

# The value of listening

Healthwatch Newham  
**Annual Report 2023-2024**



**healthwatch**  
Newham

# Contents

Message from our Chair	3
About us	4
Year in review	5
How we've made a difference this year	6
Your voice heard at a wider level	7
Hearing from all communities	12
Advice and information	14
Volunteering	16
Finance and future priorities	18
Statutory statements	20



**"Over the last year, local Healthwatch has shown what happens when people speak up about their care, and services listen. They are helping the NHS unlock the power of people's views and experiences, especially those facing the most serious health inequalities."**

Louise Ansari, Chief Executive at Healthwatch England



# Message from our Chair

## Introduction:

2023/2024 has been a busy year for the Healthwatch Newham Team as the borough continues to grow following Covid and the cost-of-living crisis.

Despite bidding farewell to some of our valued staff, including our Healthwatch Manager and Social Media Admin Officer, we are thrilled to welcome new members to our team. Jasmine Smith, our new Healthwatch Manager, and Neha Mishra, our new Social Media and Admin Officer, have already made significant contributions. Vaishali Singh has also joined us, focusing on supporting the Newham Parent Carer Forum and overseeing the Maternity and Neonatal Programme across Newham, Tower Hamlets, and Waltham Forest. The departure of our Health and Wellbeing Manager due to maternity leave has led to some exciting changes, showcasing our team's adaptability and resilience.

As an organisation, we have continued to advocate for the Newham Communities' health and social care needs. We are fortunate to have a platform where we can represent these voices to decision-makers, commissioners, and providers. Our role in influencing the Newham Health and Care Partnership and Newham Council is crucial in improving health and care outcomes for all.

Our collaboration with the local NHS Trust has been a significant milestone, allowing us to expand our reach to seldom-heard communities. This partnership has enabled us to gather valuable feedback from service users, including those accessing maternity and dentistry services. We are excited to have the opportunity to influence the Trust's upcoming plans, ensuring that resident voices are heard and considered in service improvements.

We are delighted to share that we have significantly expanded our volunteer programme, adding more passionate individuals to our team. This growth not only reflects our commitment to community involvement but also provides our volunteers with the opportunity to explore exciting topics and contribute to our mission.

Our Annual Report summarises the highlights of our work.



**"It has been lovely to have the opportunity to reflect on the hard work and big achievements the team have worked for over the last year. Despite facing challenges, the team have pulled together to deliver impactful pieces of work, spanning a host of Health and Social Care issues. We continue to reflect our community voices and look forward to the next year."**

Cllr Ann Easter - Co-Chair of Newham Advisory Board



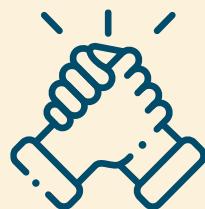
# About us

## Healthwatch Newham is your local health and social care champion.

We ensure that NHS leaders and decision-makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care. We can also help you find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.

### Our vision

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



### Our mission

To make sure people's experiences help make health and care better.



### Our values are:

- **Listening** to people and making sure their voices are heard.
- **Including** everyone in the conversation – especially those who don't always have their voice heard.
- **Analysing** different people's experiences to learn how to improve care.
- **Acting** on feedback and driving change.
- **Partnering** with care providers, Government, and the voluntary sector – serving as the public's independent advocate.



# Year in review

## Reaching out:

### 1687 people

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



### 15,870 people

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

## Making a difference to care:

We published

### 6 reports

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



Our most popular report was

## Experiences using Healthcare Services

which highlighted the struggles people face in dentistry, freedom passes and blue badges.

## Health and social care that works for you:

We're lucky to have

### 7

outstanding volunteers who gave up 120+ hours to make care better for our community.



Our local authority funds us.

In 2023 – 24, we received

### £153,650

which is 7% less than the previous year.

We currently employ

### 5 staff

who help us carry out our work.

# How we've made a difference this year

Spring



We worked for the ICB to ask over a thousand residents what good care looked like to them. They told us it should be accessible, competent, person-centred, and trustworthy.



We conducted focus groups to understand residents' experiences with health care council services, including dentistry.

Summer



We conducted a quality assurance assessment at the Diabetes service within the Shrewsbury Road Health Centre.



We began work on our Community Pharmacies project, mapping pharmacy services and organising enter and views.

