



Annual Report 2019-20

Guided by you

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Message from our chair



I was delighted to be appointed as Chair of Healthwatch Sandwell (HWS) in April 2019. My appointment coincided with a new start for HWS locally with Sandwell Borough Council awarding the contract to deliver the HWS service to Engaging Communities Solutions (ECS). Alongside the newly appointed manager, we have worked together to engage with local stakeholders, service providers, commissioners and members of the public, with a focus on raising the profile of HW in Sandwell as an independent evidence based champion for local people; able to engage, collaborate and hold health and social care leaders to account.

The work that Healthwatch Sandwell has undertaken over the last year was driven by the determination to make a difference and this report highlights where we have achieved this. For example:

- Listening to Carers Experiences in Sandwell – thanks to 227 adult carers sharing their views and experiences with us, we have shared this information to help influence the development of the Sandwell Joint Carers Strategy.
 - Our report on Children and Young People in the borough has seen us receive 364 experiences on their understanding and use of health and social care services which will help us to build and develop a strong and vibrant Youth Healthwatch
 - We set up an engagement forum for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Communities so that health and social care needs can be shared and raised with commissioners of services.
- These are just examples from a busy year of our impact. This is made possible by our dedicated team of staff, Board members and volunteers – many thanks to all of you.

Whilst we have seen unprecedented events unfold over the last few months as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the operational delivery of the local team has been flexible and responsive, to enable the service to continue functioning and we are determined to ensure we continue to engage with as many people as possible, using a variety of means.

Lastly, our work is driven by the views of local people so do not miss the opportunity to have your say by joining our Healthwatch Advisory Board or our team of volunteers and take part in our Spotlight public meetings. There has never been a more relevant time to make sure that our voices are heard.

John Taylor, Healthwatch Advisory Board Chair

We will continue to focus our work on what people tell us matters most to them, but we can only do this if people share their experiences with us.

Our priorities

Last year people told us about the improvements they would like to see health and social care services make in 2019-20. These were our three priorities for the year based on what you told us.



Listening to Carers experiences in Sandwell

HWS carried out a project that looked at support for adult carers in Sandwell. This project was designed to inform the Joint Carers Strategy 2020/24. It has been identified that carers will only recognise and use services to support themselves in a caring role if they acknowledge themselves as a carer.

Early identification of carers can help to prevent crisis point being reached and enable them to have their needs met earlier. The project will endeavour to engage with carers who do not necessarily identify as carers or those who are not currently accessing services to understand their needs in relation to support for carers.



Children and Young People

Healthwatch Sandwell have recognised that the views of children and young people are seldom heard so we are

keen to engage with young people and produce a "youth insight" into accessing and using health and social care services.



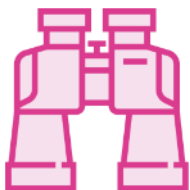
Accessing Healthcare in Sandwell: Homelessness Project Report 2020

Many people who experience rough sleeping and homelessness struggle to access the support services they need. Healthwatch Sandwell will actively engage with rough sleepers and homeless people and collaborate with other

partners to establish pathways into primary healthcare services and ensure health inequalities are addressed.

N.B. This project was carried out during 2019/20, however the analysis of the findings were produced in June 2020 and will be reported in the next annual report for 2020/21

About us



Our vision is simple

Health and care that works for the people of Sandwell. People want health and social care support that works – helping them to stay well, get the best out of services and manage any conditions they face.



Our purpose

To find out what matters to residents, patients and carers in Sandwell and to help make sure your views shape the support you need.



Our approach

People's views come first – especially those who find it hardest to be heard.

We champion what matters to you and work with others to find solutions. We are independent and committed to making the biggest difference to you.



How we find out what matters to you

People are at the heart of everything we do. Our staff and volunteers identify what matters most to people by:

- Visiting services in Sandwell to see how they work
- Running surveys and focus groups
- Going out in the community and working with other Sandwell organisations and community groups.



