of kin or their carers to explore:

- How clearly discharge information is communicated
- Whether people understand their care plans, medication, and next steps
- How supported they feel once they return home

The initial results have shown a mixed experience of overall discharge experience; however, once home, they have settled-in well with a clear understanding of their discharge materials and next steps.

Our approach:

We piloted the project with recently discharged patients and have refined our approach to improve insight quality.

- We have expanded engagement beyond hospital settings.
- We are working with community organisations to reach people after discharge.
- We are following up with residents approximately a week after discharge to understand their experiences once home.

What happens next?

We are currently in the data collection phase, with findings expected later next year. Our insights will:

- Inform recommendations to improve discharge communication
- Strengthen follow-up support for patients and carers
- Help ensure residents feel prepared and supported after leaving hospital

Information and signposting

When you're struggling to find an NHS dentist, looking for help about how to make a complaint, or need advice about a good care home for a loved one – we're your first port of call.

This year, 39 people have reached out to us for advice, support or help finding services. These conversations also help us to understand where, and how, your care can be made better.

This year, we've helped people by:

- Providing up-to-date information people can trust
- Helping people access the services they need
- Supporting people to look after their health
- Signposting people to additional support services



Supported residents facing barriers to specialist clinical pathways

Residents needing specialist support often face complex referral systems and administrative barriers.

We helped residents who wanted to access Tier 3 weight management services, pre-diabetes management, and blue badge applications linked to cancer diagnoses, providing them with clear information on escalation routes, referral criteria and signposting to advocacy services where appropriate.

This helped them to access specialist care and treatment support and ensured their clinical needs were understood and not dismissed due to administrative issues.

Overcoming barriers to GP registration

Some residents faced significant challenges registering with a GP, including those with neurodiversity, recent hospital discharge, or previous negative experiences with practices.

We provided guidance on registration rights, alternative practices, and escalation routes, and signposted to organisations offering registration support.

Residents overcame barriers to accessing primary care, ensuring continuity of care and access to medication, particularly for vulnerable individuals with complex needs.

Improving access to tests and hospital communication

Residents reported confusion following unclear hospital calls, texts, and difficulty booking blood tests.

We provided direct booking routes, contact details, and guidance on confirming referrals, helping residents understand next steps.

This reduced confusion and delays, helping residents, especially older adults and carers, access timely tests and avoid unnecessary anxiety.

Showcasing volunteer impact

Our fantastic group of 9 volunteers and interns have given 127.5 hours to support our work. Thanks to their dedication to improving care, we can better understand what is working and what needs improving in our community.

This year, our volunteers:

- Visited seldom-heard communities to hear their experiences and make them aware about our work
- Visited GP practices to obtain patient feedback for the Patient Experience Programme
- Carried out enter and view visits to local services to help them improve
- Conducted National PLACE assessment at Hillingdon Hospital



At the heart of what we do

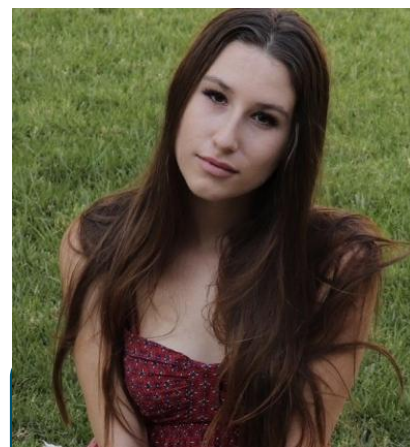
From finding out what residents think to helping raise awareness, our volunteers have championed community concerns to improve care.



Khushboo Dadlani
(Volunteer)

"I have really enjoyed volunteering with Healthwatch Hillingdon and being part of an organisation that genuinely values patient voices and community wellbeing. The experience has strengthened my understanding of patient-centred care, communication, and the importance of improving accessibility within health and social care services. I have particularly appreciated the opportunity to contribute to meaningful community engagement work while learning more about the NHS and local support systems."

"My internship at Healthwatch has provided me with the opportunity to develop my advocacy skills while gaining insight into identifying and documenting areas for improvement within the NHS. Coming from the United States where universal healthcare is not available, I found it particularly enlightening to observe and understand how a publicly funded healthcare system operates in practice. In addition, I have strengthened my technical skills, particularly in Excel, and refined my communication style to be more effective and approachable. My experience at Healthwatch has been quite rewarding and eye-opening. I am grateful for my time here as it has contributed significantly to my personal and professional development."



Michelle McDermott

Be part of the change.

If you've felt inspired by these stories, contact us today and find out how you can be part of the change.



www.healthwatchhillingdon.co.uk



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Finance and future priorities

We receive funding from London Borough of Hillingdon under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to help us do our work.

