



Together

we're making health
and social care better

Annual Report 2022–23

healthwatch
Waltham Forest

Contents

About us	3
Highlights from our year	4
Listening to your experiences	6
Getting a GP appointment	7
Ambulance Services	11
Dentists	12
Hearing from all communities	13
Maternity	14
Sanjay's joined up care	15
Advice and information	16
Volunteers	18
Finances and future priorities	20
Statutory statements	21
Get involved	23
Our Community Insights reports	24



"In the last ten years, the health and social care landscape has changed dramatically, but the dedication of local Healthwatch hasn't. Your local Healthwatch has worked tirelessly to make sure the views of local people are heard, and NHS and social care leaders use your feedback to make care better."

Louise Ansari, Healthwatch National Director

About us

Healthwatch Waltham Forest is your local health and social care champion.

We make sure NHS leaders and decision makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care. We can also help you to 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.

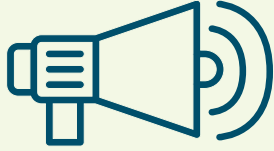


Our values are:

- **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



3,564 people

shared their experiences of health and social care services with us with over **15,000** separate insights, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.

259 people

came to us for clear advice and information. The most common topics were dental access and mental health.

Making a difference to care

We published

44 reports

covering patient experience and the improvements people would like to see to health and social care services.

Our most popular report was

Improving GP access

which proposed developing different access systems for different groups of patients.



Health and care that works for you



We're lucky to have

10

outstanding volunteers who gave up **31 days** to make care better for our community.

We're funded by our local authority. In 2022-23 we received

£102,382

which is **13.4% less** than the previous year.

We currently employ

3.5 staff full time equivalent

who help us carry out our work.

How we've made a difference this year

Spring



We interviewed 22 Care Homes about new GP services for their residents.



Feedback was very positive with resident wellbeing improving. Issues concerned access to dentistry, mental health and continence services.

Summer



We gathered feedback from over 1,000 people on their experience of accessing GPs.



Insights suggest that different access systems for the generally well and for people with long-term conditions and the vulnerable may improve experience.

Autumn



We visited maternity services, conducted surveys and reached out to ethnic minority and faith groups to talk about why some women have poorer maternity outcomes.



Whipps Cross and health services are working with local women to improve cultural awareness..

Winter



We worked with our neighbouring Healthwatch to look at urgent care and ambulance services.



We found that to tackle A&E and urgent care services we need to tackle access to GP services. We are working with Waltham Forest GPs to develop solutions..