Find out more about us and the work we do

Website: www.healthwatchsandwell.co.uk

Twitter: @HWSandwell

Facebook: @Healthwatch Sandwell

Highlights from our year

Find out about our resources and the way we have engaged and supported more people in 2019-20.



Health and care that works for you

9 volunteers



helping to carry out our work. In total, they gave up 138 hours of their time supporting Healthwatch Sandwell

We employed 5 staff

60% of whom are full time equivalent, which is a 15% decrease from the previous year.

We also employed a sessional worker for 15 hours per week.

We received

£178,075 funding

from our local authority in 2019-20.

Providing support



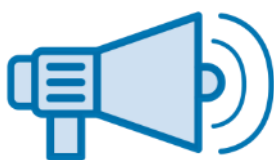
758 people

shared their health and social care story with us, 6% more than last year.

5430 people

accessed Healthwatch advice and information online or contacted us with questions about local support, 16% more than last year.

Reaching out



6878 people

3726 engaged with us through our website, 2704 people engaged with us through social media, and 448 people engaged with us at community events.

Making a difference to care



We published

12 reports

about the improvements people would like to see with their health and social care, and from this, we made 55 recommendations for improvement.

How we've made a difference



Listening to Carers experiences in Sandwell

Thanks to adult carers sharing their experiences, their views have influenced the development of the Joint Carers Strategy by the Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, Clinical Commissioning Group and the Voluntary Sector for 2020/24.

This project made use of a survey, focus groups and interviews, overall, there were 227 participants in the project.

Levels of caring responsibility were identified, 63% of survey respondents said that they had not had a Carer's Assessment, 57% of survey respondents had used information and advice services in the last 12 months, carers health had been affected due to their responsibilities, loneliness, employment and finance were also identified as issues.

Our main recommendations included:

- A publicity campaign by the Local Authority or relevant voluntary sector to publicise:
 - tasks which would define a Carer
 - carer support services
 - promote the carers assessment.
- Provide a central point of access that would give relevant information to address financial social support, practical support, respite, health information (carers and the cared for) and support for getting back into employment.
- Adult practitioners and associated staff to receive training in the needs of carers

- including their role as sign posters.
- Promote/provide service for people who provide emotional support to carers e.g. a buddy/befriending service



<https://www.healthwatchsandwell.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/HW-Sandwell-Carers-Report-2019.pdf>



Caring is a full time job...there is no break from it



Knowledge of General Practice Nurse in GP surgeries

The four Healthwatch of the Black Country - Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton were commissioned by Wolverhampton Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) on behalf of Black Country and West Birmingham Sustainable Transformation Partnership (STP) to carry out work collecting feedback from patients about their knowledge and experiences of using General Practice Nurses.

The feedback collected intended to help inform the decision making of several projects linked into the STP Primary Care Strategy.

Focus groups were facilitated with over 220 people attending.

The project found:

- A lack of knowledge of the roles of Nurses
- The availability of appointments to see a nurse as opposed to waiting for a GP appointment.
- Several participants felt that they were more likely to make an appointment to see a Nurse for female related issues as there was a perception that practice Nurses were generally female as opposed to GPs being predominantly male.

Our main recommendations included:

- Provide more information on Nurse services
- Information on the knowledge and skills of individual Nurses
- Publicise role of Nurse
- Online booking for Nurse
- Signposting and active promotion of nurse services by reception staff



<https://www.healthwatchsandwell.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/General-Practice-Nursing-Report-report-2019-003-002.pdf>



I'm not aware of the practice nurses, just tell receptionists that I want an appointment to see a GP.

I will go to the nurse first because I was one. I know their capabilities and know they will pass me on to a doctor if required.



Youth Project

Healthwatch Sandwell carried out a project to engage with children and young people in Sandwell about their knowledge and experiences of health and social care services. This project engaged with 364 young people using a survey and 71 in a series of focus groups.

The project focused on a broad range of services in order to begin to engage with young people in Sandwell around health and social care and to gauge their understanding and use of services.

