

Championing what matters to you

Healthwatch South Gloucestershire
Annual Report 2021-22



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Message from our chair

This year despite the continuing impact of COVID-19, we have seen an increase in the range of our involvement in the wider health and care system, and our contacts and relationships with users of services, commissioners, providers and local authorities.

We are energetically finding ways to reach and support those who find they are not always heard, and engaging them. Our work looking at the health visiting service was launched with a co-produced survey. Last year, people with learning disabilities worked in co-production with us and now local GPs are using their 'get ready' checklist to successfully encourage the uptake of their vital annual health checks.

At a time of intense pressure on hospitals we were pleased to be able to support North Bristol Trust in establishing why people were attending A&E and the services they encountered before they arrived. Providers now have clear indicators of where changes can be made to ensure the public get the right care at the right time, first time. We look forward to continuing to drive change and achieve positive outcomes for our community.



Georgie Bigg

Chair of the Board of Trustees. Healthwatch Bristol, North Somerset South Gloucestershire

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Georgie Bigg".



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 South Gloucestershire is your local health and social care champion. From Cribbs to Chipping Sodbury 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

Healthwatch South Gloucestershire is a place where people's experiences improve health and care.



Our mission

By offering all people of South Gloucestershire a strong voice, we will improve the quality of local health and social care.



Our values

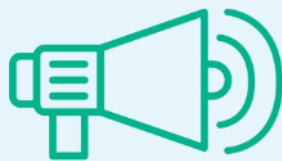
In everything we do, we are transparent, non-judgemental, and independent. We are dedicated to inclusion, co-production, and strive for continual improvement.

We adhere to the Nolan Principles, also known as the Seven Principles of Public Life. This means that we carry out our work with selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, and leadership.

Our year in review

Find out how we have engaged and supported people.

Reaching out



395 people

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

658 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

3 reports

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

Our most popular report was **‘Caring for someone with dementia: a unique journey’** which highlighted the lack of support many unpaid carers face.

Health and care that works for you



We’re lucky to have

6

outstanding volunteers, who gave up **68 days** to make care better for our community.

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

£55,206

Which is **2% more** than the previous year.









We currently employ

2 staff

who help us carry out this work – 0.3 more than the previous year.

How we've made a difference throughout the year

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

Spring		
	Caring for someone who has dementia can be challenging. We spoke to carers across South Gloucestershire to hear about unmet support needs.	Based on the feedback from carers, we created an online resource to clearly highlight diverse & local sources of help.
Summer		
	To help people to make an informed decision about the COVID-19 vaccine, we hosted a series of webinars offering reliable and factual guidance.	We engaged with 'least listened to' communities to ensure they were able to have their say on proposed changes to stroke services.
Autumn		
	Bladder & bowel services were affected by the pandemic. We asked about the changes, then recommended what would make a difference for patients & carers.	Digital GP appointments don't work for everyone. Some people needed a face-to-face appointment, so, we set out what they could ask for or could be offered at their surgery.
Winter		
	100+ people told us about their experiences at Southmead Hospital A&E department, helping North Bristol Trust understand how they and partners could respond better to high demand.	We began work on a co-produced survey with the Maternity Voices Partnership to hear from women who had experienced disruption during the transition from maternity care to the health visiting service

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, including staff, a priority. This allows us to understand the full picture, and feedback to services to help them improve



Improving uptake of annual health checks

People with a learning disability can sometimes find it difficult to identify any health issues they may be having. We created a checklist to help people get the most out of their annual health check (AHC).

Annual health checks for people with a learning disability are carried out for a number of reasons: to improve early detection of health conditions such as cancer, to check that any ongoing treatment is appropriate, and to give people a chance speak up if something isn't right.

In 2021, to help people and their loved ones make the most of their vital annual health check, we created a 'get ready checklist' for people to use before their appointment.



