



Speaking up for better care

Healthwatch Bradford and District annual
report 2025/26

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Acting Chief Executive
Chris McCann

“

The NHS plays a vital role in our lives, and we know it faces real challenges. Listening to people’s thoughts about their care is one of the best ways to improve services. Every comment, concern, and compliment helps health and care professionals see what works and what needs to change, so care can be safer and better for everyone.

“We want to say a heartfelt thanks to all the local people who have taken the time to share their experiences, and to the health and social care professionals who have listened and acted on that feedback. Your commitment has helped make a real difference for our community.”

A message from our Chair

I'm proud to present this annual report – the first produced by Healthwatch Bradford and District as an independent charity – and I'm so grateful to the team for all their work.

This time last year we were looking to the future full of optimism (and a touch of trepidation) as we set forward as a small charity tasked with representing the diverse and complex views of our District. Our patch includes one of the biggest cities in the country as well as towns as diverse as Bingley and Keighley. We know how important it is that the full range of needs are heard.

It is testament to the hard work and dedication of our staff that we can look back over the last twelve months with immense pride at what we have achieved. Far too often the only voices heard are those most able and most confident to challenge. That is why we at Healthwatch Bradford and District have reached out to those whose needs are greatest but are so often not heard in decision making. Working with our local Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities was challenging but hugely rewarding and has delivered tangible improvements.

For the first time we took the lead co-ordinating work across West Yorkshire with our Healthwatch colleagues. Working across the district, whilst focussing on areas experiencing the higher levels of deprivation and health inequalities we were able to use people's stories to effect meaningful change.

Learning from people's experiences of health and care is vital to ensure that best practice is built upon, and concerns are addressed. We know from our work over the years that an independent voice for communities is vital to achieve this. We are proud that Healthwatch Bradford and District works closely with services to make a difference, is able to ask the difficult questions and speak up fearlessly. In uncertain times we will continue to make sure we are there to ensure all voices in our area are heard where decisions are made and services are shaped. We value our independence and will continue to champion that within the system.

“Working with our local Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities was challenging but hugely rewarding and has delivered tangible improvements..”



Chair
Sarah Hutchinson

A message from our Chief Executive

As I reflect on our achievements of the last year, my overriding message is one of immense pride and gratitude to our staff, volunteers and Trustees. They have worked through a period of what can only be described as considerable turbulence, with more than a little uncertainty regarding the immediate future of Healthwatch, and beyond.

Whilst we were, of course, aware of the Dash Review it came as a shock to us all to hear of the government's decision to abolish both Healthwatch England, and local Healthwatch as part of the 10-year Health Plan. Alongside the changes to the function of the Integrated Care Boards and the inevitable job losses this has incurred we have needed to be more resilient, flexible and tenacious than ever before.

Despite these challenges, we have proudly remained committed to 'business as usual'.

We will continue to listen to our citizens and communities and amplify those voices where health and care decisions are made. We will continue to ensure that the vulnerable and those who are 'easy to ignore' have a voice and their health needs are never overlooked.

We will continue to be concerned with the level of health inequality citizens of our district face and will always strive to influence improvement. We will continue to work closely and effectively with our statutory and third sector partners to influence change and improvement in health and care provision.

Working in the health system, we are familiar with change and the challenges that can accompany it. This change can also create new possibilities.

We have the opportunity to reflect on our strengths and look for opportunities to use these in more creative ways than we may have previously done. We have the strength and reputation to remind the health and care system why an independent patient voice is essential.

Please enjoy the report, we enjoyed the work and look forward to the next year.



Helen Rushworth
Chief Executive



“We have the opportunity to reflect on our strengths and look for opportunities to use these in more creative ways than we may have previously done. We have the strength and reputation to remind the health and care system why an independent patient voice is essential.



About us

Healthwatch Bradford and District 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

In 2025/2026 we supported more than 2000 people to have their say and get information about their care. We employed 4 staff and our work was supported by 20 volunteers.



Reaching out:

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

2100 people came to us for clear advice and information on topics such as GP appointments and hospital access and transport.



Championing your voice:

We published 3 reports about the improvements people would like to see in areas like Pulmonary Rehabilitation, Gypsy Roma Traveller health screening and Self Management of Health.



Statutory funding:

We're funded by City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council. In 2025/26 we received £207,500, which is 7% more than 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 Bradford and District. Here are a few highlights:

INCLUSION

We collaborated with Radio 119, a BCB project supporting people with learning disabilities, to raise awareness of Healthwatch Bradford and District.