Autumn



Our 'Learnmimg Disabilities +Autism Project' enabled us to gather feedback from parents and carers who engaged with SEND pathways on the diagnosis and assessment pathways.



We launched our Deaf Outreach Worker position, collaborating with NEL Health and Care Partnership.

Winter



We have initiated our GP Feedback survey in collaboration with the Newham Health Collaborative.



We improved our collaborative work with our Maternal Neonatal Voices Partnership Chairs and Patient Experience Midwives as part of our MNVP project.

# Your voice heard at a wider level

**We collaborate with other Healthwatch to ensure the experiences of people in Newham influence decisions made about services at Northeast London (NEL) Integrated Care System (ICS) level.**

This year we've worked with Healthwatch across Northeast London (NEL) to achieve:



In the Big Conversation, the eight Healthwatch worked for the ICB to ask over a thousand residents what good care looked like to them. They told us it should be accessible, competent, person-centred, and trustworthy. The ICB used the findings to develop draft success measures that will be reflected to local people in the coming months and eventually lead to a single outcomes framework for the Integrated Care System. Focusing on outcomes rather than services or outputs will strengthen the ICB's focus on making a difference in what local people feel is most important.

Each Healthwatch visited care homes in their borough to talk to staff and residents about how GPs and other care staff could support residents. Simple information was produced for Homes on how doctors, nurses, carers and volunteers could work with them to look after residents.

As a result of better-coordinated care, residents are less likely to deteriorate, can remain comfortable in familiar surroundings, and are less likely to be admitted to the hospital.



We supported the NEL ICB Research Engagement Network (REN) to improve participation and diversity in research by engaging over 300 people from diverse communities at events and over 400 through our survey. We used the Big Conversation Good Care Framework to show how research could be accessible, competent, patient-centred and trustworthy. We identified community priorities for research (e.g. mental health, diabetes). We want to get the message out that if you wish medical products and services to meet your community's health needs, you need to be involved in the research that develops them.

Maternity - In past years, we engaged with pregnant women from Black, Asian, and ethnic minority communities to understand how all babies born in NEL could have the best possible start. As a result, maternity providers committed to work towards cultural competency training and a communications post in each maternity unit, providing trauma-informed care for staff and service users and providing accessible, timely information and multilingual advocates on site.





## 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 whole picture, feed this back to services, and help them improve.

# Improving the experience of the SEND Diagnosis Process

Last year, we aimed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the areas needing improvement from the perspective of parents and carers within the SEND Diagnosis Process. Thanks to this insight, the NEL NHS has identified gaps in their delivery.

You shared worrying feedback with us that suggested there was much work to do to improve the SEND Diagnosis process to ensure an effective service. Support and signposting were identified as just a couple of the gaps in delivery. In a survey completed by 25 service users, we found:

**60%**

of respondents said they did not feel adequately supported, mentally or physically, by the service providers.



## What did you tell us about your experiences?

- 28% of respondents had to wait more than two years for their first assessment appointment.
- Eleven people said they delayed seeking an assessment because they were uncertain whether the observed behaviours were significant.
- 63% said the main challenge they faced was limited access to support services.

## What difference did this make?

- We worked with the Newham Placed-Based Partnership to identify improvements across their services and discover how to deliver more consistently.
- We used the findings to develop a second phase of the project, which will involve directly engaging with service users.
- NHS England listened to our recommendations to focus more on the critical issues for patients and has directly addressed this. At the same time, they cut the target waiting time for cancer care to try and ensure people get treatment faster.
- We have fed our findings into the All-Age Autism Strategy in the Borough of Newham.

# Continuing Healthcare – Diabetes Service

Healthwatch Newham, the champion of local people's voices in accessing health and social care services, is dedicated to promoting good practices within the London Borough of Newham. In a joint partnership with East London NHS Foundation Trust (ELFT), we have committed to this goal. As part of our efforts, we recently conducted a quality assurance assessment at the Diabetes service within the Shrewsbury Road Health Centre.

## We found that

The overall experience took a holistic approach, with a good vacancy-to-staff ratio. The staff and service users were overall quite happy with their experience:

- 100% of service users said they understood the information related to their care and treatment.
- 80% of service users knew about the feedback and complaints process.
- 100% of staff felt safe about the service they were delivering.

## What improvements did we identify?

- Improve signage and ensure it is dementia friendly.
- More staff to cope with increased demand.
- Appointments are too far apart, and the building was not fit for purpose.

