

# Championing what matters to you

Healthwatch Barnsley  
Annual Report 2021-22



# Contents

Message from our Chair	3
About us	5
Highlights - Our year in review	6
Listening to your experiences	8
Advice and information	11
Volunteers	13
Finances and future priorities	16
Statutory statements	17

# Message from our Chair



By Adrian England,  
Healthwatch Barnsley Chair

It is, once again, my pleasure to introduce the Annual Report for Healthwatch Barnsley.

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic ensured that this year has been adversely affected again. We continued to follow government regulations and guidance and we implemented and followed the appropriate remedial measures. It was agreed that staff should, where possible, continue to work from home. Utilising social media and digital resources, we offered a seamless service of support, guidance and signposting. As the effects of the pandemic gradually reduced, we have developed our outreach and engagement activities. Along with the other members of the Strategic Board, we recognise the dedication of all the staff during the year, especially during these exceptional times. The majority of the last twelve months has once again been very different operationally; no doubt we will encounter other challenges in future.

I reiterate the requirement to meet the aim, both nationally, regionally, and locally to transform health and social care provisions for the benefit of local people. Commissioners and providers have continued to work in close partnership and we have supported these changes. By our membership of various groups and committees we have influenced change. As a team we will try to ensure that the resolution of health and wider inequalities of local people will remain at the heart of health and social care plans.

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 has successfully progressed the development of a Transformation and Priority programme.

## Message from our Chair (continued)

We have continued to represent all local Healthwatch at regional level (South Yorkshire, Integrated Care System (ICS)). The role of Healthwatch regarding the ICS is to act as an independent 'critical friend'. We do this by providing advice, but also by holding NHS and Local Authority Commissioners and providers to account, in terms of the quality and effectiveness of their communication and engagement. Our remit also considers 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 local health and social care services. We have also ensured that this information is cascaded to all relevant commissioners and providers. This feedback 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 local residents.

Finally, I would 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, and care home environments. We must never forget the work of unpaid carers and volunteers from the Third Sector, and all the other key workers and the many unsung heroes who do so much to support the health and wellbeing of the people of Barnsley

I commend the report and recommend readers to note the organisation's successes. Further information on Healthwatch, our work plans and reports, can be found on our website (the address for this is located on the back page of this report).



"The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown long-standing health inequalities into stark relief. With NHS and social care facing even longer backlogs, the unequal outcomes exposed by the pandemic are at risk of becoming worse. Local Healthwatch play an important role in helping to overcome these adversities and are uniquely placed to make a positive difference in their communities."

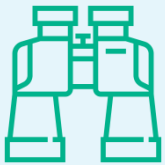


*Sir Robert Francis QC, Chair of Healthwatch England*

# About us

## Your health and social care champion

Healthwatch Barnsley is your local health and social care champion. From Penistone to the Dearne 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.



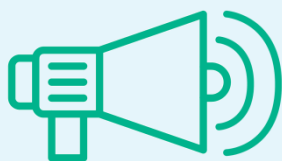
### Our values

- 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



**1580 people**

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

**142 people**

came to us for clear advice and information about topics such as mental health and COVID-19.

## Making a difference to care



We published

**2 reports**

about the effects of COVID-19 on our communities and the lack of dental appointments in the town.

Our most popular report was

**Dentistry in Barnsley**

which highlighted the struggles people have on getting access to timely dental appointments.

## Health and care that works for you



We are lucky to have

**14**

outstanding volunteers, who gave up 300 days of their valuable time to make care better for our community.

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

**£150,000**

Which is the same as previous years.

We also currently employ

**3 members of staff**

who help us carry out this work.

## How we've made a difference throughout the year

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

Spring

GP Registration Cards – After this was reported to us as an issue, we contacted various agencies regarding distribution of these cards, to help people who are refused GP registration because they do not have a permanent address. The cards support their right to be registered. We then delivered several hundred of these cards to key venues across Barnsley, which led to people of no fixed abode being able to access the health care that they need.



Summer

With only two members of staff in place during this period, and public engagement restricted due to the pandemic, we ran the service to the absolute best of our ability, continuing to be available to gather views and to signpost people to obtain the right support and care. In this period, NHS dentistry and the lack of its availability was often reported, and we took this forward in the following months.