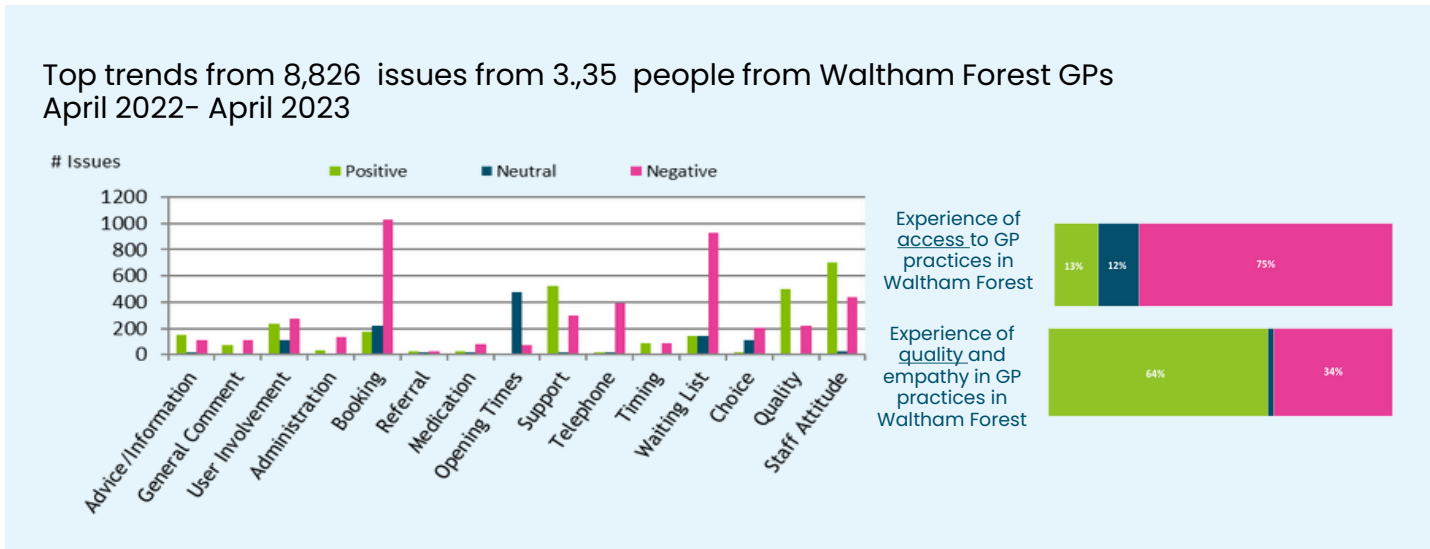


Listening to your experiences

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

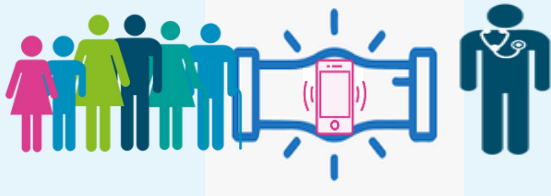
Getting a GP appointment

Being able to get a GP appointment is the issue that people in Waltham Forest are most worried about. The quality of the care they receive still remains mainly positive.



What is the problem?

Most practices ask patients to phone first thing in the morning to make an appointment. Patients often end of waiting a long time to get through on the phone only to be told all available appointment slots have gone.



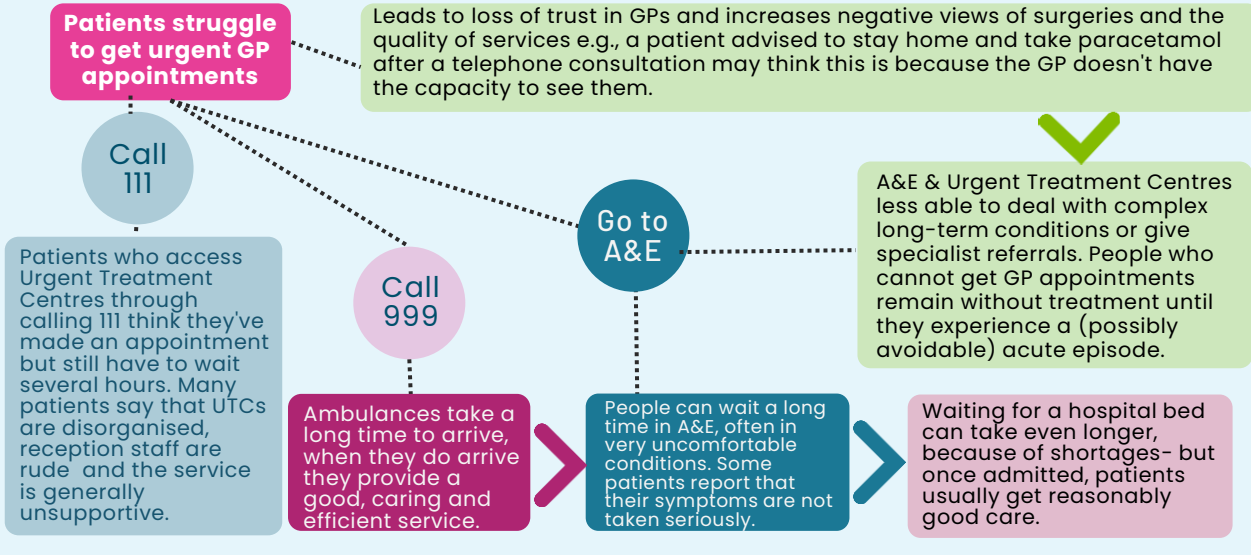
Online appointment booking systems often don't work smoothly or there are no appointment slots available; in some cases – after answering many questions patients still need to call for an appointment anyway.

Patients who can't get an appointment are often told to seek urgent care or keep trying each morning.

The more difficult access becomes, the more people start to lose trust in the quality of services as they feel care is being rationed to cut costs . It also increases pressure on other parts of the system as people unable to access their GP are using urgent care services (NHS 111, A&E, Urgent Treatment Centres). This is also problem because these services may not fully meet their needs (e.g. they can't offer specialist referrals, continuity of care, long-term treatment) and are also overstretched. This means longer waits for everyone including patients with a clinical need to be seen urgently.