Our income and expenditure:

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from Government	£147,733.48	Expenditure on pay	£128,616
Additional income		Non-pay expenditure	£5000
		Office and management fee	£13,596
Total income	£147,733.48	Total Expenditure	£147,212

Additional income is broken down into:

- £2,000 received from Healthwatch England for work on a project
- £2,000 received from the local ICS for joint work on a project
- £800 funding received from a local charity to support their project

Integrated Care System (ICS) funding:

Healthwatch across North West London Integrated Care Board also receive funding from our Integrated Care System (ICS) to support new areas of collaborative work at this level, including:

Purpose of ICS funding	Amount
	£0
	£0
	£0

Finance and future priorities

Over the next year, we will keep reaching out to seldom heard communities, especially people in the most deprived areas, so that their views and experiences are heard.

We will also work together with partners and our local Integrated Care System to help develop an NHS culture where, at every level, staff strive to listen and learn from patients to make care better.

Our top three priorities for the next year are:

1. Improving understanding of cancer services and support for carers. We will explore residents' experiences of cancer services and screening, with a focused look at carers' experiences of supporting people with cancer. This will help us identify barriers to access, awareness, and support, as well as gaps in information and recognition for carers. Insights will be used to highlight inequalities and inform improvements across the cancer pathway.
2. Exploring experiences of home care within social care remit. We will explore people's experiences of home care services, focusing on access, communication, and quality of care. This work will help identify where improvements are needed and inform recommendations to strengthen support for people receiving care at home.
3. We will carry out Enter & View visits to services identified through CQC intelligence and local Quality Assurance team priorities. This targeted approach will ensure we focus on areas where there is the greatest opportunity to improve care, using lived experience to inform recommendations and support service improvement.

These priorities are directly informed by our workplan survey with residents and local partners. We will align them with borough priorities and deliver through:

- Patient Experience Programme
- Enter and View visits
- Engagement with seldom-heard groups and community partners
- Research project

Statutory statements

Healthwatch England, 2 Redman Place, Stratford, E20 1JQ Your Voice in Health & Social Care.

Healthwatch Hillingdon uses the Healthwatch Trademark when undertaking our statutory activities as covered by the license agreement.

The way we work

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

At the start of 2025/26, our Healthwatch Board comprised three members. During Quarter 3, two members stepped down, with the remaining member assuming the role of Interim Chair.

Since Quarter 4, the Interim Chair has met with the team on a monthly basis, providing strategic oversight and supporting key decisions relating to project prioritisation, the development of new operating models, and our approach to meetings, system representation, and partnership working.

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 can provide us with insight into their experience of using services.

During 2025/26, we have been available by phone and email, provided a web form on our website and through social media, and attended 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 also publish it on our website and distribute key insights through our social media channels.

Statutory statements

Responses to recommendations

We had 1 provider who did not respond to requests for information or recommendations for an Enter & View visit. There were no issues or recommendations escalated by us to the Healthwatch England Committee, so there were 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 insights and experiences shared with us.

For example, in our local authority area, we take information to Hillingdon Health and Wellbeing Board, and the Hillingdon Health & Social Care Select Committee.

We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in North West London Integrated Care Board. For example, we contribute patient insight through forums such as Neighbourhood Steering groups, HIT meetings, the Public Health meetings, NHS 111 PALS, and local patient experience forums. We also share feedback directly with providers, including GP practices, The Hillingdon Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, and engage in patient experience and service-user forums to support improvements in acute and community services. In addition, we share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Hillingdon is represented on the Hillingdon Health and Wellbeing Board by Samreen Nawshin, Healthwatch Hillingdon Operations Manager.

During 2025/26, our representative has effectively carried out this role by providing updates on Healthwatch Hillingdon activities, reporting the findings of our Patient Experience Programme and Enter & View visits shared by the patients and service users, and providing scrutiny on providers and commissioners updates.

Statutory statements

Enter and view

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
Parkfield House Nursing Home	Following the most recent CQC inspection in 2024, which rated the service as "Requires Improvement" overall.	Wrote a report with recommendations – the service followed up on these, and patient care improved.
Drayton Village Care Centre	Nursing home for up to 91 residents. Included because of concerns raised in 2023 although had currently good rating	Made recommendations to improve activity delivery, care environment, and strengthen communication to better support residents and their families.
Hatton Grove	Selected due to recent rating indicating quality concerns.	Recommended targeted improvements to the physical environment, such as, wayfinding to the home, including ventilation and odour control, to support resident comfort and wellbeing.
Chapel Lane	To ensure that the standards identified during the assessment were being maintained and were compliant with the ratings received.	Observed care and spoke with residents, staff and providers. Noted strong support for independence. Made recommendations on communication, activities, and environment.



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