



**Annual Report 2024–2025**

## **Unlocking the power of people-driven care**

Healthwatch Waltham Forest

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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 Chief Executive

### Putting local voices at the heart of health and care change.

Over the past year, Healthwatch Waltham Forest has continued to champion the voices of local residents, adapting to evolving challenges and playing a vital role in shaping more person-centred, equitable care across the borough. Our commitment to amplifying community insight has been central to how we've **supported** system transformation in health and social care.

We've embedded the Good Care Framework across local strategies, influencing everything from maternity and mental health services to primary care and wellbeing. Our Community Insights System has become a trusted tool for monitoring and driving service improvement, aligning resident feedback with key NHS priorities.

We adapted our approach to deepen engagement with underserved communities—working alongside Romanian residents, young people, and those experiencing homelessness to better understand barriers and co-design solutions. Our Safe Surgeries project, vaccine literacy campaigns, and input into same day GP access planning show how local voices have directly influenced decision-making.

As the health and care landscape continues to change, we have strengthened partnerships with the Health and Care Partnership and the Integrated Care Board, helping ensure services are both responsive and accountable. By involving residents in every step—from feedback collection to system design—we continue to create a healthcare system that reflects the needs and aspirations of our diverse community.



“This year has shown the real impact of community insight—shaping health hub design, improving vaccine confidence, and putting local voices at the centre of care decisions. I’m proud of the team’s creativity and commitment to making care work better for everyone in Waltham Forest.”

## About us

# Healthwatch Waltham Forest 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 8,400 people to have their say and get information about their care. We currently employ 6 staff, and our work is supported by 9 volunteers.

### Reaching out:



5,530 people shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, and we identified **21,689** issues that helped us to raise concerns and improve care.

110 people came to us for clear advice and information on topics such as mental health support and how to make a complaint.

### Championing your voice:



We published 54 reports about the improvements people would like to see in areas like GP Same Day Access, Whipps Cross A & E and the health literacy and needs of the Romanian Community.

Our most popular report was Romanian Trust in Vaccines , highlighting the issues that impact the uptake of vaccines by Romanian residents.

### Statutory funding:



We're funded by the London Borough of Waltham Forest. In 2024/25 we received £111, 690, 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 Waltham Forest. Here are a few highlights.

## Spring

Our Good Care Framework shaped Health and Care priorities and new services should align with its principles. We adapted our community insights data analysis process to track GP improvements.



Our vaccine literacy pilot targeting the Pakistani community used local GPs and faith groups to improve awareness and uptake.



## Summer

**Maternity Services:** Healthwatch user feedback embedded in service strategy; targeting equity in outcomes.

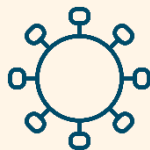


**Same Day Access:** Patient feedback informed consistent same day access model development across Waltham Forest/NEL.



## Autumn

**Romanian Trust & Vaccine Project:** Identified cultural and systemic barriers; findings used to guide winter vaccine communications.



**Safe Surgeries Audit:** Found ID requirements remain a barrier to registration—especially for vulnerable groups..



## Winter

Our report on declining patient satisfaction at **Whipps Cross A&E** asked for greater transparency on waiting times and pressures and patient-centred improvements.



Healthwatch input influenced GP **same day access** commissioning priorities and helped to identify key system dependencies





# Working together for change

**We've worked with neighbouring Healthwatch to ensure people's experiences of care in East London are heard at the Integrated Care System (ICS) level, and they influence decisions made about services at North East London ICS.**

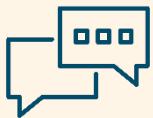
This year, we've worked with Healthwatch across North East London to achieve the following:

## Turning community insight into system change



The 8 Healthwatch continue to develop the Community Insights Programme with NEL ICB. We've processed the experiences of 162,365 people, identifying 536,048 issues. On GP and hospital services alone, we've produced 623 reports and 305 dashboards. The system tracks care trends, highlights what works, and pinpoints areas for improvement—creating a shared evidence base to make services more responsive.

## What good care looks like to local people



In 2023, we heard from over 2,000 residents about what good care means to them. They told us it should be accessible, competent, person-centred, and trustworthy. These principles are now embedded in the Integrated Care Board's strategy through our partnership work. Together with the ICB, we will measure partners' success and track progress against these standards through our Community Insights system.

## Maternity Equality



Our 2023 maternity report helped shape the NEL Maternity Equity and Equality Strategy, leading to commitments on trauma-informed care, cultural competency, multilingual advocacy, and improved communication. Its impact continues through work on interpreting services and a proposed 24/7 helpline. All 3 hospital Trusts are improving access for non-English speakers—introducing new clinical processes and bilingual advocates to deliver more inclusive, responsive maternity care.

We've also summarised some of our other outcomes achieved this year in the Statutory Statements section at the end of this report.

