



Business plan

2023-2024

Key themes this year

1. Mental health

2. Hospital discharge

3. Working with community-based health champions

4. Ensuring the patient and community voice has influence in the ICS

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Summary of our plans for 2023–2024

The bigger picture

The effects of the Covid 19 pandemic have continued to be felt and over the past year 'Cost of Living' increases have also had an impact on people. The health and care system restructured into an Integrated Care System (ICS) and we expect the coming year to bring some increasingly collaborative and concerted strategies and actions to tackle issues in health and care. However, challenges to success include issues with workforce and further restructures within the ICS and other organisations.

We have already been involved in developing local strategies and will continue to bring our insight to contribute to the South West London ICS Strategy and Joint Forward Plan, the Richmond and Wandsworth Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategies, the Wandsworth Health and Care Plan and NHS Core20+. We will also take note of where we can contribute to the national work of Healthwatch England and national policies. Our collaboration with other Healthwatch in South West London will develop further over the next year too.

Wandsworth Care Alliance (WCA) will deliver Healthwatch for at least the next three years with a slightly difference emphasis. To continue to react to what communities are telling us, we have listened to what people have told us and then prioritised a number of topics, which are outlined in this plan.

Throughout our work we will continue to champion and investigate the cross-cutting issues of **digital support/exclusion, health inequalities (including racial inequalities), mental health, support to carers and communications.**

Our main objectives for the year:

Each year we set priority themes to focus us on what matters to local people.

We've reviewed experiences people shared with us between April 2022 and March 2023 and have looked at what will be happening in health and social care to identify opportunities for people to have a say in what happens.

This year we aim to focus on the following health and care topics in our project work to promote involvement of people in health and social care, gather insight and/or provide information about local services:

1. Mental health
2. Hospital discharge
3. Working with community-based health champions
4. Ensuring the patient and community voice has influence in the ICS

Within the objectives above we incorporate cross cutting themes of **digital support/exclusion, health inequalities (including racial inequalities), mental health, support to carers** and **communications**.

We are a small team with finite resources so we have a [decision-making framework](#) to ensure that we concentrate our efforts to get the best outcomes with the resources we have available. We will also consider options to take on additional paid work under this criteria.

Topics that we would like to continue to monitor, champion or undertake further insight work on if additional resources become available include:

- Digital support for people affected by memory loss
- Champion an integrated and strategic approach to supporting people with dementia and their carers
- Access to Primary Care
- Support for people affected by sight loss

Please read the *Our plans for the year* section for more detail about what we intend to do and how we will do it.

What is Healthwatch Wandsworth?

Healthwatch Wandsworth (HWW) is the independent champion for people using health and care services in Wandsworth. We make sure NHS and social care leaders use people's feedback to improve care, and they have a legal duty to respond to our recommendations and requests for information.¹

HWW can go to a service to speak to people using its 'Enter and View' powers; we also run surveys online, in person, by email or by phone to capture what people have to say and make sure decision makers hear what you think about your care.

HWW is part of Wandsworth Care Alliance (WCA), a registered charity. WCA is contracted by Wandsworth Council to be the accountable corporate body for HWW. WCA strengthens HWW with the skills and resources across the organisation, including connections and support provided by the Voluntary Sector Co-ordination Service to voluntary sector organisations we collaborate with and the Voicing Views project that focuses on strengthening the voice of people using mental health services. More information about our governance, decision-making and our Healthwatch Committee is on the HWW [website](#).

HWW has a unique position in the health and social care field as an

¹ Health and Social Care Act in 2012

independent organisation, listening to what people have to say, with an understanding of how health and social care works in theory and practice.

The role of HWW is to monitor local services and ensure local people:

- are involved in health and social care and that their needs and experiences are heard by those who can improve the quality of local services
- share with us what they think and what matters to them about their care
- can find information about local services and can access them

Conversations between HWW and community members are confidential and, as a non-political organisation, HWW does not use information for political purposes. We champion the perspective of local people without judgment or bias.

You can read about our past work and achievements in our [Annual Reports](#).

