



Speaking up for better care

Healthwatch Slough annual report 2025/26

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Acting Chief Executive
Chris McCann



“The NHS plays a vital role in our lives, and we know it faces real challenges. Listening to people’s thoughts about their care is one of the best ways to improve services. Every comment, concern, and compliment helps health and care professionals see what works and what needs to change, so care can be safer and better for everyone.

“We want to say a heartfelt thanks to all the local people who have taken the time to share their experiences, and to the health and social care professionals who have listened and acted on that feedback. Your commitment has helped make a real difference for our community.”

A message from our Head of Healthwatch

This year, Healthwatch Slough has delivered clear outcomes by turning people's experiences into evidence that drives change. Our work has influenced improvements in GP access and primary care, highlighting issues with appointments, communication, and service navigation, and ensuring these were recognised and addressed.

Our engagement on urgent care and system navigation has revealed how residents access support, identifying confusion and service pressures. This has helped partners improve signposting, communication, and coordination across services.

Through our focus on accessible information and inclusion, we have amplified the voices of those facing communication barriers, strengthening awareness of the need for clear, inclusive, and legally compliant information.

Our Enter and View programme remains central to our impact, providing independent insights and practical recommendations to improve care quality, dignity, and patient experience. Alongside this, our engagement work has reached underrepresented groups, ensuring lived experience informs decision-making.

Together, these outcomes show our role in shaping responsive, equitable, and person-centred services. By combining community insight with system influence, we ensure local voices lead to real improvements.

At a time of uncertainty, including the planned abolition of Healthwatch, our commitment to independence remains unchanged. Our value lies in local trust and our ability to represent people without bias. We will continue to be a strong, independent voice, ensuring lived experience shapes decisions and advocating for meaningful involvement in future arrangements.



Neil Bolton-Heaton



Looking ahead, we remain focused on sustaining this impact—continuing to challenge, influence, and collaborate to ensure that everyone in Slough can access high-quality, inclusive, and person-centred health and care services.

Our achievements are a testament to the commitment of our team, our volunteers, and the many residents who shared their experiences with us."

About us

Healthwatch Slough 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 people's experiences help make health and care better.



Our values are:

Equity: We're 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.

Our year in numbers

In 2025/2026 we supported more than **15,721** people to have their say and get information about their care. We employed **6** staff and our work was supported by **13** volunteers.



Reaching out:

1,405 people shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.

14,316 people came to us for clear advice and information on topics such as **mental health support** and **finding an NHS dentist**.



Championing your voice:

We published **3** reports about the improvements people would like to see in areas like **women's health** and **residential care**.



Statutory funding:

We're funded by **Slough Borough Council**. In 2025/26 we received **£63,846**, which is **1% less** than last year.

A year of making a difference

Over the year we've been out and about in the community listening to your stories, engaging with partners and working to improve care in Slough. Here are a few highlights.

Spring

Our What Matters Most survey results spotlighted primary care, waiting lists and children and young people's mental health as local priorities.



- Listening to residents at a library event during Refugee Week gave Slough locals from diverse groups the chance to share their experiences.



Summer

We shared research which enabled women to have their say on and shape the delivery of women's health services locally.



We supported hospital teams to understand people's experiences with patient information, so what's available could better fit the needs of those who use it.



Autumn

Our involvement in the local Neighbourhood Health partnership ensured community voice sat at the heart of integrated working planning.



We shared feedback about care in hospital resulting in improved patient experience.



Winter

Sharing positive feedback on GP practice system efficiencies helped primary care staff to learn from successes and provide more timely support for patients.



We helped people to understand the NHS complaints process and access advocacy support.



Working together for change

This year, we've worked with Healthwatch across Frimley and with the Frimley Integrated Care System (ICS) to achieve the following:



Representing residents

We have represented resident's views and experiences of healthcare at the Frimley ICS System Quality Group and Experience of Care Forum. Healthwatch Slough is a member of these forums, and we have provided quality and intelligence reports and shared case studies of resident's experiences of care and support provided by Frimley services. This has ensured that patient and public voice is at the centre of quality improvement.



Involving communities in hospital rebuild plans

We collaborated with Healthwatch Surrey and Hampshire as well as Frimley ICS to gather insights from local group leaders on how Frimley NHS Foundation Trust can best engage with and involve their communities with the Frimley Park New Hospital Programme. We ensured that under-represented groups such as those with hearing and vision loss, carers and people with learning disabilities had their voices amplified.

We've also summarised some of our other outcomes achieved this year in the Statutory Statements section at the end of this report.

