



# A year like no other

**Then and now**

Healthwatch Liverpool Annual Report 2020-21



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Cover image: Cycle of Life, L8

# Message from our Chair

**This year was a year like no other. Like all organisations, our ways of working had to change quickly and dramatically to make sure our directory, information and advocacy services continued seamlessly.**

Our staff, like many others, had to adjust; setting up home offices, juggling home schooling and other caring responsibilities, and in some cases cope with the impact of Covid on themselves and those close to them.

Despite all of those challenges, we continued to engage with the public through hearing and sharing their voices, even if we couldn't meet them in person for much of the year. I'm proud of how the staff and volunteer team adapted their work to do this. You'll see examples of some of the work in this report including: hard hitting insights into the experiences of care homes during the second wave, how Covid has affected people's mental health and wellbeing, and the issues that the public needed our team's help with.

I'd also like to thank the members of our Community Engagement Board who kept meeting with us via Zoom and kept sharing valuable insights into the experiences of their communities, which we were able to share with services and decision makers. The work of these organisations has been the glue that has held our communities together during the pandemic and we value their contributions and the richness of their experience.



**"Public support for our NHS was deservedly high throughout the pandemic, and we very much hope the public will continue to give their views about the sort of healthcare system they want for our country, and in our city"**

The challenges brought about by the pandemic haven't gone away - people are still living with the effects of the past year on their families, health, livelihood and wellbeing, NHS backlogs will continue for a long time and inequalities have sadly increased. With the NHS moving into another structural reorganisation there is an added layer of change and uncertainty. Public support for our NHS was deservedly high throughout the pandemic, and we very much hope the public will continue to give their views about the sort of healthcare system they want for our country, and in our city. Likewise, a spotlight has been shone on Adult Social Care and the important role this has in Liverpool, particularly during the pandemic, and, the challenges it will now face to continue to provide for our most vulnerable citizens.

Healthwatch Liverpool will continue to give a voice to our communities through the next year, as we have done this year. We've certainly got our work cut out going forward!



Lynn Collins  
Healthwatch Liverpool Chair

# About us

## Here to make health and care better

We are the independent champion for people who use health and social care services in Liverpool. We're here to find out what matters to people and help make sure your views shape the support you need, by sharing these views with those who have the power to make change happen.

## Helping you to find the information you need

We help people find the information they need about services in their area. This has been vital during the pandemic with the ever-changing environment and restrictions limiting people's access to health and social care services.

### Our goals



#### 1 Supporting you to have your say

We want more people to get the information they need to take control of their health and care, make informed decisions and shape the services that support them.



#### 2 Providing a high quality service

We want everyone who shares an experience or seeks advice from us to get a high quality service and to understand the difference that their views make.



#### 3 Ensuring your views help improve health and care

We want more services to use your views to shape the health and care support you need today and in the future.



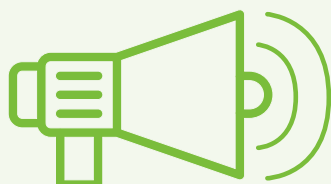
**"Local Healthwatch have done fantastic work throughout the country during the COVID-19 pandemic, but there is more work ahead to ensure that everyone's views are heard. COVID-19 has highlighted inequalities and to tackle these unfair health differences we will need those in power to listen, to hear the experiences of those facing inequality and understand the steps that could improve people's lives."**

**Sir Robert Francis QC, Chair of Healthwatch England**

# Highlights from our year

Find out about our resources and how we have engaged and supported people in 2020-21.

## Reaching out



We heard from

**1173 people**

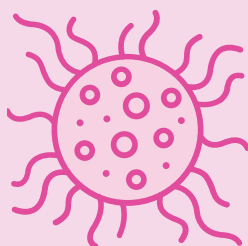
this year about their experiences of health and social care.

People engaged with our information, advice and signposting

**877,839 times**

this year including through our enquiries service, and also via our directories, websites and social media platforms.

## Responding to the pandemic



We engaged with

**12,416 people**

specifically about Covid-19 this year, by providing information about support services on the Live Well Directory, hearing pandemic experiences, championing Covid-safe wellbeing activities, and providing information and signposting via our enquiry service.

## Making a difference to care



We published

**11 reports**

about the improvements people would like to see made to health and social care services. From this, we made 78 recommendations and learning points for improvement.

We supported

**149 people**

with information and advocacy through our Independent Complaints Advocacy Service.

## Health and care that works for you



**13 volunteers**

helped us to carry out our work. In total, they contributed over 200 hours of their time.

**We employ 21 staff**

18.3 of whom are full time equivalent, which is a 10% increase from the previous year.

We received

**£553,871 in funding**

from our local authority in 2020-21, 8% more than the previous year.



# Theme one: Then and now Care Homes



## Then: First wave experiences in Care Homes

Care Homes - from residents and families to managers and staff - were hit hard by the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. Thanks to people sharing their experiences we were able to help local adult social care decision makers learn lessons which can be applied in future waves or in the event of a new pandemic.

