



Annual Report 2024–2025

**Guided by integrity,
locally driven**

Healthwatch Hillingdon

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"The impact that local Healthwatch have is vitally important. Healthwatch are empowering their communities to share their experiences. They're changing the health and care landscape and making sure that people's views are central to making care better and tackling health inequalities."

Louise Ansari, Chief Executive, Healthwatch England

A message from our Chair

In 2024–25, the Healthwatch Hillingdon Board made the unanimous decision to not bid for the local Healthwatch contract from 2025–26 onwards.

As Healthwatch Hillingdon concludes its journey, we reflect with sheer pride on the difference we have made through listening, amplifying and championing the voices of patients and communities.

Our work has always been guided by the belief that principled care begins with people—their stories, experiences and needs. While this chapter closes, our legacy of collaboration, compassion and commitment to better health and care will continue through those who share our vision.

To the Trustees, Staff, Volunteers, to those who have shared their voice or time, or, partnered with us along the way— I thank you. Together, we have shown the power of listening to make change happen.

It is with deep sadness however that our work could not continue as a result of local authority funding cuts and a disconnect between Healthwatch England's direction and our steadfast duty to provide for the needs of local communities.

Whilst this final report marks the end of our role, we wish the new provider every success, safe in the knowledge that we leave behind a strong foundation for them to build upon.



“No era truly ends; it simply changes form and is carried forward in the stories, wisdom, and compassion we leave behind.”

Lynn Hill, Healthwatch Hillingdon Chair

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

We've supported more than **200** people to have their say and get information about their care. We currently employ **7** staff and, our work is supported by **28** volunteers.

Reaching out:



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

145 people came to us for clear advice and information on topics such as **booking appointments, access to services, and administration (including records, letters, and test results)**.

Championing your voice:



We published **2** reports about the improvements people would like to see in areas like **Children and Young People's Mental Health Services**, and **Access to Primary Care**.

Statutory funding:



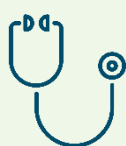
We're funded by **The London Borough of Hillingdon**. In 2024/25 we received **£158,000**, which is the same as last year.

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

We completed and shared the findings from our Central & North West London Mental Health Inpatients review.



Our volunteers participated in the Hillingdon Hospital Trust PLACE assessments.



Summer

We focused on gathering the experiences and feedback of residents related to access to primary care, coordinating with our Integrated Care Partnership to ensure representation for seldom-heard and high-risk groups.

This report was later shared with the Integrated Care Board, Hillingdon Confederation, Neighbourhood Directors, Health & Social Care Select Committee, and the Safeguarding Adults Board.



Autumn

Our volunteers led a project to assess the efficacy of the Pharmacy First scheme.



Following feedback from interaction with patients, we were able to streamline the pathway for blood test bookings in acute settings.



Winter

The 2-year project focusing on Mental Health provision for Children and Young People neared its end, with regular updates and sharing of learnings with commissioners and providers.

The full report is due to be published during 2025-26, and more information can be found in this report.



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've listened to feedback from all areas of our community. People's experiences of care help us know what's working and what isn't, so we can give feedback on services and help them improve.



Listening to your experiences

Children & young people's mental health

In 2023, NHS data highlighted:

- Approx 40% of children & young people with acute mental health cases identify as LGBTQIA+.
- 1 in 8 young people between 18 & 25, who identify as LGBTQIA+ have attempted to end their life, and almost 50% of transgender young people have considered ending their life.
- Amongst 7-10 year olds, 19.7% of boys are considered as having a probable mental health disorder compared to 10.5% of girls.
- There is disparity in young people from ethnic minority backgrounds (young black men in particular) accessing mental health & emotional wellbeing support.

Due to the previous work of Healthwatch Hillingdon on the topic of Mental Health for Children and Young People (CYP), and our independent role, voluntary sector partners proposed Healthwatch Hillingdon to facilitate engagement across the local community as part of an NHS England-funded 2-year population health management project.

What did we do?

1. Established a Voluntary Sector Forum/Task & Finish Group to:

- Collate and consolidate existing feedback from children, young people and families.
- Understand challenges and barriers across the system
- Understand what is needed to enable support in the community
- Support and maximise opportunities for engagement with children, young people and families
- Work with our 3rd sector colleagues in P3, Hillingdon Autistic Care & Support (HACS), MIND, LINK, Children & Adolescents Bereavement Service (CABS).

2. Designed and delivered a borough-wide survey.

Disseminated via schools, colleges, social media, and community groups.

3. Carried out targeted engagement with children and young people (aged 11-25), and parents.

Through events, workshops, focus groups, interviews, outreach at Libraries, faith centres, youth organisations, schools, Uxbridge College, Youth Justice Service, Youth Participation Team, Universal and Targeted Youth services, Family Hubs, and Children's Centres.

Listening to your experiences

Children & young people's mental health

Key things we heard:



44%

of children and young people cited stress about school, college, or University as the most common factor negatively impacting their mental health

68%

said they would prefer in-person 121, or group counselling over online support.

We were also able to understand the experiences of lesser-represented CYP groups through targeted engagement, including Looked after children, CYP who identify as LGBTQ+, CYP who are neurodiverse, CYP within the Youth Justice System, and CYP from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Through our engagement with these groups, we found the following:

Main factors impacting CYP mental health:

- Relationships – family, friends, romantic.
- Stress at school – exams and educational expectations.
- Bullying and discrimination – at school and cyberbullying (particularly CYP who are neurodiverse and LGBTQ+).
- Negative effects of social media, including gaming – world events, unhealthy influencers, conflicting information, sedentary and isolating activity.
- Societal expectations – unrealistic life expectations, body image and personal appearance.