These assessments allowed us to gain valuable insights into the nature of services and gather feedback directly from service users, empowering us to assess standards, identify areas for improvement, and promote best practices.

The report was shared with service providers but, unfortunately, received no response.

69

**"They take the time to ensure you and your family members understand your treatments."**

– A service user.

**"A good team and senior staff are very approachable"**

– A member of staff.

# 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.

## Creating empathy by bringing experiences to life

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

After hearing from one of our community partners at our advisory board about some of the challenges the Newham Deaf Community is facing, we linked up with the ICB and created a Deaf Outreach Worker position. This is giving Healthwatch Newham a chance to work closely with the community to make impactful change through someone who truly understands the experience.



## Getting services to involve the public

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

Healthwatch has worked in close partnership with the Newham Health Collaborative to develop a GP feedback survey. This collaboration has allowed us to gather insights from the local community on their GP services experiences. As a result, we have been able to provide individually tailored feedback to the Newham Health Collaborative and the GP practices. We have also identified enter and view options through this feedback. This has provided a direct link between the public and the services provided to them, demonstrating the power of collaboration in community engagement.



## Improving care over time

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

In 2023, Healthwatch Newham launched our Young Healthwatch project to empower young people and amplify their voices about health and social care services. The Young Healthwatch volunteers choose their focus, from vaping impacts to GP services. We provide ongoing support and learning opportunities for our Young Healthwatch team, alongside continual recruitment, to enable the project to explore new avenues.



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



## Hearing from all communities

**In the last year, we've put in a lot of effort to make sure we hear from everyone in our local area. It's important to reach out to communities we don't often hear from, so we can gather their feedback, ensure their voices are heard, and make sure our services meet their needs.**

**This year, we have reached different communities, including:**

- People aged 55+ on their Dentistry, Freedom Pass and Blue Badge Applications.
- Mothers utilising maternal health services
- Individuals utilising NHS Complaints processes.

# Experiences using Healthcare Council Services

**Healthwatch Newham ran a focus group to gather residents' voices about their experiences using healthcare council services in three specific areas: Dentistry, Freedom Pass, and the Blue Badge application.**

The group focused on people aged 55 and over and recruited people from Black African, Caribbean, Asian, and Polish backgrounds.

## We discovered that:

- 90% of the attendees could not access dental care in the last 12 months due to a long waiting list.
- 70% have applied for a freedom pass and stated the process was previously more straightforward, but now the council has increased the criteria and requirements for a freedom pass, making it more complicated to apply.
- 2% of the attendees had a blue badge, and they expressed that the process was complicated and that the waiting time was long.

## Creating person-centred, culturally competent maternity care

**Barts NHS Trust has taken steps to improve its maternity services with Healthwatch's support in delivering the MNVP project. This has been achieved through more in-depth feedback gathering to amplify the voices of service users.**

These include:

- Building relationships across the services and between patient-experience midwives and MNVP chairs.
- Increasing outreach and engagement activities, such as coffee mornings and walk-the-patch, to reach more women using the services.
- Sharing feedback from service users on a more comprehensive London network to improve information-sharing and London-wide approaches.

Healthwatch Newham's approach to gathering rich feedback from these groups has allowed us to understand the experiences of various services across Newham and Northeast London.

Gathering feedback from Maternity services users has enabled us to identify focus areas moving forward to ensure improvements across the boroughs.

Barts NHS Trust has been working with the MNVP Chairs and Healthwatch Newham to implement these changes. Healthwatch Newham launched its action plan, which was developed collaboratively with service users and staff, to begin addressing the feedback we are receiving.



## Advice and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch Newham 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 finding an NHS dentist, making a complaint or choosing a good care home for a loved one – you can count on us.

This year, we have helped people by:

- Providing up-to-date information people can trust
- Helping people access the services they need
- Helping people access NHS Complaints Advocacy
- Feeding into Hospital Strategies based on community voices

# NHS Complaints Advocacy

**It's essential that people have clear, accurate communication about their care.**

Thanks to the efforts of Healthwatch Newham, in collaboration with MIND in Tower Hamlets, Newham and Redbridge, a further 291 people were supported through their NHS complaints process.

The service was made aware of a case whereby a Mother utilising Maternity Services was denied the specific pain relief of Oromorph and paracetamol following a c-section. This resulted in her being in severe pain and discomfort all night despite requesting these medications multiple times.

