



# Annual Report 2022–23

How we're making health  
and social care better

**healthwatch**  
York

# Contents

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Message from our Chair	3
About us	4
Highlights from our year	5
Listening to your experiences	9
Advice and information	15
Volunteers	17
Finances and future priorities	19
Statutory statements	20



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**"In the last ten years, the health and social care landscape has changed dramatically, but the dedication of local Healthwatch hasn't. Your local Healthwatch has worked tirelessly to make sure the views of local people are heard, and NHS and social care leaders use your feedback to make care better."**

**Louise Ansari, Healthwatch National Director**

# Message from our Chair

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It's been another busy year with significant challenges for the health and social care system. The team has listened to many difficult stories from individuals and their families and used those stories to highlight areas of concern in health and social care in York.



**Janet Wright**  
**Healthwatch York Chair**

We are proud of our partnership working. Through our York volCeS network we have shaped conversations around health and social care in York. The network brings together the voluntary, statutory and private sectors with members of our York community.

We have continued to produce snapshot reports to highlight concerns around particular topics. Our snapshot report on the experiences of young people and their families using Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) opened conversations with relevant agencies and led to discussions around practical and achievable solutions.

I sit writing this listening to the construction work taking place in my street as part of the development of a city-wide broadband network. York must be applauded for its ambition to improve connectivity, but we must not forget those people who are still digitally excluded. Healthwatch exists to listen to everyone's voices, and we continue to strive to be as accessible as possible. We continue to provide our reports in a range of formats and our regular drop-in sessions across the city provided opportunities to meet Healthwatch representatives face to face.



**"I hope you enjoy this Annual Report in which you will read about the team and the range of work that has been undertaken. The team has risen to the challenges of an ever-changing environment with integrity and professionalism. It's a phrase used a lot at the moment but in these challenging times one thing we can do is be kind to each other."**

# About us

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## Healthwatch York 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 vision

A world where we can all get the health and care we need.



### Our mission

Healthwatch York puts people at the heart of health and social care services, enabling you to be heard. We believe that together we can help make York better for everyone.



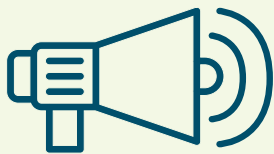
### Our values:

- Accessible
- Diversity
- Empowering
- Participative
- Informative
- Responsive
- Inclusive
- Choice
- Accountable
- Flexible

# Year in review

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## Reaching out **1,301 people**



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

## **576 people**

came to us for clear advice and information about topics such as mental health and the cost of living crisis.

## Making a difference to care

We published

## **8 reports**

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

Our most popular report was

## **Cost of Living**

which highlighted the struggles local people face with the rising cost of living



## Health and care that works for you



We're lucky to have

## **29**

outstanding volunteers who gave up 220 hours to make care better for our community.

We're funded by our local authority. In 2022-23 we received

## **£115,000**









which is 6.4% less than the previous year.

We currently employ

## **6 part time staff**

who help us carry out our work.

# How we've made a difference this year

Spring	 <p>With Healthwatch North Yorkshire, we raised the issues people face when providers fail to meet the Accessible Information Standard.</p>	 <p>We started our research into people's experiences of mental health crisis care in York.</p>
Summer	 <p>We updated the Healthwatch York Dementia Guide, helping people to navigate services.</p>	 <p>Via our summer magazine and engagement events, we kept the public informed of NHS changes.</p>
Autumn	 <p>We set up the York voICeS network to enable the public to speak directly with service providers and decision makers.</p>	 <p>Via our work with York Safeguarding Adults Board, we have contributed to improvements in local safeguarding.</p>
Winter	 <p>We evidenced the impact of the rising cost of living on the health of York residents, calling for practical changes.</p>	 <p>We met local information and signposting needs by publishing a guide of essential services that were open over the Christmas period.</p>

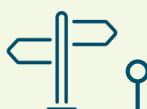
# 10 years of improving care

This year marked a special milestone for Healthwatch. Over the last ten years, people have shared their experiences, good and bad, to help improve health and social care. A big thank you to all our Healthwatch Heroes who stepped up and inspired change. Here are a few of our highlights:

## How have we made care better, together?

### Trusted information and signposting

We continue to provide public information and signposting. We update, print and post the York Dementia guide and York Mental health and wellbeing guide. Information pages on our website are regularly updated and we take enquiries daily.



