Healthwatch



Contents

Message from our Chair	3	
About us	5	
Year in review	6	
How we've made a difference this year	7	
Your voice heard at a wider level	8	
Information and signposting	13	
Volunteering	16	
Finance and future priorities	18	
Statutory statements	20	



"Throughout 2023/24, Healthwatch Barnet has played an important role in Barnet's mission to improve the health and wellbeing of our diverse communities. This report highlights the impact of Healthwatch Barnet's work in partnership with other organisations and with residents, and the ways in which it contributes to our mission to create a healthier Borough.



From Healthy Hearts to Community Connectors, listening to residents and contributing to the work of Barnet Council's Adults and Health Scrutiny inquiries, these partnerships have been valuable in both Healthwatch Barnet's projects and wider work to support our communities in Barnet."

Councillor Alison Moore, Barnet Council Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing

Message from our Chair

It gives me great pleasure to introduce our annual report for 2023-24. Our team have been working hard to find out what matters to Barnet residents, and to help make sure their views shape local services.

As far as we know, Healthwatch Barnet is the only Healthwatch in the country where the majority of staff are disabled. We believe that our lived experience, combined with our commitment to ensuring our projects are led by resident feedback, increases the effectiveness of our work to make services more equal and inclusive.

Over the last year, a key focus of our work has been high blood pressure. The <u>data for Barnet</u> show that an estimated 89,000 people in the borough have hypertension. Of these, around 39,000 may be undiagnosed. The only way to find out whether you have high blood pressure is to get it measured.

We're therefore delighted that our award-winning Healthy Heart team have just been granted funding for a third year. The team' provide peer support to Barnet's African, Caribbean and South Asian communities. Through outreach events and intensive courses, they have supported hundreds of residents around high blood pressure.

During the course of their work, Healthy Heart staff have received feedback from residents on the barriers they face to accessing healthcare, including issues with interpreters, GP access and paying for transport during the cost of living crisis. Over the autumn and winter, our Healthy Heart Coordinator delivered a series of high level presentations, sharing the concerns that residents raised with them. We are now working with the Royal Free London on improving access to interpreters, planning a healthy eating project, and collaborating more closely with GPs, both by running events in surgeries and through our upcoming primary caré access project.



"Our job is to ensure that the voices of patients are heard by those who make decisions or provide health and social care – and to press for change on their behalf."



Jennifer Pearl, Healthwatch Barnet Chair

Message from our Chair

In 2023-24, we carried out seven Enter and View visits, to services including care homes and primary care walk-in centres. We were glad to find numerous examples of good practice, which are highlighted in our reports. These included some homes using low numbers of agency staff, allowing residents plenty of choice around bedtimes and where they ate their meals, and being responsive to residents' requests. We're also pleased that a number of homes have already accepted our recommendations on matters including offering a wider range of activities to residents, improving disabled access during mealtimes, and providing dementia friendly décor.

We also delivered our Community Connectors blood pressure project. We reached a wide range of people including carers, people using food banks and Eastern European residents. We carried out over 960 blood pressure checks. At our events, residents shared their feedback with us. We **<u>published</u>** a report setting out what residents told us, and made recommendations on communication, pharmacies and joined-up provision. We are now working with statutory partners on the implementation of these recommendations, including through Barnet Council's Cardiovascular Disease Task & Finish Group.

Throughout the year, we've worked closely with the Barnet Health and Wellbeing Board and the Barnet Borough Partnership, to champion patients' voices. For example, some residents told us they had negative experiences of hospital discharge - we shared detailed evidence on this with Barnet Council's Adults and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee, and the North Central London Integrated Care Board.

I'm also pleased that, through our helpline and website, we have assisted large numbers of residents to access the services they need. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the staff team for all of their work. Of course, no reflection on the last year would be complete without a huge thankyou to our wonderful team of Healthwatch Barnet volunteers, who have made an invaluable contribution to the projects set out in this report.

The year ahead presents a number exciting opportunities. We will be publishing a report on residents' views on cancer screening - the research for this is already well underway. We will deliver a project on care home residents' experiences of mealtimes, to champion best practice in this area. We will also be working on our primary care access project, as we know this issue is a major priority for residents. We look forward to working with you over the coming year.

Jennifer Pearl Healthwatch Barnet Chair

About us

Healthwatch Barnet is your local health and social care champion.

We make sure NHS leaders and 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 are:

- **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.



Year in review

Reaching out:

1,024 people

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



13,611 people

came to us for clear information and signposting on topics such as mental health and NHS complaints.

Making a difference to care:

We produced

Four reports

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





Community Connectors Report

which highlighted the needs of residents who have high blood pressure.