Making a difference in the community

We bring people's experiences to healthcare professionals and decision-makers, using their feedback to shape services and improve care over time. Here are some examples of our work in Slough this year:



Creating empathy by bringing experiences to life

Hearing personal experiences and their impact on people's lives helps services better understand the issues people face.

Our hospital visiting program has both shone a light on what good looks like and highlighted areas for improvement at Frimley Park Hospital. Through listening to patient and carer experiences, supporting them to raise concerns, and sharing feedback with our system partners, we have drawn attention to issues with communication, discharge processes and waiting times as well as celebrated strengths such as quality clinical care and compassionate staff.



Getting services to involve the public

By involving local people, services help improve care for everyone.

By involving community group leaders as lay readers in Frimley NHS Foundation Trust's review of their patient information range, we supported the Trust to better understand people's experiences with, and of, patient information - and action meaningful change such as reducing jargon and considering more use of video and audio content. Thanks to feedback from members of the public, future patient information will better meet the needs of those who use it.



Improving care over time

Change takes time. We work behind the scenes with services to consistently raise issues and bring about change.

Our Enter & View work has supported local care homes to become more dementia friendly – read our summary report for visits carried out across East Berkshire last year [here](#). Hearing what residents had to say and following our recommendations has enabled service providers to improve experiences for all. *“It was truly an amazing experience meeting you and your team, and there was a lot for me to learn as well. Thank you so much for everything and for the valuable feedback.” – Care Home Manager.*

Listening to your experiences

Services can't improve if they don't know what's wrong. Your experiences shine a light on issues that may otherwise go unnoticed.

This year, we've listened to feedback from all areas of our community. People's experiences of care help us know what's working and what isn't, so we can give feedback on services and help them improve.



Exploring local women's views to shape healthcare improvement ideas

Last year, we heard from 580 women from Bracknell Forest, Slough and Windsor, Ascot & Maidenhead to better understand women's views on local NHS services for women's health (excluding maternity care).

With national plans to establish new women's Health Hubs evolving, we wanted to give women in East Berkshire an opportunity to have their say and influence the delivery of women's health services locally. We had a particular focus on hearing from women of Asian ethnicity due to their under-representation in the national women's health survey.

What did we do

We collected feedback using an online survey which was translated into four community languages (Punjabi, Nepali, Polish and Urdu) and in person at focus and discussion groups which included the Early Help Hub and the JMIC mosque in Slough, the Asian Women's Group in Maidenhead and the English Language Café in Bracknell. We also co-hosted a Women's Wellness afternoon with public health Bracknell for the Nepali community. We asked women what would improve care locally, what sources of information they use to support health, and what might stop them getting help for a women's care issue when needed.

Key things we heard:

"It's really important for clinicians to give women good, clear information about the options available to them. They should listen to the patient and work with them to find the best solution for them."

Women told us:

- Dedicated resources and joined-up care are needed for women's health, including translated information resources and suitably trained interpreters, culturally sensitive information, and access to wellbeing support and peer networks.
- Good healthcare looked like quick appointments, helpful communication, compassionate professionals, feeling heard and understood, and provision of high quality, relevant information.
- Difficulty accessing GP appointments, long referral waits, poor information, feeling unheard or disrespected, and lack of support or services stopped some women getting the care they needed.

What difference did this make?

Our report was used to inform NHS Frimley Integrated Care Board and Frimley Health NHS Trust's ongoing workplan for women's health. Our healthcare system partners have committed to:

- Working with GPs and primary care teams in their central role supporting women's health – equipping them with the right information, pathways and access to treatments such as pessaries, so more care can be delivered closer to home and the need for multiple referrals reduced.
- Prioritising reducing waiting times for women and building on successful initiatives such as a recent Women's Health webinar.
- Exploring co-designing more tailored resources with local women, including translated materials and culturally relevant support.

You can read our full Women's Health report [here](#).

Hearing from all communities

We're here for all residents of Slough. That's why, over the past year, we've worked hard to reach out to those communities whose voices may go unheard.

Every member of the community should have the chance to share their story and play a part in shaping services to meet their needs.

This year, we have reached different communities by:

- Celebrating diverse communities at a Refugee Week event aimed to foster inclusivity for all.
- Inputting the views of those most at risk of health inequalities within new neighbourhood working partnerships - to ensure diabetes prevention and management planning is fit for purpose.



