



**Annual Report 2024–2025**

# **Unlocking the power of people-driven care**

Healthwatch Newham

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“The impact that local Healthwatch have is vitally important. Healthwatch are empowering their communities to share their experiences. They’re changing the health and care landscape and making sure that people’s views are central to making care better and tackling health inequalities.”

**Louise Ansari, Chief Executive, Healthwatch England**

## A message from our Chair

As an organisation, we remain committed to championing the health and social care needs of Newham's communities. We are proud to have a platform that allows us to represent local voices to decision-makers, commissioners, and service providers. Our role in shaping the work of the Newham Health and Care Partnership and Newham Council is central to **driving better health and care outcomes for all.**

This year, our collaboration with the local NHS Trust marked a significant milestone. Through this partnership, we have been able to engage more closely with seldom-heard communities, gathering valuable feedback from residents who use services such as maternity and dentistry. We're especially pleased to be contributing to the Trust's future plans, helping to ensure that local voices are embedded in service design and improvement.

We're also proud to have expanded our volunteer programme, welcoming more passionate individuals to our team. This growth reflects our commitment to community engagement and gives volunteers the chance to explore important topics while making meaningful contributions to our work.

This Annual Report highlights the key achievements and impact of our work over the past year.



**"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 services. We're also here to help you access reliable, trustworthy information and advice when you need it.



### Our vision

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



### Our mission

To make sure that people's experiences help 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 internal and external relationships. We communicate clearly and work with partners to amplify our influence.

**Impact:** We're ambitious about 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 we speak truth to power.

## Our year in numbers

We've supported more than **1824** people to have their say and get information about their care. We currently employ **4** staff and, our work is supported by **8** volunteers.

### Reaching out:



- **1,824 people** shared their experiences of health and care in Newham, helping us highlight what's working and what needs to change.
- We spoke directly to **over 100 people** in focus groups and community visits, including migrant women, autistic adults, Congolese men, and Deaf residents.
- **549 people** came to us for clear, local advice on everything from urgent care to mental health and GP access.

### Championing your voice:



- We published **10 reports**, reaching over **2,000 people** on issues like cancer screening, oral care, and making complaints.
- Our most-read report on **breast screening** shared the concerns of women with learning disabilities around fear, language, and access. It's now helping to shape more inclusive care.

### Statutory funding:



Our work is funded by the London Borough of Newham. In 2024/25, we received **£153,650** to continue championing local voices and providing independent insight across the borough.



# A year of making a difference

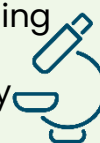
Over the year we've been out and about in the community listening to your stories, engaging with partners and working to improve care in Newham. Here are a few highlights.

## Spring

We heard from **26 Congolese residents** about the impact of mental health stigma through our Community Listening Project. Their stories are now shaping how culturally sensitive support is delivered in Newham.



We strengthened our collaboration with the **Maternal Neonatal Voices Partnership (MNVP)**, making sure that the voices of women and birthing people are influencing improvements in maternity care across Newham.



## Summer

Insights from our review visit to The Chase supported living service, gathered from **11 carers**, have helped identify the service's strengths and areas for development.



We conducted a series of focus groups with over **50 residents** with learning disabilities and autism to explore barriers to bowel cancer screening. Their feedback is now supporting Improvements in uptake and access.



## Autumn

Our GP Feedback Survey, conducted in partnership with Newham Health Collaborative, heard from **1,824 residents** and highlighted the barriers many face in accessing timely care.



Our oral and personal hygiene insights, gathered from **25 patients** and **8 staff** during our Enter & View visit, helped inform a Quality Improvement project across all adult inpatient wards at Newham University Hospital.



## Winter

Our safeguarding insight directly informed **borough-wide priorities, funding decisions, and staff training**, helping statutory services better reflect the risks facing Newham communities.



We developed an accessible Patient Information Sheet and distributed it to **48 Newham pharmacies**, helping residents, including BSL users and people with learning disabilities, make informed choices about where to get care.