Most young people were aware of and had used GP services, dentists, and opticians. Feedback on dentists and opticians was generally positive but for GP practices, Walk-In-Centres and A&E, feedback was largely focused on waiting times and the difficulty of accessing appointments. Waiting times were also an issue around accessing mental health services, however, there was also feedback in relation to the engagement with professionals and how supported and listened to young people who had used the service felt.

Being listened to by professionals was a theme from the feedback across services, not just around mental health services but with GP services, and particularly around the school nurse and being able to be involved in decision making about what happened to them.

Education providers were seen as having a role in providing information, advice and guidance to students, but it was felt that they were not always sufficiently trained and informed to be able to support students in accessing services. The need for more mental health provision dominated discussions within focus groups.

It was highlighted throughout this research that young people have the skills and ideas of how the issues identified can be tackled.

Many suggestions can be built upon through working directly with the young people themselves. Healthwatch Sandwell hopes the project is the first step in building a strong vibrant Youth Healthwatch.



It gets worse while you wait, then takes longer to help you... depression, I didn't think it was real until I went through it





Listening to Deaf and hard of hearing people

We engaged with Sandwell Deaf Community Association and created an engagement forum so that their health and social care needs can be shared and raised with the commissioners of services.

The group shared their experiences of challenges with communication, appointments with General Practitioners and their experiences at Accident and Emergency Department (Sandwell Hospital).

The groups experiences of health and social care were varied, with some positives. The key issues related to the need for an effective British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter during appointments/ consultations and staff training about the needs of deaf and hard of hearing people and how to engage with a BSL interpreter.

The provision of a British Sign Language interpreter is a legal obligation under the Equality Act 2010 and is classed as a 'reasonable adjustment'.

The group plan to meet quarterly and to invite key health and social care professionals to the meetings to respond to their issues and make recommendations on how to improve services for deaf and hard of hearing people.



*Put yourself in patients' shoes
....empathise with deaf
people.....commissioners of
services and Senior NHS staff to
meet deaf people*



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 is here for you.

Website: www.healthwatchsandwell.co.uk

Telephone: 0121 569 7211

Email: info@healthwatchsandwell.co.uk

Long Term Plan

#WhatWouldYouDo

Highlights



More than 1,000 people engaged with Healthwatch in the Black Country



NHS Long Term Plan

Following a commitment from the Government to increase investment in the NHS, the NHS published the 'Long Term Plan' in January 2019, setting out its key ambitions over the next 10 years. Healthwatch launched a countrywide campaign to give people a say in how the plan should be implemented in their communities.

In the Black Country areas of Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton, there was a collaborative approach and one report produced for the Black Country and West Birmingham Sustainability and Transformation Partnership.

To ensure a thorough range of feedback was gained, two electronic questionnaires (a General Questionnaire and a Health Conditions Questionnaire) and several focus groups were used.

Emerging trends indicate that people prefer:

- Control over their medical records and healthcare
- Easy access to information that helps with healthcare
- Easy access to healthcare professionals to get advice and help and healthcare services when needed including use of technology
- Every contact with a healthcare professional to make a difference
- Their views on health and next steps to be taken seriously
- Time to consider healthcare options and make decisions
- Being able to decide where they go to get care
- Communications that are timely, helpful and work for them
- Knowledge that helps them to care for themselves with support from the community, family and friends.

What are we doing about it?

Our priorities for 2020/21 will address some of the issues identified especially around digital transformation to ease the burden on Primary Care Services and reducing health inequalities for people with learning disabilities and or autism.

Being able to access good healthcare when you need it.