The majority of GPs

In 21/22 in the BNSSG area met or exceeded the minimum 75% of annual health checks for patients with a learning disability on their register. That's at least 3,750 people

What difference did this checklist make?

- The checklist has been shared with the **South Gloucestershire Learning Disability Team**. It has been uploaded to **TeamNet** and **Remedy**, the GP platforms.
- In their **All-Age Learning Disability Strategy 2022-2027 high level action plan**, South Gloucestershire Council set out their objective to improve the uptake of annual health checks for people with learning disabilities across the local area. The plan stated that the quality of an annual health check will be 'improved by promoting the use of the Healthwatch learning disability annual health check checklist.'
- In the strategy, the council commit to working alongside partners such as ourselves to **reduce health inequalities** for people with a learning disability.
- This year, GPs across the BNSSG area achieved the **highest annual health check completion rates** in the South West. 18% completed 100% of their annual health checks.



Anecdotal feedback is that it really helps people prepare for their AHC, saves time and gives focus to the discussion. We think over 1,800 people used it over the last year. True number will be higher.

Lesley Le-Pine, Associate LD Projects, NHS (BNSSG CCG)



Support for people with dementia and their carers

Caring for someone who has dementia can be challenging. Carers across South Gloucestershire helped us understand what support is available, and where there are gaps in provision that need to be addressed.

There are around two thousand people in South Gloucestershire living with dementia, and many are cared for by family or friends. After hearing the experiences of carers in the area, [we produced an online support map](#) to help carers find advice and support more easily as they progressed through their dementia journey with their loved one.

It includes local and national information and support, and covers every stage of caring for someone with dementia, from diagnosis to bereavement. The directory has been sent to GP practice managers so that it can be shared with any carers that need support.

Our research was picked up by South Gloucestershire Council, and we were able to work collaboratively with them on a survey that would be distributed to the public to help inform their new Carers Strategy. We will be working with the council over the months ahead to help share information about support services for carers in South Gloucestershire and the information, respite and peer-support that is available.



It's confusing, there are a lot of marvellous resources, but they are not very joined up and it depends so much on where you live, as to the service you are offered.

P. (aged 65) caring for wife



What difference did this make

- The recommendations made in our report, 'Caring for someone with dementia: a unique journey', have been reflected in **South Gloucestershire Council's Carers Strategic priorities 2022-2027**.
- This includes ensuring people can access culturally sensitive and appropriate care, flexibility of services (such as when booking GP appointments), and consistent provision of counselling and respite care across the area.
- Our work prompted **the Three Shires Medical Practice Patient Participation Group (PPG)** to set up peer support in the form of a memory café. This involved research, seeking grants, gaining volunteers, completing paperwork and policies, and training.
- Memory cafés are beneficial for both the person with dementia and their carers. Carers are vulnerable to experiencing poor physical and emotional health as a result of the pressures of caring. Memory cafés offer a break from the daily caring routine and provide the opportunity to get to know other carers in the area.

Three ways we have made a difference for the community

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



Putting patients at the heart of general practice

Patient Participation Groups provide a valuable platform for patients to give feedback about their care with their GP practice. We've been attending practice managers' meetings, sharing our insights with them and supporting practices that don't currently have a PPG.

We've taken up hosting the PPG chairs network meeting and have been able to bring in a wide range of guests from organisations such as CHIVA, who work with young people living with HIV and who spoke about people in rural areas often being diagnosed later in life. These network meetings are essential in helping PPGs and GP practices share knowledge and information around good examples of patient care and issues affecting the local community.



Mapping local support for mental health issues

Insights from our patient feedback around mental health was included in the work the South Gloucestershire locality partnership completed ahead of the new Community Mental Health Framework.

Our feedback was heard by the needs and strengths working group, which looked at existing assets and resources for people experiencing mental health issues and mapped what is currently available.



Supporting priority neighbourhoods

People know the issues that affect their community. We've been working with priority neighbourhoods to ensure resident's voices and views on local health and social care services are heard.

