



**Annual Report 2024–2025**

# **Unlocking the power of people-driven care**

Healthwatch Sandwell

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"The impact that local Healthwatch have is vitally important. Healthwatch are empowering their communities to share their experiences. They're changing the health and care landscape and making sure that people's views are central to making care better and tackling health inequalities."

**Louise Ansari, Chief Executive, Healthwatch England**

# A message from our Chair

We are pleased to present our Annual Report for Healthwatch Sandwell, highlighting our incredible work over this past year. As the health and social care champions for the borough of Sandwell, we are dedicated to ensuring the needs of our residents are heard and prioritised in the design and delivery of local health and care services.

The last year has been extremely busy. Not only have we managed to achieve all of our work priorities, but we have also gone through a tender exercise and successfully retained the Healthwatch contract for a further 5 years.

We have seen the team deliver some great work, including the report documenting the struggles people face accessing specialist eye care, our report on understanding patient experiences of pharmacy first and reviewing the experiences of people accessing GP's using digital applications. One of the key priorities for 24/25 was to focus engagement and outreach activities with underrepresented groups throughout Sandwell, which has been approached using participatory methods, which has strengthened the reach of Healthwatch Sandwell, with the dedicated team of staff and volunteers working tirelessly throughout the borough to capture the experiences of their communities. This allowed us to work with communities who are frequently left out of health and care decision making. Working in partnership with local people, we created community-driven solutions to improve people's experience of health and care services.

This year, we have said farewell to our chair, Phil Griffin who was a strong leader of our advisory board, ensuring we advocated for patients, gather experience and make a difference to local people. I want to thank Phil for his great contribution to the team. With Phil's departure I took on the role of Interim Chair whilst we recruited for a permanent replacement and in January 2025, we were delighted to appoint Amritpal Randhawa as our new Chair. Amritpal is a retired, highly experienced nurse with 46 years of dedicated service within the NHS and brings a wealth of skills, knowledge and experience with her.



As I hand over the role of Chair of Healthwatch Sandwell to Amritpal, I want to thank the staff team, the advisory board and volunteers, members of the public, community organisations and health and care services that make their work possible. Our focus for the year ahead will be firmly on community outreach and engagement, partnership working and ensuring we maximise our impact as local Healthwatch to ensure we make the biggest impact for those using health and social care services.

**Liz Byrne.**

**Managing Director- Engaging Communities Solutions CIC /  
Interim Chair- Healthwatch Sandwell**

## About us

# Healthwatch Sandwell is your local health and social care champion.

We ensure that NHS leaders and decision-makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care. We can also help you find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.



### Our vision

To bring closer the day when everyone gets the care they need.



### Our mission

To make sure that people's experiences help make health and care better.



### Our values are:

**Equity:** We're compassionate and inclusive. We build strong connections and empower the communities we serve.

**Collaboration:** We build internal and external relationships. We communicate clearly and work with partners to amplify our influence.

**Impact:** We're ambitious about creating change for people and communities. We're accountable to those we serve and hold others to account.

**Independence:** Our agenda is driven by the public. We're a purposeful, critical friend to decision-makers.

**Truth:** We work with integrity and honesty, and we speak truth to power.

# Our year in numbers

We've supported more than 24 thousand people to have their say and get information about their care. We currently employ 5 staff and, our work is supported by 16 volunteers.

## Reaching out:



**3,192** people shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.

**24,117** people were reached through face to face, outreach and digital engagement.

## Championing your voice:



We published **20** reports about the improvements people would like to see in areas like Digital access, SEND support, Specialist Eye Care, and support for Foster Parents.

Our most popular report was The Patient Experience of Using Digital Applications, highlighting people's struggles in accessing appointments, reviewing medical records and additional medical testing.

## Statutory funding:



We're funded by our Local Authority. In 2024/25 we received £180,250 which is the same as last year.

# A year of making a difference

Over the year we've been out and about in the community listening to your stories, engaging with partners and working to improve care in Sandwell. Here are a few highlights.

## Spring

Continued to develop relationships, imbedding insight and working with partners to contribute to service improvements, relating to diabetes services in Sandwell. Including a focus on ethnic community needs.