Through our Covid-19 survey, we received feedback from many relatives about lack of communication with homes & care home residents. We were also approached by Liverpool City Council, to speak to care home staff, to provide a more qualitative, in-depth perspective.

We held semi-structured interviews with staff, managers, and relatives, with the aim of capturing first wave experiences and identifying additional support needed, as well as information that might be useful for future emergency planning. We spoke to 9 professionals across 4 care homes, and 4 relatives.

From our positively received report, the council are keen to act on learning identified (for example, ensuring psychological support was made available for care home staff and ensuring better visiting arrangements). [Read our report and two page summary on our website.](#)





## Now: Care Homes

Our ongoing work with Care Homes is making sure that lessons learnt are being applied during the continuing pandemic. Our initial report was well received by commissioners and is already influencing planning of policy around Care Home services in the city.

We are now conducting a follow-up piece of work to capture further understanding of experiences, following our initial project. We hope to get back in touch with the homes we originally spoke to, to see what, if anything, has changed in the past six months.

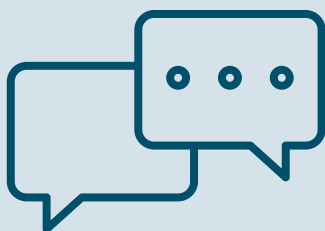
We are also going to be running a survey for residents' families to make sure their voices are heard and fed back to those who are able to make changes.



**"Thank you to Healthwatch Liverpool for allowing all of us, including care homes themselves, to have so much information to reflect on and to inform how we can support the system and our most vulnerable residents in the future. We have a range of learning points to respond to and will certainly use it both in our emergency and general planning."** **Steve Peddie, Assistant Director, Strategic Intergration, Liverpool City Council**



**"I would like to take this opportunity to highlight a particular example of the ground breaking work Healthwatch Liverpool have delivered – a review of the impact of Covid on local Care Homes focused on identifying some good practice, but also some significant learning – a typically brilliant report, balanced, which doesn't shy away from pointing out some difficult and challenging issues, but as usual, focused on how we can use this to learn and improve our services."** **Martin Farran, Director of Adult Services and Health, Liverpool City Council**



### Share your views with us

If you have a query about a health and social care service, or need help with where you can go to access further support, get in touch. Don't struggle alone. Healthwatch is here for you.



[www.healthwatchliverpool.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchliverpool.co.uk)



0300 77 77 007



[enquiries@healthwatchliverpool.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@healthwatchliverpool.co.uk)



## Theme two: Now and next Mental Health



### Now: Mental Health

**Mental health, and access to mental health support services, has long been an issue of concern for Healthwatch Liverpool.**

Feedback from patients, service users and the wider public, indicated that this is a priority for local people, and that service provision does not always meet need. It had already been identified as a priority project for Healthwatch Liverpool to focus on prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. Wider issues of emotional wellbeing have also been a key concern for the organisation, and our Wellbeing Liverpool project has sharpened our focus on the impact of non-clinical ‘ways to wellbeing’.

The pandemic increased our need to focus on mental health and wellbeing. It has already had far-reaching effects, and is likely to have long-lasting impacts. Data analysis of our public feedback since March 2020 indicates that the impact of the pandemic on people’s mental health and access to services has been profound. This finding also chimes with intelligence from Liverpool NHS Clinical Commissioning Group, Liverpool City Council and other key statutory, voluntary and community service providers. It is vital that as the city develops new policies and strategies to address these concerns, and ensure that the voices, experiences and insights of patients, service users and the public are included as key contributory factors in co-produced priorities.





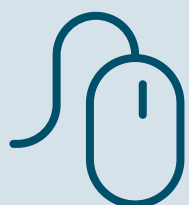
## Next: Mental Health

Our Mental Health project for 2021/22 aims to gather examples of a diverse range of voices, including: older people, people from ethnic minority groups, carers, key workers, children and young people, people with underlying health conditions and people who were already in contact with mental health services pre March 2020 - recognising the intersectional nature of these groups.

Our project aim lies in local people discussing their experiences of the mental health impact of Covid-19, the services available, or unavailable to them and the activities or experiences that had a positive impact on their wellbeing. We will use their feedback as evidence in a series of reports aimed at health and social care commissioners as well as the wider public.

Our expected impact with this project, is to influence policy development and service commissioning in the coming years as the city recovers from the immediate/acute impacts of the pandemic, and addresses its long-term/chronic implications.

We have developed a survey, organised targeted focus groups and created a short film for social media platforms explaining why everybody's input can make a difference (pictured below). The project will make use of a range of engagement methods to make it as inclusive as possible to maximise its impact.



To find out more > > >

Get involved in our project looking at the impacts of Covid-19 on the Mental Health and Wellbeing of people in Liverpool by taking our survey:

[www.healthwatchliverpool.co.uk/mental-health-and-impact-covid-19](http://www.healthwatchliverpool.co.uk/mental-health-and-impact-covid-19)

Help us out by sharing the survey with your friends, family and local community!

