



# Voices & Volunteers

Annual Report 2018-19

# Message from our Chair

I think I'm the luckiest volunteer ever because I've had the pleasure of working with the wonderful people of Slough and all the organisations and our partners.

In 2013, when Healthwatch began, I was interviewed for the post of Non-Executive Director and Chairman for Healthwatch Slough. I accepted the post on 12 November that year. Here we are, six years on and another annual report.

Many changes have happened over the last year: changes in social care and in health. Berkshire East CCG (Clinical Commissioning Group) has replaced Slough CCG as of 1 April when three CCGs joined forces. Better services with better outcomes for less cost...and hopefully better treatment for patients? My Healthwatch Board colleagues and I are keeping a close eye on the situation as I know of many people who are not happy about some of the recent changes.

One of the other big changes is Frimley Health Integrated Care System (ICS) which is all about bringing care closer to home. Moving on, we have the brand new Urgent Care Unit at Wexham Park Hospital at the cost of millions of pounds. Wexham Park Hospital is on our doorstep so we will be watching closely to see how they perform.

I have been very lucky over the last year as I've been part of a project that is close to my heart: disability and Slough.

I'm the Healthwatch representative on Slough Borough Council's Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee - a group of Councillors who meet monthly to discuss the health and social care economy, questioning the organisations that provide your services.

They asked the question: "Is Slough a disability-friendly town?". A Task & Finish Group was set up, with the support of all of the Councillors, to look at this issue. I was elected to chair the group!



*Our Chairman Colin Pill with his wife Tasneen*

*'Better services with better outcomes for less cost and better treatment for patients?'*



It's turned out to be a very big piece of work with Slough Borough Council working in partnership with Healthwatch Slough and others - including AccessAble, a company they have commissioned - to make our town better for disabled people. So many changes in the 'new generation' Slough.

I want to pay tribute to our Healthwatch Manager Nicola Strudley who is leaving us after six years. I have every respect for Nicola because of her passion for the job.

I thought of Nicola as my box of fireworks - when I had an idea, I could throw it in like a lit match, and wait for the explosion of exciting suggestions and plans. She will be missed!

My last comment is to ask you all to remember that your continued support for Healthwatch is paramount to its success. We are your only truly independent voice!

I thank you all, wish you health and happiness, and look forward to the future in Slough.

**Colin Pill**  
Healthwatch Slough Chair

Front cover: Healthwatch Slough volunteer Misbah with flowers for collecting the highest number of care stories in January.

## Changes you want to see

Last year we heard from 722 people who told us about their experience of a number of different areas of health and social care. Here are some examples of the changes that you want to see.



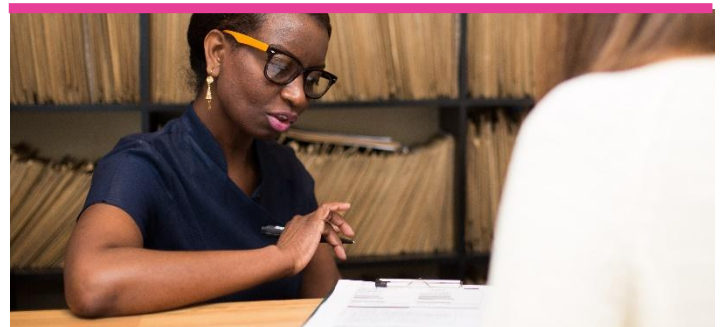
+ Make it easier to see a doctor or nurse quickly



+ Healthcare professionals should have a positive attitude and be empathetic



+ Staff should take the time to speak to people about what to expect next



+ Services should provide information so that people can make informed decisions about their care

# About us

## Healthwatch is here to make care better

We are the independent champion for people using local health and social care services. We listen to what people like about services and what could be improved. We share their views with those with the power to make change happen. People can also speak to us to find information about health and social care services available locally.

Our sole purpose is to help make care better for people.

## Our vision is simple

Health and care that works for you. People want health and social care support that works - helping them to stay well, get the best out of services and manage any conditions they face.



