

## **Healthwatch Worcestershire Annual Report 2023/2024**

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 3,900 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 80 people viewed extracts on You Tube
- Our Reference and Engagement Group - a network of over 100 organisations and "Experts by Experience"
- Healthwatch Worcestershire website – which had over 6,600 visits, with an average of over 1,500 page views per month
- Twitter (we have over 1,100 followers)

- We have grown our presence on Facebook this year, we now have over 700 followers and our posts reached over 24,000 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 youth groups, schools, colleges 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, Dementia Cafés, and Bromsgrove District Housing Trust residents
- **People from Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority Communities** - including through the Worcester Mela, the Horizon Centre and our links with community leaders
- **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Plus (LGBT+) communities** - through Kidderminster and Worcestershire Pride, Autism West Midlands LGBTQ+ Group 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, Carers Careline
- **Parent Carers** - including through Hansel & Gretel and SWANS
- **People who are homeless** – including through Maggs Day Centre, St Pauls Hostel

We have reached over 2,890 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.

### **Public Health Messaging**

The effectiveness of health messaging is key in supporting people to live longer, healthier lives. We asked over 500 people about their awareness of various public health campaigns. We found that women were more aware of the campaigns than men, and that only 10% of people who were struggling financially had heard of these important messages. We recommended that images were more inclusive, and that further information was easier to find.

### **Did you know?**

Thanks to our Report the Health Walks campaign has been reviewed and a new webpage set up which includes an interactive map and Easy Read leaflet to help people to find more information. Images have been changed to be more inclusive. In future, Public Health will be commissioning new photographs that better represent the whole community, and campaign information will be better targeted.

### **Engagement with People with Vision Impairment**

We spoke to people with a vision impairment about the challenges they face using health and care services. These are

wide ranging but include appropriate support on diagnosis, barriers accessing health services and support to adapt to day to day life, a lack of information and advice and at times a lack of awareness from staff about vision impairment.

### **Did you know?**

Our Report was endorsed by local vision impairment organisations. Together we are determined to highlight these issues at every level in our health and care services. We are also continuing our work to improve access to services for people who are D/deaf.

### **Adult Social Care**

Worcestershire County Council have introduced the Adult Front Door as the first point of contact about your wellbeing and support needs. We produced a Report of our review of the online Support Checklist and Self-Assessment form and made recommendations for improvement. These online forms are in the process of being changed and will be shared with us when complete.

Our comments have also made a difference to a number of key Care Act forms used by social workers and to Strategy documents, such as the Adult Social Care Strategy and the Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy. This is important because it ensures that people's views and perspective will influence how things happen in the future.

### **PSA test for prostate cancer**

HWW have worked with the Kidderminster & Worcestershire Prostate Cancer Support Group to gauge how well local GP surgeries communicated to patients when they were contacted

with enquiries about PSA testing. We found that men had varied access to PSA testing across the County.

### **Did You Know**

We have already written to all GP practices asking them to confirm that they are complying with NHS England's 'Informed Choice Programme' for PSA testing. We have been assured by NHS Herefordshire & Worcestershire that they are monitoring the issue.

### **Impact Project**

We have implemented the HWE Impact Tracker to record and track how we make a difference. We have a volunteer Impact Assistant who helps us capture outcomes from our work. A few examples from last year include:

- Carers views are now sought in relation to feedback about Acute Mental Health Inpatient Services.
- The County Council completely changed the navigation of its new website following difficulties encountered by our volunteers when they were Mystery Shopping.
- The Adult Social Care webpages have been reviewed - they now explain how Adult Social Care works in plain English, making it easier for people to find the information they need.
- Following a number of deaths of people who were rough sleeping we have helped the health and social care system review its work with people sleeping on the streets and improve practices where needed
- We have delivered sessions to trainee Physios and OTs as they prepare to enter the workforce, helping them to think about what matters from a patient perspective

## **Teenage Cancer Trust Young Person's Unit – University Hospital Birmingham**

We heard that sometimes younger people from Worcestershire living with cancer could not get a bed funded by the Teenage Cancer Trust, as the Hospital was using this for an older adult. After we raised this issue they came up with a new strategy to help ensure that a young person gets priority access to the bed when they are in need of it, with the ultimate aim of young people being treated together on the Unit.

### **Did You Know?**

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.

### **Making sure people are involved in planning and reviewing services**

We sit on Worcestershire's Health and Wellbeing Board. We have been checking that people are involved in how services could be changed for the future, holding local NHS bodies to account.

We promote opportunities for people to give their views on local and national issues relating to health and social care through our Bulletin.

## **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
- 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?**

Prior to the inspection by the Care Quality Commission of the Hereford and Worcestershire Health and Care Trust (H&W H&CT) we shared your feedback, particularly about Mental Health services, to inform the inspection of the Trusts services. Following the Inspection the Trust's overall ratings were "Good" for services being caring and responsive, and "Requires Improvement" for Services being safe, effective and well led.

We asked the Trust what they would do in response. The Chair of the Trust came to our Public Board Meeting and outlined their plans.

We have been invited to join the Trusts Quality & Safety Committee and to contribute to the development of their Improvement Plan.

### **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, presenting about our work on quality and patient safety to the national network and representing the WM Network on the West Midlands Cancer Alliance.

### **Signposting people to advice and information**

Over 380 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 your very prompt response ... you have provided me with a wealth of good information, and I am very grateful for that.” User of HWW Signposting Service



## **Finance**

In 2023/2024 Worcestershire County Council paid us £289,000 under contract to deliver local Healthwatch services. The main areas of expenditure have been:

Staff costs: £254,494

Establishment Costs including Depreciation: £46,989

Engagement Costs: £4,792

## **HWW Volunteers and Community Links**

Our volunteers and Community Links have supported our project work, joined us talking to people around the county and given their time to improve health and care services. Our Co-opted Board Members have also been involved in our decision making via attendance at our Public Board Meetings. A big thank you to all of you, we really appreciate the work you do!

## **Meet our new Directors**

### **Don Beckett**

With over 40 years of experience within the NHS, Don brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to Healthwatch. He is particularly interested in primary care, and will be leading for us on our work on GP's, Dentistry and Pharmacy. Don said:

“We hear from patients about the challenges they face in seeing their GP or finding an NHS dentist. I am committed to making sure that patient views and experience are kept front and centre as plans develop to help meet the many demands on our NHS primary care services”

### **Debbie Lamont**

After a career in banking Debbie worked for Action for Children. She also used to help run a support group for parents of children

with additional needs as a volunteer. She will be leading for us on our work with Children and Young People. Debbie said:

“I am passionate about ensuring that all children and young people get the help and support they need to thrive. As a parent carer myself I know this can be a struggle. I will be speaking up for children, young people and parent carers and working to break down barriers to services so people get the support they need and are entitled to”

## Get in touch

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