

# Championing what matters to you

Healthwatch Waltham Forest  
Annual Report 2021-22



# Contents

Message from our CEO	3
About us	4
Highlights from our year	5
Listening to your experiences	7
Advice and information	11
Volunteers	12
Finances and future priorities	14
Statutory statements	15

# Message from our CEO

I am delighted to have the opportunity to introduce our final annual report for Healthwatch Waltham Forest under Your Voice in Health and Social Care to reflect on what has been a hugely successful and ultimately challenging year. A year that has seen Health and Social Care continue to respond magnificently to extreme circumstances with the continuing pandemic.

During this time, Healthwatch Waltham Forest have continued their statutory responsibility to obtain the views of people about their needs and experience of local health and social care services, make those views known to those involved in the commissioning and scrutiny of care services, provide reports and make recommendations about how those services could or should be improved and promote and support the involvement of people in the monitoring, commissioning and provision of local health and social care services.

Healthwatch Waltham Forest received 2240 patient experiences to better inform our understanding of health and social care provision and to raise awareness of any on-going issues to improve care provision. 750 members of the community came to us for clear advice, this year the main areas were COVID-19 and mental health.

Despite the circumstances Healthwatch Ealing produced 11 reports on health and social care.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Waltham Forest Local Authority for all their help and support over the past five years and to wish the new providers the very best luck in delivering this wonderful service.

Tim Spilsbury, CEO, YVHSC



“The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown long-standing health inequalities into stark relief. With NHS and social care facing even longer backlogs, the unequal outcomes exposed by the pandemic are at risk of becoming worse. Local Healthwatch play an important role in helping to overcome these adversities and are uniquely placed to make a positive difference in their communities.”

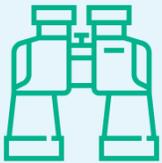
Sir Robert Francis QC, Chair of Healthwatch England



# About us

## Your health and social care champion

Healthwatch Waltham Forest is your local health and social care champion. 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.



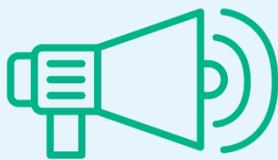
### Our values

- 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



**2240 people**

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

**750 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

**11 reports**

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

Our most popular report was

**GP and PCN Experience Report**

which highlighted patient experience by primary care network across the borough.

## Health and care that works for you



We're lucky to have

**44**

outstanding volunteers, who gave up **283 days** to make care better for our community.

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

**£129,000**

We also currently employ

**3 staff**

who help us carry out this work. previous year.

## How we've made a difference throughout the year

These are the biggest projects we worked on from April 2021 to March 2022.

Spring



From running advice lines to delivering medication, our volunteers helped combat COVID-19



We looked at how COVID-19 has affected those people with disabilities and long term conditions

Summer



With online appointments becoming the norm, our top tips helped professionals and patients get the most out of digital appointments.



We reviewed the experience of outpatients across the eight North East London Boroughs.

Autumn



We looked at the impact of accessibility of health and social care services that are used by disabled people in Waltham Forest.



We urged the Government to act after reporting a 452% increase in people struggling to see an NHS dentist.

Winter



We compared patient experience feedback by primary care network across the borough.



We compared patient experience feedback across different departments and service areas of Whipps Cross Hospital

# 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



## COVID-19, Disability and Health and Social Care in Waltham Forest

Thanks to disabled people sharing their experience of Health and Social Care accessibility with us over the last year.

The Healthwatch Waltham Forest study was made up of three parts:

- 1) analysis of local data from the regional survey;
- 2) local interviews with disabled people and carers of disabled people from Waltham Forest;
- 3) co-producing recommendations with interview participants. This report highlights the key findings and insights from the study.



### 82% of people

said they had access to key information on staying safe during the pandemic..

Most participants said access to their GP had become harder during the pandemic (53%)

A minority said they found online appointments easy to access and could be more convenient to attend than in person.

Most respondents said access to hospital specialists had become much harder (70%).

Most respondents said their regular hospital appointments were cancelled (75%). Among these respondents, a large majority said cancellations had affected their health and wellbeing (83%), most of whom said it affected them 'by a great deal' (55%).

### Key finding

Changes to digital healthcare, GP access and acute mental health care are structural challenges to the rights and inclusion of some disabled people.



All participants said they were expected to use 'digital-by-default' to access some services. Some said felt this expectation had increased during the pandemic. Participants who were not digitally confident found digitization could be a significant barrier to accessing services.



## Whipps Cross Hospital

From July 2020 – December 2021 we collected the qualitative feedback of 234 local people, about their experience of Whipps Cross University Hospital. Comments have been methodically reviewed, with leading themes and issues identified.

