

# Championing what matters to you

Healthwatch Cornwall  
Annual Report 2021-22



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# Message from our chair



In a year where the Covid-19 pandemic and its effects once again impacted on health and social care staff, patients and service users, it has been heartening to see the level of passion and commitment staff and volunteers have demonstrated.

Of course, there have also been patient and service user experiences that fell short of standards and expectations. As the health and social care champion, Healthwatch Cornwall is here to make a difference. Amongst these pages you will read many case studies from the outreach and research work we have conducted over the past year and how this has helped to shape changes to service delivery.

I am proud to be joining an excellent team at Healthwatch Cornwall, an organisation which maintains its independence, but is often the body of choice for high-calibre commissioned research work, and plays a vital role in signposting members of the public seeking advice and sharing their user experiences.

Looking ahead to the forthcoming year, we will see the new structure of the Integrated Care System take shape in Cornwall. Change of this scale always comes with challenges, however the new way of working is designed to place health, wellbeing and people at the centre of a more efficient and effective system.

Anna Pascoe  
**Chair, Healthwatch Cornwall**



I look forward to playing my part in ensuring that our helpline, website, research and outreach programmes document lessons learned and make a real, meaningful impact upon health and social care improvement in Cornwall.

**Anna Pascoe, Chair, Healthwatch Cornwall.**



# About us

## Your health and social care champion

Healthwatch Cornwall is your local health and social care champion. From Saltash to Sennen 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 mission

We are the health and social care champion for people in Cornwall. Our aim is to make sure people's experiences help contribute towards making health and care better for residents.



### Our values

- 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 and the voluntary sector – serving as the public's independent advocate.

# Our year in review

Find out how we have engaged and supported people.

## Reaching out



**10,645 people**

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

**494 people**

came to us through our information line for advice, and to share their experience about health and social care services.

## Making a difference to care



We published

**Seven reports**

about the improvements people would like to see to health and social care services. We regularly share your experiences with services and work with them to make sure it has impact. We include your feedback within local and national health and social care system reports too.

A key report this year was our 'accessing mental health support in Cornwall' report. It highlighted the struggles people experienced accessing support during the pandemic.

## Health and care that works for you



We're lucky to have

**17**

outstanding volunteers, who give us considerable time to make care better for our community.

We're funded by our local authority. In 2021-22 we received:

**£300,000**

We also currently employ

**15**

Staff who help us carry out this work.

## How we've made a difference throughout the year

These are the projects we worked on from April 2021 to March 2022.

Spring



The **adult safeguarding report** made 16 recommendations, all have been adopted by the Safeguarding Adults Board.



Feedback from residents about their experience of the **NHS dentistry crisis in Cornwall** is included in the national Healthwatch England dentistry update.

Summer



Our **accessing mental health support report** published. The recommendations were shared with system leaders and improvements have been made as a result.



A **maternity journey report** shared the experiences of 760 birthing people and their families, helping the maternity system make improvements based on service user feedback.

Autumn



The **NHS waiting times** survey gave us insights about the challenges faced by residents waiting for appointments, this was shared with system leaders to help inform services going forward.



Our **carer experience of hospital discharge** research project for NHS England and Improvement has allowed us to share local issues nationally to make improvements in the future.

Winter



Our **GP website review** was published following an analysis of all GP websites in Cornwall by our volunteers. The report has been well received, with a commitment from a number of GP practises to make changes to their websites.



We supported the national **Accessible Information Standard** campaign locally. The recommendations have been shared with the hospitals Trusts and there is a commitment to work towards making improvements.

# 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 feedback to services to help them improve.



## Improving access to mental health support

The recommendations from our accessing mental health support report have led to the provision of much more targeted support resources for different groups.

Following engagement with residents to understand their experiences of mental health services and support, we shared the findings and recommendations of our report with system leaders in Cornwall. The report identified a number of issues that need addressing, including some difficulties accessing mental health support when it is needed, and gaps in provision for people with more complex, long-term mental health conditions. The report has resulted in some very positive outcomes.



