



Together

we're making health
and social care better

Annual Report 2022–23

healthwatch
Dorset

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A large, light blue outline of a double quotation mark (") is positioned to the left of the testimonial text.

Louise and her team have continued to be a strong voice for people across Dorset this year. They have joined up with health and social care services to ensure the voice of lived experience has been included in an array of projects, particularly influencing the way carers are supported and how the Integrated Care System is being developed. It represents the people on many decision-making boards across the county and people should be assured it is making a difference.

Nicky Mitchell, Team Manager, Quality Assurance Adult Social Care Services, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council

Message from our Chair

This has been another busy year for Healthwatch Dorset. As ever, our priorities for action have been guided by insight gained from engagement and interaction with local people.

We have worked hard to ensure that your concerns are represented at local, regional and national level. However, health and care services are under pressure and many people in Dorset tell us they still find it challenging to access community services such as dentistry, GP appointments and social care assessments. Health inequalities continue to persist. In response, we have shared your feedback with the NHS and our local authorities to help them develop plans to improve access.

We published our Home First carers report and our work has already made an impact improving support for carers. And we worked with Bournemouth University media students to create promotional material to help us reach more young carers.

We published our latest report on access to NHS Dentistry and ran focus groups to gather more information. We are now working with the Local Dental Committee to help them address the issues we have raised.

Four new members joined our Board this year, bringing a wealth of new knowledge, skills and experience. We have also recruited, developed and trained many new and existing volunteers to take part in inspections, visits and projects throughout the year. However, the dedication of our small staff team and willing volunteers will only take us so far as demand for our insight and evidence continues to grow. If we are to play our part fully, our work to engage and represent the views of local communities in finding solutions to address their needs must be fully funded.

As Healthwatch marks its tenth anniversary I would like to thank the staff, Board members and volunteers for their continuing commitment and dedication. I would also like to thank all our partners who have responded so well to our feedback and taken action to address the concerns of local people. Finally, I would like to thank all the people of Dorset who have generously shared their experience of health and care services with us.



Viv Aird
Healthwatch Dorset Chair



Throughout the year we have worked closely with the voluntary sector, local councils and the NHS to establish the Integrated Care System 'Our Dorset'. Our role has been to ensure that the voice of our local communities is at the heart of all the new arrangements.

About us

Healthwatch Dorset is your local health and social care champion.

From Christchurch to Bridport and everywhere in between, we make sure NHS leaders and other decision makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care. We can also help you to find reliable and trustworthy information and advice..



Our vision

To be the independent consumer voice for people across Dorset, making sure their views and experiences help improve health, social care and wellbeing services.



Our mission

To support individuals and engage with communities to influence providers and commissioners to improve health, social care and wellbeing services.

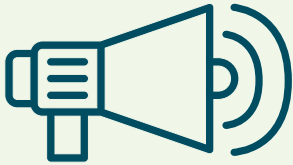


Our values are:

- **Inclusive:** we celebrate and embrace diversity.
- **Ethical:** we act with integrity, transparency and respect.
- **Accountable:** we accept responsibility for all our actions.
- **Empowering:** we build understanding, confidence and influence.
- **Collaborative:** we work in partnership to maximise the impact of all we do.

Year in review

Reaching out



1,053 people

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

948 people

came to us for clear advice and information about topics such as mental health and the cost of living crisis.

Making a difference to care

We published

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

Our most popular report was

Carers experiences of Home First

which highlighted the struggles carers face when their loved one leaves hospital.



Health and care that works for you



We're lucky to have

60 outstanding volunteers who gave up

151 days to make care better for our community.

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

£201,579

We currently employ

2 full-time and 2 part-time staff

who help us carry out our work.

How we've made a difference this year

Spring



Our volunteers interviewed 45 carers to find out more about their experience of Home First, which supports people when they leave hospital.



We published and promoted our report *Dorset County Hospital A&E: People's experiences. What works well and what could be improved?*

Summer



The Integrated Care System, Our Dorset, launched on 1 July to build stronger partnerships between communities, NHS services, local councils, Healthwatch and the voluntary sector.



Our staff and volunteers engaged with local people at summer fairs and events across Dorset.

Autumn



We gathered feedback on maternity mental health services as part of the Healthwatch England national campaign.



We supported the Healthy Brain Healthy Life project with Bournemouth University and Alzheimer's UK, running interactive workshops with minority ethnic communities.

Winter



We ran focus groups with parent carers, voluntary sector groups, schools, community workers and public health to find out more about people's oral health needs.