# Working together for change

**We have collaborated with other Healthwatch organisations to ensure that people's experiences of care in Newham are heard at the Integrated Care System (ICS) level. This partnership helps to ensure these voices influence decisions about health and care services across North East London.**

Here's how we have made this happen over the past year:

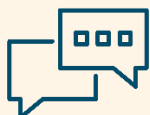
## A collaborative network of local Healthwatch:



We led the formation of a new network of local Healthwatch across North East London, bringing borough teams together to share insight and raise issues at the system level. By working together, we support a more joined-up approach to health and care for **over 2.1 million residents**.

A representative from our network now sits on the Integrated Care Board (ICB), ensuring the public's voice is heard in regional decisions.

## The big conversation:



We used the **Community Insights System** to track real-time feedback on what matters to local people, from delays in cancer referrals to challenges accessing GP appointments. This included insights from **over 1,800 Newham residents** this year, helping system leaders spot trends, identify early risks, and improve how services respond.

## Building strong relationships to achieve more:



In November, we met with decision-makers from our Integrated Care Board to talk how best to work together in the coming year. We agreed on fresh representation of Healthwatch and our community at ICB level, with Healthwatch Newham taking up this vital role. We look forward to continuing to collaborate to make care better.

We have also summarised some of our other outcomes achieved this year in the Statutory Statements section at the end of this report.

# Making a difference in the community

**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 Newham this year:

## Creating empathy by bringing experiences to life



**Hearing personal experiences helps services better understand and address the issues people face.**

We worked with **38 Deaf residents** who shared barriers to GP access, including a lack of BSL interpreters and no accessible booking systems. As a result, several GP practices and NHS partners have reviewed their interpreting services to better meet communication needs.

## Getting services to involve the public



**By involving local people, services help improve care for everyone.**

Through our focused interventions, including 3 focus groups and 1 health awareness day aimed at increasing cancer screening uptake, we engaged with **over 100 residents** with learning disabilities to help improve cancer screening services in the borough.

## Improving care over time



**Change takes time. We work behind the scenes to raise issues and drive improvements.**

With **over 56% of Newham's population** estimated to have low health literacy, we developed an accessible Patient Information Sheet. It was distributed to 48 Newham pharmacies, supporting better decision-making for people facing language, learning, or digital barriers.



## Listening to your experiences

When people share their experiences, things change. This year, **over 1,800 Newham residents** shared feedback with us, covering issues from **delays in GP appointments** to concerns about **hospital care, screening**, and support for **Deaf and disabled residents**.

Through focus groups, community visits, and local partnerships, we heard from many more, ensuring voices often left out were brought to the table. From shaping new **interpreter policies** to feeding insight into **national cancer screening plans**, your stories helped improve care in Newham and beyond.



# Listening to your experiences

## Putting dignity at the heart of inpatient care

**We set out to understand how personal care is delivered on Inpatient wards at Newham University Hospital, especially for patients who are tube-fed, frail, or need extra support with oral hygiene.**

We also identified a simple but significant gap: the hospital's website offered no clear guidance to help patients and families prepare for a stay, something that could help build confidence and reduce anxiety.

### What did we do?

Through our Enter and View programme, we spoke with **25 patients** and **8 staff**, and observed **13 ambulance arrivals**. We explored personal care across the ward, including oral hygiene, incontinence care, and comfort, with a focus on patients who were frail, had learning disabilities, or required tube feeding. We also reviewed how care was explained and delivered with dignity and consistency.

### Key things we heard:



**80%**

**of patients are satisfied with the personal care they received in the hospital.**

**5%**

**of patients were dissatisfied with the quality of care they received.**

**15%**

**reported that they were very dissatisfied.**

Our work demonstrated that direct communication with patients and effectively conveying their concerns to hospital staff can lead to meaningful improvements in healthcare services, helping to close gaps that have left some communities without adequate access.