**50% of respondents**  
to our survey had accessed mental health support in the previous six months

### How we have made a difference to mental health services in Cornwall

- Presented to the Mental Health Strategic Board and the Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Cell. This led to a commitment to follow up on, and action the recommendations.
- The recommendations are now embedded within the Community Mental Health Transformation Programme in Cornwall. Delays to accessing treatment and gaps in service provision will be addressed.
- This research led to us being commissioned to undertake a mental health and suicide prevention research project and we are currently interviewing and surveying people for that. Part of this project will seek to understand barriers in accessing support and inform delivery of services going forward.
- The innovative digital engagement and the quality of the report resulted in us being shortlisted for the Engagement category at the Healthwatch national Network Awards.

### What difference did this make?

Services have responded to this report with significantly improved mental health communication about support available targeted to specific groups.



“This insightful report enabled us to understand more about the experiences of people accessing mental health support, as well as reasons why people may not be choosing to approach mental health services. This report will enable us to plan and deliver services in ways which are both meaningful and more accessible within our diverse communities”.



Tim Francis, Associate Director for Mental Health, Learning Disability and Autism, NHS Kernow Clinical Commissioning Group.

## Making GP websites easier to understand

### Our volunteers conducted a review of all 58 GP websites in Cornwall

Our research regularly points to General Practice being the first point of contact for people accessing care. During the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns, never before was this service more important for people needing to access support.

Our volunteers reviewed all 58 GP websites in Cornwall to look at the support and information each one provided, highlight best practice, and to consider what could be improved.

The report was released as part of the national #YourCareYourWay Accessible Information Standard campaign to improve awareness about accessible communication in the health and social care sector. There is commitment from the system and key stakeholders to work with us to embed the recommendations.

There are several workshops, presentations and webinars planned in the coming months to present the report. We look forward to seeing the recommendations help make ongoing improvements to GP websites in Cornwall.



Thank you to Healthwatch and their volunteers for carrying out this review. It is so important that patients have easy access to quality information. Their excellent report does a great job of highlighting this in a very practical way. It provides valuable insight for our GP practices, who we will support to work on the recommendations.



**Andrew Abbott, Director of Primary Care for NHS Kernow Clinical Commissioning Group.**

### Key findings and recommendations were set out over five areas to help support practice managers and staff make improvements to their websites in the future.

- Finding basic, up to date information: Navigating sites, including layout and appearance; Accessibility; Up to date information
- Patient Participation Group (PPG) activity
- Signposting
- Opportunity to provide feedback
- COVID 19 information.

## Six ways we made a difference

We gather information about health inequalities by speaking to people whose experiences aren't often heard...



### Increasing emergency dentist appointments

Our ongoing pressure on the system to solve the dentistry crisis has led to an increase in the number of emergency appointments available.

An additional 1,000 NHS dentist appointments were made available in South West England, enabling people in severe pain to access emergency dental care. As a result of this, we have seen a significant decrease in the number of people getting in touch with us about this issue. There has also been a commitment to review the NHS waiting list to prioritise the most needy and vulnerable with priority access in the future. We continue to support this issue by sharing feedback nationally, and engaging with key stakeholders.



### Responding to NHS waiting times survey

Residents told us about poor communication, a lack of pain management, and limited mental health support whilst waiting for hospital appointments.

We shared the local results from the national survey with both Royal Cornwall Hospitals Trust and University Hospitals Plymouth Trust. There is a commitment from the trusts to ensure the recommendations are used to improve services, particularly in respect of improving communication while waiting to access care and treatment.



### Improving the hospital discharge experience for patients and their carers

NHS England & Improvement commissioned Healthwatch Cornwall to conduct research about the experience of people recently discharged from hospital, and their carers.

We conducted 15 interviews with carers and held a stakeholder focus group, sharing the research in full to land this important feedback with key system leaders. The report has also been shared nationally with NHS England & Improvement. Our research and report will contribute to improvements to hospital discharge, both nationally and locally.

We then share this information with NHS leaders and key decision makers in the health and social care sector to improve those services for residents.



### **Ageing Well Urgent Care Response pilot research**

We conducted research on the new rapid response teams who are on hand within two hours to help support older people to remain well at home and avoid hospital admissions.

We have been speaking with patients of this new service, and with the Urgent Care Responders who have provided the two-hour urgent care response or two-day reablement services to patients. The aim is to understand more about the person's journey and their experiences of community care in North & East, Central and West Integrated Care Areas. This approach will help to identify what is working well and what could work better from patient, carer and staff perspectives to improve services in the future.



