

	Brent Health and Wellbeing Board 28 October 2024
	Report from Healthwatch
Healthwatch Brent 2024-2025 6-month update	

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Non-Key Decision
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
List of Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Work Programme
Background Papers:	None
Contact Officer(s): <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	Cleo Chalk Healthwatch Service Manager cleo.chalk@healthwatchbrent.co.uk Patricia Zebiri Healthwatch Manager (Brent) Patricia.zebiri@healthwatchbrent.co.uk

1.0 Executive Summary

1.1. This report provides an update on Healthwatch Brent’s progress from April – October 2024 and plans for November 2024 – March 2025.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

2.1 The Board is asked to note Healthwatch Brent’s progress against our objectives for the first six months of the 24-25 financial year.

2.2 The Board is also asked to provide strategic input into Healthwatch Brent’s priorities for the remainder of the 24-25 year.

3.0 Detail

3.1 **Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities & Strategic Context**

Healthwatch Brent's work contributes to strategic priorities of 'Thriving Communities' and 'A Healthier Brent'. It also supports key priorities from the 2022-2027 Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy, including 'Healthy Lives', 'Staying Healthy' and 'Understanding, listening and improving'.

3.2 Background

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, which was amended by the Health and Social Care Act 2012, outlines the main legal requirements of Healthwatch. It includes the following statutory duties:

- Promoting and supporting the involvement of local people in the commissioning, the provision and scrutiny of local care services
- Enabling local people to monitor the standard of provision of local care services and whether and how local care services could and ought to be improved
- Obtaining the views of local people regarding their need for, and experiences of, local care services and importantly to make these views known to those responsible for commissioning, providing, managing or scrutinising local care services and to Healthwatch England
- Making reports and recommendations about how local care services could or ought to be improved. These should be directed to commissioners and providers of care services, and people responsible for managing or scrutinising local care services and shared with Healthwatch England
- Providing advice and information about access to local care services so choices can be made about local care services
- Formulating views on the standard of provision and whether and how the local care services could and ought to be improved; and sharing these views with Healthwatch England
- Making recommendations to Healthwatch England to advise the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to conduct special reviews or investigations (or, where the circumstances justify doing so, making such recommendations direct to the CQC); and to make recommendations to Healthwatch England to publish reports about issues
- Providing Healthwatch England with the intelligence and insight it needs to enable it to perform effectively

3.2.1 Work programme for 2024-2025

In April 2024, Healthwatch Brent presented our workplan for the 2024-2025 financial year. This workplan was approved by the Healthwatch Brent Advisory Board, who have responsibility for setting Healthwatch Brent's priorities and ensuring that our work focuses on issues that will have the highest impact for local communities. The 24-25 workplan consisted of:

- Adult social care
- Experiences of hospital discharge
- Access to primary care, focusing on same day access hubs and service from community pharmacies

This was in addition to our ongoing information and signposting activity and general engagement with key community groups and wards. In addition to these set priorities, Healthwatch Brent will continue to monitor key themes in patient feedback and maintain flexibility to develop additional priority areas if required.

3.3 Adult social care

In partnership with Brent's Adult Social Care team, we identified three key groups that would benefit from engagement around access to adult social care services:

- Phase one: People with dementia and their carers
- Phase two: Autistic adults and adults with learning disabilities
- Phase three: Young carers

The aim of this engagement is to provide qualitative stories that demonstrate the experiences that residents have when accessing care, and to give service users the opportunity to share recommendations for improvement. The first two phases of engagement have now taken place, and engagement with the third group is in process with a report due to follow in January 2025. In total, we have collected feedback from **42** people during phase one and **27** people during phase two. The phase one report [can be viewed here](#), with the phase two report to follow in early November.

Residents we spoke with were complementary about the quality of service provided by carers and by social workers, where they were able to receive these services. However, a number of challenges were also identified:

- Long waiting times when calling Brent Council
- Lack of support for people with hearing loss or communication difficulties
- Difficulty navigating the website and finding information about how to request a care needs assessment
- A lack of understanding/ need for more training about autism
- Abrupt manner and lack of compassion from staff
- A need to chase Brent Council before care needs assessments were progressed
- Delays in receiving support after a care needs assessment had taken place
- A lack of support for people who are not eligible under the care act but still need help with some activities.

