



On equal terms

Then and now

Healthwatch Barnsley Annual Report 2020-21

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Message from our Chair

It is, once again, my pleasure to introduce HealthWatch Barnsley's Annual Report.

The effects of the COVID pandemic ensured that this year has been somewhat different to the norm. By following Government Regulations and Guidance we implemented and followed the appropriate remedial measures throughout the year. It was agreed that staff should where possible work from home. By utilising social media/digital resources we ensured that we continued to offer support, guidance, and signposting. Along with the members of the Strategic Board, we recognise the dedication of all the staff during the year during these exceptional times. The last twelve months have been totally different operationally and we will continue to be challenged.

I reiterate the requirement to meet the challenge, both nationally, regionally, and locally to the transform the Health and Social Care provisions for the benefit of local people. Commissioners and Providers have continued to work even more closely together, and we have continued to support and challenge these changes and, by membership of the various Groups and Committees we have influenced change. I note that the resolution of the health and wider inequalities experienced by the people of Barnsley will continue to remain at the heart of Health and Social Care system reform.

The operation of the Integrated Care Delivery and Provider Groups, along with the Health and Wellbeing Board have continued to develop the local PLACE-based plan, linked to the Barnsley 2030 Plan, and is successfully progressing the development of a Transformation and Priority programme at pace.

Barnsley Healthwatch has continued to represent all the local Healthwatches' at Regional level (South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw, Integrated Care System). The role of Healthwatch with regards to the ICS is acting as an independent 'critical friend', providing advice, influencing, and supporting, and holding NHS and Local Authority commissioners and providers to account for the quality and effectiveness of their communication and engagement, and the impact of the plans developed around patient health and care inequalities.

Even with the most difficult of circumstances, throughout the year we have sustained our practice of collecting people's experiences of Health and Social Care services available locally and passed this information onto Commissioners and Providers. This data has been used to identify service gaps, as well as exceptional practice; in doing so, we continue to influence and support services so that they are ideally placed to act in the interest of the population of Barnsley.

Finally, I would also like to pass our sincere thanks and admiration to all the staff and volunteers working in Health and Social Care, Community and Mental Health sectors, Care Home staff. Not forgetting the unpaid carers and volunteers from the Third Sector, and all the other key workers and the many unsung heroes who have done so much to support the people of Barnsley throughout the current pandemic.

I commend the report and recommend readers to note the organisation's successes, more information on the organisation and our work plans and reports can be found on our web page.

<https://healthwatchbarnsley.co.uk>



Adrian England

About us

Here to make health and care better

We are the independent champion for people who use health and social care services in Barnsley. 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.



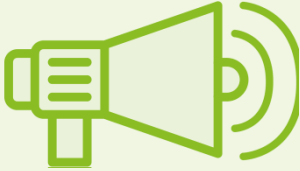
“Local Healthwatch have done fantastic work throughout the country during the COVID-19 pandemic, but there is more work ahead to ensure that everyone’s views are heard. COVID-19 has highlighted inequalities and to tackle these unfair health differences we will need those in power to listen, to hear the experiences of those facing inequality and understand the steps that could improve people’s lives.”

Sir Robert Francis QC, Chair of Healthwatch England

Highlights from our year

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

Reaching out



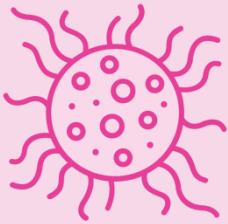
this year we heard from

2196 people about their experiences of health and social care.

We provided advice and information to

1891 people + 2,407 additional people via our website

Responding to the pandemic



We engaged with and supported

333 people with Covid -19 related queries + 2,407 people viewed our website home page providing up to date information on Covid-19

Making a difference to care



We published

4 reports

Our reports were focused on understanding the public experience of Health and Social Care services during the pandemic. We have used the information and data to inform service providers, commissioners and system leaders at both an operational level through the Barnsley Engagement Leads meetings and at a strategic level through report summaries included in system reports to the Barnsley Senior Leadership Team responsible for navigating the pandemic. In addition we made 4 recommendations in a report which was shared with schools.