### What difference did this make?

Our report led to a Trust-wide **Quality Improvement project** on inpatient care, led by the **Associate Director of Nursing**. It also triggered a full review of the **nutrition** and **hydration group**, with improvements now being embedded into the hospital's wider **patient experience** and **engagement plan**.

## Listening, observing, improving

**We conducted 6 Enter and View visits this year, speaking with over 70 patients, staff, carers, and ambulance arrivals across GP practices, care homes, and hospital wards.**

Our visits provided residents, patients, and staff with a platform to share honest experiences and helped services reflect and improve.

### Our findings

- At **Newham University Hospital**, patients described lapses in personal care. One person said, *"I felt uncomfortable asking for help to clean up, no one checked up on me."*
- On **Thistle Ward**, we heard praise for kind staff but also challenges around communication and food options. Patients with language barriers or dietary needs often felt misunderstood.
- At **The Chase** and **Look Ahead** services, residents spoke about feeling safe but also wanted more privacy and independence. We highlighted areas where staff training could better balance support with autonomy.
- At **Tollgate Medical Centre**, feedback focused on accessibility and signage. Staff welcomed our input, which has already led to small but meaningful environmental changes.

Across all visits, we observed positive staff interactions but also identified clear areas for action, particularly in **communication, personal care routines**, and the importance of **cultural sensitivity**.

### Enter and View at a Glance (2024–25)

- **6 visits** to hospital and care settings
- **80%** of staff described their work environment as welcoming (Newham University Hospital)
- **13 patients** arrived by ambulance and gave positive feedback
- **Over 25 patient voices** captured across wards and clinics
- **3 care homes/hostels** visited to hear from marginalised residents
- Over **5 clear recommendations** made to improve dignity, communication, and comfort
- **1 Trust-wide improvement plan** triggered by findings on personal hygiene and care
- **100% of visits** included conversations with both staff and patients



# Hearing from all communities

We're here for all residents of Newham. That's why, over the past year, we have worked hard to reach out to communities whose voices may often go unheard, connecting with over 200 people from groups typically excluded from mainstream engagement.

**This year, we have engaged diverse communities by:**

- Hearing from **26 Congolese residents** through our **Listening Ears project** on mental health stigma and family relationships.
- Speaking with **50+ individuals** with learning disabilities and autism about their experiences of bowel cancer screening.
- Consulting **38 Deaf residents**, who shared how the lack of interpreters and inaccessible GP booking systems create barriers to care.
- Holding **three focus groups** with autistic adults, Congolese men, and migrant women about barriers to cancer screening, insights shared with NHS England.
- Engaging **50+ participants** at our safeguarding insight event, co-hosted with the Newham Safeguarding Adults Board.



# Hearing from all communities

## Enhancing local safeguarding processes

We worked with the **Newham Safeguarding Adults Board (NSAB)** to explore how safeguarding services can better reflect the real-life experiences of local families and communities.

This included supporting a **reference group of 11 families**, many of whom care for people with learning disabilities or come from racially minoritised backgrounds. Through a series of in-depth interviews and a short survey, we gathered insights into their experiences navigating social care, raising safeguarding concerns, and the lasting impact of feeling unheard.

### Common themes included:

- Difficulties transitioning from children to adult services
- Poor communication between services
- Lack of support when families tried to raise concerns
- Feelings of being dismissed or discriminated against

We also helped co-design and support a **new Task Group** that brought together residents, community organisations, NSAB, public health, and the local authority. The group met weekly for eight weeks, ensuring that lived experience remained central to the ongoing review.

## What difference did this make?

The insight shared through our engagement is now shaping NSAB's safeguarding strategy, influencing its governance, training, and priorities around equity and accountability.

Our work has helped shift the conversation from services speaking on behalf of families to services learning directly from them and acting on what they hear.

# Hearing from all communities

## Community Listening Ears

**Through our Community Listening Ears programme, we engaged hard-to-serve communities by holding a focus group to explore how mental health affects relationships among Congolese residents in Newham.**

People told us that fear of judgment drives social isolation, causing individuals to withdraw from community life. Barriers such as language, lack of culturally appropriate services, and mistrust in healthcare providers made accessing support even harder. Their concerns also reflected cultural expectations and community pressures.

