The value of listening

Healthwatch Rotherham

Annual Report 2023-2024





healthwatch

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"Over the last year, local Healthwatch have shown what happens when people speak up about their care, and services listen. They are helping the NHS unlock the power of people's views and experiences, especially those facing the most serious health inequalities."

Louise Ansari, Chief Executive at Healthwatch England



Message from our Chair

Welcome to our Annual report for 2023-24.

This year's report sets out the work we have undertaken to deliver on national and local Healthwatch priorities. I am pleased to highlight how the impact we have has grown during the year. We agreed a new work plan in April 2023 and we have made good progress on that plan as you will read in this report.

For the second year running we have reached more people than ever by increasing our éngagement, our outreach and our advice and contact services. We are improving our contribution to supporting Rotherham patients and residents through these activities. The feedback we have collected has helped shape and influence the services we have reviewed.

During 2023 our Healthwatch manager, Eldho, left the service after making a good contribution to our work. We were sad to see him go but we have been fortunate to appoint Kym Gleeson as our new Healthwatch Manager. Kym's knowledge, enthusiasm, ambition and determination are going to be a great influence in further developing our role and our work.

As we move forward into 2024-25 our prospects are good. Our new manager has developed a new work plan focussed on some really important aspects of health and social care and the services the residents of Rotherham receive. To help us deliver this we have a new three year contract with Rotherham Council which will enable us to grow our team and increase the engagement and communication work we do. We are also working more collăboratively and comprehensively with the South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board, the Rotherham Place team and our partner Healthwatch organisations in South Yorkshire.

I am excited about the future and the role Healthwatch can play in influencing and shaping health services and supporting the needs of our residents.



"Under the leadership of Eldho and then Kym, Healthwatch Rotherham has made real progress this year. With additional funding in 2024, we are confident we will continue to increase our influence and involvement in local health and social care services"



John Barber, Healthwatch Rotherham, Chair

Statement from our host organisation

We have been hosting the Healthwatch Service now for just over 3 years and have recently been awarded the new contract which takes us to 2026. It has been a challenging yet exciting year in 2023/24. We saw a new Healthwatch Service Manager, Eldho start in January as well as Andrea, our Community Engagement Officer. Both have made tremendous progress for Healthwatch Rotherham, reaching even more communities to ensure voices are being heard. Unfortunately we said goodbye to Eldho in November as he ventured onto new opportunities but we soon welcomed Kym who is our current Healthwatch Service Manager and the future is looking bright! We also said goodbye to a long standing member of the Healthwatch team, Emma as our Research and Campaigns Officer with Nicola taking on that role in December. With our new contract successful we have now appointed a new member to our team, also a Nicola who will be supporting our information and Signposting service. More success has included the development of our advisory board which is continuing to grow and the recruitment of new volunteers. As we move into the new year Kym and her team have worked hard to produce a new work plan that takes Healthwatch on new journeys that will help the Rotherham Community have their say. I am very proud to be a support to our Healthwatch service as a representative of the hosted organisation.

Jamie Ashton, Director of Business Development, Citizens Advice Rotherham and District



About us

Healthwatch Rotherham is your local health and social care champion.

We make sure NHS leaders and 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

We want everyone in Rotherham to live a healthy life and be able to access the health and social care services they need for this to happen.



Our mission

To make sure people's experiences help make health and social care better by:

- · Obtaining the views of local people
- Promoting the involvement of local people in decision making
- Providing information and resources to empower people



Our values are:

- **Listening** to people and making sure their voices are heard.
- Including everyone in the conversation especially those who don't always have their voice heard.
- Analysing different people's experiences to learn how to improve care.
- Acting on feedback and driving change.
- **Partnering** with care providers, Government, and the voluntary sector serving as the public's independent advocate.



Year in review

Reaching out:

865 people

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



2076 people

came to us for clear advice and information about topics such as mental health, access to dentists, hospital and GP services.

Making a difference to care:

We published **6 topic based reports** this year about the improvements people would like to see in health and social care services.

We also produced **7 'What we heard' reports** which are our regular monthly insight reports which highlight what we've heard from the public. These are shared with services to give them timely feedback in to what is and isn't working.



Our most looked at report was:

RDaSH Crisis Team Service report

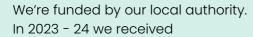
which was a commissioned report, gathering feedback from users of the Mental health Crisis team service so that the service could use that information to help them shape future transformations and developments.

