



# On equal terms

Then and now

Healthwatch Manchester Annual Report 2020-21

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# Message from our Chair

**A year like no other, and the people of Manchester have responded to the pandemic admirably.**

The people of Manchester have continued to receive our support in their difficult journey through this period which has been uncertain for all of us and tragic for too many. I'm proud of our Healthwatch and the way it has stepped up to the challenge and especially in the way it has championed some of the most vulnerable members of our society.



**I'm proud of our Healthwatch and the way it has stepped up to the challenge...and championed some of the most vulnerable members of our society.**

When COVID-19 struck we, along with everyone else, were faced with some difficult decisions around where to focus attention. The Healthwatch Manchester board drew upon their collective understanding of the needs faced by their communities and this helped create an annual plan geared mostly around information and communication of safety from infection. Two investigations later we've seen an improvement but some people left behind in the digital transformation process.

As we enter our ninth year of operation I'm pleased to say these people are once more the focus of our attention and their voices will be amplified through new and innovative methods. All this has been made possible through the uplift in our core funding which we received at the start of the year and has been used to great effect in the establishment of our new Information Team.

As usual I am thankful to our board of trustees for their continued support and strength and to our staff and volunteers for their drive and commitment.



**Vicky Szulist, Healthwatch  
Manchester Chair**

# About us

## Here to make health and care better

We are the independent champion for people who use health and social care services in Manchester. 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 can 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.



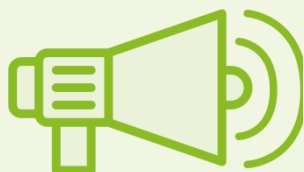
**"Local Healthwatch have done fantastic work throughout the country during the COVID-19 pandemic, but there is more work ahead to ensure that everyone's views are heard. COVID-19 has highlighted inequalities and to tackle these unfair health differences we will need those in power to listen, to hear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

**724 people**

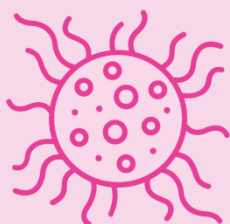
this year about their experiences of health and social care.

We provided advice and information to

**809 people**

this year.

## Responding to the pandemic



We engaged with and supported

**417 people**

during the COVID-19 pandemic this year.

## Making a difference to care



We published

**3 reports**

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

**14 recommendations**

we made last year to help improve the health & social care services across Manchester.

## Health and care that works for you



**32 volunteers**

helped us to carry out our work

**We employ 4 members of staff**

75% of whom are full time equivalent

We received

**£140,000 in funding**

from our local authority in 2020-21.



# Theme one: Then and now Dentistry



## Then: access to NHS dental services

**Thanks to people sharing their experiences of dentistry we were able to help commissioners adapt to sudden changes in need and ensure that patients had access to simple, clear information about their treatment.**

Since the beginning of the pandemic we have been inundated with calls from people looking for a dental practice which is taking on NHS patients. The number of people enquiring about dental services has significantly increased from previous years and it has been one of the major issues which people have contacted us about.

We found that the quality of information on dentists' websites was out of date, leading us to undertake a programme of work to ensure that patients have access to the most up to date information. We have been contacting our local dentists on a regular basis so we correctly signpost residents to those services which are taking on NHS patients and to any appropriate emergency contact information.

From the beginning of the pandemic it was immediately clear to us that this was going to be one of the major issues which affected people across Manchester and we were determined to be the voice of patients who were dealing with dental issues.





## Now: Ongoing dentistry issues

**Thanks to patients sharing their experience of dentistry during the pandemic, we have been able to highlight many issues with the Manchester Local Dental Committee and to ensure that the voices and experiences of patients is being heard. We want the issue of dentistry to be right at the top of the worry list for NHS England. Making this issue a political and policy priority has been essential to ensuring the issues continue to be addressed.**

Between April 2020 – March 2021 we had 156 people shared their experience of dentistry with us. The overwhelming majority of these calls are regarding people have difficulties either registering with a dentist or getting an appointment.

