

Unlocking the power of people- driven care

Annual Report
2024–2025



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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 at Healthwatch England



Note: Names and identifying details of the public have been changed throughout this report.

Message from our Chief Officer

It is with pride and a degree of unease that we look back on another busy year of listening to people's experience of health and social care services.

We've heard from over 3200 local people about their experiences. Continuing to explore access to primary care, we have looked into local people's experience of dentistry and produced two reports focusing on and learning what could be improved.

We are in an ongoing process of sharing our findings with colleagues in the NHS and the Local Dental Network to explore how experience and feedback can influence provision. As the cost-of-living crisis continues to put pressure on Dudley borough households and health inequalities seem to be widening, local people are consistently faced with difficult choices, with private dentistry bills an unattainable reality for many.

Collaboration has continued to be a priority of ours. Working with partners in Public Health we have co-designed dentistry research, supported the pharmaceutical needs assessment (to be published later in the year) and worked with NHS and Council colleagues from Safeguarding to local community development work. We are particularly pleased that the feedback we obtained about access to GP services has resulted in a co-designed charter that clearly outlines patients' rights and can be found on every GP practice website in the borough.

As cuts are felt across Local Authorities and Integrated Care Boards, it is important to reach out to communities to ensure we're still actively listening, and that lived experience is understood around the board tables, when services are being re-imagined and re-designed. Unfortunately, we have also received a cut to our annual budget this year and our team of five has become four.

We are ever grateful for the ongoing support of our health and care colleagues, our Steering Group, our wonderful volunteers and most importantly the people of the Dudley borough who continue to share experiences in the hope of bringing about better care for others.



Jason Griffiths, Chief Officer Healthwatch Dudley

"As a small but dedicated and influential local service, it is imperative that we help amplify the voice of local people and ensure local experience and intelligence are at the forefront of positive change."



About us

Healthwatch Dudley 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

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



Our mission

To make sure that peoples' experiences help make health and care better.

Our values



Equity

We are 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.

Year in review

3224 people

shared their experiences of health and social care services with us or came to us for information and advice.

Each person that shares their experience with us helps improve health and social care services in Dudley borough.



Making a difference to care:

We published:

19 reports

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

Our most popular report was:

Making a dental appointment in Dudley borough – mystery shopping exercise

We worked with the Dudley Council's Children and Young Peoples Public Health Team to contact every dental practice in the borough that offers NHS dental appointments.

Health and social care that works for you:

In 2024 – 2025 we employed

5 staff

As of April 2025 we employ 4 staff.

We're lucky to have

15 volunteers

who support our work.

We're funded via our local authority. We also receive money for commissioned work. In 2024–25 we received:

£222,505

which is 1.88% more than last year.



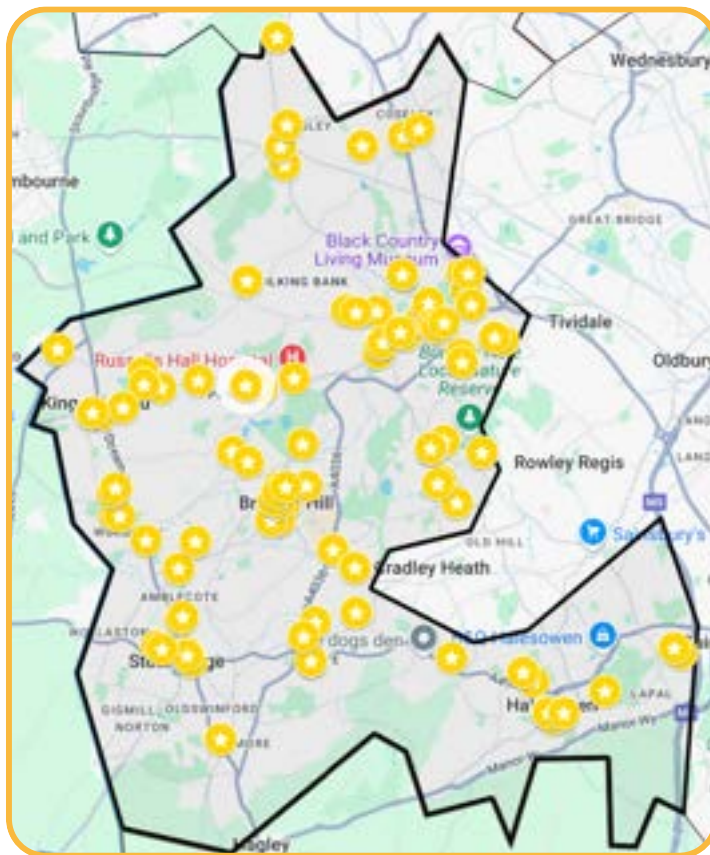


Listening to your experiences

When service users share their experiences, changes can be made to improve care. That's why, over the last year, we have made connecting with and listening to all areas of the community a priority.