Getting a GP appointment

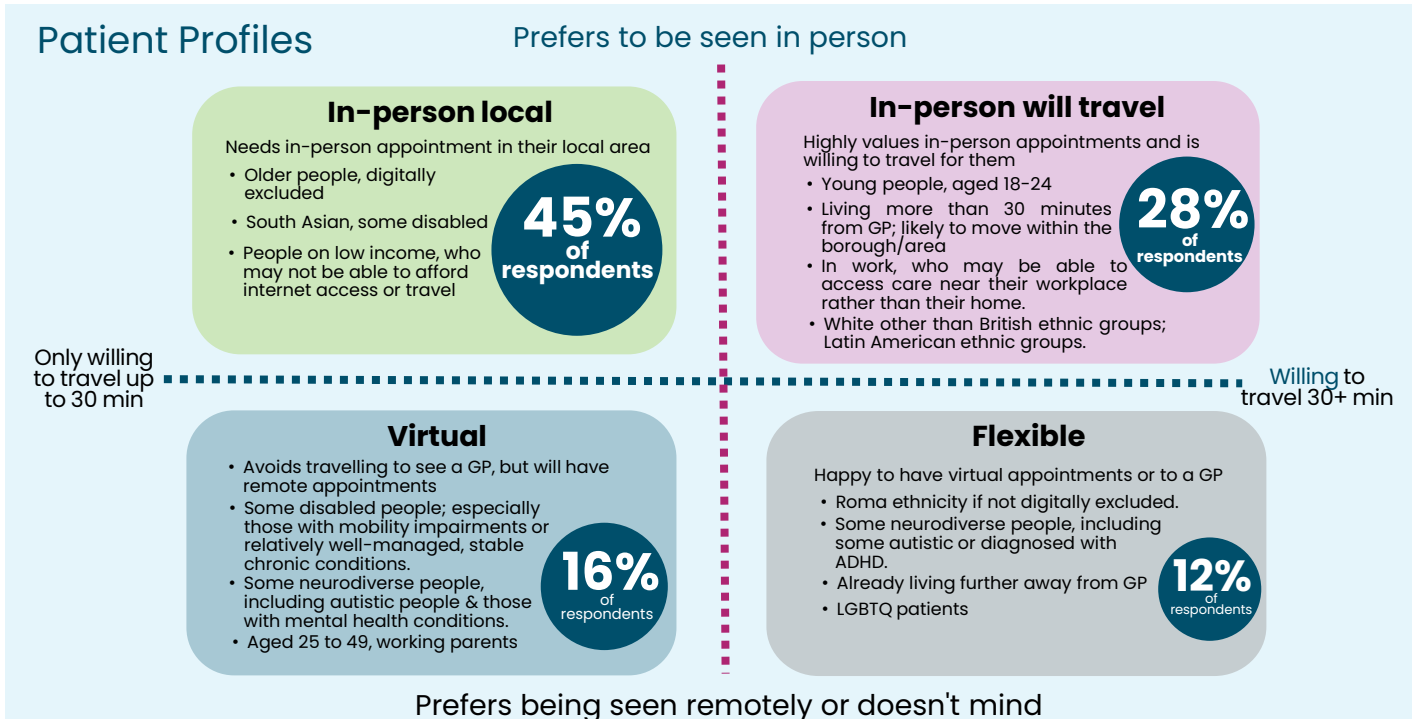
Impact of poor GP access on urgent care



What do local people want?

We looked at feedback from 4,713 Waltham Forest patients*. It showed that 45% of people wanted a face-to-face appointment with their own GP but 56% were interested in doing things differently.

* patients from a 2023 GP Access and Extended Hours survey ([download report here](#)).