The main issues included:

- Difficulties in booking routine and emergency care appointments.
- Priority being given to private patients.
- Inaccurate information.

People told us that when they were unable to access a dentist, they experienced inconvenience, anxiety, worsening problems requiring further treatment, pain and fear. Some people even told us about their experiences where lack of access to care pushed them to take steps which put their own health and wellbeing at risk, such as pulling their own teeth out.

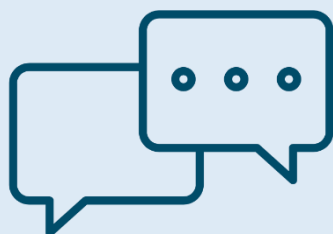


**I've tried every dentist in Manchester and further afield but nobody can help. My son is in a lot of pain and needs his teeth sorting out. It's a shocking situation**

The lack of accurate (or in some cases any) information about whether dentists are taking on NHS patients was a real problem during the pandemic and we heard from many people who were quite distressed about being unable to locate a dentist accepting NHS patients. It is vital that people have access to the most up-to-date information about local dental services and we have been highlighting these stories to make sure that their voices are being heard.

Since the beginning of the lockdown our team have been working hard to ensure that we are able to provide people with the most up-to-date and relevant information. We have been signposting people to the appropriate urgent care services where necessary and other relevant local services. Many people who have been suffering in pain with dental problems have been unable to access the required medical care and this had led to some people taking matters into their own hands and trying to deal with their issues themselves. We have been consistently speaking up for people who have been put in this situation and we will continue to do throughout the upcoming year.

### 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 Manchester is here for you.



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



0161 228 1344



[info@healthwatchmanchester.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchmanchester.co.uk)





## Theme two: Then and now COVID-19 safety information



### Then: COVID-19 safety information

**Since the beginning of the pandemic, concerns had been raised with us about the quality of COVID-19 safety information for those members of our community for whom English is a second language.**

At the June 2020 Healthwatch Manchester trustee board meeting, the issue of poor access to COVID-19 safety information was identified as an area requiring immediate work. Three communities were identified as facing particular disadvantage:

- a. Deaf
- b. South Asian
- c. Chinese

We then created and launched a survey aimed particularly at the communities identified above, and we reported on our findings in September 2020. Following the success of this work, we decided to re-run the survey in January 2021 (with additional questions regarding the vaccination programme) to see if anything had changed since our original survey, and we published our new report in June 2021.



## Now: COVID-19 safety information

During the course of our investigations we identified a number of findings which could be used to improve the standard of information received by those communities for whom English is a second language. One of the main findings was the vitally important role played by the local voluntary/culturally specific community groups. These groups acted as a lifeline for many residents and were a great source of information for people who didn't know to go for help.

Our report highlighted how trusted these organisations were in many communities and how a greater focus needs to be given to these groups when attempting to spread vital health and safety information.



**An open and ongoing dialogue needs to be created and maintained between statutory providers and the local community and cultural independent sector around COVID-19 safety information.**

**Healthwatch Manchester Three Communities: What's Changed? report**

One of the other main findings in the report was the concerns about digital accessibility to services. Obviously during the lockdown period many face-to-face appointments were simply not possible and a lot of activity had to be moved online.

Many of our respondents said that they were not happy with this as they either did not have access to a required device for the online services or they simply did not know what to do even if they were able to access the necessary online page.



**"What do people do if they are not online and can't use a device (laptop/tablet)? Not everyone is online or has access to a smart phone. How are people who can't read meant to use a service?"**

As a result of people sharing their experiences, we have been focussing on the issue of digital accessibility and have been championing these voices with health and social care service providers. With the move towards digital provision being increased through the lockdown, there is an urgent need to ensure that everyone is aware of how they access services through online systems and also that they have the means to do so in the first place.

We have been raising all of the issues which came through during our investigations and we have been championing the voices of local people. Whilst our second survey indicated that some people feel as though progress had been made since our initial survey, it is clear that there is much more to be done and Healthwatch Manchester will be at the front of this push for change.



**To find out more > > >**

Healthwatch Manchester Three Communities: What's Changed?