Health and social care that works for you:

We're lucky to have

15

outstanding volunteers who gave up over 200 hours to make care better for our community.

Our core funding comes from our local authority. In 2023 - 24 we received

We currently employ

6 staff

£124,864



How we've made a difference this year



Our Men's Health report was published, evidencing the need for a Men's Health Strategy for Barnet.



Our Community Connectors blood pressure checks rolled into action – we carried out over 960 checks in 2023.



We put all the arrangements in place for 4 Enter and Views of care homes, including research frameworks, training and DBS checks of our reps. The visits took place over the next few months.



Care Quality Commission (CQC) - we shared residents' feedback about services in Barnet, to inform the CQC's intelligence-based inspection work.



During Black History Month, our Healthy Heart team did a series of high level presentations on the health inequalities faced by the residents they work with.



We provided evidence to Barnet Council's Adults and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee on the difficulties residents are facing with accessing primary care.



We carried out Enter and View visits to Edgware and Finchley primary care walk-in centres, and some clinics in Edgware Hospital.



We started work on our cancer screening project, gathering residents' feedback about how their access to testing could be improved.



Listening to your experiences

Services can't make improvements without hearing your views. That's why, over the last year, we have prioritised listening to feedback from all areas of the community, and sharing this with services to help them improve.

We have worked hard to make sure we hear from everyone in our local area. We have reached out to communities we hear from less frequently to make sure their voice is heard, and services meet their needs.

Healthy Heart

In 2023/24, our Healthy Heart team worked with hundreds of people from Barnet's African, Caribbean and South Asian communities, raising awareness of ways to tackle high blood pressure.



We know that global majority residents are more likely to experience **health inequalities**. So, we're delighted that

our award-winning Healthy Heart peer support team have just been granted a third year of funding. Alongside providing practical support, the team listen to residents' feedback about barriers to accessing healthcare, including issues with interpreters, GP access and transport costs during the cost of living crisis.



"I have not visited the GP for three years. After Covid, I don't really trust using them. I know I have high blood pressure and other [health conditions].."

Somali resident interviewed by Healthy Heart

Many residents tell us the Healthy Heart project has supported them to get help from their GP. In a sample of 43 participants, 34 said that, after attending our course, they knew that if their blood pressure went above 140/90, they should go to their GP. However, while individual support is invaluable, we know systemic changes are needed. Over autumn and winter, our Healthy Heart Coordinator shared residents' feedback at key forums including the Barnet Health and Wellbeing Board, the Pan Barnet GPs Forum, and a Black History Month event at Hendon Town Hall, to name a few. Statutory stakeholders pledged to work with us to make improvements.

What difference did this make?

- October-March: Heathy Heart supported 900+ residents. Of these, 150+ attended intensive workshops or courses. The team distributed 800+ resource packs, (Before this, Healthy Heart had already helped hundreds of people, working as part of another team in our host organisation, Inclusion Barnet.)
- We are working closely with the Royal Free London NHS Trust, to improve interpreting services.
- We identified a need for increased provision of culturally tailored, budget friendly support for residents to eat healthily. As part of our third year of funding, we are working with our Clinical Reference Group to develop a Healthy Heart Eating Well Workshop.
- We are now collaborating more closely with GPs, and have run several outreach events in surgeries. For our upcoming primary care access project, we have worked with Healthy Heart partners including the Somali Centre of Excellence, Barnet Asian Women's Association and Colindale Communities Trust to agree shared goals.

Care homes



"Outside walking/wheelchair sessions [have begun as] a regular feature of the programme, eight residents have now signed up to take part in the sessions in the garden, this is expected to grow as the months get warmer.."

Care home response to Healthwatch Barnet recommendation

In 2023/24, we carried out four Enter and View visits to care homes. We have published reports on Athenaeum and Hadley Lawns. Our reports on Catherine Lodge and Elmhurst have been shared with the homes, to seek their response prior to publication.

We were pleased to have the opportunity to highlight a number of areas of good practice. In Athenaeum, these included resident's cultural needs being met during mealtimes, positive feedback from residents and relatives about staff being caring and responsive to requests, and good levels of choice for residents around bedtimes and where they ate their meals. In Hadley Lawns, we were glad to find low numbers of agency staff, good consultation with residents on meal plans, and residents describing the home as having a friendly and welcoming atmosphere.

We are pleased to report that these two homes have been working on implementing a number of our recommendations. For example, both homes have further developed their activities programmes. Athenaeum is looking to provide more dementia friendly décor. Hadley Lawns has increased the accessibility of its arrangements for mealtimes, including by purchasing table clothes and serviettes in contrasting colours.