Out and about

We went to 117 community activities and events in 2024–2025.



We recognise the benefit of meeting people out in the community.

By connecting with people in places where they already attend, they often feel more able to share their experiences in a safe environment.

This year we travelled across the borough and targeted groups, activities and events where people who are often seldom-heard would attend.



Out and about

We strive to listen to all corners of the community. Here is a snapshot of some of the communities we have reached out to.

Dads Rock



We attended an event aimed at supporting dads. We shared information on support services for dads and families and listened to their experiences.

Brockmoor & Pensnett



Supporting engagement with the community in Brockmoor & Pensnett, we attended a Community Showcase to highlight local services, organisations & activities.

Mental Wellbeing for Asian Women



We joined a health and wellbeing session organised by Womenn. The event focused on empowering women and assisting them with their mental health.

Listening in libraries



We attended engagement events within Dudley libraries to reach out to members of the community we don't usually hear from.

Supporting Veterans



We have joined the Armed Forces Breakfast Club throughout the year to listen to the experiences of veterans and signpost them to local services.

Dudley Young Health Champions



We attended the Dudley Young Health Champions conference to hear about their work to raise awareness of health and wellbeing issues. We encouraged young people to continue to share their experiences and champion for better services.

Listening at Russells Hall Hospital

Strong relationships with the Patient Experience Team allow us to routinely discover the patient experience at Russells Hall Hospital.

"The care for my brother by the nurses was phenomenal, such skilled and dedicated professionals."

-Angela, sister of patient

We maintain a regular presence at Russells Hall Hospital and strive to connect with as many patients and visitors as possible. In 2024-2025:



- **We accompanied the Patient Trolley which visits patients on wards.**

We listened to the experiences of in-patients and signposted them to additional support out of the hospital.



- **We host regular sessions at the new Information Hub**

The Information Hub is a space to provide support and information to patients, visitors, carers and staff. We host sessions alongside other services.



- **We took part in the national PLACE* assessment.**

At Russells Hall Hospital, the Emergency Department and The Guest Hospital.



- **We joined Patient Experience Group meetings**

We championed the voices of people we heard from and shared their feedback and experiences.

"I wasn't given any follow-up care or information. I have been contacted since, but they just discharged me and didn't give me any more information."

-Shelia, patient

**The Patient Led Assessment of the Care Environment (PLACE) is where volunteers visit the hospital and provide feedback on the hospital environment from the patient's perspective.*



Patients react to new parking system

A new automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) system at the car park for Russells Hall Hospital highlights concerns with parking.

When seeking feedback on a new ANPR parking system at the hospital we heard stories from members of the public who found the parking at Russells Hall Hospital to be challenging.

“We have started to allow two hours before our appointment for parking. As a blue badge holder, unless we are there before 8:00am then we are not able to find a space. When you have mobility issues it’s no joke if you have to park a long way from the entrance.”

–Facebook user

“The spaces [in the maternity car park] are so tight it makes it really difficult for expecting moms to get in and out of their vehicles.”

–Facebook user

“The new system is relatively easy to use and I saw staff helping people use it.”

–Jen, visitor at Russells Hall Hospital

We shared this information with the Patient Experience Team and Mitie the car park operator. We encourage Mitie, Russells Hall Hospital and other partners to work together to address concerns raised by patients and visitors to the hospital.

“Maternity car park has very tight spaces. It is difficult for pregnant women to get in and out of a car. I have to walk at least 5 to 10 mins every time to my appointment due to no spaces.”

–Facebook user



Showcasing local services at a community event

We helped organise a health and wellbeing event to showcase local health services.

In collaboration with The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust and Dudley Council Public Health, we helped organise an event that showcased the rich community spirit of Brockmoor and Pensnett, and featured a variety of informative stalls, demonstrations, and activities.

The event was supported by a national organisation, the Institute for Voluntary Action Research, with funding from the National Lottery Community Fund.



From 'Play Your Cards Right' with Macmillan Cancer Support, to first aid demonstrations from St John's Ambulance and sports activities, there was something for everyone to get involved with and learn about.