Autumn

Access to GP Services Survey – We carried out a survey of public opinion on this topic. Issues highlighted included having to call the surgery many times before calls were answered, the waiting time to actually get an answer, and the long time frame to get an appointment. It is hoped the ensuing report will help to shape these services and improve them in future.



Winter

Carers experience of discharge from hospital – This piece of work focused on patients that were admitted for elective surgery or via A&E and gave a carer perspective on this. We spoke to 12 carers for this and we received very different views, with some saying they felt involved in the process with the hospital and were supported, whilst others did not feel this at all. Communication was also an issue. A report will be formulated to hopefully guide and inform this process, so that it works better for patients and their carers in future.



# Listening to your experiences

Services can't make improvements without hearing your views. That's why over the last year we have made listening to feedback from all areas of the community a priority. This allows us to understand the full picture, and feedback to services to help them improve.





## Supporting care providers and their patients

***Issue at local optical care provider*** – In October 2021, a local optician (a provider of the NHS MECS Service in the Barnsley Area) told us they were receiving regular calls, which had been incorrectly referred to them by the 111 service. Due to the optician being in the Barnsley borough, they can only see these patients under the NHS MECS service if they are registered with a GP in Barnsley. Patients with a GP outside of the borough need to be referred to an optical care provider in their own area.

Unfortunately, 111 were supplying this Barnsley optician's telephone number to patients outside the borough and they were subsequently receiving these misdirected calls on a daily basis, causing frustration to them and to patients, as these calls had to then be directed back to 111.

Ideally, the optician wanted 111 to guide out of area clients to services that were local to them. Having gathered this information via a routine optical appointment, and agreeing to look into it further, our Information and Outreach officer then made enquiries with YAS (the 111 service provider) to check the best way to take this forward. Several emails and telephone calls were made and with partnership working, by November 2021 this problem had been resolved.

***Adult Mental Health Crisis Care*** – During June 2021 Healthwatch Barnsley raised concerns with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in regards to Adult Mental Health Crisis Care and some recommendations that had been made by a Task and Finish Group during 2018/19. Healthwatch were concerned that despite the services response to the recommendations there were several issues which were still not being addressed.

The concerns were raised regarding the recommendations made on conveyancing, 24/7 Crisis Care and Governance and Accountability. In response to the concerns raised by Healthwatch the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee met with providers of mental health services in Barnsley (SWYFT), Cabinet members and commissioners.

The investigations have been completed and The Executive Director, Core Services has published a report on the findings (15/10/2021) and concluded that

***"It is clear from the discussions that all partners are committed and that much work is being done to improve services to people suffering a mental health crisis, however the committee would question whether enough was being done, at the right pace, and whether partnership working needs to be strengthened."***

## Mental health service improvements

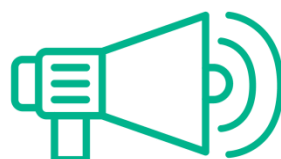
In our last few Annual Reports, we talked about the role our Vice Chair, Mark Smith, undertakes in improving mental health for the people of Barnsley.

The Barnsley Mental Health Partnership (BMHP) celebrated its first birthday and steady progress has been achieved. A new All Age Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy went out to public consultation at the end of the year and will be published in 2022. A dashboard is under development to enable the BMHP to monitor progress against the objectives contained within the strategy. This process has been extremely slow and is impeding effective scrutiny of development.

Last summer, Healthwatch Barnsley made a formal referral to the BMBC Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Committee on the lack of progress in Adult Crisis Care following a recent O&S Task and Finish Group. BMHP produced an action plan following this investigation. One of the issues highlighted was the lack of data sharing.

Healthwatch Barnsley was heavily involved in producing an outline specification for a Mental Health Response Vehicle (MHRV) within the borough. It was envisaged that this would involve partnership working between Yorkshire Ambulance Service, South Yorkshire Police, BMBC Adult Social Care and South West Yorkshire Partnership Foundation Trust. Unfortunately, Barnsley was unsuccessful in the application for the pilot within South Yorkshire. A scheme replicating a similar pilot project in Hull was commissioned in Doncaster. One of the reasons for this decision was the lack of an alternative to detention under Section 136 of the Mental Health Act. As this year ended, the BCCG started a tendering process for this type of provision within Barnsley. There is, however, concern that the funding limitations mean that this service will not be available all day, every day. We will report upon this next year.