Following our previous work around end of life care we work with the Sue Ryder Hospice User Group hearing feedback from users and their families and influencing positive change.



INFLUENCE

Delivered a presentation to BTHFT Governors, Clinical Leads and Public Health colleagues re patient experience and the challenges of the recommendations of the 10-year plan.



Our Chief Executive helps shape Accident and Emergency services through the Excel programme at Bradford Teaching Hospital Foundation Trust.



IMPROVEMENT

We continue to work with Healthier Lives supporting improvements in provision of services for people with Learning Disabilities and Neurodiversity.



Staff presented a seminar on what good translation services look like in the NHS as part of National Information Week.



PARTNERSHIP

Through the local Citizen Voice Operational Group we continue to work with partners across the city amplifying user voice and keeping it at the forefront of decision making.



Contributed to the CBMDC internal review of 'voice organisations' with a specific focus on the need for an independent public voice re health and care services.





Working together in West Yorkshire

This year, we have continued to work with the other local Healthwatch in West Yorkshire to make sure people's voices influence decision-making at the West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board and its wider partnerships.

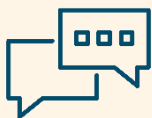
The West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) plans and funds NHS services across West Yorkshire. This year, we've worked with Healthwatch across West Yorkshire on the following:

Non-emergency patient transport:



When non-emergency patient transport criteria changed in April 2025, people were suddenly denied the journeys they needed to reach hospital appointments. We asked people to share their experiences and received feedback from 35 people. Eight of these people were in touch with their local Healthwatch for advice and support on how to appeal the decision, which helped them get transport to their appointment.

Informing the Integrated Care Board (ICB):



People across West Yorkshire who face unfair barriers to healthcare need to be heard. We gathered their feedback and brought it to the ICB. We identified issues and provided recommendations for funders and the services. These insights are now shaping how the ICB funds mental health services, supports children and young people's mental health, and tackles health inequalities across West Yorkshire, putting people at the heart of health and care decision-making.

Supported self-management of health:



People manage their own health every day but need better support. With West Yorkshire Voice, we spoke to 155 people across the region. Their experiences, combined with data from previous reports, revealed what helps and what hinders people from looking after their own health. Access to information, cost, time and transport are a few examples.

For people to successfully manage their own health, they need support to build knowledge, develop practical skills and gain confidence. The report shares tips from people who have found what works for them, and findings are directly fed into planning neighbourhood health services.

Working together in West Yorkshire



People's voices in neighbourhood health across West Yorkshire

Neighbourhood health means having health services closer to where people live, helping people manage their health and prevent avoidable hospital visits. We have worked closely with the West Yorkshire ICB to secure money to make sure people's voices are listened to in the planning of neighbourhood health.

We helped neighbourhood health teams listen to what people and communities think and want, so services are designed around what people actually need.

West Yorkshire Voice

West Yorkshire Voice is another way to get your voice heard in health and care, but at a West Yorkshire level. It is a network made up of individuals, groups, organisations and existing networks. It aims to influence decisions that are made about health and care in the West Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership.

The West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) funded Healthwatch to coordinate West Yorkshire Voice between July 2022 and March 2026. During this time, the network has grown to nearly 700 members and has helped bring people's voices into many areas of health and care.



"All of the different elements of West Yorkshire Voice have informed decisions about health and care support time and time again. Their views and experiences have made a difference in lots of ways: how Neurodiversity support is planned and run, how the 10-year plan will benefit the people of West Yorkshire, and giving a voice to people who are often not able to tell their story."

Colin Hurst, Insight, involvement, and consultation lead, WY ICB.

Healthwatch has built the network, which has now been handed over to the ICB to continue to involve people's voices.

To join or find out more, visit www.wypartnership.co.uk/get-involved/west-yorkshire-voice

We've also summarised some of our other outcomes achieved this year in the Statutory Statements section at the end of this report.

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 Bradford and District this year:



Improving care for people with learning disabilities

We help facilitate conversations with local communities and key partners.

We supported conversations with our local Learning Disability groups and the Yorkshire and Humber Patient Safety Research Collaboration to improve their Accessible for All information.



Improving Accessibility

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

We work across communities and service providers to ensure equality of access for all our citizens across our district. Wherever we see barriers to access we work with services to help with understanding issues and responsibilities under equalities legislation.