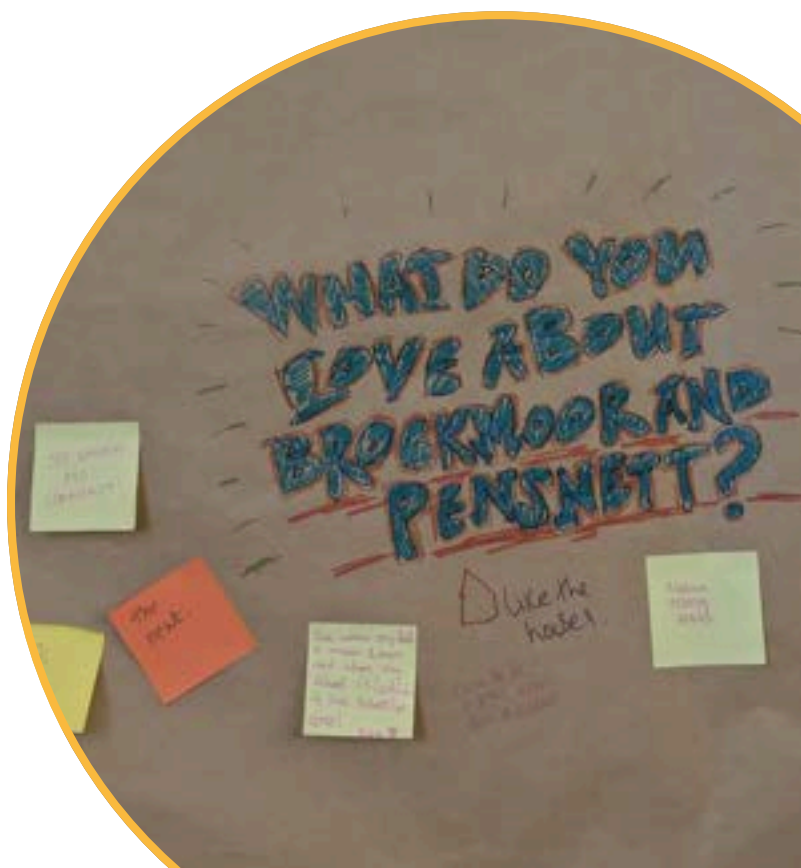
The event also showcased previous engagement work that has taken place with the community and voluntary groups, working with local children to better their understanding of health, wellbeing and lifestyle choices.

We attend the Brockmoor & Pensnett Steering Group to champion the voices of local people in the development of health and social care services in the area.



"We're really pleased to be a part of this community event. It is great to see so many local people coming along to share their experiences and hear more about what is available to them."

**- Jason Griffiths, Chief Officer
Healthwatch Dudley**



Seeking feedback on safeguarding

We have been working with colleagues from Dudley Safeguarding People Partnership to explore ways of gathering feedback from people going through the safeguarding process.

We originally aimed to work with DSPP whereby they would identify people who had gone through the safeguarding process who could share their experiences with us to identify what is working well and areas for improvement.

DSPP was unable to identify people to refer to us, which triggered a period of reflection and reassessment of the original joint project to overcome the difficulties in obtaining the views and experiences of people who go through the safeguarding process, many of the barriers are a national issue.

We collectively acknowledge that providing feedback when actively involved in the safeguarding process can be difficult and understandably not a priority when individuals are dealing with numerous challenges.

We are exploring ideas with the Safeguarding Adults Board to put in place ongoing feedback opportunities and inviting people to speak to us if they want to share their experience with an independent body. We have also recommended including specific task and finish groups and regular Board agendas to maintain the user voice within safeguarding services.

There is a collective and ongoing commitment from the Adult Safeguarding Board to learn from people who have been through the safeguarding process, to better understand what works well, what could be improved and how various agencies respond to and support people through challenging times, that can often negatively impact someone's health and wellbeing.

Have you been through the safeguarding process?

If you have had experience of the safeguarding process, reach out to our team to share your views.

Contact details can be found at the end of this report.





How we've made a difference this year

We have taken your feedback to the people that have the power to make change. The stories we heard from the community have led to positive changes to services.

Changes being made to improve access to GP services

Over 1000 people across Dudley borough shared their experiences of accessing GP services with us. The voices of the public are leading to change at all levels of care.

The stories highlighted how not everyone's needs are being met when visiting their GP practice. We used the stories shared with us to identify changes that could be made to improve access to GP services.

Every GP practice in Dudley borough has put the new Patient Charter on their website, in response to our work on GP access. We were commended at the Healthwatch Impact awards for this work.



What does the Patient Charter do:

- Clearly explains what patients can expect from their GP service.
- Sets out adjustments that can be made for people with additional needs.
- Sets out the rights for people who do not have a fixed address.
- Gives patients the power to challenge their GP practice if they do not receive the care they are entitled to.

Registering with a GP when you don't have an address

Bembe was unable to register with a GP without ID. This had prevented him from getting a GP or seeking healthcare for over seven years.

We were contacted by another charity as Bembe had been unable to register with a GP practice despite being given a card stating he does not need an address to register with a practice. He had visited a couple of practices but was told he was out of the area.