There is also concern of information governance in the provision of data to the Barnsley Suspected Suicide Learning Panel. This work initiated within the borough has been looked upon nationally as exemplary. It will be a shame if this pioneering work is stymied by these difficulties.



# Advice and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch 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. Whether it's finding an NHS dentist, how to make a complaint or choosing a good care home for a loved one – you can count on us.

This year we helped people by:

- Providing up to date information on COVID-19
- Linking people to reliable information they could trust
- Supporting the COVID-19 vaccination and booster programme
- Helping people to access the services they need



## Peer support

As part of the NHSE/I Project looking at carer experience, one of the people that we attempted to interview was really struggling with her husband (due to his Alzheimer's). We made appointments to call her when he was watching his favourite television programme, as he was usually quieter then and she would be able to talk. We attempted this on three occasions and it was clear that we were not going to be able to conduct the interview.

This potential interviewee told us, "This is what it is like" and because of the pandemic the support groups she used to attend had either closed for good or were not currently meeting; she missed just having a one to one chat and getting things off her chest.

We also spoke to another carer who was new to the area and although she was not caring for someone with Alzheimer's, she was in a similar position. With permission from them both, we exchanged their numbers and they now call each other every week just for a general catch up and to offer mutual support. Both have told us how much this weekly call means to them, adding that their mental wellbeing has improved by being able to speak honestly to someone about their situation, without feeling judged or inadequate.

Being able to facilitate this support mechanism for these two people gave us a real sense of pride, and consolidated why we work for Healthwatch – the never failing need to make a positive difference.



# Volunteers

We're supported by a team of amazing volunteers who are the heart of Healthwatch. Thanks to their efforts in the community, we're able to understand what is working and what needs improving in NHS and social care.

This year our volunteers:

- Helped with surveys, reports and suggested potential improvements to local services
- Continued to support us by their attendance at our Board meetings, helping to steer the future work of the organisation
- Represented us and acted as our voice at a variety of health and social care meetings throughout the borough



# Carol's story

## What was your motivation for volunteering?

I perceived that I didn't have time to volunteer and that the only way that I could make a difference was to donate money. That was until I became a carer and advocate for my mum, who lived with Lewy Body Dementia (LBD) for circa 12 years.

I was provided with minimal information about LBD and had to navigate the complexity of the various health and social care services with no support. As mum's care needs increased the more challenging it became to understand which organisation(s) were responsible for mum's care, health and wellbeing. The situation was exacerbated by numerous service failures and a lack of coordination and integration within, and across, health and social care services. Following mum's death, I searched for a cause that I felt passionate about, one that gave people a voice and (through collaboration) would make a difference to healthcare services. I chose a volunteer role with Healthwatch Barnsley (the independent consumer champion for health and social care).

## Why should I volunteer?

Anyone can get involved. No matter what field of work you are in and / or whatever your interests, what volunteering requires is a commitment and desire to make a difference. What the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us is that connection, and a sense of community, is essential to everyone. When you volunteer, you provide that for others (and yourself). No matter what aspect of volunteering you're involved in, it impacts the people affected and makes a tangible change in a life. The experience, insight, ideas and knowledge that everyone brings helps Healthwatch to influence improvements to the healthcare products and services available now and in the future.

## How is volunteering beneficial?

The benefits of volunteering can be far-reaching and have a positive impact on your wellbeing, as well as your relationships with others and in providing career prospects. There are many positives to it, but volunteering not only leads to greater personal satisfaction (e.g., that you have contributed to making a difference in the lives of others) but can also help to put your own life in perspective. This is how it has benefited me.



### Steph

"I have three young children who are all at school and I run my own small business so volunteering for Healthwatch Barnsley fits in nicely with my lifestyle. I am creative and I love to get involved in promotions and engagement, you will often find me making up promotional packs or keyrings themed to particular events!"

### Andy

"I closed my business just before the pandemic and went into semi-retirement. However, I sometimes missed using some of the skills I had honed in my business, such as design, and I have been volunteering with Healthwatch Barnsley for a while now, doing this type of work. I am very interested in the aims of the organisation and I am keen to get more involved in the future, both in the office and at events."