Please can GPs talk a little more of our problems when we are ill, they only give us two minutes to speak, it's not good enough

I don't think I'm at the centre of my healthcare, decisions are made for me, there is a pre-set plan ... I don't feel confident enough to challenge healthcare professionals

Being able to access good healthcare when you need it

Helping you find the answers

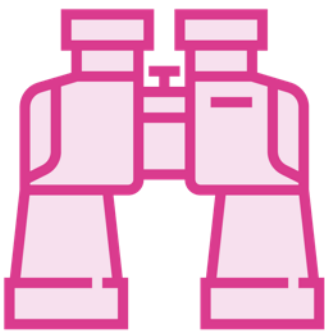


Signposting

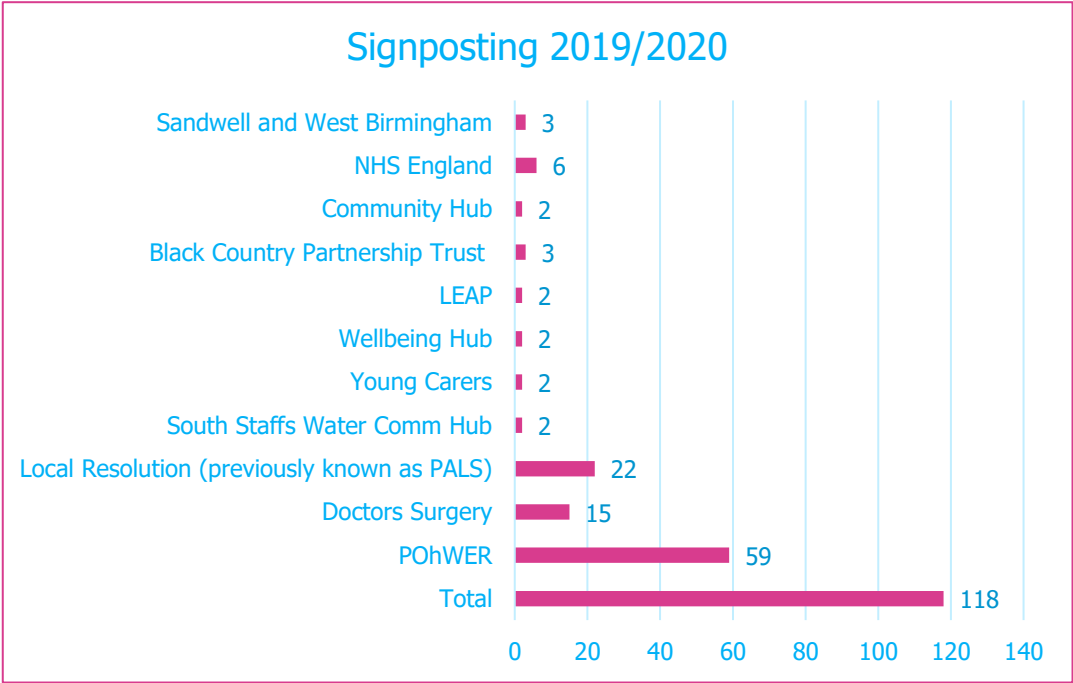
Finding the right service can be worrying and stressful. Healthwatch Sandwell plays an important role in helping people to get the information they need to take control of their health and care and find services that will provide them with the right support.

This year we helped people get the advice and information they need by:

- Providing advice and information articles on our website.
- Answering people’s queries about services over the phone, by email, or online.
- Talking to people at community events.
- Promoting services and information that can help people on our social media platforms.



During 2019/20 our activities included signposting the public to relevant support agencies to assist them with their concerns. During this period Healthwatch Sandwell signposted to 28 main organisations - increasing our signposting activity by 8% over the same period last year, which the following graph depicts with the numbers signposted:



* LEAP – an energy and money saving service

Case study

Helping people new to Sandwell- Support with Services

Mr & Mrs X, were at a local GP Surgery when a Healthwatch Community Outreach session was in place. Mr & Mrs X were new arrivals to the UK and Sandwell, they spoke English well but it was not their first language. Mr X was clearly in distress and discomfort. He explained that he was diabetic and suffering with foot problems. Mr X was frustrated as he felt he was not receiving a good service from the Doctor who he said was not listening to him properly and

had not referred him to a specialist. The Community Outreach Lead told Mr X that he had a right to change his Doctor and explained that they could ask to speak to the Practice Manager of the surgery to resolve the issues. This was new information to the couple who then felt empowered to act straight away and asked for an appointment to see the Practice Manager.