## Understanding experiences – our reports

### Homeless service experiences

Our homelessness services report was published in February 2021. The report explores the provision of Homelessness services in Liverpool and how they were viewed by the people using them. Before the pandemic we had made 24 visits to services working with people who are homeless, speaking with 117 people, including 74 who were homeless at the time. We also made a short film, interviewing someone who had been homeless but was now working supporting homeless people.

Through this work, we found that there were no joined-up services for people with dual diagnoses (mental health issues and substance misuse), or easily accessible mental health services for people who were homeless. We also found that specially commissioned health services aimed at the homeless population were preferred over mainstream health services where people often felt judged and that their needs were not fully met.

We shared our report with Liverpool City Council (LCC), Liverpool CCG, and the organisations we worked with on this project, with positive feedback of our intelligence influencing service commissioning. The pandemic radically altered how homeless services were delivered in Liverpool. Many of these changes reflected our report's recommendations about homeless services - the pandemic provided the urgency and funding for change. We are interested to see how homeless support is delivered post-pandemic and how mental health and substance misuse services can better meet the needs of this group of people.

### Special Education Needs And Disabilities (SEND) experiences

We engaged with children, parents, carers and professionals this year, to capture and learn from their experiences of Liverpool's SEND provision and to make a series of recommendations, based on their expert insights. We looked at the whole process, from identification and assessment of need, through to transition to adult services.

We received input from 208 individuals (75 parents and carers, 72 children and young people, 61 SEND practitioners) through surveys, semi-structured interviews, 5 case studies and 6 peer-led focus groups for children and young people delivered for us by Liverpool Young Advisors from the Liverpool Safeguarding Children's Partnership (LSCP). A report, including 18 recommendations (on topics such as early intervention, increased representation at all stages of the commissioning cycle, and improved alignment of Neurodevelopmental and CAMHS support) was submitted to the SEND Partnership Board, which welcomed the document, stating that it would help to inform the SEND Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), the SEND Co-Production Charter and the SEND Joint Commissioning Strategy.

### Transplant experiences

We conducted in-depth interviews in September 2019 with 6 kidney transplant patients, who either lived or had received their transplant here, to understand more about their experiences of undergoing transplant. We identified a number of areas where support and care could be improved for patients post-transplant. Due to Covid delays, this report was published in 2020. We believe that our findings are very important, and still need to be acted on. Given that transplant patients, as a group, face a serious risk from Coronavirus, we think that some of our findings, particularly around emotional support and access to healthcare whilst immunocompromised, are particularly relevant in this current climate. We would like to see local health and care systems working to ensure that those at risk are kept informed. We will be sure to re-send this important report once the pandemic has eased, to ensure that the recommendations that we have made are followed up. We would like to make sure the contributions and time of our participants are not forgotten.





## Responding to COVID-19

Throughout the pandemic, Healthwatch Liverpool has played an important role in helping people to get the information they need, and sharing their experiences of care to impact positive change. The insight we collect is shared with both Healthwatch England and local partners to ensure services are operating as best as possible during the pandemic, and ensuring local people understand the options available to them.

**This year we helped 12,416 people by:**

- Providing up-to-date advice on the COVID-19 response locally
- Linking people to reliable up-to-date information, including the local response, shielding, help and support, vaccinations and many other Covid topics
- Hearing the voices of local people throughout the pandemic
- Engaging local people through championing well-being activities within government guidelines
- Helping people to access the services they need

## Case Study: Improving Covid vaccination clarity

A member of the public contacted us about the criteria for Covid vaccination due to health conditions rather than age. They have Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and had been concerned about protecting themselves from Covid after hearing of others with the condition experiencing major deterioration after Covid infection, perhaps because of the overlap in symptoms between long Covid and ME/CFS.

We were able to send clear information to the enquirer, in which we explained the national criteria for Covid prioritisation and that it was based largely on first protecting those who would be more likely to die from a Covid infection, rather than those who may be at increased risk of long Covid. We then shared this question with the Clinical Commissioning Group who confirmed the situation, and also then updated their FAQ page to make this information visible to others in a similar position. The member of the public was not able to get their vaccine sooner than the rest of their age cohort but we were able to ensure they had received an explanation about why, and helped to ensure others in future would now have easier access to this information.

## Hearing people's experiences of the impact of Covid-19

### Surveys

During the year we ran two Covid surveys. The first survey was launched on 1st April, early in the first lockdown and ran until 31st August. We produced two public reports on findings drawing on responses from 630 people. Our second survey ran from 1st August and is on-going. The survey findings provided early indications on people's pandemic experiences. This included the direct impact of Covid infection, including hospitalisations, bereavement and long Covid, but also the indirect impact on people's mental health, caring responsibilities, isolation, delayed care for non-Covid related conditions and people's experiences of accessing services remotely.