### What difference did this make?

The focus group provided **Congolese residents** a safe space to share lived experiences and highlight the **cultural and systemic barriers** they face. Their voices informed recommendations for tailored services, including **culturally aware mental health support**, improved **youth engagement**, and stronger **community connections**. These findings are now shaping the future of care in Newham.

## Improving Health and Care services for our Deaf Community

**Our Deaf Outreach Worker connected with 38 Deaf residents across Newham to understand their healthcare experiences and expand her network.**

Residents told us they struggled to access **GP services** due to missing **interpreters**, inaccessible **booking systems**, and a lack of understanding from staff. For many, this meant going without care or relying on others to communicate their needs.

### What difference did this make?

In response, we introduced Deaf awareness training for GP non-clinical staff, a crucial step toward improving access. Residents welcomed the visibility of a Deaf staff member in Healthwatch, which helped build trust and ensure their concerns were heard.

We have now laid the groundwork for a Deaf Advisory Board, aimed at improving access and influencing local services to better support Deaf people in Newham.



# Information and signposting

**Whether it's finding an NHS dentist, making a complaint, or choosing the right care home for a loved one — people count on us for answers they can trust.**

This year, **1,310 people** turned to us for advice, support, or help navigating health and social care.

## **We helped people by:**

- Sharing up-to-date information
- Supporting access to the care they need
- Guiding people to manage their own health
- Signposting to specialist support services



## NHS Complaints Advocacy Service

**Thanks to the efforts of Healthwatch Newham, in collaboration with MIND in Tower Hamlets, Newham and Redbridge, 392 people were supported through their NHS complaints process this year.**

We dedicated over 1,100 hours to advocacy support, helping people raise concerns, understand their rights, and feel empowered to speak up.

### **The most common issues included:**

- Communication issues
- Delays in diagnosis and treatment
- Quality and safety of care
- Staff attitude and professionalism
- Accessibility and equality of care

These recurring themes continue to inform system improvements to make NHS services more responsive and equitable.

**“Healthwatch Newham are the only ones who have done anything to stop me going around in circles.”**



## Case Study

Mr A, a 62-year-old man with severe visual impairment and aphasia, struggled to raise a complaint after a delayed diagnosis due to poor communication support.

With tailored advocacy, including accessible materials, in-person support, and assistive tools, he successfully submitted his complaint and received a formal apology acknowledging failings in his care.

### **As a result:**

- He felt empowered and heard
- His case highlighted access gaps in NHS complaints processes
- His feedback informed wider service improvements

**“They were so patient and kind. It’s important that health and care professionals understand autism so that they can provide people with the proper care and support.”**



## Key Activity in Newham:

**49**

referrals were made to services

**1,107**

hours were delivered, exceeding the annual target of 1,000 hours

**212**

unique service users called us for information

**43%**

of clients had a declared disability

**81**

new cases taken on during the year

**100%**

of client feedback received was positive

**46–64**

was the most common age range we supported

**392**

service users were supported across the year

**"One senior staff member said that the patient feedback helped them 'see things From a patient's perspective' and that some steps were already being taken to improve care plans and engagement."**



