

The value of listening

Healthwatch Liverpool
Annual Report 2023 – 2024



healthwatch
Liverpool

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Message from our Chair

Tackling health inequalities in Liverpool during a cost of living crisis.

In my first year as Chair of Healthwatch Liverpool, I have been humbled and inspired by the continued efforts of our chief executive Sarah and her team to give a voice to the most vulnerable people in our population, in order to support the health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities.

In that time the service has delivered above and beyond its statutory requirements, shining a light on opportunities for improvement and highlighting where we can focus our attention to meet the needs of our communities. In the last 12 months our team have been able to do deep dive work around diverse subjects including dental and primary care access, hospital provision, and services and needs for trans people.

We were sad to say goodbye to our NHS complaints advocacy staff in June 2023 but we can be proud of our work supporting people with their NHS complaints over the past five years. We made sure there was a smooth transition to the new provider and we look forward to working together to make sure that everyone is supported to raise concerns about their care provided by our local NHS Trusts.

We had happier news in February 2024 as we received confirmation that we have been awarded the contract to provide Healthwatch services to Liverpool for a further three to five years, to deliver more for Liverpool. This includes visiting more care homes across the patch to support residents in getting their views across and helping to improve standards. We will continue to be the go-to organisation for the city to amplify your voices, whether by phone, chatting to us in the community or at one of our consultation events, or getting involved in our surveys and needs assessments.

Our hosted Live Well Directory continues to be the primary resource for finding out what services are available near you, and the many things you can get involved with in your local area to support your physical and mental health and wellbeing. All of this will continue to be shaped by the Community Engagement Board, and we welcome people from our neighbourhoods to get involved, with us or one of the amazing community groups out there making a difference to people's lives.

Finally, I hope you enjoy reading our 2023 – 24 annual report. As always I'd like to remind you, If you've got a story to share about health or social care services in Liverpool, there's never been a better time to get in touch. We can't wait to hear from you.



"In my first year as Chair of Healthwatch Liverpool, I have been humbled and inspired by the continued efforts of Sarah and the team to give a voice to the most vulnerable people in our population ... We will continue to be the go-to organisation for the city to amplify your voices."

Zoran Blackie, Healthwatch Liverpool Chair



About us

Healthwatch Liverpool 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

We want a health and social care system that is fair and works for everyone. We want to make a difference by influencing positive change.



Our values are:

- **Empowering** – We empower local people to have their voices heard on issues relating to health and social care;
- **Equity** – We value equality, diversity and inclusion and work to make sure that all communities in Liverpool are represented in our work;
- **Person-centred** – We work with everyone in an empathetic, confidential and non-judgemental way;
- **Collaboration** – Our work is evidence-based and collaborative. We work closely with other organisations which share our values;
- **Independence** – We are independent and not afraid to challenge decisions when they are not in the interests of local people;
- **Accountability** – We are transparent and open in everything we do and we are accountable to the community.



Year in review

Reaching out:

1199 people

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

92,928 people

came to us for clear advice and information on topics ranging from dentistry to social care, via our advice and information service, website, the Live Well Directory, and at community events.



Making a difference to care:

We produced

13 reports

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

Our most popular report was

“The State of NHS Dentistry in Liverpool”

which we published in Winter 2022, highlighting the struggles people face on accessing dentistry in Liverpool. The dental crisis continues and as such, this report is still our most popular report in 2023/24.



Health and social care that works for you:

Our outstanding volunteers gave

183 hours

to make care better for our community.

We're funded by our local authority for our Healthwatch activity.

In 2023 – 24 we received

£428,423

which is **22% less** than the previous year.





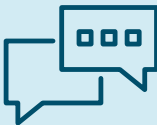





At the end of 2023 – 24 we employed

11.9 staff (FTE)

who help us carry out our work. – down from 15.3 at the start of the year.

How we've made a difference this year

Spring	 <p>We attended an event for Liverpool's carers, providing signposting, advice, and information.</p>	 <p>We published our report on Sensory Impairment Services, following engagement with service users</p>
Summer	 <p>We were quoted in the House of Commons Health and Social Care Committee's NHS Dentistry Report</p>	 <p>We submitted written evidence to the Women's Health Parliamentary Inquiry</p>
Autumn	 <p>A Co-production Charter was produced by Partnerships, including the Learning Disability and Neurodiversity Partnership Boards which we support and co-chair</p>	 <p>Launched our survey about Sexual Trauma in healthcare</p>
Winter	 <p>We carried out Listening Events at The Walton Centre, and Liverpool University Dental Hospital.</p>	 <p>We provided Information, Advice and Signposting at a Dementia event, and heard people's experience at an additional event with people with dementia.</p>



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

Three ways we have made a difference in the community

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

Bridging the gap for the local Polish community and accessing hospital services

Our connections with Liverpool's Polish community have improved greatly this year, and the Polish community organisation, Merseyside Polonia, now sits on our Community Engagement Board and has been actively engaged with our work. We have worked with Merseyside Polonia to address issues raised by the Polish community in relation to access to acute hospital services. From this:



- Several meetings and visits have taken place with the Patient Experience Team at The Royal Liverpool Hospital. From this work, Polish patients were involved in a PLACE assessment (Patient Led Assessment of the Care Environment) at The Royal which led to more accurate menu translations for Polish patients.
- A 'walkabout' at The Royal also identified a number of access/signposting issues for Polish people – including translated information availability on self-check-in machines. Work is now on-going to address these issues.
- Merseyside Polonia also provided us with useful introductions to other community groups, enabling us to speak to even more people and hear their voices.