Welcoming all Slough residents to have their voices heard

We provided advice and information as part of a celebration of inclusion and diversity

During Refugee Week we supported an 'Everyone Welcome' event at a local library and cultural centre – hosted by Slough Borough Council, in partnership with Slough Refugee Support. The theme 'Community as a Superpower' was brought to life by various activities aiming to spotlight and celebrate local diversity and the power of cohesive communities.

What difference did this make?

Slough residents from a huge range of backgrounds were enabled to access advice and information in a welcoming and inclusive environment. We reached around 100 people on the day, many of whom may not have heard of us before – listening to their experiences of accessing health and social care support and increasing awareness of how Healthwatch can support.

Amplifying local views to shape services aimed to bring care closer to home

Advocating for those who may face barriers to accessing support has been a core part of our role within a new community alliance

We joined the Neighbourhood Health partnership in Slough and East Berkshire to ensure community voice drives the implementation of a new NHS and Government vision which aims to help people live well in their local areas. By listening to Slough residents during everyday engagements at a range of community groups – including settings for older adults, people with learning disabilities and those with mental health challenges – we were able to contribute key insights to influence the development of the local diabetes-focussed program.

What difference did this make?

Neighbourhood Health is a central priority in the NHS 10 Health Year Plan and an important part of the Government's health mission. Supporting the program team in Slough with ongoing work to reduce the prevalence of, and health inequalities driven by, Type 2 Diabetes, has allowed Healthwatch Slough to amplify the voices of local people who may be less heard – to influence and support key decision making within the evolution of new, transformative ways of neighbourhood working.

Information and signposting

When you're struggling to find an NHS dentist, looking for help about how to make a complaint, or need advice about a good care home for a loved one – we're your first port of call.

This year **14,316** people have reached out to us for advice, support or help finding services. These conversations also help us to understand where, and how, your care can be made better.

This year, we've helped people by:

- Providing up-to-date information people can trust
- Helping people access the services they need
- Supporting people to look after their health
- Signposting people to additional support services



Supporting people with long-term health conditions to advocate for themselves

Our advice and information gave Danielle options for accessing better housing support

Danielle was living with Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME) and Fibromyalgia which had left her wheelchair bound - and was in temporary accommodation which she felt was unsuitable for her needs. She called us to talk through her options as well as to share her experiences with struggling to access appropriate support through her GP Practice, who had been unable to provide home visits for health checks and social prescribing conversations.

We listened to Danielle and enabled her to feel heard, before providing advice and information on how to access assistance via the local Citizen's Advice service, who to speak to at Slough Borough Council to request housing guidance, as well as details of the local advocacy service who could continue to support her while she took these next steps. We also signposted to resources and support for ME, including a national charity, so Danielle knew where to go for additional help managing her health during a stressful time.

The importance of feeding back on unhelpful care experiences

When Ramesh was declined specialist support we helped him consider next steps

Ramesh has Spina Bifida and reached out to Healthwatch Slough after his GP declined to refer him to an eye specialist or for an assessment for back pain, and spoke to him in a way he felt was extremely dismissive. He had increasing worries about spinal pain and other issues relating to his disability, and had recently paid privately for screening to confirm he had glaucoma.

Ramesh had also received poor advice on the process for requesting his medical notes and what advocacy support was available for him locally. After hearing Ramesh's story, we rectified this by providing appropriate guidance for both. We also talked Ramesh through the NHS complaints process so he could raise his concerns with his GP practice and provide valuable feedback which they could learn from to improve their service provision. Finally, we signposted him to charities that could support with his health and wellbeing into the future – Shine and Berkshire Vision.

Ramesh thanked us for our time and care, reassured that there was more he could do to address his worries as well as feedback on his negative experience.

Showcasing volunteer impact

Our fantastic volunteers have given **238 hours** to support our work. Thanks to their dedication to improving care, we can better understand what is working and what needs improving in our community.

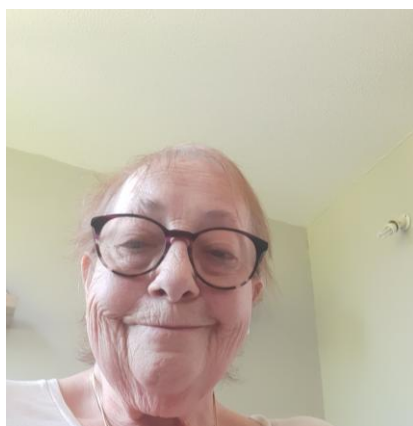
This year, our volunteers:

- Took part in Enter and View visits as Authorised Representatives, helping us to fulfil this important function.
- Collected experiences and helped communities to share their views.
- Attended meetings and groups, raising awareness of Healthwatch and the feedback we have received.
- Provided strategic decision making and advice via our Strategic Advisory Group.



