

Championing what matters to you

Healthwatch North Somerset
Annual Report 2021-22



Contents

Message from our chair	4
About us	5
Highlights from our year	6
Listening to your experiences	8
Advice and information	12
Volunteers	14
Finances and future priorities	16
Statutory statements	17

Message from our chair

COVID-19 has continued to have an impact and create pressure on people and services this year. These pressures have been reflected in the feedback we receive from the public, and have driven our work and enabled us to concentrate on the areas of greatest concern, such as access to GPs, dentists and mental health services.

A survey of the needs of carers was carried out to ensure they could access vital information quickly and easily. These experiences added to the public consultation over the new Carers Strategy. We also looked at what young people want in their schools and communities to best support mental health and wellbeing. We will continue to scrutinise access issues over the coming year.

Plans are in place for a new health centre to replace Graham Road GP surgery in Weston-super-Mare. We worked with the surgery and patients, encouraging communication and ensuring that a wide range of voices were heard. This co-production work was echoed in our engagement with under-represented communities on the configuration of stroke services. We look forward to continuing to drive change and achieve positive outcomes for our community.



Georgie Bigg

Chair of the Board of Trustees. Healthwatch Bristol, North Somerset South Gloucestershire

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Georgie Bigg".



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 North Somerset is your local health and social care champion. From Weston to Winford 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

Healthwatch North Somerset is a place where people's experiences improve health and care.



Our mission

By offering all people of North Somerset a strong voice, we will improve the quality of local health and social care.



Our values

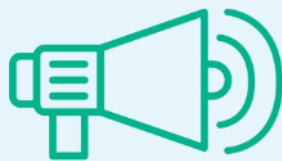
In everything we do, we are transparent, non-judgemental, and independent. We are dedicated to inclusion, co-production, and strive for continual improvement.

We adhere to the Nolan Principles, also known as the Seven Principles of Public Life. This means that we carry out our work with selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, and leadership.

Our year in review

Find out how we have engaged and supported people.

Reaching out



264 people

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

1,957 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

3 reports

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

Our most popular report was **‘Engagement with service users of North Bristol Trust’s A&E Department’** which looked at people’s interaction with professionals prior to attending A&E and why they were there.

Health and care that works for you



We’re lucky to have

10

outstanding volunteers, who gave up **176 days** to make care better for our community.

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

£54,519

Which is **1% more** than the previous year.








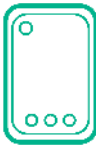
We also currently employ

2.5 staff

who help us carry out this work – **0.8 more** than the 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		
	Carers told us they would like additional support from their GP. The Carers Partnership Group is now looking at how GPs can identify and assist more people who are carers.	People were increasingly told to look online for information. We carried out an audit of local GP practice websites to check what information could be found, and how easily.
Summer		
	We engaged with under-represented communities to ensure they had their say on proposed local changes to stroke services.	Digital GP appointments don't work for everyone. For people who needed a face-to-face appointment, we set out what they could be offered and what to expect from their surgery.
Autumn		
	We championed the involvement of patients and local residents in the consultation for relocating Graham Road Surgery in Weston-super-Mare.	Bladder & bowel services were affected during the COVID-19 pandemic. We carried out a survey to understand how this had impacted people's lives.
Winter		
	100+ people told us about their experiences at Southmead Hospital A&E department, helping North Bristol Trust and other services respond to high demand.	With the NHS under pressure from COVID-19 and seasonal illnesses, we supported the 'Call NHS 111 First' campaign to help people get the right care first time around.

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



Supporting children and young people’s mental health

Thanks to young people sharing their experience of mental health support with us, charities and NHS services in North Somerset heard loud and clear what kind of help is needed and had evidence of where there are gaps in provision.

The prevalence of mental health issues amongst children and young people (CYP) is on the increase. Issues are emerging in younger age groups and both schools and services are struggling to keep up with the demand.

Our research found that support through schools and colleges in North Somerset was fragmented and varied in quality. We heard from more than 100 children & young people with lived-experience, or parents and carers about when they sought help.



75% of children
and young people said they had experienced mental health issues.