These findings have been published on the Healthwatch Brent website (reports library), shared with key stakeholders and sent directly to Brent's Director Adult Social Services (DASS). We received the following response:

"Thank you for conducting this engagement exercise and gathering valuable

feedback from our customers regarding adult social care for individuals with dementia. Your efforts are crucial in helping us understand the needs and concerns of our residents.

“The report has highlighted several key areas for improvement in Brent, including long waiting times, the responsiveness of our service, particularly in relation to phone communications, and the additional support required for people with hearing loss. This feedback is essential as it underscores the need to enhance our communication and responsiveness to better serve our community.

“Brent is committed to this journey of improvement. We have already initiated a new structure aimed at refining the processes and pathways for customers accessing our services, with the goal of having these improvements in place by October. We are actively working with our teams to ensure that telephone lines are reliable, and that staff respond promptly to calls.

“Additionally, we are currently undertaking a project to develop and enhance our sensory services. The feedback from this report will significantly contribute to the new design and delivery of these services to our community.

“We fully accept Healthwatch’s recommendations and will integrate them into the ongoing changes we are developing. These recommendations will play a crucial role in shaping our service enhancements.

“Thank you once again for your feedback. We look forward to continuing our collaboration with Healthwatch and our customers to improve the delivery of our services.”

We will continue to meet regularly with the DASS to share further feedback from residents and to discuss how these actions are being implemented. We will also return to the groups that participated in the engagement to share the response and to gather feedback as to whether their experiences have improved.

Our work with the adult social care team also involves supporting the development of the new coproduction programme. Healthwatch Brent have a place on the coproduction steering group and have been an active partner in supporting the Council to develop a new model for coproduction with service users.

The final element of our Adult Social Care project involves mystery shopping to evaluate the adult social care front door. We have worked with the Service Manager for the Corporate Contact Centre to develop a series of profiles that our volunteers will use to test the information and support received by residents’ contact Brent Council. This work is underway, with reporting expected in early 2025.

3.4 Hospital discharge

Throughout May and June, Healthwatch Brent's team of Enter & View volunteers carried out three visits to local care homes, led by our Volunteers and Projects Officer. Aside from assessing the quality of care being delivered in each home, the team also had a focus on hospital discharge. They spoke to both residents and staff about what happens when a patient is discharged from hospital to a care home, and how this process can be refined.

The care home staff and residents raised a number of concerns about the current process. This included:

- Patients being discharged to the care home when they are still significantly unwell
- Patients not receiving adequate food and water while waiting to be discharged, or while waiting for transport to take them to the care home
- Missing paperwork
- Inadequate communication and lack of information about care required after discharge
- Deadlines for discharge being missed

Following this work, we have produced a report detailing a number of recommendations for improving the hospital discharge process. Our Healthwatch Manager has met with the discharge team at London North West Hospital who recognise the challenges in regard to discharge and have undertaken to review our recommendations and develop a plan for improvement. This will include a focus on adequate hydration and nutrition, and plans to improve discharge communication and process – in particular looking at ways to standardise an approach to making discharges more fluent.

Our report, including the full response from LNWH, will be published in November.

3.5 Primary care

In September, we published our [GP access report](#), which brought together the views of 228 residents across North West London, and included a significant sample from Brent. In February 2024, we became aware of proposals to change the way that some patients in North West London access same-day GP appointments, including the introduction of 'same-day access hubs.'

We launched our survey to find out more about how patients are currently using their GP practices, current issues and challenges, and to follow up on some of the concerns raised – such as how easy it is to book an appointment and how long patients are waiting before they can be seen. Overall, we found that residents were happy with the current service being provided by their local GP practice. Most residents who responded to the survey (75.5%) felt that their GP took their needs and preferences into account at least some of the time.

There was also recognition that changes are needed, to address issues with the availability of appointments and with accessibility of booking options. This includes both same-day access and the ability to book appointments in

advance. However, any changes need to be developed in collaboration with patients, taking their views and needs into account.

The report and associated recommendations have been shared directly with the ICB to help inform their work on same day access. We will continue to monitor this work closely, and ensure that patients are consulted with in a meaningful way throughout the process.

3.6 Maternity project update

This project looked at how standards of care vary across North West London, and any factors that may put a woman at risk of receiving a lower standard of care.