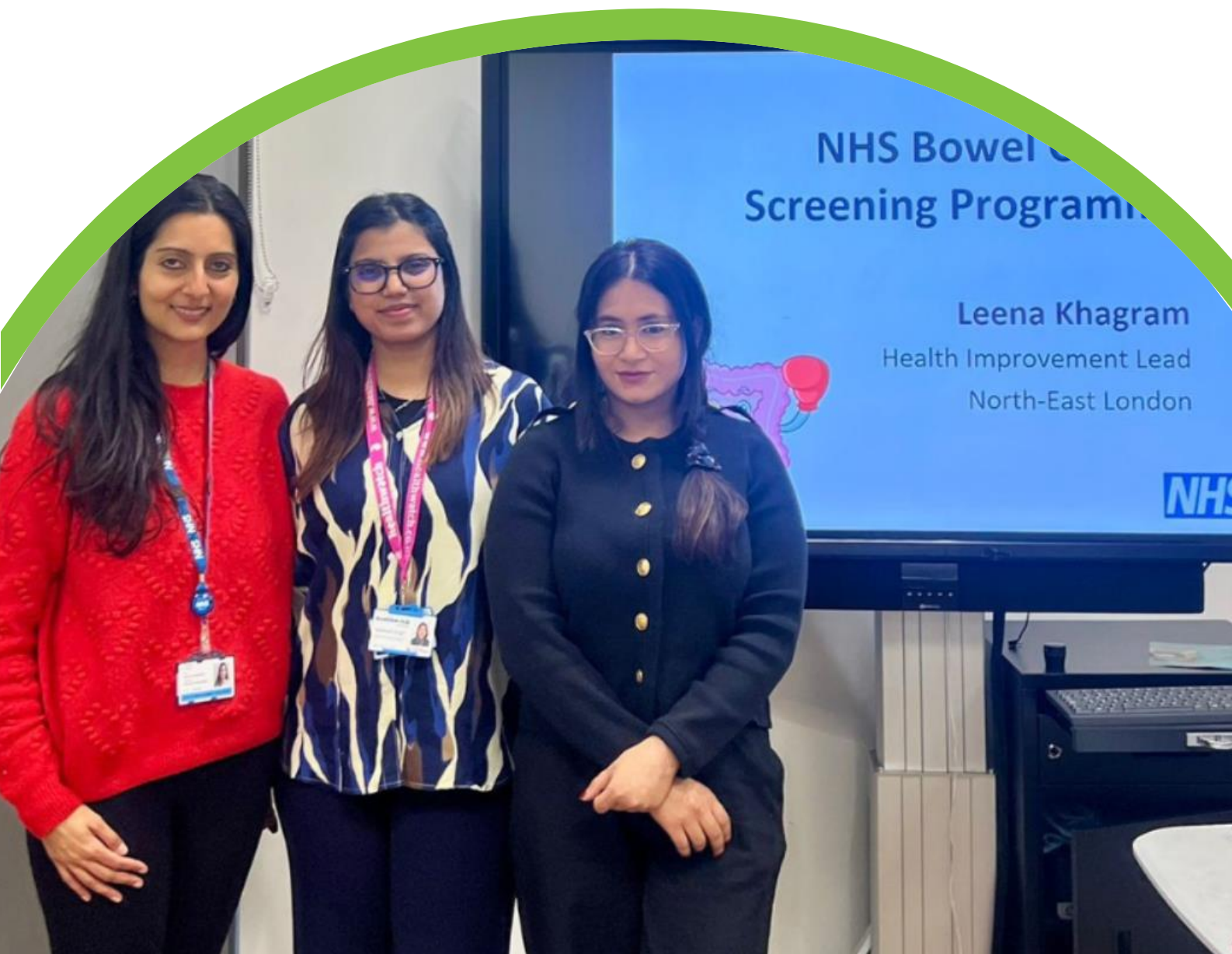
# Showcasing volunteer impact

**Our fantastic volunteers contributed over 80 hours this year to support our work.**

From attending community events to sharing local voices, their passion helps shape better services.

## **This year, our volunteers:**

- Promoted our work in public spaces
- Gathered stories from their communities
- Took part in **Enter and View visits** to improve service





# Showcasing volunteer impact

## At the heart of what we do

**From finding out what residents think to helping raise awareness, our volunteers have championed community concerns to improve care.**

"As I pursue a career in health services through a Master's in Public Health, which includes advanced research at the University of Hertfordshire, volunteering with Healthwatch Newham has allowed me to connect deeply with the community and contribute to improving local health and social care services. It has enhanced my passion for giving people a voice in shaping the care they receive.