Health and care that works for you



13 volunteers

helped us to carry out our work. In total, they contributed approx. the equivalent of 300 days

We employ 4 staff

2.9 of whom are full time equivalent

We received

£150,000 in funding

from our local authority in 2020-21, the same as the previous year



Theme one: Then and now Dentistry



Then: access to NHS dental services

At the beginning of the pandemic we launched a survey to find out about peoples experience of health and social care services, and we ran a survey every quarter thereafter. Thanks to people sharing their experiences of dentistry we were able to identify and communicate our findings to the Commissioners.

Our reports found that patients were not only struggling to access dental treatment but that they were provided with little explanation as to what was happening to dental services leading to confusion and uncertainty.

“It felt like a forgotten service”

Patients experienced conflicting information about which part of the health system should be providing them with certain treatments e.g. pain management and infection, and complained of a lack of joined up working as they were batted backwards and forwards between services.



Now: Ongoing dentistry issues

Thanks to patients sharing their experience of dentistry during the pandemic, we have contributed to the campaign to ensure that the issue of dentistry is right at the top of the worry list for NHS England. Making this issue a political and policy priority has been essential to ensuring the issues continue to be addressed.

Between April 2020 and March 2021 46 people shared their experience of dentistry with us

The main issues included:

- Difficulties in finding an NHS Dentist
- Difficulties in getting an appointment
- Priority being given to private patients.
- Cancelled appointments

People told us about their frustrations trying to find an NHS dentist and about being offered private appointments instead and being unable to afford to pay privately. People also told us about the level of frustration and anxiety with cancelled appointments.



One patient's appointment cancelled numerous times resulting in attendance at hospital for emergency treatment

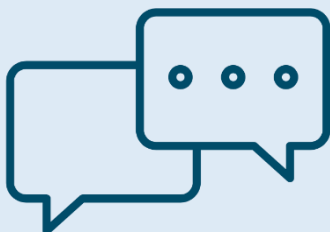
The lack of information during the pandemic in relation to dental appointments has led to patient confusion and uncertainty around dental treatment in general.

We have continued to ask questions in our surveys about people's experience of dental care and this information combined with general public enquiries has provided us with intelligence which has been shared with HWE, our regional HW network, and with the commissioners of dental services.

This has culminated in quarterly meetings with dental commissioners to raise concerns and to understand the service delivery model, so that we are better informed to share information with the public.

This work has also resulted in Digital and Social Media Messaging which we continue to share widely.

Share your views with us



If you have a query about a health and social care service, or need help with where you can go to access further support, get in touch. Don't struggle alone. Healthwatch is here for you.

 www.healthwatchbarnsley.org.uk

 **01226 320106**

 **Email Healthwatch@barnsleycvs.org.uk**



Theme two: Then and now

Accessing your local GP



Then: accessing your local GP

Being able to get an appointment with a GP has been a priority for Healthwatch since it was first established.

In 2019 / 2020 Healthwatch Barnsley heard about the following issues through our advice and support services and through our engagement activities

- Lack of GP appointments and long waiting times for appointments
- Difficulty reaching a receptionist by telephone at some GP surgeries



Now: accessing your GP during the pandemic

The arrival of the pandemic has changed the way we access GPs, placing even more pressure on phone lines and larger reliance on technology at home. We decided to look into these issues to see what impact this was having on patient experience when accessing a GP. As a result of the pandemic we had to change the way we gathered patient experience, and were mindful of those people we believed might struggle to access our online activity. We were keen to reach those people that we believed were less likely to have access to, or to use IT, and therefore our Engagement Officer targeted foodbanks and older people's complexes to distribute a letter and a Healthwatch leaflet. The information distributed provided a number of different options to participate in our survey's. What we found was that the pandemic had exacerbated the problems we had heard about previously for many people, whilst some people found it easier to use online services.



