The value of listening

Healthwatch Kensington & Chelsea, Healthwatch Westminster Annual Report 2023-2024



Healthwatch RBKC is your local health and social care champion

We make sure local decision makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care.

Stay in touch with us and

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rbkc 58 Harrow Road, W2 5ES

healthwetch

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"Over the last year, local Healthwatch have shown what happens when people speak up about their care, and services listen. They are helping the NHS unlock the power of people's views and experiences, especially those facing the most serious health inequalities."

Louise Ansari, Chief Executive at Healthwatch England



Message from our Chair

A message from Minna Korjonen, Chair of Kensington & Chelsea advisory board and Interim Chair of Westminster advisory board.



Over the past year, our Healthwatch teams in Westminster and Kensington & Chelsea have worked hard to establish themselves as a key point of contact for residents who want to talk about their experiences – and challenges – with local health and social care services.

It hasn't been an easy year for many in our community. With the rising cost of living, struggles to access primary care, lengthening waiting lists and ongoing recovery from Covid-19, we know that things have been tough.

As Healthwatch, our role is to help connect those who are struggling with the services that can support them. We must also make sure that the voices of all our communities are heard loud and clear by the people making decisions about how services are run.

We're proud of how we've been able to achieve this. Our advice and signposting service has been the first point of contact for hundreds of local residents throughout the year, making sure that people can receive the care they're entitled to or get the right support when something goes wrong.

Meanwhile, our research has focused on people who are least likely to have their voices heard through other channels. This includes people from global majority backgrounds, people experiencing homelessness, those who don't speak English, and young people.

We have also been at the heart of the local response to some of the most important health and social care developments in both boroughs. This has included the planned changes to how acute mental health services are delivered, and proposals to change the way that residents access same-day GP appointments. I'm proud to say that Healthwatch has been able to speak up on behalf of local people on both these issues and will continue to do so.

Healthwatch is most effective when we are able to draw on a rich range of views and perspectives, not only during our engagement but also when setting our priorities. With this in mind, strengthening the diversity of our advisory boards and volunteering programme has been another priority over the past year, and we have welcomed several new members on board. This means we are able to benefit from an even greater wealth of lived experience and professional expertise.

I hope that you will read this report and be inspired to help us in improving health services and challenging health inequalities. If you do, why not look at the volunteering information on page 16, or consider applying to join one of our advisory boards? Our Healthwatch services are founded on a principle of inclusion, and we welcome everyone who lives or works locally to find a way to be involved.

Looking ahead to 24-25, I see a tremendous amount of opportunity to drive change. We will continue to provide support, to hear your voices, and to speak up about the needs of local people. We hope you'll join us.

About us

Healthwatch Kensington & Chelsea and Healthwatch Westminster are the local health and social care champions for people living in the biborough. We are jointly commissioned services that work closely together to improve services across both boroughs. Our shared annual report reflects this close working relationship.

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

Our vision

Local people can all get the health and care they need, and are at the heart of health and care services.

Our mission

To understand the needs, experiences and concerns of local residents, act as the community champion and amplify voices to influence decision makers to make health and care better for everyone.

Our values are:

• Independence: We work independently from the local authority and local health services, and our priorities are governed by the needs and wishes of local people.

• Collaboration: Patients, residents, community partners and system partners are included in our work at every stage.

• Inclusion: We work actively to include voices from people who have not been listened to previously, and to ensure our work reflects the diversity of our borough.







Westminster Year in review

Reaching out:

259 people

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

212 people

came to us for clear advice and information about topics such as mental health and the cost-of-living crisis.

Making a difference to care:

We published

11 reports

Our most popular report was

Community perspectives on the impact of the closure of acute mental health services at the Gordon Hospital

which highlighted the concerns people have about changes to acute mental health care.

Health and social care that works for you:

We're lucky to have

3

outstanding volunteers who gave up **2 days** of their time each month to make care better for our community.

We're funded by our local authority. In 2023 - 24 we received

£154,095

We currently employ

6 staff

who help us carry out our work.







