

# On equal terms

Then and now

Healthwatch Slough Annual Report 2020-21



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# Message from our Head of Healthwatch

In February we learnt that our Chair, Colin Pill, had sadly died. Colin was an inspirational and tireless advocate for the people of Slough who devoted many years to ensuring local people were able to shape how health and care services are delivered. He was passionate about the wellbeing of people from all backgrounds particularly young people and those with disabilities. Colin was the chair of Healthwatch Slough from 2013, having been involved in the Local Involvement Network and other patient involvement organisations beforehand. Never afraid of speaking the truth to people in powerful positions, he helped make health and care services better for people in Slough.

It has been a year of change for all of us and at Healthwatch Slough we adapted to new ways of working during the Covid-19 pandemic, along with many other organisations. Much of our planned public engagement and visits to services paused and we delivered an increased focus on providing advice and signposting, in addition to supporting the local response to Covid-19.

We worked closely with our partners in the voluntary and community sector so that they could be our “eyes and ears” and inform us of the issues that people were experiencing in relation to the pandemic but also the impact on health and social care services. A consequence of this work resulted in an additional focus for us on the impact of Covid-19 on mental health.

In 2019, Slough Borough Council, the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead and Bracknell Forest Council made a joint decision to commission a single Healthwatch service across East Berkshire. In January 2021 we were delighted to join forces with Healthwatch Bracknell Forest and Healthwatch Windsor, Ascot and Maidenhead to provide an integrated Healthwatch service across East Berkshire.

While the pandemic has inevitably changed our ways of working, we are always conscious of those who are digitally excluded, we have found opportunities to develop and create new connections and relationships which will continue in the future.



Neil Bolton-Heaton

Head of Healthwatch - Windsor, Ascot and Maidenhead, Bracknell Forest, Slough, Hampshire, Wokingham.

# About us

## Here to make health and care better

We are the independent champion for people who use health and social care services in Slough. We're here to find out what matters to people and help make sure your views shape the support you need, by sharing these views with those who have the power to make change happen.

## Helping you to find the information you need

We help people find the information they need about services in their area. This has been vital during the pandemic with the ever-changing environment and restrictions limiting people's access to health and social care services.

### Our goals



#### **1 Supporting you to have your say**

We want more people to get the information they need to take control of their health and care, make informed decisions and shape the services that support them.



#### **2 Providing a high quality service**

We want everyone who shares an experience or seeks advice from us to get a high quality service and to understand the difference their views make.



#### **3 Ensuring your views help improve health & care**

We want more services to use your views to shape the health and care support you need today and in the future.



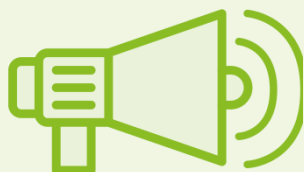
**"Local Healthwatch have done fantastic work throughout the country during the COVID-19 pandemic, but there is more work ahead to ensure that everyone's views are heard. COVID-19 has highlighted inequalities and to tackle these unfair health differences we will need those in power to listen, to hear the experiences of those facing inequality and understand the steps that could improve people's lives."**

**Sir Robert Francis QC, Chair of Healthwatch England**

# Highlights from our year

Find out about our resources and how we have engaged and supported people in 2020-21.

## Reaching out



We heard from

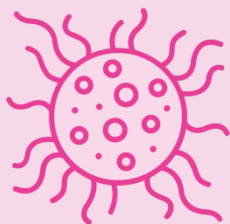
**428 people**

this year about their experiences of health and social care.

We provided advice and information to

**3782 people this year.**

## Responding to the pandemic



We engaged with and supported

**19,879**

people during the COVID-19 pandemic this year.

## Making a difference to care



We published

**4 reports**

about the improvements people would like to see to health and social care services. From this, we made 5 recommendations for improvement.

## Health and care that works for you



**4 volunteers**

helped us to carry out our work.

**We employ 2 staff**

50% of whom are full time equivalent

We received

**£80,610 in funding**

from our local authority in 2020-21.





# Theme one: Enter and View



## Then: Enter and Viewing health and social care services

Healthwatch have a legal power to visit health and social care services and see them in action. This power to Enter and View services offers a way for Healthwatch to meet some of their statutory functions and allows them to identify what is working well with services and where they could be improved. This is undertaken by specially trained volunteers called Authorised Representatives.

The purpose of an Enter and View visit is to collect evidence of what works well and what could be improved to make people's experiences better. Healthwatch can use this evidence to make recommendations and inform changes both for individual services as well as system-wide. During the visit, Healthwatch focus on:

- Observing how people experience the service through watching and listening.
- Speaking to people using the service, their carers and relatives to find out more about their experiences and views.
- Observing the nature and quality of services.
- Reporting our findings to providers, regulators, the local authority, and NHS commissioners and quality assurers, the public, Healthwatch England.