Barriers to seeking support:

- Long waiting times– appointments to see their GP, wait times between GP and referral to CAMHS, wait times between CAMHS triage and treatment.
- Awareness of available support – what's out there, accessibility, service-offer, where to look for help/trustworthy advice.
- Lack of trust/confidence in statutory services – safeguarding triggers, parental consent, feeling unheard and not taken seriously. Experiences of rejected referrals from CAMHS and falling through the gaps leaves CYP feeling dismissed and unimportant, fear of judgement and discrimination (LGBTQ+ black and ethnic minority groups).
- Social stigma – fear of bullying and discrimination, being perceived as 'weak' especially for boys (particularly prevalent in accessing school MH services), parental and cultural beliefs, and parental fear of authorities.
- Accessibility of services – travel requirements (cost implications), appointment times, engagement methods (digital/f2f/groups), language (clinical), environment (triggers for autism), administrative requirements (form-filling).

Listening to your experiences

Children & young people's mental health

What difference did this make?

Thanks to our dedicated staff, over 450 children and young people and parents were able to be heard, and share their experiences with us, with 311 CYP responding to our survey. From this work, we were able to:

- Ensure more young people know about services and how to access them.
- We were able to facilitate greater knowledge of voluntary sector services and increased collaborative working.
- We received positive feedback from CYP about their involvement and the opportunity to influence service provision for the future.
- We produced a podcast in partnership with the Youth Urban Arts Foundation.
- A Young Healthwatch Hillingdon (YHWH) podcast on managing exam stress is now included in the Hillingdon 16+ education prospectus.
- We experienced increased interest in our YHWH volunteering programme.
- We assisted in the development of a council-led mental health and wellbeing website aimed at professionals, CYP and parents, with aims to provide a single point of access into services and increase awareness of available services.

Our Recommendations:

Actualise the implementation of Thrive across the CYP mental health system

- Ensure the Thrive principles are central to the commissioning of services.

Invest in the Voluntary Sector

- Value their expertise, promote and empower effective working relationships between NHS and voluntary sector services.

Support schools to lead.

- Through investing in early intervention and prevention through training for staff, and peer support among CYP.

Develop clear pathways to support.

- Develop a single point of access for children, young people, families, and professionals. Introduce better support for front line health practitioners.

Listen. Engage. Involve.

- Develop support for families, systematically involve children, young people and families in decision-making.

Review spending to:

- Invest more into early intervention and prevention, implement a broader range of therapies and support, invest in social media and online applications on platforms children and young people *actually* use.

Review the accessibility of services to improve access and outcomes for:

- Children who are neurodiverse, children who identify as LGBTQ+, and children from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Share good practice, knowledge and insight

- Develop a whole community approach to children and young people's mental health.

Information and signposting

Whether it's finding an NHS dentist, making a complaint, or choosing a good care home for a loved one – you can count on us. This year **145** people have reached out to us for advice, support or help finding services.

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



Showcasing volunteer impact

Our fantastic volunteers have given **over 200 days** 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 communities to promote our work through engagement events and surveys.
- Collected experiences and supported their communities to share their views.
- Carried out PLACE assessments of our local hospital.



Looking back

Since Healthwatch Hillingdon's formation in 2012, people have shared their experiences, good and bad, to help improve health and social care. We would like to thank everyone that has helped us make an impact locally, and share some highlights of our work:

How have we made care better, together?

Ambulance Services



We engaged with residents to ensure their views were represented in the strategic plan for the London Ambulance Service (LAS), with LAS citing our report as an example of best practise.

COVID-19 Vaccine confidence



Our research exploring COVID-19 vaccine confidence with people from different backgrounds provided vital lessons for public health campaigns.

Lower back pain services



We reported to commissioners the experiences of patients following the decommissioning of lower back pain services, highlighting and directly addressing the challenges they faced.

Hospital Discharge



Our 'Safely Home to the Right Care' report on discharge saw the experiences of patients help shape discharge from Hillingdon and Mount Vernon Hospitals.

Children & Young People's Mental Health Support

Revisiting the work carried out in 2015, we engaged with children and young people to understand their experiences of Mental Health service provision 10 years later, to highlight the changes in barriers to accessing services, and what good care looks like.



NHS Long term plan

We engaged with residents about the NHS Long term plan, addressing their concerns and wishes for the future of NHS services, with a particular focus on mental health.



Children & Young People

Our 'Listen to me!' and 'Seen and Heard' reports highlight the needs of children & young people in Hillingdon, helping guide commissioners and providers in the delivery of Mental Health support and services.

Finance and Funding

We receive funding from The 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	£158,000	Expenditure on pay	£237,862
Additional income	£22,044	Non-pay expenditure	£40,556
		Office and management fee	£9,190
Total income	£180,044	Total Expenditure	£287,608

Additional income is broken down into:

- £300 received from The Confederation, Hillingdon for a volunteer project.
- £20,455 received from the London Borough of Hillingdon for a community-based project.
- £1,289 received from various refunds and rebates.

Statutory statements

**Healthwatch Hillingdon, Registered office: 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.**

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 voluntarily 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 2024/25, the Board met 6 times and made decisions on matters such as strategic priorities and sustainability of the Healthwatch Hillingdon contract into 2025-26. 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 2024/25, 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 publish it on our website.

Statutory statements

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 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 the Hillingdon Health and Wellbeing Board, and the Hillingdon Health & 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 following meetings for the Hillingdon Health & Care Partners (HHCP): Delivery Board, P Community Engagement Group, Health Protection Board, Children & Young People's Transformation Board, Vaccination Programme Steering Group. We share feedback with The Hillingdon Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and attend Patient experience groups to aid improvements in acute services.

We also 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 Lynn Hill, Healthwatch Hillingdon Chair.

During 2024/25, 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.

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