Priority neighbourhoods are areas that need additional support or investment to improve areas such as health and wellbeing. From stalls in shopping centres to listening events for people to come along and share their feedback with us, we've been working to listen to local communities. By gathering information from areas that are often not heard, we can share our insights into what needs improving, both locally and nationally.

Advice and information

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 by:

- Advising people how to use the NHS 'Find a dentist' website
- Linking people to online health services such as eConsult and the NHS app
- Directing people to Patient Advice and Liaison Services
- Providing information and myth busting about registering with a GP



Signposting people struggling to find an NHS dentist

Almost 400 people contacted us to share their difficulties accessing NHS dental treatment or finding an NHS dentist that was accepting new patients. We've been offering advice and signposting people towards NHS 111 and NHS England's Customer Contact Centre.

In July, the Department for Health and Social Care, the NHS, and Healthwatch England published a letter asking dental practices to update their information on the NHS website to show if they were accepting NHS patients.

We posted a copy of this letter to every dental practice in Bristol, encouraging them to review their online profiles to help patients find accurate information about available dental care.



We also regularly updated our website to keep people in the loop about NHS dentistry in our area. For instance, we published an article in January after it was announced by the government that £50 million would be made available to the NHS to help dentists offer additional sessions at weekends and evenings. Almost £5m was allocated to the South West and we are monitoring how it is being used by practices.

Helping you get the right care, first time

To help control the spread of COVID-19 and avoid crowded waiting rooms in hospitals, the NHS launched a campaign which urged people to 'call NHS 111 first' rather than going straight to A&E.

We've been supporting the NHS in South Gloucestershire by sharing their campaign materials and information about how NHS 111 services operate, when to go to a Minor Injuries Unit, or go to a GP. We've used our social media channels, website, newsletter, and face-to-face engagement to highlight how local 111 services have been made more person-centred after a pilot project reduced 111 referrals to urgent care services by 70%.



We let people know about the increased number of clinicians available to take 111 calls and the introduction of a Clinical Assessment Service (CAS) – expert teams that provide clinical support to 111 call handlers and patients who ring. The enhanced service now offers dedicated mental health support on a Saturday and Sunday between 8am and 8pm.

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 people share their views about local services at engagement events
- Carried out an audit of GP practice websites to ensure patient information is clear and accessible.
- Assisted with analysing patient feedback and deciding which areas of health and social care we should focus on with our upcoming projects and research.
- Represented us on patient experience groups.
- Connected with, supported, and peer-mentored each other.
- Joined a steering group planning Investors in Volunteers accreditation in 2023.





Kate

“It’s been a strange year as a Healthwatch volunteer with COVID influencing not only people’s health and access to healthcare but also the way in which Healthwatch can uncover patient views. This has created opportunities to think about how we engage with diverse patient groups, what matters to them and to contribute to discussions about what healthcare and Healthwatch will look like when the pandemic subsides. The healthcare environment has fundamentally changed, and many patients have struggled to access the care they need. It’s been a pleasure to be able to help make their voices heard and ensure they have a say about services which must meet changing local needs.”



Jemma

“I enjoy volunteering for Healthwatch South Gloucestershire and have been doing it for two years now. This year, I really enjoyed working on the learning disability checklist for people to use during their annual health check. I’ve gained a lot of experience through volunteering.

I take part in the quarterly Prioritisation Panels, and make sure the needs of people with a learning disability in South Gloucestershire are not forgotten.”



Do you feel inspired?

Get in touch to find out more about our volunteering opportunities.



www.healthwatchsouthglos.co.uk



03300 553251



jacqui@healthwatchbnsg.co.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	£55,206	Staff costs	£48,915
Commissions	£3,482	Operational costs	£4,733
Other	£120	Support and administration	£8,497
Total income	£58,808	Total expenditure	£62,146

Top three priorities for 2022–23

1. Find out more about waiting times for Improving Access to Psychological Therapies programmes, whether offers of support are appropriate, what's missing, and what additional support is offered for people on waiting lists.
2. Learn how Primary Care Networks are involving the public in discussions around modelling their services to local need.
3. Continue to tackle digital exclusion by running support and training sessions on using online health services.