Online appointments / telephone much easier to fit around work commitments

In addition to our survey's and general advice and support services we also heard from patients who were recovering from a stroke and their carers by attending online outreach sessions with the Stroke Association. Attending their Time to Talk event, Survivors Group and Carers Group, this provided us with valuable information about peoples experiences of Health and Social Care services generally but also specifically in relation to GP access.

Healthwatch Barnsley is now in a position to complete our GP Access scoping document to undertake more targeted work on this very important area of Health and Social Care.



It was impossible to reach the surgery by phone. They have no queuing system, so you do not know how long you are going to wait. One person told us that they had called 37 times and still did not get through.

We signed up to the NHS GP Card Scheme, to increase registration with GP's. This will help people who face difficulties because they are asked for proof of address or other ID. We have distributed the cards to the Refugee Council, and Housing Alliance for wider distribution.



Responding to COVID-19

Healthwatch plays an important role in helping people to get the information they need, especially through the pandemic. The insight we collect is shared with both Healthwatch England and local partners to ensure services are operating as best as possible during the pandemic.

This year we helped 4,936 people by:

- Providing up to date advice on the COVID-19 response locally
- Linking people to reliable up-to-date information
- Supporting the vaccine roll-out
- Supporting the community volunteer response
- Helping people to access the services they need
- Carried out four survey's to find out about people's experience during the pandemic

Top four areas that people have contacted us about:



GP services



Dentistry



Hospital care



Pharmacy services

Key Issues for people



The key issues people were contacting us about included:

- Not being able to get through on the telephone to GP
- Not being able to get a GP appointment
- Not being able to get an NHS dental appointment
- Planned hospital procedures, such as elective surgery or dental which were still needed were cancelled.
- Some people struggled to get over the counter medication in shops or pharmacies



Contact us to get the information you need

If you have a query about a health and social care service, or need help with where you can go to access further support, get in touch. Don't struggle alone. Healthwatch is here for you.



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Volunteers

At Healthwatch Barnsley we are supported by 13 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:

- Helped people have their say from home, by sharing surveys online.
- Attended meetings, webinars and training
- Provided response to Draft Quality Accounts
- Responded to consultation documents
- Supported each other during the pandemic
- Helped prepare surveys
- Supported review of policies and procedures



Road Testing Training Modules

Margaret Lindquist was one of two volunteers to road test BMBC's BETA online safeguarding training. Between the two volunteers they carried out the following modules on a range of devices and fed back on content and ease of use:

Safeguarding for workers who raise concerns

Recognising and sharing safeguarding adults concerns

Self neglect and hoarding

Mental Health

Last year's Annual Report, described the role, Vice Chair Mark Smith undertakes in improving mental health for the people of Barnsley. The work on creating an alliance of organisations to deliver this aim came together with the launch of Barnsley Mental Health Partnership (MHP) in January 2021, reporting to the Barnsley Health and Wellbeing Board. Mark is our representative on the Partnership.

The year also saw the dissolution of Barnsley Crisis Care Concordat Suicide Prevention Partnership, work previously undertaken by this group will be taken forward by the Crisis Care Task Group of the Mental Health Partnership Delivery Group (MHPDG). The MHPDG will ensure priorities of the MHP are delivered to improve the emotional wellbeing of the people of Barnsley through clearer and stronger governance. This will ensure that recommendations of Barnsley Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Groups are implemented. This year Mark was invited to provide expert advice to the task and finish group on Child Mental Health – Early Intervention and Prevention.

The suicide prevention work will be strengthened in both new physical prevention initiatives as well as response to people in crisis. This year we have been working to ensure the lessons coming out of reviews undertaken by the Barnsley Children's Safeguarding Partnership and the Barnsley Safeguarding Adult's Board have been taken forward in this important area.