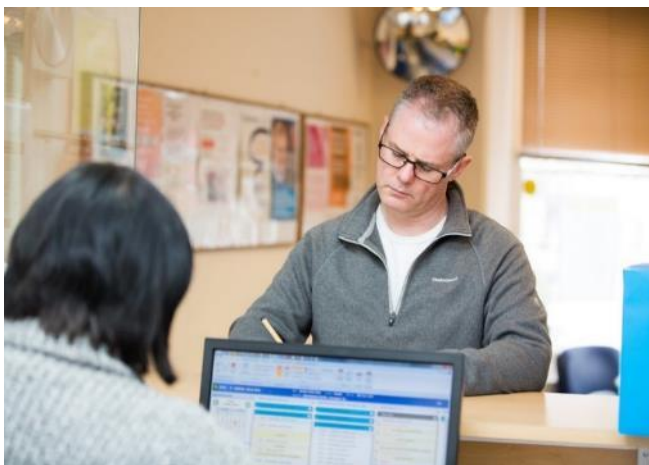
Listening to patients with long term conditions



The organisation for Sickle Cell Anaemia Research and Thalassaemia, known as OSCAR Sandwell, invited Healthwatch to a group meeting where several people shared in depth their experiences of going into a Sickle Cell crisis and the hospital services they access. A crisis will often result in an admission to a hospital stay via A&E services or the Sickle Cell & Thalassaemia Centre (SCaT) at City Hospital.

The main themes from the patient feedback were concerns around pain management and the differing levels of awareness of Sickle Cell disorder by health staff. Healthwatch, OSCAR Sandwell and Birmingham and the SCaT centre are now working together to gather more patient feedback to inform training and services for the patient group.

Resolving problems



Birmingham Midland Eye Centre (BMEC)

A Patient was unhappy about their last appointment, as the health care professional was asking questions that were already recorded on the Patient's records, this caused the patient concern as to whether the notes were accurate.

The Patient contacted HWS for advice. HWS advised them to make a formal complaint via POHWER, the NHS complaints advocacy service.

POHWER helped the patient with their complaint and the issue got resolved. An apology letter was received explaining that they had a computer issue on that day. The Patient was happy with the outcome and thanked HWS for the help.

Correcting mistakes



A Patient contacted Healthwatch Sandwell informing us that they are recorded as deceased in their hospital notes. The Patient was advised to make a formal complaint to Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust and also to the GP via POhWER – the NHS complaints advocacy service.

As a result, the patient was able to discover which service was responsible for the error to enable the hospital record to be corrected. The Patient was grateful for the support provided by Healthwatch Sandwell, which enabled her ongoing treatment to continue.

Listening to concerns



Healthwatch Sandwell were contacted on several occasions by a relative, of a resident residing in a care home, who was concerned about the standard and quality of care within the home. We raised these concerns with the Local Authority who completed a review of the home. None of the concerns raised by the relative were found to be an issue. The relative continued to raise concerns so we made the decision to include the home in the Enter and View programme. The visit took place on September 10, 2019. We were unable to substantiate any of the concerns raised by the relative.

However, there was a comment made by one family member regarding the response times for residents who required personal care. There was also a comment made by a staff member that residents had to wait longer than they should when requiring personal care during busy periods. ***We recommended that the manager investigates the response time for supporting residents with personal care and ensures that the staffing ratios are correct.***

Volunteers



At Healthwatch Sandwell we are supported by 9 volunteers to help us find out what people think is working, and what people would like to improve, to services in their communities.

This year our volunteers:

- Raised awareness of the work we do at community events and with health and care services.
- Visited services to make sure they are providing people with the right support.
- Helped support our day-to-day running.
- Listened to people's experiences to help us know which areas we need to focus on.