Working with the Black Country Integrated Care Board, regarding accessibility and digital inclusion within health services. Empowering people with disabilities and sensory loss, ensuring patient voice and involvement.

## Summer

Seeing how health and social care services are integrated by talking to patients in step down facilities, to ensure they get the best care during temporary rehabilitation.

Collaborative partnership working with Sandwell Safeguarding Board, undertaking outreach in community spaces.

## Autumn

A community outreach led programme, working with GP surgeries to raise their profile and share good practice.

Raising the awareness of medication and advice that patients can access outside of GP and 111 service, known as Pharmacy First.

## Winter

Working with members of the visually impaired community to gather their views and experiences on methods of GP access and how they are communicated to.

We followed up on some Enter and View visits, from our Pharmacies programme. Visits were made to each Pharmacy to review recommendations.



# Co-Production Charter

Co - production is a way of working that involves people who use health and care services, carers and communities in equal partnership; and which engages groups of people at the earliest stages of service design, development and evaluation. Healthwatch Sandwell has supported Sandwell Council to launch Sandwell's first ever place-based 'Co-production Charter'.

The charter sets out a common and consistent approach to co-production for provider organisations across the borough; whilst also supporting professionals by sharing best practice and information. It incorporates a wide range of feedback from professionals and residents alike.

The charter was launched in January 2025 at an event attended by representatives from organisations, carers and individuals who have worked together over the past 12 months, to share a wealth of insight around their experiences and involvement.

## A collaborative network of local Healthwatch:

Benefits of the new approach ensure people with lived experience are able to 'have a say' about the service, care or support they receive. This often leads to more effective and useful provision that meets people's needs. The principles of co - production and engagement can be applied to many services.



Sandwell Council's Cabinet Member for Adult Services, Health and Wellbeing, Councillor Jackie Taylor, said:

***"Sandwell's place - based Co - production Charter firms up expectations around co - production by setting out agreed principles for involving people in decision making. It was insightful to talk to people with first - hand experience of using our services and carers about their involvement in this trailblazing work.***

***I'm really excited about the next steps in getting Sandwell's communities galvanised around embedding co - production in our everyday way of working, which will be supported by Healthwatch Sandwell."***

## Next Steps

Healthwatch Sandwell are working with the adult social care commissioning team to develop a collaborative partnership, which Healthwatch Sandwell will chair. The purpose of this partnership will have an arena where partners from health, social care and community and voluntary sector can come together to discuss issues that are important to Sandwell residents. We will facilitate the collaboration of all members and be involved with making suggestions for improvements to support health and care across Sandwell. Findings will be shared with strategic decision makers in a timely way.



Amritpal Randhawa, chair of Healthwatch Sandwell said

***“The Healthwatch team will ensure that people with lived experiences are able to have their say about care or support they receive. Hopefully, this will ensure more effective and useful provision that meet needs”***

To read more on the Co-Production Charter, use the link below.

[The Co Production Charter](#)



# Working together for change

Healthwatch links into Integrated Care Systems (ICS) by representing the public voice and helping the Black Country ICS understand local priorities. We do this through various means, including patient feedback, Enter and View work assessing services and intelligence gathering from service users and our individual programme of priority projects.

Within the Black Country ICS, there are four local Healthwatch organisations: Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall, and Wolverhampton. While we have not undertaken any joint work projects during 2024/2025, we continue to maintain strong links and regular communication with one another.

## A collaborative network of local Healthwatch:

As the Healthwatch organisations across the Black Country, we collaborated to submit a Freedom of Information (FoI) requests to the Black Country Integrated Care Board (ICB), seeking greater transparency on key areas of public interest. The ICB has provided a formal written response to the questions posed, which is now available on each of the respective Healthwatch websites for public access.



A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is in place to provide a framework that supports future agreements, partnerships, and collaborative projects. This MoU also helps to clarify mutual expectations and shared understandings.

We are committed to ensuring that the perspectives of all four Healthwatch organisations are represented, and we provide reciprocal feedback to support collective learning and a unified voice across the region.

As a collective, we regularly meet with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and participate in the bi-monthly Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) and Integrated Care Board (ICB) meetings alongside other Healthwatch representatives. In addition, the Black Country Healthwatch Managers meet as a group to share updates on what we are hearing from our local communities and to identify any emerging common themes across the region.

