



Speaking up for better care

Healthwatch Wandsworth annual report 2025/26

Delivered by Wandsworth Care Alliance

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Acting Chief Executive of Healthwatch England
Chris McCann

“

“The NHS plays a vital role in our lives, and we know it faces real challenges. Listening to people’s thoughts about their care is one of the best ways to improve services. Every comment, concern, and compliment helps health and care professionals see what works and what needs to change, so care can be safer and better for everyone.

“We want to say a heartfelt thanks to all the local people who have taken the time to share their experiences, and to the health and social care professionals who have listened and acted on that feedback. Your commitment has helped make a real difference for our community.”

A message from our chair

Welcome to our Annual Report for 2025/6.

We continued to speak up as an independent voice for patients. We listened to individuals, groups and communities; collaborated with other voluntary organisations; and published a series of important reports, including on autism, access to GPs, and experience on a mental health ward.

We took the issues and recommendations to the NHS and others who can make the important changes. They were received positively, and made a real difference.

We achieved this through our volunteers and small staff team, working as part of Wandsworth Care Alliance (WCA) and drawing on its wider expertise. I would like to thank them for their commitment.

Sadly, the Government has decided to end Healthwatch as an independent voice, probably from April 2027. But we believe a strong voice of patients remains essential: and hope that it will be possible in Wandsworth to find a way of building on the capacity and expertise developed over recent years.

Read on to hear more about our collaborations with the community to make sure lived experiences and often unheard voices shape health and social care services.



Chair
Stephen
Hickey

Thank you to everyone in the community who took part in our projects, from residents, to community organisers and managers of health and care services. Our work would not be possible, nor would it make a difference without our work together.

About us

Healthwatch Wandsworth is your independent local health and social care champion.

Although the Government has decided to end Healthwatch as an independent service, probably in 2027, Wandsworth Care Alliance will continue the mission as an independent organisation, building on our knowledge, skills and experience delivering Healthwatch Wandsworth and its predecessor the Link.

We are independent from the Council and the NHS and help their leaders and decision-makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care. You can come to us for trustworthy information and advice.



Our vision

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



Our mission

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



Our values are:

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

Collaboration: We build relationships. We communicate clearly and work in partnership to amplify our influence.

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

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

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

WCA Community Voice and Insights continues the mission

Wandsworth Care Alliance (WCA) staff and volunteers have delivered Healthwatch to achieve our vision:



A resilient, connected community that participates in local systems to ensure everyone is healthy and happy.

We believe this is best done through collaboration and evidence for change based on lived experiences from the community and co-designing solutions.

Our year in numbers



Reaching out:

Nearly 1300 people were involved in sharing experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.

175 people came to us for advice and information on topics such as **GP services**, **hospital services** and **social care**. Our advice pages have been accessed over **3000** times.



Championing your voice:

We published **7** reports about the improvements people would like to see in areas like **autism diagnosis support for 0-8 year olds**, **experiences of accessing GPs**, **Patient Advice and Liaison Services (PALS)** and **Interpretation services for BSL users**.

Our most popular reports were about our previous years' Enter and View of a mental health ward, experiences of autism diagnosis for 0-8-year-olds and experiences accessing GPs.



Making a difference

94% of people said interacting with us made a difference.*

We take the experiences people share with us to people who run health and care services so they make improvements.

5 out of 8 of people running health and social care organisations who responded to our survey said they are making improvements to their services based on engaging with us.**

*Taken from surveys of people using our information and signposting service, our website and events.

** We surveyed people running health and social care organisations. 9 people responded (2 from a health or social care commissioning organisation, 5 from health or social care providers and 2 were from other organisations). (2 said they were not sure. 3 said this was not applicable to them so they have been removed).



Statutory funding:

We received **£178,835** in Government funding from Wandsworth Council (about 3.5% more than last year). This allowed us to employ **2.6 FTE staff** for Healthwatch Wandsworth. **29 people** supported our work by volunteering their time.

