



Annual Report 2024–2025

Unlocking the power of people-driven care

Healthwatch Bath and
North East Somerset

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"The impact that local Healthwatch have is vitally important. Healthwatch are empowering their communities to share their experiences. They're changing the health and care landscape and making sure that people's views are central to making care better and tackling health inequalities."

Louise Ansari, Chief Executive, Healthwatch England

A message from our CEO

It is with great pride that I present this year's Annual Report for Healthwatch Bath and North East Somerset—our first full year under a renewed contract. 2024–2025 has been a year of listening, learning, and leading change. We've worked hard to ensure that community voices—especially those often unheard—are shaping local health and care.

From digital access and eating disorders to compassionate communication and speech therapy, our work has driven meaningful impact. A highlight was our visit to Sulis Ward, where patient feedback led to positive changes in staffing and volunteer support.

Our achievements are thanks to our dedicated staff and incredible volunteers, who contributed 945 hours—equating to £15,987.85 in social value. We also welcomed student placements, adding 395 hours and £6,687.35 in value.

Looking ahead, we're excited to implement new systems for managing data and insights, helping us better understand and act on what matters most to local people.

Kevin Peltonen-Messenger
Chief Executive Officer, The Care Forum



"From digital access and eating disorders to compassionate communication and speech therapy, our work has driven meaningful impact."

Kevin Peltonen-Messenger, CEO, Bath and North East Somerset

About us

Healthwatch Bath and North East Somerset is your local health and social care champion.

We ensure that NHS leaders and decision-makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care. We can also help you find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.



Our vision

To bring closer the day when everyone gets the care they need.



Our mission

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



Our values are:

Equity: We're compassionate and inclusive. We build strong connections and empower the communities we serve.

Collaboration: We build internal and external relationships. We communicate clearly and work with partners to amplify our influence.

Impact: We're ambitious about creating change for people and communities. We're accountable to those we serve and hold others to account.

Independence: Our agenda is driven by the public. We're a purposeful, critical friend to decision-makers.

Truth: We work with integrity and honesty, and we speak truth to power.

Our year in numbers

We've supported more than 7,257 people to have their say and get information about their care. We currently employ 3 staff and, our work is supported by 22 volunteers.

Reaching out:



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

6909 people came to us for clear advice and information on topics such as cancer support, prescription costs and the NHS dental recovery plan.

Championing your voice:



We published 8 reports about the improvements people would like to see in areas like e-cigarette use, eating disorders and people's experiences of digital healthcare.

Our most popular report was '[The importance of compassionate communication in care](#)', highlighting what happens when difficult and negative experiences of care and treatment are compounded by communications lacking in compassion.

Statutory funding:



We're funded by B&NES Council. In 2024/25 we received £133,056.00

A year of making a difference

Over the year we've been out and about in the community listening to your stories, engaging with partners and working to improve care in B&NES Here are a few highlights.

Spring

We met with the Alzheimer's Society to discuss engagement with their Dementia Voice group on issues of accessibility in GP surgeries.



We met with the manager of Swallow, a leading provider of learning disability support to progress ideas for joint working and engagement around priority concerns.



Summer

We gave a presentation on Core20Plus5 to the Children and Young Peoples network to support wider understanding of the NHS's approach to tackling health inequalities.



In partnership with other Healthwatch, we undertook a project looking at eating disorders and what support was available locally to young people.



Autumn

We presented the report on the experience of refugees' access to healthcare to the B&NES Health and Wellbeing Board.



We promoted the wide range of wellbeing courses being offered in B&NES. These help people be more active, build confidence, learn new skills, and manage overall wellbeing.



Winter

We visited a local hospital ward to talk to people staying there about how it was for them.



We talked to people about digital access to healthcare and what they thought about using it.



Working together for change

We've worked with neighbouring Healthwatch to ensure people's experiences of care in B&NES are heard at the Integrated Care System (ICS) level, and they influence decisions made about services across B&NES, Swindon and Wiltshire.