Health and social care that works for you:

We're lucky to have had

9

outstanding volunteers who gave up **147 days** throughout 2023-24 to make care better for our community.





which is the same as the previous year.

We currently employ

3 staff

who help us carry out our work.



Sum

How we've made a difference this year



We published a snapshot report on what you told us about the waiting times at Rotherham Hospital and presented our findings and recommendations to the Patient Experience Group. The report was well received and new initiatives have now been implemented.



From the feedback you gave us via our information and signposting service and engagement events, we have published monthly reports on 'What we heard'.

These reports are fed back to the services providers so that they can take action to improve their provision.



We held an engagement session with Deaf Futures community group and published a report highlighting the barriers that they face in healthcare settings. We are continuing our work with the group and healthcare providers to ensure BSL interpreters are available to those who need them.



We worked with RDaSH to gather targeted feedback from users of the mental health crisis service and produced a report outlining our findings and recommendations. RDaSH accepted our recommendations in full and they are working on implementing them during 2024.



We carried out two Enter and View visits on local care homes. We listened to the experiences of residents and their families and made recommendations for improvements which have been put into place.



We worked with Rotherham council to help them develop a strategic framework to ensure Rotherham carers stay mentally and physically happy. Our Unpaid carers report focused on those who may go unnoticed in the system to make sure their needs were considered.



We supported the NHS South Yorkshire ICB campaign 'Start with People: refresh South Yorkshire', by gathering feedback from seldom heard groups in Rotherham to feed into the project to help shape health services in South Yorkshire.



We ran three face to face 'Let's talk' sessions on smoking and vaping in conjunction with local Public Health specialists and our Community Public Health nurse to highlight the health risks to college students at Rotherham College.

Your voice heard at a wider level

We collaborate with other Healthwatch to ensure the experiences of people in South Yorkshire influence decisions made about services at NHS South Yorkshire Integrated Care System (ICS) level.

This year we've worked as Healthwatch across Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield to achieve:



Making sure your voice was heard as part of the Integrated Care Partnership Strategy, "It Starts with People" and hosting Community Conversations where we asked the question "What matters to you about your health and wellbeing?" . Between us we heard from around 800 people whose views have helped influence the NHS South Yorkshire 5 year plan.

Better outcomes for our underserved communities in South Yorkshire. By working in partnership with our ICS, NHS England and Healthwatch England, we are looking at inequalities within the deaf community and how we can make it easier for them to access health and social care. As part of this, we highlighted the lack of BSL interpreting in Opticians, and the NHS are now working with opticians to improve awareness of their duties to provide this...





Making sure that the public views and experiences of dentistry are heard by decision makers. We take our intelligence and feedback on local dentistry to our ICS and also to the South Yorkshire Local Dental Network. In November we presented what we've heard at an NHS South Yorkshire Dental event, highlighting the dire state of NHS dentistry and the real consequences for people across our area..

"Our Healthwatch partners in South Yorkshire work tirelessly to ensure the voice of people from Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield influences health and care services. They are particularly crucial to the system in their ability to ensure we hear from our most underserved communities. They effectively balance working with us as partners and holding us to account where necessary, and area very important cog in our system"



- Katy Davison, Deputy Director of Involvement NHS South Yorkshire ICB



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 helps us to understand the full picture, and feed this back to services and help them improve.

Improving communication around appointment waiting times

Through the enquiries and feedback we received last year, we recognised that there were issues around appointment waiting times and communication at Rotherham Hospital. To bring these concerns to the attention of The Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust, we conducted a snapshot report and made recommendations for change.

Our report highlighted that the issues faced by people were not just lengthy waiting times, but a lack of support and communication between the hospital and the patient. Many spoke about suffering from cancellations or delays but not being informed about what would happen next. Others were concerned that their physical and mental health had suffered whilst waiting. Our findings and recommendations were presented to the Patient Experience Team for consideration.

85% of respondents said they were not kept informed about appointment details, waiting times and delays when waiting for their hospital appointment.



What did you tell us about waiting times?

- 1 in 2 people said they were very dissatisfied with the wait time given to them to attend their hospital appointment.
- 83% of respondents felt that their symptoms were worsened by their hospital appointment being delayed.
- 8 out of 10 people told us they did not receive any support from the hospital whilst waiting for their appointment.
- 64% of respondents would be happy to travel to another hospital local to Rotherham if it meant their waiting time was reduced.

What difference did this make?

