



Championing what matters to you

Healthwatch Barnet
Annual Report 2021-22



healthwatch
Barnet

Your local health and social care champion

 Making sure
your voice
is heard 

Working with you
to improve services

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Message from our chair

2021/22 has been a tremendous year of growth in supporting local residents for Healthwatch Barnet. Whilst the fallout from the pandemic presents many ongoing challenges, we have continued to champion people’s voices and support improvements in local services.

We are change makers.

This year we have listened to and engaged with local communities whose voices are often not heard. We’ve gathered the experiences of hard of hearing and deaf people in accessing GP practices and secondary and community care, and consequently NHS leaders are introducing new provisions for BSL interpreters for GP appointments. We have also carried out community outreach to identify trends in the experiences of people with physical and mental long term conditions, visual impairment, and disabled people in order to share insight with NHS Leaders and advocate for improvements.



183% increase

In people engaging with us for help and advice this year.

We have continued to work in partnership with voluntary sector organisations, such as Barnet COVID-19 Champions, Romanian Culture and Charity Together, North London Hospice, Jewish Care and Barnet Mencap on joint initiatives. We have also strengthened our relationships with statutory services so we can work together as part of a wide local integrated system to improve the care and support people receive.

In 2022/2023 we plan to listen to and engage with even more people, to support individuals and local communities with their health and social care challenges and keep partners in the new Integrated Care System accountable to the needs of local people.

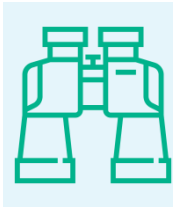


Jennifer Pearl
Healthwatch Barnet Chair

About us


Your health and social care champion

Healthwatch Barnet is your local health and social care champion. From Colindale to East Barnet and everywhere in between, we make sure NHS leaders and other decision makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care. We can also help you to find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.




Our vision

A world where we can all get the health and care we need.



Our mission

To make sure people’s experiences help make health and care better.



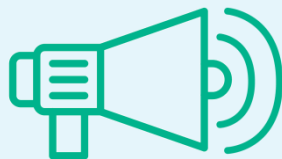
Our values

- Listening to people and making sure their voices are heard.
- Including everyone in the conversation – especially those who don’t always have their voice heard.
- Analysing different people’s experiences to learn how to improve care.
- Acting on feedback and driving change.
- Partnering with care providers, Government, and the voluntary sector – serving as the public’s independent advocate.

Our year in review

Find out how we have engaged and supported people.

Reaching out



1,128 people

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

11,758 people

came to us for clear advice and information about topics such as secondary care, COVID-19, Long COVID and social care.

Making a difference to care



We published

8 reports

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

Our most popular report was

Accessing Your GP Remotely

which highlighted the struggles people have on the changes to primary care.

Health and care that works for you



We employ

3 staff

who delivery our service and carry out our functions.

We have

19 volunteers

who gave up 22 days to make care better for our community.









We received

£121,478

from our local authority who fund Healthwatch Barnet.

How we've made a difference throughout the year

These are the biggest projects we worked on from April 2021 to March 2022.

Spring		When people reported to us difficulties in using hospital transport services we produced a Snapshot Insight Report.		We shared insight from deaf residents on their difficulties in seeing their GP with NHS leaders and regularly highlighted their challenges.
Summer		With most GP appointments initially being conducted remotely, we engaged with over 400 people to highlight its impact.		In response to the growing number of people experiencing Long COVID and the limited data available we started interviewing local residents about their experiences.
Autumn		Teaming up with the four Healthwatch's across North Central London we engaged with 300 people with Long COVID.		As lockdown rules were lifted we re-started face-to-face community outreach to support people to access the right services.
Winter		We worked with GPs to identify the barriers to advance care planning so more conversations could be started.		Throughout winter and into spring we toured across Barnet and attended 20 community events to help people access appropriate services.

Listening to your experiences

Services cannot make improvements without hearing your views. That is 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 through our strong relationships.



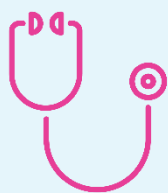
Highlighting the difficulties in seeing your GP

Thanks to people sharing their experiences of remote GP access with us over the last year, we were able to demonstrate the impact of the difficulties some people have had to local NHS leaders, and pushed for improvements.

During the pandemic and lockdown periods there have been significant changes to how people accessed their GP with most initially seen remotely to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Whilst this new approach worked well for some, for others it created barriers.

