

Championing what matters to you



Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch
Leicestershire
Annual Report 2021-22

Contents

Message from our chair	3
About us	5
Our year in review	6
How we've made a difference throughout the year	7
Listening to your experiences	8
Three ways we have made a difference to the community	11
Advice and information	12
Volunteers	14
Finances and future priorities	17
Next steps	18
Statutory statements	19
The way we work	20
Responses to recommendations and requests	21
Health and Wellbeing Board	22

Message from our chair

I am very pleased to present the Annual Report for Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire for the year 2021 – 2022.

We have adapted our way of working due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. The Healthwatch Advisory Board (HAB) continues to have online meetings. Members of the HAB continue to attend board meetings held by providers and commissioners across Leicester and Leicestershire to ensure that issues affecting patients and the public are taken into consideration.

Towards the end of the year, we were sad to see Shireen Bharuchi leave the board to continue her role as an Optometrist. We welcomed Alexandra Partner, who has worked clinically as a Diagnostic Radiographer in acute settings for five years and has worked as an academic in healthcare higher education for the past ten years. She has been published at international conferences and sits on several advisory boards and committees. She is passionate about improving health and social care.

The team has been working on reaching out to the public to inform the work. We developed a program of outreach activities going to local parks and open spaces, community facilities and public places.

We also enhanced our reach via social media including the use of local community radio, social media as well as continual updates to our website .

We realise that not everyone has access to or is comfortable with digital technology and therefore we have produced and distributed our guide, "Improving and Shaping Health and Social Care in Leicester and Leicestershire".

A key issue for people this year has been accessing GP and Dental Services. Reports compiled have been presented to the Health Overview and Scrutiny Commission and city and county Health and Wellbeing Boards.

We worked closely with Healthwatch Rutland to look at themes centred around New Models of Care and organised sessions at John Storer House, Wesley Hall, Shama Women's Centre and The African Caribbean Centre.

Additionally, our staff collaborated with Leicester City Football Club, Local Authorities and Everards Brewery in a unique project to raise suicide awareness and prevention among males who are three times more likely of dying by suicide.

They printed QR codes onto beer mats for distribution across pubs and restaurants. We also informed VitaMinds, Freedom Youth Club, The Centre Project and EAVA FM. This resulted in young people being involved in music production and recording with lyrics highlighting the issues. As we continue to adapt to the challenges of new variants of the pandemic and ever-changing national guidelines, we will continue to identify how best the public can be involved. The next year will see us grow our Community Network and Diversity Inclusion Health Network.



"May I take this opportunity to thank all who have engaged with us in the last twelve months, who shared their experiences and the providers who have made changes because of our feedback."

Harsha Kotecha

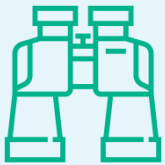
Chair of Healthwatch Leicester and
Healthwatch Leicestershire



About us

Your health and social care champion

Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire is your local health and social care champion. From Belgrave to Bosworth 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.



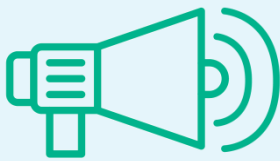
Our values

- 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



5300 people

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

20221 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

10 reports

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

Our most popular report was

Turning the tide: male suicide

which aimed to raise awareness to reduce death by suicide.

Health and care that works for you



We're lucky to have

16

outstanding volunteers, who gave up **155 days** to make care better for our community.

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

£299,260

Which is **0.2% less** than the previous year.

We also currently employ

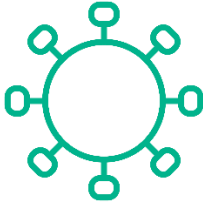
9 staff

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



'Let's talk' - We launched a series of monthly themed community focus groups to identify the impact of changes introduced across health and social care in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.



We challenged providers to invest money to address the findings of our CAMHS report on improving time to treatment waits.

Summer

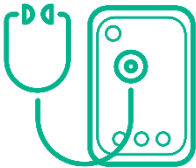


We attended 36 events and engaged directly with over 2420 people during our summer tour. 350 told us about challenges accessing their GP practice.



We reviewed the GP practice websites to see how informative and accessible they are for people. We reviewed 118 practice websites made 12 recommendations to the CCGs to improve the website for patients.

Autumn



We resumed our Enter and View programme and using the text messaging service, 1138 patients shared their experiences of Latham House Medical Practice in Melton Mowbray.