## Now: “Virtual” Enter and View process during the pandemic

**During the Covid-19 pandemic and in line with Government Guidance care homes restricted access to outside visitors in order to protect residents from Covid-19 infection.**

Healthwatch Slough understood that this restriction would mean that our normal enter and view process of visiting and viewing services and speaking “face to face” with residents and staff would not be able to take place. We recognised that it was still very important for residents to have access to an independent organisation so that their voices could be heard and service quality could be observed and understood.

In March 2020 Healthwatch Slough had begun to undertake an Enter and View at Oxford House Nursing Home in Slough. Due to the pandemic beginning at that time we were unable to finish the Enter and View process “in person” and we had to consider alternative methods to keep momentum and meet our obligations whilst being safe and inline with Government Covid-19 guidance. We worked with the home to create and trial some alternative methodology in order to capture the experience of the residents, their families and carers and the homes staff.



“I found the Healthwatch Slough Enter and View a positive experience. Arunjot and Chaia were both warm and easy to speak to. I felt that they were professional, worked with integrity and were keen to champion quality care in the local area. This made it easier to be able to showcase our work. I trusted them and I felt happy for them to contact our residents and relatives for their views. **Oxford House Manager**”

In partnership with the home we agreed and developed the following:

- Regular exchange via emails with the Manager including receiving copies of non-confidential staff minutes, memos and newsletters for relatives.
- Phone consultation with relatives.
- On-line Family/Relatives Survey.

Following the success of the Oxford House Enter and View we decided to undertake an Enter and View of an additional care home in September 2020 – Applegarth Care Home. For this we agreed with the home manager and residents that they would undertake on our behalf a “live virtual” viewing of the home using an iPad and that we would watch and engage with this as it was taking place. This provided us with additional valuable insight into the quality of the services being provided.



“Healthwatch Slough enabled residents to have their voices heard and to guide us in the right direction to continue to do well and go that extra mile. I would recommend Healthwatch to other providers in Health and Care services and would like to send our thanks for their help and the opportunity to showcase our wonderful home. **Applegarth Manager**”



To read the enter and view reports please go [here](#) and [here](#)



## Theme two: What Matters Most

**In addition to the insight we have received over the year, in February 2020 we started our What Matters Most project to understand what matters most to the people of Slough in relation to their Health and Social Care.**

We launched a survey, and **101** residents shared their views and experiences with us. We asked which services people thought Healthwatch Slough should be focusing on in the coming year and the results were:

We asked which services people thought Healthwatch Slough should be focusing on in the coming year. The results were:

**36%** said GP services

**17%** said Mental Health services

**18%** said improving overall access to health and social care services





## what matters most

We also asked residents about their experiences of local services:

**98** negative experiences were shared with us, with the following factors influencing the experience:

- Difficulties contacting and accessing services.
- Waiting times to get an appointment.
- Negative/poor staff attitudes.
- Lack of follow up care.
- Poor communication – language and information barriers.
- Heavy reliance on technology.
- Facilities – costly parking and cold rooms.

**115** positive experiences reported with people valuing health and social care services that had:

- Professional, kind, and friendly staff/volunteers.
- Easy to book appointments.
- Short waiting times upon arrival.
- Efficient and well organized, accessible.
- Good and effective communication.
- Safety measures in place for COVID-19.

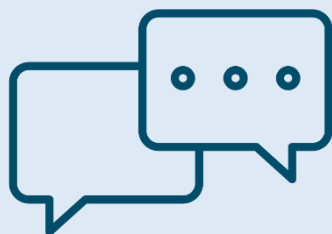


**“Wexham A&E are fantastic, also the children’s ward at Wexham Park. The staff are absolutely incredible.”** Quote from a Slough resident

The report has supported us to identify our priorities for the year ahead and we look forward to working with residents, providers and commissioners on the issues that have been raised.

The report will be shared with the relevant service providers, and other external stakeholders, to support local health and social care services in providing improved care to its users.

You can read the full report [here](#).



### Share your views with us

If you have a query about a health and social care service, or need help with where you can go to access further support, get in touch. Don’t struggle alone. Healthwatch is here for you.

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

[0300 0120184](tel:03000120184)

[enquiries@healthwatchslough.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@healthwatchslough.co.uk)



## Responding to COVID-19

**Healthwatch plays an important role in helping people to get the information they need, especially through the pandemic. The insight we collect is shared with both Healthwatch England and local partners to ensure services are operating as best as possible during the pandemic.**

**This year we helped 19,879 people by:**

- Providing up to date advice on the COVID-19 response locally
- Linking people to reliable up-to-date information
- Published a COVID-19 insight report
- Published an impact of COVID-19 on health report
- Supporting the vaccine roll-out
- Helping people to access the services they need

**In addition:**

- We attended the One Slough COVID-19 Community Response weekly meeting.