This role has strengthened my communication, community research, data collection, and advocacy skills, while providing valuable insight into health systems and public service delivery. It has also boosted my confidence in engaging with diverse communities and professionals.

Being part of meaningful change and seeing the direct impact of our work has been incredibly rewarding, both personally and professionally." – **Rachael**

"I joined Healthwatch Newham to leverage my Master's in Public Health and advanced research skills, driven by a strong passion for health promotion and patient satisfaction.

Being part of the team has given me valuable, real-world experience in research and data collection, allowing me to contribute meaningfully to improving local health and social care through evidence-based insight." – **Christopher**



### Be part of the change.

If you've felt inspired by these stories, contact us today and find out how you can be part of the change.



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



**020 3866 2969**



[info@healthwatchnewham.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchnewham.co.uk)

## Finance and future priorities

We receive funding from the London Borough of Newham under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to help us do our work.

### Our income and expenditure:

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from Government	<b>£153,650</b>	Expenditure on pay	<b>£114,596</b>
Additional income	<b>£0</b>	Non-pay expenditure	<b>£10,530</b>
		Office and management fee	<b>£28,524</b>
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£153,650</b>	<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>£153,650</b>

### Integrated Care System (ICS) funding:

Healthwatch organisations across North East London ICB also receive funding from the Integrated Care System (ICS) to support new areas of collaborative work, including:

Purpose of ICS funding	Amount
Grassroots NEL Cancer Alliance	<b>£15,000</b>
Smoking Cessation	<b>£5,000</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>£20,000</b>



# Finance and future priorities

## 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 continue working with partners and our local Integrated Care System to help build an NHS culture where staff at every level listen to patients and learn from their experiences to improve care..

## **Our top three priorities for the year ahead are:**

- Strengthening community support to help residents quit smoking
- Promoting awareness of the signs and symptoms of cardiovascular disease
- Improving patient experience and engagement at Newham University Hospital

# 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 2024/25, 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 2024/25, 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.

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.

# Statutory statements

## Responses to recommendations

There were no issues or recommendations escalated by us to the Healthwatch England Committee, so there were 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 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.

## Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Newham is represented on the Newham Health and Wellbeing Board by our CEO, Julie Pal. In 2024/25, she fulfilled this role by attending meetings, presenting reports, and contributing to discussions aimed at improving local health and care outcomes.

Our Manager represents Healthwatch Newham on the North East London Integrated Care Board (ICB).

### **We also share insight and evidence with the following key forums:**

- Newham Health and Wellbeing Board
- Health Scrutiny Board
- NUH Patient Experience and Engagement Committee
- Newham Health and Care Partnership

Additionally, we submit data and insight to Healthwatch England to support national efforts to address health and social care issues.

# Statutory statements

## Enter and View

Location	Reason for Visit	What happened as a result
Newham University Hospital	Quality of services in A&E	Recommended improving the waiting area by adding seating, adjusting temperature, and ensuring access to water or working vending machines.
Thistle Ward, Newham Hospital	Quality of oral hygiene and personal care for elderly patients	Director of Nursing implemented a quality improvement project across adult inpatient wards.
The Chase	Quality of the supported living service	Highlighted the need for better care plan involvement with relatives.
Tollgate Medical Centre	Evaluate the quality of care and services	Recommended improving accessibility of informational materials, especially in multiple languages.
Look Ahead	Assess the quality of supported living homes in Newham	Introduced safeguarding training to help staff support non-verbal residents in understanding their rights. Recommended assigning a staff member to lead structured activities.

# Statutory statements

## Activities and Outcomes, 2024–2025

Project / Activity	Outcomes Achieved
Healthwatch Promotions	Increased awareness of Healthwatch’s work and recruited new volunteers through community outreach events.
Health Equity Board	Used findings from our community safeguarding programme to inform Safeguarding Adults Board reviews.
Safeguarding Adults Board	Adopted our recommendations and included them in its quality improvement programme.

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