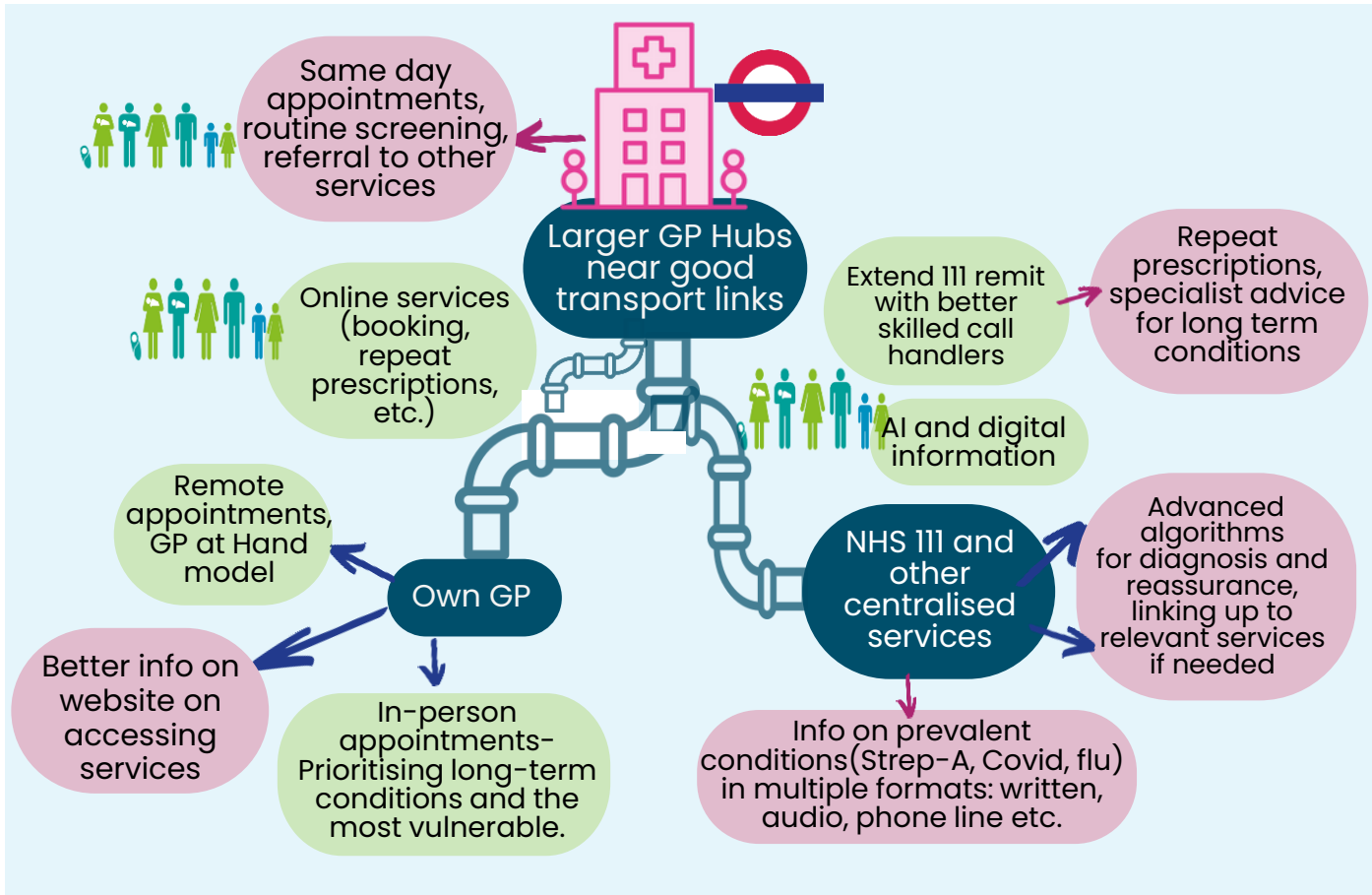


This would indicate that if you provide a good online, phone and GP Hub service for the mostly well you could free up face to face capacity for those that need it most.

Getting a GP appointment

What could better access like?

Rather than everyone trying to accessing care through a GP Practice phone line they can chose to access information, services and support in a range of ways that better suit their needs.



More traditional users

Addressing the needs of the other group in a flexible personalised way creates capacity for this group in GP surgeries.



Prefer booking by telephone, being seen in person, going to the same GP surgery.
 Represent the largest group, but just short of a majority.
 Are likely to be more vulnerable: older, disabled or more severely ill, digitally excluded.

A significant other group



Happy to book online, use online tools, have remote consult, go to a hub or Urgent Treatment Centre.
 How they are willing to be flexible may vary between groups and individuals. (some may be willing to travel to a walk-in centre but not have remote consultations, or the other way around)

This group could be key for unblocking the pipeline

Getting a GP appointment

Local peoples' insights have influenced:

- Planning of GP Hubs with more same day appointments.
- new digital phone systems to improve response times.
- better information on what services are available and how to access them without having to go through GPs.



What difference will it make?

