

Healthwatch Worcestershire Annual Report 2022/2023

Healthwatch Worcestershire is your independent health and social care champion. We make sure health and social care leaders hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care. We can also help you to find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.

Listening to people who use health and care services

Across the year we have had contact with over 4,100 people. There is a gap in life expectancy between the most disadvantaged people who live in Worcestershire and the least. The reasons are varied, but many of the differences in people's health are avoidable, and due to unfairness. We have continued to listen to people experiencing health inequalities, visiting organisations regularly and having lots of conversations.

We have listened to people's views through:

- Visiting groups and meeting people face to face
- Video conferencing and telephone calls
- Carrying out surveys and focus groups
- Online Public Board Meetings - people can log on and join in - over 180 people viewed extracts on [You Tube](#) – **opens in new window**
- Our Reference and Engagement Group - a network of over 100 organisations and “Experts by Experience”
- Healthwatch Worcestershire website – which had over 11,000 visits
- Twitter (we have over 1,100 followers) and Facebook (our posts reached over 10,000 people across the year)

We have produced 10 Bulletins and been on local radio and television.

We have made a special effort to reach:

- **Children and young people** – by working with schools and with students at the University of Worcester
- **Older people** including through the Wyre Forest Older People's Showcase events, the University of Third Age and Dementia Cafés, and Bromsgrove District Housing Trust residents

- **People from Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority Communities** - including through the Asian Women's Group (Redditch), the Horizon Centre and our links with community leaders
- **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Plus (LGBT+) communities** - through Worcestershire Pride and Out2gether
- **People with a learning disability** – through South Worcestershire Additional Needs Support Group and our links with SpeakEasy N.O.W.
- **People with Mental Health issues** – including through Home Group, Behind the Smile and Jigsaw
- **Carers** including through the Worcestershire Association of Carers and Carers Careline
- **People who are homeless** – including through Maggs Day Centre, St Pauls Hostel and Wyre Forest Nightstop
- **People with Neurological conditions** – through Wyre Forest MS Society and Worcester & District Branch of Parkinson's UK

We have reached over 3,000 people through our engagement activities.

Our Reports and Recommendations

We have used the information people have told us to decide which areas of health and care to find out more about.

[Awareness of Minor Injuries Units](#) – opens in new window

We asked over 600 people what they knew about Minor Injuries Units (MIUs). Whilst most had heard of MIU's people were not confident about what they do, who they can treat, when they are open or when X-Ray facilities are available. Men and people in younger age groups knew less about MIU's than others.

[Link to our Report](#)

Did you know?

Thanks to our Report the NHS has targeted promotional activity about MIUs at younger males. "Frequently Asked Questions" have been added

to the NHS's website to answer common questions about who can be treated at a MIU. Online information has been streamlined to make it more consistent.

[Finding out about Adult Social Care Services through Worcestershire County Councils NEW website](#) – opens in new window

Our volunteers conducted a Mystery Shopping exercise to find out information about Adult Social Care services on the County Council's new website and we made recommendations about how it could be improved. One of our volunteers who is blind worked with the Councils web team to help them improve the accessibility of the site.

Did You Know?

Our recommendations have formed the basis of a review of content on the Adult Social Care sections of the website. Some improvements have already been made and further changes will follow, these will include improved accessibility for people who use screen readers.

Bringing your voice to Government

We used your feedback to make submissions to:

[Health & Social Care Committee Inquiry into NHS Dentistry](#) – opens in new window

[Government consultation on the reform of the Mental Health Act 1983](#) – opens in new window

House of Lords Communications and Digital Committee Inquiry into Digital Exclusion and the Cost of Living

We send all our Reports to the Care Quality Commission (CQC), who inspect health and care services and to Healthwatch England, to help build the picture of services at a national level.

Our Work – Making a Difference

[Worcestershire Acute Hospital Trust Inpatient Discharge Policy](#) – opens in new window

Based on what you told us about your experiences of leaving hospital during Covid-19 we worked with the Trust on the update to their Inpatient Hospital Discharge Policy.

Did You Know?

Due to our feedback the Inpatient Discharge Policy now includes sections on mental health, homelessness, the involvement of carers in the discharge planning process, and the identification of a usual cut off time for hospital discharge of 8 p.m.

[Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Plus \(LGBT+\) communities](#) – opens in new window

In March 2020 our Report highlighted the need for a greater level of awareness and understanding of LGBT+ issues across NHS and social care services

Did You Know?