Our plans for the year

Topic 1: Mental Health

Background:

Throughout our work in 2022-3 people told us about how a variety of issues affected their mental health, including the cost of living. Mental Health was overwhelmingly the most important thing to most of the people we spoke to, so we will be focusing the majority of our time on this priority. There was concern about the general mental health of our the population, particularly young people and the time it can take to receive mental health support from

services. There are people in our community whose experiences in life add to their chances of poor mental health, for such as people with long-term conditions, carers, people who identify with the LGBTQ+ and ethnic minority communities. For example, black young people say some of their experiences have a cumulative impact on their mental health. Isolation also has an impact on mental health wellbeing for some, as highlighted by people we spoke to about their experiences of sight loss.

Managing emotional and mental health wellbeing in pregnancy, childbirth or the first year after giving birth and becoming a parent (called the perinatal period) represents a challenge for many and the mental health of parents can directly affect the physical and mental health outcomes of their children. In 2021 and 2022 we identified a need for greater collaboration and communications between the organisations dealing with perinatal maternal health to raise awareness of perinatal mental health and support available. In 2022 we continued to champion the topic and started to recruit participants from black and ethnic minority groups to shed more light on their experiences and the experience of their partners.



What we will do:

We hope to encourage health and care services to address these issues further and in 2023 and we will focus our own work in the following ways in partnership with WCA projects:

- Work with WCA's Voicing Views project to continue our focus on the perinatal mental health experience of ethnic minorities and work with the community to raise awareness of the issues and support available. We will also begin to try to understand more about the impact on the mental health of men and partners.
- Support the Voicing Views project to improve a digital directory of information about mental health support available in Wandsworth and making sure people who use mental health services are involved in developing it.
- Start to listen to younger people about their experiences of mental health and employment. This may include managing mental health and sickness at work or the impact of bias, imposter syndrome and opportunities available to them.
- Find out more about the experiences of mental health for people who are homeless.
- Find out about the experiences people have of the new buildings at South West London and St George's Mental Health Trust Springfield Trinity and Springfield Village and the impact on mental health support.

We also want to continue to monitor, champion or undertake further insight work on the following issues if we have capacity:

- The impact of the cost of living.
- Social isolation.
- Progress of initiatives to tackle health inequalities including outreach to community groups and initiatives like the Ethnicity Mental Health Improvement Project that seek to tackle race inequalities, and including responses to the Wandsworth Public Health Annual Director's Report about the need to address mental health race inequalities.

- Waiting times for Talk Wandsworth and Children and Young People’s mental health support services.
- Voices of young people in the commissioning of mental health services.
- Experiences of the mental health crisis line and crisis hub.
- The review of mental health supported housing.

Topic 2: Discharge from Hospital

Background:

New Discharge to Assess arrangements that started during the pandemic have developed to try to get people home from hospital quicker using a multidisciplinary approach. Care is also increasingly provided at home using technology to create a ‘virtual ward’ in people’s homes.

In 2021 and 2022 we spoke to carers about their experiences of discharges from hospital and then we worked with local organisations to share what people told us and to understand if things could be improved. Over the course of the year the NHS changed their guidance to make sure carers were considered more and a toolkit was created for London hospitals to make sure important steps are taken to involve carers when arranging hospital discharges.

What we will do:

- Work with St George’s Hospital to put in place the carers’ hospital toolkit to improve hospital discharges.
- Ensure that the NHS are gathering and responding to the experience of people who are receiving health and care via ‘virtual wards’.



Topic 3: Working with community-based health champions

Background:

Our insight from working with communities highlights the importance of building trust, being perceived as independent and working alongside and empowering communities when trying to reach and work with the community, particularly people who experience health inequalities.

Recently we identified a need for a network for people with sight loss to find out about tools to support them and reduce isolation, as well as providing a route for organisations to collaborate and reach them.

