

# The value of listening

Healthwatch Hillingdon  
Annual Report 2023–2024



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**"Over the last year, local Healthwatch have shown what happens when people speak up about their care, and services listen. They are helping the NHS unlock the power of people's views and experiences, especially those facing the most serious health inequalities."**

Louise Ansari, Chief Executive at Healthwatch England



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# About us

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## Healthwatch Hillingdon 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:

**542 people**

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

**299 people**

came to us for clear advice and information about topics such as booking appointments and access to services.



## Making a difference to care:

We published

**1 report**

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

Our most popular report was a

**Review of the Mental Health  
Inpatient experience**



## Health and social care that works for you:

We're lucky to have

**24**

outstanding volunteers who gave up over **240** days of their time to make care better for our community.

We're funded by our local authority. In 2023 - 24 we received

**£158,000**

which is the same as the previous year.

We currently employ

**7 staff**

who help us carry out our work.



# Year in review

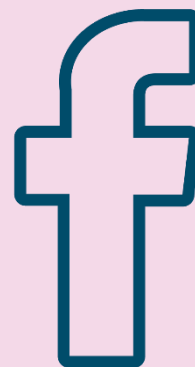
## Facebook

**817 people**

follow our Facebook page, a 7% increase on last year.

**We had a reach of over 64,000**

on this platform, through campaigns and posts.



## Instagram

**1,212 people**

follow our Instagram page, a 7% increase on last year.

**We had a reach of over 2,000**

on this platform, through campaigns and posts.



## How we listen to residents and make their voice heard:

We had

**961 calls, and emails**

from residents seeking advice, guidance, and giving feedback - an 18% increase on last year.









To ensure the experiences of Hillingdon residents is heard, we attended

**260 meetings**

with service commissioners and providers of health and social care.



# How we've made a difference this year

Spring	 <p>We assisted residents in booking hospital Phlebotomy appointments.</p>	 <p>We helped patients to access NHS dental appointments.</p>
Summer	 <p>The NHS announced changes to their contract with dentists, after our data showed widening inequalities.</p>	 <p>NHS England published a plan to improve Long Covid care after people shared their stories with Healthwatch organisations.</p>
Autumn	 <p>The local THRIVE network is restarted with our support and guidance.</p>	 <p>We initiated a long-term engagement project centred on GP access, to identify barriers residents are experiencing when accessing primary care.</p>
Winter	 <p>We conducted an in-depth review of Mental Health Inpatient experiences at Central North West London (CNWL) Trust's services in Hillingdon</p>	 <p>We began work on understanding children &amp; young people's experiences with mental health services, and major factors affecting managing their own mental health.</p>





# 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.**

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# A review of Mental Health In-patient experiences

**In 2023, Healthwatch Hillingdon were commissioned by Central North West London NHS Trust (CNWL) to carry out a review of in-patient experiences of the acute mental health wards at Riverside, on the Hillingdon Hospital site.**

The review focused on how well the Trust is performing in the following areas:

- The ward environment
- Quality of care
- Communication with staff
- Provision of activities and meals
- Involvement in care planning and preparation for discharge.

We visited the Riverside Centre, The Woodlands Centre, and the Colham Green Road Inpatient unit.

The Riverside Centre has two wards; Crane and Frays, which aim to provide a safe and therapeutic environment for people with acute mental health difficulties. They are accessed by those who:

- Are suffering an acute phase of a serious mental illness, suspected to have an acute mental illness, or a relapse of long-term mental illnesses that, due to the level of identified risks to self or others, cannot be safely assessed and treated anywhere but in an inpatient mental health ward.
- Have been detained under the Mental Health Act.
- Are vulnerable, at risk of harm to self or others as a result of an acute phase of a serious mental illness and cannot be safely supported in a community setting despite increased level of support, care and treatment.
- Have a dual diagnosis of learning disability, substance misuse etc. however the primary reason for inpatient care is an acute phase of a serious mental illness.