This year, we've worked with Healthwatch across these areas to achieve the following:

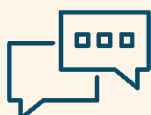
A collaborative network of local Healthwatch:



Healthwatch across B&NES, Swindon and Wiltshire work collaboratively to highlight issues affecting populations across the ICS area. This year, several collaborative projects have been carried out, including:

- Eating disorders
- Vaping in adolescents
- Digital access to healthcare

The big conversation:



Increased engagement with carers, and the services supporting them has hugely increased our understanding of their needs and the importance of amplifying their voices. This had led to us carrying out a major piece of work looking at the experiences of looking after loved ones, which aims to be published later in 2025.

Building strong relationships to achieve more:



In March 2024, Healthwatch services in B&NES, Swindon and Wiltshire started discussions with the ICB to plan how to better understand two priority areas for the health system. Plans were developed to increase the public's awareness of hypertension, as well as how we can gain better understanding for the reasons people attend Accident and Emergency departments.

We've also summarised some of our other outcomes achieved this year in the Statutory Statements section at the end of this report.

Making a difference in the community

We bring people's experiences to healthcare professionals and decision-makers, using their feedback to shape services and improve care over time.

Here are some examples of our work in Bath and North East Somerset this year:

Creating empathy by bringing experiences to life



Hearing personal experiences and their impact on people's lives helps services better understand the issues people face.

In August 2024, we published our 'My Voice Matters' report on the collaborative working we undertook with the Parent Carer Forum. This work focused on speech & language therapy for children and young people and allowed 12 parent carers to share their views on what worked well and what could be done better.

Getting services to involve the public



We worked with NIHR over the Spring and Summer to jointly deliver engagement sessions with families from more deprived areas of B&NES.

This included at the National Playday and after school clubs. We supported their hearing from members of the community who are less well represented in health research.

Improving care over time



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

In B&NES we have been developing our relationship with the Twerton and Whiteway Network to ensure the views and experiences of people living in those areas are more frequently heard and included in the work we do.

Listening to your experiences

Services can't improve if they don't know what's wrong. Your experiences shine a light on issues that may otherwise go unnoticed.

This year, we've listened to feedback from all areas of our community. People's experiences of care help us know what's working and what isn't, so we can give feedback on services and help them improve.



Listening to your experiences

Visiting St Martin's Hospital to speak to patients

We visited the Sulis ward at St Martin's Hospital in Bath on 19th February 2025.

The ward is for the rehabilitation of patients, including those recovering from stroke, and coming out of acute wards at The Royal United Hospital in Bath, prior to going back home or into a care home

What did we do?

During visits we collected evidence of what works well and what could be improved to make people's experiences better. We talked to people within the ward, including patients, residents, carers, staff and relatives, as well as observing the quality of service

Key things we heard:

It was a busy ward with staff observed to relate well to patients and to work well together

Patients felt there were not enough nurses and healthcare staff and that more frequent access to physiotherapy would be welcomed

There appeared to be limited options for activities and ways to pass the time during our visit



"I think the ward is understaffed for how busy it is"

What difference did this make?

After the visit, the ward reviewed staffing levels and escalated the issue to hospital management. Additional volunteers were also recruited to support patients whilst on the ward.

Listening to your experiences

Speech & Language Therapy

12 parent carers shared their experiences and views in relation to their children and young people with SEND

We worked with the Parent Carer Forum (PCF) to present feedback shared by their members in May 2024 about the provision of speech and language therapy

Key things we heard:

Long waiting lists are a real concern – in development terms children are at risk of falling behind, which impacts socially as well as in terms of Education.

Thresholds are felt to be high so that once some improvements have been achieved a child may fall out of the service.



“Although the staff are great, we had a different person for every appointment so my son wouldn’t engage which made the appointments fairly ineffective”

What difference did this make?

