The value of listening

Healthwatch Cheshire West
Annual Report 2023-2024

healthwatch
Cheshire West

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Message from our Chair and CEO

We are delighted to present our Annual Report for 2023 – 2024; a year which saw the impact the voice of local people can have on the development of local health and care services across Cheshire.

This year has provided many challenges to our health and care systems and we have continued to travel into our communities, to ensure we hear the experiences and views of local people regarding health and care services, often connecting with those that others find harder to hear. By attending events and support groups and visiting people in their neighbourhoods, we have engaged with the diverse range of communities we serve, hearing directly what matters to them. Our team of staff and volunteers have listened, shared knowledge, and signposted people to help them find the services they need.

Lynne Turnbull
Healthwatch Cheshire West Chair

Louise Barry
CEO of Healthwatch Cheshire West

This year people have shared with us the impacts of a range of issues including:

- Accessing GP services
- Finding an NHS Dentist and/or emergency dentistry support.
- Quality of services in hospital settings
- Waiting times for mental health services
- Experiences of residential and nursing homes
- Experience of urgent and emergency care

Our team share these insights with service providers at all levels, influencing decisions and helping to make real improvements to the services local residents receive. We present people's views and experiences at local level, attending all Care Community and Community Partnerships meetings and at board level, sitting alongside NHS and Local Authority leaders as they make strategic decisions for the future.

With Accident and Emergency departments continuing to be stretched and corridor care remaining an issue, we visited the three main A&E departments across Cheshire to gather people's experiences in real time. We are encouraged that all hospital trusts we visited committed to changes based on our recommendations, with action plans in place to help improve patient experience.

With the variety of work we do, nothing could be achieved without our hard working and dedicated team of staff and volunteers, who bring a wealth of skills, experience and knowledge. Their passion for helping people and improving their experience of health and care services is evident in all they do and we are proud of all their commitment and activity.

We look forward to another impactful year ahead, and to working in partnership with both people and services to ensure local voices are heard and acted on.

Statement of support from Cheshire West and Chester Council

Healthwatch Cheshire West continues to be a valued partner to Cheshire West and Chester Council and the wider health and care system as we pursue our common values around making life better and healthier for our many communities.

The opinions and lived experiences of residents which are gathered by Healthwatch enrich how priorities are identified and actions developed and monitored. Healthwatch's local work with GPs, involvement with the network of community partnerships and input to our anti-poverty work are important in making real changes that enhance the quality of people's lives.

Healthwatch's accurate, targeted reports and research, including Enter and View visits, help us to pick up concerns and trends, informing the areas of need and inequality which need prioritising. There is also the information available from the Citizens' Focus Panel and the many community groups Healthwatch has links to.

Healthwatch was commissioned to gather insight and intelligence for the new Combatting Drugs Partnership on the lived experience of residents and their friends and families concerning substance misuse across the Borough. This will be extremely useful in future planning.

The Council is proud of its work in supporting asylum seekers and refugees and values the input of Healthwatch in providing them with clear information about how our health, care and other services work and feeding back to providers comments on gaps and needs.

Healthwatch continues to be a regular contributor to our Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which uses reports, such as those on Dentistry and A&E Watch at our area's two acute Hospital Trusts, in developing its work programme and highlighting areas for enquiry.

Healthwatch supports the setting of the strategic direction of Cheshire West Place, which oversees local NHS services, by attending the Place Partnership Committee and contributing to its working groups such as the Integrated Transformation Steering Group, which co-ordinates action to achieve priorities.

The organisation is also one of the key partners on our statutory Health and Wellbeing Board, the body which leads on improving health and wellbeing in our Borough. The Board meets up to ten times a year. Healthwatch's links to its national network is an additional channel of best practice we can refer to as a means of improving standards.

Healthwatch has made a significant contribution to promoting and co-ordinating public communication. This includes supporting the promotion of Cheshire West Place and its priorities and helping to develop communication to support the Falls Prevention Strategy.

We look forward to continuing to work together with Healthwatch in the year ahead and beyond as a committed, trusted and experienced member of our health and wellbeing partnership."

Helen Bromley, Director of Public Health, Cheshire West and Chester Council

About us

Healthwatch Cheshire West 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 Purpose:

To be an independent voice with the people of Cheshire, helping to shape and improve local health and care services.