Throughout 2021/2022, the most common feedback we received from people was the challenges they faced in accessing the GP. As a result, we gathered a robust understanding of people's experiences by engaging with over 400 people through interviews, focus groups and a survey.

Our report 'Accessing your GP Remotely' found that although some people liked the new GP process and convenience of remote appointments, others felt it limited patient choice and confidence in 'digital diagnosis' was low. Furthermore, the lack of privacy was an issue as was communication and many felt remote appointments did not meet people's accessibility needs.



Only 10% of people

we engaged with were offered a face-to-face GP appointment.

What difference did we make

As a result of our findings:

- Local NHS leaders have commissioned additional provisions for British Sign Language interpreters and multilingual interpretation for face-to-face appointments.
- We worked together with the Clinical Commissioning Group on a campaign to improve communication about primary care and the different methods available to access care.
- We have been invited to work on the procurement of new online consultation software used to make GP appointments to ensure it meets patients needs.
- The Clinical Commissioning Group has incorporated our analysis to form part of a comprehensive review of how primary care is working.



"As we move through a phase of recovery we continue to think about the way patients access services and the need to adopt a blended approach of both face to face and virtual consultations that fits the needs of the local population appropriately."

**Katrina Watson, Head of Primary Care
NHS Barnet Clinical Commissioning Group**



Making conversations about advance care planning easier

Thanks to people sharing their understanding and experiences of advance care planning, we have helped local GPs to understand the barriers people can have talking about advance care planning and make it easier to start the conversation.

Advance care planning offers people the opportunity to plan their future care and support while they have the capacity to do so. These conversations with healthcare professionals can be held at any age. Unfortunately, often these conversations are not had because it is a sensitive matter and the term can attract negative connotations.

A group of GPs working with the Barnet Primary Care Training Hub, which oversees the education and development of the primary and community workforce, approached us to work together to explore ways to improve advance care planning. We interviewed a broad mix of people to explore their views and experiences.

Our report ‘Barriers to Advance Care Planning’ found that there was a lack of awareness about advance care planning which was in part due to its title and a lack of understanding as to what it is. Once it was explained most people responded positively. The most common difficulties in starting the conversation were people and their families feeling uncomfortable about death; cultural and religious taboos; and conflicting views within a family.



“It would also be helpful if the GP could print out a very simple leaflet on ACP and say this is what it’s all about, take it home and read it and discuss it with your family and then you can say to the patient ‘phone to make an appointment’ which puts it in the patient’s ballpark.”

Interviewee



What difference did we make

As a result of our work, local GPs are now equipped with knowledge and insight into the most common barriers that prevent people planning ahead and taking advantage of the benefits of having advance care planning conversations. Also, a leaflet has been produced based on the feedback provided that will further support GPs to start the conversation.



“We unanimously agreed that this report, highlighting the narrative, opinions and experiences of individuals in Barnet in their own words, was extremely powerful. It has been invaluable for GPs and the Training Hub to learn more about the challenges experienced by people locally.”

The Barnet Primary Care Training Hub

“We are grateful for the amazing work carried out by the Healthwatch Barnet team on the project.”

Dr Elizabeth Goodwin



Demonstrating the impact of Long COVID

Long COVID is an evolving condition that can greatly impact the health and quality of life of an individual. Initially in the pandemic, there was a focus on acute COVID-19 and less attention on Long COVID. Thanks to local people sharing their experiences of Long COVID, we are helping NHS leaders to improve the support available.

Locally there has been a need for more qualitative work to understand people’s experiences of living with Long COVID and the challenges they face. Therefore, last summer we led a research project across North Central London working in partnership with Healthwatch Camden, Enfield, Haringey and Islington with the aim of supporting the better development of services to help people manage the condition. Through interviews, focus groups, events and a survey we engaged with over 300 people.

The core themes of our report ‘People’s Experience of Long COVID’ were the impact on people’s health, both physical and mental; impact on their life such as employment, job security and home life; challenges with accessing support, referrals, diagnosis, useful interventions and lack of knowledge of the condition among GPs.



55% of people

Said it took 4 months or more to receive a diagnosis.

73% of people

Said they had to conduct their own research on Long COVID.