Kensington & Chelsea Year in review

Reaching out:

188 people

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

143 people

came to us for clear advice and information about topics such as mental health and the cost-of-living crisis.

Making a difference to care:

We published

11 reports

Our most popular report was

The mental health needs of young people in Westminster, Kensington & Chelsea

which highlighted the struggles young people face accessing mental health services.

Health and social care that works for you:

We're lucky to have

11

outstanding volunteers who gave up their time each month to make care better for our community.

We're funded by our local authority. In 2023 - 24 we received

£150,105

We currently employ

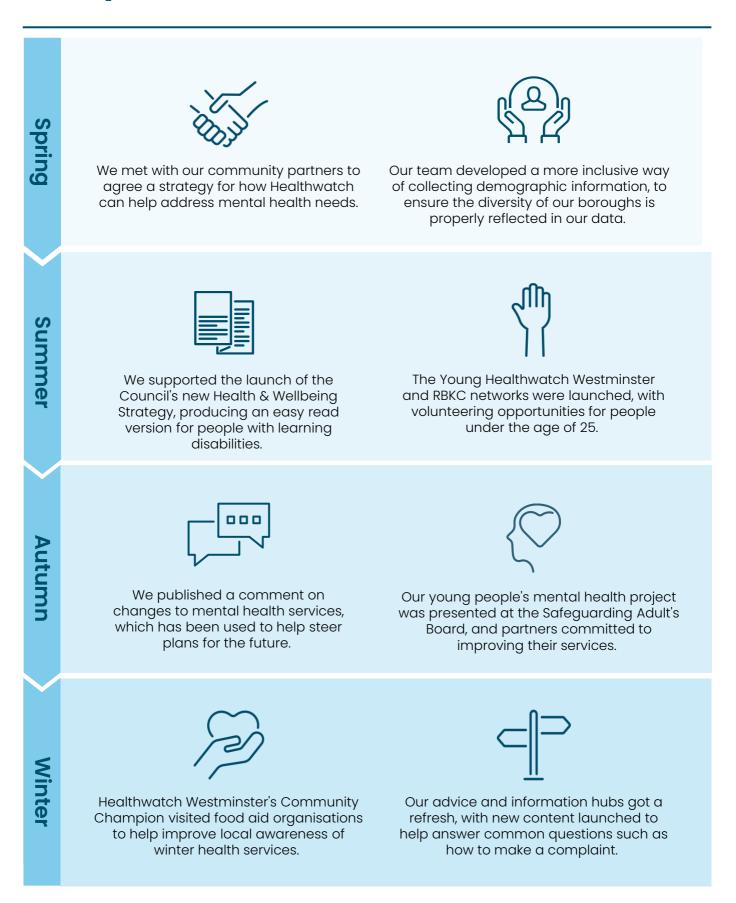
5 staff

who help us carry out our work.





How we've made a difference this year



Really Shocked nat Centre Pain department Treated me. Green Jacq low Was your operience here TODA exi We are collecting feedback on potient experience Chelseal Westminster Hospital - speak to us leave a postit Note! Had Alle opticatusly So. 13/01/24 EXCELLENT My Experier VERY NERY Today at the hespited 6000 ! Was Not So Good, THANK YOU didn't Feel heaves

Acting on your experiences

Everything Healthwatch does is based on the needs of our local communities. We set our priorities based on what you tell us is most important and share your views with local service providers so they can improve. This year our work has focused on core issues such as mental health and access to primary care.

Embedding patient voice into the Gordon Hospital consultation and scrutiny process

Through a patient experience report, support for individuals to speak at the scrutiny committee, and a consultation event open to our volunteers and wider network, Healthwatch Westminster and RBKC ensured that patient voice was at the heart of conversations to change the way local mental health services are delivered.

We'll continue to talk to the mental health trust and local ICS about how their plans reflect the concerns patients raised. They've committed to considering our concerns and addressing these as part of their proposals.