We attended 14 carers groups and we heard from 123 carers and 14 staff and volunteers. On carers rights day we used our social media platforms to raise awareness of carers rights and invite people to share their experiences with us.

Winter



Our HAB has raised concern about the future governance arrangements of Mental Health services and the lack of the patient and carer voice being built into them, with the executive system lead for Mental Health.



Our chair shared our dentistry findings with BBC East Midlands. We received an increase in the number of calls about dentistry throughout January. We are working with providers to improve dental services.

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.



Turning the Tide: Male Suicide

Thanks to people sharing their experience of male suicide we have helped the NHS identify gaps in service provision, identified gaps in the prevention pathway, identified potential barriers that prevent men from coming forward to access services and explored ways to raise awareness of local services.

Through our contact with services, we found a real passion, commitment, motivation, and some excellent services delivered through the framework of the Suicide Prevention Strategy and coordinated through the Suicide Audit and Prevention group. There were however gaps identified in the pathways, particularly in data sharing, and knowledge of services to refer people to.

This was an issue for people providing services in the community in as much as potential opportunities to support people who were recently bereaved or people who had sought help via emergency services or their doctor with suicide ideation or self-harm.

Gaps were also identified in access to services for ethnic diverse communities and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) communities. Whether these barriers were real or perceived, uptake of services by these communities were generally low.

What difference did this make

To coincide with **Time to Talk day** we shared our findings with key partners at the Everards Brewery launch event. Everard's Brewery developed beer, mats, drip mats and posters with a QR code linking to the 'Start a Conversation' website. The '**Get the Ball Rolling**' campaign was devised by local councils to tackle the high levels of male suicide across Leicester and Leicestershire.

We worked with Leicester City Football Club (LCFC) to link into the mental health portal being developed with United Leicester to establish a link into the '**Start a Conversation**' website linking to all prevention services available. Public Health leads have been working with the wellbeing lead at LCFC.



Working in collaboration with Equality Action to improve health & wellbeing through the arts we brought together an initiative involving a young diverse male group to develop a rap song that explores men's mental health issues.

"Our report on male suicide in Leicester and Leicestershire resulted in this campaign being created and is part of a response to our call for more to be done to reduce high levels of male suicide."

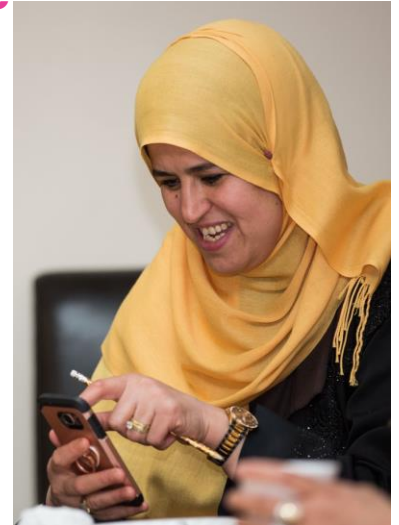
Mark Farmer, Healthwatch Leicester
and Healthwatch Leicestershire Advisory Board Lead for Mental Health.

Access to GPs: You are next in the queue

Thanks to people sharing their experiences of accessing their GP Practice during the Covid-19 pandemic we have helped the NHS identify issues within general practice and pushed for improvements.

One of the main issues we have heard was around the availability of appointments or the lack of available appointments. People reported a negative or mixed experience of getting an appointment at their GP Practice and comments were made about telephone lines being constantly engaged and calls unanswered.

The majority of people we spoke to had a positive experience in getting repeat prescriptions.



“Over the last year the way people access health and social care changed dramatically. We recognise that general practice has worked to maintain services throughout the pandemic. However, our snapshot shows that the services are not working for local people. We have raised the issues with the Clinical Commissioning Groups and are working with the GP network to help improve services for patients”.

Harsha Kotecha, Chair, Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire .

During lockdown we worked with our volunteers to review GP Practice websites to see how informative and accessible they are for people. People told us that it is difficult to get through to the GP Practice on the telephone, they are unsure of the online booking procedures and do not know who to contact to raise a concern or complaint.

- We reviewed 118 GP Practice websites across the city and county.
- Our volunteers reported a big difference in the quality and quantity of information available.
- Key information was easy to find and access on most of the websites.
- Volunteers felt that details of how to make a complaint was not always easy to find and felt hidden on the website.
- Volunteers felt there needs to be an explanation about triage and the process available on all websites.
- We found that the coronavirus information was not always current and up to date. Information on the vaccines was variable and there was limited information on vaccine hesitancy.