Meeting at the Royal Liverpool Hospital with Merseyside Polonia and the Patient Experience Team.

Champion for Diversity on Liverpool Health Determinants Research Collaboration

We are committed to both making sure people's voices are heard and working with others to reduce the inequities in local people's health. We were delighted to be partners with Liverpool City Council, local universities and LCVS in a successful bid to NIHR's Health Determinants Research Collaborative. This will bring £5 million into Liverpool to tackle health challenges through better decision making. Our role will be to advise on and support the involvement of local people in the programme – including as community researchers. 50 local people of all ages and backgrounds will be recruited, trained and supported by the HDRC to tell their stories, co-produce research and advocate for change – making a real difference to their communities.



"Healthwatch Liverpool are a valued partner of the Liverpool Health Determinants Research Collaboration (HDRC). The HDRC aims to enable Liverpool to become a world leading centre for research. The programme is focussed upon enabling a culture of making evidence informed decisions by Liverpool City Council and its partners to improve the determinants of health. This will ultimately lead to overall improvements in health outcomes and a narrowing of the health divide within the city. Although it is early days of a 5-year programme, having Healthwatch Liverpool on the programme board has been extremely valuable in ensuring a different perspective focussed upon the importance of genuine community involvement and co-production. Healthwatch Liverpool have been a champion for diversity and ensuring we focus on building into the programme at an early stage ways to include people who are often excluded or unheard"

Prof Matt Ashton, Director of Public Health Liverpool

Elevating Voices In Gender Diversity and Secondary Care

Following publication of our 'Trans Healthcare' report (June 2023) which had a focus on primary care, we received further feedback from trans and non-binary people about secondary care experiences. This feedback focussed on Liverpool Women's Hospital and Liverpool University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

We therefore began to work with staff and former/current patients at these trusts, and a local transgender support group, Spirit Level, to address issues of poor practice/discrimination, and to review policy documents to ensure they are inclusive and use suitable language. We also aimed to facilitate awareness-raising/discussion events at which trans and non-binary patients would be invited to tell their stories, answer questions from clinical and non-clinical staff and provide training on gender diversity and inclusion.

This work is on-going including several events scheduled over the coming months. We have also established an informal Gender Diverse reference group of local people who are willing to be involved in or consulted on the work set out above. Feedback from the hospital trusts involved has been very positive, and ongoing collaboration is planned.



There's a summary of other outcomes we've achieved this year in the Statutory Statements section at the end of this report.

"A Good service, when you get in" – GP Access

At Healthwatch Liverpool we know it is important to people to be able to contact their GP when they need to, and in a way that works for them. We also know, from what people tell us, that they do not always feel that they can access their GP as easily as they would like to.

Our overarching focus is currently on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, but we are always interested in gathering feedback on the general experience as well as the experience of those getting unequal care and access.

We shared our report with partners at the ICB, informing their Primary Care Recovery Plan and actions.

Key findings



A majority of people prefer to contact the GP by phone, followed by going in in-person.

The most popular phone system included a call-back option. People also like to know where they are in the queue.



There were mixed views on eConsult; some people said they had to lie on the form to avoid being advised to go to A&E. Some found it easy to use, others didn't.

GP websites varied in the information they provided and in how accessible they were, including for speakers of other languages.



Older people were more likely not to use the internet and there were some examples of older people falling through the gaps.

Most patients were unfamiliar with the roles of ARRS staff (Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme e.g. Social Prescribing Link Workers, pharmacists, physiotherapists).



Most patients were unaware of the Enhanced Access scheme which was introduced in October 2022.

Practice managers told us that practices are under enormous pressures, and many struggled to recruit staff to cover higher demand from patients.



Older people, people with sensory disabilities and speakers of other languages faced additional problems in accessing GPs/primary care.

We know from NHS Cheshire & Merseyside Integrated Care Board (ICB), Liverpool Place that work is already happening around some of these, for example improving/increasing the ways to access GP practices.

Trauma Informed Care – The impact of sexual trauma on attending for cervical screening – and other health care appointments

We received feedback from patients about the impact that sexual trauma has on their confidence in attending screening appointments for cancer, or other conditions, or feeling comfortable with health care professionals touching them in an intimate way in the course of required treatment or clinical investigations.

Often when survivors of sexual assault visit a medical professional, memories can surface due to the type of examination and the lack of control the person might feel. This can be so difficult that many actively avoid seeking medical attention which can put their health at risk. Survivors often make a choice not to disclose their experience of sexual assault or abuse to medical professionals and may not want their medical records to contain this information. Many NHS professionals receive limited or no training about this. This training gap leaves healthcare professionals unaware of the prevalence of sexual abuse and the extent to which associated trauma can impact survivors and the way they access healthcare.

What we did

We worked with the Survivors Trust to develop a survey, based on one they had already devised, but adapted to gather our own local information. We then worked with organisations including WHISC (Women's Health Information & Support Centre), RASA (Rape & Sexual Assault Centre), SLDAS (South Liverpool Domestic Abuse Services), Savera, Refugee Women Connect and Safe Place Manchester to develop the survey and check that it used suitable language, included relevant questions, and signposted people to appropriate support services.