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@barnsleycvs.org.uk



www.healthwatchbarnsley.org.uk



01226 320106



Email Healthwatch@barnsleycvs.org.uk

Finances

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

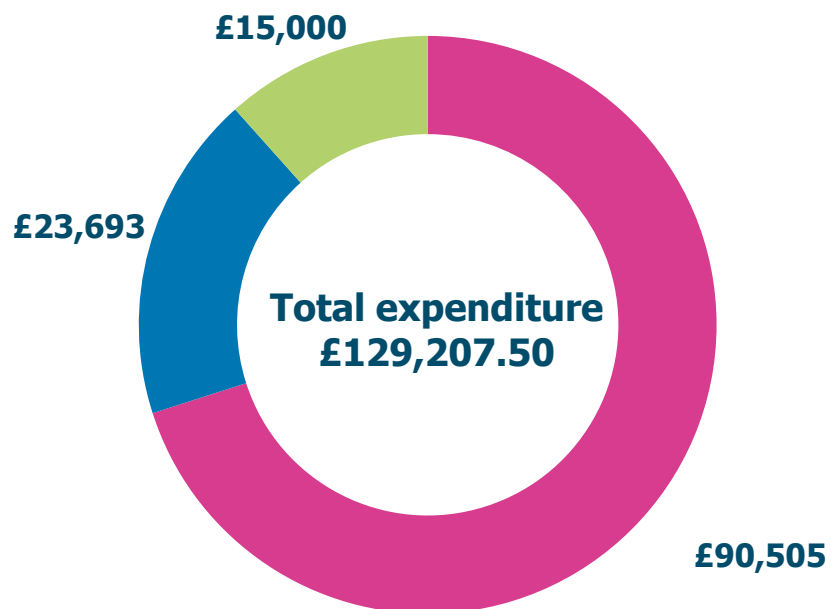
Income

- Funding received from local authority



Expenditure

- Staff costs
- Operational costs
- Support and administration



Next steps & thank you

Top three priorities for 2021-22

1. Health Inequalities
2. GP Access
3. Dental Access

Next steps

- Increase community presence and engagement when restrictions are lifted
- Volunteer recruitment and retention
- Ensure that our commitment to equality and diversity / hard to reach communities is incorporated into all work streams



Tackling health inequalities will need those in a position to facilitate change and to listen. To hear from the experiences of all those facing inequality, particularly the seldom heard groups, and to understand the steps that could improve people's lives, and then to act on what has been learned."



Statutory statements

About us

Barnsley CVS, Priory Campus, Pontefract Road, Barnsley, South Yorkshire S71 5PN

Healthwatch Barnsley 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 eight 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. Through 2020/21 the board met six times and made decisions on matters such as, agreeing the priorities for the year ahead and revising as necessary due to the pandemic and agreeing costings for potential commissioned work.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities by ensuring that the Board receive regular intelligence reports which are based upon a summary of the issues that we are contacted about every month. In addition to this any intelligence that is gathered from the public via surveys or outreach / engagement sessions is also provided to the Board as part of the intelligence report to inform decision making about priorities.

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 2020/21 we have been available by phone, by email, provided a webform on 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.

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, for example, attending outreach sessions e.g. with the Stroke Association. Enabling some people to complete our surveys with us over the phone when they have no digital access and by producing and sharing paper versions of our survey's. We have distributed our information to communities via foodbank parcels, and we have targeted older peoples housing complexes with our leaflets providing information on different ways to contact us.

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 www.healthwatchbarnsley.org.uk

2020-21 priorities

During this period Healthwatch Barnsley revisited our priorities to ensure that we supported our local communities and to meet the ever changing demands driven by the pandemic. Central to this was the provision of up to date information, in addition to the provision of local intelligence to system leaders.

Project / activity area	Changes made to services
GP Access	Ongoing developments
Dental Access	Improved sharing of information
Covid -19 / Vaccination information / intelligence	Ongoing with a view to targeted communications

Responses to recommendations and requests

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 Barnsley is represented on the Barnsley Health and Wellbeing Board by Adrian England (Healthwatch Barnsley Chair) During 2020/21 our representative has effectively carried out this role by their attendance at scheduled meetings.

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