The findings were shared with the local Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and were consolidated with their research and action plan to make service improvements for patients.

Three ways we have made a difference for the community

Throughout our work we gather information about health inequalities by speaking to people whose experiences are not often heard.



Encouraging more young men to talk about their mental health.

We worked with a local charity to enable young men to produce a rap song that relates to male suicide and mental health. 'The Game' explores a man's journey navigating and escaping his mental health struggles through gaming. Local artist Lucky C provided vocals for the track, alongside local youth groups.

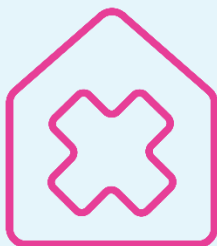
The hope is that the song encourages youth groups, especially from diverse communities, to come forward if they are suffering with their mental health. The aim is that the song sparks conversation eliminating the negative stigmas associated with men's mental health.



Carers rights

It is recognised that over the last two years there has been unprecedented pressure on social care services due to increased demand and staff absence through sickness.

Carers who shared that they had experienced delays in being able to access social care services for the people that they care for. Over the years we have worked closely with carers agencies to highlight carers rights and to ensure that people are aware of the support available.



Homelessness: Experiences of hospital discharge and post-discharge care

We wanted to explore what support is available to homeless people when they are discharged from hospital. Our aim was to understand the experience of hospital admissions and discharge of homeless people and accessing post discharge care in the community.

We have gathered feedback from homeless people and those who work directly to support them. There were however disparities that became apparent during our study, particularly between what staff providing the services told us and what homeless people told us about their experiences of hospital discharge and access to community health services.

Advice and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch 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 and dental services
- Linking people to reliable information they could trust
- Supporting the COVID-19 vaccination and booster programme
- Helping people to access the services they need



Access to Dentistry

Over the last two years we have seen an increase in the number of calls from people trying to access NHS dental services. In December, we reviewed local dental practice websites and invited people to share their experiences with us. People told us that they were unable to find a dental practice that is taking on new patients.

People who could not get an NHS appointment, were being offered a private appointment that they could not afford.

People are often not aware that there are seven Emergency Dental Services in Leicester and Leicestershire. We have formed a strategic partnership with the NHS Local Dental Committee (LDC) and have continued to provide details of the concerns from patients. The LDC has worked with us to provide up to date information around dentistry for the interests of local people. We have produced advice for the public about what is available and where to go for additional support.



People raised concerns about accessing their rural GP practice

As part of our summer tour, we heard from people in Melton Mowbray that there were concerns about accessing appointments at Latham House Medical Practice. The key difficulties for patients were being able to contact the practice over the telephone to make an appointment and obtaining a face-to-face appointment. We decided to conduct an Enter & View visit to the practice. We had previously visited in September 2018 and wanted to see what changes and/ or improvements had been made for patients. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, we decided to use the GP text messaging service to reach patients in the practice. We heard from 1138 patients.



We produced a series of recommendations to the service provider. The findings indicated that the telephone booking system is a huge frustration to patients. We recommended that the surgery reviews the telephone booking system and find a way to advertise more prominently the different ways patients can make an appointment.

The practice provided a full response to our recommendations and a new telephone system was implemented in April 2022.

Volunteers

We're supported by a team of amazing volunteers who are the heart of Healthwatch. 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:

- Carried out website and telephone reviews for local services on the information they provide and assessing their accessibility
- Visited GP Practices as part of our Enter & View programme
- Assisted as part of 'Readers' Panels' – checking local services' publications to make them more people focused and easier to read
- Helped support our day to day running



**Bhavin Gohil – Youthwatch**

I have found Healthwatch to be very helpful and useful for my needs, I really enjoy meeting new people and gaining new knowledge and experiences.

**Chris Bosley – Enter and View Authorised Representative**

During my eight years with the Enter & View team I have enjoyed visiting GP surgeries, residential homes, A&E and hospital wards. Through listening to patients, resident's and their relatives we have identified both good and poor practices. Usually, managers found our recommendations helpful and acted on them. It is also gratifying to know our reports add to the national picture so that Healthwatch England can speak up for patients' interests.