Our volunteers contacted all the dentists in Dorset and we gathered case studies for our latest report on local access to NHS dentistry.

10 years of improving care

This year marks a special milestone for Healthwatch. Over the last ten years, people have shared their experiences, good and bad, to help improve health and social care. A big thank you to all our Healthwatch Heroes who have stepped up and inspired change. Here are a few of our highlights:

How have we made care better, together?

Children and Young People



Our Young Listeners project and engagement work on children and young people's mental health services has been used in Ofsted visits, helped redesign local services and influenced the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities offer across Dorset.

Urgent and emergency care



Our volunteer led interviews at A&E Departments and hospitals in Poole and Dorset have influenced national waiting time directives, improved local facilities, developed clearer information for patients, and enhanced staff training.

NHS dentistry



We continued to voice public concerns that improvements to NHS dentistry are too slow, leaving thousands of people in pain.



Accessing care and vaccines during COVID-19

We gathered over 1,000 people's views on how the pandemic was affecting access to local care, and received feedback on transport to vaccination centres, the booking system, carers' support and eligibility, which influenced local planning and public information.



Community engagement

We worked closely with our voluntary sector colleagues to help people facing health inequalities have their say and supported people experiencing homelessness to influence Care Quality Commission strategy and raise awareness of the barriers they face in accessing care.



Healthwatch Hero



Celebrating a hero in our local community

Phil has been volunteering with Healthwatch Dorset over the last two years to help raise awareness of the barriers he faced while homeless and trying to access health and social care services.

Phil was homeless for 18 years and when he travelled back to Bournemouth, he spent a month living on a bench. When we first met, Phil told us: "accessing information on where to get help is very difficult. You have to keep pushing for help, but you get cast aside. I want to be treated with the same respect that everyone deserves. I want to feel like I belong to a community, and not just pushed away."

To help raise awareness, Phil volunteered to be filmed sharing his story and his contribution to some of our reports has been invaluable. Watch the video here: vimeo.com/643968179

Phil is now settled independently in his own permanent accommodation with his dog, Austin. When we recently met up with Phil, he said: "If me talking helps at least one person or does something to make our society a bit better, then it's worth my time any day."



Listening to your experiences

Services can't make improvements without hearing your views. That's why over the last year we have made listening to feedback from all areas of the community a priority. This allows us to understand the full picture, and feed this back to services and help them improve.

Advocating for fairer NHS dental care

NHS dentistry is in desperate need of reform and this year we have successfully moved NHS dental care up the political agenda.

With living costs on the rise, our new findings show widening health inequalities as people in every part of the country struggle to pay for dental care.

We have seen a shortage of NHS appointments, with our latest report finding no dentists taking on new NHS adult patients anywhere in Dorset. This affects people on the lowest incomes the most, meaning they are less likely to have dental treatment than those on higher incomes.

We made renewed calls on NHS England and the Department of Health and Social care to put a reformed dental contract in place.

Changes to NHS dental contracts

From April 2023, responsibility for dental services within Dorset moved to NHS Dorset Integrated Care Board. This means there will be a greater opportunity to work with local people, dentists and other specialists in our area to develop new and different ways of working.

“ We are grateful to Healthwatch Dorset for shining a light on these important issues and in a way that brings home the real impact on people’s lives.

Recent developments that have been put in place in Dorset include a child-friendly dental pilot practice in the Wareham area, an additional 100 urgent care appointments every week across the county and a stabilisation programme with initially 30 appointments every week for people who do not have a regular dentist.

David Freeman, Chief Commissioning Officer, NHS Dorset

What next?

We’ve been working with voluntary sector groups, health visitors, schools, parent carers, public health and dentists to develop some local solutions and we’ll be publishing a new report in 2023.

“ One of our clients had to call 111 for an emergency dental appointment and were referred to Bridport. They couldn’t attend as they didn’t have funds for public transport, so instead they pulled their own tooth out and then got a bad infection.

The Lantern Trust, Weymouth

Helping carers when their loved one is in hospital

On Carers Rights Day (24 Nov 2022), hospitals across Dorset launched a new Hospital Carer Passport to help carers be recognised and supported while they are caring for someone who is in hospital. The passport offers carers more support in hospital with flexible visiting times, inclusion in care, involvement in planning for discharge and clearer information.

This new scheme meets one of the recommendations made in our report on carers experiences of supporting loved ones leaving hospital to recover at home – a process called Home First. Our volunteers interviewed 45 carers and almost half the people we spoke to rated the service they and their cared for person received as poor.