Working together for change

We've worked with neighbouring Healthwatch across **South West London** to ensure people's experiences of care are heard at a strategic level – the **SWL Integrated Care System (ICS)** – as well as in Wandsworth itself.



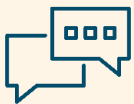
A collaborative network of local Healthwatch:

We have participated in a network of 6 local Healthwatch in South West London. Our network has collated residents' feedback about **community services**, and drawn together their experiences of **adult mental health services**. Our representative has worked with the ICS to make sure the voices of local people inform improvements in the health and care services they fund.

Thanks to people who shared their experiences with us about virtual wards last year, the Integrated Care Board (ICB) have used the feedback when reviewing the services across SW London.

"We have heard what's most important through local engagement, including by our Healthwatch partners."

Jonathan Bates, Chief Commissioning Officer at SWL ICB



A big conversation:

We conducted **engagement with the deaf and deafblind community, their carers and GP Practice staff, to determine how well a new BSL interpretation provider had been implemented in GP Practices**. We published two reports to highlight our recommendations, one for GP Practices and another for our ICS. We are meeting with these stakeholders to press for improvements to BSL interpretation services, based on what people told us and our recommendations.



Building strong relationships to achieve more:

We have continued to meet monthly with our neighbouring Healthwatch and ICS, to discuss engagement priorities and where our work can align. Our ICS representative has also attended a variety of stakeholder groups to champion our community insight and identify further opportunities to ensure local people shape their services. We look forward to developing new ways of working as both the local Healthwatch and ICS structures change over the coming year.

Listening to your experiences

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

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

Every member of the community should have the chance to share their story and play a part in shaping services to meet their needs. Read on to hear about examples of how we reach communities, and work with those who may go unheard.

When change is needed we work with those leading health and care services to hold them to account for the experiences people are having and make sure things change.



Improving support for patient queries and concerns at hospitals

201 people have told us their views about Patient Advice and Liaison Services (PALS), and the feedback will now shape improvements.

We'd heard mixed to negative feedback from local people about accessing and using the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) at local hospitals.

What we did

We spoke to healthcare aware people at community events in collaboration with Estate Art CIC, Wandsworth Patient Forum and the Furzedown Project and we launched a survey to understand issues and barriers people were having to get support when they need it from PALS. Our Healthwatch Governor has also worked with the Council of Governors to highlight the need for change.

Key things we heard:

48%

Of 187 people asked did not know about PALS, 29% were confident about its purpose. Many did not know the difference from complaints.

People suggested that clarity and availability information and interactions with staff should be improved.

40%

Of 29 people who used the service reported issues accessing and communicating with PALS at different hospitals

53% of 28 people asked suggested that communication and responsiveness needed to be improved, We recommended that accessibility and advocacy support should be better embedded.

80%

Of 29 people who used PALS reported they were not entirely satisfied with the outcome

People suggested the ability for PALS to influence change needs to improve. We recommended learning from PALS cases should be better embedded and communicated.

PALS is an important point of contact for patients for questions, concerns and providing support and information about care and treatment and to resolve issues at an earlier and more appropriate stage, rather than going unaddressed and potentially escalating into a formal complaint. Read more [here](#).

What difference did this make?

St George's Hospital have planned more than 13 actions between May and August 2026 to address our recommendations to improve access and support from PALS and to ensure learning from cases is improved.

Improvements for those admitted to an acute mental health ward

People who are admitted to the Holybourne Hospital acute wards as an NHS patient should see improvements to their ward environment, care and activities thanks to people who spoke to Healthwatch Wandsworth and Healthwatch Richmond during our two visits.

We spoke with 16 people staying on acute wards at Holybourne Hospital which is not an NHS trust. We visited because it cares for NHS patients referred by South West London and St George's Mental Health Trust (SWLSTG). There was positive feedback, including satisfaction with therapy staff. However, their stories also highlighted a need for more consistency so that all patients have a positive experience.