## Our purpose

To find out what matters to you and to help make sure your views shape the support you need.



## Our approach

People's views come first - especially those that find it hardest to be heard. We champion what matters to you and work with others to find solutions. We are independent and committed to making the biggest difference to you.



## People are at the heart of everything we do

We play an important role bringing communities and services together. Everything we do is shaped by what people tell us. Our staff and volunteers identify what matters most to people by:

- + Visiting services to see how they work
- + Running surveys and focus groups
- + Going out in the community and working with other organisations

Our main job is to raise people's concerns with health and care decision-makers so that they can improve support across the country. The evidence we gather also helps us recommend how things can change for the better.

# Highlights from our year



**722 people** shared their health and social care stories with Healthwatch Slough, **6% more** than last year.



We have **12 core volunteers** who help carry out our work. In total, they contributed 510 hours - that's **72 working days**.



We gave information and signposting advice to **513 enquirers**, **34% more** than last year



We visited **28 services** to seek and understand people's experiences of care.



Our helpdesk took **282 calls** averaging **27 minutes** each



We ran **22 pop-up information stands** and attended **38 community events** across the Borough

# How we've made a difference

Take a look at these examples of how we've used the experiences and involvement of people who live and work in the Borough to make an impact on health and care services.

## Moving the soap: Improving GP surgeries for disabled patients

In Summer 2018, our staff and volunteer team, working in pairs, visited 17 GP practices across Slough. We wanted to understand disabled people's experiences of visiting their GP - easy and welcoming or difficult and off-putting?

The project was carried out as part of the Accessible Slough project.

We walked through the premises and also looked outside. Our checklist considered physical, sensory and mental impairments. The team included volunteers with disabilities and long-term medical conditions themselves.

Examples of good practice included:

- + hearing loops (most surgeries)
- + text messaging service for people with autism waiting outside
- + easy to understand printed materials

Some of the negative observations we made:

- + Some TV screens playing daytime soaps rather than informing and updating patients
- + High reception desk
- + Soap located beyond wheelchair users' reach
- + Big potted plant blocking disabled toilet door
- + Fire exit leading to step or rough ground
- + Ridges and potholes outside surgery entrances

Our report contained 13 recommendations, and a chart showing the findings for individual surgeries which they could use to plan improvements. At least one has started making changes already. We sent the report and recommendations to the Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Slough Wellbeing Board and also Berkshire East CCG who is responsible for commissioning primary care.

We want them to work with individual surgeries and across Slough to improve the experience of primary care for disabled patients. We will be visiting again next Spring to check progress.





A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a clear glass filled with orange juice. The person is wearing a silver ring on their left ring finger. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a dark-colored top.

**healthwatch**  
Slough

## People's Assembly

Do you have a long-term condition  
or support someone who does?  
Join us over a cuppa to swap stories at

*Cyppenham Carers Group*

**Weds 20th March  
1pm-3pm**

Cippenham Baptist Church  
11 Elmshott Lane  
SL1 5QS

**Time to talk  
about your care  
and hear other  
people's stories.**

A large, stylized white quotation mark graphic on a dark blue background.



## Library storytime: collecting your stories to help others

At the start of 2019, Healthwatch Slough met parents and children when we led storytime sessions at libraries across Slough. This enabled us to hear your stories.

As it was National Obesity Week, we read books to the children about positive body image: *What I Like About Me* and *Shapesville*.

*“Thank you for taking the time to do this with our children. The material you are covering is so important. They really enjoyed it, and I got to meet other Mums.”*

We asked the children “What do you do to look after your bodies?” and talked about visiting the doctor, hospital and optician. We gave out colouring sheets.

At the end of the session, we invited parents to tell us about the care they and their children had received. Quotes from just a few of their many stories are reproduced here.

- + “Dr. Patel at Herschel is very good and I have confidence in that surgery.
- + “I miss my family and often feel isolated. I worry my child has withdrawn into herself.”
- + “I was told if I wasn’t happy I could go private”
- + “I wasn’t given any information or choice”
- + “Since we were referred for specialist help at WPH we have had the best support”.