### More accessible information

We provide a free readability service, ensuring NHS literature is understandable. We continue to be public facing, meeting the public and engaging via social media and the press.



### Relationships

We continue to nurture our relationship with NHS and council partners so we can understand changing systems and bring public voice into decision making.



### Care home assessing

Our team of friendly, trained volunteers meet care home residents to understand how care could be provided better. Information is shared with York Council and CQC to make positive changes for residents.



### Co - production

Our staff continue to champion co-production approaches across health and care. We're called upon to run workshops and deliver training. We're excited to see this embedded into ICB policy.



## Healthwatch Hero



### Celebrating a hero in our local community.

Kirsty is a volunteer with us at Healthwatch York. Outside of her time with us, she's actively raising awareness of menopause issues across the city, helping people to identify symptoms and raising awareness of the support available.

Kirsty's passion is clear when talking to her. Through friendly conversations she's been able to inform and signpost York residents to life enhancing services and information points. Kirsty tells us that many do not realise they're going through the menopause, or those that do often don't feel supported. Kirsty has set up coffee mornings and menopause walks around the city giving people a safe and confidential place to share their worries and experiences with people who can relate and understand.

Kirsty is amazing and her work continues to improve the lives of residents. We can't wait to see what the future looks like for Kirsty and all the people she supports along the way. This is why Kirsty is our Healthwatch Hero. Keep up the amazing work Kirsty.





# 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 our main priority. This allows us to understand the full picture, and feed this back to services to help them improve.

# Improving access to children's mental health support

**The pressures on mental health services have been widely reported. The Care Quality Commission's (CQC) State of Care report highlights issues including workforce recruitment and retention. The CQC Community Mental Health report, conducted after the pandemic, shows the impact this further pressure has had on outcomes for patients.**

With services struggling to meet demand, increasing the risk of children and young people's mental health worsening and reaching crisis point, we wanted to understand local residents' experiences of accessing child and adolescent mental health services.

We identified challenges relating to inefficient administration, poor communication from service providers and lost opportunities for effective information and signposting. For patients and carers this has contributed to longer waiting times for support, challenges with 'waiting well' and mistrust in the system.

## Changes to patient and carer experience

Our findings gained media attention and have resulted in practical changes across the system including:



- Better support provided to teachers, aiding and improving the quality of referrals
- CAMHS now provides information and signposting at the first point of contact, including the anticipated patient pathway
- Improved appointment administration and communication internally and with patients

## What difference will this make?

Our report was presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board on 16 November 2022. The resulting conversations showed the power of sharing people's feedback – decision makers listened to your voice and took action.

With these changes in place, it should be easier for people to make quicker and more informed decisions around how they access mental health support. Better administration, communication and signposting will support patients with waiting well.



“CAMHS regularly loses paperwork and it is common to have to fill out the same assessment forms for the same children several times.”

# Holding health and social care to account on the Accessible Information Standard

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**Getting health and social care is challenging for people who need information in an accessible format. Despite health and care services being legally required to meet the Accessible Information Standard since 2016, many York and North Yorkshire residents' needs are not being met. Fortunately, after hearing your experiences, services are committing to reviewing and correcting their practices.**

The Accessible Information Standard states that health and care organisations are legally required to provide a consistent approach to identifying, recording, flagging, sharing, and meeting the information and communication support needs of patients, service users, carers and parents with a disability, impairment, or sensory loss.

For many, failing to meet these standards can lead to missed appointments, an invasion of privacy or unmet medical needs.

## In partnership with Healthwatch North Yorkshire, our recommendations included:

1. Ask what helps and do something about it. Put the user first.
2. Once identified, share people's information needs within organisations.
3. Involve people with lived experience to help find pragmatic answers.
4. Review what you're doing to make sure it is working and learn from what is and isn't going well.