We have been pleased to see numerous changes over the year to make Bradford even more inclusive.



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 heard the voices of people representing a wide range of communities and life experiences. These voices help us know what's working and what isn't, so we can give feedback on services and help them improve.



Gypsy, Traveller and Roma Health Needs Assessment

City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council commissioned this health needs assessment to strengthen local understanding of how Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities experience screening, vaccination and wider health services, and what needs to change to reduce inequalities.

Partners recognise these communities as underserved and at risk of exclusion; however, local planning is constrained by limited visibility in routine data and inconsistent recording.

What did we do

We worked with partners to deliver a series of focus groups with the local Gypsy Roma and Traveller Communities. We also held a city wide conference led by members of the GRT community to key stakeholders working with groups in Bradford.



“Lack of trust in statutory services can reduce engagement.”



“Bad experiences can affect willingness to access any services in the future.”



Gypsy, Traveller and Roma Health Needs Assessment

Key things we heard:



Screening uptake may be higher than administrative data suggests but remains statistically invisible due to non-identification.

Roma and Gypsy and Traveller communities each have distinct cultural norms and cannot be treated as a single cohort.

Romani dialect and interpreting commissioning constraints contribute to reliance on informal interpretation networks.

This report demonstrated that inequalities affecting Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities are not solely the result of individual choice or awareness. They are shaped by structural barriers, historical mistrust, communication challenges and limitations in data visibility.

What difference did this make?

This Healthwatch Bradford and District report provides evidence as part of City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council Public Health's Health Needs Assessment. Our stakeholder event was instrumental in helping communities, statutory and voluntary organizations understand and work together more closely and effectively. We are already seeing tangible changes in the way demographic information is being recorded.

Pulmonary Rehabilitation in West Yorkshire: Understanding People's Views

Five local Healthwatch teams worked together to ask residents how they perceived the term Pulmonary Rehabilitation and what kind of name would make the service more appealing.

Engagement took place in community settings across Calderdale, Leeds, Kirklees, Bradford, and Wakefield, reaching around 250 participants.

Key things we heard:



Most people had never heard of PR and assumed it was heart-related or linked to drug/alcohol recovery.

After hearing what PR really is, people described it as useful, supportive, and life-improving.



“When you’re on your own all the time you lose confidence – this sounds like it could bring that back.”

What difference did this make?

Evidence produced by Healthwatch has directly informed the renaming of the pulmonary rehabilitation service. This work has informed the relaunch of the service which includes new branding and a promotional video.

Information gathered by Healthwatch across West Yorkshire will help to shape how the service is promoted and how people will be signposted in future.



Hearing from all communities

We're here for all residents of Bradford and District 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 by:

- Working directly with the Gypsy Traveller Roma communities building strong links with key groups.
- Targeted groups suffering socio – economic disadvantage running focus groups in our areas of highest need and disadvantage.
- Worked closely through the Bradford Anti Racism Charter with anchor organisations across Bradford ensuring the system is hearing from all communities.



Development of the Bradford and Craven Anti-Racist Charter

As part of our ongoing collaboration with many partners across the district including the Race Equality Network (REN), we contributed to the 25th Anniversary Gala Dinner and the development of the Bradford and Craven Anti-Racist Charter



What difference did this make?

We highlighted partnerships and achievements, celebrating 25 years of advancing race equality.

We also presented at the Health & Wellbeing Board to share stakeholder feedback

These activities strengthened partnerships, amplified the voices of diverse communities, and showcased Healthwatch's commitment to promoting equality, inclusion, and community engagement.

Gypsy, Traveller and Roma (GTR) stakeholder event

The day created a positive, safe space for partners to share insight, challenge assumptions, and contribute practical recommendations linked to improving access to screening, immunisation information, and wider health support for these seldom heard from communities.

What difference did this make?

Attendees commented on how enjoyable and engaging the event was because it was genuinely hands-on throughout, rather than a "sit and listen" session; the practical activities kept both hands and minds active and made a significant difference to how well people connected with and retained the information. Shared learning and understanding led to real improvement in the future delivery of services.



Information and signposting

When you're struggling to find an NHS dentist, looking for help about how to make a complaint, or need advice about a good care home for a loved one – we're your first port of call.

This year 490 people have reached out to us for advice, support or help finding services. These conversations also help us to understand where, and how, your care can be made better.