Barriers that children and young people typically mentioned to accessing mental health support included not enough counsellors, fears that people would find out, and concerns that they wouldn’t be taken seriously.

Comments from parents and carers referenced having to fight for help for their child and long waiting lists for Child and Adolescent Mental Health services (CAMHs). One person said they had been told by a GP that mental health services were ‘swamped’ and therefore couldn’t help.

Across both groups there was a desire for different kinds of support, including relaxed sessions, being able to talk to the same person, and learning coping skills.

What difference did this make

Mental Health Support Teams, who support schools in dealing with mild to moderate mental health issues and liaise with external specialist services, are to be fully operational in schools in North Somerset by the beginning of 2023. In the interim, the Mental Health charity Off The Record was commissioned to provide support from late 2021.

In the **Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2024**, North Somerset Council has committed to publishing a multi-agency CYP mental health strategy.



OTR will be working in partnership with service providers and in community spaces across North Somerset to address areas keenly raised in public feedback

Off The Record



Working to improve patient care

We've been helping Graham Road Surgery in Weston-super-Mare improve the quality of care provided to patients.

In the spring we helped Pier Health Group Limited facilitate a series of engagement workshops ahead of the consultation about the proposed relocation of Graham Road Surgery. Pier Health asked us to use our co-production experience to facilitate the workshops. Topics included transport to the planned Weston Rugby Club site, and how the new site could be used to enhance patients' health and wellbeing.

We also were able to support the surgery to increase their communications about the consultation to local residents and to its 11,000 patients. To used our networks in communities, which we have built over many years, to allow as many people as possible to have their say during the consultation period. We promoted each step through our social media channels, website, and email newsletters.

The long-term goal of moving the surgery is to improve the care provided. This year, [feedback around service provision at Graham Road](#) was collated into reports on a regular basis. As part of our obligation to scrutinise services and in our role as a critical friend, we liaised with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and provided monthly updates to the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) so that the surgery would receive the necessary support, in order to give a better service to its patients.



We enable local people to monitor the standard of provision, and we report and recommend how a service could be improved. These are our core functions, and we take this responsibility seriously.

Vicky Marriott, Area Manager Healthwatch Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire



What difference did this make

In August 2021, a Care Quality Commission inspection of Graham Road Surgery found issues around staffing and resources, which were having an impact on patient care. The CQC and the CCG are now supporting Graham Road to make necessary improvements – for instance, the surgery has brought in additional receptionists, provided enhanced training, more nurse practitioners and a new telephony system to make it easier for patients to seek care.

We continue to gather and pass on patient feedback. We are currently retraining our authorised Enter and View team of volunteers, who will be ready to visit and evaluate the service this autumn. We last visited the surgery in February 2020.

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.



Supporting unpaid carers

If a person is registered as a carer with their GP, additional support such as priority access to vaccines can be offered.

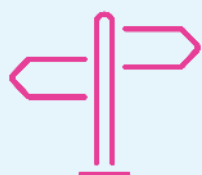
COVID-19 exacerbated the caring experience for many. After speaking with unpaid carers, we found that measures such as electronic flagging on notes can help GP surgeries offer additional support for both the carer and the cared-for person. We shared this recommendation with the BNSSG Carers Partnership Group, which includes the Clinical Commissioning Group and carers organisations. The group plan to work with their partners to ensure robust carers registration processes are set up with GPs.



Improving access to patient information

During the pandemic, NHS service information and appointments went online. We helped make sure online services were accessible as possible.

Our volunteers reviewed GP practice websites. Thanks to their hard work, we road-tested our review tool that helps to make websites patient friendly and consistent. The Centre for Primary Care research, University of Bristol asked to use it in 2022, for a CCG funded project.



Dual diagnosis: mental health and addiction

We heard, back in 2020, that there was a lack of support for people simultaneously suffering from mental health difficulties and addiction.

People who have mental health issues may also struggle with addiction – and vice versa. A contributing factor can be adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). After speaking to people with lived-experience, we recommended that services acknowledge the role of trauma and develop their training & treatment strategies. In 2021 North Somerset Council's Joint and Health and Wellbeing Strategy agreed that trauma-informed practice needed to be improved through better training opportunities for practitioners in key services.