We wanted to hear from survivors of sexual violence to:

1. Build a case for improvements in local healthcare.
2. Work with local services to help them understand how they can make their services more accessible and more supportive for survivors of sexual trauma.
3. Contribute to national work carried out by the Survivors Trust in association with NHS England (NHSE).

We circulated the survey via the organisations mentioned above, as well as sending it to Merseyside Polonia, Chinese Wellbeing, LCVS, Liverpool Public Health Department, Central Liverpool Primary Care Network (PCN), Mersey Care Talking Therapies, The University of Liverpool, The Maggie Oliver Foundation and Manchester NHS Foundation Trust for distribution. The survey ran from November 2023 to February 2024, and we received 66 responses.

We received additional funding from Liverpool Charity & Voluntary Services (LCVS), acting as community lead for Merseyside & Cheshire Cancer Alliance, which was used to add a component about cervical screening to the survey and for language support for survey respondents, where required.

Further, Healthwatch England also funded an interview with a disabled woman about her experience of cervical screening. This interview allowed us to produce a case study of this woman's experiences, and suggestions for improvements to services. This was part of a wider piece of work involving 9 other Healthwatch organisations and also fed into a Healthwatch England report.

What difference did this make?

We made 5 recommendations for screening programmes and a further 2 for wider health care. Examples include:

1. NHS Screening staff to work with diverse patients to co-produce trauma-informed invitation letters.
2. If the current national work on self-screening for cervical cancer proves it to be an effective method, seek to roll this out locally as quickly as possible to allow those who would prefer to self-administer the test to have this choice.
3. Health passports and #CheckWithMeFirst cards to be routinely available in locations such as GP practices, Walk-In Centres and hospital waiting rooms. These would make it easier for a range of patients to discreetly let health practitioners know that certain procedures may be difficult or re-traumatising for them. This is something to consider beyond screening programmes, and may also be helpful to neurodivergent patients, patients with learning disabilities and trans or non-binary patients for example.

Our recommendations can lead to real impact for local people, including increased take-up of screening and local timely roll out of self-screening if found to be effective. This can have outcomes not only for earlier detection of cervical cancer, but also, increased peace of mind and certainty through increased uptake. Beyond this, our recommendations will put trauma-informed care, and therefore, people and their experiences, at the heart of service design, delivery, and continued learning. This will help to improve the experiences of healthcare for these patients, leading to wider health improvement and less avoidance of future consultations or treatment.

We hope to secure further funding to take these recommendations forward in 2024/25.



The Survivor's Trust #CheckWithMeFirst cards which we hope to make widely available across Cheshire and Merseyside over the coming year.

Patient Voice Brings Trust Improvements

Through our work with Liverpool's NHS Trusts, we regularly share patient experiences and feedback, to facilitate positive change and service improvement, as well as positive feedback to promote best practice. Our liaison with Trust stakeholders also means we can escalate patient experiences, leading to specific outcomes for patients and families.

Rathbone Hospital Rehabilitation Unit Listening Event

We spoke with patients at this mental health unit managed by Mersey Care who were generally very positive about the unit, and we shared this praise with service leads. Patients also told us about areas for improvement. Patients specifically shared issues with delays for visitors at the entrance to the unit.

As a result, the unit has now employed a full-time receptionist/ward clerk, and has implemented a new doorbell system which can be heard throughout the first floor, leading to reduction in visitor waiting times, and further peace of mind to patients awaiting visitors and loved-ones, at a time when that connection can play a vital role in their wellbeing.



LUHFT Endoscopy Improvements For Disabled Patient and Carer

A carer contacted us about their family member's negative experiences at Endoscopy Units across Liverpool University Hospitals Foundation Trust (LUHFT) sites. These experiences included poor facility layout for wheelchair users, staff attitudes which they felt were prejudiced towards wheelchair users and unsafe use of the patient hoist when it was used at all. This patient requires regular endoscopies due to a pre-cancerous condition, and as a result of their experiences, felt too traumatised to consider returning for repeat tests.

With consent, we raised these experiences with LUHFT. As a direct result of this, not only were genuine apologies and learning shared with the client, but specific assurances were made around improvements and learning, including hoist provision and use, staff attitudes, layout improvements, and several other positive changes. The patient and carer were both relieved and satisfied and would now feel comfortable to return in future for these vital repeat endoscopies.



"I contacted Healthwatch Liverpool, on behalf of my Mum who had very poor experiences with endoscopy appointments at The Royal and Broadgreen hospitals. Not only did they listen to and empathise with this, but they offered to raise our feedback directly with the hospitals. The Trust came back with a proper apology and specified the ways they would ensure these issues didn't happen again. Mum and I are glad to know nobody else will experience what Mum experienced, as a wheelchair user, and also, as a patient with a cancer risk. This is an anxious time anyway without worrying about poor care. We're relieved that our experience, and sharing this has led to something positive, both for Mum in future, and for other patients."

Carer, on behalf of endoscopy patient

Your voice heard at a wider level

We collaborate with other Healthwatch to ensure the experiences of people in Liverpool influence decisions made about services at Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care System (ICS) level.