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



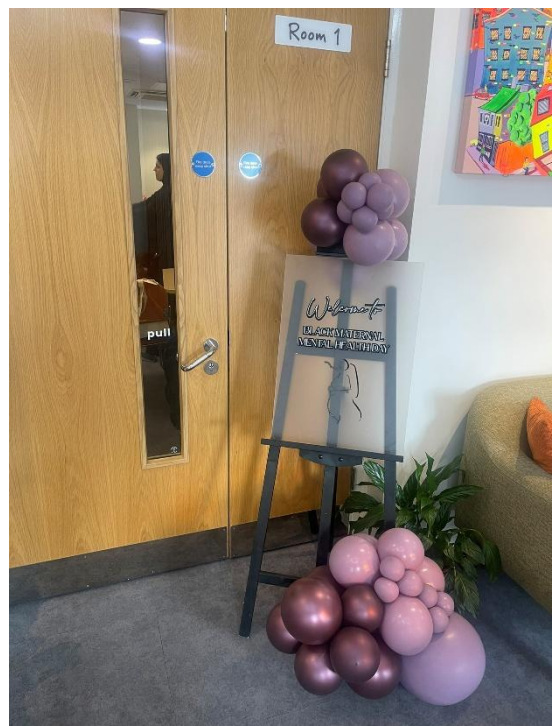
Improving Access to Respiratory Health

Thanks to feedback, service providers are looking at ways to simplify the process of arranging for early screening of respiratory health.

People with learning disabilities have been proven to have a significantly higher mortality rate.

We were able to highlight particular difficulties with the current approach which relies solely on contact via telephone. Learning disabled communities and organisations we work with have consistently raised this as a concern.

Services are now looking at how they may be able to approach this differently in the future.



Showcasing volunteer impact

Our fantastic volunteers offer invaluable support to 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
- Facilitated focus groups at stakeholder conferences.



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.



Anna

"I really enjoyed the chance to talk to people and hear their misconceptions around the Roma, Traveller and Gypsy communities.

Having experienced this today I think I will widen my job searches to include jobs that let me talk to people.."

"I was very nervous to begin with but everyone was really kind and supportive.

As well as developing new skills I learnt things about the Gypsy and Traveller communities that I had never had any experience of."



Vlad

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.healthwatchbradford.co.uk



0300 5610 987



info@healthwatchbradford.co.uk



Finance and future priorities

We receive funding from City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to help us do our work.

Our income and expenditure:

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from Government	£207,500	Expenditure on pay	£151,000
Additional income	£9,980	Non-pay expenditure	£25,500
		Office and management fee	£40,980
Total income	£217,480	Total Expenditure	£217,480

Additional income is broken down into:

- £4,980 received from West Yorkshire ICB for work on Pulmonary Rehab.
- £5,000 received from the West Yorkshire ICB for general involvement

Integrated Care System (ICS) funding:

Healthwatch across West Yorkshire receive funding from our Integrated Care System (ICS) to support new areas of collaborative work at this level, including:

Purpose of ICS funding	Amount
General Involvement	£5000
Pulmonary Rehabilitation Project	£4980

Finance and future priorities

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 top three priorities for the next year are:

1. The impact of the shift to digital in Health and Social Care.
2. Access to preventative care.
3. Integrated neighbourhood health.



Statutory statements

Healthwatch Bradford and District. Cardigan House, Ferncliffe Road, Bingley
BD16 2TA

Healthwatch Bradford and District uses the Healthwatch Trademark when undertaking our statutory activities as covered by the licence agreement.

The way we work

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

Our Healthwatch Board consists of 3 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 2025/26, the Board met 4 times and made decisions on matters such as budgeting, staffing structures, organisational priorities. 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 2025/26, 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 our social media channels and our monthly email newsletter.



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 Access to Care Programme Board, Health Scrutiny Committee, Bradford Safeguarding Adults Board

We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in West Yorkshire ICB. For example, we make voices heard at the System Oversight and Assurance Group, System Quality group and Partnership Board amongst others. We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

Healthwatch representatives


Healthwatch Bradford and District is represented on the Bradford Health and Wellbeing Board by Helen Rushworth Chief Executive Officer.

During 2025/26, our representative has effectively carried out this role by sharing insights about feedback received by Healthwatch about local health and care services and providing information and insights ensuring improving health inequalities remains the focus of policy decisions.

Healthwatch Bradford is a member of the Bradford District and Craven Health and care Partnership Board, the decision making mechanism for local health and care provision..

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