Top four areas that people have contacted us about:



41% on GP services



7% on Dentistry



19% on Hospital care



7% on Testing and Screening  
(inc. COVID-19)

Case study



A patient contacted Healthwatch Slough requesting information on how to make a complaint about a GP who recently administered the Covid-19 vaccine to some of their family members. The caller told us that they had experienced the doctor as rude and unprofessional.

Healthwatch Slough suggested that the caller contacted the GP practice manager to make the complaint and provide feedback on their experience. We also provided additional advice and information to the caller regarding COVID-19 and signposted the caller to Slough complaints advocacy in case they needed further support in making the complaint.



Contact us to get the information you need

If you have a query about a health and social care service, or need help with where you can go to access further support, get in touch. Don't struggle alone. Healthwatch is here for you.



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# Volunteers

**At Healthwatch Slough we are supported by 4 volunteers to help us find out what people think is working, and what improvements people would like to make to services.**

## **This year our volunteers:**

- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic Healthwatch Slough's normal face to face engagement activity was temporarily suspended in line with Government guidelines. We recognised that it was important to keep connected with Healthwatch Slough volunteers and decided to hold 2 "virtual" tea parties during the year.
- Conducted informal 'Eyes and Ears' local feedback to gather through their own local networks of contacts and provision of feedback from their own patient experience with clinical services provided during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Investing in Volunteers Award – a small group of Healthwatch Slough Volunteers were interviewed in October 2020 by an external assessor to gather feedback on their volunteering experience. Help and Care our host provider was awarded Investing in Volunteers in January 2021.





### Volunteer - Mary

I've been a volunteer since the very beginning of Healthwatch in Slough. My first volunteering task was to conduct a patient survey in GP Surgeries. Other tasks included Enter & View, activities with children, GP and Dentists Surveys.

I have enjoyed volunteering in Slough for over 40 years and received a Mayor's Appreciation Award in 2019. Volunteering gave me the opportunity to connect with hard-to-reach communities and sharpened my listening, language and interpersonal skills.

Lockdown during this pandemic was very challenging and the tea parties organised by Healthwatch for volunteers and officers were a welcomed event which allowed us to stay connected and informed. I enjoyed all these sessions.

## Make a difference to Slough - Become a Healthwatch Slough Board Member

Healthwatch Slough is looking for new voluntary Board Members for its local leadership board. As a Board Member, you will have a responsibility for contributing to policy and strategic direction, helping define goals and targets as well as evaluating performance. You would also represent Healthwatch Slough at key meetings and help influence change in services based on insight reports.

We are looking for people with relevant knowledge and experience and a commitment to want to see better outcomes in health and care for the residents of Slough. To find out more and apply contact us or visit the board section of our website by clicking [here](#).



### Volunteer with us

Are you feeling inspired? We are always on the lookout for new volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering, please get in touch at Slough.



[www.healthwatchslough.co.uk/volunteer](http://www.healthwatchslough.co.uk/volunteer)



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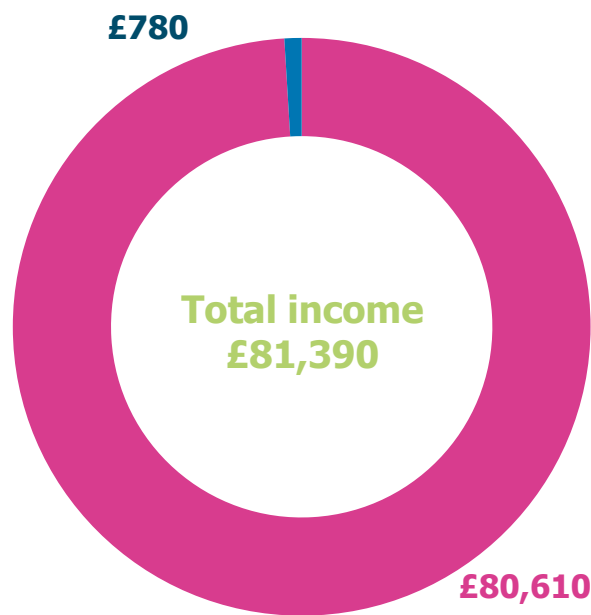
[enquiries@healthwatchslough.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@healthwatchslough.co.uk)