What we did and what patients told the Trust

As part of this project, we:

- Supported two people with lived experience to speak at the council's scrutiny committee.
- Ensured the council's response to proposals was informed by these speakers' personal insights and our report summarising the views of 133 other local people.
- Hosted an online event for our network to feed into the consultation.
- Ensured that Healthwatch's response to the consultation and the feedback we gathered from residents was incorporated into the trust's future planning.

What patients told us

- There cannot be an 'either/or' approach to providing acute in-patient services and community mental health services. Both are important and both need to be provided for.
- More consideration needs to be given about how proposed services would provide appropriate and joined up care for people experiencing homelessness.
- Community-based alternatives are not always enough to address the needs of people experiencing serious mental health challenges.



"Through its work, Healthwatch has helped us understand a diverse range of stakeholder perspectives and championed residents' needs. Further, the insights from its report have helped us triangulate our local intelligence."

David Bello, Director of Health Partnerships and Mental Health.

Improving the mental health experiences of young people (aged 18-25) in the Bi-borough

Last year, we published findings of the experiences young people shared about their mental health needs and experiences. Thanks to this insight, we have received commitments from partners within the Safeguarding Adults Executive Board, Westminster Employment Forum, young mental health services, and local authority to expand their support for enhancing young people's access to and experiences with mental health services.

90% of respondents shared they had experienced feeling lonely or isolated in the last 12 months, which suggests more needs to be done to improve the availability of mental health and wellbeing support in institutions, particularly for managing academic stress and career pressures.

Up to 80%

of respondents said they either talk to friends, family, or seek online support for mental health and wellbeing support, with an average rating of **72.2%**.

What did you tell us about mental health experiences?

- Less than half of respondents reported seeking support from primary mental health services, institutions, community organisations, and emergency and crisis lines.
- GPs and local First Contact Mental Health Practitioners were found to be less helpful with an average rating of 44%. While opinion was mixed, some respondents found CBT sessions useful in lowering panic attacks and anxiety, while others believed doctors pushed medications more than they helped.

We recommended that mental health service providers, partners, and local authorities tackle these issues, and highlighted the need to better integrating wrap-around well-being support and social prescribing into mental health services. We also recommended increasing access to mental healthcare services, addressing mental health stigma in schools and increasing support for young people not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEETs).

What difference did this make?

- By sharing our findings, we helped partners and community organisations gain a better knowledge of mental health issues and contributed to the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, which focuses on improving the wellbeing of young people.
- The project has encouraged more young people to discuss their concerns regarding their mental health and mental health services issues, thus creating a talking culture around what is often stigmatised. This has also influenced our Young Healthwatch network group, which consists of young people, to facilitate continuous engagement in monitoring existing and emerging priorities.
- We've also had an impact on how digital mental health services for young people, like Kooth and Qwell, can be convenient, sustainable, and inclusive. In addition, we have suggested strategies for the Central North-West London Young People's Adult Service to incorporate and maintain young people's voices in decision-making process.

Three ways we have made a difference in the community

Throughout our work we gather information about health inequalities by speaking to people whose experiences aren't often heard.

Creating empathy by bringing experiences to life

Conversations with residents provide a rich source of information about what's working well in our boroughs and what needs to be done better.

In December, we recruited a Community Champion to carry out visits to local food aid organisations and speak to people about staying well over winter. As a result, we were able to collect views about vaccine hesitancy, public health messaging and how people prefer to access health services. Feedback from patients has been shared with the ICS, in the form of a resident insight report as well as direct testimonials. This feedback will inform future winter planning.

Getting services to involve the public

Services need to understand the benefits of involving local people to help improve care for everyone.

In June 2023, Healthwatch Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea engaged with diverse community organisations to enable residents with language support needs to share their experiences using translation services in primary care. As a result, we have had an impact on how the London Ambulance Service can effectively respond to patients with language support needs who require urgent or emergency care. This service includes phone translation services, on-site communication with frontline clinicians, and pre-hospital communication guides.