It showed that although the pandemic affected every local resident, not everyone experienced it in the same way. For example, some of the alternative approaches put in place such as telephone consultations with consultants and GPs, worked very well for some people, helping them to access care from their own home. However, for others, especially those facing communication barriers, living with high levels of stress or a lack of privacy in their home; this felt like a poor substitute for the in-person appointments they were used to. This information was drawn on by a wide range of decision makers to inform their thinking.

### Focus groups

We supplemented this work with themed focus groups on Test, Track and Trace, Care homes, Access to Dental Care, Mental Wellbeing and Covid Vaccination. These allowed us to understand people's experiences in more detail. We passed on findings from focus groups to relevant health and social care organisations. We have worked to ensure our focus groups are accessible to a broad range of people. Members of the public are able to join us on Zoom video calls, dial in via the telephone, and we have also provided BSL interpretation at focus groups, ensuring we can continue to hear from those who may be digitally excluded or have additional communication needs.

**"Healthwatch Liverpool have been a key partner for us during the Covid-19 pandemic, as we have sought to engage with our residents in a meaningful way, and collect valuable insight into how our Covid response messages in relation to testing, contact tracing, and other Covid safe measures are being received and could be improved on." Matt Ashton, Director of Public Health, Liverpool City Council**



## Top four areas that people have contacted us about:



22% on Dentistry



17% on supporting people to access services found on the Live Well directory



10% on GP Services



9% on Social Care

## Accessing dentistry



Early in the pandemic, we heard from 425 people about issues with accessing dentistry.

A social prescribing link worker contacted us about a patient who was struggling to access dental care. The usual issues people have had in this year in trying to get a dental appointment, even if living with dental pain, were complicated in this case by the person requiring an interpreter and struggling to communicate with services by telephone. We liaised with the dental commissioner at NHSE to confirm the arrangements for provision of interpretation, on both phone calls with NHS dental providers. Because of the difficulties this patient had experienced over some months, the commissioner then liaised directly with a dentist to secure an appointment for the enquirer.



### Contact us to get the information you need

If you have a query about a health and social care service, or need help with where you can go to access further support, get in touch. Don't struggle alone. Healthwatch Liverpool is here for you.



[www.healthwatchliverpool.co.uk/find-services](http://www.healthwatchliverpool.co.uk/find-services)

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## Liaising with Trusts for positive change

We received an enquiry from a caller whose mother is profoundly deaf and had a detached retina needing an urgent operation. On the day of the operation the BSL interpreter booked by the hospital did not turn up. It was initially agreed that the daughter could interpret instead but then the family were told that the operation was being cancelled, despite concerns from the daughter, mother and doctors about lasting damage that might result from a further delay. The daughter herself then found a registered BSL interpreter allowing the operation to go ahead.

The daughter felt that cancelling appointments for Deaf people when interpreters don't attend (which anecdotally seems to be common) is discriminatory as a hearing person's appointment or surgery would not be delayed in this way. She also felt it might help explain the poorer health outcomes experienced by Deaf people. She submitted a Freedom of Access for information on cancelled appointments and requested a copy of the trust's policy. She was also concerned what would happen if someone declined an interpreter (e.g. because they were known to the patient and there were worries about confidentiality).

Having received a copy of the policy the family feel that the hospital's policy had been misunderstood and misapplied by staff. Healthwatch Liverpool liaised with the hospital and together with the daughter presented a case study to the trust so that they could learn from the experience, reviewing their approach and making sure that staff are aware of the options in these circumstances. One point which the family would like the trust to take on board is recording the number and impact of appointments cancelled due to issues with interpreters so that the impact can be monitored and addressed.

In the meantime, the patient needed a lung scan and the same issue occurred. Fortunately, on this occasion the trust agreed to the scan going ahead without an interpreter - this was vital as the scan revealed a tumour in the lung requiring removal. If the family had accepted a postponement, the chance of a healthy recovery could have been reduced.

**"It's possibly the only time I've sought support like this, seeing it 'from the other side' has been an experience. Claire's done an amazing job. I nominate her for Employee of the year! I felt well supported by her, listened to, her empathy shone through and most importantly for me she was super proactive she's a real credit to Healthwatch." Sue, an enquirer supported by Healthwatch Liverpool**







## Wellbeing Liverpool website and engagement



Love Wavertree litter pick

At the beginning of 2020, our Wellbeing Liverpool Officer planned three events to formally launch the new Wellbeing Liverpool website in April. Due to the first national lockdown the launch events were put on hold and many community groups closed or moved online. The website was eventually given a 'soft launch' in September.

Our Wellbeing Liverpool Officer continued to engage with community groups and members of the public both via our social media, and face to face when restrictions were eased, engaging

with 55 community groups. More than ever, we heard how community groups and activities improved people's wellbeing and mental and physical health, and how mental and physical health, and wellbeing had suffered when groups were closed or moved online during lockdown.