What difference did we make

As a result of our work, local NHS leaders have produced a comprehensive action plan to work through each of our recommendations. Our findings have enabled local NHS leaders to have a thorough understanding of the challenges and barriers people with Long COVID face and they are now taking steps to improve local services.



“Hearing feedback from our communities and their personal stories is vitally important to help us reflect on the care we offer. This report and its recommendations will help us to better understand what our residents need from us, and how we can improve access to services and experience of care.”



“We are committed to working in partnership with Healthwatch and other health and care organisations across NCL to implement the recommendations in this report.”

Dr Katie Coleman, Clinical Lead for Primary Care Network Development, NCL CCG
Sarah Mansuralli, Executive Director of Strategic Commissioning, NCL CCG

Advice and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch Barnet is here for you. In times of worry or stress, we can provide confidential support and free information to help you understand your options and get the help you need.

We always aim to work together with health and social care providers and we have a strong network of relationships to help achieve positive outcomes for people. Whether it's finding a GP practice, help to make a complaint or choosing a good care home for a loved one – you can count on us.



Getting people GP appointments when all else has failed

Tania came to us after difficulties getting a GP appointment to discuss getting a COVID-19 vaccine to ensure it was safe for her due to her pre-existing conditions. We made contact with the Practice Manager to secure an appointment.

“Thank you so much. You are the only people in the whole bureaucratic system who has tried to help me and you certainly have had an impact. I now have a telephone consultation booked with a GP this Friday. I really hope this will allow me to move on to getting a COVID vaccine quickly.”

“I very much appreciate bringing this issue to our attention, which has helped to highlight important concerns including internal training needs. The practice will ensure that issues raised in this matter will be addressed.”

GP Practice Manager



Helping people who have slipped through the cracks

Sarah previously had breast cancer and was called for a scan but did not receive any further instructions. She then received a letter stating she had missed her appointment and her rearranged appointment had been cancelled. She called PALS who referred the call to the clinic who then hung up on her. Sarah called us in great distress and asked for help. We contacted colleagues at the Trust to review and resolve the issues.

“Thank you for your help, more people need to know about Healthwatch. This is really good work your doing. I received a call from the hospital today, an apology, and an appointment for Friday this week with the breast consultant. Also they located my mammogram results, which was thankfully clear.”

“As an organisation, we know how important it is to hear from people who have a broad range of experiences of using our services. Healthwatch Barnet are an important part of helping us understand the experiences of our local community. The insight that we have received and shared this year has deepened our partnership working, and we look forward to building on this in the year to come.”

Beth Brown, Head of Patient Experience and Involvement, Royal Free London NHS Trust



Supporting people to access the right care at the right place

Winter to early spring is always a challenging time for NHS services because of the increased demand, but more so now due to the COVID-19 and its impact on service provisions, particularly elective care.

Working together with the Clinical Commissioning Group and local voluntary sector organisations we delivered a communication and engagement campaign throughout the winter to support people to stay well and to access care in the right place at the right time. The reach of our campaign was significant. To take account of Barnet’s diverse population we translated the communication into the 10 most common community languages used, from Romanian to Bengali. Here are a few key successes:

- We held 45 community engagement sessions across Barnet to share the campaign messaging and gathered over 575 people’s insights and experiences of local services.
- 10,000 people were reached through sharing the campaign messaging in our online networks – Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.
- 2800 Eastern European people were reached by our partner, Romanian Culture and Charity Together, through their weekly food bank sessions.



“We worked closely with Healthwatch Barnet on our Winter resilience outreach work. Healthwatch really understood the brief and despite quite a tight timeframe put together an extensive programme of outreach work to reach a diverse range of groups and communities. The insights that were gained were immensely helpful to the CCG and will influence our winter and other communications and engagement programs going forward. As a partner, we found Healthwatch Barnet to be collaborative and professional and look forward to working closely with them in the future.”

Communications and Engagement Team, NCL CCG

Keeping our local community informed

Throughout the year we organised many community events to enable people to be kept up-to-date on health and social care, and the opportunity to engage with people who delivery local services.



The Future Delivery of Healthcare Services in Barnet

With the introduction of Integrated Care Systems currently in development across the nation, we worked in partnership with North Central London Clinical Commissioning Group to share insight on the future of Barnet services, and to enable residents to ask NHS leaders their questions about the current provisions.

“Thank you very much indeed for organising this event and answering so many questions. Really informative.”

“Interesting evening today with the ICS event - thank you to Healthwatch for organising this - very illuminating.”