Advice and information

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 what to do when choosing a good care home for a loved one – you can count on us.

This year we helped by:

- Advising people how to use the NHS 'Find a dentist' website
- Linking people to online health services such as eConsult and the NHS app
- Directing people to Patient Advice and Liaison Services
- Providing information about the right to register with a GP surgery



Helping you get the right care, first time

To help control the spread of COVID-19, avoid crowded waiting rooms in hospitals, the NHS launched a campaign urging people to 'call NHS 111 first' rather than going straight to A&E.

We've been supporting the NHS in North Somerset by sharing campaign materials and information about how NHS 111 services operate in our area via our social media channels, website, newsletter, and face-to-face engagement.



This included highlighting that local 111 services were made more person-centred after a pilot project reduced 111 referrals to urgent care services by 70%. We also let people know about the increased number of clinicians available to take 111 calls and the introduction of clinical assessment services (CAS), expert teams that provide clinical support to call handlers and patients who come through NHS 111.

We let people know about an enhanced 111 service offering mental health support on a Saturday and Sunday between 8am and 8pm, and for urgent dental help.

Signposting people struggling to find an NHS dentist

More than 200 people contacted us to share their difficulties accessing NHS dental treatment or finding an NHS dentist that was accepting new patients. We've been offering advice and signposting people towards NHS 111 and NHS England's Customer Contact Centre.



We also regularly updated our website to keep people in the loop about NHS dentistry in our area. For instance, we published an article in January 2022 after it was announced by the government that £50 million was available to the NHS to help people suffering from oral pain, disease, and infection. £5 million was allocated to the South West. A small number of dental practices provided NHS weekend and evening slots.

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 build an understanding of what is working and what needs improving in NHS and social care. This year our volunteers:

- Helped people share their views about local services at engagement events
- Carried out an audit of GP practice websites to ensure patient information is clear and accessible.
- Assisted with analysing patient feedback and deciding which areas of health and social care we should focus on with our upcoming projects and research.
- Represented us on patient experience groups.
- Connected with, supported, and mentored new volunteers.
- Were involved in a reference group to help inform major service change.





John

"I joined Healthwatch because I had grown frustrated with the time it had taken to progress the diagnosis and treatment of someone I care for. I became interested in how healthcare provision in the BNSSG area is meant to work. I learned that, contrary to general understanding, it isn't "one NHS" but a substantial number of individual businesses mostly funded by the Department of Health via different routes. Understanding this has helped me navigate the system and led me to focus my time on helping make it better. I have received training, seminars, attended meetings plus received newsletters. I enjoy meeting with the staff and volunteers at Healthwatch, learning from their experiences, and sharing my own."



Lance

"Whilst I had started my career working in medical research, events subsequently took me away into the information and communications technology industry. When I retired and moved to Portishead, I was looking for an opportunity both to reconnect with the healthcare sector and also build connections with my local community. Joining Healthwatch as a trustee on the Board and a volunteer representing Healthwatch at meetings has enabled me both to make a positive contribution to the local healthcare system and also bring some of the skills I developed in my business career. I have also been able to learn a lot from local healthcare workers as well as colleagues from other Healthwatch areas in the South West."



Do you feel inspired?

Get in touch to find out more about our volunteering opportunities.



www.healthwatchnorthsomerset.co.uk



03300 553251



jacqui@healthwatchbnssg.co.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		Costs	
Funding (local authority)	£54,519	Staff costs	£38,776
Commissions	£3,448	Operational costs	£4,675
Income total	£57,967	Support & admin	£8,391
Restricted reserves used on extra projects	£2037	Total expenditure	£51,842

Top three priorities for 2022–23

1. Explore the provision of NHS dental care, specifically for residents in care homes.
2. Evaluate the provision of Mental Health Support for Children and Adolescents where they have been found to be ineligible for services provided by CAMHs and the Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership.
3. Continue to tackle digital exclusion by running support and training sessions on using online health services.

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 get sidelined.

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, because of where you live, income or race.

Having already received training around co-production, we have created a set of principles. We are now producing a toolkit which will set out how we work and how our project development and research delivers our commitments around coproduction.