When face to face sessions briefly resumed in Summer 2020, people told us:

**"I was fed up working from home and I'd noticed my clothes getting tighter during lockdown and thought, 'what can I do?' so I started doing an hour's litter picking every day and have lost 2 stone!" Volunteer - Walton Hall Park**

**"Getting involved in our community has given us a sense of agency and has really improved our wellbeing. We've seen the difference the Love Wavertree events have made to people who have been socially isolated as everyone feels so much joy" Love Wavertree litter pick**

**"I have quite a stressful job so for me it's about my mental health and being able to escape from work and empty my mind of everything and just focusing on cricket and the social aspect" Member of Sefton Park Cricket Club Women's Team**

As restrictions kept changing throughout the Autumn we decided our main objectives were to ensure people knew about the "things I can join in with from home" option on our website search and to keep people updated about online groups and groups they can join when restrictions are eased. We also began an Instagram Live series where we interviewed community groups about how they had adapted during lockdown and their future plans.



Once restrictions began to ease, our Wellbeing Liverpool Officer restarted face-to-face engagement. In total, through our many ways of working this year, we engaged with 1918 people through the Wellbeing Liverpool service. We received feedback about the positive impact our engagement made to local people:

**"Thank you so much for keeping your Instagram page updated, if you didn't do that I would never have known about all the wonderful things happening in my community" Participant at New Beginnings Improving Lives Women's Mental Health Boxing**

**"I saw the gardening group you posted about and have been going every week since!" Online comment**

## The Live Well directory



We helped 1918 people this year through our information and signposting service. However, we wouldn't be able to do this without having access to information about the vast range of health, care and wellbeing services available in Liverpool. We want this information to be available to everyone, which is why a really important part of our work is keeping the Live Well Directory up-to-date.

We think it's vital that there's a trusted source of information for anyone who needs it - whether you're looking for help for yourself, for a friend or family member, or if you're a professional looking for options for someone you're supporting. That's where the Live Well Directory comes in.

We maintain the Liverpool service information on this online directory all year round - over 1500 services - making it the trusted place to find out what options are out there for you.

This year the site had over 216,800 hits on the directory with people viewing more than 594,600 pages. Every search result page on the site has a prominent message encouraging people to contact us if they can't find what they're looking for so the site acts as another route into our enquiry service.

Throughout this year, we knew that it was important that people could easily access this information. We added a new category of Coronavirus support to the site's search, as well as the home page. This included information from essential Covid support and vaccinations, to domestic abuse services and food banks. To highlight this work: Before the pandemic, there were 4 foodbank pages on the directory. As of March 2021 there were 25 community food shops or food parcel services pages - That's a 525% increase in food support services during this year. Live Well Liverpool has been a vital source of information this year, particularly to those most in need.



Faiths4Change Community Garden



Visit the Live Well Directory to find local services

 [www.thelivewelldirectory.com](http://www.thelivewelldirectory.com)



## Identifying gaps in local services

Through our information and signposting service, and the feedback and experiences we heard this year, we identified 105 gaps and issues with service provision. Some of the most common service gaps identified were: access to dentistry services including emergency dentistry, and access to advocacy services. We were able to raise these with service commissioners.

### NHS dentistry

Accessing an NHS dentist is often difficult even in a normal year. During the pandemic this became much more difficult. Dental practices closed at the start of the pandemic and after reopening were able to see fewer patients due to social distancing and the need to allow gaps ('fallow time') between patients for increased cleaning and air circulation, especially as many dental treatments include 'aerosol generating procedures' which could potentially spread Covid. Fewer appointments and a backlog from the time when dentists were closed led to more people in dental pain struggling to get care, despite increases in capacity at the Emergency Dental service.

Throughout the year we continued to keep up to date on dental capacity by phoning dental practices. This information meant we could direct callers to a dentist more likely to be able to treat them, although they would often have to wait for quite some time for treatment. We also liaised with the NHSE dental commissioner, making sure they were aware of the issues affecting people and how few dentists were accepting new patients. It is important that NHSE hear this feedback and can draw on it in the work with dentists, to return their capacity back to nearer pre-Covid levels.

As a result of this identification, we now have regular meetings set up between Merseyside Healthwatch services and the dental commissioner to continue this. Across the country Healthwatch have been finding the same issue. Our pooled intelligence has allowed HWE to continue to raise this issue nationally.

### Advocacy

Another gap which we have noted and raised with commissioners is for advocacy. There are some forms of advocacy which legally have to be commissioned and delivered but these only cover very specific situations (e.g. people who are sectioned because of their mental health). There are many other situations where it is important for people to have support in speaking up and being heard. This can help to stop problems from escalating. We raised this gap concern, and non-statutory issue-based advocacy is now being included in a new advocacy service being commissioned for Liverpool.