The Worcestershire Acute Hospitals Trust have initiated a range of measures based on the recommendations in our Report. These include the re-introduction of the NHS Rainbow Badge scheme and LGBT+ awareness and training, increasing LGBT+ visibility within services, producing LGBT+ specific information and improved data collection.

Our Report is also being used in GP training and inspired the University of Worcester to develop training for 200+ student nurses about meeting the health care needs of the LGBTQ+ community.

Adult Social Care

We meet regularly with Worcestershire County Council to provide feedback and discuss issues relating to Adult Social Care. These have included: co-production (we spoke at the launch of the Council's new Building Together Forum), Hospital Discharge the supply of care home places and domiciliary care. We have also discussed how quality in these settings is checked and monitored.

Did You Know?

We have worked with the County Council to update advice in the Worcestershire Care Services Directory about choosing a care home. It will in future include questions about the regulation of the home including review of care plans, complaints, CQC registration and whether a stop has been placed on admissions. This provides people with important information to inform their choice.

Making sure people are involved in planning and reviewing services

We sit on Worcestershire's Health and Wellbeing Board. They decide on priorities about health and care in Worcestershire, and have set these out in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022 - 2032. We have made sure this includes tackling the causes of ill health, including housing, employment and education.

We have been checking that people are involved in how services could be changed for the future, holding local NHS bodies to account.

Did You Know?

We brought together the feedback you have given us about getting a same day GP appointment, using NHS 111, going to A&E and Minor Injuries Units to inform planning for how urgent and same day care will work in the future. You told us that services have to work for patients, be local to them and available when they need them if pressure on Accident and Emergency Departments is to be relieved.

Improving the quality of health and care services

You told us patient safety and high-quality health and social care services are really important. We check this by asking for assurances about services including through:

- Checking how patients are kept safe, and that any concerns are dealt with through feedback to and formal meetings with local and national NHS bodies and the Care Quality Commission (CQC)
- Attending and providing information to the County Council's committees which scrutinise health services and social care services for adults and children and young people
- Commenting on the Quality Accounts of health providers
- Raising specific issues that are important to patients. This year we have asked for assurances about compliance with NHS mandatory guidance about entitlement to free parking on hospital sites and the availability of MS Specialist Nurses and clinics in Wyre Forest
- Our volunteers looked at the condition of Acute hospital buildings and other non-medical aspects of care in NHS services
- Telling the Care Quality Commission (CQC) about your experience of services so they can consider this before their inspections

Did You Know?

We have continued to highlight the difficulties people have experienced getting mental health services when they need them, including access to urgent help. We asked the Chief Executive of Hereford and Worcestershire Health and Care Trust to attend our Public Board Meeting to explain about accessing Healthy Minds services. We were told that waiting times are improving. We will continue to monitor how mental health services are performing, including through quarterly meetings with service leads. [Watch the Video](#) – opens in new window

Healthwatch – the national voice

We are part of the Healthwatch network. Healthwatch England (HWE) is the national organisation and provides us with information and advice. Our information is used by HWE to help build the national picture.

We have engaged with Healthwatch England by attending the West Midlands (WM) Network meetings for local Healthwatch and representing the WM Network on the West Midlands Cancer Alliance. We are also piloting work to record and track how Healthwatch make an impact and using the HWE quality framework to improve how we work.

Signposting people to advice and information

Over 350 people contacted us to share their experiences or for help/information about local health and social care services. We “signposted” people to the right information or organisation. We have produced guides in different formats about how to complain about health and social care services.

“Thank you for replying so promptly. I found this very helpful and have followed up the links”

Finances

In 2020/2021 Worcestershire County Council paid us £265,000 under contract to deliver local Healthwatch services. The main areas of expenditure have been:

Staff costs: £198,999

Establishment Costs including Depreciation: £49,385

Engagement Costs: £4,728

HWW Volunteers and Community Links

We have expanded our Volunteer and Community Links network.

Our volunteers have supported our project work, helped us to spread the word about Healthwatch and given their time to improve health and care services. Our Co-opted Board Members have also been involved in our decision making.

Community Links are people well connected in their communities, who chat with a lot of people about health and care services! They relay this feedback to us in the way that works best for them. Through them we hear voices we might not otherwise reach.

A big thank you to all our Healthwatch Volunteers and Community Links.

[Watch our video about volunteering for Healthwatch Worcestershire](#) –
opens in new window

Get in touch

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