We identified a local GP practice and contacted them to check he was within their catchment area. Bembe does not have any ID, so we agreed with the practice the person would take a letter as proof of address.

After helping him to register with a GP he is now seeing his doctor and receiving treatment for multiple conditions.

“You don't know how much what you have done has helped me.”
-Bembe

Care homes and supported living

Care homes and supported living facilities house some of the most vulnerable in our society so reaching out and hearing their views is vital in ensuring they receive high quality care.

“We have a singer that comes!”
-Resident

“They seem to be in front [of the] television, not took out much.”
-Family member

We have been working with the Quality Partnership and other partners to conduct Enter & View visits to see what is working well and what can be improved based on the feedback from residents and their loved ones.

56% of residents and their loved ones told us that staff are caring all of the time and 72% said that care needs are met most or all of the time.

The overarching issue raised across the facilities was the topic of choice. People appreciated choice in food, activities, where they spend their time and, if required, how they receive care.

Some people were happy with the range of activities provided at their facility, whereas others wanted more variety and choice.

“Carers are underrated and don't get enough credit for the hard job that they do.”
-Family member

We published a report following each visit and provided recommendations based on what we heard.

The facilities responded to our findings and recommendations. The majority saw the visits as a valuable opportunity to improve care and have committed to make changes.



Exploring NHS dental services in Dudley borough

After people shared their experiences of long wait times and barriers to care, we explored what it is like for local people to access NHS dental treatment.

Key findings:

- 55% of people who asked for support with communication in dental appointments said it was not provided.
- Some people told us the cost of dental treatment forced them to make difficult decisions, including choosing not to get treatment or taking on debt.
- 84% of survey respondents were able to successfully book an NHS dental appointment the last time they tried.

Through surveys, conversations, visits to dental practices and calling every NHS dental practice in the borough, we have developed a picture of what it is like for people in our community to access NHS dental treatment.

People shared both good and bad experiences of NHS dental services in Dudley borough.

People who had additional communication needs or a disability were more likely to feel like they had not been treated with dignity and respect during their last dental appointment. This highlights the importance of listening to people who are seldom heard in order to develop health care that meets the needs of the whole community.

Following this research, we have begun to explore ways to improve the equity of NHS dental services in Dudley borough.



Moving forward:

- There is commitment from partners of the Local Dental Network to work together to achieve the recommendations made in our report.
- There is commitment from local and national charities to work with us and local services to improve access to dental care for people with disabilities or additional communication needs.

What is it like to book an NHS dental appointment in Dudley borough?

We worked with Dudley Council's Children and Young Peoples Public Health Team to call every NHS dental practice across the borough.

We called 40 dental practices across the Dudley borough, presenting as a local person looking to make an NHS dental appointment. We called practices with three different scenarios to discover the experience of booking routine and urgent appointments. We also looked to see if there was a difference in provision for adult and child appointments.

Key findings

- Dental practices prioritise urgent appointments over routine check-ups.
- There was a lack of signposting to appropriate support when dental practices were unable to provide an NHS appointment.
- 38% of dental practices requested callers 'register' before being offered an appointment.
- 75% of practices offered a private routine appointment when there were no NHS routine appointments available.

Our findings were shared widely and formed part of our wider research into local NHS dental services. This work has informed the recommendations we have made to local services and will guide commitments from partners.



"If seen privately, I could have an appointment for 5pm the next day at a cost of £150."

-Caller seeking an urgent appointment for an adult





Visiting all communities

We consider it important to reach out to the communities we hear from less frequently, to gather their feedback and make sure their voices are heard, and services meet their needs.

This year we have reached different communities by:

- Visiting people who struggle to have their voices heard.
- Collaborating with Black Country Foodbank to speak to people experiencing financial hardship.
- Working with Public Health, Dudley Integrated Health and Care NHS Trust and other partners to explore the needs of people living in Brockmoor and Pensnett.

Technology supports people who don't speak English to share their experiences.

We visited multiple groups attending Dudley Adult Learning. These included various levels of English speakers of other languages (ESOL) and a Key Skills session. This engagement allowed us to hear what members of the migrant community had to say about accessing pharmacies and NHS dental services.

We completed the surveys with the assistance of Google Translate, the ESOL tutor, and ESOL resources.

These sessions provided insight into how people with limited English may encounter barriers when using health and social care services.

Our team has shared its new knowledge of digital translation services with colleagues and people in the community who do not speak English.