## What difference will this make?

As a result of this partnership work, we've received confirmation of changes being made from several health and care providers.

We continue to inform the public around their rights, and providers of their obligations. These changes should ensure that people don't miss health and social care appointments simply because they're not provided with information in a format they can understand.



“The system doesn't anticipate that not everyone can use the phone. It is a legal requirement of the Equality Act that NHS Trusts make reasonable adjustments by providing alternatives to use of a telephone.”

– Ian, York Resident

# Three ways we have made a difference for the community

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

## Creating empathy by bringing experiences to life



It's important for services to see the bigger picture. Hearing personal experiences and the impact on people's lives provides them with a better understanding of the problems.

Healthwatch York includes a personal health and care story within every magazine. This is usually a 'day in the life' of a carer, voluntary sector provider or NHS worker. Through these stories we're able to bust myths about what it's like to be supporting people day to day, and offer a different perspective to health and social care. It's an opportunity to really showcase good practice, and highlight often unseen personal challenges.

## Getting services to involve the public



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

We're active participants in local mental health transformation initiatives, including the neurodiversity and mental health workstream.

Through these channels, we've cultivated working relationships with underrepresented communities and the providers that serve them. From this, we've evidenced a need for a co-produced information and signposting tool for neurodivergent people and we look forward to signing off the finished version.

## Improving care over time



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

Access to NHS dentistry continues to dominate the issues and enquiries we receive. From your feedback, we've produced two major reports and continue to call for more NHS dentistry in York, at both local and national government level. Most recently, we submitted evidence to the Health and Social Care Select Committee about poor experiences in York and the need for contract reform, and we await the outcome.



# Hearing from everyone

Over the past year we have worked hard to make sure we hear from everyone within our local area. It is 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:**

- Having a regular presence within the local mental health hub.
- Liaising with community leaders and council colleagues to ensure we're hearing from people living in current areas of deprivation.
- Hosting York volCeS – inviting underrepresented communities to comment on health and care services alongside service providers and commissioners.
- Being active contributors to key strategic meetings; putting your voice at the centre of discussions, sharing good practice and holding services to account.

## York voiCeS Network

Through our voiCeS network, we facilitate meetings to ensure that community voices are key to decision making. At each meeting we update people on local health and care and, through activities, workshops and discussions, provide York residents with the opportunity to share their experiences.

Each of these meetings has a different theme, for example, women's health and mental health. This allows people from various backgrounds and experiences to participate and to have their voices heard.



"Now I am in the menopause, my GP puts all symptoms down to the menopause! It's like I can't have anything else wrong with me. I have had a stomach complaint for several years which is now being put down to the menopause so I can't get any investigations done for it." - York Resident



## Highlighting the impact of the rising cost of living on health

In response to the increase in complexity and severity of issues we were receiving, we ran a survey asking people to tell us about the impact of the rising living costs on their health. We heard from 200 people across York.

We found that people were no longer able to afford nutritious food, heating, and non-essential items. This was causing isolation, worsening of physical health conditions and feelings of anxiety, depression and shame.

We presented our findings at the City of York Council cost of living summit to demonstrate the very real health impact of rising costs. Recommendations from the findings were shared to provide an informed cross sector response.



"We are in financial hardship now. I'm losing sleep worrying where we will be in a few months' time! Christmas around the corner and my children won't have any presents to open."

York Resident



# Advice and information

Our Advice and Information service provides independent, confidential support to help people find the correct information, to understand the options available and get the right help. Whether it is navigating primary care, finding a dentist or choosing a care home, we will support you.

## This year we've helped people by:

- Providing up to date information people can trust via telephone, social media, email, bulletins, magazines, signposting guides and engagement stalls.
- Supporting people to look after their health with the rising cost of living.
- Helped people access the services they need.
- Signposted to valued community-led support.

We are one of the few organisations who continue to print materials and make sure they're publicly available in a format that works for you.