What we will do:

- WCA's healthy communities project is leading the development of health champions in community groups to reduce health inequalities amongst people in our community most affected (known as Core20+5 populations). These groups know how to best to reach their communities and find solutions to spread health messages and reduce health inequalities. We will work across WCA to:
 - connect with these groups and champions to gather their experiences of health and care and to find opportunities for their voice to influence changes that might be needed.
 - support WCA to explore the development of the model and its impact.
 - explore how health champions who are close to communities can highlight less often heard voices and those of people who are isolated in hyper-local areas.
- We will identify and develop our network of contacts and connectors with organisations that work with isolated and less often heard voices, such as organisations working with people with long-term conditions or disabilities, people with a mental health condition and carers such as 'buddy schemes', GPs and other services. We may decide to use Enter and View powers to visit services that often have unseen users.
- When working with the community we will promote opportunities that empower and improve the resilience of local organisations to tackle health inequalities, including support from WCA.

Topic 4: Ensuring the patient and community voice has influence in the ICS

Background:

Developments and challenges in health and social care after the pandemic mean that it has never been more important to ensure that locally there are mechanisms and resources to make sure services respond to local needs and experiences. In the past year we have been working with the ICS to include the voice of local people in their governance and to use intelligence gathered about people's experiences.

What we will do:

- We will continue to collaborate with ICS decision makers, commissioners and service providers to ensure they are embedding user voice and that they have the mechanisms and structures to put people and their experiences at the heart of health and social care. This will include a Community Voice Subcommittee of the ICB in Wandsworth and work with other Healthwatch across South West London, providing advice on engagement, challenging them to consider insights from the community when making decisions and drawing on opportunities to increase insight and avoid duplicating engagement with the community.
- We will support adult social care to embed strategic service user involvement and co-production.
- We will continue to offer our insight to strategic plans and evidence of needs in Wandsworth such as the JSNA and the Wandsworth Health and Care Plan so that organisations can plan prevention initiatives to tackle health inequalities, reduce barriers to access and improve experience.

If resources become available we will collaborate with organisations on specific projects to hear from people affected by health inequalities about their experiences of services and to improve access to services, experience and outcomes.

Other key operational challenges and objectives

- We will produce an annual report and responses to the Quality Accounts of our two large hospital Trusts.²
- We have a new contract (between WCA and Wandsworth Council) that starts in April 2023 and will continue to adapt how we work towards evolving requirements and improvements.
- We will begin preparing for a self-assessment using the Healthwatch England Quality Framework next year.
- We will continue to explore and embed a 'Trauma Informed Approach' throughout our work, to ensure that we work with people in a way that involves them in important discussions but does not trigger previous traumatic experiences.
- Changes to health and care services can take time and we rely on health and social care services to make the changes. We will continue to track the influence of our previous work and remind the people in charge of services of what patients and service users have shared about their experiences of health and social care.
- We will consider introducing a new volunteer role so that people with 'lived experience' can increasingly shape how we work when we are planning and undertaking projects.
- We will plan our work with a focus on the social value it offers to volunteers and those collaborating in our projects. Including:
 - Increased knowledge of health and care services and how they work.
 - Career development through increased skills and experience in research, engagement, report writing and governance.
 - Other benefits for people who share their experiences such as providing information to:

² Find out more about Quality Accounts here: <https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/about-the-nhs/quality-accounts/about-quality-accounts/>

- Increase health literacy about how to prevent ill-health and maintain wellbeing, and empowering people to manage their own health and choose services.
- Raise awareness of services available and how to access them.
- We will collaborate with organisations, leaders and networks to increase awareness about us so people approach us when they need us.

Promotion and Communications Plan

Background

Our communications plan is an integral to our reaching people in the borough, to ask them about their experiences and to help them find health and care services through our advice articles on our website, our electronic and printed newsletters and our presence on social media.

In line with public health guidance, we are now back to face-to-face engagements and outreach, while still making use of online communications and retaining the advantages of online communication.