During the last 12 months, the 9 Cheshire & Merseyside local Healthwatch have continued to work together to provide a strong voice for the 2.5 million people who live, work and use health and care services across our region. We have worked together on a wide range of issues enabling the Cheshire & Merseyside ICS to hear what matters to local people on a much wider footprint, and use this to make informed decisions about the provision of health and care services. Healthwatch leads meet weekly to ensure we are up to date with changes in services, requests for support from the health and care system, and to brief each other on the ICS meetings we have attended. We have also had face to face meetings with lead officers of the Integrated Care Board. There is an agreed process for working together which includes a Memorandum of Understanding and a Data Sharing Agreement.



Dental improvement plan – we have consistently highlighted the dental shortage locally and we are delighted to see the agreement of a Cheshire and Merseyside dental recovery plan to start addressing some of the challenges. We sit on the Dental Recovery Board that oversees the implementation of the plan.

Primary Care Recovery Plan agreed by Cheshire and Merseyside ICB in this year included a section written by the 9 Healthwatch in Cheshire and Merseyside on what the public expect from GP primary care. This was based on the feedback that we and the other Healthwatch received on this subject and our GP Access Report published in this year. We hope to work with the ICB in 2024-25 to find out from patients if the plan is making a difference to the experiences of patients.



Many local people have been experiencing long distressing stays in corridors of A&E departments. The local Healthwatch organisations have been sharing feedback on how this impacts patients and helped produce a **“Patient Experience Assessment Tool” for Accident and Emergency Corridor Care**. While the top priority has to be making sure patients don’t need to receive their care on corridor trolleys, the checklist aims to maintain safety and dignity as much as possible while corridor care remains a sad reality.



“We are fortunate to have a really strong Healthwatch network in Cheshire and Merseyside. In 2023–24, our nine local Healthwatch organisations continued to play an influential role in the work of both NHS Cheshire and Merseyside and our wider Health and Care Partnership – as an equal partner and constructive critical friend.

I really value the vital contribution that each Healthwatch organisation – and the wider Healthwatch network – continues to make to our Integrated Care Board, our nine Place Partnerships, and many important programmes of work.

Most important of all, remains the unique value that the Healthwatch network brings in connecting system partners to people’s views and experiences of the health and care services that we provide – in doing so helping us to identify and implement improvements.”

Graham Urwin, NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Chief Executive



Hearing from all communities

Over the past year, we have worked hard to make sure we hear from everyone within our local area. We consider it 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:

- Taking our service to the community, through various community events and outreach opportunities;
- Meeting with community organisations that serve some of Liverpool's diverse communities to hear their concerns and experiences;
- Leading the 'Lived Experience' Co-Production work with Neurodivergent people and/or people with learning disabilities;
- Our Community Engagement Board members bring to us the experiences they hear, enabling us to articulate the concerns and priorities of diverse communities;
- We take these insights and community intelligence directly to NHS Leaders and ICS Partners.

Co-Production with Neurodivergent People and People with Learning Disabilities

A key focus of our work is engaging with people who are Neurodivergent (particularly autism or ADHD) and / or people who have a learning disability. We helped set up Strategic Partnership Boards for both groups in this year and now co-chair them. We have a team member whose post is specifically to engage with people with lived experience. We are committed to helping people get involved in ways that work best for them. We are now seeing these groups have a real influence both strategically and operationally.

- An all-age Co-Production Charter has been agreed.
- A Joint Strategic Needs Assessment is being finalised.
- Strategies are being written ready for consultation and implementation in 2024-25.
- Individual services have heard and taken on board direct feedback.
- Neurodivergent people and people with a learning disability are being woven into mainstream conversations and commissioning requirements.

Sensory Packs at Royal Liverpool Hospital

As a result of working with neurodivergent people and people with learning disabilities, we heard significant levels of feedback about sensory overwhelm when attending the new Royal Liverpool hospital. This led us to visit the site for a walkthrough, to further understand and experience the sensory impact people told us about.

This led to conversations with the Trust around sensory needs and impacts. The trust are now exploring the idea of 'Sensory Packs' for patients. Healthwatch Liverpool looks forward to further involvement in discussions and planning for this, to ensure patient voice is at the heart of any roll out plans, creating solutions which suit people's needs.



We used this meme to raise awareness among professionals about how the experience of a neurodivergent person may not be obvious and to encourage people to think and ask about the adjustments that might help reduce someone's distress or overwhelm.

People said:	We made sure we:
<p>Co-production often feels too inflexible, and people have felt judged by other well-meaning organisations if they couldn't commit to attending all the time.</p> <p>If people have to miss appointments for a while because of not having enough capacity, they can feel too overwhelmed to come back.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accepted that people's capacity can change and their needs can vary on a day-to-day basis. Welcome people to participate as, when and how works for them. Value each interaction that is possible rather than judging people for the times they can't interact.
<p>When expectations in meetings are not clear people can feel anxious and unable to contribute.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Put speaking and listening symbols on agendas so people know ahead of time what items are updates to listen to and help them to expect when a contribution may be asked for. Provide clear, concise and explicit questions beforehand so that people have thinking and processing time. When the subjects is complex we have two versions of questions, one with more prompts, so that people can choose the one that works for their processing style.
<p>Formal meetings often use off-putting language.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have all people, especially professionals, using clear and accessible language, and ensure everyone feels able to ask questions.
<p>Meeting environments can be overwhelming.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide quiet spaces to seek respite. Provide fidget toys or other things to help people regulate their mood. This could include colouring materials or wordsearches. Sometimes this is enough to regulate someone's mood, enabling them to contribute. They might not have otherwise felt able to get involved. Provided photos and videos of the venue, explanations of the meeting's documents and what to expect. Allow people to contribute in other ways – especially important for 'unheard voices' (the name people chose for those who find meeting formats inaccessible, or who are not able to attend).