## Help to find dental care in York

Enquiries about dentistry constitute around 20–50% of enquiries to us every month.

The situation in York has declined rapidly this year as several dental practices have stopped providing NHS care. Only one dental practice in York is taking people onto a waiting list, but they are advising that there will be a wait of at least five years. Following our dentistry reports in recent years, we submitted evidence to the Health Select and Social Care Select Committee's inquiry in January 2023, and work to maintain pressure for change.

“I know a Ukrainian lady who is in a lot of pain from a tooth. It is spreading to her face. She thinks she may need root canal treatment. She is planning to return to Ukraine to her town which is a war zone to get dental treatment as she can't find an NHS dentist and can't afford private care.” – **York resident**

## Advice and information guides

Our co-produced information and signposting guides are central to the information work we do. These are printed guides that we post to residents and disseminate to community spaces, and frontline staff across the city.

Our Mental Health & Wellbeing Guide is widely recognised across York. The guide is updated every two years to account for service changes. We published our latest edition in April with a print run of 3,000 copies to cope with local demand.

“I love these guides. I'm hoping to carry a few with me when I meet up with friends or when people ask me who they should turn to when they need extra support or advice.” – **Resident**



Our Dementia Guide was published in June 2022, and contains relevant advice and resources for people living with dementia and their families and carers.

“Healthwatch York is doing an amazing job and your guides support many in York” – **Resident supporting their parent**

**We acknowledge that it's particularly challenging to know what services are available over the Christmas period.**

We produced a guide of services open in York. Following conversations with residents, the guide included warm spaces, foodbanks and community food hubs. We worked with the CVS wellbeing team to make sure the residents they work with received this list directly.





# Volunteering

We're supported by a team of experienced volunteers who are at the heart of what we do. Thanks to their local knowledge and professional skills, we're able to reach more people and have a greater impact.

## This year Healthwatch York volunteers:

- Hosted community stands across the city; Providing information, gathering experiences and giving Healthwatch York greater visibility.
- Took part in Participatory Research training and began Projects focusing on different topics relevant to their communities.
- Rang all local NHS dentists to see if they were taking on new NHS patients to update our website and signposting information.
- Supported the revival of our care home work by visiting local care homes to chat with residents and staff; feeding back to us on the quality of providers.
- Produced interesting and insightful blogs for our website and social media.

## Lesley

"I enjoy engaging with members of the public and listening to their experiences when using the health and social care services in York and seeing how these are taken on board when new services are planned. It is good to be involved with an organisation that not only listens but makes sure the public voice is heard at every stage."



## Chris

"I am involved in the readability project where we review NHS and other leaflets and information to ensure they make sense to the people who will read them. It is a worthwhile piece of work and great to get feedback which confirms the value of what we do for patients. It can be quite challenging, but it is good to know you are part of a group working together. I really enjoy it and comment on as many as I can."



## Phil

"I am the Service Manager for the York Drug and Alcohol Service. I have been working within the Drug and Alcohol field in York for 19yrs now and have seen the impact that health inequalities / barriers can have on people who access these services. It has been a privilege to sit on the Healthwatch York Steering group over the last year and being able to have an impact on improving services for all residents of York."



### Do you feel inspired?

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

 <https://www.healthwatchyork.co.uk/>

 01904 621133

 [healthwatch@yorkcvs.org.uk](mailto:healthwatch@yorkcvs.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 and expenditure

Income		Expenditure	
City of York Council	£118,039	Expenditure staff salaries and expenses	£107,375
Additional Income	£2,750	Non-pay expenditure	£27,670
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£120,789</b>	Office and management fee	£17,130
<b>Overspend (financed by prior year's surpluses)</b>	<b>£31,386</b>	<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>£152,175</b>

Additional income is broken down by:

- **£1,500 funding** received from Healthwatch England for IT changes
- **£1,250 funding** received from Healthwatch England for a care interview

## Next steps

In the ten years since Healthwatch was launched, we've demonstrated the power of public feedback in helping the health and care system understand what is working, spot issues and think about how things can be better in the future.