**"Healthwatch Liverpool has a critical role, which unfortunately is perhaps not well known or understood, in ensuring the voices of those who use health and social care services are heard. With a focus on supporting and challenging how we can improve services and deliver better outcomes, Healthwatch Liverpool not only actively seek views from those using services; which, due to their independence, can enable feedback that may not otherwise be received or addressed; but they also bring vital public feedback to providers and statutory agencies, offering partnership in positive change. As already described, Healthwatch Liverpool plays a key role in supporting the strategic planning of local services and monitoring delivery. This is a critical role at any time, but as we come out of an international Pandemic, it is my opinion that their role is fundamental."**  
**Martin Farran, Director of Adult Services and Health**

## Healthwatch Independent Complaints Advocacy

With all healthcare resources stretched with treating those affected by Covid and prevention thereof, many members of staff were redeployed and other areas of work were put on hold. The complaints handling departments of local health services had to prioritise submissions. While people have been understanding of the unique nature of our current circumstances, there are now a series of delays in processing and investigating complaints.

**Help with NHS  
Complaints**

### This year we:



- Provided direct Independent Complaints Advocacy to 55 people
- Provided information on the complaints procedure to 94 people
- Supported 55 people with Self Help Information Packs, to empower them through the process, when something hadn't gone right with their care

Our involvement in complaints has still been imperative through these challenges. As a result of the ongoing delays a lot of our clients had been unable to receive a response or an acknowledgement of their complaint, and without our involvement they would still be waiting. This has been a very stressful and frustrating time for a lot of our clients.

## Case Study – Communication barriers

This year we have seen a pattern in referrals where English is not people's first language. People have been struggling to communicate with other organisations due to limited communication facilities as a result of Covid. Through our advocacy work, we were able to assist a client who had found it difficult to communicate with the Trust due to English not being their first language, to attend a face-to-face clinical debrief (government guidelines permitting at the time) to discuss a traumatic experience. This enabled their story to be heard and learnt from, benefitting the patient's voice, the trust's learning, and future patients' experience.

## Case Study 2 – Referral delays

We worked with a client who was facing many delays in their referral for treatment. This had been ongoing for around 8 months before we began working with this client. Again English was not our client's first language. Through our advocacy for this client, we were able to enquire with PALs on their behalf about the circumstances around the delay. As a result, the client's care was discussed in a multi-disciplinary meeting and a referral made for consideration of treatment, which may otherwise have continued to be delayed.



To find out more about how we can help with a complaint about an NHS service visit:

➡ [www.healthwatchliverpool.co.uk/complaints](http://www.healthwatchliverpool.co.uk/complaints)



# Involvement

At Healthwatch Liverpool we are supported by 13 volunteers who help us find out what people think is working, and what improvements people would like to make to services.

## This year our volunteers:

- Helped people have their say from home, carrying out focus groups online
- Proof-reading and translating content to ensure our information is high quality and accessible
- Carried out information accuracy reviews on local service details, ensuring the information we provide is accurate
- Sharing their own experiences with Healthwatch Liverpool
- Supporting and championing our social media engagement

2020/21 presented a number of challenges for our volunteers who have also had to adapt very quickly to participating in our engagement activities remotely. As an organisation, we have done our utmost to support our volunteers to continue in their roles by providing resources, equipment, training and wellbeing support. They have demonstrated great enthusiasm, resilience and commitment in their approach to engagement and participation at such a difficult time. We would like to say a massive thank you to our HWL volunteers for their ongoing support, dedication and involvement in our work. Here's to us all being able to meet in person very soon!



## Meet our volunteers



### Hearing their stories - Elizabeth

"It has been an eye opener to see in reality, the challenges that health and social care users face daily in trying to access services. Being a member of the volunteering team has presented a great opportunity to meet people when they are feeling vulnerable, be more empathetic, hear their stories and give them a chance to speak out and be heard.

It has provided me with the privilege of being trained in areas of safeguarding, learning disability awareness and patient experience.

These trainings sessions have helped to boost my self esteem and self confidence and to develop a positive mind set, and the support I have received as a volunteer, has helped to make sure I am all good to go in empowering service users."



### Zooming into 2021 - Marie




"Having been a Healthwatch Liverpool volunteer for some time, this past year has proved a challenge. However, it has also opened up opportunities and enabled me to develop new skills. I have participated in many activities including facilitating and supporting numerous online Zoom focus groups. I have helped to gather information from many diverse groups and ensure their voices are heard. Along with participating in focus groups, I have also helped send out survey forms to hard-to-reach groups, supported the collection of feedback data, and reviewed the Live Well Directory with other volunteers.

I would definitely say that 2020 has been a year to remember and am I looking forward to volunteering with Healthwatch Liverpool during 2021."



### Volunteer with us

Are you feeling inspired? We are always on the lookout for new volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering, please get in touch with our Volunteering and Involvement Officer, Steph.