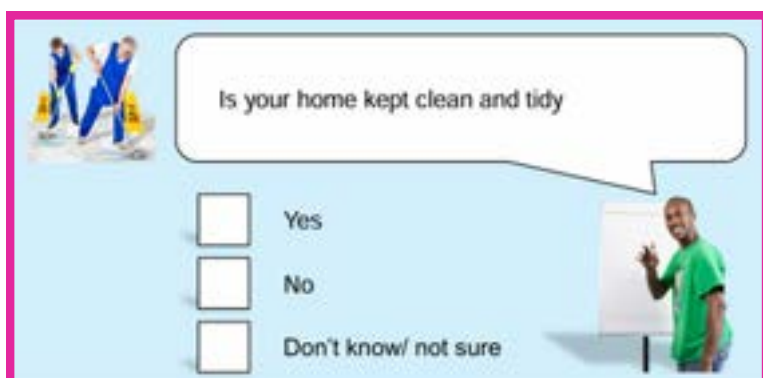
Learning to produce Easy Read materials

Sarah from Dudley Voices for Choice provided training on producing easy read materials for people with learning disabilities and autism.

Dudley Voices for Choice campaigns for and supports local people with learning disabilities and autism spectrum disorder. They taught our team how to produce Easy Read materials so we can communicate in a way that works for people who are often overlooked by services.

Easy Read surveys were produced and used to collect feedback on NHS dental services and a supported living facility. This enabled people who are seldom heard to share their experiences in a way that worked for them.

If you would like this report, or other Healthwatch Dudley materials in an Easy Read format, please contact our team.



Healthwatch Dudley in conversation

We sat down with Stuart Bates from the NHS Black Country Integrated Care Board (ICB) and Tina and Dave from Alternat+ves, a voluntary group that supports people whose loved ones have substance use disorder.

They identified issues with people caught between mental health and addiction support services. They shared how they felt at a loss with where to go and their frustration that commonly co-occurring conditions, like mental health issues and substance use, were not treated together.

“One of the things we're really on a mission for is to stop the stigma.”
-Dave, Alternat+ves

Following the conversation, we extended an offer to local drug services to hear more experiences of people who are accessing their services.



Veterans share experiences of care

We joined local veterans at three Armed Forces Breakfast Clubs.

Veterans told us that Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) impacted their daily life. They told us that it was helpful to talk to someone who has had similar experiences of serving in the armed forces.

“Veterans are trained in a certain way, they will go into fight, flight or freeze due to their training. They need to be treated in a certain way otherwise they will shut down.”
-Veteran

Peer support from other veterans often helps as they have understanding and provide support for tasks that may otherwise be overwhelming, such as assessing help or getting to appointments.

“My friend takes me to my medical appointments and takes me out for the day.”
-Veteran

We heard that when planning and designing services, especially those regularly accessed or aimed at veterans, then co-producing and consulting with veterans is vital.

“It needs someone who can understand the needs of veterans.”
-Veteran



LGBTQ+

This year we have reached out to the LGBTQ+ community to discover their experiences of health and social care.

We attended groups at the What? Centre including a Gay Men's Group and LGBT+ group. People shared their experiences of dental care, GP practices, mental health services and hospital care.

People told us that they often felt dismissed by care services and not provided with adequate care.



"It feels like a lack of care from people who should care."

-Jamie, group attendee

Mental Health Services

Young people attending an LGBTQ+ group shared their experiences of mental health services.



"For 11 years I have spoken about the same issue and no one has helped me."

-Taylor, group attendee



"I was seen by four different members of staff [from children's mental health services] my appointments were inconsistent."

-Toni, group attendee

Transgender Care



"People are saving up to pay for private treatment."

-Kai, group attendee

We heard people's experiences of transgender care. Long wait times have led to increased stress and some people save up to pay for private treatment so they don't have to wait.



"I waited three years for a second appointment because they lost my referral."

-Andi, Dudley resident

Looking into GP services for people who are transgender.

We worked with the What? centre to discover what it is like for people who are transgender to access and receive treatment from their GP. This piece of work was commissioned by Healthwatch England and forms part of a wider report that looks at experiences across the country. The report is due to be released in 2025.





Information and signposting

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch Dudley is here for you. In times of worry or confusion, we can provide confidential guidance and free information to help you understand your options and get the help you need.

In 2024–2025:

1030 people were
provided information.

2319 people were
signposted to services.

Getting dental care

Ahmed is an asylum seeker who has recently moved to the area with his family. He had a tooth infection and was experiencing pain.



We contacted NHS 111 and were able to arrange an urgent dental appointment. Ahmed was able to obtain treatment.

"Thank you. It is all sorted and I am no longer in pain."

We also provided Ahmed information on his right to treatment as an asylum seeker and provided guidance on communicating this with dental services.

After helping him to get urgent dental treatment his pain has now gone.

Helping asylum seekers and refugees to access local services and healthcare.