Feedback as a whole is mixed, with 55% positive experiences, A broad majority of comments about staff attitude and quality are positive overall (68%), suggesting staff are generally working hard to deliver good outcomes. On information, involvement and support, positive feedback is at a lower level (61%), this indicates that treatment and care is not as personal as patients may expect. Just a fifth of comments on service access are positive (22%). Leading issues include waiting times at appointments, cancellations and waiting times for treatment, and difficulty in booking or making contact.

The hospital does well compared with peers. On positive indicators, it consistently outperforms Royal London Hospital by around 5%, and Newham University Hospital by a noticeable 20%.



“Transport services are vital in ensuring people don’t miss appointments or that transport issues don’t exacerbate the physical and emotional stress of travelling and receiving treatment.”



## Maternity and Inpatients

Feedback as a whole is 61% positive – this outperforms the hospital average by 6%. In the last six months, overall satisfaction is up by a significant 45%, comments suggest.

When compared with other departmental groupings, we find that Maternity and Inpatients scores best on information, involvement and support, this is possibly a reflection of the personal care environment. Patients tell us they generally feel looked after and well cared for, while on wards.

## 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 aren't often heard.



### Creating empathy by bringing experiences to life

It's important for the NHS and social care services to step back and see the bigger picture, through hearing personal experiences, and the impact on people's lives. This provides a deeper understanding than using data alone, can challenge assumptions and motivate people to think and work more creatively.

We collected 2240 patient reviews for a wide range of health and social care providers. This year the key issues affecting the people of Waltham Forest were: GP appointments; access to health and social care services particularly for information about COVID-19; and access to NHS dentists.



### Communicating services to the public

Services need to understand the benefits of involving local people to help communication and awareness.

We provided signposting and information to local service provision for about 750 people. This included raising awareness of available service provision and ensuring the people of Waltham Forest understood how to access those services.



### Improving information over time

Change takes time. We often work behind the scenes with health and care services to consistently raise issues and push for changes.

We have added over 150 news items in the year which have included COVID-19 information such as changes to restrictions and vaccination centre dates as well as health information and engagement events across the borough.

This includes over 350 posts on Twitter and Facebook to better reach the whole community.

# 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
- Linking people to reliable information they could trust
- Supporting the COVID-19 vaccination and booster programme
- Helping people to access the services they need



# 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:

- Helped people have their say from home, carrying out surveys over the telephone and online.
- Created digital content on our website and social media.
- Carried out website and telephone reviews for local services on the information they provide and assessing their accessibility.
- Continued to help with the local volunteering efforts supporting those who were self-isolating.





### Tatiana

I have been volunteering for HWWF since November 2019 and I became a social media volunteer in April 2020. I wanted an opportunity to develop my skills and gain office based experience within the charity sector. Many of us struggled during the pandemic, and I found that volunteering for HWWF gave me something to occupy my time whilst contributing to the community. Volunteering at HWWF has been a great experience for me and I was able to learn how to use Canva and be creative.



### Clare

I started volunteering with HWWF in October 2020 as a Patient Experience Volunteer. We were more than six months into the pandemic by that point and it was a disorientating and heart-breaking time for many. I decided that I wanted to use my spare time, that I had, to speak to people about their experiences of health and social care and Healthwatch Waltham Forest gave me the opportunity to do that.



# 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	
Funding received from local authority	£129,000
Additional funding	£0
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£129,000</b>

Income	
Staff costs	£77,000
Operational costs	£40,000
Support and administration	£12,000
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>£129,000</b>

## Top three priorities for 2022–23

1. Digital isolation
2. Supporting work to tackle health inequalities
3. Hearing more from our underrepresented communities

## 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.

Over the coming years, our goal is to help reduce these inequalities by making sure your voice is heard, and decision makers reduce the barriers you face, regardless of whether that's because of where you live, income or race.

# Statutory statements

## About us

The contract holding organisation for Healthwatch Waltham Forest during 2021-22 is Your Voice in Health and Social Care (YVHSC)

45 St Marys Rod, London, W5 5RG

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 Committee consists of 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.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities. This includes identifying themes and trends through our patient experience feedback which directly tells us the focal points of the local community for Health and Social Care. This in turn informs our strategic priorities year on year. The committee is reflective of the local community and acts as a conduit between the service and the people which ensures a representative voice. We work with our Health and Social Care partners to highlight concerns and to streamline priorities wherever possible.

### **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 2020/21 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 ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. We publish it through partner organisations in health and social care as well as Voluntary Sector Partners. The report is published on our website and promoted through social media.

This year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we did not make use of our Enter and View powers. Consequently, no recommendations or other actions resulted from this area of activity.

There were no issues or recommendations escalated by our Healthwatch to Healthwatch England Committee and so no resulting special reviews or investigations.



**healthwatch**

Healthwatch Waltham Forest

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

t: 0800 145 5026

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