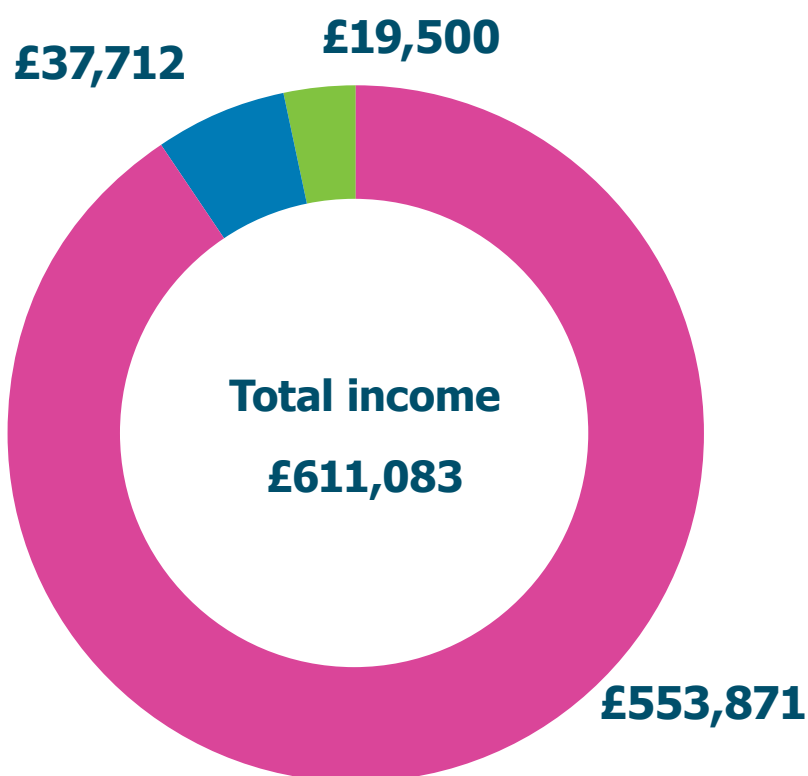
 [www.healthwatchliverpool.co.uk/volunteer](http://www.healthwatchliverpool.co.uk/volunteer)  
 **0300 77 77 007**  
 [steph.gregory@healthwatchliverpool.co.uk](mailto:steph.gregory@healthwatchliverpool.co.uk)

# Finances

To help us carry out our work we receive funding from our local authority under the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

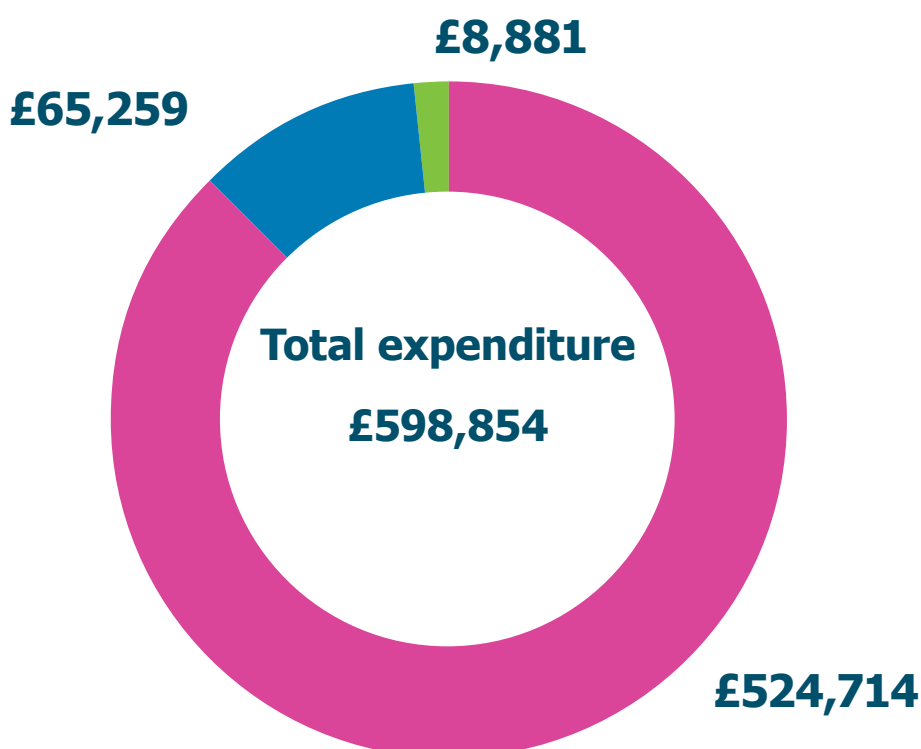
## Income

- Healthwatch funding received from local authority
- Funding from Citizens Advice Liverpool
- Funding received from Liverpool CCG



## Expenditure

- Staff costs
- Operational costs
- Support and administration



# Next steps & thank you

## Top three priorities for 2021-22

1. The continuing impact of the pandemic including the impact on health inequalities
2. Mental Health and Wellbeing
3. Care homes