At the heart of what we do

From finding out what residents think to helping raise awareness, our volunteers have championed community concerns to improve care.



Debs

“My role of proof reading with Healthwatch is a very interesting one. Apart from keeping my brain sharp I also have the pleasure of learning how local Care Homes are run.

The team are kind enough accept any comments I would like to make concerning the welfare of our vulnerable and senior citizens.

I really feel part of the group and enjoy the small part I play immensely.”

“I joined Healthwatch because I am passionate about improving the health and wellbeing of those in my local community. I believe everyone deserves a voice in how health and social care services are designed and delivered, and I wanted to help make sure those voices are heard.”

Bethany has completed her training and is now an Authorised Representative supporting our Enter and View visits in local care homes.

“As a volunteer I feel I am able to contribute to meaningful change, highlight people’s experiences, and support better outcomes for everyone in the community.”



Bethany

Be part of the change.

If you've felt inspired by these stories, contact us today and find out how you can be part of the change.



www.healthwatchslough.co.uk



0300 012 0184



enquiries@healthwatchslough.co.uk

Finance and future priorities

We receive funding from Slough Borough Council under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to help us do our work.

Our income and expenditure:

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from Government	£63,846	Expenditure on pay	£49,512
Additional income	£0	Non-pay expenditure	£6,622
		Office and management fee	£5,000
Total income	£63,846	Total Expenditure	£61,134

Finance and future priorities

Over the next year, we will keep reaching out to every part of society, especially people in the most deprived areas, 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:

1. To maintain high quality service delivery until the formal abolition of Healthwatch, ensuring residents voices are heard and amplified in influencing decision makers and service providers.
2. To fully support any transitional arrangements following the abolition of Healthwatch.

Statutory statements

**Help & Care hold the contract to deliver the Healthwatch Slough service.
Help & Care, Unit A49, Aerodrome Studios, Airfield Way, Christchurch,
Dorset, BH23 3TS**

**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 4 members who work voluntarily to provide direction, oversight, and scrutiny of our activities.

Our Board ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community.

Throughout 2025/26, the Board met 5 times and made decisions on matters such as deciding our strategic priorities and agreeing our Enter and View programme of activity. 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 can provide us with insight into their experience of using services.

During 2025/26, we have been available by phone and email, provided a web form on our website and through social media, and attended 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.

Statutory statements

Taking people's experiences to decision-makers

We ensure that people who can make decisions about services hear about the insights and experiences shared with us.

For example, in our local authority area, we take information to the Health and Wellbeing Board, Place Committees, Primary Care Forums.

We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in Frimley Integrated Care System. For example, we attend the System Quality Group and Patient Experience Forum. We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Slough is represented on the Slough Health and Wellbeing Board by Claire Shropshall.

During 2025/26, our representative has effectively carried out this role by sharing resident experiences of Health and Social Care Experiences..

Healthwatch Slough is represented on Frimley Integrated Care Partnerships and Frimley Integrated Care Boards by Claire Shropshall.

Statutory statements

Enter and view

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
Oxford House Nursing Home	No full CQC inspection conducted since 2019 and the home had only recently upgraded to online care plans and medication records.	Published a report with recommendations which can be found here . As a result, the home made changes to improve quality of care, to include making dementia friendly adaptations to bathroom equipment, involving residents and relatives with an upcoming garden project and planning the development of a sensory and relaxation room.
Oak House Care Home	Large home with up to 120 residents across residential, nursing, dementia and end of life care.	Published a report with recommendations which can be found here . As a result, the home made changes to improve quality of care, to include relocating clocks to more visible areas and sourcing clearer, more dementia-friendly designs, collaborating with the Activities Manager at a nearby home to learn from best practice, improving signage to the garden and advertising for more volunteers to come in and talk to residents.

2025 – 2026 outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
Women's Health Project	Enabled the voices of 580 local women to be used to influence NHS planning for women's health services.
Neighbourhood Health Implementation Program	Community voice is driving the development of new integrated ways of working, providing diabetes support to those most at risk of experiencing barriers to accessing preventative healthcare.
Reaching out to diverse groups	Targeted community engagement has ensured we've been listening to the needs of Slough residents from all walks of life – and feeding them back to strategic partners at the Health and Wellbeing Board and Place Partnership meetings.
Enter & View program	Awareness raised locally around how to create more dementia friendly environments in care homes.
Involving people in the reviewing of health information	Future patient information will better meet the needs of those who use it.

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