Woodlands Centre (two wards):

Oaktree Ward aims to treat older adults who:

- Are over the age of 18 and have any primary cognitive disorder.
- Have a mental disorder and a significant physical illness (e.g. stroke, Parkinson's disease, severe IHD or COPD) or frailty.
- People over 70 or approaching end of life.

Hawthorne Intermediate Care Unit (HICU) provides:

- Intermediate care beds for patients requiring a full multidisciplinary rehabilitation programme.
- Step-up beds for short-term inpatient care and to prevent acute hospital admission.

Colham Green Road is a 15-bedded inpatient unit providing a specialist rehabilitation service for people with enduring mental health problems aged between 18 and 65 and living in Hillingdon. It comprises:

- 10 single en-suite rooms.
- 5 self-contained studio flats.

With a team of volunteers, between October 2023 and April 2024, we interviewed 40 patients and facilitated a group session at Colham Green Road.

We also interviewed one family member and conducted a focus group with Carers.



# A review of Mental Health In-patient experiences

## Crane & Frays Wards

### What's working well:

- Meal quantity
- Movement therapy activities

### What could be improved?

- Security of patients' personal possessions
- Ward hygiene & cleanliness
- Patients being disturbed throughout the night (the impact of sleep deprivation on recovery)
- Meal quality & variety (including more culturally appropriate food)
- An assessment of the nutritional balance of meals provided.
- Greater range of activities to support emotional health and wellbeing
- Greater access & opportunities to exercise to prevent weight-gain (this is having a detrimental effect on some patients' wellbeing)
- Provision of accompanied leave and activities when agreed as part of care plans.
- Communication about care plans & medication (side effects and what to expect)
- Communication of patient rights & access to support (including advocacy)
- Information on discharge about community mental health and other available support.
- Whilst visiting arrangements were felt to be good, it was agreed that there are no suitable spaces for visitors away from other patients, and that this can make visiting feel unsafe.

## Oak Tree Ward

### What's working well:

- Access to outside space
- Privacy
- Room and the ward environment
- Food quality and quantity
- Activities offered
- Communication with staff
- Visiting arrangements

### What could be improved?

- Falls prevention. The ward itself would benefit from some physical adaptations to the ward space that prevent falls and support mobility confidence, such as handrails and grab rails especially near the doors.
- Regular exercise sessions targeted for older people to maintain and improve strength and balance.
- Whilst patients told us they were happy with the activities on offer, many lacked motivation or confidence to participate. Therefore, we recommend a review of the activity programme in collaboration with patients to understand their motivations and what they need to feel confident in taking part.
- Greater patient involvement in care planning and improved communication about care plans. (Some of the patients interviewed told us they had asked questions about the plans for their care but did not feel they had received answers. This left them feeling disempowered in understanding their conditions and how to manage them and caused some anxiety regarding next steps in their recovery and future).

# A review of Mental Health In-patient experiences

## Colham Green Road Inpatient unit

### What's working well:

- The home environment
- The level of privacy, but with many opportunities to socialise with other patients.
- The facilities available such as the shared kitchen and garden room.
- The range of organised activities.
- Communication and interactions with staff.
- The information and support provided.

### What could be improved?

- Space was a common answer. It was felt by all that there isn't enough communal space or areas to allow for visitors and private conversations.
- Greater access to therapeutic support post-discharge. Many of the patients we spoke to reported trauma from being in the acute wards (some outside of Hillingdon) and that having opportunities to talk about their experiences would be helpful to their long-term recovery.

## Hawthorne Intermediate Care Unit

### What's working well:

- The level of privacy
- The ward environment itself
- The activities available
- Food quality and quantity
- Access to outdoor space
- Quality of care
- Communication/interaction with staff
- Visitor arrangements

### What could be improved?

- Access to the television (with only one on each ward)
- Ward cleanliness
- Greater choice of food that caters for dietary requirements and allergies.
- A wider variety of activities including outdoor activities, and physical activities for those with limited mobility.
- Communication and involvement in care plans.
- Visitor restrictions at mealtimes.
- Access to physiotherapists.