Hospital discharge



"No one tells you or the Ward Clerks that no [transport] is coming. You just sit and wait for hours until someone realises and books another.."

Enquiry line caller, Healthwatch Barnet

This year, a number of residents contacted us with concerns about hospital discharge. These included situations where they felt that they or their relatives had been discharged too early, problems with hospital transport and a lack of follow-on care.

Last autumn, we arranged to meet with with PPL, a social enterprise commissioned by the North Central London Integrated Care Board to review hospital discharge. We fed back the concerns residents had shared with us, and provided several anonymous case studies, where residents had consented to this. In February, Barnet Council's Adults and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee requested our assistance with their enquiry into hospital discharge, and we provided them with detailed written and oral evidence. We will continue our work to press for improvements in this area.

Community Connectors

During 2023 our Community Connectors carried out over 960 blood pressure checks at events across Barnet

428 attendees received high blood pressure readings; 243 received slightly raised readings. Many people with high readings planned to take one or more actions:



28% said they would do more exercise

24% planned to see their GP or another health professional

19% told us they would change their diet

11% said they would speak to their family or friends about blood pressure

5% told us they would quit or reduce alcohol use, and 4% that they would quit or reduce smoking







While our Healthy Heart project works specifically with African, Caribbean and South Asian residents, our Community Connectors worked across all of Barnet's communities. For our events, we partnered with food banks, religious centres and Eastern European groups. Many attendees told us that our sessions had inspired and empowered them to make changes. However, they also shared about financial and practical challenges, which prevented them from doing more. We published a report about resident's views, and are working with decision-makers to make changes:

- Many people told us they had never heard of the free **blood pressure checks** offered by pharmacies. In response, Barnet Council have done more to publicise this. We are also working with pharmacies on how this can be better promoted.
- Residents said better information was needed about free ways to keep fit. We've done more to share the links people need in our communications; we also ran a meeting for statutory and voluntary partners where we explored how we can all do more to share information about free exercise options.
- The North Central London Integrated Care Board are funding us to deliver a second Community Connectors project in 2024/25, so we can take this work further.



"Lots of people find it difficult and too expensive to go to the gym... there are other options out there, but it's not always easy to find out about them."

Female attendee at a Community Connectors event

Amplifying residents' voices



"I just want what's happened for me to be taken on board. I want things to get better for other people who go to [this service]."

Enquiry line caller, Healthwatch Barnet

This year, we've worked hard to ensure residents' views shape the work of our statutory partners. We've met regularly with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and fed into their review of health inequalities in North Central London. We shared detailed feedback from residents about specific services, which has informed the CQC's inspection work. We also arranged a meeting between all of the North Central London Healthwatch and CQC Operations Managers, to facilitate closer partnership working.

We assisted with a review of the Barnet Health and Wellbeing Board's priorities. We're delighted these include co-production with residents, and focus on areas we know residents are concerned about, including primary care access, digital inclusion and mental health. We also fed into the Barnet Neighbourhoods Programme Delivery Board, sharing residents' views on what they need from local services.

Cancer screening



"Once, someone walked in during my [cervical smear] - they knocked but didn't wait for a reply. It's so routine for the staff - they forget it's so sensitive for a lot of women."

Female resident, Healthwatch Barnet

The evidence shows that 38% of cancer cases are preventable. While screening is available, people can struggle to access this for many reasons, including lack of information, caring responsibilities and fear or nervousness about the process. Statistically, some **alobal majority** and **Eastern European** groups are less likely to attend cancer screening appointments.

We've therefore launched a survey on this issue, to gather residents' views on how screening could be improved. We're carrying out interviews and focus groups in collaboration with partners including Groundwork, Barnet's Somali Centre of Excellence and Barnet Asian Women's Association. We've already collected evidence on key changes that would improve communication about screening, simplify the booking process, and make the experience more culturally sensitive. We have begun liaising with the North Central London Cancer Alliance, the North Central London Integrated Care Board and Barnet Council's Public Health team on this issue. We will be publishing a report of our findings, and will use this a basis to advocate for change.



Information and signposting

We can provide confidential support and free information to help you understand your health and social care options and get the help you need.

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 during the cost of living crisis

Transport for medical appointments



"Thank you so much for your informative reply. I will follow up your leads and see what happens. Very impressed with the amount of detail, so thank you once again."

Stan,* an older man, contacted us just after moving to Barnet to live in sheltered accommodation. He explained that he has mobility issues and is not able to walk very far. He was phoning around GPs about registering, but was not sure how he was going to travel there, or get to his hospital appointments.