# Working together for change

Each of the Healthwatch Managers/Chief Officers takes a lead responsibility for attending a whole range of ICB meetings as follows:

Healthwatch Sandwell:

- Prevention and Personalisation Strategic Forum.
- Digital Inequalities Subgroup.
- Improving Access Strategic Group (sensory loss)
- PEoLC Oversight Group.

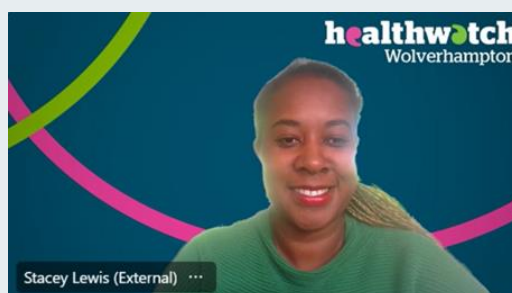


Healthwatch Walsall:

- Black Country Integrated Care Board in a participatory, non-voting capacity.
- Black Country System Quality & Oversight Committee.

Healthwatch Wolverhampton:

- Black Country Involvement Advisory & Assurance Group



Healthwatch Dudley:

- Black Country Local Dental Network
- Digital Inequalities
- Improving Access Strategic Group (sensory loss)

# Making a difference in the community

**We bring people's experiences to healthcare professionals and decision-makers, using their feedback to shape services and improve care over time.**

Here are some examples of our work in Sandwell this year:

## Creating empathy by bringing experiences to life

**Hearing personal experiences and their impact on people's lives helps services better understand the issues people face.**

Healthwatch Sandwell presented the findings from our report [Diabetes in Sandwell](#), to the Sandwell Hospital Diabetes and Endocrinology quality and improvement group. We have continued to work collaboratively within health and care services and with commissioners to help inform and influence improvements in Diabetes related services.

## Listening to young people

**HWS collaborated with the NHS Youth Worker Team in Sandwell and West Birmingham Trust to create a spotlight report highlighting the issues young people with long term conditions (diabetes).**

The report highlighted that young people supported by the service are those who are at risk of disengaging from services and failing to manage their health condition and transition successfully into adulthood. Youth Work referrals are via health care professionals with the young person's consent.

## Improving care over time

**We work behind the scenes with services to consistently raise issues and bring about change.**

We have continued to work collaboratively within health and care services and with commissioners to help inform and influence improvements in diabetes related services. We contributed to an Improvement Plan for the locally commissioned NHS National Diabetes Prevention Programme currently delivered across Sandwell by Living Well, Taking Control. The work involved the service provider, commissioners and Black Country Integrated Care Board Transformation and Improvement considering and exploring the findings of the [Diabetes in Sandwell](#) report and in particular the supplementary insight findings of cultural differences and needs within ethnic communities: [Conversations about diabetes in African Caribbean communities](#).

# Change Takes Time

In March 2023 we published a report [Accessibility – Are Health and Social Care Services meeting Information and communication needs.](#)

The findings within the report provided insight and detail to highlight that overall services are not sufficiently, or consistently, meeting the Accessible Information Standard. Therefore, Sandwell residents with disabilities, sensory loss, or impairments there is inequity in access.

The report complemented the national picture by providing a practical “toolkit” resource based on the experiences, voices and views of local people to help inform and improve accessibility in health and social care services.

Below are two impact statements highlighting our work and ongoing contributions.

*“NHS Black Country ICB Digital Inequalities In 2021 the Black Country ICB (Integrated Care Board) established a system wide Digital Inequalities sub-group of the ICS Digital Board to attempt to address some of the challenges faced by our local population in accessing services digitally.*

*Along with our ICS partners, the group works intensively with community and voluntary groups and has built a strong relationship with all four Healthwatch partners in the Black Country. Healthwatch Sandwell has contributed to both our Digital Inequalities subgroup and our Sensory Loss User and Strategic groups, whereby we are raising the profile of the Black Country’s vision and hearing loss population by recognising the importance of addressing the barriers that these vulnerable groups face when accessing healthcare services, which directly impact their experiences and health outcomes. The recent accessibility report findings published by Healthwatch Sandwell have also supported the work that the Black Country ICB continues to do with vision and hearing loss citizens. Healthwatch have actively listened to and supported local residents with disabilities and sensory loss, as well as families, carers, and other local community organisations with identifying and addressing key issues where services are failing to meet the needs of the local population. and provides guidance and suggestions on what could work to better meet needs.*