Long COVID: What is it and what support is available?

Working in partnership with Barnet COVID-19 Health Champions (Groundwork London), we organised a panel of local experts to provide information and support for residents with Long COVID which included a question and answer session. It was the first of its kind when Long COVID was not widely acknowledged or understood.

“This event has been informative and helpful. After having been ill, the paramedics took me to A&E and the doctor there told me off for being there and wasting his time. At least now I know I am not imagining the symptoms.”

“Thank you Healthwatch Barnet for providing this useful information session and for taking Long COVID seriously.”



What Matters To Me?

As part of Dying Matters Awareness Week we worked in partnership with multiple organisations to invite people to ask themselves a simple question, what matters to me?

“ Thank you for promoting such an important issue and for this very helpful webinar which made me to think a lot about my clients and myself.”

“ Thanks to great panel, thought-provoking discussion and sensitive facilitation.”

Volunteers

At Healthwatch Barnet we are supported by 19 volunteers. Thanks to their efforts, we're able to understand what is working and what needs improving in NHS and social care.

This year our volunteers:

- Provided insight, knowledge and updates on services across Barnet.
- Helped to create our project research methodology enabling us to reach more people.
- Interviewed residents, delivered focus groups and carried out surveys.
- Analysed our data to find common themes impacting residents.
- Created digital content on our website and social media.
- Conducted a virtual visit to care homes during lockdown.
- Supported us with community engagement and outreach.



“I’m so grateful for all this experience I’ve gained from volunteering with Healthwatch Barnet and I’ve really tried to get the most out of it which I’m sure right now with this pandemic I couldn’t have gotten anywhere else.”



“If it wasn’t for this volunteering I’ve been doing with Healthwatch Barnet I’m sure I wouldn’t have come as far as I have. Thank you for being patient and supportive of me.”



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



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.

Income		Expenditure	
Funding received from local authority	£121,478	Staff costs	£94,625
Additional funding	£15,000	Operational costs	£10,531
		Support and administration	£15,000
Total income	£136,478	Total expenditure	£120,156

Top themes for 2022–23

1. Children and young people services
2. Men's health

Next steps

Each year we choose two core themes that forms the basis of significant work for the coming year. As the health and social care environment is always evolving this allows us to be nimble and give us the have capacity to explore smaller projects based on in-the-moment feedback.

We have reviewed the intelligence we have gathered throughout the year. By a majority children and young people’s services and men’s health were selected by our advisory board as our 2022/23 core themes. There are other areas we are already working in that will continue. These include primary care, integrated care system, cancer services, hypertension, and social care.

As the nation recovers from the pandemic and the devastating impact it has had on services and society, we will continue to champion the voices of local residents in an ever-changing agile environment, particular those who are seldom heard.

Statutory Statements

About us

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

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



The way we work

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

Our Advisory Board consists of 8 members who work on a voluntary basis to provide direction, expertise and aid Healthwatch Barnet to plan our priority areas and deliver our statutory obligations. Our board ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community. Through 2021/22 the board met 4 times and made decisions on matters such as the selection of our core themes for 2022/2023.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities. For example, we collect insight from residents through our community outreach, website forms, telephone enquiries, public events and consultations with clients/users of local VCS services. Our work is primarily driven by the insight we gather from residents.

Methods and systems used 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, provided a webform on our website, surveys, 1-2-1 interviews, focus groups, public events, attended meetings of community groups and forums, provided our own activities and engaged with the public through social media.

We are committed to taking additional steps to ensure we obtain the views of people from diverse backgrounds who are often not heard by health and care decision makers. This year we have done this by building a partnership with Romanian Culture and Charity Together so we can understand the needs of Eastern European communities.

Responses to recommendations and requests

There were no providers who failed to respond to request for information or recommendations. This year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we did not make use of our Enter and View powers. Consequently, no recommendations or other actions resulted from this area of activity. There were no issues or recommendations escalated by our Healthwatch to Healthwatch England Committee and so no resulting special reviews or investigations.

Health and Wellbeing Board

Healthwatch Barnet is represented on the Barnet Health and Wellbeing Board by Nitish Lakhman, Healthwatch Barnet Manager. During 2021/22 our representative presented on areas of concerns reported to Healthwatch Barnet through our research and reports, such as people's experiences of accessing GP services.



healthwatch Barnet

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