We suggested that, when Stan phones the GP he's looking to register with, he asks about **NHS Patient Transport Services**. We also gave Stan the contact details for Age UK Barnet and Dial a Ride. Stan asked how he should find out about whether a GP surgery has good patient reviews, so we signposted him to the GP Patient Survey postcode checker.

*Name changed

Dental care



"I really need to see an NHS dentist, I need my wisdom teeth taken out and some fillings, but I'm on a very low income and I don't think I could afford it privately. I've been searching for a dentist for months. They are either not taking new NHS patients or I'm on a waiting list - but I haven't heard back from any of them after waiting a few months."

Layla,* contacted us because she had been trying to register with an NHS dentist for several months. She needed fillings and wisdom tooth extractions. We told Layla that NHS 111 are able to assist with arranging some urgent dental procedures.

We also informed Layla that the NHS does allow people to register with dentists outside of the area where they live, and gave her details of how to search for these. Layla contacted us before the **dental care recovery plan** was announced, but going forward we will be letting people know about this, where it's relevant for them.

Layla said she'd be happy for us to share anonymous details about her case. We have therefore shared her case study with Healthwatch England, to support their national campaigning on the issue of dental care.

*Name changed

Access to services



"I'm in a bad place at the moment, I can't get the help I need. I don't know if I can trust my GP any more. I live by myself. I get cut off from everything and I've been feeling really low."

Nasir,* phoned us because he was having problems accessing medical help. He said that a few months earlier he'd completed a residential alcohol rehab programme which had really helped him. However, since leaving that service he had found it difficult to access any help for the many physical health problems he was struggling with. Nasir said he was finding it hard to trust his GP. He mentioned that he'd raised complaints with his GP and he didn't feel they had responded to these properly.

Nasir said that he needs to see his GP in person as he finds it very difficult to communicate properly over the phone, but they would only offer him phone appointments. Nasir also told us that he was feeling very low and struggling to cope because of everything that was going on. We gave Nasir information about the complaints process, including contact details for **Pohwer**, an organisation that runs an NHS complaints advocacy service in Barnet. We had a sensitive conversation with Nasir about the struggles he was having around his mental health, and gave him the contact details of services including the Samaritans, Mind in Enfield and Barnet's Crisis Café and the Barnet Wellbeing Hub.

*Name changed

GP access



"Thank you very much our discussion and for sending me all this information."

Chloe,* contacted us because she was concerned about not being able to get through to her GP to book an appointment. She was already aware of NHS 111 and the help available at pharmacies. Chloe has a particular long-term condition. We informed her about new support which is being rolled out through North Central London GP surgeries, for people with certain long-term conditions. Chloe said she wanted to move to a different GP surgery, but didn't know how to gauge whether it would be any better than her current one. We signposted Chloe to the GP Patient Survey postcode checker. Chloe said she'd be happy for us to share anonymous details about her case. We have therefore shared her case study with Healthwatch England, to support their national campaigning on GP access.

*Name changed



Volunteering

We're supported by a team of amazing volunteers who are at the heart of what we do.

This year our volunteers:

- Carried out Enter and View visits to local services to help them improve
- Supported our outreach events
- Provided valuable insight into community networks and opportunities to reach residents
- Collected experiences and supported communities to share their views



"I'm motivated by my desire to support improvement in the quality of local health and social care services. Collecting reliable and valid evidence, as volunteers do, is crucial."



Helena -Healthwatch Barnet Volunteer



"Volunteering with Healthwatch Barnet is a fun way to learn and engage within the community while spreading awareness about health issues. Being part of a caring team is at the forefront of Healthwatch Barnet."



Emine -Healthwatch Barnet Volunteer



"I recently joined Healthwatch Barnet and I've felt very welcome from the start. I wanted to volunteer because of my personal interest in qualitative research and my desire to understand the underlying reasons behind various issues, which I believe is just as important as quantifying them. I really appreciate how Healthwatch Barnet seeks to improve health services - I look forward to continuing to contribute to these important projects."



Melysa -Healthwatch Barnet Volunteer

Do you feel inspired?



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



www.healthwatchbarnet.co.uk



020 3475 1308



info@healthwatchbarnet.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.

Our income and expenditure

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from Government	£124,864.00	Expenditure on pay	£128,569.50
Additional income	£44,811.00	Non-pay expenditure	£28,791.50
		Office and management fees	£11,115.00
Total income	£169,675.00	Total expenditure	£168,476.00

ICS funding

Healthwatch across North Central London receive funding from our Integrated Care System (ICS) to support new areas of collaborative work at this level. Please note, the £2,500 listed below is also included in the total income listed on p18.