After speaking with asylum seekers and refugees we have realised it is difficult for them to find and access services. We are now working with the Voluntary and Community Sector Refugee, Asylum Seeker and Migrant Network to make it easier for local services to provide the right information to asylum seekers, refugees and migrants.



"We wouldn't have found that support without the information you gave us."

Tim, a volunteer at a Black Country Foodbank spoke to us to say that his 95 year old father is a carer to his mother, who has dementia. His mother went to respite care once a week and his father was not aware of the support he could receive as a carer.

As Tim's parents live in Sandwell we provided information on Healthwatch Sandwell for dementia support for his mother and carer support for his father.

We provided informal advice on the process of obtaining support and provided information on services that could support Tim and his wife in Dudley.

"The Admiral Nurse visited and my mum is getting care once a week and my dad can have some respite. It has been a life saver for him. Thank you so much."

-Tim





Volunteering

Volunteers play a vital role in helping people have their say on health and social care.

Volunteering with Healthwatch Dudley can help you develop skills, gain experience and make a difference to your community.

Volunteering

We're supported by a team of 15 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 volunteers took part in lots of activities including:

- Attending community events.
- Administration and desk research.
- Representing us at meetings and workshops.
- Mental health community research.
- Assessing the care environment and food tasting at Russells Hall Hospital
- Turning small actions into big impact through our micro-volunteering challenge.



298
hours
volunteered

70
events
attended



"I think Healthwatch Dudley is very supportive and everyone is helpful and friendly."

-Healthwatch Dudley Volunteer

"I now have more confidence in greeting people."

-Healthwatch Dudley Volunteer

100% of Healthwatch Dudley volunteers feel valued for their contributions to our work.



Our student volunteer created an information campaign to educate young people on taking care of their oral health. Including an information board and blog post.



Volunteers inspired by stories of mental health

Three Healthwatch Dudley volunteers underwent training to conduct in-depth interviews with local people to explore mental health.

The project was led by researchers from the University of Wolverhampton and Birmingham Voluntary Service Council, with support from Healthwatch Dudley and other local volunteers.

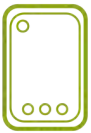
"I feel quite privileged to have listened to people's feelings."

-Healthwatch Dudley Volunteer

27 people shared their stories and experiences with our volunteers. This is what they found:



There is a lack of affordable activities for young people in Dudley.



Some people felt more comfortable speaking over the phone than in face to face conversations.



Small changes, like reducing parking fees, could possibly help in improving daily wellbeing.



There is a strong community spirit amongst local people and groups. People try to support each other, even when they have limited resources.

"I was pleasantly surprised at how many people were supporting community mental health and their commitment to people."

-Healthwatch Dudley Volunteer





Collaboration

Healthwatch Dudley works closely with other organisations to champion the voices of people across Dudley borough.

Black Country Healthwatch

We work with Healthwatch across the Black Country to champion the patient voice and work closely to support our mission.

Black Country Integrated Care System (ICS)

Within the Black Country ICS, there are four local Healthwatch organisations: Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall, and Wolverhampton.

The Black Country Healthwatch Managers meet as a group to share updates on what we are hearing from our local communities and to identify any emerging common themes across the region.



Memorandum of Understanding

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is in place to provide a framework that supports future agreements, partnerships, and collaborative projects. This MoU also helps to clarify mutual expectations and shared understandings.

We are committed to ensuring that the perspectives of all four Healthwatch organisations are represented, and we provide reciprocal feedback to support collective learning and a unified voice across the region.

Each of the Healthwatch Managers/Chief Officers takes a lead responsibility for attending a range of system meetings as follows:

Healthwatch Dudley

- Black Country Local Dental Network
- Digital Inequalities
- Improving Access Strategic Group (sensory loss)

Healthwatch Sandwell

- Prevention and Personalisation Strategic Forum
- Digital Inequalities Subgroup
- Improving Access Strategic Group (sensory loss)
- PEOC Oversight Group

