



# Annual Report

**April 2020 – March 2021**

Healthwatch Barnet

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# Message from our Chair

**2020/2021 has been an unprecedented year for the nation, our local community and Healthwatch Barnet but we have continued to champion people's voice and support the ongoing local COVID-19 response.**

Inclusion Barnet started delivery of the Healthwatch Barnet contract in April 2020 at the same time as the pandemic was starting and the nation went into lockdown. This caused difficulties in many areas of our work, from Enter and View to public engagement as we all started to work remotely. With the changes at a national and local level this year, our resources have been stretched far and wide to speak up for people using health and social care services. Nevertheless, our staff and volunteers adapted to an agile and ever-changing environment to listen to the experiences of local people using health and social care services and their experiences of COVID-19.



**This year we have engaged with 8,344 people, attended 100 stakeholder meetings and produced 4 reports.**

Although we are nearing the end of the national lockdown as a result of the successful vaccination programme, locally this is just the beginning. Integrated Care Systems are expected to be given its legal form from April 2022, subject to Parliamentary approval. Enter and Views visits of Barnet services will commence again once it is safe to do so. Supporting post pandemic recovery and the shifts in healthcare, such as digital healthcare and so much more.

We will continue to go from strength to strength in 2021/2022 with our new Healthwatch Barnet staff team, increased volunteers and plans to deliver a truly peer-led Healthwatch model making use of people's experience to drive change.



Jennifer Pearl  
Chair, Healthwatch Barnet

# About us

## Here to make health and care better

We are the independent champion for people who use health and social care services in Barnet. We're here to find out what matters to people and help make sure your views shape the support you need, by sharing these views with those who have the power to make change happen.

## Helping you to find the information you need

We help people find the information they need about services in their area. This has been vital during the pandemic with the ever-changing environment and restrictions limiting people's access to health and social care services.

### Our goals



#### **1 Supporting you to have your say**

We want more people to get the information they need to take control of their health and care, make informed decisions and shape the services that support them.



#### **2 Providing a high quality service**

We want everyone who shares can experience or seeks advice from us to get a high quality service and to understand the difference their views make.



#### **3 Ensuring your views help improve health & care**

We want more services to use your views to shape the health and care support you need today and in the future.

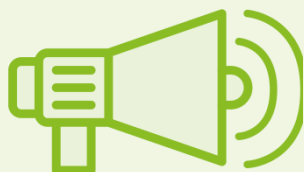
**"I am not able to be physically present to help my mum with issues. I truly value your willingness to look into my concerns and take the time to reply to me. I very much appreciate it. Stay safe, take care, and keep up the good work. Thank you! "**

**Feedback from Barnet resident**

# Highlights from our year

Find out about our resources and how we have engaged and supported people in 2020-21.

## Direct Enquires



We heard from

**197 people**

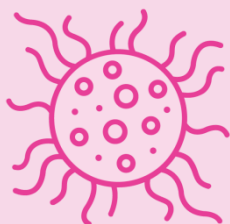
this year through telephone and email about local service enquiries.

We signposted

**88 people**

people this year to other services.

## Engagement



We engaged with

**8,344 people**

through our website and social media during this year.

We attended over

**100 stakeholder meetings**

to champion the voice of local people who use services.

## Making a difference



We published

**4 reports**

about improvements people would like to see to health and social care services. From this, we made 10 recommendations for improvement.

We spoke with

**322 people**

to produce our reports.

## Health and care that works for you



**12 volunteers**

helped us to carry out our work. In total, they contributed 200 hours.

**We employ 3 staff**

One 0.9 full time equivalent Manager, one 0.6 Research Officer and 0.6 Communications and Engagement Officer.

We received

**£121,478 in funding**

from our local authority in 2020-21





# Barnet Care Homes – Phase 1

## First Wave – How Did Care Homes Manage?

**The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on care homes, particularly within London, and our ability to perform our Enter and View function. Therefore, we set about to understand Barnet care homes' experiences of providing their services to residents and identify any key issues. We spoke with 43 care homes and interviewed 50 staff.**

We found several key findings:

- Most care homes we spoke with were under-occupied, which worried care home's financial viability.
- Managers reported ensuring safe staffing levels was a significant challenge due to covid-19 staff absences, which required them to utilise several strategies to combat including extra shifts, overtime, recruiting more permanent staff, using bank and agency staff and allowing staff to stay overnight in the care homes.
- Difficulties in managing Covid-19 in staff and supporting return to work.
- Preventing cross-infection through staff clothing.

- 48% of care homes reported difficulties in accessing sufficient personal protective equipment.