*We would like to thank Healthwatch Sandwell, especially Sophie Shuttlewood, who has actively played a part in supporting the Digital Inequalities programme, with her invaluable contributions, knowledge and passion. This support has been paramount to continue with the developments made by the digital inequalities team in exploring and addressing the barriers to accessing primary care-based healthcare services locally.”*

# Continued Impact

The Black Country Integrated Care Board (ICB) celebrates and sincerely thanks our Healthwatch partners for the vital role they play in championing the voices of local people. Their connectedness and trusted relationship with local neighbourhoods and communities is instrumental in helping to shape services that are inclusive, equitable, and responsive to community needs.

**“One powerful example is Healthwatch Sandwell’s work on accessible information standards. Their insight brought to light to barriers faced by people with communication needs – including service inequity due to variation in local contracts, inconsistent booking processes, and a lack of accessible formats. Their findings highlighted how such disparities disproportionately affect people with hearing loss, those who use British Sign Language, individuals with learning disabilities or autism, and those with multiple communication needs. Healthwatch Sandwell revealed how digital exclusion, interpreter shortages, limited-service quality, and a lack of awareness compound health inequalities.”**



Their work challenged providers to confront not only practical barriers – like the need to book BSL interpreter’s weeks in advance – but also wider issues of dignity, independence, and patient privacy.

These insights have been instrumental in catalysing a review of current arrangements and provider performance levels, which in turn has initiated the re-specification of the service provision, led by people with lived/living experience and trusted partners from the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) sector. We are proud to work alongside Healthwatch to uphold the voices of our communities and ensure services are inclusive, person-centred, and equitable for all.

Together, we are driving meaningful change to reduce health inequalities and embed true co-production at every level of care.

**Emma Sharman Digital Inclusion Lead Black Country ICB**  
**Ramjeet K Matharu Partnership Specialist Black Country ICB**



# Listening to your experiences

**Services can't improve if they don't know what's wrong. Your experiences shine a light on issues that may otherwise go unnoticed.**

This year, we've listened to feedback from all areas of our community. People's experiences of care help us know what's working and what isn't, so we can give feedback on services and help them improve.



# Listening to your experiences

## The Patient Experience of Using Digital Applications

**Sandwell has one of the lowest uptake in digital app use across the Black Country.**

We set out to understand the barriers people face when accessing NHS apps, we found **25%** of our respondents sharing they have unsuitable technology, preventing them from using digital apps.

### What did we do?

We listened to 208 patients about their experiences and frustrations of accessing NHS digital apps. We gave information to patients and shared free resources – which helped patients to understand how to navigate services online.

*“I use the NHS app but didn’t know that you can request advice on the app under contact your GP for advice, until now”*

### Key things we heard:

**53%**

of people in Sandwell use the NHS app.

**29%**

of people told us that they didn’t use apps because of either a lack of understanding or unwillingness to use digital apps

**15%**

of patients told us that they prefer to phone their GP surgery

Our work has highlighted that there are a number of factors that prevent patients using the NHS app and our report has made recommendations including the need for a person-centred approach for patients to choose their preferred methods of accessing GP services.

### What difference did this make?

In Sandwell, there are more patients accessing and using Primary Care by using NHS digital apps.

[The Patient Experience of Using Digital Apps](#)

# Listening to your experiences

## Conversations with Foster Carers in Sandwell

There are over 240 Local Authority Foster Carers, however there is a large shortfall in carers to support over 800 children and young people in need of a permanent or temporary foster carer.

Healthwatch Sandwell were invited to take part in a celebration of Foster Carers in Sandwell. We were given the opportunity to talk to them and staff about their experiences and some of the challenges that they face.

### Key things we heard:



Some foster carers have children with Special Education Needs, and it has been challenging to get an EHCP, there are often delays which result in children not receiving timely educational support and interventions.



Some foster carers who are waiting to foster a child require a medical check to ensure that they are suitable to foster. We were informed that there are long delays in accessing the check which has implications on fostering.