Our plan for communications

Our website, electronic newsletter and circulating our surveys electronically will be important. Our plan includes:

- Sending out 2 newsletters per quarter (one longer one and a shorter bulletin) to our members, with two printed versions per year to reach people who are not digitally connected to us.
- Using press releases, where possible, to reach a wider audience with information about our events and our priorities and encouraging organisations to share our information in their own publications and to raise awareness of our work.
- Collaborating with staff in communications and engagement roles through a Wandsworth and Merton Communications and Engagement Group.
- Using opportunities for communication and collaboration across WCA projects to support each other with a focus on mental health.
- Sharing and promoting information about support that is available relating to select awareness days and weeks.
- Creating more advice and information articles for our website that people can use to find information about services in Wandsworth.
- Use case studies to demonstrate benefits of involvement and to get people interested to be involved in what we do.
- Collaborating with partners who have contact with more isolated clients. Using organisations working with people with long-term conditions or disabilities, people with a mental health condition and carers such as 'buddy schemes', GPs and other services.

Resources

To deliver our programme we rely on three main resources:

- Financial - in 2023-24 our contract income reduced by 10% compared to the previous year. Additional project funding may be obtained where it fits our aims and objectives or goes beyond our planned work.
- Staff - The HWW contract provides resource for 2.6 full time equivalent staff. However, WCA resources, staff and their skills can contribute to supporting HWW work further.
- Volunteers - We currently have 28 volunteers, a vital augmentation to the staff team for achieving our levels of activity, undertaking a wide range of roles ranging from sharing intelligence from local boards and meetings or speaking to patients during visits to service to helping write our reports.



How our work will make a difference

We will continue to use the insight we gather from the public to make the case for improvements in health and social care. Demonstrating how far our evidence or recommendations are acted on by others can be challenging and can take time.

We build relationships with local health and care leaders to find out what is happening in health and social care and champion views of local people.

Our impact will be felt in the following ways:

1a. Increased community insight/evidence: our work has increased understanding of community needs and experiences, amplified community voices and improvements they say are needed or has challenged assumptions or provided reassurance. Our intention is that, where recommended, service commissioners and providers will make changes to their practice including staff training and guidance and changes to how a service works. In some instances, the work will prompt further investigation and monitoring.

1b. Amplified the voices of people who are heard less often and a range of communities: our work facilitates insight/evidence of needs and experiences and amplified lesser heard and diverse voices.

2: Empowered community with information: we enabled people to choose and access services and manage their health, reducing health inequalities and access barriers. We gave them information so they know how to raise concerns.

3a: Commitment to service improvements: our work facilitated longer-term changes because decision makers made commitments, including in strategies and policies.

3b: Implemented service improvements: our work facilitated changes to health and care service delivery e.g. staff training, processes, access and reduced health inequalities.

4: Improved engagement and involvement in health and social care: we encouraged more meaningful and increased involvement and co-production leading to responsive services (including at the Health and Wellbeing and ICS boards). We ensured that the perspective of people using services is not overlooked and opportunities for public engagement and co-production.

5: Other improvements e.g. improved wellbeing and access to services or other unplanned benefit or social value.

These impacts are not easy to measure and specific service changes on the ground are almost always the result of the work of many people, including but not exclusively Healthwatch. Nevertheless, they are vitally important. Updates about the impact of our work will be available on our website, via our newsletter and our annual report.

Our Key Performance Indicators:

In addition to our broad statutory responsibilities and obligations, under our contract with the London Borough of Wandsworth we have Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to assess our performance.

Our KPIs for 2023-24 are:

- **Number of unique people viewing our webpages**
- **Number of members/newsletter subscribers**
- **Number of people involved and/or providing feedback**
- **Percentage of people responding 'yes' to having gained something from interacting with HWW**
- **Percentage of stakeholders responding that they have done something differently after interacting with HWW**

We also provide reports on:

- Our impact tracker.
- Demographics of our volunteers and people involved in our work where disclosed.
- Our stakeholder survey.
- Reach of our communications.

Thank you

Thank you for your continued support. We look forward to working with more local people and organisations in the coming year. If you would like to share your stories and experiences with us or you would like to collaborate with us, we would be very keen to hear from you.

Contact us

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