



Annual Report 2024–2025

Unlocking the power of people-driven care

Healthwatch Solihull

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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 Chair

At Healthwatch Solihull, our priority remains clear: to listen to the people of Solihull and ensure their voices influence the health and social care services they rely on.

Over the past year, we have supported individuals and families through our information and signposting services, helping them understand their rights and navigate complex care pathways. From phone calls to face-to-face information giving, our team has provided guidance that has made a tangible difference to people's lives.

Through in-depth investigations, we've explored how well people feel supported for menopausal symptoms and what it's like to use community pharmacies. These reports highlight the real-life experiences of service users, and our evidence is driving improvements in these crucial areas. We've also worked to improve access to NHS services — including support for prostate cancer and from urgent treatment centres.

Our evidence-based reports have helped influence decision-making at the highest levels. Many of our recommendations have become part of ongoing quality improvement processes within the Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care System. But we also know there is a lot more to do. So, we continue to press for change where it matters to ensure that no one is left behind. Our collaboration with other local Healthwatch has strengthened our voice and amplified the issues that matter most to communities.

None of this would be possible without the tireless commitment of our staff and volunteers. On behalf of the Board, I thank them for ensuring that the people of Solihull are truly heard.



“Real change begins when we truly listen. Every voice matters and every story has the power to shape better care.”

Richard Burden, Chair, Healthwatch Solihull

About us

Healthwatch Solihull 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.



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 almost 6,000 people to have their say and or get information about their care. We currently employ 8 staff, and our work is supported by 15 volunteers.

Reaching out:



5,093 people shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.

825 people came to us for clear information on topics such as mental health support and finding an NHS dentist.

Championing your voice:



We published two investigation reports about the improvements people would like to see in pharmacy and menopause advice and treatment. We also published three impact reports in pharmacy, the NHS prostate cancer pathway and urgent care.

Our biggest impact came from the Urgent Care in Solihull report — it prompted service-wide improvements to how urgent care is communicated and accessed locally, helping more people understand where to go and reducing confusion during stressful situations.

Statutory funding:



We're funded by Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council. In 2024/2025 we received £170,164.41, which is 4% more than 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 Solihull. Here are a few highlights.

Spring

Raised patient confusion around urgent care access; led to better UTC signposting, new communications, and stakeholder engagement to improve service clarity and coordination.



Our findings led UHB to improve prostate cancer care with more support workers, holistic assessments, and clearer post-treatment guidance.



Summer

Volunteers helped extend our reach into underrepresented communities, ensuring more voices were heard and needs identified in Solihull's care landscape.



We took part in community festivals and events, gathering feedback and signposting support – ensuring residents' voices reached commissioners and service leads.



Autumn

Our social media posts promoted NHS winter services and local pharmacy options, helping people navigate care more effectively during a pressured season.



We heard from care home residents and staff, helping decision-makers understand daily challenges and inform better planning for future care provision



Winter

Our work supported the Pharmacy First rollout to 96% of pharmacies, boosting uptake, referrals, and access through targeted outreach and staff training



Revealed gaps in GP menopause knowledge and inconsistent care; our findings are shaping local awareness, training, and future service improvements.



Working together for change

We've worked closely with the Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care Board (ICB) to make sure people's experiences of care are heard and acted on at system level.

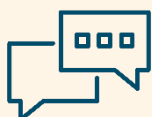
This year, our partnership with the ICB has helped drive meaningful changes across the health and social care system to improve services for local people.

Working together for change:



Our relationship with the Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care Board (ICB) is key to improving local health services. As an independent member, we bring a strong patient voice to decision-making. We don't just share feedback—we work to make sure change happens. By working closely with the ICB, we've used their role in bringing the system together to increase our impact.

The big conversation:



We've agreed with the ICB that our reports will feed into their quality structures—ensuring action is taken when people share their experiences. As a member of the ICB's Quality Committee and System Quality Group (SQG), we help shape priorities and improvements. This means the ICB can support joined-up conversations, hold services to account, and track progress that we can share back with local communities.