## Impact and outcomes

Throughout the project, regular reports were provided to the Trust to present feedback and recommendations, and a full report published.

Based on our recommendations, CNWL have produced an improvement plan for Crane and Frays wards, which is currently being implemented, and we plan to revisit the wards next year to assess progress.



# 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	£158,000	Expenditure on pay	£177,285
Additional income	£166,199	Non-pay expenditure	£25,452
		Office and management fees	£13,615
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£324,199</b>	<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>£215,352</b>

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### Additional income is broken down by:

- £80,000 received from North West London Integrated Care Board for work on access and inequalities..
- £86,000 received from the local authority for work CYP mental health.
- £199.37 funding received from various refunds.

## ICS funding

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

Purpose of ICS funding	Amount
Increasing awareness of community pharmacy services, including access to vaccinations.	£30,000
Support for ongoing Population Health Management priorities.	£50,000

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## Next steps

**Over the next year, we will keep reaching out to every part of society, especially people in the most deprived areas, so that those in power hear their views and experiences.**

We will also work together with partners and North West London 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. Continuing our work assessing mental health provision for both adults and children and young people and working collaboratively with providers to improve services.
2. Understand and make recommendations based on the experiences of residents in accessing Primary Care.
3. Review the structure of Healthwatch Hillingdon and ensure sustainability and effectiveness in representing the patients in Hillingdon.





# Statutory statements

**Healthwatch Hillingdon,  
Gladstone House, 77-79 High Street, Egham, Surrey,  
TW20 9HY**

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



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# 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 of our activities. Our Board ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community.

Throughout 2023/24, the Board met 4 times and made decisions on matters such as strategic priorities, operations and recruitment, and allocation of budgets. 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 can provide us with insight into their experience of using services. During 2023/24, we have been available by phone, and email, provided a web form 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 available on request.

## **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.

## **Taking people's experiences to decision-makers**

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

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

We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in the North West London Integrated Care Board. For example, we attend the Hillingdon Health & Care Partners Delivery Board, Children & Young People Transformation Board, and the Hillingdon Primary Care Executive Group. We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

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## Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Hillingdon is represented on the Hillingdon Health and Wellbeing Board by Lynn Hill, Healthwatch Hillingdon Chair. During 2023/24 our representative has effectively carried out this role by providing updates on Healthwatch Hillingdon activities, reporting the recurring and emerging themes raised by our residents, and providing scrutiny on providers and commissioners updates.

Healthwatch Hillingdon is represented on the following strategic, commissioning and provider boards:

- Primary Care Executive Group – Lisa Taylor, Managing Director
- Hillingdon Health & Care Partners Delivery Board – Lisa Taylor, Managing Director
- Health Protection Board – Lisa Taylor, Managing Director
- Health and Social Care Select Committee – Lisa Taylor, Managing Director
- Patient Experience Review Group & Patient Experience Forum – Lisa Taylor, Managing Director
- Mount Vernon Cancer Centre Programme Board – Daniel West

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## 2023 – 2024 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
Phlebotomy –Acute and community services.	Worked with the Trust and Primary care to develop patient communications, and directly assisted patients in accessing services.
Children and Young People (CYP) service transformation (THRIVE)	Working with NWL Integrated Care System, Healthwatch Hillingdon planned and led the implementation of THRIVE, bringing together providers, commissioners and 3 <sup>rd</sup> sector organisations to drive transformation in CYP mental health support and services. This has now resulted in the creation of a THRIVE Coordinator post in Hillingdon.
Neighbourhood Roadshows	Our direct involvement in planning and delivering neighbourhood roadshows with local health and care partners has engaged approximately 2000 Hillingdon residents in receiving health checks and connecting them with local health and care services.
Development of a multi-agency Hillingdon engagement and involvement group	Our facilitation of a forum of health and care partners led to the development of a Hillingdon public and patient involvement charter and improved collaboration of public engagement and involvement activity in Hillingdon.

# healthwatch

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