# Making a difference in the community

**We bring people's experiences to healthcare professionals and decision-makers, using their feedback to shape services and improve care over time.**

Here are some examples of our work in Waltham Forest this year:

## Improving maternity services through real stories



Healthwatch listened to local women's experiences of maternity care through interviews, focus groups, and surveys. Many highlighted poor communication, limited cultural awareness, and lack of consent. We shared these insights with maternity teams and the Maternity and Neonatal Voice Partnership. This work informed an action plan now adopted across five maternity units in NEL, helping deliver care that is safer, more equitable, and more culturally sensitive for women and families across the regions.

## Making GP access work for everyone



We brought patient feedback into key discussions on improving Same Day Access to GPs. We shared insights from Practice Participation Groups and our Community Insights System at NHS workshops. This influenced the design of a clearer, fairer access model across Waltham Forest, helping ensure that routes into same-day care are more consistent, less reliant on digital tools, and better aligned with what local people need.

## Building Trust with the Romanian Community



We've been working to improve health access and vaccine confidence in the Romanian community by building trusted communication channels. Through Romanian-language Facebook and WhatsApp groups—moderated by Romanian-speaking nurses and community researchers—we share accurate health information and answer questions. This work has informed NHS vaccine campaigns and is beginning to address deeper issues of trust and understanding in how services are accessed and used.



## 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

## Measuring success through your experience

Last year we went out into the community to ask local people what good health and care means to them. They said it should be accessible, competent, person centred and trustworthy. We called this the Good Care Framework

### What did we do?

We looked at how well GP services meet the Good Care Framework's four pillars. Residents identified problems with accessing appointments, unclear communication, and a lack of continuity in care.



78%

of patients highlighted problems with accessibility, especially phone and online booking systems and waiting times.

67%

felt that staff were competent particularly nurses.

47%

Felt care was person centred with little choice or patient and carer involvement.

Our work showed that many people struggle to access GP care in a way that meets their needs. Booking systems are often confusing or unfair—especially for those without digital access. Appointments can be too short, hard to get at convenient times, or not available soon enough.

This makes it difficult for people with long-term or complex health needs to get the support they rely on. Patients said they want clearer, fairer ways to book, longer appointments when needed, and regular check-ups to help them stay well.

### What difference did this make?

Our insights helped shape a fairer, more consistent Same Day Access system and informed how GP services are measured using the Good Care Framework. As a result, access has improved through extended hours, easier booking, 111 referrals, and greater use of pharmacies.

# Listening to your experiences

## Designing health hubs around real community priorities

We surveyed 231 Waltham Forest residents to understand their experiences managing long-term conditions and their priorities for a local health hub. Responses reflected diverse health needs and informed recommendations for accessible, inclusive, and holistic care—particularly around general health, mental health, and women’s services

### What did people say they wanted?

Residents want convenient, one-stop hubs offering general healthcare, mental health support, and preventive care. Long waits, lack of coordination between services, and limited specialist access are major challenges. For women’s health, key barriers include a lack of female practitioners and inadequate access to reproductive care. People value flexibility, personalised plans, and services tailored to specific conditions. Insights highlight the need for culturally competent, accessible hubs with extended hours, digital tools, and social support options



75%

want general healthcare in the hub

68%

want mental health support included

91%

say location is a top priority

34%

prefer one visit to access multiple services

### What difference did this make?

Findings are directly influencing the design of Waltham Forest’s Locality Hub model. Commissioners are now prioritising co-located services, flexible hours, and tailored long-term condition support. Women’s health services are being redesigned with more accessible screening and menopause care. Our insights have ensured that future hubs respond to what matters most—making services easier to access, more joined-up, and genuinely community-led.



## Hearing from all communities

**We're here for all residents of Waltham Forest. That's why, over the past year, we've worked hard to reach out to those communities whose voices may go unheard.**

Every member of the community should have the chance to share their story and play a part in shaping services to meet their needs.

**This year, we have reached different communities by:**

- Engaging Romanian residents using home-language interviews to highlight vaccine access barriers..
- Used the Good Care Framework to gather views from residents in low-income areas, shaping priorities for more accessible, person-centred, trusted care.
- Shared Locality Hub insights at with the development team to influence services that meet all sections of the community.





# 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, 842 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



## Breaking barriers to vaccine access through clear information

**One resident's access to vital travel vaccinations was restored after we challenged misinformation and poor communication at her local GP practice.**

A local resident was wrongly refused travel vaccinations at her GP practice, receiving conflicting explanations and no route to escalate her concerns. After we contacted the practice and clarified NHS guidance, the issue was resolved. The resident and her son received their vaccinations, and the practice acknowledged a breakdown in communication. They committed to staff training, improved patient information, and clearer processes for assessing and delivering travel vaccinations going forward..



“Thanks to your fantastic help, my son and I have both had the vaccinations we needed... The situation was only rectified with your direct personal intervention.”