Building strong relationships to achieve more:



Over the past year, we've worked with the ICB and the System Quality Group to feed patient insight into key areas like community pharmacy and hospital discharge. Together, we've brought system partners around the table—including the ICB, CQC, NHS England and local providers—to agree actions that make a difference. This collaboration has led to clearer public messaging on Pharmacy First and better discharge planning that puts patients first.

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 Solihull this year:

Creating empathy by bringing experiences to life



Hearing personal experiences and their impact on people's lives helps services better understand the issues people face.

People in Solihull now feel more confident using pharmacies for minor illnesses. After we shared stories of confusion and low awareness, the ICB ran campaigns to explain what support pharmacists offer. These changes helped improve access, boosted trust in pharmacy services, and made it easier for people to get care quickly

Getting services to involve the public



By involving local people, services help improve care for all.

Following our report, the ICB took action to improve how urgent care services listen to the public. They launched a comprehensive stakeholder engagement programme to strengthen communication and ensure that patient voices directly shape the development of the urgent and emergency care (UEC) strategy.

Improving care over time



Change takes time. We work behind the scenes with services to consistently raise issues and bring about change.

We've been working to improve urgent care in Solihull. First, we investigated local people's experiences and published a report. Services have improved communication, access, and awareness. We then shared a second report with the ICB to provide detailed feedback and push for change. Through ongoing collaboration, we continue to raise issues and press for better systems. Change takes time—but by listening and sharing what we hear, we're helping to make care better.

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

Tackling gaps in prostate cancer care

Last year, we gathered feedback from people using the NHS prostate cancer pathway in Birmingham and Solihull.

While many described receiving good care, others raised concerns about delays in diagnosis, limited information about treatment options, and a lack of post-treatment support.

What did we do?

We gathered feedback from 93 people through surveys and interviews. We shared our findings with University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust (UHB) and the ICB.

UHB responded by outlining actions to address key issues, including improving access to diagnosis, increasing the number of Holistic Needs Assessments, and enhancing post-treatment support. We requested evidence of implementation and impact.

Key things we heard:



68%

were not offered support for side effects

8%

received a Holistic Needs Assessment

48%

said healthcare professionals involved them in making treatment decisions

What difference did this make?

UHB reported actions including increased diagnostic capacity, recruitment of specialist staff, more holistic assessments, and improved support services. They also introduced processes to encourage patients to raise concerns and access information. While some feedback suggests further improvement is needed, these changes are intended to enhance care across the prostate cancer pathway

Listening to your experiences

Improving access to community pharmacies for minor health needs

Last year, we gathered feedback from people using NHS community pharmacies in Birmingham and Solihull.

Most were satisfied, but some raised concerns about privacy, awareness of services, and a preference for GP referrals over those from receptionists.

What did we do?

In early 2024, we gathered feedback from over 460 people about their experiences with NHS community pharmacies in Birmingham and Solihull. While most were satisfied, others raised concerns about privacy, awareness of services, pharmacist expertise, and consultation room availability. We published a report highlighting these barriers and shared it with the ICB.

In response, the ICB committed to action. In February 2025, we published a follow-up report to assess progress on Pharmacy First uptake, staff training, translation services, and public awareness campaigns.

Key things we heard:



17%

were aware that pharmacists can prescribe some medicines independently

42%

preferred a GP appointment over using a pharmacy for clinical advice

35%

cited lack of private spaces as a barrier to using pharmacies

What difference did this make?

Public awareness has improved through leaflets, radio ads, school outreach and social media. Pharmacies now have greater access to translation services, and the ICB has committed to ongoing communication and integration efforts

Hearing from all communities

We're here for all residents of Solihull. 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, our community engagement officers have reached different communities by:

- Engaging with students during Freshers and Careers events.
- Supporting the Hong Kong community at cultural celebrations.
- Visiting warm hubs and dementia cafés across Solihull



Hearing from all communities

Engaging with older people and rural communities

We visited warm hubs, dementia cafés, and community events across Solihull.