The support of our volunteers is extremely valuable to the work of Healthwatch Sandwell, in return they have acquired new skills and knowledge.

Volunteers and Healthwatch Sandwell Projects

Our volunteers have been involved with our projects and have assisted us by:

- Attending engagement events to promote our current projects.
- Promoting the sign up for Carers Project including focus groups and completion of the survey.
- Taking part in our Enter and View visits to care homes and GP surgeries.
- Assisting with the Young People's Project, being involved with focus groups and engaging with young people, also helping with note taking.
- Administrative support, this has been a helpful role, especially with data entry and photocopying.



We could not do our work without the valued support of our dedicated team of volunteers; who contribute so much to the success of our organisation

Youthwatch

If you are aged between 12 - 25 years, why not be a part of Youthwatch. Help to shape the services you use in your own way. Help make a difference to the services in Sandwell.

Our volunteers

We could not do what we do without the support of our amazing volunteers. Meet some of the team and hear what they get up to.



Geoff

I was with the Local Involvement Network (LINK) prior to Healthwatch Sandwell. I just wanted carry on improving local services. I have now been with them for over 6 years and have been involvement with various projects.

Recently I have supported the Carers Project, promotion of Healthwatch Sandwell in Hospitals and Enter and Views in GP surgeries.

I like the community involvement and being able to bring forward peoples' issues about the services.



Stephen


I found out about Healthwatch Sandwell when working for Age UK.

I've been doing administration tasks with them since January 2020, such as inputting surveys, preparing project packs and photocopying. I am enjoying being in an office environment again and feel part of the team.



Glenn and Brenda

Glen and Brenda both started volunteering with us in 2014, however from February 2020 they have both decided to stop their voluntary work with us to make the most of their retirement. During their time at Healthwatch Sandwell they have been enthusiastic and have been involved in a variety of roles including engagement events, surveys and Enter and Views visits.

 *Thankyou for all your continued hard work and commitment.* 

Our volunteers

Two of our volunteers are part of our Healthwatch Advisory Board.



Dave

I have lived and worked in Sandwell for many years and have a keen interest in health and social care issues facing local residents. I have worked in the community and voluntary sector for nearly 25 years and currently manage an advocacy organisation working throughout Sandwell. I am committed to supporting people in Sandwell to secure their rights, represent their interests and access services they need. I believe that local services are best shaped by involving people who use them in a spirit of true co-production.



Bill

Since a heart attack in 1999 and heart surgery in 2000, I have had a keen interest in the NHS. I found that patients were not represented very well on local committee's so I became a patient representative at the Primary Care Trust Meetings. I then joined our Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) and became involved with the Hospital Trust Board, the Local Authority Health Scrutiny and the Local Authority's Ambassadors Groups. I am now a member of Healthwatch Sandwell Advisory Board and also Chair the Sandwell Cardiac Group and Support Group.