Key things we heard that could be improved:



Better and more frequent activities (especially at weekends)

Better staff interactions with certain teams

Improvements in the ward culture and environments

More information and involvement in care plans for patients

We've worked with Holybourne Hospital management and SWLSTG to ensure there is an action plan to make improvements and that progress will be monitored. We plan to visit acute wards at SWLSTG soon. Read more [here](#).

What difference did this make?

The Hospital Director confirmed that the Healthwatch action plan is progressing changes and improvements against the 7 recommendations we made, including updating communication protocols so that patients better understand their care plans.



"I want to thank [Healthwatch Wandsworth and Healthwatch Richmond] for taking the time to visit and understand Holybourne Hospital and for the time your team have taken to ensure the report is accurate and detailed. I also want to thank you for the opportunity to address the outstanding issues."

Steve Bradford - Hospital Director

Working in partnership with communities who are less often heard

Experiences of Urdu-speaking, sanctuary seeking women accessing women's health services

We heard from local Urdu-speaking sanctuary seeking women about the impact of language barriers on accessing women's healthcare.

We collaborated with Happy Homes, Roehampton Wellbeing for Children and Mindworks UK to speak with 56 women about women's health. With thanks to Asma Choudry and Sahar Beg for helping us share health information and hear the experience of attendees. Asma Istwani helped host the discussion through collage-making and creative writing. Read more [here](#).

What difference did this make?

Women at the workshops said that presentations were helpful and were positive about being able to participate.

This project helped us start building relationships for our work to continue with more workshops.

Next, we are also surveying sanctuary seeking women and staff working in services.

We're speaking to women's healthcare services about the experiences people have shared and will launch a zine* to share findings.



*A [zine](#) is a small-circulation print or online publication that is produced through non-commercial means to appeal to a niche audience (from the word fan magazine). Their content usually consists of original or appropriated text and images.

Improving access for South Asian communities to Cervical Screening

We continued working with the South Asian community and health and care partners to increase uptake of cervical screening in Wandsworth.

People told us last year there was a need for culturally appropriate communications that also address language barriers, the need for more community outreach, to break taboos and more cultural sensitivity training for staff. We worked with Happy Homes, Community Roehampton Wellbeing Inclusion Network, Mushkil Aasaan, Wandsworth Asian Women's Association and Women of Wandsworth, SWL NHS ICB, Wandsworth Council, GPs to co-design multilingual materials, short videos and translated FAQs. .



What difference did this make?

Members of the community and staff involved told us that they increased their knowledge and confidence. Community members told us they were more likely to access screening. While measurable impacts, such as the number of women taking up cervical screening will take time to emerge, the approach has already strengthened trust, partnerships and communication. See the materials we produced [here](#).

Understanding what affects Black men's experience of prostate cancer services.

9 Black men with experience of prostate cancer shaped a proposed project, whilst learning more about prostate cancer and the impact of trauma.

We worked with Cancer Don't Let It Win and [RM Partners](#) to hold a workshop. We heard about experiences of prostate cancer services in SW London and the impact of trauma and adverse experiences of these services.

What difference did this make?

We heard from the group that they found the workshop useful or very useful for sharing their experiences and having questions answered. Attendees helped us understand how to shape future projects for which we will apply for funding, with some interested to continue to be more involved and contribute their lived experience.

Read more about the experiences shared with us [here](#).

Making a difference in the community over time

We bring people's experiences to healthcare professionals and decision-makers, using their feedback to shape services and improve care over time. Here are some examples of our work in Wandsworth this year:



By bringing experiences of Neighbourhood Health to life, helping services understand issues people face

Health and care services are starting to re-organise. Early work is grouping staff providing health and care services into Neighbourhood teams. We are bringing to them what local people say it's like to manage their health in their area.

We collaborated with 11 organisations who gathered insights from their communities with funding from a Neighbourhood Health Fund. We've [published](#) the findings and are discussing these with decision makers soon.