Together with the Parent Carer Forum, who co-authored the report, we have been invited to meet with the Professional Lead for Children’s Speech and Language Therapy at Bath and North East Somerset Community Health and Care Services, and the Head of Specialist Services at HCRG Care Group. The purpose of the meeting, scheduled for early July, is to review the report and its findings.

Hearing from all communities

We're here for all residents of B&NES. That's why, over the past year, we've worked hard to reach out to those communities whose voices may go unheard.

Every member of the community should have the chance to share their story and play a part in shaping services to meet their needs.

This year, we have reached different communities by:

- We connect with parents of children with additional needs at SEND Local Offer events across B&NES.
- We regularly engage at local food pantries and community events like the Twerton and Whiteway Network Big Breakfasts to reach people facing socio-economic challenges.
- As part of the LGBTQ+ network to ensure issues for this community are reflected in our work.



Hearing from all communities

Improving engagement with marginalised communities

We set up a new Local Advisory Group to improve our connection with the communities experiencing the greatest health inequalities.

The group will support Healthwatch to set priorities and plan projects that will amplify the voices of seldom heard and marginalised groups, ensuring our work includes those whose need is greatest.

What difference did this make?

The launch of Local Advisory Groups has sharpened our focus on tackling health inequalities. Going forward, we'll prioritise projects and engagement that elevate the voices of marginalised and seldom-heard communities, ensuring their experiences shape our work.

Carers shared experiences at AWP's October Carers Event

We heard from carers supporting loved ones with mental ill health who refuse care.

Their stories highlighted emotional strain and isolation. Similar feedback from other events prompted us to begin research into this often-overlooked aspect of the caring experience.

What difference did this make?

This research will help us understand the challenges faced by carers in these situations. By gathering more voices, we aim to influence service design and policy, ensuring carers receive recognition and support. The findings will guide more inclusive, responsive approaches to mental health and carer support.

Information and signposting

Whether it's finding an NHS dentist, making a complaint, or choosing a good care home for a loved one – you can count on us. This year 6909 people have reached out to us for advice, support or help finding services.

This year, we've helped people by:

- Providing up-to-date information people can trust
- Helping people access the services they need
- Supporting people to look after their health
- Signposting people to additional support services



Helping Samuel Support Friends in B&NES

Samuel was guided to local services for home adaptations through clear signposting and advice on coordinated community support.

Samuel enquired about support for friends in B&NES needing grab rails. Staff signposted the Community Wellbeing Hub and We Care service, clarifying service scope and consent requirements.

Online resources were shared, highlighting potential service charges and the importance of coordination. The response empowered Samuel to take informed next steps while respecting privacy and promoting independence.

Improving GP care for people with autism

A resident was guided to NHS and charity services for help with unresolved health concerns following a hospital procedure.

Joanne contacted the team about ongoing issues with endometriosis after a laparoscopy at RUH. She was advised to follow up with her GP and contact the Patient Experience Matters service (formerly PALS) for support or complaints.

We also signposted Joanne to Endometriosis UK for further advice and emotional support. The response ensured she had access to both clinical and community-based resources to manage her condition.

Showcasing volunteer impact

Our fantastic volunteers have given 945 hours to support our work. Thanks to their dedication to improving care, we can better understand what is working and what needs improving in our community.

This year, our volunteers:

- Engaged with seldom heard groups and supported them share their views
- Worked with community groups and organisations to amplify the voices of their service users
- Attended strategic boards to share what we have heard with decision makers



Showcasing volunteer impact

At the heart of what we do

From finding out what residents think to helping raise awareness, our volunteers have championed community concerns to improve care.

"I've really enjoyed my time at Healthwatch. It gave me the chance to connect with communities and gather meaningful feedback on health and care.

I built up my research skills through a project I was genuinely interested in and felt supported every step of the way.

Volunteering here has helped me grow and given me a better understanding of how social research can make a real difference."

Ella



"I helped the Healthwatch team run a focus group in Twerton, one of the most deprived areas in England.

I was deeply struck by how many people shared stories of struggling to access NHS dental care, and the visible impact it had on their health and confidence.