### Rich

"I started volunteering for Healthwatch Barnsley after I retired. Three years ago I was diagnosed with a life changing illness and going through tests and treatment was very daunting. I have the confidence to ask questions but many people do not, it is about giving people a voice and letting services know when things work well and when they don't!"



### Do you feel inspired?

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



[www.healthwatchbarnsley.org.uk](http://www.healthwatchbarnsley.org.uk)



01226 320106



[healthwatch@barnsleycvs.org.uk](mailto:healthwatch@barnsleycvs.org.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		Income	
Funding received from local authority	£150,000	Staff costs	£82,369
Additional funding	£33,946	Operational costs	£30,499
		Support and administration	£4,335
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£183,946</b>	<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>£117,203</b>

## Top three priorities for 2022–23

1. Health Inequalities
2. Mental Health
3. Adult Social Care

## Next steps

The pandemic has shone a stark light on the impact of existing inequalities when using health and care services, highlighting the importance of championing the voices of those who all too often go unheard.

Over the coming years, our goal is to help reduce these inequalities by making sure your voice is heard, and decision makers reduce the barriers you face, regardless of whether that's because of where you live, income or race.



# Statutory statements

## About us

Healthwatch Barnsley contract is held by Barnsley Community and Voluntary Services, Priory Campus, Pontefract Road, Lundwood, Barnsley 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 2021/22 the board met eight times and made decisions on matters such as taking on the NHSE/I Commission to look at carer experience and to work with other local Healthwatch in South Yorkshire in readiness for the changes to health and social care commissioning.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities by involving as many sections of our communities as we can. We gather feedback from a wide range of sources and ensure that these are analysed to enable us to spot any trends or emerging opportunities.

### **Methods and systems used across the year's work to obtain people's views and experience.**

We use a wide range of approaches to ensure that as many people as possible have the opportunity to provide us with insight about their experience of health and care services. During 2021/22 we have been available by phone, by email, 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. To facilitate this we have employed an additional Engagement Officer from May 2022. 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, within local newsletters and share with our stakeholders and partners. The Annual Report is also shared with our Health & Wellbeing Board and Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

## Responses to recommendations and requests

We had no providers who did not respond to requests 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 Barnsley is represented on the Barnsley Health and Wellbeing Board by Adrian England, Chair of our Strategic Advisory Board. During 2021/22 our representative has effectively carried out this role by attending quarterly meetings and being an active member of any related workshops.

## 2021-2022 Outcomes

2021/22 has been a challenging year for Healthwatch Barnsley. Due to the ongoing pandemic and staff changes, we were not able to be involved in as much engagement with residents as we would have liked.

We have however, spoken at length to residents regarding the COVID-19 vaccination programme in Barnsley, and how they have been affected by this. The findings were passed on to Barnsley Clinical Commissioning Group who used some of this information in their COVID-19 reports.

We also undertook a survey on Access to GP Services which provided us with some rich intelligence. We are currently awaiting feedback from Barnsley Clinical Commissioning Group and Barnsley Health Federation on our findings before our report is to be published.

Our work with carers has highlighted some of the issues faced when the person they care for has been discharged from hospital. We are now working on the next steps which can be added to the new Carers Strategy; this is currently being developed.

Our Strategic Board members have continued to champion improvements to care and communications with service providers, notably in mental health services and safeguarding. They also keep abreast of the news and changes within the health and social care arena, with the emerging Integrated Care Systems becoming a legal entity (to take over the role of local Clinical Commissioning Groups).

# healthwatch

Healthwatch Barnsley  
Priory Campus  
Pontefract Road  
Lundwood  
Barnsley  
S71 5PN

[www.healthwatchbarnsley.org.uk](http://www.healthwatchbarnsley.org.uk)

t: 01226 320106

e: [healthwatch@barnsleycvs.org.uk](mailto:healthwatch@barnsleycvs.org.uk)

 [@HWatchBarnsley](https://twitter.com/HWatchBarnsley)

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

 [Healthwatch@vabarnsley.org.uk](https://www.linkedin.com/company/Healthwatch@vabarnsley.org.uk)