- By providing insight to Rotherham hospital about the concerns that the public had around waiting times, delays and communications, they were able to see where improvements to the service were needed in order to improve patient experience.
- Through working collaboratively, Rotherham hospital were able to provide us with
 information of their 'waiting well' service which highlights ways patients can manage
 their own health whilst waiting for an appointment. We were then able to share details of
 this service on our website and social media. to help raise awareness amongst the local
 community.
- Rotherham hospital has since become one of three pilot sites in the UK taking part in the
 e-meet and greet programme. This programme aims to let patients know at the start of
 their referral pathway the likely waiting time to be seen by the service they've been
 referred to. The trust also contacts patients regularly whilst they remain on the waiting
 list. This helps to keep waiting lists accurate as well as reassuring patients that they are
 still on the list to be seen.

Is Rotherham's mental health Crisis service working?

In 2023, we were asked by the Crisis team service delivered by RDaSH (Rotherham, Doncaster and South Humber NHS Foundation Trust) to gather some independent feedback on their service to help them shape their ongoing transformation work.

Mental health services remain a priority in the NHS Long Term Plan, which is committed to improving how the NHS treats people with severe mental illness, including during a crisis.

We conducted most of our research face to face although we also gave people the option to complete our survey online. Our findings highlighted that although some individuals have a fantastic experience with the Crisis team, there were also many who were not satisfied with the service they had received, particularly in terms of aftercare and support. We saw recurring issues surrounding staff not reading patient care plans, patients not feeling listened to and a sudden stop in care leaving people without adequate support.



"It helped telling someone my problems and then telling me what would help, and I love my counselling sessions. Talking to someone really helps me."

Respondent - Healthwatch Rotherham

Our key findings were:

- 70% of respondents said they did not find the Crisis service helpful when they initially tried to access them., with 3 out of 4 people feeling that the support services offered weren't relevant or helpful to their needs.
- **61%** of respondents said they were not provided with any additional information of support services they could access outside of the crisis team.
- 64% of respondents were not referred onto any other relevant NHS team once their treatment with the Crisis team had ended.

Our report and recommendations were sent to RDaSH for their consideration.

"I had around 3 appointments then got removed off as they said all is okay while I wasn't ok."

Respondent - Healthwatch Rotherham



What difference did this make?

- RDaSH reviewed our report and agreed that our key findings were broadly in line with what their own engagement work had highlighted. They accepted our recommendations in full and these have formed part of an ongoing internal review.
- By working in collaboration with the Crisis team, we have given the public a voice in future developments of the service. The feedback we gathered has been embedded into the transformation work that the service is currently undertaking.
- Our report was picked up by BBC who ran an article on their main news website. This not only
 widened the reach of our audience, it helped to keep mental health issues in the public eye and
 means our recommendations can be fed into the NHS long term plan to improve care for those
 using this service.

Three ways we have made a difference in the community

Throughout our work we gather information about health inequalities by speaking to people whose experiences aren't often heard.

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.

Following a report we produced in the summer of 2022 about long Covid, we recognised there was a need to engage more with groups underrepresented in the study. As a result, we connected with the RDaSH Long Covid team and provided a Let's talk event in Urdu to local Rotherham residents. The event was split into two sessions, one for men and one for women, to allow for open discussions to be held around the topic and appropriate information to be passed on. The session also provided an opportunity for the RDaSH Long Covid team to gain a better understanding of how long Covid had specifically affected this community.



Getting services to involve the public

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

Healthwatch Rotherham linked together services from RDaSH with Shiloh and the Lighthouse Project to provide support and advice to people living in supported accommodation on mental health and the 5 ways to wellbeing at a Let's talk event. The event provided an informal opportunity for RDaSH to connect with this community in a positive way, sharing self help techniques to help maintain a positive and healthy mind,, as well as practical advice on benefit claims, linked to mental health issues. This benefitted not only the attendees but also the wider homeless community in Rotherham due to the knowledge being shared between services.



Improving care over time

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

Throughout the year we have engaged face to face with Rotherham residents at 90 community groups and local venues such as supermarkets, Rotherham Minster and Rotherham hospital. We have also spoken to people on the telephone and via email about their experiences of local health and social care services. The feedback we receive goes in to our monthly 'What we heard' reports which are shared with the service providers so that they are aware of the issues as they are happening and can work to resolve them. The feedback also feeds into our work plan to ensure that we focus on the issues that matter the most to local people.



There's a summary of other outcomes we've achieved this year in the Statutory Statements section at the end of this report.