Our Principles:

- Work in partnership to act as a strong, local consumer voice, making a difference to health and care provision for the people of Cheshire
- Gather the views of the people of Cheshire
- Provide a platform from which diverse and seldom heard voices from across Cheshire can be heard
- Set the standard for excellent public engagement
- Ensure that all people have timely and good quality information and advice
- Establish and use networks and public engagement to gather meaningful and robust local insight and intelligence
- Provide constructive checks, balances and challenge to service planners and providers
- Provide Independent Complaints Advocacy Service (ICAS) using feedback for insight and intelligence regarding patient choices and concerns.

Healthwatch Cheshire West's year in review

Reaching out:

3,379 people

engaged with us for advice; information about topics; to share their experiences and to assist their decision making.

808 people

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

Making a difference to care:

We published

19 reports

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

Our reports that received most attention included:

Countess of Chester Hospital A&E Watch, Leighton Hospital A&E Watch and our range of Enter and View reports.

Health and care that works for you:

We're fortunate to have

111

outstanding volunteers who gave up **455 hours** to make care better for our community.

We're funded by our local authority, Cheshire West and Chester . In 2023 - 24 we received

£151, 126

which is the same as the previous year.

We currently employ

a small team of staff

who help us carry out our work.

How we've made a difference this year

We've helped improve access to care for cancer patients at their local GP practice, after sharing their views with decision makers.

We've shared the experiences of care home residents and their friends and family with leaders to help improve services in the future.

Our local feedback has influenced the development of the Cheshire and Merseyside Dental Recovery Plan, aiming to give better access to dental services.

The wealth of information people shared about access to GP services has informed the Primary Care Access Recovery Plan.

The Countess of Chester Hospital embarked on an improvement plan based on the experiences shared by people during our A&E Watch.

Patients' experience of Accident and Emergency at Leighton Hospital has improved following our A&E Watch.

Changes to the Ambulatory Wound Care service were made in line with recommendations made in our report last year, resulting in improved patient experience.

We gave a voice to those impacted by drugs and alcohol misuse; their insights are to be shared with the Combatting Drugs Partnership to help shape their future strategies.

Your voice heard at a wider level

We collaborate with other Healthwatch to ensure the experiences of people in Cheshire West and Chester influence decisions made about services at Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care System (ICS) level.

During the last 12 months, the nine Cheshire & Merseyside (C&M) local Healthwatch have continued to work together to provide a strong voice for the 2.5 million people who live, work and use health and care services across our region. We have collaborated on a wide range of issues, enabling the Cheshire & Merseyside Integrated Care System (ICS) to hear what matters to local people across our footprint enabling them to make informed decisions about the provision of health and care services. Weekly meetings are held between Healthwatch leads to ensure we provide a collective voice when collaborating with ICB leaders based on the information people tell us locally.

We have consistently highlighted the dental shortage locally and were delighted to see the agreement of a Cheshire and Merseyside Dental Recovery Plan to start addressing some of the challenges facing people in accessing appropriate dental services. Healthwatch are part of the Dental Recovery Board which means we can continue to influence improvements to people's experience of dental services in the future.

The nine local Healthwatch have heard about the challenges people currently face in accessing GP services. We outlined the improvements people would expect to see in the Primary Care Recovery Plan, based on feedback received collectively. The plan was agreed by Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board (ICB) and we will investigate to find out if the plan is making a difference to patient's experience in the year ahead.

Many people have been experiencing long distressing stays in corridors of A&E departments. Healthwatch have been sharing feedback on how this impacts patients and helped produce a 'Patient Experience Assessment Tool' for Accident and Emergency Corridor Care. While the top priority has to be ensuring patients don't need to receive their care on corridor trolleys, the checklist aims to maintain safety and dignity as much as possible while corridor care remains a sad reality.

"We are fortunate to have a really strong Healthwatch network in Cheshire and Merseyside. In 2023-24, our nine local Healthwatch organisations continued to play an influential role in the work of both NHS Cheshire and Merseyside and our wider Health and Care Partnership – as an equal partner and constructive critical friend.

I, personally, really value the vital contribution that each Healthwatch organisation - and the wider Healthwatch network - continues to make to our Integrated Care Board, our nine Place Partnerships, and many important programmes of work.

Most important of all, remains the unique value that the Healthwatch network brings in connecting system partners to people's views and experiences of the health and care services that we provide - in doing so helping us to identify and implement improvements."

NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Chief Executive, Graham Urwin

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 feed this back to services and help them improve.

Improving patient experience of emergency care

In September we carried out an A&E Watch and two Enter and View visits at the Countess of Chester Hospital, observing activity whilst gathering the views of patients on their experience of the Accident and Emergency Department. 125 people shared their views over three days, providing an insight into what's going well and what improvements could be made.

The reports that followed were welcomed by senior leaders and governors, and our recommendations developed into an action plan by the divisional and departmental leads. We were delighted to see the actions taken forward, which are having a positive impact on the experience of people who access the service.

What did you tell us about your experience of A&E?

- Almost three quarters of respondents (71%) thought the service they received in A&E was good or excellent
- Positive themes included the service they received from the staff and the speed of being seen by triage
- Negative themes included long wait times, general facilities and staff communication
- Almost three quarters (74%) of those waiting at A&E had not been kept regularly up to date on waiting times and just over half (52%) had not been kept up to date with their treatment and care.

Healthwatch also observed people smoking directly under no smoking signs outside the entrance, and empty vending machines, drinks machines and water jugs in some locations.

What difference did our visit make?

Thanks to the action plan the Countess of Chester Hospital have committed to:

- People in the waiting area being updated every hour by the reception team, so they understand how long their wait may be
- Visitors experiencing a cleaner environment as cleaning schedules are increased
- People being able to access refreshments when they need them, with vending machines being checked and replenished daily
- People arriving to a smoke and cigarette free environment, with additional checks and cleaning taking place.

> ***The Countess of Chester Hospital would like to thank Healthwatch for the Enter and View and A&E Watch visits conducted in our Emergency Department between 7 and 11 September 2023. Our priority is the continual improvement of our services and the experience of our patients and carers when accessing services. We have made changes based on your recommendations to improve patient experience in the future and would like to thank you for sharing this insight."***

Leighton Hospital taking action following patient feedback

Our visits to Leighton Hospital in November 2023, gave us time to observe the busy Accident and Emergency department and the Same Day Emergency Care Unit (SDEC), speaking to patients about their experience in real time. As a result of the visit, an A&E Watch report and two Enter and View reports were published and recommendations for improvements made.

The leaders of Leighton Hospital welcomed the reports that followed our visits and were quick to take action to improve the patient experience. Some of our recommendations complemented and reinforced work already planned to take place, with additional recommendations taken on board and actioned quickly.

What actions have been taken?

Since our reports were published, Mid Cheshire Trust have created an action plan and committed to:

- The Same Day Emergency Care (SDEC) unit opening seven days per week, helping to alleviate the weekend rush in the Accident and Emergency Department
- Further collaboration with East Cheshire Trust (Macclesfield Hospital), sharing best practice to help meet the needs of local residents
- Displaying GP and local Pharmacy opening hours in the reception area, to encourage people to seek alternative advice for non urgent treatment
- Confidential conversations taking place in appropriate rooms rather than at the reception area to ensure greater privacy and dignity.

Once again, we would like to extend our thanks to the team for the time they spent with us, our staff and our patients. We value Healthwatch's understanding of the busy and challenging nature of our emergency department and appreciate their respect for the role of our staff and our patient's dignity. The delivery of urgent and emergency care at Leighton Hospital, like other departments up and down the country is under immense pressure, and these challenges are reflected in some of the experiences that the Healthwatch representatives encountered, particularly with regards waiting times and the high volumes of people needing our care. We are proud of the work we do, but, in our ambitions to be a listening organisation it is essential that we use the feedback we hear to act and make positive changes for our staff and the communities we serve. This report, along with other insight and intelligence we receive about our services will be used to make changes and improve our care.

Actions that will be taken following this report will be aligned to the commitments we have made in our Quality Strategy in order to challenge us all to collectively focus on improving outcomes and experiences.

Through our long-standing record of effective system working with Healthwatch I am confident throughout the year we will be able to reflect how we're continuously improving in response to this feedback.

With our thanks to the Healthwatch team
Ian Moston
Chief Executive Officer
Mid Cheshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Meeting local residents wound care needs

In July 2022 Healthwatch Cheshire undertook an independent review of Central Cheshire Integrated Care Partnership's (CCICP) six Ambulatory Wound Care clinics. The service had recently transferred to CCICP and they were keen to gain independent feedback from patients and staff to ensure they were meeting the needs of local residents.