**<https://www.healthwatchmanchester.co.uk/news/2021-06-17/covid-19-three-communities-whats-changed>**



## Responding to COVID-19

**Healthwatch Manchester 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 417 people by:**

- Providing up to date advice on the COVID-19 response locally
- Linking people to reliable up-to-date information
- Supporting the vaccine roll-out
- Supporting the community volunteer response
- Helping people to access the services they need



## Top four areas that people have contacted us about:



61% on Primary care



11% on Secondary care



5% on Social care



3% on Mental health

## Case study



Early in the pandemic, we heard from 146 people about their difficulties trying to register with a dental practice and the lack of available clear information. Our role became much more focused on providing people with clear, consistent and concise advice and information articles on our website to help address people's concerns. We now provide regular updates about which local dentists are accepting NHS patients.

The key questions people were asking included:

- Why can I not find care as an NHS patient but I could as a private patient?
- Where can I find accurate and up-to-date information about local practices accepting NHS patients?



### 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 Manchester is here for you.



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# Volunteers

**At Healthwatch Manchester we are supported by 32 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:**

- Helped people have their say from home, carrying out surveys over the telephone and online.
- Created digital content on our websites and social media.
- Carried out website reviews for local services on the information they provide.
- Helped with the local volunteering efforts of shopping and collecting prescriptions for those self-isolating or shielding.



### Young volunteer - Joe

"I have been volunteering with Healthwatch Manchester for some time and during lockdown I was able to support them through a number of different important projects. As part of my role, I've been gathering research around dentists to feed into the work which the team are producing. It has been such an interesting and rewarding experience, helping the team gather experiences of care to help people from our community."



### Board member - Mina

"I have been on the Healthwatch Manchester Board for four years now. Recently I played an active role in an extremely important project looking at integrated care experiences of people from the local South Asian community with diabetes. The project was timely, essential and very well designed. It provided a voice to many people to share their experiences of integrated care and to highlight any issues which they have faced during their care."



### 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 using the information below:



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



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**[info@healthwatchmanchester.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchmanchester.co.uk)**