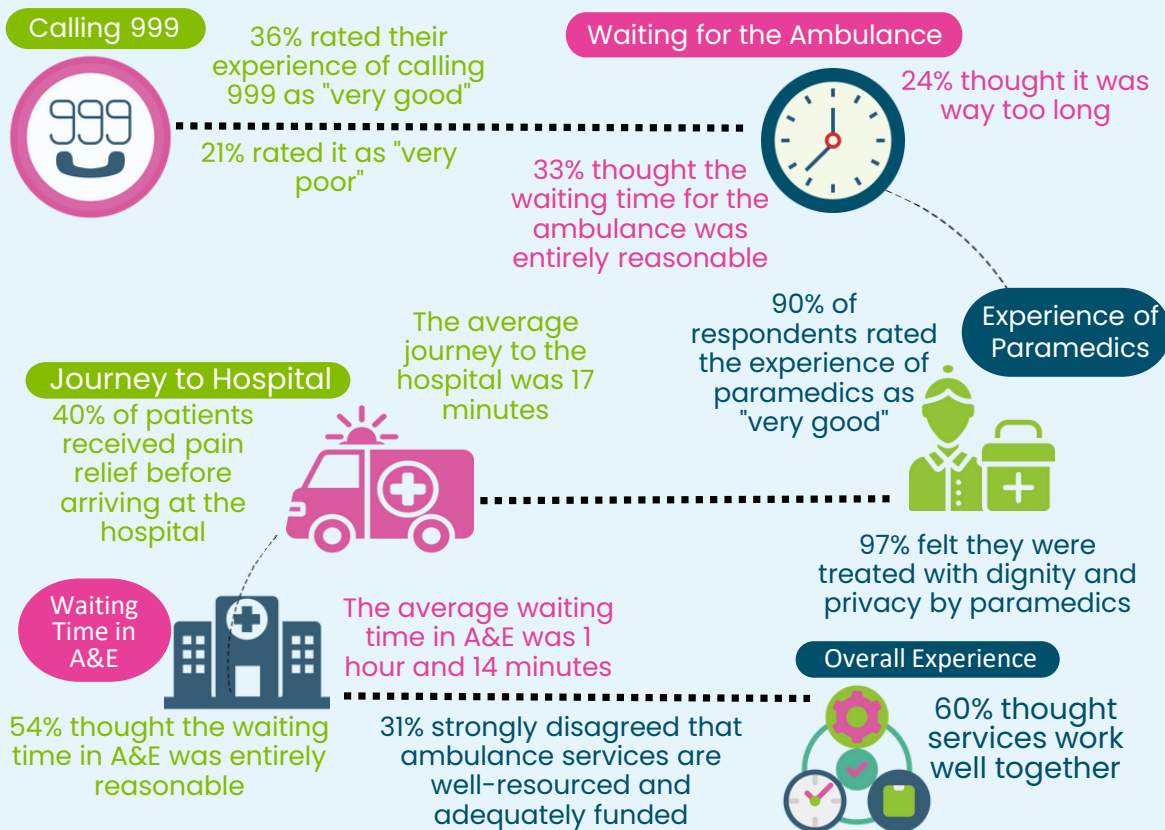


- If you who aren't sure you need to see a GP you'll be able to access trusted information on your options including the NHS App, pharmacy, practice nurse or making your own direct referral.
- If you need a face to face appointment with your GP you should find it easier to get through on the phone and to see your own GP.
- If you're less worried about seeing your GP you could be seen quicker at a GP Hub.



Ambulance Services

We engaged with 54 local residents on their experience of the London Ambulance service



People had a very positive view of the London Ambulance service and its staff. They are, however concerned about ambulance waiting times and about the under-resourcing of the service. People suggested:

- Increasing investment in the LAS, including better pay and conditions for staff.
- Improving waiting times and service responsiveness, including streamlining triage at dispatch
- Improving primary care services and alternative urgent care services for situations which are not life-threatening, to decrease pressure on ambulances.
- Better training for 111/999 dispatchers and ambulance drivers.

What difference will it make?



The engagement Healthwatch led with local residents has been one of the key data inputs into the LAS five year strategy development process. The areas of work and improvements we are going to introduce have been heavily influenced by the voice of the residents.

Beata Malinowska, Deputy Director of Strategy and Transformation, London Ambulance Service NHS Trust

Finding a dentist

It is a tale of two very different experiences with dentists in Waltham Forest. If you can get an NHS appointment or can afford to go private then the experience is generally very good (83% positive). But if you're one of the many people who are finding it extremely difficult to access NHS dentists (63% negative experience of access) including accessing emergency dentistry (for example via NHS 111) then the consequences can be harrowing. ([link to report](#)). Care home managers also told us it was hard to find a dentist who can come to a care home for people who can't travel and wheelchair users said it isn't possible to access some dental practice.



"I went in March to register my child at the dentist, I was told that until April he does not register anyone, in April I was told that until May he does not register anyone, I went today to be told that no more new patients are registered."

Comment came from Google reviews

Changes to NHS dental contracts

We raised your concerns with Healthwatch England who incorporated our insights into their national campaign to push the government to come up with a better way of funding dentists to improve access and affordability. The Healthwatch campaign resulted in NHS England changing:



- Increasing the payments for dentists when treating patients with complex needs, for example, people needing work done on three or more teeth.
- Requiring dental practices to regularly update the national directory as to whether they are taking new NHS patients.
- Moving resources from dental practices that are underperforming.

Locally, the North East London Integrated Care Board will now have responsibility for our local dentistry services and we have suggested that they look at opportunities to increase community dental services within our dental hospitals services and to target initiatives to underserved deprived areas and reaching the most vulnerable in our community.

What difference will it make?