### **The Partnership Boards continue to grow**

The Carers, Autism and Learning Disability Partnership Boards have continued to grow both in terms of membership and achievements.

The Boards have initiated conversations leading to front line NHS staff training in how to connect with individuals with communication issues, high level consideration of access to mental health services including post-diagnostic Autism support, and improving interactions with the DWP. The Carers Partnership Board also scrutinises the implementation of the Informal Carers Service and is developing regional and national links with NHS Long Term Plan work.



### **Kernow Maternity Voices Partnership (KMVP) and Kernow Parenting Journey (KPJ)**

Our commitment to improve maternity services and the journey of new parents continues through our KMVP and KPJ work.

KMVP supported the relaunch of a Friends and Family Survey providing 500 pieces of feedback from service users. They have also developed and launched Cornwall's own personalised maternity care plan and developed informed consent training for staff and co-wrote the guidelines. This KPJ project has been commissioned by the local maternity and neonatal service to review education offered from pre-pregnancy up to two years old and has so far listened to the views of 300 people.

# Advice and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch Cornwall 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 to your hospital or GP or choosing a good care home for a loved one – you can count on us.

This year we helped people by:

- Providing information on how to find an emergency dentist
- Supporting people with issues accessing their local GP
- Linking people to reliable information they could trust
- Helping people to access the services they need



## NHS dentistry signposting

This year we have been making our signposting more relevant to the public. This has involved giving out the dentist waiting list number and the emergency dentist contact details. We also promote the special dentistry service that local GPs can refer to if someone has no dentist, helping people in urgent need to get help.

*“Just saying thank you for your help. It’s been a long road to get a dentist. It also gave me much more, I had the confidence to look for a job, had an interview, and am now employed”.*



## Resolving issues with GPs

Our database of practice manager contact details ensures that everyone we respond to knows how to contact their Practice Manager, and fully understands the complaints procedure too.

We also provide information on how to escalate complaints to the relevant clinical director, and also how to get advocacy support.

*“Thank you for this. You have provided me with a lot of information. Your email has really helped me understand the options so thank you for that”.*



### Talk to us about your experience

Help us improve health and social care services for people in Cornwall. Call or email us to share your experience.

**T: 0800 0381 281**

**@: [enquiries@healthwatchcornwall.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@healthwatchcornwall.co.uk)**

# Volunteers

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

This year our volunteers:

- Conducted the GP website review, a volunteer-led project
- Supported our staff taking feedback from the public via telephone
- Interviewed residents for our mental health research project
- Conducted interviews with people for our Ageing Well project
- Engaged with the public at Freshers Fairs, Winter Fair and Christmas Market
- Shared information with local groups and Patient Participation Groups.





**Rebecca**

"I started volunteering with Healthwatch to enhance my knowledge of wider patient engagement whilst studying for my nursing degree. Since qualifying I have continued to be a part of the scheme as I feel that understanding the patient experience, positive or negative, can encourage growth within the NHS and continue to ensure we provide the best service possible for the future".



**Sandy**

"The highlight of my year with Healthwatch in 2021 was my very first post Covid face-to-face engagement with Sarah Jones for Freshers' Week at Duchy College. I enjoy being part of a team that takes the time to listen to people's stories and correlates that information to help shape the way these services are developed for the future".



**Do you feel inspired?**

We are always on the lookout for new volunteers, so please get in touch with us to find out about volunteering



[www.healthwatchcornwall.co.uk/volunteer-us](http://www.healthwatchcornwall.co.uk/volunteer-us)



01872 273501



[Rhannon.pring@healthwatchcornwall.co.uk](mailto:Rhannon.pring@healthwatchcornwall.co.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.

Income		Expenditure	
Funding received from local authority	£300,000	Staff costs	£367,385
Partnership Boards	£64,000	Operational costs	£60,248
Maternity Voices	£65,431	Support and administration	£51,817
Kernow Parenting Group	£27,000	Total expenditure	£479,450
Other funding	£53,500		
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£509,931</b>		

## Top three priorities for 2022–23

1. Conduct engagement with residents and listen to their experience
2. Ensure recommendations are implemented in key work areas
3. Collaborate and work constructively within the new Integrated Care System

## Next steps

The Healthwatch Cornwall team has grown and will continue to thrive as we enter the next financial year ahead. The team is well equipped to face the ongoing post-pandemic challenges with a new streamlined strategy in place.