Collective

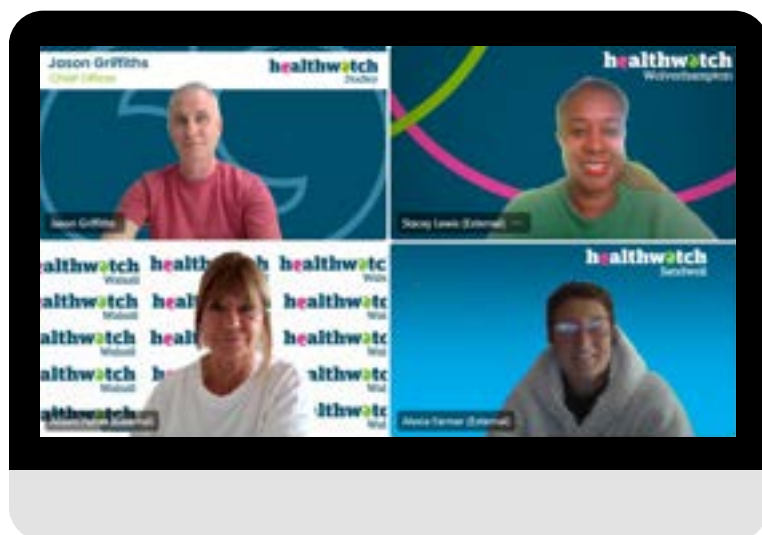
- Care Quality Commission
- Integrated Care Partnership
- Integrated Care Board

Healthwatch Wolverhampton

- Black Country Involvement Advisory & Assurance Group

Healthwatch Walsall:

- Black Country Integrated Care Board in a participatory, non-voting capacity
- Black Country System Quality & Oversight Committee



More than the essentials

We have been commissioned by Black Country Foodbank to discover what support people need beyond the food parcel.

Sharing advice and information

Whether it's referrals to mental health services, carer support or information on financial help, training and adult education; we have been providing local people with the information they need. Local people have told us that receiving information on a range of health and social care services whilst visiting a foodbank has been invaluable.



"The information you gave me saved my life!"

Foodbank user

By monitoring the information we provide to people who use foodbanks we aim to build a picture of what support is needed. This is also highlighting gaps in existing services and helping to identify areas for improvement.

Information and signposting was provided on:



Digital connectivity

Social services



Primary care

Refugee and migrant support



Listening to experiences

Local people have been sharing their experiences of health, care and the circumstances which contributed to their financial insecurity.

People have told us how a single life event, such as getting sick, can quickly lead to bigger issues and poverty.

In learning about these circumstances we hope to identify key areas for change that could prevent more people from having to rely on foodbanks in the future.



"It costs £4.80 to get to the hospital. It doesn't sound like much to some people but that's two days of food for me."

-Foodbank user



Pharmacy services

We worked with Public Health services to see what the community thinks of pharmacy services.

The Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment is a formal evaluation of the current and future pharmaceutical service needs of the local population. It happens every few years and forms a key part in ensuring services meet the needs of the community.



Utilising our links with the community

Public Health services reached out to get our input on community engagement for the assessment.

We were able to use our links with the community to increase the diversity of voices included in the pharmaceutical needs assessment. This ensures services can recognise how they work for everyone in the community.

Volunteers assist with data entry

Healthwatch Dudley volunteers entered data for all the surveys we collected which assisted Public Health in their efforts.

“A huge thanks to you for entering the survey results electronically, it’s been a massive help and we are truly grateful.”

–David Pitches, Head of Healthcare, Public Health

Black Country Integrated Care Board celebrates and sincerely thanks us for championing the voices of local people.



“Healthwatch Dudley’s connectedness and trusted relationship with local neighbourhoods and communities is instrumental in helping to shape services that are inclusive, equitable, and responsive to community needs.

One powerful example is Healthwatch Dudley’s initiative to create a GP Patient Charter using feedback from over 1000 local people, including those with learning disabilities, additional communication needs and long-term health conditions.

By using this feedback, Healthwatch Dudley worked with GPs, NHS leads and practice managers to develop a GP Practice and Patient Charter which sets out what patients can expect from their practice and is on every practice website across Dudley borough.

We are proud to work alongside Healthwatch Dudley to uphold the voices of our communities and ensure services are inclusive, person-centred, and equitable for all. Together, we are driving meaningful change to reduce health inequalities and embed true co-production at every level of care.”

–Peoples and Communities – Black Country Integrated Care Board



Statutory statements

**Healthwatch Dudley, 7 Albion Street, Brierley Hill, DY5 3EE.
Healthwatch Dudley is hosted by Dudley Council for Voluntary
Service. Charity number: 517766.**

**Healthwatch Dudley 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 Steering Group currently consists of four members who join us on a voluntary basis to provide direction and oversight. Full scrutiny is provided by the Dudley CVS Board.

Dudley CVS is our host organisation and contract holder. Their board advises us on local priorities to help inform the direction of our work. Our steering group takes this advice and ensures our priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community.

Throughout 2024-2025 the Steering Group met four times and their support included: advising on the direction of our work researching NHS dentistry, giving steer on the future development of our work, looking at safeguarding and helping develop new terms of reference.

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 2024-2025 we have been available by phone, email, and a contact form on our website. We have also been listening to people 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, share across social media, our email subscription and will make physical copies available throughout the community.