This has allowed people to participate in creative and adaptable ways that work for them and empower neurodivergent people to shape the strategy and action plan for the city.

We use similar adaptations in our work with people who have learning disabilities in addition to producing Easy Read information.



"Healthwatch Liverpool are one of our major partners contributing to the System Partnership work that Liverpool City Council and Liverpool ICB are committed to delivering. Sarah from Healthwatch co-chairs both the Neuro-Developmental and Learning Disability Partnership Boards with support from Alice, and Alice has been particularly instrumental in garnering the unheard voices of people with learning disabilities and/or autism."

Liverpool City Council



Healthwatch Liverpool staff with staff from Chinese Wellbeing at a student welcome event

Advice and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch Liverpool is here for you. 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 accessing emergency dental care, finding activities to support wellbeing, or navigating social care – you can count on us.

This year we've helped people by:

- Providing up-to-date information people can trust;
- Helping people access the services they need;
- Helping people with complex needs access NHS dentistry;
- Supporting people to look after their health during the cost-of-living crisis.

NHS Dentistry Crisis Continues in Liverpool

This year, we received **1720 enquiries about dental care**. Of these, 1640 resulted in us recording a provision 'gap', which means that there was insufficient dental services available to meet the client's needs, and our signposting abilities were limited by a lack of suitable service options.

Liverpool residents continued to battle the struggles of NHS Dentistry this year, which means we at Healthwatch Liverpool also continued hearing from the public about this crisis. 56% of enquiries to our Information and Advice service this year, were about dental care. We aim to help people find the health and care services they need so seeing so many people still unable to get dental care is greatly concerning to us and the people we're trying to help.


Liverpool residents continue to contact us to try and find an NHS dentist who will see them. In an environment where some dentists who previously provided NHS care are now only offering private appointments, the gap between those who can and cannot afford care is widening. The few dental practices who are accepting new NHS patients are doing so with lengthy waiting lists, and many more access and registry issues since the pandemic. We have provided up to date information and signposted wherever it is available, including to emergency treatment, within a frustrating dental landscape.

We continue to highlight patients' experiences to dental commissioners at ICS level; and escalating the severest cases where we are most worried about an immediate risk to the patient's physical or mental health. In these exceptional cases, arrangements are made to secure them dental care. This has included patients on immunosuppressant medication who are at risk of infection, people undergoing cancer treatment at severe risk from dental infections and people who are severely malnourished because of not being able to eat, including insulin dependent diabetics. It can also include some people whose dental distress has led to or worsened mental despair.

A vulnerable client with long term conditions and severe mental health issues contacted us after being removed from their dental practice's list for unavoidable non-attendance. The client's dental issues meant they were living on soft foods and Ensure drinks and had lost weight. The impact of these issues was causing further deterioration in their mental health. We escalated this case to the ICB's Dental Team, and the client received a dental appointment. The client came back to us to share: "Thank you so much, it's a lovely Christmas present."

This year the Government agreed a national dental recovery plan. With the dental situation in our region being so poor we felt that much more needed to be done, even just to avoid the situation getting worse. Given the scale of the problem and an underspend each year on the dental budget, Cheshire and Mersey ICB developed a local Dental Recovery Plan to use that underspend to get some of those most in need seen. We were part of discussions about this plan and now sit on the Dental Recovery Programme Board to monitor its implementation.

More fundamental national action is needed to solve the dental crisis but we are pleased to be part of tackling the problem locally in the meantime.

 **"Healthwatch colleagues are fully integrated into the commissioning of services and specific projects across Cheshire and Merseyside and have membership of our programme board which supports the delivery of targeted access schemes. This invaluable input gives us insight into patients' perspectives and experiences and supports decision making. In addition, Healthwatch are regularly in contact with the Dental team to ensure individual vulnerable patients with identified clinical needs can access NHS dental care"**

Luci Davenport, Senior Primary Care Dental Manager, ICB Cheshire and Merseyside

Helping you find the services you need

Our enquiries work provides Information, Advice, and Signposting to the public and professionals in Liverpool, helping people to avoid searching endlessly for answers, and empowering them with up to date and correct information to suit their needs and circumstances. In 2023–24, we provided 11,658 signposts to our enquirers, ranging from emergency dental care, to advocacy services, and from support groups to leisure activities.

People come to us with a range of enquiries, and the complexity of each case means we tailor our advice, information, and signposting to fit each person and each circumstance. That complexity often means we go beyond signposting, at times escalating cases in order to support our clients in finding resolutions and successful outcomes.