That experience stayed with me and strengthened my commitment to working with Healthwatch to fight for a fairer, more equal society."

Daren



Be part of the change.

If you've felt inspired by these stories, contact us today and find out how you can be part of the change.



www.healthwatchbathnes.co.uk



01225 232 401



info@healthwatchbathnes.co.uk

Finance and future priorities

We receive funding from B&NES Council under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to help us do our work.

Our income and expenditure:

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from Government	£83,566	Expenditure on pay	£77,786.00
Additional income	£49,500	Non-pay expenditure	£15,011.00
		Office and management fee	£8,910.00
Total income	£133,056.00	Total Expenditure	£101,707.00

Additional income is broken down into:

- £49,500 from B&NES Council in year one of the new contract to support co-production across 2024/25, 2025/26 and 2026/27.

Integrated Care System (ICS) funding:

Healthwatch across BSW received no funding from our Integrated Care System (ICS).

Finance and future priorities

Next steps:

Over the next year, we will keep reaching out to every part of society, especially people in the most deprived areas, so that those in power hear their views and experiences.

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

Our top three priorities for the next year are:

1. Communication
2. Service delivery
3. Quality of Treatment /Care

We are also deepening our focus on how key issues shape people's experiences of health and care—and we're taking steps to ensure those most affected by inequality are heard. By actively engaging with marginalised and excluded communities, we're working to make sure their voices drive real change in services.

We're also ramping up efforts to gather feedback from social care service users, so their lived experiences directly shape how care is designed, delivered, and improved.

Statutory statements

Healthwatch Bath and North East Somerset is hosted by The Care Forum, The Vassall Centre, Gill Avenue, Fishponds, Bristol, BS16 2QQ

Healthwatch Bath and North East Somerset 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 Local Advisory Group (LAG) consists of members who work on a voluntary basis to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny to our activities. Our LAG ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our local community.

Our work priorities are driven by what people have told us is important to them, through our surveys and feedback forms, information and signposting enquiries, web page views, and our review of localised strategic data.

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 can provide us with insight about their experience of health and care services. During 2024/2025 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 work with BESMCA, (Bath Ethnic Minority Senior Citizens Association), Julian House, young people, members and those experiencing multiple needs to gain vital insight.

We ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. It will be published on our website and shared with our mailing list whilst also being shared with the Integrated Care Board, Health and Wellbeing Board and the Health Oversight Scrutiny Committee.

Statutory statements

Responses to recommendations

All providers responded to our requests for information and recommendations.

There were no issues or recommendations escalated by our Healthwatch to Healthwatch England Committee and so no resulting special reviews or investigations.

Taking people's experiences to decision-makers

We ensure that people who can make decisions about services hear about the insights and experiences shared with us.

For example, in our local authority area, we share information with the Health and Wellbeing Board and Integrated Care Board. We also share information with relevant commissioners and service providers to ensure recommendations are visible and acted upon. A new system of following up on recommendations has been introduced in 2024/25 to ensure we are able to routinely measure the impact of work

We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Bath and North East Somerset is represented on the B&NES Council Health and Wellbeing Board and the ICB Board by varied Healthwatch Bath and North East Somerset staff.

During 2024/25 our representative has effectively carried out this role by regularly attending the meetings and workshops.

Staff also attended relevant HOSC, ICB, Inequality Committees and VCSFE Alliance Meetings throughout the year.

Statutory statements

Enter and view

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
Cleeve Court care home	Requested by Bath and North East Somerset Council	We shared recommendations with the hospital, all of which were followed up on and improvements made
John Stacey ward, Paulton Memorial Hospital	By invitation of the hospital	Following recommendations being made to the hospital, they improved patient access to activities and completed a review of staffing levels
Sulis ward, St Martin's Hospital	By invitation of the hospital	After the visit, the ward reviewed staffing levels and escalated the issue to hospital management. Additional volunteers were also recruited to support patients whilst on the ward

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