Responses to recommendations

We are grateful for how receptive staff across health and social care have been to our recommendations. There were no issues of recommendations escalated by us to the Healthwatch England Committee, so no resulting reviews or investigations.



The way we work

Taking people’s experiences to decision makers

We ensure that people who make decisions about services hear about the insights and experiences we gather. We do this by regularly attending meetings including: the Health and Wellbeing Board, Dudley Health and Care Partnership Board, Dudley Quality Partnership, Local Dental Network and Health Select Committee. Additional subgroups and partnership meetings provide a further opportunity to build relationships and share intelligence.

We share and present our reports with system partners to highlight the public's voice on health and social care issues.

We share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level. We work with other local Healthwatch and the Care Quality Commission regarding issues facing Dudley and the wider Black Country.

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Dudley is represented on the Dudley Health & Wellbeing Board and the Health and Care Partnership Board by Jason Griffiths, Chief Officer. During 2024–2025 our representative has effectively carried out this role by delivering reports and amplifying community voice and contributing the the development and design of changes in provision of the boards.

These boards are made up of representatives from different organisations. This includes NHS, Safeguarding, Care services, charitable organisations and public groups.

Finance

To help us carry out our work we receive funding via our local authority under the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

Our income and expenditure

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grants	£218,360	Expenditure on pay	£178,512
Other income	£4,145	Non-pay expenditure	£20,292
		Office and management fees	£21,722
Total income	£222,505	Total expenditure	£220,526

Enter & view

We have a legal power to visit health and social care services and see them in action.

Enter & View is an opportunity to:

- See and hear how health and social care services are provided.
- Collect the views of service users, carers/relatives and staff.
- Observe services.
- Report back findings and make recommendations.
- Get an action plan from managers to address recommendations.

This year, we made seven Enter & View visits; we published the reports and recommendations on our website.

Location	Reason for visit	Outcomes
Amberley Care Home	We went as part of our work with the Quality Partnership.	Residents felt the staff were caring and that bedrooms were kept clean and tidy. We recommended that Amberley explores new ways of sharing information with residents and their loved ones. We also recommended exploring ways to enrich residents lives.
Allenbrook Nursing Home	We went as part of our work with the the Quality Partnership.	Allenbrook Nursing Home appreciated the “insightful” results in our report. They completed redecorating, agreed upon artwork to display and will use email more frequently to communicate updates with families and loved ones.
Hillcroft Nursing & Care Home	We went as part of our work with the the Quality Partnership.	Residents felt safe and cared for within the home. We recommended providing more personalised care and to actively seek feedback from residents and their loved ones.
Select Lifestyles	We went as part of our work with the the Quality Partnership.	Residents are supported to take part in activities outside of the home and are offered some choice on food and drink. We recommended that more activities are offered in the home and residents encouraged to make more choices.
Island Court	We went as part of our work with the the Quality Partnership.	Staff provide personalised care and residents are offered plenty of choice. Island Court is very open to feedback and relatives said they responds positively to comments.
Purity Dental	Randomly selected as part of our research into access to NHS dental services.	Patients told us they could get emergency appointments quickly. Text reminders from the practice are useful and staff are “friendly”. We recommended the practice improves communication on the services provided.
Mucklow & Homer Dental Practice	Randomly selected as part of our research into access to NHS dental services.	We visited Mucklow & Homer twice due to there being no NHS patients at the initial visit. Patients found the practice helpful and friendly. We recommended sharing information more clearly regarding the services provided. In response the practice said they signpost patients to alternative practices if they cannot meet the patients’ needs.

Next steps

Over the next year, we will keep reaching out to every part of society, especially people who are seldom heard, 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 priorities for the next year are:

- Reviewing and revisiting access to GP services.
- Listening to the experiences of people who use Black Country Foodbanks.
- Sharing people's experiences of accessing NHS dental care in Dudley borough.
- Engaging with the community to hear people's experiences of mental health services.

Have your say

If you have had an experience with health or social care, good or bad, we want to hear from you.

By sharing your story you can help to bring about positive change to local services.

Share your story with our team:

 **03000 111 001** local rate number

 **07983728913** WhatsApp message

 www.healthwatchdudley.co.uk/have-your-say

 hello@healthwatchdudley.co.uk

Stay up-to-date

Sign up to our mailing list for Insight Bulletins and information on the latest reports and research: https://t.ly/-zC-_

Follow us on social media:

 [@hwdudley](https://www.facebook.com/hwdudley)

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If you would like this report in another language or format please contact us.

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**Committed
to quality**

Healthwatch Dudley is committed to providing a quality service, from how we collect data, to the information we provide. Every three years we perform an in-depth audit, in conjunction with Healthwatch England, to ensure we meet this high standard.