

Healthwatch at the South West Charity Conference 2023



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Introduction

Healthwatch Bath & North East Somerset joined this year's South West Charity Conference and Expo to share the work of Healthwatch with delegates from business and the Third sector.

Sue Poole, Development Officer for Healthwatch Bath & North East Somerset and Ann Marie Scott, Volunteer Support Officer were joined for part of the day by Dr Aanchal Rana, a student from the University of Bath, who is undertaking research with Healthwatch into the experiences of refugees in accessing healthcare.

The initial conversations that led to Aanchal joining Healthwatch took place between Ann Marie and delegates from the University at last year's conference, which shows the real benefits that can come from this type of event.



The Healthwatch stall showcased some of the work completed over the past year including examples of research reports completed by volunteers and 'lived experience' reports – My Voice Matters.

In addition to sharing the work of Healthwatch through our stall and in conversations with other delegates, we had in-depth conversations on a range of topics including the work of children's hospice services, the need for more awareness and action around Sickle Cell disease and the growing need for services for people who have experienced trauma.

As well as being able to catch up with existing contacts across the Third sector the conference provided opportunities to make new health and care connections.

New connections

Focus: Children's hospice services in the South West

We made new connections including with the Children's Hospice South West and the Jessie May Hospice at Home.

We are meeting with the Jessie May Children's Hospice at Home and hope to visit Charlton Farm Children's Hospice in Somerset, part of Children's Hospice South West, to explore how we might help provide opportunities for children and their families to provide feedback.



Children's Hospice South West

Children's Hospice South West provide hospice care for children and young people living with life-limiting conditions and support for their whole family. This includes hospice breaks, emergency care, palliative care and end of life care at three children's hospices including Charlton Farm in Somerset, as well as in Devon and Cornwall.

We hope to follow up our connection with Children's Hospice South West by visiting Charlton Farm Children's Hospice in Somerset to explore how we might help provide opportunities for children and their families to provide feedback.

[Childrens Hospice South West | Making the most of short and precious lives across the South West \(chsw.org.uk\)](https://www.chsw.org.uk)

Jessie May Hospice at Home

Jessie May provides specialist nursing care for terminally ill children in their own homes in Bristol, Bath & NES, South Gloucestershire, North Somerset and more recently in Swindon and Wiltshire.

They also take children out into the community, support them in hospital if admitted and provide respite care and support for families as well as end of life care and bereavement support.

Following the conference we have arranged to meet with Jessie May Children's Hospice at Home to discuss opportunities for supporting their work.

[About Us | Jessie May](#)

Focus: Sickle Cell Anaemia & Thalassaemia

OSCAR – Organisation for Sickle Cell Anaemia Research

Another new connection was with OSCAR, who provide support for people with Sickle Cell and Thalassaemia in Bristol and the South West with the aim of improving the quality of health and wellbeing for individuals and families living with these conditions.

Sickle cell disease is a group of inherited health conditions that affect the red blood cells. The most serious type is Sickle Cell Anaemia, and this can lead to bouts of severe pain called Sickle Cell Crisis which can be life threatening, as well as other health impacts.

Sickle cell disease is particularly common in people with an African or Caribbean family background. People may be healthy carriers of Sickle Cell Trait which means the conditions can be passed on to children of healthy parents. Approximately 1 in 79 babies born in the UK carry the Sickle Cell Trait. Screening is now routinely carried out during pregnancy and at birth.

Thalassaemia is a group of inherited blood conditions that affect the way oxygen is carried around the body, and can make people very anaemic. It mainly affects people from a Mediterranean, South Asian and Middle Eastern origin, and similarly people can be healthy carriers of the trait.

As a result of meeting with OSCAR we have increased our awareness and understanding of this condition and were able to promote Sickle Cell Awareness Day on 17 June. We are exploring a possible event later in the year to focus on Sickle Cell and Thalassaemia with BEMSCA (Bath Ethnic Minority Senior Citizens Association)

[Oscar Bristol - Home](#)

[Sickle cell disease - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

[Thalassaemia - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)



Focus: Connections supporting refugee research

Dr Aanchal Rana has been working with Healthwatch through June and July to carry out research into refugees' experiences of accessing healthcare for her Masters in Global Public Health Policy at the University of Bath.

Aanchal had the opportunity to meet with a number of local charities including Bath Mind and Julian House which have provided support for refugees in Bath & NES, and to build her understanding of voluntary sector provision across the area.

“It was interesting to have the opportunity to meet with some of the local charities and organisations which have provided support to refugees arriving in Bath and also to find out about the range of services provided by the voluntary sector in the area”

Dr Aanchal Rana

Extending existing connections

Healthwatch Bath & NES followed up existing contacts including with the Genesis Trust, Julian House, Youth Connect South West, Breakthrough, Clean Slate, Bath Mind and 3SG, and is looking to increase its engagement opportunities with these organisations over the coming months.



Making a difference

We were really pleased to hear that Youth Connect South West had been able to use their 'Young Inspectors' report into local mental health services for young people, completed in 2021 and funded through Healthwatch community pot, to access 3 year funding for a new service.

“Youth Connect South West's 'Young Inspectors' report into mental health services for young people, funded by Healthwatch community pot funding, identified the need for additional well-being support and has helped YCSW to access three year funding for a new service”

Cheryl Sharp, Programme Manager

It is always encouraging to hear that peoples' voices and experiences can and do make a difference and help to bring about positive change.

To see the Young Inspectors and other reports visit Healthwatch Bath &NES website:

[An investigation into the accessibility of Mental Health & wellbeing services for Young People in B&NES | Healthwatch Bathnes](#)



All in all we had a very useful and rewarding day at the South West Charity conference & expo 2023

Next steps

- Healthwatch will follow up new its connections with Jessie May, Children's Hospice South West and OSCAR to explore how we can help gather feedback and promote their work

- Healthwatch will follow up existing contacts and expand engagement opportunities to ensure more people's voices are heard especially those who face the most barriers in accessing the support and care they need



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