We have made several recommendations including:

- A single point of access to help streamline foster carer support
- Easier and timely access to Educational Health and Care Plans
- More appointments to be made available for prospective foster carers
- Better access to necessary medication for fostered children with additional needs

### What difference did this make?

Providers and commissioners are now more aware of the challenges prospective and current foster carers are experiencing.

[Conversations with Foster Carers in Sandwell 2024](#)

# Listening to your experiences

## Patient Experiences of Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) Provision in Sandwell

Last year during our targeted engagement with underrepresented groups in Sandwell we heard from parents and families about their children's experiences of accessing SEND provision and support.

This has highlighted some inequalities that children face within our communities.

### Key things we heard:



Parents told us their challenges with accessing services with dual diagnosis.



Some parents also told us that they had concerns in getting support in place before their child transitions to further education, such as moving to secondary school.

We became aware parents did not have a knowledge of where to go for further advice around support services available to them, their children and their families. We were able to signpost them to the relevant organisations.

### What difference did this make?

Parents are more aware of organisations in Sandwell that can support them with their challenges.

More families are now accessing the support they need.



### Next Steps

Further work in 2025/26 to understand and identify gaps and capacity within the system.



# Hearing from all communities

**We're here for all residents of Sandwell. That's why, over the past year, we've worked hard to reach out to those communities whose voices may go unheard.**

Every member of the community should have the chance to share their story and play a part in shaping services to meet their needs.

**This year, we have reached different communities in Sandwell by visiting:**

- Tipton Bangladeshi Community Centre
- Sandwell Asian Family Support Service
- Sandwell Visually Impaired





# Hearing from all communities

## Seeing The Problem: The Struggles of Accessing Specialist Eye Care in Sandwell

### Voices in Focus: Listening to Black and Asian Communities about eye care.

Healthwatch Sandwell spoke to a diverse range of people, including many Black and Asian residents about their experiences with specialist eye care. We looked at their journeys, from waiting times to treatment, to help ensure services meet the needs of all communities. Engagement took place at Sandwell Visually Impaired (SVI), Sandwell Asian Family Support Service (SAFS), Tipton Bangladeshi Community Centre, and Sandwell Outpatient Eye Treatment Centre.



**80%** of respondents said their vision worsened while waiting and  
**30%** of respondents reported significant deterioration while waiting.

### What we heard

*"losing my sight has sent me into years of deep depression which was very hard to come out of. Sandwell Visually Impaired Group (SVI) have been a brilliant and supportive organisation and community."*

*"It is hard when blind getting to treatment sites."*

As part of our commitment to accessibility, this year 25/26 we are conducting a project to understand how people with disabilities, sensory or sight impairments experience accessing services, and to identify where improvements can be made.

### What difference did this make?

We collated our findings from our engagement and shared them along with recommendations with local service leads.

Our findings also contributed to Healthwatch England's new report, [A strain on sight: Waiting for NHS specialist eye care](#).

[Seeing the Problem: Struggles Accessing Specialist Eye Care in Sandwell](#)

# Information and signposting

Whether it's finding an NHS dentist, making a complaint, or choosing a good care home for a loved one – you can count on us. This year 3,192 people have reached out to us for advice, support or help finding services.

**This year, we've helped people by:**

- Providing up-to-date information people can trust
- Helping people access the services they need
- Supporting people to look after their health
- Signposting people to additional support services



## Patient Story & How We Helped

### Supporting Access to Smoking Cessation Medication

A local resident faced challenges accessing prescribed smoking cessation medication through their GP surgery, despite following the correct referral route via Smokefree Sandwell. The individual was motivated to quit and successfully began the process using Varenicline (Champix) but encountered delays and confusion over who held prescribing responsibility.

Healthwatch Sandwell provided personal support, guidance and assistance throughout the process. We advised the resident on steps to take, including engaging the practice manager, contacting Time to Talk, and submitting formal concerns to the GP practice.

Through persistent support and communication, we helped facilitate direct communication between the resident and the practice. This resulted in a positive outcome: both the individual and their partner were granted prescriptions to continue their quit attempts.

### Outcome

- The individual received the necessary medication and support to continue their quit smoking journey.
- The case highlighted a broader issue around commissioning responsibilities and communication between services.
- Feedback was escalated to commissioners (ICB) to inform future improvements in stop smoking service pathways in Sandwell.