## Next steps

- As soon as we can safely do so, we want to resume in-person engagement including engagement with Healthwatch members. We will work with local community organisations to do this and to hear the experiences of people who felt less included and heard during the pandemic. We will do this alongside online engagement, recognising that people will be ready to engage in person at different paces and that for some people, online options have allowed them to be included in a way they haven't been able to before.
- We are restarting our Enter and View visits to care homes (with appropriate safety measures) and look forward to also being able to do this within other care settings.
- We are revisiting our Care Home Project to see if the experiences of care home staff and the families of residents changed in the later waves of the pandemic, and if there are further lessons to be learned.
- We will be developing projects to increase our engagement with children, families, and young people to better understand their experiences and the impact of the pandemic on people at such a formative time of their life.
- We will be supporting Health and Care partners to engage with less heard communities and those most affected by the health inequalities in the city, to ensure that as the city works to recover from the pandemic, inequalities are tackled rather than deepened.



**"The pandemic and the impact it has had on health and care services have hit hard. None of us are unaffected but some have been hit harder than others. As a city we can't allow the long term impact of the pandemic to be deepening inequalities and exclusion. The "new normal" needs to include decisions being made with communities at their heart, based on an understanding of people's lives and experiences and with a commitment to leaving no one behind. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everybody who is helping us to put people at the heart of health and social care. From our staff, volunteers, members and our Community Engagement Board, to the community organisations that have contributed to our work. And of course, members of the public who shared their invaluable views and experiences with us. We look forward to working with you through the next year, to advance the impact and positive change we can create together in Liverpool. Healthwatch Liverpool also sends our thanks and appreciation to health and social care workers, and all frontline staff helping to get Liverpool through the Covid-19 pandemic." Sarah Thwaites, Healthwatch Liverpool Chief Officer**





# Statutory statements

## About us

Healthwatch Liverpool is delivered by Laridae CIC, 151 Dale Street, Liverpool, L2 2AH (company number 8254903).

Healthwatch Liverpool 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.**

We have a Community Interest Company board with 6 directors who work on a voluntary basis to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny to our activities. In 2020-21 they met 5 times and made decisions on matters such as our budget, policies and working from home arrangements.

They are assisted by a parallel Community Engagement Board with 11 members in this year representing local communities to ensure that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community. Through 2020-21 the Community Engagement Board met 10 times and made decisions on matters such as our priorities for 2021-22 and influencing the direction of particular projects.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities. We learn a lot about the issues people are facing from our information and signposting enquiries; for example how difficult it is to access an NHS dentist and to share that information with commissioners. We supplement this with focused engagement such as our series of online focus groups.

## 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 2020/21 we have been available by phone, by email, provided a webform on our website, attended virtual meetings of community groups and forums, provided our own virtual activities such as surveys and focus groups 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.

When we had to change to online events we made sure that people without internet access could -and did- join in by phone, and that we ensured interpreting and translation including BSL was available for online events. We also liaise with community organisations that work with people who are less often heard and draw on the expertise of our Community Engagement Board.

We ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. We publish it on our website and link to it on social media and in our member newsletter.

### 2020-21 priorities

Project / Activity Area	Changes made to services
Impact of Covid/ Health Inequalities	<p>We shared what the public were telling us with decision makers including the Health Protection Board. Our information supported the concerns of key partners about the devastating and unequal impact of Covid. A shared commitment to mitigate that led to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Vaccination bus delivering targeted Covid vaccinations to communities with the greatest barriers or hesitancy to take them up.</li> <li>- Engagement with ethnic minority groups and communities, and targeted communication from community members to their peers.</li> <li>- Decision to appoint Community champions based in community organisations, to serve as a two-way channel between communities and public health, initially on vaccine take-up but also on other health approaches to address inequalities and reverse the declining local life expectancy.</li> </ul>
Mental Health	<p>Mental Health is being built into the city's Covid recovery planning. So far this has included some targeted funding to third sector organisations to provide support around bereavement, suicide and advice. We contributed to a multi-agency report to the local Social Care and Health Select Committee.</p>
Social care settings in the pandemic	<p>Our report has influenced social care and mental health recovery planning. Some of what we learned was specific to the first wave of Covid-19 when the NHS was protected but care homes less so. A follow-up piece of work, which is about to start, will see which issues continued in later outbreaks and still need further action to address.</p>

## Responses to recommendations and requests

This year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we did not make use of our Enter and View powers. Consequently, no recommendations or other actions resulted from this area of activity. There were no issues or recommendations escalated by our Healthwatch to Healthwatch England Committee and so no resulting special reviews or investigations.

## Health and Wellbeing Board

Healthwatch Liverpool is represented on the Liverpool Health and Wellbeing Board by Sarah Thwaites, Chief Officer. During 2020-21 our representative has effectively carried out this role by attending meetings, sharing community insights and participating in groups that report to the Health and Wellbeing Group such as the Health Protection Board (which met weekly for much of the year) and the Well Liverpool pandemic recovery group.



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