Services are currently facing unprecedented challenges and tackling the backlog needs to be a key priority for the NHS to ensure everyone gets the care they need. Over the next year we will continue our role in collecting feedback from everyone in our local community and giving them a voice to help shape improvements to services.

We will also continue our work tackling inequalities that exist and work to reduce the barriers you face when accessing care, regardless whether that is because of where you live, income or race.

## Top three priorities for 2023-24

1. Navigating primary care
2. Mental health crisis care
3. York volCeS



# The contract for Healthwatch in York

Healthwatch York is proud to be part of York CVS. As such, our registered office is York CVS, 15 Priory Street, York, YO1 6ET. The Chair of Healthwatch York sits on the York CVS Board and the Chair of York CVS sits on the Healthwatch York Steering Group.

Healthwatch York uses the Healthwatch Trademark when undertaking its statutory activities as covered by the licence agreement.

# The way we work

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## How we involve others in our governance and decision-making

Our Healthwatch steering group consists of nine members who work on a voluntary basis to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny to our activities. Our steering group ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our local communities. Throughout 2022/23 the steering group met 4 times and provided Healthwatch York with advice and support around effective and ethically sound research approaches for our mental health crisis care work.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities via email, in person and post.

## Methods and systems used across the year to obtain people's experiences

We used a wide range of approaches to ensure that as many people as possible had the opportunity to provide us with insight about their experience of using services. During 2022/23 we were 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 hosting York volCeS.

We ensure that our publications are available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. We publish them on our website, email to our vast mailing list, print and post copies. We also now provide local libraries with our publications – pop in and have a read at your convenience.

## Taking people's experiences to decision makers

We ensure that people who can make decisions about services hear about your insights and experiences.

In York we take information to sector representatives (such as York CVS and/or Nimbus care), service providers, commissioners, council leaders, councillors, MPs, the Integrated Care Board and Integrated Care System. We also work with other local Healthwatch and Healthwatch England to address shared health and social care concerns.

We take insight and experiences to strategic meetings in the city including the Drug and Alcohol Partnership, Safeguarding Adults Board and Connecting Our City. We share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

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## Enter and View

We did not conduct any Enter and View visits this year and so no recommendations or actions were put forward.

## Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch York is represented on the York Health and Wellbeing Board by Siân Balsom, Healthwatch York Manager. During 2022/23 Siân has effectively carried out this role by sharing Healthwatch York reports, compiling update reports at the Boards request, and taking an active role in all Board discussions.

Siân also sits on the York Health and Care Partnership Executive Committee, and feeds into the Humber and North Yorkshire Integrated Care Board through regular meetings of the 6 Healthwatch leads across Humber and North Yorkshire. Siân also takes part in the System Quality Group, which aims to address quality concerns across Humber and North Yorkshire.

## Feedback we received

"I value their professionalism and honesty, and the fact that they are willing and eager to work collaboratively" – **Ashley Green- Healthwatch North Yorkshire CEO**

"They are open and transparent about feedback statistics. They are a very valuable and trusted resource" – **Savanna Thompson, Adult Social Care Transformation Team**

"Healthwatch York is a critical friend, a source of really constructive critique. They help us to hold a mirror up to ourselves and highlight how the wider impacts of our decisions might affect the population." – **Sarah Coltman-Lovell, NHS Humber and North Yorkshire ICB**

## 2022–2023 Outcomes

<b>Project/ activity</b>	<b>Changes made to services</b>
CAMHS snapshot report	Improvements to communication, and information and signposting.
City of York Council re Council Tax	Pilot introduced to improve experiences of people struggling to pay
Mental health transformation	Mental health hub developed with co-production as a guiding principle
Accessible Information	Strong commitments from all local partners to improve accessibility. Action plans in place and changes underway.
Continuing to monitor the impact of lack of dentists in York	Healthwatch York actively involved in local discussions and sit on appropriate bodies to highlight concerns. Local MPs championing the issue, plans for a roundtable in place

# healthwatch

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