In November 2023 we revisited the two Cheshire West and Chester clinics based in Northwich and Winsford, to check on progress made and revisit the experience of patients and staff one year on.

What did we find?

This community service is valued, bringing care closer to home in locations easier to get to than hospital settings. Patients continued to rate their experience of the service overall as good or very good with staff particularly highly praised. The majority of patients told us that the clinics were all very clean and the vast majority of staff were seen washing their hands before treatments. Patients told us that staff members clearly introduced themselves and they received good and appropriate advice and information to support them with their wound care.

What difference did this make?

CCICP Service Managers valued our reports and were able to make improvements to the service based on our feedback. This was evident in this year's results.

- All patients said they felt involved in their care (an increase of 11% from last year)
- 94% of patients said they are able to make appointments that are convenient to them (an increase of 15% from last year)
- All staff members said they work well as a team (an increase of 11% from last year)
- All staff are now aware how to request an interpreter if required and feel they have sufficient time to provide quality care within the clinic environment (both up 43% compared to last year)
- All staff have the equipment and dressings they need to provide evidence based wound care (last year 85% answered 'somewhat'; this year all felt equipped)

> ***Many thanks to Healthwatch for repeating this exercise and a thorough report. The report demonstrated positive developments since the service transferred and since the previous survey. The opportunities identified within the report to further improve, such as around our estates, will be picked up and taken forwards."***
> Pip Morrant Director of Community Services, Central Cheshire Integrated Community Partnership

> ***"Yes I could not fault anything with my visits and I have been coming a number of weeks for a few months. Everything is excellent, keep up the good work you are doing."***
>
> Feedback from patient attending the Ambulatory Wound Care clinics

Three ways we have made a difference in the community

Throughout our work we gather information about health inequalities by speaking to people whose experiences aren't often heard.

Improving the journey for cancer patients

Hearing personal experiences and ideas for improvement directly from those who are affected can help improve the way services operate day to day.

Healthwatch Cheshire West contacted a number of cancer patients from Upton Village and Park Medical Surgeries in Chester to find out how their journey went leading up to diagnosis and beyond. Our findings raised awareness of some of the difficulties cancer patients encounter and the need for timely access to appointments. As a result, flags have been added to patient notes, to inform the operation team and help them access urgent same day appointments when they need them.

Helping services to involve the public

Services need to understand the benefits of involving local people to help improve care for everyone.

Healthwatch Cheshire West have been gathering the views of residents on the impacts of drugs and alcohol misuse. The feedback shared by our Citizen's Focus Panel during phase one of the project, gave us the insight we needed to move to phase two, enabling us to design a wider scale survey and target our engagement activity, tailoring our questions to gather meaningful responses.

The experiences and ideas we hear will be shared with Cheshire West and Chester's Combatting Drugs Partnership who have committed to creating an action plan based on our findings and recommendations.

Improving care over time

Change takes time. We often work behind the scenes with services to raise issues and bring about change.

Through the feedback we receive and our involvement on a range of forums, we know that discharge from hospital continues to be a challenge. Over this year we have been involved in discussions about both reablement services, and discharge to assess. This has led to planned work and reports for 2024 -2025 based on people's experiences.

Additionally, we know that good access to diagnostic tests at locations people can get to is vital for improved health and wellbeing outcomes. This year has seen us provide challenge to delivery partners to ensure they are basing planning design and decisions around people's lived experiences, rather than making assumptions. The impact of this is that we are now working alongside the C&M diagnostic team to gain a stronger understanding of the impact of some aspects of diagnostic services in the first instance.

Hearing from all communities

Over the past year, we have worked hard to make sure we hear from everyone within our local area. We consider it important to reach out to the communities we hear from less frequently to gather their feedback and make sure their voice is heard, and services meet their needs.

This year we have reached different communities by:

- Developing our Enter and View programme to ensure we hear more from care home residents about their experiences of health and care
- Connecting with asylum seekers, refugees and the homeless to hear about their access to services and offer signposting support
- Listening to those with learning disabilities and their parents and carers, in a number of ways, including regular attendance at the Learning Disabilities Partnership Board, Parent Carers Forum and Carers Trust, as well as during day to day engagement.