Our advocate played a crucial role in empowering this client to communicate her complaint in a systematic way, as she had been traumatised by her experience on the post labour ward. Our advocate also helped her to understand all the information relevant to her complaint, including the correct procedure.

The client received a written response admitting that the Oromorph and paracetamol analgesia could have been administered as prescribed and that the midwife was wrong in refusing to provide it. The Trust also admitted that the midwife had incorrectly transfused IV fluid which exceeded the prescribed dose. The Trust agreed to remind midwives in the next scheduled meeting, known as the 'Huddle', that the medications can be administered together.

## Increasing Hospital Awareness

**Providing feedback directly to the hospitals is critical to improving the services provided.**

Healthwatch Newham created a report for Newham Hospital detailing the issues we saw through our NHS Complaints Advocacy Service.

Our report highlighted the top 6 most prominent concerns we supported clients with to make complaints. We also highlighted how Newham Hospital compared to the other Barts NHS Trust Services. This report was shared with the Director of Strategy at Newham Hospital and helped to inform their emerging Hospital Plan for the following year.

**Healthwatch Newham wants to ensure that everyone needing advocacy support can access an effective service.**

- We continue to advertise and raise awareness of this service across Newham through promotional materials and at events.
- We monitor the service's productivity and address areas for improvement, working collaboratively with our team at Mind in Tower Hamlets, Newham, and Redbridge.



# Volunteering

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

**This year, our volunteers:**

- Visited communities to promote their local Healthwatch and what we have to offer
- Collected experiences and supported their communities to share their views
- Carried out enter and view visits to local services to help them improve

69

**"My name is Jemima Kasongo. I am a second-year student studying Midwifery. I joined Healthwatch Newham in September 2023, and it has been a pleasure working with the team. Since starting with Healthwatch Newham, I have learned a lot about Health and Social Care, as well as Public Health."**

**I got to speak with patients and understand how they feel about the healthcare system in Newham. I was able to take part in Enter and View visits. We have carried out community outreach work. I will continue volunteering any time I have spare time. Thank you to the team for the opportunity to volunteer with Healthwatch Newham."**



Jemima –  
Healthwatch  
Newham

69

**I volunteer for Healthwatch Newham because our healthcare system faces significant challenges, from accessibility to the quality of care. By amplifying patients' voices and experiences, we can identify critical issues and work towards creating a more equitable and effective healthcare system for everyone. As a volunteer with Healthwatch Newham, I conduct surveys and interviews with patients to gather their feedback on various healthcare services. I participate in community outreach programs, engaging with diverse groups to ensure underrepresented voices are heard. These efforts drive meaningful changes in the healthcare system, ensuring it better meets the needs of all patients. My volunteering experience has been incredibly rewarding, allowing me to advocate for improvements and ensure every patient's voice is heard and valued."**



Rabiat –  
Healthwatch  
Newham

## Do you feel inspired?



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

-  [www.healthwatch.org/newham](http://www.healthwatch.org/newham)
-  020 3866 2969
-  [info@healthwatchnewham.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchnewham.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		Expenditure	
Annual grant from Government	£153,650	Expenditure on pay	£76,625
Additional income	£10,000	Non-pay expenditure	£59,084
		Office and management fees	£15,364
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£163,650</b>	<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>£151,073</b>

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**Additional income is broken down by:**

- £10,000 received from the ICS.

## ICS funding

Healthwatch across NEL also receives funding from our Integrated Care System (ICS) to support new areas of collaborative work at this level, including:

Purpose of ICS funding	Amount
Attending cross-borough meetings.	£10,000
	£
	£

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## 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. Improving the education and awareness around prostate cancer in black men.
2. Amplifying the voices of seldom-heard groups through our Community Listening Ears Project.
3. Addressing Health and Care Inequalities.



## Statutory statements

**Healthwatch Newham, Bizniz Point, 44 Broadway, E15 1HP**  
**The Healthwatch Newham contract is held by CB Plus, SEIDs Hub,**  
**Empire Way, Wembley HA9 0RJ**

**Healthwatch Newham 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 Board consists of 20 members who work voluntarily to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny of our activities. Our Board ensures that decisions about priority work areas reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community.