# Finances

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

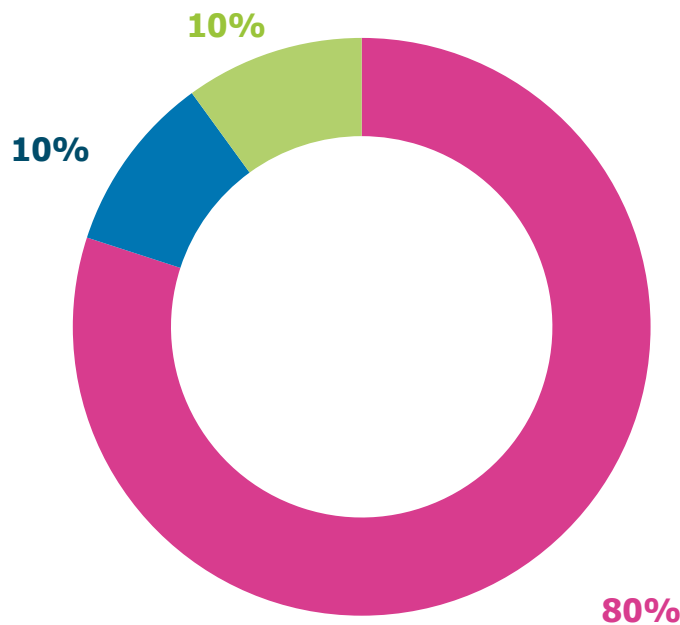
## Income

- Funding received from local authority
- Additional funding



## Expenditure

- Staff costs
- Operational costs
- Support and administration



# Next steps & thank you

## Top three priorities for 2021-22

1. Access to GP Services
2. Children and Young People
3. Mental Health

## Next steps

- Refreshing our volunteer offer and development of new volunteer roles
- Developing a Healthwatch Ambassador Programme to increase our reach to seldom heard communities
- Developing Enter and View programme subject to COVID-19 Government guidelines.



**“COVID-19 has highlighted and multiplied many of the inequalities that existed pre pandemic and increased health inequalities are a central part of that. We need to further reach out and understand the experiences of seldom heard individuals and communities in order to address this”.**

Neil Bolton-Heaton – Head of Healthwatch Windsor, Ascot and Maidenhead, Bracknell Forest, Slough, Hampshire, Wokingham.

## Thank you

- Members of the public who shared their experiences and views with us.
- All our amazing staff and volunteers.
- Slough Community and Voluntary Organisations.
- Partner organisations including: Slough Borough Council, Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust, Frimley Health and Care.
- Help and Care for providing us with infrastructure, back up and support.



# Statutory statements

## About us

Help and Care, A49, Aerodrome Studios, Airfield Way, Christchurch, Dorset, BH23 3TS. Registered Company No. 3187574 | Registered Charity No. 1055056.

Healthwatch Slough uses the Healthwatch Trademark when undertaking our statutory activities as covered by the licence agreement.

## The way we work

### **Involvement of volunteers and lay people in our governance and decision-making.**

Our Healthwatch board consists of 5 members 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. Through 2020/21 the board met three times and made decisions on matters such as undertaking Enter and Views and the impact of COVID-19 on Mental Health.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities and in 2021 will run a prioritisation survey asking the public what they would like us to prioritise. We interrogate our data and intelligence on a monthly basis to identify common themes and concerns that we need to address. We regularly attend a variety of forums to hear directly about the health and social care experiences of patients and the public.



Methods and systems used across the year’s work to obtain people’s views and experience.

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 health and care services. During 2020/21 we have been available by phone, by email, provided a webform on our website, provided a feedback centre/rate and review system, attended virtual meetings of community groups and forums, provided our own virtual activities and engaged with the public through social media.

We are committed to taking additional steps to ensure we obtain the views of people from diverse backgrounds who are often not heard by health and care decision makers. This year we have done this by, for example, specific engagement work with young people, carers and those aged over 50 and living alone.

We ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. We publish it at [www.healthwatchslough.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchslough.co.uk)

2020-21 priorities	
Project / activity area	Changes made to services
Responding to COVID_19	Providing up to date advice on the COVID-19 response.
The effect of COVID-19 on Mental Health Survey	Increased awareness of mental health needs of Slough residents
Increase digital reach and monitoring	Increased digital communications and improved intelligence collection by monitoring social media to identify concerns with health and social care

Responses to recommendations and requests

This year we did make use of our Enter and View powers by undertaking two Enter and Views.

There were no issues or recommendations escalated by our Healthwatch to Healthwatch England Committee and so no resulting special reviews or investigations.

Health and Wellbeing Board

Healthwatch Slough is currently represented on the Slough Health and Wellbeing Board by Rafal Nowotynski. During 2020/21 our representative has effectively carried out this role by communicating the voice of Slough residents in respect to Health and Social Care experiences and patient and public involvement.



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