With these changes in place, it should be easier for people to find a dentist taking on NHS patients in their local area, alleviating the stress and worry so many suffer when they cannot afford to go private.



Hearing from all communities

Over the past year we have worked hard to make sure we hear from everyone within our local area. We consider it important to reach out to the communities we hear from less frequently, to gather their feedback and make sure their voice is heard and services meet their needs.

This year we have reached different communities by:

- Talking to women from Black African and Caribbean, Pakistani and Eastern European communities about their experience of maternity services.
- Talking to people in care homes about changes to GP services
- Presenting community insights reports on GPs and hospital services that breaks down experience based on ethnicity, disability, gender, age, LGBTQ, and faith.

Equal maternity outcomes

We engaged with pregnant women mainly from Black, Asian, and ethnic minority communities to understand how all babies born and cared for in Waltham Forest could have the best possible start in life. We found.

Culture: women of Black ethnicities were more likely to say it's important to them to be looked after by professionals who are similar to them (cultural background, age etc.), and less likely to say care providers are similar to them.

Choice: referral by a GP to maternity services appears to lead to less choice than self-referral. Women from Black African, Turkish, Pakistani and Eastern European communities and single parents are more likely to rely on GP referrals.

Language: access to healthcare professionals who speak their first language was important for those with basic and conversational English, but less so for fluent non-native speakers. Polish and Pakistani respondents were less likely to report having access to professionals who speak their language.

Income Antenatal classes are no longer widely available free at the point of access.

Capacity Antenatal provision sometimes seen as rushed and with maternity health professionals lacking time to engage.

What difference will it make?

Maternity providers have committed to work towards:

- cultural competency training for individual Maternity Units.
- trauma-informed care for both staff and service users.
- a communications post in each Maternity Unit focused on the provision of accessible, timely information.
- provision of multilingual advocates on site.

You can find out more about what difference the work is having [here](#)



From the Maternity Equity and Equality work last summer to the Maternity Choice work earlier this year, we honestly couldn't have done it without you. You were able to reach communities we never would have been able to reach on our own, and with that it meant the engagement was genuine, sensitive and considered.

All the insight and feedback you gathered really has set actions and recommendations to deliver meaningful change in maternity care, and whilst I'm incredibly grateful for all your hard work and support, it will be our communities who will benefit the most.

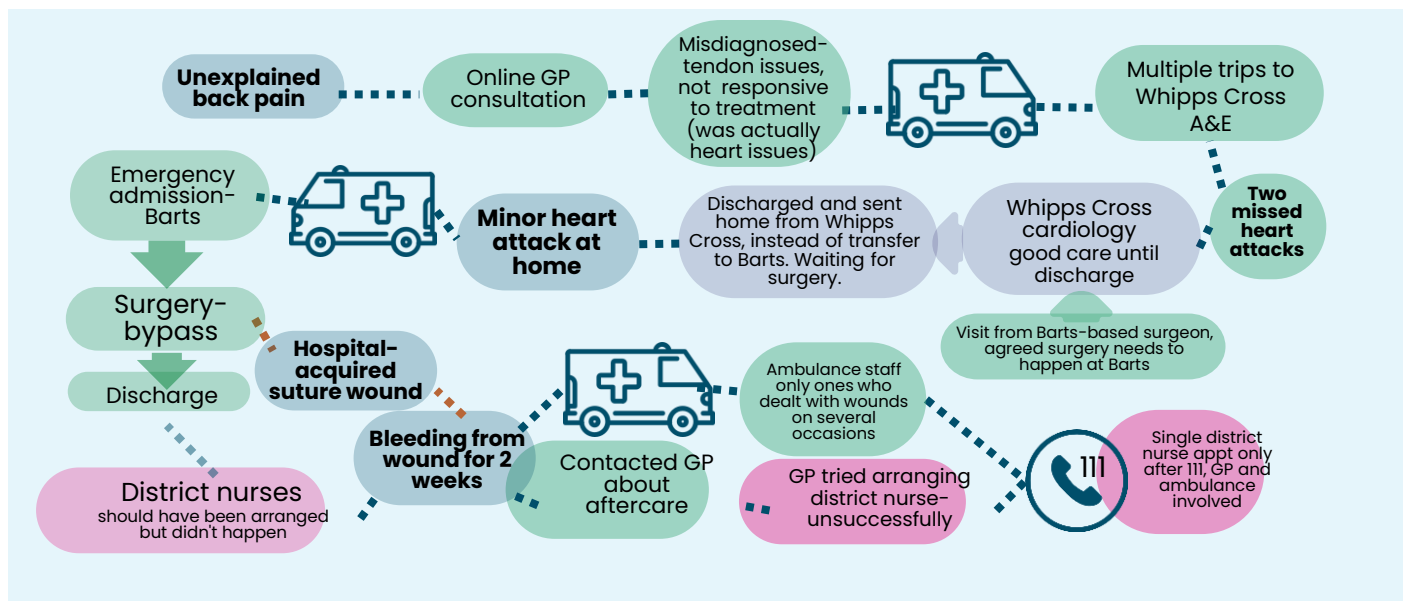
Sarah Coulthard, Senior Communication and Campaigns Manager, NHS North East London ICB

