

Championing what matters to you

Healthwatch Solihull
Annual Report 2021-22



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Message from our chair

I am pleased to present Healthwatch Solihull's annual report for 2021-2022. Given the very visible pressures and challenges health and social care services currently face, it is important that we shine a spotlight on our mission to ensure everyone in Solihull, regardless of background, can access the best possible care.

At the core of this mission is our belief that the needs of patients and the public must be central to the design and delivery of health and social care services. No-one knows these better than the service users themselves. This report shows what can be achieved when services truly listen to what people want, and work closely with them to make the improvements they need. This is particularly important for people whose views aren't often heard. I am proud that, in the following pages, you can read about how Healthwatch Solihull has given groups such as young people with mental health issues, and vulnerable groups in our community a voice to demand and secure changes to the services they rely on. We will continue to support these groups by working with them, and with service providers, to ensure constant improvement. We will also be investigating the experiences of other vulnerable groups in our ambitious programme of activity in the coming year.

Alongside giving greater visibility to often forgotten communities, Healthwatch Solihull itself has become a much stronger presence in the local health and social care system. Over 3000 people – more than ever before shared their experiences with us in 2021-22. We used what the public told us to speak out about the issues that most mattered to them – such as the backlog for treatments exacerbated by Covid-19, long waits for ambulances and difficulties getting appointments with dentists and General Practices. We also helped people find support for their own personal situation through our Information and Signposting service.

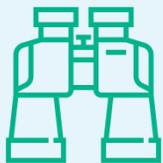
The importance of our role, as the independent voice and champion for patients and the public, will be increased in the new Integrated Care System (ICS), which links NHS and local authority social care services more closely together. We look forward to collaborating with our partners in the ICS to tackle health inequalities and improve health and social care for everyone in Solihull.

I would like to thank the incredible team of Healthwatch Solihull staff and volunteers for the brilliant work they do on behalf of patients and the public. Thank you also to NHS and social care staff, alongside our many friends in the thriving voluntary sector, who work with us to make such a positive difference for the people of Solihull. But the biggest credit for our impact must go to everyone who shared their experiences with us. I appeal to you to keep telling us your thoughts – and encourage your friends and family to do the same – so that together we can create ever bigger benefits for you, your community and everyone in Solihull.

About us

Your health and social care champion

Healthwatch Solihull is your local health and social care champion. From GP Services to social care homes 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.



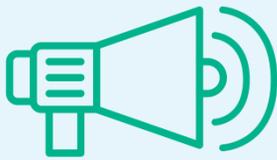
Our values

- 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



2,867 people

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

182 people

came to us for individual clear advice and information about topics such as mental health and COVID-19.

Making a difference to care



We published

3 reports

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

We visited

8

care homes to ensure residents had their say.

Health and care that works for you



We're lucky to have

20

outstanding volunteers, who gave up **14 days** to make care better for our community.

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

£155,322

We also currently employ

7 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



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



We engaged with care homes using technology and held online coffee morning with residents and care home staff.

Summer



We published our report into Birmingham and Solihull residents' experiences of health and social care during the second national lockdown, with recommendations to improve care during the recovery of services after Covid-19.



We supported the #BecauseWeAllCare campaign which saw 54,000 people come forward to tell us about issues they faced with services.

Autumn



As restrictions began to ease we started to re-engage with people out and about in the community, reaching more people and gathering their views.



We continued to support local services to roll out COVID vaccine boosters. As well as supporting people to access their flu vaccine.

Winter



We continued to work with local Primary Care Networks to listen to the views of local people who were finding access difficult. Helping them to identify key issues for improvement.



As part of our forthcoming investigation, we met with Local Dentist Committees to discuss the crisis in NHS dentistry and how access can be improved for people in Birmingham and Solihull.

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.



Making accessing your GP easier

Thanks to people sharing their experience of accessing general practice (GP) services via technology (e.g., by telephone, the GP's website, apps or video calls) with us last year, this has helped ensure that accessing GP services via technology is an easier process for everyone.

There are positive aspects to the use of technology for GP access and during the COVID-19 pandemic for patient/staff safety and infection control. However, we heard that the information and the language regarding accessing GP services via technology need to be simpler and clearer for some people. This will help ensure that services are accessible to all.

Healthwatch Solihull shared what we heard from patients with all Primary Care Networks (PCNs) in Solihull (Solihealth). We also shared the draft report with the Birmingham and Solihull Clinical Commissioning Group. The PCNs acknowledged the need to improve on the issues we found during our investigation, and they committed to improve services.