We look forward to working with our partners in the Integrated Care System (ICS). As three co-commissioned Healthwatch covering a geography coterminous with our ICS, we have an opportunity to contribute at many levels. The connections we have with the public and professionals in North Somerset, and our independence and our expertise in engagement will enable us to represent the collective voices in our communities. We will use utilise the platforms and levers in the system to make recommendations for how things can improve, based on what people tell us.

Statutory statements

About us

Healthwatch Bristol, North Somerset & South Gloucestershire, The Sion,
Crown Glass Place, BS48 1RB

Healthwatch North Somerset 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 10 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, and align with local strategic priorities. Through 2021/22 the board met 12 times. Actions included refreshing our diversity, equality, equity and inclusion (EDEI) policy, voting in an EDEI Champion, and expanding our paid work.

We ensure wider public involvement when deciding our work priorities. Six of our volunteers are involved in our Prioritisation Panel, and analyse themes in our public, patient and family feedback. They have helped us decide on our work in 22/23.

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 2021/22 we have been available by phone, by email, via 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. During the lifting of lockdowns, we also went out and spoke to people in person.

We are committed to taking additional steps to ensure we are inclusive and obtain the views of people who have protected characteristics, or who are disenfranchised due to homelessness, being a Gypsy, Roma or Traveller, being a refugee, or being part of a stigmatised group. These voices are least heard by health and care decision makers. This year we have been engaging with under-served groups via our project work and improving our explanation about why it is important to collect demographics. We ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. We publish it on our website and send an electronic version to our provider and commissioner contacts.

Responses to recommendations and requests

We regularly receive responses from the acute hospital trusts, Sirona, VitaMinds, & Public Health but we have not received them from Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership Trust or SWASFT. We contributed to a special review into child and adolescent mental health, by the CQC. We were invited to bring evidence to the National (Hospital) Discharge Taskforce for adult social care; the Local Government Association, Department for Levelling Up and Communities and the Department of Health and Social Care. This year, due to the pandemic, we were unable to make use of our Enter and View powers, but are planning visits in the autumn.

Health and Wellbeing Board

Healthwatch North Somerset is represented on the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee by Georgie Bigg, our Chair of Trustees for Healthwatch. During 2021/22 we have provided an overview of the common themes found in our quarterly feedback about local healthcare services, and gave our recommendations from deep-dive evaluations of service-user experiences.

2021-2022 Outcomes

Project / Activity Area	Changes made to services
Partnered with Bristol Health Partners and BABCON Health Integration Team (HIT).	Research was selected for a national portfolio of nursing research that informs best practice. A funding bid hopes to have a significant impact on nursing care by developing training and education to underpin high quality continence care.
Staff, volunteers, and trustees undertook co-production training.	We collectively agreed our co-production principles and how we would use them to inform our work, and are now developing our own co-production toolkit.
Began working towards the Investing in Volunteers quality standard.	This will help Healthwatch provide a better standard of support for volunteers, and embed our values and practices around Equality, Diversity & Inclusion in all our work
Worked with the CCG to ensure seldom-heard communities and individuals were able to have their say during a public consultation on proposed improvements to local stroke services.	Increased participation in the consultation by assisting the CCG with online meetings, spreading the word through our communication channels, and attending vaccination centres.
Continuing to build relationships with local authority partners/Public Health/Health and Wellbeing Board. Attending Bristol Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Locality Partnership engagement subgroups.	We have a standing item on the Health and Wellbeing Board agenda, and keep the board and other partners up-to-date with emerging and ongoing feedback themes from patients, carers and families.



healthwatch

North Somerset

Healthwatch North Somerset
The Sion
Crown Glass Place
Nailsea
North Somerset
BS48 1RB

www.healthwatchnorthsomerset.co.uk

t: 03300 553251

contact@healthwatchnorthsomerset.co.uk

 @HealthwatchNS

 [Facebook.com/HealthwatchNorthSomerset](https://www.facebook.com/HealthwatchNorthSomerset)

 [Healthwatch Bristol, North Somerset & South Gloucestershire](#)