A Foot in the Door For Surgery Outcome

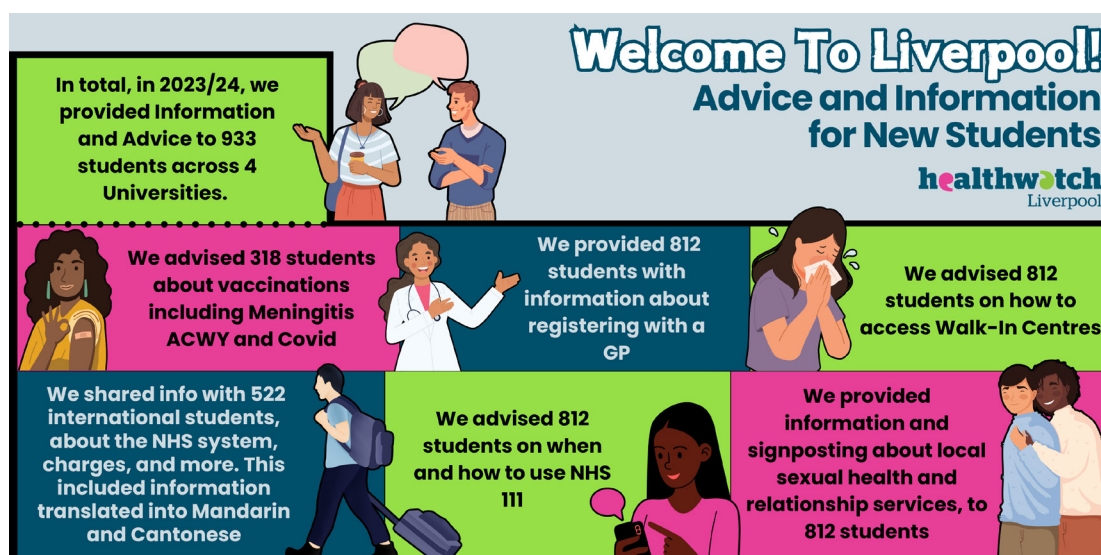
Our client contacted us not knowing where to turn. They had been awaiting foot surgery for over a year with no progress or communication. Initially under the care of another hospital, the client's surgeon had agreed to surgery, with the surgery intended to take place at Broadgreen Hospital. Since then, the client had heard nothing from either hospital, despite multiple attempts to follow up on this. Due to the client's declining health and on-going pain, with the client's consent, we liaised with Liverpool University Hospital Foundation Trust on their behalf, to request a progress update on the client's surgery. Following discussions, the client was offered a consultation with the surgeon for the following month.

The client later contacted us again to share:

"I have received an appointment at Broadgreen hospital. I cannot tell you how relieved I am, at last, to get this. I am sure it must be down to your hard work for me. Thank you very much".

Nobody Should Be Without A GP

We were contacted by a professional working with a vulnerable client, who had no GP after being removed from their previous GP practice list. The client had attempted to register elsewhere, but they were flagged as having been previously removed from a GP practice, and refused. The client should have been placed on the 'Special Allocations Scheme' but this had not happened thus far. As nobody should be without a GP, we liaised with the ICB who in turn liaised with Primary Care Support England, and the client was then allocated to a GP Practice. Both professional and client were relieved with the eventual resolution.



A summary of the work we did to support students who were new to Liverpool in 2023.

The Live Well Directory

The Live Well Directory is a live and up-to-date source of service information for members of the public and professionals in Liverpool. Healthwatch Liverpool manages and maintains the Liverpool based information, ensuring accessible and obtainable information on services from health to leisure, and support groups to food banks, providing vital information at people's finger-tips. In fact, the Liverpool aspect of the Live Well Directory is home to information about more than 1500 services in Liverpool.

In 2023-24, there were 84,950 visits to more than 370,000 pages on the directory. The information on Live Well also feeds through to our Wellbeing Liverpool directory which supports the work of social prescribing in Liverpool. Wellbeing Liverpool was visited 22,097 times this year, across 62,429 pages.

This year, St Helens Borough Council announced their intention to join Liverpool and Knowsley on Live Well in 2024-25 and in partnership with Citizens Advice St Helens have set about adding St Helens based listings. This will expand the reach of the directory within the greater Merseyside and Cheshire area. This new partnership has already seen improvements to the appearance and functionality of the site with more development work planned over the coming year.

We asked professionals, and they said:

What do you like about the Live Well Directory?

"You are an amazing service and make my job a lot easier so thank you – please continue to support us!" – Pathways Advisor

"News and information about local community groups and services, because the Live Well exists, I don't have to spend time 'asset mapping', it's done for me." – Citizens Advice Liverpool

"I value this resource as it is updated regularly and shows activities and services by postcode. I use this every working day to support my clients" – Citizens Advice Liverpool

"The website provides a wide range of information on activities, support and groups that are available. It gives you a lot of information that can be provided to people who are in the community and who don't always have access to the internet. For people who are able to use the website it gives them the freedom to look for things for themselves." – Community Connector

What else would you like?

The most wanted addition to the offer was a regular update/bulletin on new groups added to the directory. **We set up a monthly email update for professionals to fulfil this.**



"Live Well / Wellbeing Liverpool have been invaluable for asset mapping services across ward and neighbourhood level. This will only be enhanced further through the continued development work from Healthwatch, in capturing local community assets and resources to support a strength-based approach for practitioners to service delivery in Liverpool.