“



Joining up services

We used Sanjay's story of a wide range of health and care services to show how different parts of the system not working well can have a drastic impact both for the patient and the services.



We suggested that people recently discharged from hospital should be flagged on GP systems and when they phone for a GP appointment or other care they should be given a priority. Patients should be able to alert someone in the system if District Nurses do not turn up and issues should be dealt with quickly. Sanjay's story was presented to the Waltham Forest Health and Care Partnership and the North East London Integrated Care Board .



Advice and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch 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, how to make a complaint or choosing a good care home for a loved one – you can count on us. This year the most common issues we've helped people with are:

- Dentists
- Children and young people
- Covid
- Mental health

Advice and information

Help to find dental care in Waltham Forest

The most common request for information and advice was on how to access dental services. People told us that dentist were not taking on new patients.

The impact of delayed treatment has resulted in people living with considerable pain, developing medical resistance and dental conditions worsening.

“I went in March to register my child at the dentist, I was told that until April he does not register anyone, I went in April I was told that until May he does not register anyone, I went today to be told that no more new patients are being registered.

“I have been trying to contact all the dentist around E17 but no one takes NHS patients. I cannot afford a 1.2k root canal and I am in severe pain.”

Healthwatch Waltham Forest have raised concerns with the Health and Wellbeing Board and Health Scrutiny Committee and have worked across the London Healthwatch network to look at possible solutions .

Understanding how to make a GP complaint

People find it difficult know how to complain about their GP practice and when they do they find it hard to see what difference it might make .

It is not clear how to give feedback or make a complaint at many GP Practices.

Receptionists can make it feel difficult to make a complaint

It's not clear what difference making the complaint will make or even where it goes. We added a clearer explanation of the complaints process on our website [How to make a complaint](#)

This will change on 1 July 2023 with the North East London Integrated Care Board taking over responsibility from NHS England. We hope that this might give us more opportunity to improve the process and use the insights that the provide.





Volunteering

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

This year our volunteers:

- Visited Whipps Cross Hospital, voluntary and community sector events and community groups to promote Healthwatch Waltham Forest and what we have to offer
- Collected experiences and supported their communities to share their views.
- Carried out an enter and view visits to Whipps Cross Hospital to help understand where things were working well and where they could be improved.
- Interviewed residents over the phone to make sure we reached digitally excluded residents.
- Collected the most up-to-date information on changes to services, such as whether NHS dental appointments were available at practices

Jennie – visiting health services

“During the last year I have engaged with people who have used the maternity services at my local hospital. Their feedback has highlighted good practice and identified issues of concern, which will be shared across NHS England to ensure all patients who use the service receive safe, effective and compassionate care. I enjoy being part of the Healthwatch team ensuring that the care provided locally is the best it can be.”



Tunde – gathering community insights

“I was able to access a Queen Mary University community researcher course as part of my volunteering. The training provided me with the courage to reach out to the community, take part in focus groups, conduct surveys and connect with a diverse range of people. I enjoy volunteering as the flexible schedule fits well with my family responsibilities. My volunteering experience is leading to paid opportunities and I’m thinking about a career in community engagement”



Maria – supporting our administration

“Being a volunteer in Healthwatch has provided me with many opportunities to develop new skills, such as managing stakeholders’ queries, working with and supporting the rebranding of the organisation’s governance policies and procedures and meeting the deadlines. The work with Healthwatch has open for me also career doors, giving me the opportunity to progress in my role in the NHS



Do you feel inspired?



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



www.healthwatchwalthamforest.co.uk



0800 145 5026



info@healthwatchwalthamforest.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	£102,382.50	Expenditure on pay	£108,590.71
Additional income	£60,019.78	Non-pay expenditure	£43,564.70
		Office and management fee	£10,246.87
Total income	£162,402.28	Total expenditure	£162,402.28

Additional income is broken down by:

- **£1,250 funding** received from Healthwatch England for work on a project
- **£33,675 funding** received from the North East London Integrated Care Board
- **£16,344 funding** from Local Voice (host organisation)

Next steps

In the ten years since Healthwatch was launched, we've demonstrated the power of public feedback in helping the health and care system understand what is working, spot issues and think about how things can be better in the future.