Our recommendations:

1. Improve hospital processes to support carers by having a named contact for carers, 24/7 support, consistent use of carer passports and/or 'This Is Me' forms and discharge process training for staff using carers experiences from this project.
2. Increase awareness for carers and improve carer identification by establishing carer lanyards and carer signs above beds in hospital, Carer Champions at senior and ward level, and the creation of quiet spaces and time for carer communications/discussions in hospital.
3. Better information for carers to include leaflets and training to help carers to identify themselves and register with GP/council services, a hospital discharge pack and a single link to signpost carers to for support.

What difference will this make?

Our recommendations are being used to help redesign the Home First service so that it works better for the people who deliver it and for those who are supported by it, including families and carers, patients, and staff. New carer leaflets have been produced and the Hospital Carer Passport has been launched.

We worked in partnership with Dorset HealthCare and Dorset Community Action (DCA) on this project. DCA created a series of carers videos that are being used in hospital staff training. Watch them here: dorsetcommunityaction.org.uk/carers-voices.

Carers told us that they often felt unsupported and ignored during the discharge process and there was a lack of information:



Called and given two hours to collect my dad with no discussion or offers of help. He was sent home with just medicines, no support, and no one asked how my dad would be looked after. I had to take emergency time off of work.

Three ways we have made a difference for the community

Throughout our work we speak to a broad range of people about their health and care experiences and use their feedback to influence positive change.

Creating empathy by bringing experiences to life



It's important for services to see the bigger picture. Hearing personal experiences and the impact on people's lives provides them with a better understanding of the problems.

The case studies in our Dentistry report helped bring the data to life.

"I am in urgent need of a NHS dentist. I find my gums/teeth bleeding throughout the day on a daily basis. I'm going to university in September and I'm only 22 years old and I'm in such a difficult situation which has caused damage to my mental health." **Sam's story**

Getting services to involve the public



Services need to understand the benefits of involving local people to help improve care for everyone.

256 people told us about their experience of attending Dorset County Hospital A&E Department.

"Working with Healthwatch Dorset helps us engage differently with the population to really hear their voice to influence our quality improvement." **Nicky Lucey, Chief Nursing Officer/Interim Deputy Chief Executive, Dorset County Hospital**

Improving care over time



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

Over the last three years, Healthwatch Dorset has been working with children and young people to help them influence the design and delivery of local services. Our Young Listeners findings and the feedback we gathered in 2019 for the 'Your Mind – Your Say' campaign is now helping re-design young people's mental health services.



Hearing from all communities

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

This year we have reached different communities by:

- Working with Bournemouth University students to help us reach more young carers.
- Supporting interactive Healthy Brain workshops with minority ethnic communities.
- Bringing the voices of people experiencing homelessness to our local NHS leaders and ICS.
- Involving community groups who support vulnerable people in our dentistry work.

Helping us reach more young carers

During April and May 2022 we worked with two groups of media students at Bournemouth University to produce a campaign to help us reach out to more young carers.

They produced a series of posters, social media and videos featuring young carers sharing their story, which we were able to promote during Carers Week.

“ Big thanks to all the students who worked on this project with us.
Healthwatch Dorset



Healthy Brain Healthy Life

We are proud to have been part of the Healthy Brain, Healthy Life engagement project, funded by a grant from Alzheimer's Research UK's Inspire Fund, to raise awareness and engage with minority ethnic communities around brain health and dementia.

The project aimed to increase knowledge about the positive steps people can take to reduce their risk of dementia using traditional food, music, storytelling and other creative approaches in a series of workshops: bournemouth.ac.uk/research/projects/healthy-brain-healthy-life

Read our volunteer Liv's blog about the project: healthwatchdorset.co.uk/what-is-healthy-brain-healthy-life

“ After attending the written word workshop, I think poetry is so beneficial to people living with dementia. It helps to really understand their feelings and the family as well.

Workshop attendee



Advice and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch Dorset is here for you. In times of worry or stress, we can provide confidential support and free information to help you understand your options and get the help you need. Whether it's finding an NHS dentist, how to make a complaint or choosing a good care home for a loved one – you can count on us.

This year we've helped people by:

- Providing up-to-date information people can trust.
- Helping people access the services they need.
- Helping people share their experience of trying to access NHS dentistry.
- Supporting people to look after their health during the cost of living crisis.

Help to find dental care in Dorset

Over 200 people contacted us for advice and information on dental services last year. People told us that practices were not taking on new NHS patients, and that some had waiting lists of over a year.