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:

- · Increasing our in person engagement at groups and services across Rotherham, such as Shiloh, The Learning Community, Rotherham Opportunities College, U3A, Making Space and MCVC.
- Providing opportunities for members of the public to speak to and hear from services at the 6 Let's Talk events we held., covering subjects such as mental health, smoking and vaping, diabetes and the NHS.
- Collecting feedback from Rotherham residents to feed into the South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board's Start with People refresh strategy, to ensure that their voices are heard and help shape local services to meet the needs of local people.



Signposting and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch 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 services, making 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, and helping people access the services they need through our website, on the telephone, via email and at our engagement events
- Promoting other health and social care services and providing information on local events
- Signposting to advocacy support services where additional help is needed
- Helping people access NHS dentistry
- Supporting people to look after their health during the cost-of-living crisis
- Signposting to Citizens Advice Rotherham and District, to provide holistic advice and support to people who come to us for help

Frustration turned into success

A case raised by one Rotherham resident highlighted the need for services to keep people fully informed and updated about the progression of their cases.

Thanks to the support of Healthwatch Rotherham, months of frustration came to an end for one Rotherham resident who had been chasing for funding for an autism assessment with no success.

Healthwatch Rotherham were contacted by Jane*, who was chasing funding for her relative to be assessed at a private clinic for autism under the right to choose. Despite her relative meeting all the criteria for assessment, Jane had been chasing the funding for it for over 4 months. She was increasingly frustrated that even though she had spoken to the correct departments on multiple occasions and had raised the issue all the way up to her MP, she still wasn't getting a response.

With Jane's consent, Healthwatch Rotherham contacted the department responsible for the funding and found out that they were waiting for the outcome of the funding request prior to contacting the client. Healthwatch explained that the client was feeling ignored and requested that the department call her to update her on the progress of the case. Subsequently, Jane received a call and an apology from the department that she had had to escalate her case to us in order to get a response and a few weeks later, Jane's relative received full funding for their autism assessment. *Name changed

Raising awareness of diabetes in the local Yemini and Kashmir community

Along with our colleagues at Diabetes UK, we delivered a Let's talk event for the Yemini and Kashmir community in Rotherham during diabetes awareness week.

The talk enabled us to raise awareness around type 1 and type 2 diabetes within the Yemini and Kashmir community, as well as providing information on the relationship between insulin and food and advice on healthy eating and exercise. To further support individuals at home, the group were provided with leaflets and handouts in English, Urdu and Hindi to make the information accessible to the wider community.

Later in the year, we revisited the group and provided additional language accessible resources giving further information around diabetes management during Ramadan and EID celebrations.

Working closely with colleagues from other organisations allows us reach out to different communities and provide accurate and accessible information resources for Rotherham residents.



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:

- Attended engagement events, listening to the experiences and views of local people and feeding that back into our research
- Promoted Healthwatch Rotherham within their communities and workplaces
- Carried out enter and view visits to local care homes, to gather residents, families and friends views and to provide recommendations to help the services improve
- Researched and wrote reports for us to use in future projects
- Provided strategic guidance, helping us structure our work and ensure we meet our targets



Holly and Olivia joined us for a 6 week placement. They attended engagement events, gathering feedback from local residents as well as producing research documents for us to use in our upcoming projects.

"Being on placement at Healthwatch Rotherham has been amazing! Being able to go out into the community and find out what people's experiences of healthcare services have been has been really eye opening. Also, the team at Healthwatch Rotherham have been amazing and it's been great to see how much this team is invested in helping the citizens of Rotherham's voice be heard."

"I have really enjoyed my time at Healthwatch Rotherham! The team is so welcoming and helpful and I was allowed to research issues and concepts that I am really interested in, and produce resources in these areas. I also loved attending engagements, I became more confident and was able to talk to a variety of people about their experiences within a Healthcare setting, as well as just learning about their lives."





Holly (top) and Olivia (bottom) -Healthwatch Rotherham



"As the primary care giver of my non-verbal daughter who has complex needs, I had first hand experience of both fantastic and not so fantastic care in different clinical settings. Although I was able to advocate with clinicians and give my daughter a voice, I know many people who aren't able to do this for the person they care for. By joining Healthwatch Rotherham, I can shine a spotlight on this issue, and in partnership with service providers, help them think about how people who have different disabilities are treated in clinical settings."



Kym Gleeson -Healthwatch Rotherham

Do you feel inspired?