Enriching lives through community connections

This year we've continued to play an active role in all Care Communities and Community Partnerships across Cheshire. Our relationships with statutory services and support groups at a local level, have helped us to connect people from all communities with services that can enrich their lives.

We have been able to go the extra mile, not only signposting to services, but contacting the service to help make that first move less daunting. Knowing the right people to approach to help make things happen, can offer people a new path without them having to start it alone.

We actively engage in a variety of settings to ensure we hear from as many people as possible within each Community Partnership across Cheshire West. An engagement visit to a local library sparked a conversation with a woman who had been widowed, was feeling lonely and didn't know where to turn. Being part of the Community Partnership, meant we were able to contact a local support group who could help. The woman was reluctant to go alone, but thanks to our relationships we were able, not only to share information about the group, but to arrange for someone to meet her there.

A year on and she's progressed from being a regular visitor to a key volunteer, giving her a new lease of life and a network of friends.

Helping to improve the health of asylum seekers and refugees

After visiting asylum seekers and refugees at the Crossroads Community Hub in Chester, we helped to reconnect the Hub with Chester FC Community Trust and restart football sessions, helping to improve the mental and physical wellbeing of this seldom heard from community .

Chester FC Community Trust had previously run football sessions for the asylum seeker and refugee community at their grounds in Chester. This had been stopped due to low attendance, but with new groups arriving in the area, Healthwatch suggested they revisit the idea, to help improve their mental and physical wellbeing whilst connecting them with other members of their community.

We contacted the Community Development Officer at Chester FC Community Trust who welcomed the suggestion and set the wheels in motion to start the sessions again. They visit the Hub regularly and are investigating the possibility of future additional outreach activity local to the Hub, for those who find travel to Chester restrictive.

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, making a complaint or helping to choose a good care home for a loved one – you can count on us to point you in the right direction.

This year we've helped people by:

- Providing up-to-date information people can trust
- Helping people access the services they need
- Helping people access NHS dentistry
- Supporting people to look after their health during the cost-of-living crisis

Dental treatment for those in need

With access to dentists being a continued issue in the area, Healthwatch have been able to help people get the appointments they need, when they need them.

Healthwatch Cheshire West, alongside our Healthwatch colleagues across Cheshire and Merseyside, are fully integrated into the oversight of service commissioning. This invaluable input gives us insight into dental patients' perspectives and experiences and supports decision making. In addition, Healthwatch are regularly in contact with the Dental team to ensure individual vulnerable patients with identified clinical needs can access NHS dental care.

Thanks to our knowledge and links to the Integrative Care Board's Dental Team, we've been able to signpost many people to dental practices which have been taking on new patients, some which had been searching for over 12 months to find one available. In addition we've be able to link with Cheshire and Merseyside ICB Patient Experience Team, helping those with more complex dental needs to get the immediate treatment they need.

The daughter of a man called us for help to find a dentist, as her dad's dentures had broken and he was unable to eat. He'd received a quote of £4,000 from a private dentist which was completely unaffordable. Travelling was difficult for him so an emergency dentist miles away would not have worked for him. Thanks to our connections with the Dental Team at the ICB, they were able to find a dentist closer to home who could help him. Both father and daughter were "over the moon"!

Signposting to supporting services

Signposting is one of the many ways Healthwatch Cheshire helps people to get the care they need. There are many health and care services across Cheshire West and Chester, but finding the correct can be difficult.

Our signposting activities take place via email, over the telephone and face to face whilst engaging with our communities. Here are just a few examples of the people we've helped and the impact our interactions have had on their health and wellbeing.

During a visit to the West Cheshire Autism Hub, a man spoke to us as he was finding it increasingly difficult to complete tasks and was becoming distressed. We were able to signpost him to Small Good Stuff (a directory of local carers and support in Cheshire West and Chester) where he found someone who could help. His new carer now comes once a week and helps him with a number of tasks, relieving his stress and anxiety.

A woman telephoned us to ask how she could access a particular type of Covid vaccination for her disabled son, as other types had caused him to have fits. We suggested she ask her GP to refer her son to Warrington Hospital who can provide different vaccinations and can cater for reasonable adjustments. A week later she called back to say that Warrington Hospital had been wonderful - a nurse had met them in the car park and stayed with them throughout to ensure the son's treatment went well.