**"There were problems in obtaining PPE at first. Consequently, we had to purchase elsewhere at greater expense."**

**Specialist Care Home**

**"During March and most of April it was a very hard time. I never want to see anything like it again. There was a very high demand although we never ran out except in mid-April."**

**Nursing Care Home**

- 56% of managers said obtaining tests and results for staff and residents was a major issue.



**"Some staff were showing symptoms by the end of March, but none were able to be tested."**

**"The swabs we received have been recalled and now we have no testing."**

**"Tests weren't available when needed at the beginning of the pandemic. When tests did finally arrive, we had to wait three weeks for them to be collected by the courier."**

- Delays in Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards assessments.



**"A standard DOLS is supposed to arrive within 28 days but they never do, which makes a mockery of the 7-28-day limit"**

**Nursing Care Home**

As a result of care home staff and management sharing their experiences, we recommended Barnet Council to act quicker to reduce the length of time some care home residents were waiting for Deprivation of Liberty assessments; NCL CCG and GPs to ensure care home residents have a choice of face-to-face GP appointments if required and we recommended Barnet Council and the Government to consider additional financial support for care homes who experienced increased costs and reduced income due to the pandemic.



# Barnet Care Homes – Phase 2

## Second Wave – Residents & Relatives Experience

**Following on from our phase 1 report we sought to understand the experiences of care home residents and their relatives during the second wave of the pandemic. We contacted 83 CQC registered care homes in Barnet and gained insight from 129 people.**

We found several key findings:

- COVID-19 information - 84% of respondents had been provided with information on how to stay safe during the pandemic.
- Testing - 73% of respondents had been offered COVID-19 testing mainly on a monthly and weekly basis.
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) - 78% of respondents indicated that care home staff always used appropriate PPE when providing care, although 62% of respondents stated they were provided PPE for personal use in shared spaces.
- Access to healthcare services - Respondents have had issues in accessing healthcare services with 23% of respondents stating there had been an impact in accessing their GP.





**"My mother has deteriorated significantly during this time, she has a degenerative illness but due to this pandemic her condition has worsened more quickly and seriously than it would have."**

**"My loved one needs an assessment for his incontinence needs. We have been waiting for this since January."**

- Impact on physical health - 35% of respondents stated that their physical health had deteriorated due to factors such as reduced access to healthcare services and physical wellbeing activities, including maintaining relationships with family and friends.



**"Mum had a severe stroke which affected her speech and cognition. The window visits have been difficult as she can't speak. She is missing our close contact and is losing weight."**

**"Total disruption of her normal social and wellbeing activities including day services and regularly coming home to family. Must be feeling confused."**

- Impact on mental health - Almost 50% of respondents stated that their mental health and wellbeing had deteriorated, primarily due to a lack of social interaction causing isolation and depression.



**"At one stage, my mother said "I would rather catch the virus and die than be cooped up like this" – and she meant it!"**

**"She has been feeling isolated and depressed as a result. One of the drivers for moving into the home was the regular entertainment and continuous activities. All of that has been sadly missing, causing loneliness and depression."**

As a result of care home staff and management sharing their experiences, we recommended care homes improve physical, social, wellbeing activities and access to healthcare service; facilitate regular visits for each resident in line with the easing of visitation restrictions and review methods of communications with family and friend of residents to identify if better approaches can be used taking into account the views of residents and their family.



# COVID-19 Project

**Healthwatch Barnet played an important role in helping people to get the information they need, especially through the pandemic. During the very first months of the national lockdown, we collected insight from 68 residents on how the pandemic affected access to services.**

We found several key findings:

## **Physical Healthcare:**

- 78% of people told us they experienced changes to their healthcare due to the pandemic, with many respondents reported a negative impact resulting from these changes.
- Good communication about changes in services was a key theme to ensure on-going accessibility during the lockdown and also ensuring people did not face digital exclusion.

## **Mental Health:**

- 62% of people told us that they tried to access formal or informal support for their mental wellbeing during the lockdown.
- Concerns about the long-term impact on the provision of mental health services was a key theme and included risks of longer waiting times and increased health inequalities.

## **Social Care**

- Nearly 1/3 of people told us that they, or the person they care for, needed support or care to carry out daily activities during the lockdown.



# Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy Engagement Project

**Healthwatch Barnet was commissioned by the Barnet Public Health Team to engage and collect feedback from residents about the new Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2025. We collected feedback through 1-2-1 interviews, focus groups and an online survey. In total, we engaged with 75 local residents.**

We found several key findings:

- As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, residents positively reporting on their health and wellbeing declined by 28% and residents negatively reporting on their health and wellbeing increased by 17.5%.
- As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, residents top three self-identified health and wellbeing priorities were access to parks and green spaces, access to good health services and breathing clean and safe air.
- 90% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that 'creating a healthier place and resilient communities' should be one of the borough's top priorities.
- 94% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that 'improving the healthy life expectancy for all' should be one of the borough's top priorities.
- 83% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that 'ensuring coordinated holistic care when we need it' should be one of the borough's top priorities.



# Volunteers

**At Healthwatch Barnet we are supported by 12 volunteers to help us find out what people think is working, and what improvements people would like to make to services.**

**This year our volunteers delivered 200 hours of volunteering to:**

- Support plan, deliver and evaluate our project work.
- Help people from care homes to have their say, carrying out surveys over the telephone and online.
- Interview care home management staff through online video chat and telephone.
- Create digital content on our website and social media.
- Provide a source of local intelligence on things that matter to Barnet residents.



## Volunteer with us

Are you feeling inspired? We are always on the lookout for new volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering, please get in touch at Healthwatch Barnet.



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

**020 3475 1308**

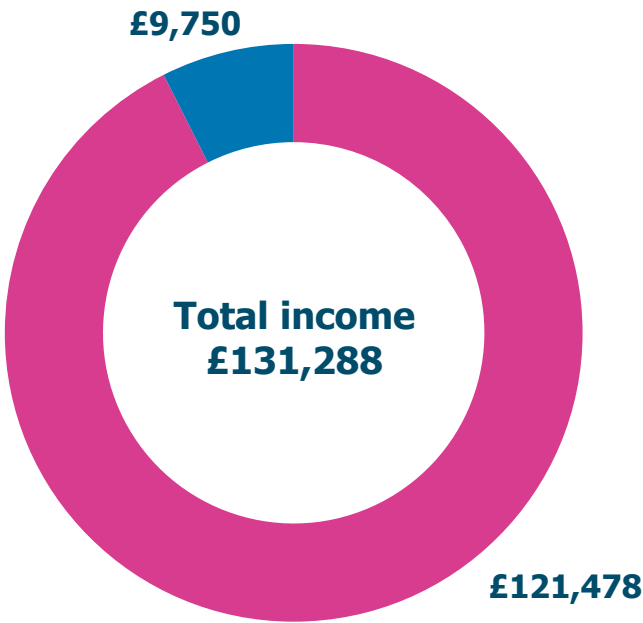
[info@healthwatchbarnet.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchbarnet.co.uk)

# Finances

To help us carry out our work we receive funding from our local authority under the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

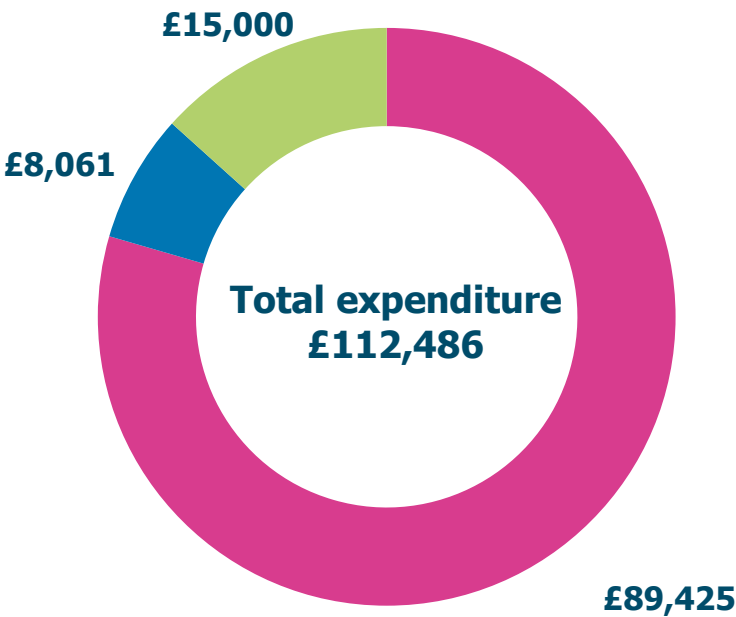
## Income

- Funding received from local authority
- Additional funding



## Expenditure

- Staff costs
- Operational costs
- Support and administration







Healthwatch Barnet  
Independent Living Centre, c/o Barnet & Southgate College  
7 Bristol Avenue  
Colindale  
London NW9 4BR

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

t: 020 3475 1308

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

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 @HealthwatchBarnet