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



www.healthwatchrotherham.org.uk



01709 717130



info@healthwatchrotherham.org.uk



Finance and future priorities

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

Our income and expenditure *

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from Government	£108,911	Staff costs	£87,393
Additional income	£2,600	Operational costs	£7,079
		Support and administration	£33,507
Total income	£111,511	Total expenditure	£127,979

^{*}These are draft, estimated figures for 2023-24 and so may be subject to change. Our full audit and annual accounts are due to be published in October 2024.

Payment for commissioned work:

£6,000 received from the local ICS for joint work on a project

ICS payment

Healthwatch Rotherham received a payment from the South Yorkshire Integrated Care System (ICS) in 2023/24 to support collaborative work at this level in conjunction with the South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (SYICB) and South Yorkshire Healthwatch (Barnsley, Doncaster and Sheffield), for the below:

Purpose of ICS payment	Amount
Start with People refresh	£6,000

Next steps

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 continue to 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 three priorities for the next year are:

- Examining the healthcare experiences of those with learning disabilities & autism.
- 2. Using the feedback we get from the local community to shape the focus of our work, recognising the value of voice.
- 3. Improving our contacts and engaging in positive networking across the homeless/refugee/asylum seeker community.

Out Transformation Together Strategy which outlines these priorities along with our aims and vision for 2024-27 can be found here: <u>Transformation together strategy</u>



Statutory statements

Citizens Advice Rotherham and District are the host organisation for Healthwatch Rotherham, 2 Upper Millgate, Rotherham, \$60 1PF.

Healthwatch Rotherham 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 6 members who work on a voluntary basis 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 2023/24, the Board met 12 times and made decisions on matters such as appointing a new Healthwatch manager and approving our new work plan into 2024/25. They have also helped strengthen our collaboration with other Healthwatch in the South Yorkshire region and actively participate in the delivery of our work plan.

Through talking to local people and our information and signposting work we gain an understanding from the public as to what services we need to focus on during the year. This year we have also introduced a new survey that allows people to directly tell us what they think we should focus our work on. This will ensure that we gain 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 2023/24, we have been available by phone, and email, provided a web form on our website and through social media, as well as through our engagement events and stands at local community groups and forums. We are committed to taking additional steps to ensure we obtain the views of people from diverse backgrounds who are often not heard from. This year we have done this by strengthening our links with groups who work with homeless and ethnic minority communities. We have also forged strong relationships with schools and colleges who provide education for those with special educational needs.

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, on our social media pages and email it to various health and social care organisations for information and onward dissemination.

Responses to recommendations

This year we have had I provider who did not respond to our recommendations. The provider was given several opportunities, to reply and we remain committed to updating our report should they respond to us. We had no issues or recommendations escalated by us to Healthwatch England Committee and therefore there have been 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 our local authority area, for example, we take information to several departments of Rotherham Council such as Public Health, the health select committee and local commissioners. We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in South Yorkshire. For example, we took part in a partnership development programme with partners from NHS England, national ICB's and other Healthwatch from across the UK to look at improving the healthcare systems for people. We also share our data and reports with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

Enter and view

This year, we made 2 Enter and View visits. We made 11 recommendations or actions as a result of this activity.

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
Eastwood House Care Home	We work in collaboration with our commissioners who provide us with recommendations for places they would like us to visit.	We wrote a report with recommendations and sent this to the care home manager. We had a positive response from the service and where possible changes have been made to improve the service for residents.
Cherry Trees Care Home	Concerns raised by relatives of residents regarding care.	We wrote a report with recommendations and sent this to the care home manager. No response was received from the service.

Additional 2023 - 2024 activity

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
In person Let's Talk events	We ran 6 Let's talk events on subjects such as long Covid, diabetes, smoking and vaping, self care, wellbeing and the NHS. These events enabled us to work in partnership with other agencies to provide information, help and advice to a wider audience.
Monthly newsletter	We have published a newsletter every month to let people know what we have been up to, highlighting current and upcoming projects and raise the awareness of what is happening in the local area.

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Rotherham is represented on the Rotherham Health and Wellbeing Board and Health Select committee by Kym Gleeson, Healthwatch Rotherham Manager. During 2023/24 our representative has effectively carried out this role by listening to the priorities in the local authority and giving the value of local voice to feed in to the borough priorities.

Healthwatch Rotherham is represented on South Yorkshire Integrated Care Partnerships and South Yorkshire Integrated Care Boards by a representative from across the South Yorkshire Healthwatch collaboration.

healthwetch

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