Topics which the storytime parents talked to us were GPs and GP surgeries, mental health and emotional wellbeing, midwives and Wexham Park Hospital.

We took all the information and recorded it on our database. We use stories from patients and the public to identify themes and feed back key messages to the relevant providers (e.g. GP surgeries) to encourage good care and help make improvements.

*“It’s so great to come to the library and find you ....I also got a chance to meet other mothers in the same situation. Thank you.”*



# Helping you find the answers

Finding the right care or support can be worrying and stressful. There are many organisations who can provide help, but often people don't know where to start.

Last year we helped 722 people access the advice and information they needed - see examples below.

You can come to us for advice and information in a number of ways including:

- + At community events
- + Over the phone
- + Advice and information on our website
- + Contact form on the website for specific enquiries
- + By e-mail

## Telling you what's out there

**Karen:** I met Healthwatch Slough when I was shopping in Sainsburys! They had a stand there that day so I went over to have a look. As we chatted I mentioned my husband Mike. He recently became bedridden due to a medical condition.

They asked me if I knew about the support available for carers. I was amazed! **I'd never thought of myself as a 'carer' before.** Thanks to them I got in touch with the Carers Centre and a support group. Healthwatch opened my eyes to my own situation and what's out there.



## Answering your questions



Ashok rang our helpdesk to ask how to make a complaint about his wife's care. Lena was shortly having complex surgery for a tumour in her mouth. They were told if only she'd been referred sooner, the operation would have been easier and simpler with less recovery time. But Lena had had to 'beg' for her dentist to refer her to a specialist and it had taken four months.

We e-mailed Ashok information about how to make a complaint and find out about compensation so that he and Lena (who would need to agree) could decide what to do.

# Our volunteers

At Healthwatch Slough we couldn't make all these improvements without the support of our volunteers who work with us to help make care better for their communities.

What our volunteers do:

- + Collect people's views and experiences which we use in our reports
- + Raise awareness about Healthwatch around the Borough
- + Support our day to day running & governance
- + Visit services to make sure they're meeting people's needs



*Some of Volunteers (L-R) Colin & Tasneen, Zhora, Mary, Mike, Dolly, Misbah & Shahid enjoy some time off!*

## Local people making a local impact in their community

Volunteers play a key role in our engagement work - getting Healthwatch Slough out and about to meet different people across the Borough and gather people's views.

Healthwatch Slough's 2018/19 calendar was pretty full! We don't wait for people to come to us - we go and meet people where they are: at the community groups they attend, out shopping, in the park, having coffee, or using local services. Here's just a flavour!

Zhora met patients, relatives, and staff at her regular pop-up information stand at Wexham Park Hospital. Misbah reached homeless people and other housing advice clients at her monthly drop-in service at the local office of the charity Shelter. Town centre shoppers could also meet us at Starbucks, another regular drop-in venue.

Volunteers help us get creative about reaching seldom-heard voices : for example, we held a Healthwatch Walk in a local park to reach women and children living in bed and breakfast accommodation with nowhere to go in the day.

Our volunteers are vital to our work of reaching all corners of our community to provide information and collect people's views and experiences of services. In short, they've made Healthwatch Slough what it is today.



## Meet our volunteers

We caught up with a couple of our fantastic volunteers to show you how their work truly makes a difference to the lives of people in our area.

### Aruna

Aruna started volunteering for us recently but was not new to voluntary work. Previously she was an advisor for Citizens Advice Slough until it closed. Why get involved with Healthwatch Slough? “I wanted to use my years of experience to contribute to the work Healthwatch do.”

Before retirement she was a midwife in Slough for many years - “I loved my job”. So Aruna is known to many mums around the Borough.

Having a long-term medical condition herself - she has rheumatoid arthritis - she has experience of using services as a patient too.