We also worked with Central London Community Hospitals (CLCH) to hear from patients receiving co-ordinated [Proactive care](#), a focus of neighbourhood teams.

"Historically GPs selected patients they felt would benefit, but there are lots of people not known to GPs. We've now changed this... Now, the first question we ask is who knows what matters to the person so there is a greater variety of people involved in the discussion and this will hopefully also improve communications between more people supporting the patient."

Campbell Flack, Head of Clinical Services, Wandsworth Place, CLCH



Helping services to involve the public and improve care for everyone.

We continued work with local people and Wandsworth Council to create a co-production charter and toolkit to improve how Council departments work alongside communities when making decisions and running services.

The charter will be presented for formal adoption in 2026 and we will use the charter to improve the involvement of local people across more services.

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

Support whilst awaiting Autism Diagnosis (0-8 year-olds).

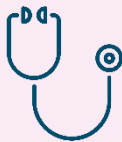
A new webpage gives parents access to support before diagnosis. The service has been renamed as a Social Communication Difficulties service and many of the public services have moved to providing a service without requiring a prior diagnosis.



Find out more on [our page](#) about what happened after our report.

Access to GPs

Several GP practices told us about how they are looking at supporting access for people who have access requirements or do not use the online forms.



More on changes since our work [here](#).

Support for unpaid carers

Identification and support to patients at St George's Hospital has improved. This includes adoption of a Carers' Charter, a Carers' forum, increased training and involvement of staff. We will continue to collaborate with communities and services to bring more changes.



Accessible Information Standards

We've continued to hear from people who about accessibility in GP practices. We have heard from BSL users in South West London to understand if a new provider has made a difference. Read more [here](#).

South West London ICS now have these insights they can use to consider interpretation services they manage.



Community Mental Health Teams/Integrated Recovery Hubs

We continued to survey people who use Integrated Recovery Hubs and have reported to South West London Mental Health Trust about where patient experience is improving and areas for improvement.



Progress since our Enter and View visit:

[Read](#) about improvements to patient information, care and discharge plans on **Thomas Young Ward** at St George's Hospital.



Connecting the community to improve health and wellbeing

We support community organisations to help them run their organisations as well as working closely with them to make sure their communities are heard. We create networks and foster collaborations, all with the aim of improving health and wellbeing in Wandsworth.



"I wanted to thank you again for all your support... Many of the conversations and connections we've developed can be traced back to your encouragement and introductions... We're gradually becoming more connected into local VAWG, migrant wellbeing, health inequalities, and community partnership spaces, which is exactly what we hoped to achieve in these early months."

Sinem Aksay, [Umay Prevention CIC](#)

Umay have connected with the Kingston Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Practitioners Forum, Richmond & Wandsworth VAWG Community Forum and more. Sinem discussed experiences of Turkish-speaking women with Healthwatch Wandsworth as part of the project about language barriers experienced by refugee and asylum-seeking women.

Community organisations gathering insights

WCA has supported local charities to gather and share insights from their communities on topics such as women's health and vaccinations.



"I was terrified in the beginning re. the task itself and the deliverables. We did it and big credit for this accomplishment is to be given to you and your team."

Chris Pavlakis, Other Ways To Care

"Overall, with thanks and appreciation to the Wandsworth Care Alliance, this project has established a solid foundation for future delivery, evidencing both the need for and value of inclusive community-led women's health education."

Martine Anson, Southbank Alliance

Information and signposting

You can come to us when you're struggling to find an NHS dentist, looking for help about how to make a complaint, or advice about a good care home for a loved one.

This year **175** people have reached out to us for advice, support or help finding services. These conversations also help us to understand where, and how your care can be made better. Specific information and advice on our website has been accessed **3156** times and **176** people received information at our events.

This year, we've helped people by:

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



Supporting residents with the complaints process

Sandra contacted us as she felt her mother had experienced poor care while in hospital.

Sandra did not live near her mother and was unaware of who to contact in Wandsworth to resolve the issue and file a complaint.