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 at Healthwatch Sandwell

Website: <https://www.healthwatchsandwell.co.uk/>

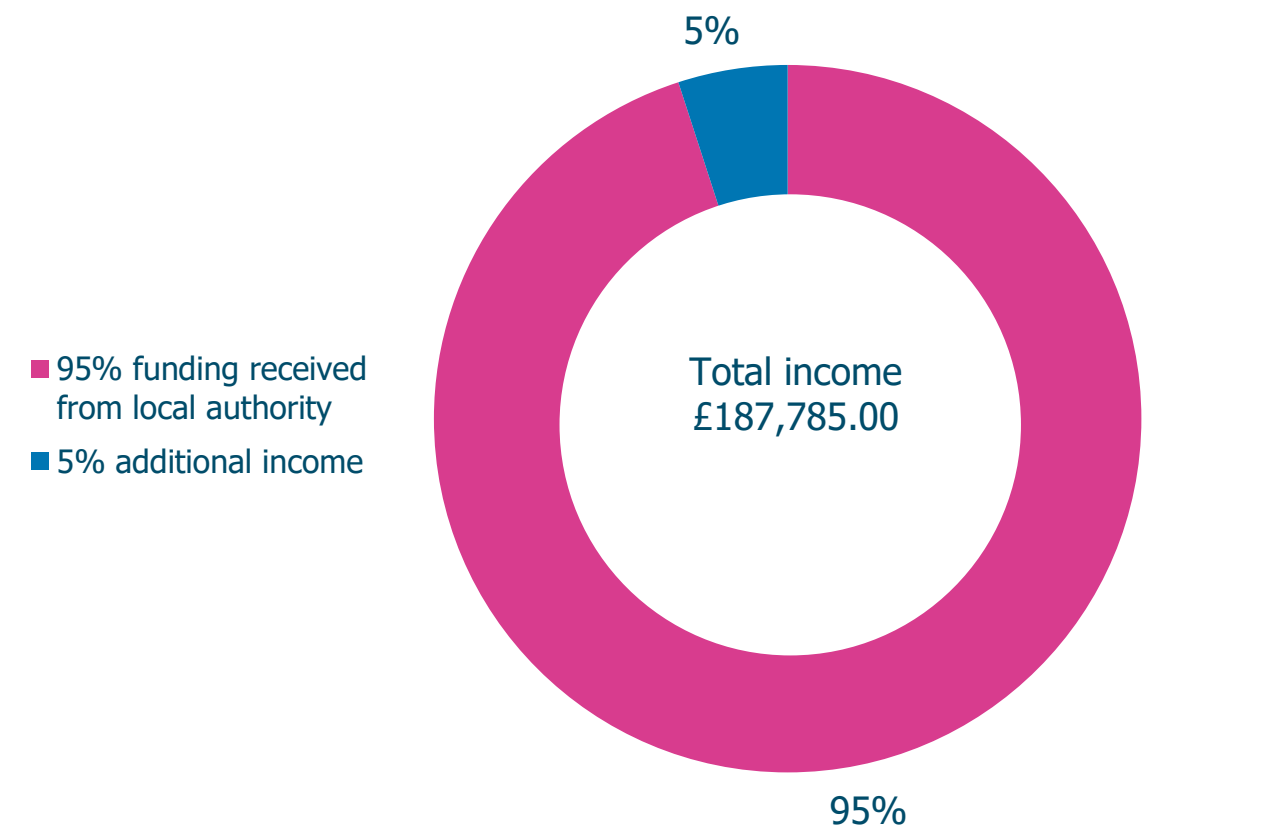
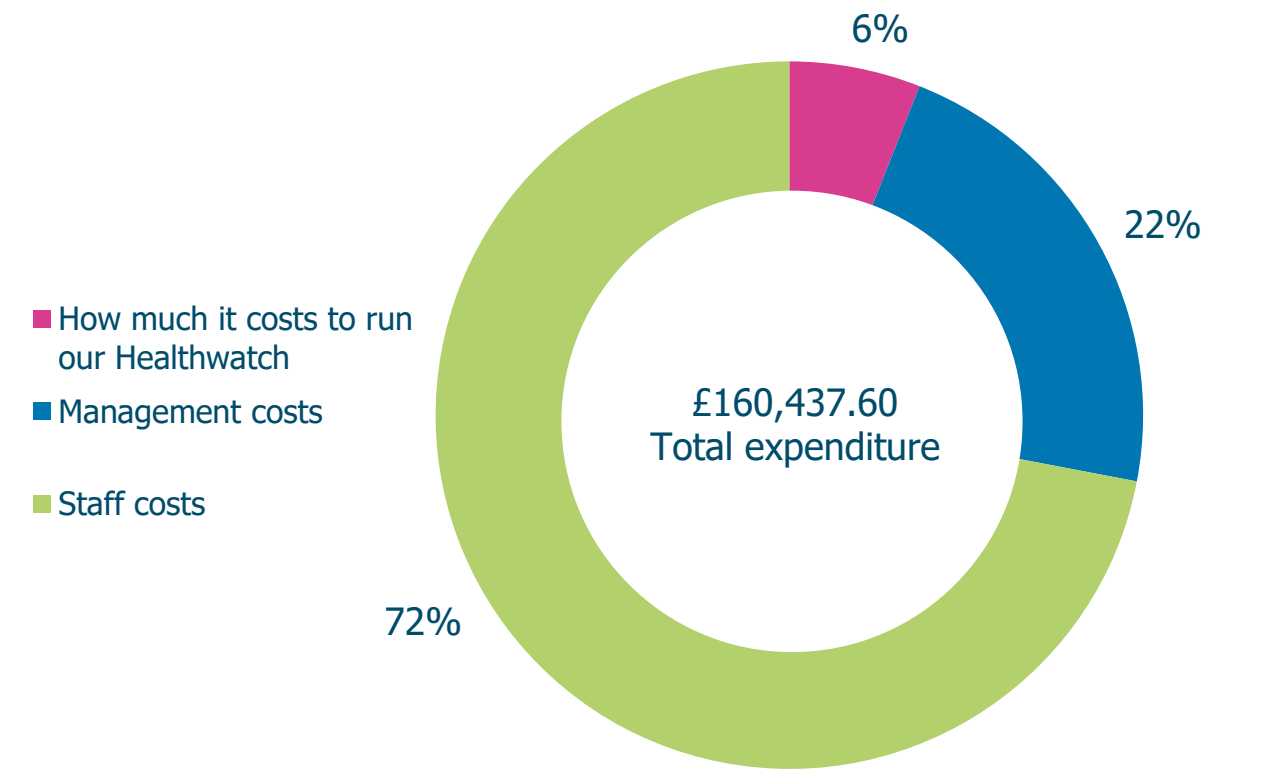
Telephone: 0121 569 7211