## Clearer GP advice key to building vaccine confidence

**Pakistani residents want clearer, trusted vaccine information directly from GPs and respected community figures to make informed decisions.**

We interviewed 15 residents, largely from the Pakistani community, about their views on vaccines. Many reported hesitancy due to unclear or inconsistent information—particularly from their GP. While NHS websites were trusted, people also valued guidance from community figures like imams. These insights revealed a need for more proactive, culturally sensitive communication from GPs and trusted messengers. As a result, local vaccine campaigns in Waltham Forest, Newham and Tower Hamlets were tailored to include GP practices and faith-based networks, making information more accessible and credible within the community



“The GP, the internet and peer endorsement have provided me information. Even the imam had a lot of information. They are also trusted leaders.”



## Showcasing volunteer impact

Our fantastic volunteers have given over 300 hours 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
- Collected experiences and supported their communities to share their views
- Carried out enter and view visits to local services to help them improve



# Showcasing volunteer impact

## At the heart of what we do

**From finding out what residents think to helping raise awareness, our volunteers have championed community concerns to improve care.**

"Volunteering at Healthwatch has helped me with my university studies and to shape my plans for the future."

"The training Healthwatch provided gave me the courage to reach out to the community, take part in focus groups, conduct surveys and connect with a diverse range of people. Volunteering allows me to get vital practical experience to underpin my academic studies."

Kunjul



I've been with Healthwatch Waltham Forest for several years and see it as a way of giving back to society while I can.

I carry out Enter and View visits to care homes, the hospital, and other services to help us understand care standards from the patient's perspective.

Healthwatch's safeguarding training and legislation updates have been invaluable—informative and instructive. They shape how I approach my role, which I undertake with a supportive and committed team.

Victoria



### Be part of the change.

If you've felt inspired by these stories, contact us today and find out how you can be part of the change.



[www.healthwatchwalthamforest.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchwalthamforest.co.uk)



0800 145 5026



[info@healthwatchwalthamforest.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchwalthamforest.co.uk)

## Finance and future priorities

We receive funding from the London Borough of Waltham under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to help us do our work.

### Our income and expenditure:

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from Government	£111,690	Expenditure on pay	£91,085
Additional income	£13,772	Non-pay expenditure	£26,545
		Office and management fee	£7,780
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£125,462</b>	<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>£125,410</b>

### Additional income is broken down into:

- £2,584 received from the local ICS to evaluate multi-disciplinary team working in care homes .
- £800 funding received from a local charity to support their project
- £5,000 to from Public Health to help understand vaccine hesitancy in the Romanian community
- £1,187 from the local ICS for participating the voluntary, community and social enterprise leadership group.

### Integrated Care System (ICS) funding:

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

Purpose of ICS funding	Amount
Participation in governance structures- per Healthwatch	£5,000
Delivering the Community Insights System for the 8 Healthwatch	£77,000

## Finance and future priorities

### 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 our local 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. Bringing the voice of residents into the design of services in three proposed new integrated health and care hubs in Waltham Forest.
2. Understanding more about how inequalities impact on the management and prevention of long-term conditions.
3. Improving the health literacy of Romanian residents and tackling misinformation by testing new channels of communication online in the Romanian language.

# Statutory statements

**Local Voice, 80 Redmans Road, London, E 1 3AG.**

**Healthwatch Waltham Forest 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 Advisory Group consists of five members who work voluntarily to provide direction, oversight, and scrutiny of our activities.

Our Advisory Group ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community.

Throughout 2024/25, the Board met five times and made decisions on matters such as priority groups who we had not yet reached how the budget should be allocated to projects. We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities through careful analysis of the community insights gathered.

## 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.

We are committed to taking additional steps to ensure we obtain the views of people from diverse backgrounds who are often not heard from. This year we have done this by working with Romanian-speaking community researchers and delivering health literacy campaigns with marginalised groups such as refugees and those experiencing homelessness.

# 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 Health and Wellbeing Board and the Health Scrutiny Committee, as well as the Quality and Performance Group. We regularly meet with public health leads and commissioners to share resident feedback and influence planning.

We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in North East London Integrated Care System (NEL ICS). For example, we present insights at the NEL Healthwatch Insight and Intelligence Group, which brings together Healthwatch teams from across the ICS footprint. We also contribute to NEL clinical networks and thematic groups—such as the Maternity and Neonatal Equity and Equality Group and the Primary Care Access Programme Board—ensuring that local voices shape system-wide responses.

We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

## Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Waltham Forest is represented on the Waltham Forest Health and Wellbeing Board and the Integrated Care Partnership by Dianne Barham, Chief Executive.

During 2024/25, she has effectively carried out this role by championing the Good Care Framework, which is now used to assess and guide service transformation through programmes such as Care Closer to Home and the development of Locality Hubs. Our presentations have influenced discussions on improving GP access, maternity equity, and health inequalities, ensuring community voices are central to strategic decision-making.



## Statutory statements

### Enter and view

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
GP Practice – Manor Practice	Community Insights Feedback was negative	Wrote a report with recommendations – the service followed up on these, and patient experience improved.

### 2024 – 2025 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
Dental access complaints	Prompted review of NHS Choices listings and practice accountability

Healthwatch Waltham Forest



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