We spoke with older residents at 9 warm hubs, 4 dementia groups, 2 information fairs, and a Pensioners Fair hosted by MP Saqib Bhatti.

What difference did this make?

This enabled people aged over 80 and those in rural areas to share their views and challenges with us. We provided tailored signposting to meet their individual needs and made their voices part of local care conversations.

Supporting carers across Solihull

We attended Solihull Health Partnership's Carers Events to listen and inform.

These events gave carers a safe space to share their experiences and concerns about supporting loved ones.

What difference did this make?

Carers were empowered through signposting to services and support. We helped ensure their needs, and the needs of those they care for, —are recognised in local care planning.

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 825 people have reached out to us for information, support or help finding services.

This year, we've helped people by:

- Giving tailored information through phone, online, and in person.
- Helping people understand their care rights.
- Supporting access to NHS and urgent services.



Signposting after distressing medical error

A woman distressed by a mistaken cancer warning was signposted to the right channels to raise a complaint and find resolution.

While on holiday, Mrs S received an unexpected email from her doctor suggesting a possible cancer diagnosis. Unable to return home early, she spent the rest of her trip in distress.

On returning, she was informed the email had been sent in error. Healthwatch Solihull provided information on how to make a formal complaint and signposted her to Solihull First for further guidance. She later told us she felt reassured after being listened to.



“Thank you for listening to me. The email was sent to me by mistake, and my mind can rest easy now. You are wonderful people. I’m very happy this is resolved.”

Signposting after unexpected dental charge

A pensioner secured a dental refund after being signposted to the complaints process and relevant advocacy services.

A pensioner entitled to free NHS dental care, was surprised to be charged nearly £30 for a wash and rinse treatment following a routine appointment. Confused by the charge, he paid it and later contacted Healthwatch Solihull.

We provided information on how to raise a formal complaint, signposted him to advocacy services, and advised him how to contact the ICB, which handles dental complaints. Simon later received a full refund and an apology.



“I’m glad I called you. I’ve received a letter of apology from the dentist and have been refunded. Thank you so much for your help”

Showcasing volunteer impact

Our fantastic volunteers have given 335 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:

- Collected experiences, and supported communities to share their views, at 71 Solihull community events.
- Helped review our Information & Signposting (I&S) webpages to improve accessibility and relevance.
- Attended research and board meetings to contribute to decision-making and strategic planning.



Showcasing volunteer impact

At the heart of what we do

From finding out what residents think to raising awareness, our volunteers have championed community concerns to improve care – while also gaining skills and experience to support their own development

“Volunteering with Healthwatch Birmingham & Solihull has been a rewarding experience. It’s given me the opportunity to listen to diverse voices, contribute to improving health and social care services, and feel more connected to my community. I’m proud to be part of a team that values inclusion, impact, and real change.”

Watch Matilda share her experience of volunteering with us in [this short video](#).



Matilda

“Volunteering with Healthwatch Birmingham & Solihull has been one of the best decisions I’ve made in rebuilding my career. It’s expanded my experience, developed essential skills, and deepened my understanding of the public’s role in healthcare. Despite initial apprehension after moving from another country, the experience has boosted my confidence and helped me grow personally and professionally. The training and support from Healthwatch staff has been invaluable, fostering a sense of inclusion and making this a truly transformative experience.”

Find out what Sonia gained from volunteering with us in [this short video](#).



Sonia

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.healthwatchsolihull.org.uk



0808 196 3912



volunteer@healthwatchsolihull.org.uk

Showcasing volunteer impact

More stories from those making a difference

Further quotes that shine a light on how volunteering strengthens our community—and supports personal growth too

"My volunteering with Healthwatch Birmingham & Solihull has been incredibly valuable, offering insights into healthcare from the care receiver's perspective. It provided networking opportunities and broadened my understanding of the sector, while also fuelling my passion for improving healthcare outcomes. This experience has been enriching and will support my future career in healthcare."