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, or other characteristics.

Having received training around co-production, we have defined our principles and are now creating a co-production toolkit to set out how we deliver our commitments around coproduction.

As one of three co-commissioned Healthwatch covering a geography coterminous with our new ICS, we plan to work at many levels to represent the collective voices in our communities. We will continue to build connections with the public and professionals in South Glos and develop our expertise in engagement and evaluation.

Statutory statements

About us

Healthwatch Bristol, North Somerset & South Gloucestershire, The Sion, Crown Glass Place, BS48 1RB

Healthwatch South Gloucestershire 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 10 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, and align with local strategic priorities. Through 2021/22 the board met 12 times. Actions included refreshing our equality, diversity, equity and inclusion policy, electing an EDI champion on our Board of Trustees and expanding paid work.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities. Six of our volunteers are involved in our Prioritisation Panel, analysing themes in our patient, family and carer feedback, and recommending the 22/23 workplan focus.

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, via our website, provided a feedback centre, 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 are inclusive, and obtain the views of people who have protected characteristics or who are disenfranchised due to homelessness, being a Gypsy, Roma or Traveller, being a refugee, or being part of a stigmatised group. These voices are least heard by health and care decision makers. This year we have been engaging with under-served groups via our project work and have translated surveys, and supported people with English as a second language to get involved. We have also explained why collecting demographics is so important. This annual report is made available on our website, is printed, and sent as an electronic version to our provider and commissioner contacts.

Responses to recommendations and requests

We regularly receive responses from the acute hospital trusts, Sirona, VitaMinds, & Public Health but we have not received them from Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership Trust or SWASFT. We contributed to a special review into child and adolescent mental health, by the CQC. We were invited to bring evidence to the National (Hospital) Discharge Taskforce with the Local Government Association, The Department for Levelling Up and Communities and the Department of Health and Social Care.

This year, due to the pandemic, we were unable to make use of our Enter and View powers, but we're planning visits to settings this autumn by authorised volunteers.

Health and Wellbeing Board

Healthwatch South Gloucestershire is represented on the South Glos Health and Wellbeing Board, the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee by Vicky Marriott, Area Manager. During 2021/22 she has carried out this role by providing an overview of common themes in our public feedback and offering updates on our latest research and reports. into local healthcare services.

2021-2022 Outcomes

Project / Activity Area	Changes made to services
Partnered with Bristol Health Partners and BABCON Health Integration Team (HIT)	Research was selected for a national portfolio of nursing research that informs best practice. A funding bid hopes to have a significant impact on nursing care by developing training and education to underpin high quality continence care.
Attended regular catch-ups with VitaMinds, Practice Managers, Hospital and community health professionals and the Disability Equality Network.	Sharing feedback such as those about sexual health and screening services has been fed into assurance groups. Primary care feedback has been discussed with practice managers to inform their GP services
Involved in the development sessions that have begun to align ICS and the local authority under a 'One South Glos' vision.	Priority setting can be influenced each year, using themes and intelligence.
Worked with the CCG to ensure seldom-heard communities and individuals were able to have their say during a public consultation on proposed improvements to local stroke services.	Increased participation in the consultation by assisting the CCG with online meetings, spreading the word through our communication channels, and meeting people while they attend vaccination centres.
Continuing to promote the Easy Read 'get ready checklist' for people with learning disabilities to help them to see the value of having an annual health check (AHC) with their GP.	An estimated 1800 people with a learning disability used the AHC checklist across Bristol, North Somerset and South Glos in 21/22 which provided focus and saved time.
Provide feedback from the public about their experiences of community mental health services	The SG Locality Partnership is now commissioning a new multidisciplinary mental health support team.



healthwatch

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