Alex Partner – HAB Board Member

Joining the Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire advisory board has been a rewarding journey. Reflecting on my time as a volunteer has made me realise how much I have gained from this role. Working with the board has given me a better understanding of health and social care services across the county and more importantly a deeper appreciation of the needs of the people using these services. I am passionate about patient centred care that is high quality and constantly improving. Giving my time towards championing the voice of patients and service users is a privilege and I am pleased to see the progress being made.

The Healthwatch advisory board and team take special care to capture the needs of underrepresented or vulnerable groups and make sure provision is inclusive and responsive to the needs of a diverse population. This work is both interesting and satisfying. I look forward to the next 12 months and the challenges that lie ahead.



Do you feel inspired?

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

 www.healthwatchll.com

 0116 251 8313

 Email: enquiries@healthwatchll.com

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		Income	
Funding received from local authority	£299,260	Staff costs	£233,236
Additional funding	£67,875	Operational costs	£35,785
		Support and administration	£66,253
Total income	£407,578	Total expenditure	£335,273

Top three priorities for 2022–23

- 1. Dementia Services** – exploring what local services currently exist for Dementia service users and to identify any gaps in provision as identified by people who arrange and use them. Investigate whether services have been maintained or reduced because of the Covid-19 pandemic and whether there are plans to expand or restore services over the next 3 years.
- 2. Access and Communication** – to explore if people’s needs of health and care services are being met in Leicester and Leicestershire. We have identified seven groups and with each group identified we will seek to listen and outline what the specific issues are for those communities. We are aiming to collect feedback from health and care services users of the following communities: Somali, Bangladeshi, Physical disability, Learning disability, Unpaid carers, including young carers, LGBTQIA+, new settlers including refugees and asylum seekers.
- 3. Maternity Services** – Working in partnership with Healthwatch Rutland to explore the current service provision and to find out from parents if the local service is meeting their needs.

Next steps

The pandemic has shone a stark light on the impact of existing inequalities when using health and care services, highlighting the importance of championing the voices of those who all too often go unheard.

Each year, we develop and deliver special projects based upon and informed by local feedback as well as identification of issues, gaps or barriers. This work is in addition to our core programme of work and is supported by and agreed by our commissioners within Leicester City Council and Leicestershire County Council.

Our initial focus will take into consideration the following areas:

1. Access to Urgent Care Services
2. Access to Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
3. Impact of Covid-19



Statutory statements

About us

Engaging Communities Solutions (ECS) is the contract holder for Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire. The ECS corporate office is based at: Blakenall Village Centre, 79 Thames Road, Walsall, WS3 1LZ – www.weareecs.co.uk

The local office is based at: Clarence House, 46 Humberstone Gate, Leicester, LE1 3PJ. Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire 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 five 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 six times and made decisions on where to carry out our enter and view visits, what our priorities should be and escalated issues about access to the CCG.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities by carrying out independent research and evaluations of health and social care. We rely on your feedback and experience of health and social care services to influence how services can be improved and how best practice can be shared.



In February 2022, We held three online listening events to give people the opportunity to share their views about what key themes they would like to see us focus on in the next 12 months.

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 2021/22 we have been available by phone, by email, provided a webform on our website, provided a feedback centre/rate and review system, 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 establishing our **Diversity Inclusion Health Network**.

Exclusion continues to impact on some communities leading to access issues, negative experience and more importantly, higher prevalence of health inequalities. Over the last 12 months, we have been gathering experiences from diverse communities and invited people from these communities to attend our 'Chai, Coffee and Chat' event and 50 people attended.

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 at www.healthwatchll.com and share it with relevant committees.

Responses to recommendations and requests

- We had no providers who did not respond to requests for information or recommendations.
- We were able to conduct three Enter and View visits to GP Practices this year. We selected the GP Practices based on our findings from our GP Survey. We used the GP text messaging service to reach patients and produced a report with recommendations for improvements. We made 23 recommendations to GP providers and responses are included within these reports.
- There were no issues or recommendations escalated by our Healthwatch to Healthwatch England Committee and no resulting special reviews or investigations.



Health and Wellbeing Board

Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire is represented on the Leicester Health and Wellbeing Board and Leicestershire Health and Wellbeing Board by Harsha Kotecha, Chair and Gemma Barrow, Chief Officer.

During 2021/22 our representatives have liaised with local authority democratic service officers and other leads to discuss papers for presentation and discussion at board meetings.





healthwatch

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