Soroush



"Volunteering with Healthwatch Birmingham & Solihull during my Masters in Public Health has been an enriching experience, both personally and professionally. It allowed me to engage with diverse communities, gather valuable feedback on health and social care services, and contribute to meaningful change. This role helped me refine my communication and organisation skills and strengthened my commitment to public health. I highly encourage every student to volunteer; it's a great way to give back while gaining valuable career experience."

Vidhya



Finance and future priorities

We receive funding from Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to help us do our work.

Our income and expenditure:

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from Government	£170,164.41	Expenditure on pay	138,414.07
Additional income	£ 0	Non-pay expenditure	15,991.37
		Office and management fee	17,028.08
Total income	£170,164.41	Total Expenditure	171,433.52

We did not receive any additional income.

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. Tackling health inequalities
2. Improving access to Health and Social Care
3. Amplifying public voices in decision making.

Statutory statements

Healthwatch Solihull, Enterprise Centre, 1 Hedingham Grove, Solihull, 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 ten members who provide direction, oversight, and scrutiny of our activities.

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

Throughout 2024/25, the Board met four times and held discussions on important health and social care issues. We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities.

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 and share with stakeholders.

Statutory statements

Responses to recommendations

All providers responded to our 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 that have been shared with us.

In our local authority area, for example, we take information to several boards and committees. These include Solihull Place Committee, Solihull Health and Wellbeing Board and Solihull Safeguarding Adults Board.

We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care System. For example, we share collated information from Healthwatch Solihull and Healthwatch Birmingham at the ICB and Integrated Care Partnership and highlight patient insight and experience at their Quality Committee. We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Solihull is represented on the Solihull Health and Wellbeing Board by Andy Cave, Chief Executive. During 2024/25, 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 is represented in the Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care System by:

- Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care Partnership – Richard Burden (Chair)
- Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care Board – Andy Cave (CEO)
- Solihull Place Committee – Andy Cave (CEO).

Statutory statements

2024 – 2025 Outcomes

This table highlights work that may not be featured elsewhere in the annual report. It captures key projects, service improvements, and how people's feedback has shaped care in Solihull.

This year, we did not make use of our Enter and View powers. Consequently, no recommendations or other actions resulted from this area of activity.

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
Local Service Planning and Housing	
The Solihull Draft Housing Allocation Scheme 2024	Feedback submitted on local housing priorities; staff noted internal uncertainty about consultation scope, highlighting the need for clearer internal coordination.
Proposed changes to charges for council-run day opportunities	Raised equity concerns; received a direct response from Solihull Council acknowledging our input and confirming our influence in shaping future planning.
Advocacy and Strategy Development	
Proposed changes to the guidance on providing advocacy	We highlighted the importance of two-way communication and clear information sharing, ensuring people feel confident accessing independent advocacy support.
The Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy Refresh	We emphasised stronger connections between feedback and commissioning decisions, especially around prevention, mental health, and access to early help services.
Healthwatch Birmingham and Solihull NHS Long-Term Plan response	Feedback shaped how the plan addresses prevention, access, and integrated care across Birmingham and Solihull, reflecting public priorities

Statutory statements

2024 – 2025 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
Access to Primary and Urgent Care	
Access to NHS Community Pharmacies	Raised awareness of service barriers; informed the ICB strategy; foundation for Pharmacy First expansion.
Think Pharmacy First (Impact Report)	96% pharmacy sign-up; 107,000+ consultations; new PCN engagement leads; outreach campaigns and translated materials.
Urgent Treatment Centres in Birmingham and Solihull	Shared three years of patient feedback to support improved UTC access, better signposting, and public understanding of when and how to use them.
National Policy Engagement	
Change NHS: The 10-year health plan for England	We shared Solihull residents' views on accessibility, digital inclusion, and personalised care, contributing to national dialogue on shaping the NHS's future.

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