We supported Sandra by signposting her to the relevant Patient Advice and Liaison (PALS) department to raise a concern with the hospital.

Sandra got back in touch with us to inform us that PALS acknowledged, investigated and ensured a follow up was made with local service managers/matrons. Sandra was given a face-to-face meeting in which proposed resolutions were discussed.



“You were able to listen to the concerns highlighted; confirm options for raising concerns formally via PALS, CQC and formal complaint process.”

Supporting people with dentistry

Tony receives the state pension. While he was aware he is not entitled to free NHS dental treatment he phoned us to say he had recently been charged more than the top band for NHS dental treatment.

We gave Tony information on the maximum amount he should be paying for NHS dental treatment and then provided him with the form to request a refund.

Tony got back in touch to tell us he was successful in receiving a substantial refund on his most recent dental treatment.



“Healthwatch Wandsworth was really co-operative and engaged all the way with my enquiry”

Showcasing volunteer impact

Our fantastic volunteers have given over 1080 hours to support our work. Thanks to their dedication to improving care, we can better understand what is working and what needs improving in our community.

This year, our volunteers:

- Visited communities to promote our work
- Collected experiences and supported their communities to share their views
- Carried out Enter and View visits to local services to help them improve
- Represented us and our community at meetings to promote the involvement of local people and to hold services to account so that they respond to what people have said.



At the heart of what we do

From finding out what residents think to helping raise awareness, our volunteers champion community concerns to improve care in our Healthwatch and Wandsworth Care Alliance community projects.



Shakeel

I had opportunities to support the anonymised analysis of user experiences in mental health Integrated Recovery Hubs, autism diagnostic pathway, patient engagement across GPs, appointment booking on the NHS App and more.

It is rewarding knowing that my work contributes to improving the experiences of vulnerable patients in our community by ensuring that decision-makers have evidence-based information to guide their actions.

WCA provided safeguarding training, induction and I regularly receive updates about plans and events. The team is friendly and dedicated and the volunteers' day event is a source of motivation.

I began volunteering with Healthwatch on the Enter and View team and have continued to support the team when needed, contributing to various other types of surveys such as the early discharge from hospital survey. I have also volunteered with Wandsworth Care Alliance, helping to collect data for the team.

I do not volunteer simply to try something out, but because it is the right thing to do. At the same time, I feel that volunteering is also about what I gain from the experience. I enjoy taking on tasks, doing them well, and making the most of the opportunity.



Nina

I volunteered to make a difference to people's understanding that they have a voice regarding health and social care topics.

I feel I make a positive impact for the organisation and the community through participating in meetings and airing views, helping prepare leaflets, proof reading surveys and results, looking at reports, minutes of meetings, attending courses, social events with communities introducing myself and participating.

I found it difficult at first in formal meetings and with new acronyms. The staff created a welcome and supportive environment. When I had challenges I asked questions, said what I was interested in and did extra training. I became more vocal in expressing myself and my mobility disability is addressed.



Avril

Finance and future priorities

We receive funding Government funding from **Wandsworth Council** under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to help us do our work.

Our income and expenditure:

The following figures have not yet been formally examined or audited and therefore may be subject to future adjustment.

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from Government	£178,835	Expenditure on pay	£167,105
Additional income	£62,000	Non-pay expenditure	£48,354
		Office and management fee	£24,200
Total income	£240,835	Total Expenditure	£239,057

Additional income is broken down into:

- £14,000 income deferred from previous year for continuation of activities
- £42,000 from Wandsworth Council for Co-production project
- £6000 for small projects including: ICB funding for representation, recruiting participants for LSE re-ablement project, RM Partners project proposal and Wandsworth Council funding for prostate cancer project
- We are carrying forward £14,130 into the financial year 2026-7 for continuation of activities.