# Showcasing volunteer impact

**Our fantastic volunteers have given 105 hours to support our work. Thanks to their dedication to improving care, we can better understand what is working and what needs improving in our community.**

## **This year, our volunteers:**

- Visited communities to promote our work
- Collected experiences and supported their communities to share their views
- Carried out enter and view visits to local services to help them improve



# Showcasing volunteer impact

## At the heart of what we do

**From finding out what residents think to helping raise awareness, our volunteers have championed community concerns to improve care.**

"I began my volunteering journey with Healthwatch Sandwell in January 2024 and so far, the experience has really been nice. I have been opportune to support and undertake various administrative and data analytical tasks across various topics and issues of interest. I would say that key to my ability to delivering quality outputs on any assigned tasks is my Supervisor - Anita Andrews, whose warm support has been encouraging.

I am really proud to be a member of the Healthwatch Sandwell team helping to promote engagement, accountability and improved positive outcomes in the health and lives of the people. And I positively look forward to another year to continue supporting Healthwatch on the work they do"

**Ferdy**



"I started volunteering with Healthwatch Sandwell last year as an administrator which I enjoy. I have also been out in the community talking to people who are having problems concerning their health. I have enjoyed both roles and look forward to doing more with the team."

**Jean**



### Be part of the change.

If you've felt inspired by these stories, contact us today and find out how you can be part of the change.



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



0121 817 5078



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



# Finance and future priorities

We receive funding from our Local Authority under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to help us do our work.

## Our income and expenditure:

Income		Expenditure	
Annual income from Local Authority	£179,625	Expenditure on pay	£160,636
Additional income	£1,292	Non-pay expenditure	£35,133
		Office and management fee	£18,726
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£180,917</b>	<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>£214, 496</b>

## Additional income is broken down into:

- £1,000 received from Healthwatch England for work on a project
- £291.85 received from Healthwatch England for the National Conference Participation

# Finance and future priorities

## 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 also 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 work programme for 2025/26 will be around the inequalities and barriers faced by people in Sandwell.

Over the 2025/26 period, our focus will be on addressing the systemic inequalities and barriers that prevent access to health and social care.

## Our top three priorities for the next year are:

- Cancer pathways – to look at the impact of social deprivation and how it affects survival outcomes.
- Children's and Adolescent Mental Health and Neurodiversity.
- The first twelve months of the Midland Metropolitan University Hospital.



# Statutory statements

Healthwatch England, 2 Redman Place, Stratford, E20 1JQ

Healthwatch Sandwell uses the Healthwatch Trademark when undertaking our statutory activities as covered by the license agreement.

## The way we work

### **Involvement of volunteers and lay people in our governance and decision-making.**

Our Healthwatch Board consists of 5 members who work voluntarily 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 2024/25, the Board met 5 times and made decisions on matters such as our priority projects and commissioned work. We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities.

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

We use a wide range of approaches to ensure that as many people as possible can provide us with insight into their experience of using services.

During 2024/25, we have been available by phone and email, provided a web form on our website and through social media, and attended meetings of community groups and forums.

We ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. We will publish it on our website, through social media channels, newsletters and paper copy will be available for those who require it.

# Statutory statements

## Responses to recommendations

We had no providers who did not respond to requests for information or recommendations. There were no issues or recommendations escalated by us to the Healthwatch England Committee, so there were 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 shared with us.

For example, in our local authority area, we take information to Sandwell Health and Wellbeing Board, Sandwell Adults Safeguarding Board, Sandwell Scrutiny Board, Sandwell Health and Care Partnership Board.

We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in the Black Country Integrated Care System. For example, Healthwatch Sandwell work together with Healthwatch Walsall, Healthwatch Wolverhampton and Healthwatch Dudley by representing the Black Country at various meetings including Prevention and Personalisation Strategic Forum, Transformation, BC Integrated Care Board, Quality and Oversight Committee, Involvement and Advisory Assurance Group.

We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

## Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Sandwell is represented on the Sandwell Health and Wellbeing Board by Amritpal Randhawa ISAB Chair

During 2024/25, our representative has effectively carried out this role by presenting our reports to raise the profile of the patient story which is valuable in supporting quality improvements at strategic and operational levels .