Services are currently facing unprecedented challenges and tackling the backlog needs to be a key priority for the NHS to ensure everyone gets the care they need. Over the next year we will continue our role in collecting feedback from everyone in our local community and giving them a voice to help shape improvements to services.

We will also continue our work to tackling inequalities that exist and work to reduce the barriers you face when accessing care, regardless whether that is because of where you live, income or race.

Our top three priorities for 2023-24 are to:

1. Improve GP experience by co-designing access points based on local people's needs and requirements.
2. Improve the lives of people with complex long-term conditions by identifying how joining up services could work better for more people.
3. Increase the co-productions of local services by creating a network of 'community influencers' who bring their experiences and our evidence.



Left to right - Dr Sheraz Younas from our GP Federation, Amber Harris and Sue Boon from our Health and Care Partnership and Dianne Barham and Robina Ramzan from Healthwatch Waltham Forest

Statutory statements

Healthwatch Waltham Forest, hosted by Local Voice, 80 Redmans Road, London, E1 3AG.

Healthwatch Waltham Forest 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 is currently recruiting 'Community Influencers' who work on a voluntary basis to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny to our activities. Our Board ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community. Throughout 2022/23 the Board met four times and made decisions on our priority projects, income generation opportunities and staff remuneration.

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 have the opportunity to provide us with insight about their experience of using services. During 2022/23 we have been available by phone, email, provided a webform on our website and through social media, as well as attending 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 send to all of our Community Influencers and stakeholders.

Responses to recommendations

We are awaiting a response from one of our providers to our recommendations. There were no issues or recommendations escalated by us to Healthwatch England Committee, so 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 insight and experiences that have been shared with us.

We regularly present our Trends Analysis findings to the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Health and Care Partnership board and its operational groups. We highlight what's working well, what's not working so well and how things might be improved. We have also presented community insights on GP Access, Inadequate rated GP practices, Whipps Cross, dentists and integrated care. We produced deep dives on GP Access and Barts Health for the Waltham Forest Quality and Performance Group and providers are now required to report back to the Group on what impact they have had. We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

Healthwatch North East London

We lead the North East London ICB Community Insights Project that joins all of our community insights together into one data set. This means that Waltham Forest residents voices can easily and quickly have an impact across the region

Enter and view

This year, we made one Enter and View visit to Elizabeth Ward at Whipps Cross Hospital. We made five key recommendations as a result of this activity.

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
Elizabeth Ward Whipps Cross Hospital	Review improvements to the ward and review discharge processes and integrated care systems.	Wrote a report with recommendations – the service followed up on these and patient safety improved.

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Waltham Forest is represented on the Waltham Forest Health and Wellbeing Board and the Waltham Forest Health and Care Partnership Board, by Dianne Barham and Robina Ramzan. We are coopted members of the Scrutiny Committees for Health, Adult Social Care, and Whipps Cross Hospital.

2022–2023 Outcomes

Project / activity	Changes made to services
Quarterly Trends Reports on integrated care, GPs Whipps Cross Hospital.	Quality improvement activities focused on areas of poor patient experience and new projects can be measured in real time as to impact on local people.
Care Homes report on GP Services	Development of a one-page infographic for Care Homes and GP Practices to facilitate clearer understanding of the GP Care Home programme. Reduction in hospital admissions of care home residents Improvement in the quality of health care for residents.
Raised issues on access to Health and social care services and safeguarding for refugees in Hotels	Refugees and Asylum seekers will receive better access to Health and social care services with GP access made a priority. Actions are being taken to ensure safeguarding in particular for young children.
Elizabeth ward – Whipps Cross Hospital	This report and our trends report led to the development of a patient leaflet and further investigations into the timeliness of care visits conducted by home care organisations.

Get involved – community influencers make a difference.

This year we launched our community influencers volunteering programme. You can choose how much or how little you want to be involved depending on your own interests, experience and time capacity. We commit to rewarding and recognising your time in a way that's meaningful to which might be financially or making sure you know what difference your input has.

What can community influencers do?



Become a community influencer by clicking this image



Our community insights reports



As well as the reports already highlighted, we have provided insights on a wide range of topics important to our local residents and partners.

You can find all of our reports on our website [here](#). We provide quarterly summary dashboards on resident's experience of GP Practices, Whipps Cross Hospital and on health and care services as a whole. We also work with our neighbouring Healthwatch to produce reports across the North East London area [access North East London reports here](#).

We produced a range of project reports, some of which have been highlighted in this report. Click on the images below to find out more.



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Waltham Forest



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