Integrated Care System (ICS) funding:

Healthwatch across **South West London** also received funding from our Integrated Care System (ICS) to support collaborative work at this level, including:

Purpose of ICS funding	Amount
South West London ICS Funding for the SWL Healthwatch Executive Officer (funds held and related expenditures paid for by Healthwatch Sutton).	£88,000

Future priorities

Over the next year, we will be ensuring local people continue to shape and help improve health and care services.

Our priorities for 2026–7 reflect a lot of potential change in how people are listened to by health and care services. The Government announced they intend to abolish Healthwatch, and at the time of writing, the Bill to make these changes is going through Parliament. There are no specific details about what the future system will look like.

We have focused our plans for the year to do what we can to make sure what people have already told us is heard and that local people continue to be heard. We will not be starting longer-term new projects, but will build on current and previous work.

Our top three priorities for the next year are:

1. Reviewing our work and ensuring that what people have told us remains on the agenda
2. Supporting the embedding of patient voice in new structures for patient feedback and accountability
3. Gathering fresh community insights as we transition to WCA Community Voice and Insights.

As an experienced Healthwatch host, WCA's intention is to prepare for new opportunities, continuing the Healthwatch mission as an independent organisation. Our work this year will include finding funding and new collaborations to contribute to future work with patients and communities in Wandsworth, building on our knowledge, skills and experience.

Read more in our [business plan](#).

Statutory statements

Healthwatch Wandsworth is delivered by Wandsworth Care Alliance (WCA) and our office is at Tooting Works, 89 Bickersteth Road, Tooting, SW17 9SH.

Healthwatch Wandsworth uses the Healthwatch Trademark when undertaking our statutory activities as covered by the licence agreement

The way we work

Involvement of volunteers and lay people in our governance and decision-making.

Our Healthwatch Committee has six members who work voluntarily to provide direction, oversight, and scrutiny of our activities. This includes members of the WCA Board of Trustees. The Trustees and WCA are ultimately responsible for the delivery of Healthwatch.

Our Committee ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community. Throughout 2025/26, the Board met four times and made decisions on matters such as planning our year with the planned abolition of Healthwatch, the Committee election process and responses to proposals for a new NHS Online Trust. We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities by reviewing feedback over the past year, holding conversations in the community and surveying the public and voluntary sector organisations (see our [Decision Making Policy](#))

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 2025/26, we have been available by phone and email, provided a web form on our website and through social media, and attended meetings of community groups and forums. Additional steps to ensure we hear from people who are less often heard include for example, projects focused on Black men with prostate cancer, women who do not speak English as a first language, BSL users. We have acquired funding for resources to support communication and collaborated with community organisations to make sure activities are culturally appropriate and used a trauma informed approach.

We ensure that this report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations, we publish it on our website, mention it at community events and submit it to the Adult Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Statutory statements

Responses to recommendations

There were no providers who did not respond to requests for information or recommendations, although it has been challenging to get responses due to pressures on health and care staff and lack of staff continuity. There were no issues or recommendations escalated by us to the Healthwatch England Committee, so there were no resulting reviews or investigations.

Our Representatives taking people's experiences to decision-makers

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

For example, in our local authority area, our Chair, Stephen Hickey contributes to the Health and Wellbeing Board and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the ICB Health and Care Partnership Board and Health and Care Committee. At these meetings he encourages the inclusion of the views of local people and we present what local people have told us.


Other staff and volunteers contribute to meetings and boards including our nominated Governor at St George's Hospital, at South West London and St George's Mental Health Trust board and other committees relating to a range of services including primary care, social care and more.

We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in the South West London Integrated Care System. For example, we present findings from our South West London-wide engagement to forums including the Health Equity Partnership Group, the SWL Health Research Collaborative and South West London & St George's Mental Health Trust. Alyssa Chase-Vilchez and latterly Andrew McDonald represented the 6 Local Healthwatch in South West London within the South West London Integrated Care Partnership Board and their sub-committees.

We also contribute at a national level through dialogue with Healthwatch England and mutual sharing of information, data and emerging issues.

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