Through maintaining and developing the LiveWell site, Healthwatch Liverpool are continuing to ensure that residents can find and access local services, activities, advice, and support to improve their health and wellbeing."

Barry Fearnough, Liverpool City Council Neighbourhood Manager



Volunteering

We're supported by a team of amazing volunteers who are at the heart of what we do. Thanks to their efforts in the community, we're able to understand what is working and what needs improving.

This year our volunteers:

- Visited communities to facilitate information stalls at community events
- Collected experiences and supported their communities to share their views
- Co-designed patient experience surveys
- and more!

This year our team of volunteers which included 2 student placements, dedicated 183 hours of their time to Healthwatch Liverpool's vision and goals.

Their work included: co-facilitation of events including Student Freshers stalls, mental health information stalls, and Listening Events at health and care settings. Volunteers also supported the facilitation of our Co-Production groups with neurodivergent people and people with learning disabilities. This year, volunteers also co-designed patient experience surveys utilized at such events.

Volunteers engaged with various training opportunities this year, including training delivered by Healthwatch England, as well as local training on Enter and View visits, and project specific training on 'Trauma Informed Care'.



"My experience with Healthwatch Liverpool has been incredibly, insightful and valuable with the teams. The organization plays a crucial role in the healthcare system in Liverpool and beyond by gathering feedback from the public and patients to improve health, statistics and social care services in Liverpool.

Healthwatch Liverpool provided a platform for me as a student nurse to share my experiences with health and social care services. They feedback on various aspects such as access to services, quality of care, waiting times, communication with healthcare professionals, and overall satisfaction with the learning received. This feedback I received was [helpful] to identify areas for improvement and advocate for changes in my future practice.

One of the most remarkable aspects of my experience with Healthwatch Liverpool is witnessing the dedication and passion of their team members both past and current staff.

They are committed to making a difference in the lives of people by ensuring that their voices are heard and that their concerns and recommendations are addressed, respectively."



Moses –
Student volunteer

Do you feel inspired?



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



www.healthwatchliverpool.co.uk



0300 77 77 007



enquiries@healthwatchliverpool.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.

Our income and expenditure

Income for Statutory Healthwatch Provision		Expenditure	
Contract income from Local Authority	£428,423*	Staffing costs	£421,477
Other income from Local Authority		Operational	£37,029
Funding for ND/LD work	£34,121	Support and administration	£10,374
Funding for Wellbeing Liverpool hackathon hosting	£5,000		
Total income from Local Authority	£467,544*	Total expenditure	£468,880

Additional income is broken down by:

- £7,852.79 received from Access to Work.
 - £800 received from Healthwatch England for a cervical screening project interview.
 - £4,355 received from Cheshire and Merseyside Cancer Alliance for a cancer screening project.
- * In April and May 2023 we received funding to continue delivering NHS Complaints Advocacy while the service transitioned to a new provider from June 2023. This funding is included in our income covering statutory Healthwatch Provision.

Next steps

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

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

Our top three priorities for the next year are:

1. Equity and inclusion
2. Care homes and care settings
3. Improving experiences for people who are neurodiverse or have a learning disability





Statutory statements

Healthwatch Liverpool is delivered by Laridae CIC, 151 Dale Street, Liverpool, L2 2AH .

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 7 directors who work on a voluntary basis to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny to our activities. In 2023-24 they met 9 times and made decisions on matters such as our budget, staffing, policies and values. They are assisted by a parallel Community Engagement Board with 16 member organisations 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 2023-24 the Community Engagement Board met 7 times, influencing the direction of particular projects, sharing community insights and setting our priorities for 2024-25.

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

We use a wide range of approaches to ensure that as many people as possible can provide us with insight into their experience of using services. During 2023/24, we have been available by phone, and email, provided a web form on our website and through social media, as well as attending meetings of community groups and forums. This then drives our work and our priority setting. Our Community Engagement Board helps us to decide which of the many issues we hear about through these routes are selected as our top priorities. For example, the many calls we get from people unable to access NHS dentistry makes this a priority to keep raising with decision makers. Our conversations with community partners and local people and events and meetings bring fresh issues to our attention – for example sparking our work this year on Sexual Trauma. Our Community Engagement Board helps us to decide which of the many issues become high priority for us.

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

Responses to recommendations

We had three providers who did not respond to requests for information or recommendations within the time period covered by this report. These are: Royal Liverpool University Dental Hospital, Alder Hey Children's NHS Foundation Trust and Redford Court Residential Care Home, who have not yet responded to recommendations made following patient experience Listening Events, and Enter and View visit. There were no issues or recommendations escalated by us to Healthwatch England Committee, so no resulting reviews or investigations.

Taking people's experiences to decision-makers

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

In our local authority area, for example, we take information to the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Place Partnership board, Social Care and Health Scrutiny Committee. Primary Care Group and Learning Disability and Neurodiversity Partnership Boards. We have developed a local data sharing system which we call Healthwatch Liverpool Data Store to share anonymised intelligence with services and decision makers.

We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care System. We work collaboratively with the other local Healthwatch to ensure representation and input into the ICB board, the Health Care Partnership, Quality and Performance committee, Primary Care Committee and System Quality Group. We also share anonymised data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level, via the Healthwatch National Data Store.

Enter and view

This year, we made four Enter and View visits. We made 12 recommendations or actions as a result of this activity. Our visits to local Hospital Trusts this year took the form of Listening Events which did not require the use of our statutory Enter and View powers.