Throughout 2023/24, the Board met six times and made decisions on matters such as what needed to be represented in Newham Hospital's operational plan and to extend board membership to improve representation of the Newham community.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities.

## **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 were available by phone and email, provided a web form on our website and through social media, and attended meetings of community groups and forums.

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 share it with the Health and Wellbeing Board.

## **Responses to recommendations**

We are still awaiting a response from our providers.

## **Taking people's experiences to decision-makers**

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

For example, in our local authority area, we take information to the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Health Scrutiny Board.

We also share our insights and experiences with decision-makers in the Northeast London Integrated Care System. For example, we share information with the NUH Patient Experience and Engagement Committee and the Health and Care Partnership. We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

# Advisory Board Members

Healthwatch Newham is delivered in partnership with local organisations. We have established the Healthwatch Newham Advisory Board, whose role is to support the core team and shape the work programme around the needs of Newham residents.

Healthwatch Newham is leading one of the most significant charity partnerships in Newham. It works with Newham's charity, voluntary and community organisations, and we would like to thank them for their guidance to Healthwatch Newham, particularly with some of Newham's key communities:

- Councillor Anne Easter (Co-Chair)
- Julie Pal (Co-Chair) – CB Plus (CommUNITY Barnet) /Healthwatch Newham
- Jasmine Smith – Healthwatch Newham
- Rashna Begum – MIND in Tower Hamlets and Newham
- Maryan Nur – MIND in Tower Hamlets and Newham
- Zoirada Colorado – Community Links
- Taskin Saleem – SubCo Trust
- Claire Helman – Aston Mansfield
- Dimple Makwana – North East London Cancer Alliance
- Herve Bessieres – West Ham United Foundation
- Angus Mckenzie-Davie – Co-production team
- Hilda Mango – Co-production team
- Alison Greene – Patient Experience and Engagement, Newham Hospital
- Rukshana Ahmed – Enabled Living
- Angela Skrabania – Enabled Living
- Mary-Ann Foxwell – Age UK
- Ryan Suyat – NEL ICB
- Jo Frazer-Wise – NEL CCG
- Joy Caron-Carter – One Newham, Sustainable Newham
- Kulbinder Mann – Digital Comms NEL NHS

The Advisory Board's membership is drawn from Newham-based organisation representatives. Its role is to support Healthwatch Newham to:

- Identify critical areas of work
- Develop and deliver activities
- Provide guidance and support to project teams
- Offer expertise, experience and knowledge which will promote and support Healthwatch Newham activities

## Enter and view

This year, we made six Enter and View visits. Due to this activity, we are still awaiting responses to our recommendations or actions.

Location	Reason for visit	Recommendations to provider
Eneberi Clinic	To see how services were being delivered.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve Signage in different languages</li> <li>• Improve complaints processes and feedback system after treatment and consultations.</li> <li>• Appointments are too far apart, and the building is not fit for purpose.</li> </ul>
Shrewsbury Road Health Centre Diabetes Clinic	To see how services were being delivered.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve Signage and ensure it is dementia friendly.</li> <li>• More staff to cope with increased demand.</li> <li>• Appointments are too far apart, and the building is not fit for purpose.</li> </ul>
Newham University Hospital A&E	To see how services were being delivered.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reception staff should provide patients with an estimated waiting time when they register. This estimate should be based on the current caseload and any known delays.</li> <li>• Clear, consistent communication can help manage patient expectations and reduce frustration.</li> </ul>
Tollgate Medical Centre	To see how services were being delivered.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical information leaflets should be available, not all online, and in a variety of languages.</li> </ul>
Osbourne Pharmacy	To see how services were being delivered.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommendations to be made.</li> </ul>
Church Road Pharmacy	To see how services were being delivered.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommendations to be made.</li> </ul>

## Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Newham is represented on the Newham Health and Wellbeing Board by Julie Pal, CEO of CB Plus. During 2023/24, our representative effectively carried out this role by attending meetings, presenting reports, and participating in discussions on improving health and care outcomes for residents.

## 2023 – 2024 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
Healthwatch Promotion at Universities	Increased awareness of Healthwatch work and recruitment of volunteers.
Community Safeguarding	The safeguarding adult board has taken up the recommendations and next steps and incorporated them into its quality improvement programme.
Health Equity Board	Using the community safeguarding programme as a lens to view some of the findings from safeguarding adult boards. This is informing those reviews.



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