A disabled, homeless man contacted us to ask for help as he had been housed in a hotel room with an inaccessible bathroom and no means to cook for himself. The understanding was that he would eat at a café at a local church; but this was not always open. He was also concerned that he would find it difficult to keep away from the drug taking residents there. We raised a safeguarding concern with Cheshire West and Chester Council who confirmed that he was being supported but had not accepted a recent offer of a home as it was too far away from family. We then put him in touch with an Advocate from Disability Positive who assisted him to find his veteran ID number which would help with his housing application.

NHS Independent Complaints Advocacy Service

This year we've helped people by:

- Giving in-depth practical support to help them access the NHS Complaints Procedure
- Providing information to help them find out what stage their complaint is at within the process
- Signposting to other organisations who can help

NHS Independent Complaints Advocacy Service (ICAS)

ICAS offers telephone, online, and face-to-face support to help the people of Cheshire to progress complaints in relation to any NHS service provision provided at hospitals, GP Practices, dentists, pharmacies, opticians and nursing homes.

This year 100 people contacted our ICAS service with concerns over their NHS care or treatment:

10% of all contacts related to dentistry. Two-thirds were looking for help to find an NHS dentist after finding themselves without an NHS dentist primarily due to the dentist going private. The remaining third was regarding the poor quality of treatment they had had and long waiting times for treatment.

25% of contacts were regarding GP surgeries. Themes included not being listened to or taken seriously, misdiagnosis, poor communication, incorrect prescribing of medication, the difficulty getting an appointment to see a GP, and being refused services such as travel vaccines and referrals for scans and hair loss treatment.

Hospital complaints made up 45% of contacts. Staff not listening, lack of communication with the patient or family, lack of experience or understanding of the conditions the patient had, poor care and misdiagnosis being the reasons why people felt the need to raise a complaint.

Concerns over mental health services made up 10% of our contacts. Incorrect diagnosis, inaccurate records, lack of treatment or care available for children moving to adult services and the closure of the waiting list for ADHD referrals were among the reasons why people were contacting the service for support to raise a complaint.

Issues with Pharmacies made up 2% of the contacts. The reasons for contact were concerns over prescription errors and a decline in the quality of service.

Hospital transport made up 2% of the contacts. This was split between non-emergency hospital transport (transport not being available) and emergency transport, due to concerns over the abrupt and unhelpful attitude of staff.

"Things have now moved forward, thanks for your help. Just speaking to someone who seemed to understand my frustrations made me feel that I was not being awkward and to keep going with my complaint."
Cheshire West and Chester resident

"Thanks so much for the letter, it is perfect. Your help and support with doing this has been pivotal and greatly appreciated. I would have had to let this complaint go if it were not for your help."
Cheshire West and Chester resident

Looking for support with a complaint?

If you need help through the complaints process, or would like to explore your options, you can find out more about ICAS on our website:

www.healthwatchcwac.org.uk/what-we-do/help-making-a-complaint

Volunteering

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

This year our volunteers:

- Visited communities to promote their local Healthwatch and what we have to offer
- Collected experiences and supported their communities to share their views
- Carried out Enter and View visits to local services to help them improve
- Reviewed a range of health and care documentation to ensure people could understand its content
- Assisted with the national scheme Patient Led Assessments of the Care Environment at local Acute Trusts.

The best part of volunteering with Healthwatch Cheshire West is when I interact with people. I get to meet new people, tell them about Healthwatch and make them feel comfortable so they can share whatever experience they have with me. I get peace of mind when I come out to volunteer, that I'm helping people to have their voices heard.

People often applaud us for the job we are doing which makes me so happy - that the work we do is being recognised. I make sure they know that their feedback will make a difference to health and care services across Cheshire West.

Marylyn Igolimah
Healthwatch Cheshire West Volunteer

I had a career in Health and Social Care and became passionate about older peoples service provision in residential and nursing care. As a volunteer with Healthwatch, completing Enter and View visits enables me to ensure good practice is demonstrated and to hear the thoughts of service users and family members.

I have been proud to be a volunteer with the Healthwatch Team, to oversee good practice and recommend improvement in the provision of services for older people . Healthwatch makes a huge difference to individuals, services and in the local community and provides an opportunity to capture the views of people who need their support .

Rhiannon Wilson
Healthwatch Cheshire West Volunteer

Do you feel inspired?