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
Prince Alfred Residential Care Home	To learn more about the care home and the service provided to residents.	Wrote a report of our findings which included many observations of what we felt was good practice. We shared our findings, which included that staff appeared to be kind, proactive and patient in their interactions with residents, with staff at the care home, Liverpool City Council Social Care team and with the general public.
Eldonian House Residential Care Home	To learn more about the care home and the service provided to residents.	Wrote a report of our findings which included many observations of what we felt was good practice. We made 7 recommendations including: consider making dementia friendly changes to the environment for any future decorations/renovations. We shared our findings with staff at the care home, Liverpool City Council Social Care team and with the general public.
Redford Court Care Home	To learn more about the care home and the service provided to residents with acquired brain injuries.	Wrote a report of our findings which included many observations of what we felt was good practice. We made 1 recommendation and shared our findings with staff at the care home, Liverpool City Council Social Care team and with the general public. Findings included: 'This consistency of staffing seems to have contributed to the good practice that was shown during our visit and is validated by the patient feedback we received on site.'
Rockfield House Residential Home	To learn more about the care home and the service is provided to residents with neurodiversity and/or learning disabilities.	Wrote a report of our findings which included many observations of what we felt was good practice. We shared our findings with staff at the care home, Liverpool City Council Social Care team and will shortly be shared with the public via our website.

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Liverpool is represented on the Liverpool Health and Wellbeing Board by Sarah Thwaites, Chief Officer. During 2023/24 our representative has effectively carried out this role by presenting our Annual Report for 2022/23 and speaking on patient feedback on NHS pressures, pharmacy closures, work to produce an all-age autism strategy and the Better Care fund.

Healthwatch Liverpool is represented on Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Partnership and Integrated Care Board by Sarah Thwaites, Chief Officer, in conjunction with the lead officers of the other 8 Healthwatch in the catchment area. We are also collectively represented on the Primary Care Board, Quality and Performance Board, Dental Recovery Board, Transformation Board and the System Quality Group.

2023 – 2024 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
Long covid support – we followed up with the service about recommendations in our 2022 report and received an update on changes made.	<p>To improve awareness in GP practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A newsletter published and we have visited GP surgeries to improve communication;• All letters to GPs offer education to practice colleagues regarding the Long Covid Service. Continue to review low referral practices and offer education sessions;• GPs are advised rationale for tests/investigations required prior to tier 3 Referral to Long Covid at education sessions. <p>For patients:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explained to patients on initial contact regarding need for investigations prior to referral;• Patients are given information leaflets / advice by clinicians either at telephone consultation or Face to Face – or patients may be advised activities to try on an individual basis;• A wide range of leaflets translated into a variety of languages and braille;• Working on some videos of exercises to support people at home;• Educational event has been given to Deaf Society;• Developing a video vlog for activities to support with recovery;• Started a self-help group with external speakers on a variety of topic.
Co-production charter – the Learning Disability and Neurodiversity Strategic Boards which we support took a previously child only Co-production Strategy and rewrote it to be all age.	There is now an all-age Co-production Charter agreed by the Council and ICB at Place and is being built into NHS contracts to ensure that NHS trusts also work with a coproduction ethos.

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
Escalation to LUHFT of how distressing and inconvenient it is for cancer patients and families when last minute appointment changes are not communicated.	Breast Cancer Clinic admin team now contact all patients by telephone with any short notice changes to their clinic appointments.
A local college delivering Health and Social Care training was looking for better connections with health and care providers to give its students more experience. Knowing that recruitment is a major challenge we were keen to support this and use our connections to broker introductions.	<p>A social care apprenticeship is now being developed as a result of these initial introductions.</p> <p>IT students produced two public videos for local NHS trusts improving their understanding of and interest in the sector.</p>
Our Enter and View visit to Eldonian House Residential Care Home resulted in recommendations which have been actioned by the home, to benefit its residents.	<p>The home has implemented our recommendations with an action plan which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing photographic food menus for residents, increasing residents' informed and autonomous choice at meal times which could result in increased nutritional benefits; • Considerations for more dementia friendly décor are planned for the next home renovation.
Our Listening Event at Mersey Care's Urgent Treatment Centres resulted in numerous recommendations based on patient experience, and several outcomes have already been achieved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Old Swan and Garston sites are now displaying their waiting times on screens within the waiting room, following our findings and recommendation about patients feeling unclear on expected waiting times; • A new staffing model has been implemented and recruitment is now underway following recommendations we made around staffing levels; • Actions have been delivered and are further planned following our recommendations based on the voices of patients we spoke to who are neurodiverse and/or have learning disabilities. These include staff training reviews, sensory materials, patient information, and visits being arranged to review the patient journey through the service.
We attend welcome events for Liverpool's large student population.	We worked closely with Chinese Wellbeing to provide students with a home language of Mandarin or Cantonese with translated information, advising them on the important steps for health such as registering with a GP. We also spoke to a large cohort of students from other countries such as India and Nigeria. Our information and advice to students from abroad included explaining the differences in healthcare approach in the UK. Increasing their knowledge of local services and NHS healthcare structure can help to reduce inappropriate demand on Accident and Emergency Services, and help students access appropriate medical care.

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