Healthwatch Sandwell is represented on Black Country Integrated Care Partnerships and integrated Care Boards by Aileen Farrah on behalf of the Black County Healthwatch.

# Statutory statements

## Enter and view

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
Discharge Lounge, Acute Medical Unit 1 at Birmingham City Hospital, Dudley Road, Birmingham, B18 7QH	The Enter and View programme for 2024/25 focused on the patient experience at the discharges lounges, the aim of the visits was to find out: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• review the service provided by discharge lounge teams</li> <li>• about patient experiences of care during the stay at hospital</li> <li>• the effectiveness of discharge to home/care facility</li> <li>• whether the discharge was co-produced</li> </ul>	Wrote a report with recommendations – re visits in 2025 will assess compliance
Discharge Lounge, Newton 1 Ward at Sandwell General Hospital Hallam St, West Bromwich B71 4HJ	As above	Wrote a report with recommendations – re visits in 2025 will assess compliance
Pharmacy 3 Park Lane Wednesbury West Midlands WS10 9PR	Re-visits to community pharmacies to review implementation of recommendations made after the Enter and View visits in 2022/23.	Wrote a report with findings
Pharmacy 93 Shireland Road Smethwick B66 4QJ	As Above	Wrote a report with findings
Pharmacy 249 Halesowen Road Cradley Heath B64 6JD	As Above	Wrote a report with findings
Pharmacy Wednesbury Oak Road Tipton DY4 0BP	As Above	Wrote a report with findings
Pharmacy 75 Park Lane East Tipton DY4 8RP	As Above	Wrote a report with findings
Pharmacy 196 Causeway Green Road Oldbury B68 8LS	As Above	Wrote a report with findings



# Statutory statements

## 2024 – 2025 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
Digital Apps	The key challenge areas were identified as around abilities, skill levels, support needs and resources – all of which could present risks of digital exclusion from access and use of services. Providers more aware of the key challenges that are resulting in a lower uptake of the NHS app, these have been identified as around abilities, skill levels, support needs and resources all of which present a s a risk of digital exclusion from access and use of services.
Fostering	Key challenges were access to controlled medication, EHCPs, Foster Carer medical check up delays. We shared our report and recommendations and providers and commissioners are now more aware of the challenges prospective and current foster carers are experiencing.
SEND	Key challenges identified were, lack of support from GP services, the long wait for assessment for diagnosis, difficulties getting an EHCP, communication from CAMHS, and parents not knowing where to get support. Parents are more aware of organisations in Sandwell that can support them with their challenges. Further work in 2025/26 to understand and identify gaps and capacity within the system.
Eye Care	Key challenges were identified as long waits and impact on people's independence and mental health. Our findings were shared with service providers and contributed to the Healthwatch England report.



# ECS

## Engaging Communities Solutions CSR highlights

Engaging Communities Solutions CIC are the providers of seven local Healthwatch and an Advocacy provider. We are committed to developing our corporate social responsibility and this is a round up of our highlights for the year 2024/25

### Our employees



Across our business we have **21** full time employees. As we have a commitment to flexible working to support our employees with their lives outside of work we also have **10** employees who work less than the standard number of hours per week.

**50%** of our senior management are female and **78%** of our middle managers are female.

All our staff have access to an **employee assistance** scheme that provides mental wellbeing support.

We are a **real living wage** employer.

### Our community



Our employees were supported to give **27.5 hours** of volunteering time to their communities this year with paid time off to volunteer.

We provided the equivalent of **24 weeks** of meaningful work placements for school, college and university students.

Our staff raised **£304.50** for charities last year.

We supported **89** volunteers last year who gave **1163** hours of their time to our work.

### Our supply chain



During the last 12 months we have spent **£25,853** with other VCSE organisations.

### The environment



We have saved **4,914** car miles by using public transport this year.

Delivered by:  
Engaging Communities Solutions  
Meeting Point House  
Southwater Square  
Telford  
TF3 4HS



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



0800 470 1518



[contactus@weareecs.co.uk](mailto:contactus@weareecs.co.uk)

PO box 71, Pure Offices, Broadwell  
Road, Oldbury, West Midlands  
B69 4BY



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



0121 817 5078



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



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