The impact of delayed treatment has resulted in people living with considerable pain, dental conditions worsening and added to existing health inequalities.

“Because I don't have teeth, I can't eat food completely, this made problem for my stomach.

Our advice and information has meant people who need urgent treatment know their options and have clear information.

“Thank you for all the information you gathered to help me make an informed choice about treatment for my teeth.

We share regular updates on our dental enquiries with NHS England dental commissioning team, Healthwatch England and the local ICS, Our Dorset. We also presented findings to Health Scrutiny Committees.

Raising awareness of maternal mental health

43 new mothers and birthing parents from Dorset told us about their experience of maternal mental health care. Based on feedback from 2,693 people across England, Healthwatch is now calling for improved consistency and monitoring of postnatal six-week checks, and boosted support for GPs to provide quality mental health care for new mothers.

Key findings:

Over one in ten (16%) women respondents said they hadn't received the six-week postnatal check, which NHS England established in 2020 to make sure new mothers feel well and are recovering properly.

Nearly half (44%) felt their GP did not spend enough time talking to them about their mental health, while a third (30%) said their GP didn't mention this during the check.

One in seven (15%) said they had their six-week check by phone, with many new parents finding it hard to verbalise their mental health struggles and discuss physical issues.

“Nobody did any kind of mood questionnaire. I had quite severe postnatal anxiety and OCD and it wasn't picked up by any professionals. Eventually at around 12 weeks I reached a kind of crisis point and called the GP and asked to be put on anti-depressants and asked to be referred to the perinatal mental health team. After that things started improving but I still resent that I had to advocate for myself to sort things out, it could've been sorted earlier and I might not have got so unwell.

Dorset resident



Image © Swanage.News

Volunteering

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

This year our volunteers:

- Visited communities to promote Healthwatch Dorset and what we have to offer.
- Collected experiences and supported local people to share their views.
- Carried out PLACE visits to local hospitals to help them improve.
- Collected the most up-to-date information on changes to services, for example whether NHS dental appointments were available at a practice.
- Supported Healthy Brain, Healthy Life workshops for minority ethnic groups in Dorset.
- Carried out '100 Conversations' interviews to help NHS Dorset use public feedback to shape services.

Will

Will first joined us as a volunteer and then chose Healthwatch Dorset for his student placement.

"I learnt what it's like in a real working environment on placement. I thought it was cool that I could work and do something that I enjoy while also feeling like I am doing something good and positive and actually making a difference and helping people. You don't have to work for no reason, you can work and make a difference."



Jackie

"I want to say a big thank you for allowing me to help out over the last couple of years. It was so good to be able to feel useful, particularly during Covid and my recent illness, and it also helped to open my eyes to some of the issues surrounding our health services which impact so many people."



Jack

Jack is an autistic advocate with roles across the charity and health sectors for over a decade. Locally, his day job is in the library at Dorset County Hospital and he's active across different staff forums. He is a co-author of the award winning 'Know Your Normal' research co-produced with UCL and Ambitious about Autism in 2017.

"I've volunteered with Healthwatch Dorset for over three years and I joined the Board this year. I feel strongly about the wider public having a role in the decisions made about health and social care and I want to make a difference."



Do you feel inspired?

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

 healthwatchdorset.co.uk

 **0300 111 0102**

 enquiries@healthwatchdorset.co.uk

Finance and future priorities

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

Our income and expenditure

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from local authorities	£201,579	Expenditure on pay	£110,680
Additional income	£12,977	Non-pay expenditure	£23,093
		Office and management fee	£68,600
Total income	£214,556	Total expenditure	£202,373

Additional funding is broken down by:

- **£12,752** from NHS Dorset for work on NHS dentistry and urgent & emergency care.
- **£225** from Bournemouth University for volunteer expenses on Healthy Brain project.

Next steps

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

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

We will also continue our work to tackle inequalities and work to reduce the barriers you face when accessing care, regardless of whether that is because of where you live, your income, your ethnic background or your gender.

Top three priorities for 2023-24

1. NHS dentistry and oral health
2. Urgent & emergency care
3. Children & Young People's mental health services



Statutory statements

Healthwatch Dorset, The Bridge, Chaseside, Bournemouth, BH7 7BX.

Healthwatch Dorset is hosted by Evolving Communities CIC, a community interest company limited by guarantee and registered in England and Wales with company number 08464602. The registered office is at Unit 2, Hampton Park West, Melksham, SN12 6LH.