Email: info@healthwatchsandwell.co.uk

Finances



We are funded by our local authority under the Health and Social Care Act (2012). In 2019-20 we spent £160,437.60



Our plans for next year



Review of the Year

This year has seen “new beginnings” for Healthwatch Sandwell, with Engaging Communities Solutions – a Community Interest Company and one of the biggest providers of local Healthwatch, successfully gaining the contract. I have been in post since June 2019 and have been lucky to have retained an experienced and knowledgeable staff and volunteer team, who have been nothing but supportive during this transitional year. Two new members of staff joined us later in the year, along with four new volunteers, a compliment to the existing team which has helped to shape and enhance operations.

Over the past twelve months we have taken time to review the quality of the service and make the necessary changes to enhance what we can deliver. In addition we have developed relationships with key stakeholders and partners as well as local people. In the Autumn we were chosen by Healthwatch England to pilot the Quality Assessment Framework which enabled us to further understand where our work is effective and where more improvements can be made. This also informed Healthwatch England to identify how they can offer support and training to local Healthwatch.

Throughout the year we have successfully worked on a range of priorities including Support for Carers, Young Peoples Experiences of Health and Social Care Services and Reducing Inequalities for Rough Sleepers and Homeless people.

Plans for 2020/21

As we plough through the challenges that Coronavirus present us with, we look ahead with optimism in developing our work programme. This will require a degree of flexibility to allow us to be responsive to events in our health and social care systems, but the primary focus and key themes will undoubtedly be the implications and consequences that COVID-19 has had for local people in accessing health and social care services. In addition, we will also concentrate on digital transformation and how this has and can be used to ease the burden on primary care services.

Finally, on behalf of Healthwatch Sandwell I would like to say thank you to the NHS, key workers and all involved in the fight against COVID-19.



Alexia Farmer
Manager
Healthwatch Sandwell

Thank you

Thank you to everyone that is helping us put people at the heart of social care, including:

- Members of the public who shared their views and experience with us.
- All of our amazing staff and volunteers.
- The voluntary organisations that have contributed to our work.
- Commissioners and providers in Sandwell who have taken the views of the public on board.



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 Healthwatch Sandwell

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If you need this in an alternative format please contact us.

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