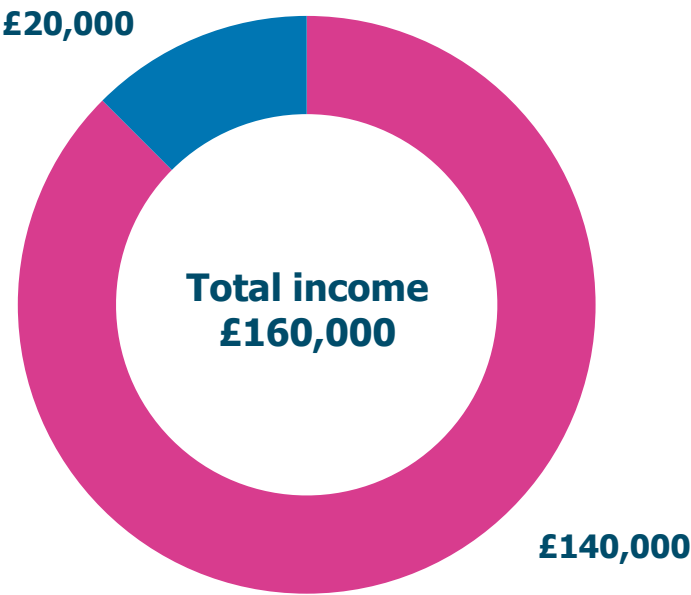


# Finances

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

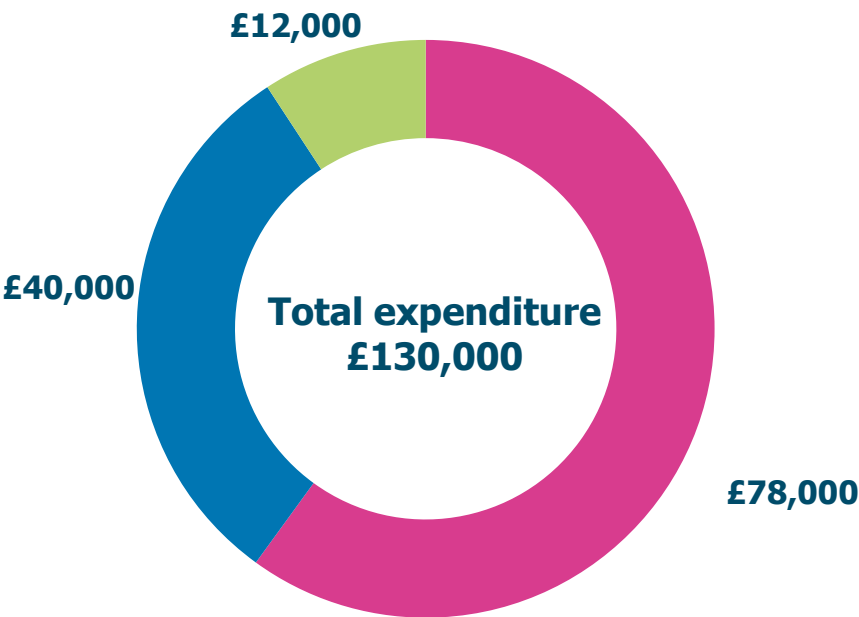
## Income

- 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. The lack of dentist spaces and access
2. The impact of lockdown on people's health and wellbeing
3. The barriers to health and care highlighted by lockdown

## Next steps – a word from our Chief Officer

Information and communication has been a key part of this year demanding a major focus on vulnerable people and communities through the pandemic.

We saw, heard and felt the panic and fear from our citizens at the start of last year as communications closed down and many people became isolated and afraid. We're still supporting these groups of people as the long-term effects of lockdown become manifest. Their needs, especially around mental health, are now a priority area of focus for Healthwatch Manchester.

One of the biggest challenges was to help people into the online world of health and care and I'm pleased and proud to say our new Information Team responded admirably with a revamped website and suite of digital resources & initiatives created to help maintain and improve engagement. This was made possible due to our increase in core funding from Manchester City Council so many thanks for this timely and much needed uplift.

I must also thank our Chair and board for their leadership and support through the past year and to our members and volunteers for keeping it real and grounded for me.

There have been some positive outcomes from the past year such as an open dialogue created through necessity with our dentists, a renewed focus on safeguarding & citizenship and the benefits to online engagement for some of the less vocal members of our society – a real game changer for Healthwatch in many respects. I'm looking forward to the challenges of this coming year knowing that the need and support for our work is well established.



Neil Walbran, Healthwatch  
Manchester Chief Officer



# Statutory statements

## About us

Healthwatch Manchester, Canada House, Chepstow Street, Manchester, M1

Healthwatch Manchester 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 7 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 6 times and made decisions on matters such as our response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities. As the independent consumer champion for those who use health & social care services, input from the public acts as the main driver for our organisational priorities. We consult widely with all of our communities within Manchester to ensure that everyone has their voice and so that we can understand the priorities which matter to everyone.



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, our COVID-19 Three Communities reports, which looked into the quality of COVID-19 safety information for those communities in Manchester for whom English is a second language.

We ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. The reports have been published, as with all of our work, on our [website](#).

2020-21 priorities	
Project / activity area	What we did
Deregistration from GP practices	We launched a survey to gather the views of people who had been deregistered from a GP practice and reported on <a href="#">our findings</a> .
Students & Health Access	We <a href="#">produced a series of videos</a> highlighting the health services across the city which would be relevant for our student population
Accessibility of COVID-19 safety information	We launched two surveys and produced <a href="#">two subsequent reports</a> looking into the quality of safety information around COVID-19 for people who whom English is a second language.
Complaints procedures of health & social care services	In partnership with local healthcare organisations, we launched a <a href="#">Health and Social Care Complaints charter for Manchester</a> .

Responses to recommendations and requests

This year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we did not make use of our Enter and View powers. Consequently, no recommendations or other actions resulted from this area of activity.

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 Manchester is represented on the Manchester City Council Health and Wellbeing Board by Vicky Szulist, our Chair.



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