Healthwatch Dorset 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 eight 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. Throughout 2022/23 the Board met seven times and made decisions on matters such as engagement projects and our workplan priorities.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities.

Methods and systems used across the year to obtain people's experiences

We use a wide range of approaches to ensure that as many people as possible have the opportunity to provide us with insight about their experience of using services. During 2022/23 we have been available by phone, email, through social media and via our website contact form. We have also 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, announce it in the press, share via social media, in our monthly news bulletin and provide printed copies at Healthwatch Dorset events.

Responses to recommendations

All providers responded to our recommendations and requests for information. There were no issues or recommendations escalated by us to the Healthwatch England Committee, so no resulting reviews or investigations.

Taking people's experiences to decision makers

We ensure that people who can make decisions about services hear about the insights and experiences that have been shared with us. In the two local authorities we cover, for example, we take information to both Health & Wellbeing Boards and the Health Scrutiny panels.

We also take insight and experiences to decision makers within the Dorset Integrated Care System and the Dorset Integrated Care Partnership. For example, we shared our reports and findings with the Dorset System Quality Group and Dorset Health and Care Partnership. We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Dorset is represented on the Dorset Health and Wellbeing Board by Dr Margaret Guy, Local Board Vice Chair, and on BCP Health and Wellbeing Board by Louise Bate, Healthwatch Dorset Manager. During 2022/23 our representatives have effectively carried out this role by attending meetings and sharing Healthwatch Dorset insights.

Healthwatch Dorset is represented on the NHS Dorset Board and the Dorset Integrated Care Partnership by Louise Bate, and on the Dorset System Quality Group by Dr Margaret Guy.

2022–2023 Outcomes

Project/activity	Changes made to services
<p>Dorset County Hospital A&E: People’s experiences, what works well and what could be improved?</p> <p>Read our report: healthwatchdorset.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/HWD-AE-Dorset-Hospital-report-final-April22.pdf</p>	<p>Our recommendations influenced the A&E refurbishment, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a new entrance and waiting area • larger resuscitation rooms • bigger cubicles • a new digital system • better facilities. <p>We attend regular hospital patient experience group meetings and continue to provide patient feedback.</p>
<p>Carers experiences of Dorset Home First service: Discharging patients from hospital and supporting them to recover at home.</p> <p>Read our report: healthwatchdorset.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/Carers-Home-First-report-final.r-Sept-2022.pdf</p>	<p>Our recommendations are being used to help redesign the Home First service so that it works better for the people who deliver it and for those who are supported by it, including families and carers, patients, and staff, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new carers leaflets have been produced • the Hospital Carer Passport has been launched.
<p>Why are people finding it difficult to access NHS dental care in Dorset? A follow-up report looking at what care is available and how people are affected by a lack of access to treatment.</p> <p>Read our report: healthwatchdorset.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/NHS-dental-care-in-Dorset-report-final-Feb2023.r.pdf</p>	<p>Our report gave NHS Dorset a better understanding of local need ahead of delegated commissioning in April 2023. Recent developments that have been put in place in Dorset include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a child-friendly dental pilot practice in the Wareham area • an additional 100 urgent care appointments every week across the county • a stabilisation programme with initially 30 appointments every week for people who do not have a regular dentist.

Project/activity	Changes made to services
<p>Access to GPs: We gathered feedback locally and worked with NHS Dorset to evaluate patient engagement in GP enhanced access plans.</p>	<p>We worked with Primary Care Networks in North Dorset, Poole & Purbeck to encourage patient involvement and support Carers events. Our involvement in the evaluation of GP enhanced access plans led to sharing good practice in patient engagement.</p>
<p>Healthy Brain, Healthy Life: Interactive workshops about brain health and dementia prevention engaging with minority ethnic communities.</p> <p>Read about this project: bournemouth.ac.uk/research/projects/healthy-brain-healthy-life</p>	<p>Digital stories, poems, recipes and artwork co-created with participants, best practice guidance and other resources from the workshops will be shared widely via our networks, websites, social media, publications and training events to optimise reach and further engage the wider community.</p>
<p>Hospital environments: PLACE (Patient Led Assessments of the Care Environment)</p>	<p>Our volunteers took part in PLACE visits across Dorset, as patient assessors. Going into hospitals as part of teams to assess how the environment supports the provision of clinical care, assessing such things as privacy and dignity, food, cleanliness and general building maintenance and the extent to which the environment is able to support the care of those with dementia or with a disability.</p>



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

Louise Ansari, Healthwatch National Director



healthwatch

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