Aruna was the perfect person to reach out to the young families in our community. We asked her to meet with local mums to gather their views and opinions about the services and support they’d received. “I thoroughly enjoyed it” she enthuses. “I felt I was back to form - loving mothers and babies. **It made me feel good.**”



### Sheila

“My name is Sheila, I volunteer for Healthwatch Slough. I began volunteering because I’ve always been interested in health and social care and I was keen to get involved with an organisation which was able to collect people’s stories and use them to make a direct impact. Even though I play a very small part, **I feel very proud to be involved.**”

“Through volunteering, I’ve been able to meet new people, learn about local initiatives, get involved in children’s activities and share my experiences. In all honesty, even though my aim was to give back to the community, I found that I have received so much more in return. It’s been so rewarding and I’ve been reminded that we are all in this together.”





# Our finances

In 2018-19 we received funding totalling £88,200 from Slough Borough Council.

We received £5,000 of additional income from Slough CCG (page 7)

Please note that our examined, statutory annual accounts are based on the year ending 30 September. These figures are therefore provisional, based on our internal management accounts.

# Our plans for next year

Due to the change of manager, our formal list of 2019/20 priorities is still due to be approved, but planned projects - several already underway - include:

- + Investigate how accessible dental surgeries are for people with disabilities, with a programme of visits
- + Follow up GP surgeries accessibility project - repeat visits and securing change
- + NHS Long-Term Plan consultation - we've been seeking people's views to shape the future
- + Volunteer training initiatives
- + Project addressing how people's hearing is supported locally, voicing their views and experiences of services
- + Maternity Voices project - collecting women's feedback to help shape maternity services



Slough activist Eleanor Cryer MBE with Arran Dulai, our new Healthwatch Officer who joined us this year - welcome Arran!

# Our thanks

Thank you to everyone helping us put people at the heart of health and social care, including:

- + Members of the public who live or work in Slough who shared their views and experiences with us
- + Our amazing volunteers
- + Nicola Strudley, outgoing Healthwatch Manager for her passion and drive
- + The other voluntary organisations which have supported our work
- + The providers, commissioners and other organisations who have worked with us to improve the experience of service users.

*As Chair of Healthwatch England, it's my role to make sure your Healthwatch gets effective support and that national decisions are informed by what people are saying all over England.*

*If you were one of the 400,000 people who shared their experiences with us last year, I want to say a personal thank you. Without your views, Healthwatch wouldn't be able to make a difference to health and social care services, both in your area and at a national level. One example of this is how we shared 85,000 views with the NHS, to highlight what matters most, and help shape its plans for the next decade.*

*If you're part of an organisation that's worked with, supported or responded to Healthwatch Slough thank you too. You've helped to make an even bigger difference.*

*None of this could have been possible without our dedicated staff and volunteers, who work in the community every day to understand what is working and what could be better when it comes to people's health and care.*

*If you've shared your views with us then please keep doing what you're doing. If you haven't, then this is your chance to step forward and help us make care better for your community. We all have a stake in our NHS and social care services: we can all really make a difference in this way.*



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Robert Francis'.

**Sir Robert Francis QC**  
Healthwatch England Chair

# Contact us



## Healthwatch Slough Community Interest Company

Registered Company no. 08686075

*(the organisation holding the local Healthwatch contract as of 31/03/2019)*

Postal address: c/o The Pokesdown Centre, 896 Christchurch Road, Bournemouth BH7 6DL  
Phone number: 0118 418 1 418  
Email: [enquiries@healthwatchslough.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@healthwatchslough.co.uk)  
Website: [www.healthwatchslough.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchslough.co.uk)  
Twitter: @HWSlough  
Facebook: [facebook.com/HealthwatchSlough](https://facebook.com/HealthwatchSlough)  
Instagram: [instagram.com/healthwatchslough](https://instagram.com/healthwatchslough)

### Our partner organisation (sub-contractor):

Name: Help & Care  
Registered Address: The Pokesdown Centre, 896 Christchurch Road  
Bournemouth BH7 6DL

Our annual report will be published on our website by 30 June 2019.

We will also share it with

- + Healthwatch England
- + Care Quality Commission
- + NHS England
- + Frimley Health and Care ICS
- + Slough CCG
- + Berkshire East CCG
- + Slough Borough Council
- + Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee
- + Slough Wellbeing Board

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