We will continue to apply pressure on the system for key work areas such as GP access, dentistry, mental health and our work to improve provision for carers. Commissioned work will also be a focus, following through with projects such as Ageing Well, and new projects such as Covid impact and suicide prevention.

Severe health inequalities will continue to exist in our coastal communities, and we will provide a life-line to residents struggling to access health and social care, working tirelessly to improve provisions through our relationships with key stakeholders and service commissioners in 2022 and beyond.

# Statutory statements

## About us

Healthwatch Cornwall, 6 Walsingham Place, Truro, Cornwall, TR1 2RP. Healthwatch Cornwall 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 Cornwall Board consists of five 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 four times and made decisions on matters such as how we will work with the Integrated Care System (ICS), staff welfare and development. The board also scrutinises our income and expenditure.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities. The Work Plan and our organisational priorities are informed in part by the feedback, views and opinions we receive from members of the public.

### **Methods and systems used across the year's work to obtain people's views and experience.**

We used 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 were available by phone, by email, provided a webform on our website, 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, targeting fourteen specific groups designated by Public Health as part of our Covid impact research.

We ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. We publish it on our website at [www.healthwatchcornwall.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchcornwall.co.uk) and communicate it widely with key stakeholders.

## **Responses to recommendations and requests**

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 Cornwall is represented on the Cornwall Health and Wellbeing Board by Mario Dunn. During 2020/21 our CEO Mario Dunn has effectively carried out this role by attending meetings in person and raising issues brought to our attention through our engagement with residents in Cornwall.

### 2021/22 outcomes table

Project / activity Area	Positive outcomes, improvements and results from key work areas during the last financial year
Adult Safeguarding	Safeguarding Adults Board accepted 16 recommendations
Mental Health	Recommendations embedded within the Community Mental Health Transformation Programme
Dentistry	1,000 additional appointments made available in the South West
GP website review	Commitment from Primary Care to embed suggestions
NHS waiting times	Patient feedback included in mental health strategy and ongoing improvement
Accessible Information Standard	Recommendations contributing towards local Quality Priority to improve AIS standards
Kernow Maternity Voices Partnership	Feedback from Maternity Journey report shared with LMNS to inform service provision
Carers and hospital discharge	Local and national research informing national provision through NHSE&I
Ageing Well	Report and recommendations shared to inform future provision of Urgent Care

# Message from our CEO



As the impact of Covid-19 recedes, the reality of the health and social care challenges facing Cornwall come back into focus. Our annual report reflects those challenges and the actions we have taken in response over the past year.

These are the priorities that people have told us matter. They are ongoing challenges – NHS treatment waiting times, access to mental health services, support for carers, GP access, the availability of NHS dental treatment – and so much more. The breadth of what we do to progress these issues is equally wide – support and signposting for people, advocacy for change, public outreach, facilitation of partnership boards and project development add up to a significant volume of work and a measurable positive impact for the people of Cornwall.

Yet despite the positive impact we make, we know that the goal of bringing about change in the health and social care system is a marathon not a sprint. Many of the issues we work on, are enduring and we advocate improvement in the full knowledge that the NHS remains under extreme pressure. That is why we are considered a “critical friend” of NHS and social care. For despite the immediacy of the pressures, it is essential that we are able to plan for change, being about service improvements and integrate the working of health and social care more effectively. A constant state of emergency is not sustainable for the public nor the people who work for the NHS.

I hope you have found this report about the work we have undertaken over the past year to be informative. The year ahead will of course be equally demanding so Healthwatch Cornwall remains ready to respond to those issues that people tell us matter to them.

Mario Dunn  
Chief Executive Officer, Healthwatch Cornwall

# Reports and information

You can read more about the different subjects mentioned in this report by following the links below:

Adult Safeguarding report [here](#)

Accessing mental health support in Cornwall report [here](#)

GP website review [here](#)

Ageing Well report [here](#)

NHS waiting times report [here](#)

Kernow Maternity Voices annual report [here](#)

Kernow Maternity Voices Maternity Journey report [here](#)



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