Healthwatch Solihull would like to thank service users, Solihealth and the Birmingham and Solihull Clinical Commissioning Group for their participation and involvement in this investigation.



The Solihull PCNs (Solihealth) said “the technology report has aided the PCNs and respective Practices within Solihealth to identify and plan work for improvements based on service user feedback. In some areas, the learning has provoked more efficient and innovative ways of working or includes evolving current processes. In other areas, the report offered reassurance of what the PCNs were doing well.”

- All PCNs are actively updating and developing their websites. They are not solely for information as they are being used to make bookings, order prescriptions and request medications.
- All PCNs include face to face bookings as part of a personalised and flexible approach. Additional, weekend and extended appointments have been offered as well as telephone appointments which are preferred by some patients.
- The practices are multi-disciplinary with expertise including; clinical pharmacists, care coordinators, paramedics, physician associates, nurses and phlebotomists.
- Contact and communication with patients happen through telephone calls, texts, emails and letters.
- All PCNs have processes to manage telephone appointments should patients miss the call.

Read the full report on our website

Healthwatch Solihull will continue to engage and hear the experience of people's experiences of accessing general practice (GP) services via technology and use this to drive improvement.

Improving experiences of support for young people who have self-harmed

Thanks to people sharing their experiences of young people who have self-harmed, and their families, we have written an initial report to push for improvements on the support received by young people who have self-harmed.

We shared a survey in December 2021 – May 2022 to be completed by Solihull residents (16+ years old) who have self-harmed or know someone who has self-harmed. We also interviewed two people – one young person and one parent/carer.

Common themes from what we heard were:

- Issues with the amount of time spent on waiting lists with no support.
- How young people are supported in educational settings.
- The type of support or treatment given impacting the how much it will help a young person who self-harms.



44% of people

we heard from said the support received after self-harming was not at all useful.

We will use the report, to encourage self-harm services and commissioners to:

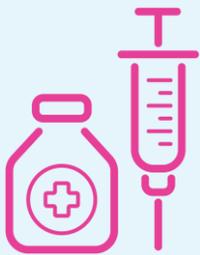
- Engage well with the pastoral care services offered in educational settings such as schools, colleges and universities.
- Promote existing help and support to the parents/carers of young people who self-harm as parents and carers are often also impacted by their child's self-harming.
- Significantly reduce waiting times for assessments and support as soon as possible. As well as providing more support or signposting to other sources of support during any period of time on a waiting list and particularly when young people are moving between services.
- Ensure that the care and support provided is patient-centred and that services work effectively together to provide consistent treatment for the young person.

You can read the full report and response from SOLAR on our [website](#)



Three ways we have made a difference for the community

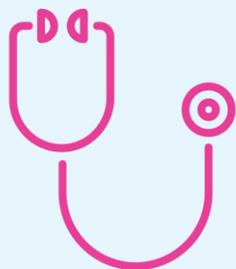
Throughout our work we gather information about health inequalities by speaking to people whose experiences aren't often heard.



Helping local people access vaccines

During the pandemic we have seen a huge and successful roll out in Solihull. Although some people found that there was no provision that they could access due to their lifestyle and commitments.

We helped local services to identify key areas in Solihull to take their vaccine vans, or vaccine teams to operate pop ups. People who were socially isolated, or vaccine hesitant were able to access vaccines in places that felt safe and comfortable for them.



Getting services to involve the public

Services need to understand the benefits of involving local people to help improve care for everyone.

We continuously worked with local GP's to listen to patient and public views. Encouraging them to address key issues and improve service delivery based on what people told us.



Ensuring young people have their say

It's important that young people are involved in the shaping of healthcare services, so that future services work for them and so that services understand what young people need in order to thrive.

This year we have worked with local colleges and sixth forms to include young people in our Self Harm study. We have also worked with pastoral leaders to provide volunteer positions for young people who are studying, giving them the opportunity to understand the healthcare system, grow in confidence, share their own views, and encourage their peers to get involved.

Advice and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch Solihull 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.



Supporting mental health recovery

A gentleman who had been receiving care for mental health was discharged from hospital during the pandemic. During his time in hospital, he lost contact with his family. He was provided with accommodation near the hospital, and due to having nobody to provide care for him throughout the day, had to check in each day before returning to his accommodation.

We signposted and incorporated help from Solihull Action Through Advocacy, Solihull Council and Mental Health Matters. This led to him and his family being able to reconnect quickly. Their wishes were to be in contact with each other so that they could care for him, and he could live with them.