Purpose of ICS funding	
Collaborative work between the ICS and Healthwatch Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Haringey and Islington to support the work of three North Central London Integrated Care System Committees - the Quality and Safety Committee, the Primary Care Contracting Committee and the Community Engagement Steering Group.	£2,500

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. Care homes: delivering a project on care home residents' experiences of mealtimes, to champion best practice in this area.
- 2. Cancer screening: publishing a report on residents' experiences of screening and working with statutory partners to make improvements.
- 3. Primary care access: working to improve residents' experiences of accessing primary care including through research, public communications and work with GP surgeries in Barnet.



Statutory statements

Healthwatch Barnet is hosted by Inclusion Barnet, a Deaf and Disabled People's Organisation.

Healthwatch Barnet uses the Healthwatch Trademark when undertaking our statutory activities as covered by the licence agreement.

Our address is: Independent Living Centre, c/o Barnet and Southgate College, 7 Bristol Avenue, Colindale, London, NW9 4BR.

The way we work

Involvement of volunteers and lay people in our governance and decision-making

Our Healthwatch Board consists of seven members who work on a voluntary basis to 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. We also ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities, using the methods outlined below.

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 experiences of using services. During 2023/24, we have been available via phone, email, social media and a webform on our website. We have also gathered residents' views through our research and outreach events. One example of the way we have responded to residents' feedback is our work on hospital discharge. A number of callers to our helpline raised concerns in this area, and the work we have done on this issue is set out on p10.

We are committed to taking additional steps to ensure we obtain the views of people from diverse backgrounds who are often not heard from. For example, over the last year we delivered our Healthy Heart project to members of Barnet's African, Caribbean and South Asian communities, gathered their views around barriers to accessing healthcare, and fed these back to our statutory partners to create change. Through our Community Connectors work, we reached out to carers, Eastern European communities and people in financial hardship.

We ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible, and will publish it on our website.

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 Healthwatch England Committee, so 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, we take information to a range of forums including the Barnet Health and Wellbeing Board and the Barnet Borough Partnership Board. We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in the North Central London Integrated Care System, for example through our work with the North Central London Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Alliance, which is convened by our host organisation, Inclusion Barnet. In North Central London, the five local Healthwatch rotate the role of representing the group on the Integrated Care System's Quality and Safety Committee, Primary Care Contracting Committee and Community Engagement Steering Group. In 2023/24, representation was provided by Healthwatch Islington, and we shared information with them in meetings and written briefings, which was then fed to the committees. We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

Enter and view

This year, we made seven Enter and View visits. So far, we have published 15 recommendations as a result of this activity.

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
Athenaeum Care Home	To gather residents' and relatives' experiences of the home's environment, mealtimes & activities.	Published report with recommendations – the service is following these up to improve residents' experiences.
Hadley Lawns Care Home	To gather residents' and relatives' experiences of the home's environment, mealtimes & activities.	Published report with recommendations – the service is following these up to improve residents' experiences.
Catherine Lodge Care Home	To gather residents' and relatives' experiences of the home's environment, mealtimes & activities.	Wrote a report which has been shared with the service, to give them an opportunity to respond prior to publication
Elmhurst Care Home	To gather residents' and relatives' experiences of the home's environment, mealtimes & activities.	Wrote a report which has been shared with the service, to give them an opportunity to respond prior to publication
Edgware Primary Care Walk-in Centre	To gather patients' experiences of the centre's environment & service.	Wrote a report which has been shared with the service, to give them an opportunity to respond prior to publication.
Finchley Primary Care Walk-in Centre	To gather patients' experiences of the centre's environment & service.	Wrote a report which has been shared with the service, to give them an opportunity to respond prior to publication.
Edgware Community Hospital – Royal Free London outpatients clinics	To gather patients' experiences of the clinics' environment & services.	We are currently writing up a report.

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Barnet is represented on the Barnet Health and Wellbeing Board by Sarah Campbell, Healthwatch Barnet Manager. During 2023/24 our representative has carried out this role by presenting to the board and sharing residents' feedback on key issues. See below some examples of our work with statutory partners over the last year. As set out on p21, the five North Central London Healthwatch rotate the group's representation on key Integrated Care System committees - in 2023/24 Healthwatch Barnet fed into the work of these committees through our appointed representative.

2023 - 2024 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
Presentation to Health and Wellbeing Board	High level support for recommendations set out in our Community Connectors report
Presentation to Barnet Borough Partnership Board	Support for findings of our Healthy Heart project
Royal Free London Healthy Living Hub Meeting	Shared residents' feedback on their needs around local services

healthwatch Barnet

Healthwatch Barnet Independent Living Centre, c/o Barnet and Southgate College, 7 Bristol Avenue, London







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