We found that levels of care were consistent: overall, the majority of women we spoke to were pleased with the standard of care they received, across all stages of their pregnancy. Notably, our research did not find a significant disparity in care or outcomes based on the borough they resided in, the hospital used or the participant's demographic information.

We spoke to **37** participants who gave birth at Northwick Park Hospital. Of all the hospitals we visited, Northwick Park had the highest proportion of positive feedback (90%). The remaining 10% of respondents said their experience was 'mixed'. No respondents gave negative experience. For those who has a mixed experience, the key themes related to lack of communication and receiving conflicting information.

Northwick Park also had a high proportion of positive feedback for care after giving birth (82%). The remaining 18% of respondents said their experience was 'mixed'. No respondents gave negative experience. One woman said: "Health visitor is amazing. They came every week for first three months. I'm very happy. They also gave me information about wellbeing centres."

There were five non-English speaking participants who gave birth at Northwick Park. All non-English speaking participants stated that they got the information they needed in their preferred language. All non-English speaking participants rated their experience as positive or very positive.

We also spoke to a further **36** Brent residents who chose to go out of borough for their care.

Of these:

- 8 chose another service because it was nearer to their home
- 12 chose another service because it had a good reputation/was recommended to them
- 4 stated that they were not happy with the reputation of local services
- The remaining 12 did not state their reasons for going out of borough for care

Those going out of borough were more likely to report negative or mixed experiences of postnatal care, suggesting more work needs to be done on continuity for people moving between services.

We have shared the findings of the report with the Head of Midwifery at Northwick Park, and with other hospitals across North West London. We have also met with the teams from the Family Hubs and Family Wellbeing Centre to discuss how these services can be better promoted. Healthwatch Brent are sharing regular communications to support better awareness of these services.

3.7 Review of Pharmacy First services

Our 2024-2025 workplan also involves a review of how patient sentiment towards pharmacy services across the borough, including the Pharmacy First scheme. The project aims to

- Evaluate whether patients feel that the Pharmacy First scheme is effective, and whether they are happy with the overall standard of care provided by their local pharmacy
- Evaluate whether patients have been able to access medications in a timely manner
- Evaluate whether patients have enough information about Pharmacy First, and understand what is available to them.

Overall, this project aims to ensure that the service being provided by local pharmacies meets the standards that residents are being promised, and that people have enough information to make use of the services. We will speak to a range of patients and professionals to gather testimonials about their experiences, and make recommendations for how pharmacies can better meet the needs of Brent residents, and also feed our findings to Healthwatch England as part of their wider review of primary care access.

3.8 Engagement

Aside from the project work outlined above, we have continued our regular engagement programme, visiting a variety of community spaces across Brent to speak to residents about their experiences with health and social care. The key themes and issues uncovered during these visits are shared directly with relevant services and commissioners, and used to identify future priorities for the Healthwatch team. In Q1 we participated in 16 engagement and outreach events, reaching 160 residents. In Q2, we participated in or held 14 events and reached 168 residents.

3.9 Advice and Signposting

Our advice and signposting service consists of in person information and 'know your rights' sessions, a telephone and email support service and an information hub on our website. This service has been very active throughout the first half of the 24-25 financial year, and we expect it to continue at the same pace throughout Q3 and Q4.

Service provided	Q1	Q2
In person advice sessions	67	39
Information and signposting cases through our telephone/email support service	16	11
Individuals accessing the online information hub	499	560
Total	582	610

The most popular topics of information included how to access adult social care, information about the NHS complaints process and requests for advocacy. We have found that the lack of non-statutory advocacy services in Brent has become a significant challenge for many residents.

4.0 Financial Considerations

4.1 There are no relevant financial implications.

5.0 Legal Considerations

5.1 There are no relevant legal considerations.

6.0 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

6.1 The Healthwatch Service has been assessed against the Equality and Diversity Policy so that it ensures we are fully committed to and undertaking action under the Equality Act 2010 and other forms of legislation that combat discrimination and promotes equality and diversity.

7.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

7.1 No impact on environmental objectives.

8.0 Communications Considerations

8.1 Covered in the main body of the report.

Report sign off:

Cleo Chalk
Healthwatch Service Manager