Healthwatch Solihull were able to communicate with various organisations, the family and the individual to create a network for this gentleman to improve his care and quality of life. The family came back to us and thanked us. *"This was such a hopeless situation and we never thought we would be able to take him on holidays or look after him again, it's been so long, thank you."*

We have had an indepth look at mental health services this year, and a part of preventing a decline for people is having the correct support available. We worked earnestly to ensure that this support could be provided by the right people and the outcome was the right one.

Awaiting a diagnosis

A lady who was suffering with a new medical condition during the pandemic. She had received multiple operations and procedures spanning over 2 years and had not received an official diagnosis. Her livelihood was lost, and due to developing mobility issues because of her condition, she was unable to attend meetings and interviews at the job center, she could not get the help she needed.

Left in a desperate situation, she shared her story with us, we were able to put her in contact with the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), and after corresponding with the doctors on her case, we helped her achieve an official diagnosis.

Following conversations with the CAB, Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) and Solihull Action Through Advocacy (SATA), she got her diagnosis and clarification. This allowed her to receive backpay, and now she is in a much better position where she is receiving the right medical care, and her livelihood is no longer at threat. *"It's all thanks to the information and support given to me by Healthwatch, I've got my money back and I know what's been wrong with me. I was getting nowhere running around in circles, thank you so much."* is what we heard following this case.

Volunteers

We're supported by a team of amazing volunteers who are the heart of Healthwatch Solihull. 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.
- Continued to help with the local volunteering efforts supporting those who were self-isolating.
- Attended services such as care homes to observe service delivery and speak to service users.
- Helped us to run coffee mornings and gather feedback out in the community.





Gina

"I enjoy talking and trying to help pass on opinions - good and not so good, this helps the staff team to work with the people that can make improvements where needed. I found the people I have worked with a nice friendly group. It has given me a broader outlook on how people think in different walks of life. So, thanks to you all at Healthwatch and volunteers, giving back some spare time to help others makes me happy."



Jenny

"I wanted to volunteer as I'm not well enough to work but wanted to do something worthwhile and help others. I am really concerned about people who have difficulties accessing healthcare and wanted to help make sure they are heard and not left behind."



James

"I have been a volunteer for Healthwatch Solihull since November 2018, in that time I have been involved in Mental Health awareness evenings, report writing, & more recently I became the Volunteer Representative on the Birmingham & Solihull Healthwatch Board. I enjoy volunteering for Healthwatch Solihull as I am passionate about improving local health services."



Do you feel inspired?

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



www.healthwatchsolihull.org.uk



0808 196 3912



volunteer@healthwatchsolihull.org.uk

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		Expenditure	
Funding received from local authority	£155,322	Staff costs	£121,810
Additional funding	£0	Operational costs	£36,678
		Support and administration	£4,107
Total income	£155,322	Total expenditure	£162,595

Top three priorities for 2022–23

1. Use our position on the Birmingham and Solihull ICS to ensure the experiences of local citizens drive the changes needed for improvement.
2. Improving access to primary care and mental health services.
3. Ensuring support for those waiting for treatment.

Tackling long-standing health inequalities in Solihull will continue to be at the heart of everything we do. Only through listening to and involving those most likely to experience inequality in health and social care will we see change for our more deprived communities. Our role is to both ensure we are making local voices heard and that health and social care services have effective systems to involve patients and the public in decisions. The citizen voice needs to be threaded through every layer of the new ICS.

The fast-paced change in health and social care needs to ensure patients are on the journey too, understand the changes being made and how that affects them. We regularly see the impact of poor communication and the challenges this creates for citizens, this needs to improve so everyone gets access to the care they need at the right time and place.

Statutory statements

About us

Healthwatch Solihull, Enterprise Centre, 1 Hedingham Grove, Birmingham B37 7TP
Healthwatch Solihull 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 nine 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 formally four times and made decisions on matters such as maximising our impact for the most vulnerable in Birmingham, tackling inequalities and ensuring we are well placed within the emerging Birmingham and Solihull ICS.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities. People's experiences prompt and lead our activity and investigations, with our reports focusing on improving services for everyone. People's experiences collected through our feedback centre, community engagement and information and signposting are collated and themed. Key issues go through our Topic Identification and Prioritisation (TIPS) process where our volunteers and members of the public help us select issues for us to investigate.

Health and Wellbeing Board

Healthwatch Solihull is represented on the Solihull Health and Wellbeing Board by Andy Cave, Chief Executive. During 2021/22, he has effectively carried out this role by championing the involvement of local people in decisions and supporting the Board to understand citizens' experiences.



healthwatch Solihull

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