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

www.healthwatchcwac.org.uk
0300 323 0006
info@healthwatchcheshire.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.

Our income

Income		Expenditure	
Funding received from LA to deliver Healthwatch Statutory activities. This figure includes funding for Independent Complaints Advocacy Service	£151,127	Operational Costs	£12,273
Additional income	£20,000	Staffing Costs	£139,892
		Office Costs	£10,854
	£171,127	**Total expenditure**	**£163,019**

Next steps

Over the next year, we will keep reaching out to our local communities to ensure people's voices and experiences inform the design and delivery of health, care and wellbeing services in their areas.

We will also work together with partners and our local Integrated Care System to help develop a culture where, at every level, staff continuously strive to listen and learn from people and patients to make care better.

Our top priorities for the next year are:

1. Primary Care access – including GP, dental and pharmacy.
2. Community Partnerships and Care Communities – ensuring plans include wide range community voices in design and delivery.
3. Quality of discharge from hospital settings, and use of support to ensure care closer to home.
4. Board development.

"Over the last year, local Healthwatch have shown what happens when people speak up about their care, and services listen. They are helping the NHS unlock the power of people's views and experiences, especially those facing the most serious health inequalities."

Louise Ansari, Chief Executive at Healthwatch England

Statutory statements

Healthwatch Cheshire CIC, Sension House, Denton Drive, Northwich, CW9 7LU

Healthwatch Cheshire West 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 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. Throughout 2023/2024 the Board met four times and made decisions on matters such as governance and maintaining the independence of Healthwatch Cheshire West.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities.

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 have the opportunity to provide us with insight about their experience of using services. During 2023/2024 we have been available by phone, email, provided a webform on our website and through social media, as well as attending meetings of community groups and forums and general public face to face engagements.

We ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. It is shared with health and care services and commissioners, voluntary and community organisations, and is also available for people in Cheshire to read on our website.

Responses to 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

In Cheshire West and Chester we take information directly to providers and to decision makers, including via the Health and Care Partnership and Health and Wellbeing Board. We also give evidence to Scrutiny Committees.

Insight and experiences are also taken to decision makers in the Cheshire and Mersey Integrated Care System. The nine Cheshire & Merseyside Healthwatch Organisations are represented on the Integrated Care Board (ICB), the Primary Care Commissioning Committee, the Quality and Performance Committee, the Transformation Committee, the Women's Services Committee, subcommittees and Task and Finish groups and the Health Care Partnership to ensure public voice is represented and heard.

Individually we are each active partners of ICB groups at our own 'Place' level (Cheshire West in our case).

The nine local Healthwatch organisations have a trusted and effective relationship of over ten years. Our processes for joint work, designed to fit local needs, allow us to work proactively and responsively to ensure local people's lived experience influences decision making. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been written, and endorsed, by all nine Healthwatch organisations to underpin our joint work and promote openness, honesty and flexibility.

Enter and View

This year we've enhanced our Enter and View Programme, incorporating the views and experiences of the people accessing the services we visit. As well as giving a broader perspective, it has enabled us to give more specific recommendations in our reports to help improve the services they offer.

This year we conducted **fourteen** Enter and View visits across Cheshire West and Chester. We made **eight** Enter and View visits to care homes, gathering the views and experiences of 67 residents and their friends and family. These included Davenham Hall in Northwich, Whitby House in Ellesmere Port and Orchard Manor in Upton, Chester.

In addition we visited **two** Ambulatory Wound Care clinics in Northwich and Winsford, investigating how the service has developed following our visit last year.

Our local hospitals remain a focus for us, with **four** Enter and View visits made to the Countess of Chester and Leighton Hospital and their Same Day Emergency Care (SDEC) units.

Our subsequent reports and recommendations were welcomed and have been a catalyst for future changes and improvements.

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Cheshire West is represented on the Health and Wellbeing Board by Louise Barry, Healthwatch Cheshire CEO. During 2023/2024 our representative has effectively carried out this role by using the insight and intelligence gathered by Healthwatch staff and volunteers, and submitted by the public, to help shape and inform discussions and decisions. Of particular interest in this year have been reports on our A&E Watch, Wound Care Service and care home Enter and View visits.

Healthwatch Cheshire West is represented on the Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Partnerships by Healthwatch Cheshire CEO and Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Boards by Cheshire and Merseyside Healthwatch CEO representatives.

healthwatch

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