Working with system leaders to improve care

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

In February 2024, several residents contacted us to raise concerns about proposals to implement new 'same-day access hubs'. We wrote to the ICS to query about what changes were being planned, and how patients were being involved in the process. As a result of pressure from Healthwatch and other patient advocacy groups, the ICS have delayed their plans and committed to further engagement with local people. This work will be ongoing over the coming years, and we will continue to champion the importance of public involvement.

There's a summary of other outcomes we've achieved this year in the Statutory Statements section at the end of this report.











Hearing from all communities

Being out and about amongst our local communities is central to how Healthwatch Westminster and Healthwatch Kensington & Chelsea work. Everyone on our team spends time engaging with patients and residents, supported by our volunteers.

This year we have reached different communities by:

- Connecting with diverse community organisations such as Strengthening Kensington Youth Families, the Delgarno Trust and Dadihiye Somali Development Organisation.
- Spending time at CAB drop-in sessions and food aid events, to meet with people who are more likely to be experiencing health inequalities.
- Supporting the people we meet to speak up about their own needs, for instance by attending local committees or co-production events.

Transforming food aid organisations in Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea

In June 2023, Healthwatch Westminster, Kensington reviewed food resources and food aid organisations in meeting the needs of diverse communities, as well as the effectiveness of the food provision strategy.

The key demographics using the food aid organisations were people aged 50-79, facing long-term health conditions, high financial insecurity from white or other backgrounds. Residents generally remarked that, while they were appreciative of the food aid organisations, the lack of funding meant that communities with diverse health, dietary, and cultural needs were not met. We have demanded that service providers, local authorities, and community organisations prioritise meeting the needs of vulnerable communities, effectively collaborate to pool resources, and promote food diversity.

What difference did this make?

- The Abbey Centre Food Pantry continues to meet residents' acute needs and has partnered with UNFOLD to deliver refugee meals in the community, financed by the Healthy Communities Project.
- Westminster Chapel Food Bank is partnering with the Salvation Army to meet the needs of disadvantaged groups. Local authorities are increasing the diversity of food support for vulnerable people, such as children during the Easter Holidays, which is part of the Holiday Activities and Food Provision Programme. It is expected that around 4,700 healthy meals will be given in Westminster.
- The Hafs Academy food voucher scheme partners with local merchants to meet the needs of diverse groups. It is available to the residents of Church Street, Edgware Road, and Little Venice Ward.

Creating maternity services that provide equal care for all

Maternity services in Westminster and RBKC have committed to improving the quality and consistency of information that is delivered to patients.

Our March 2024 maternity report found that the lack of consistency in information shared with new parents after giving birth was one of the factors driving inequality in the experience of giving birth. In particular, women asked for more information about how to look after themselves after giving birth – including mental health services – and more tailored support for breastfeeding.

Throughout the project, we focused on engaging with diverse groups of women who were more likely to face inequalities in maternity care. This included people who do not speak English and women from refugee backgrounds.

We shared their feedback with service leaders who are committed to providing a more equal standard of care for women after giving birth. Local maternity services are also drawing up plans to take forward our other recommendations.

These include:

- Listening culture should be embedded into maternity services across North West London.
- Maternity services should continue to offer high levels of interpretation and translation, and maintain vigilance in ensuring all types of information are available.
- Clear information about postnatal services should be shared with all patients after giving birth.



Advice and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch is here for you. Developing our advice and information service has been a key priority for our Healthwatch teams over the past year, and we now have detailed advice hubs on both websites. We also have a free telephone advice line, information inbox, and a schedule of engagement for providing advice and signposting at community events.

This year we've helped people by:

- Providing up-to-date information people can trust
- Helping people access the services they need
- Helping people understand and navigate the NHS complaints process
- Giving people more information about where to access support in the community

Issues with GP registration: informing Westminster residents of their rights

Making patients aware of their rights under the NHS Constitution is an important part of the work that we do. C and his wife, who immigrated to the UK in 2022, were struggling to understand how to navigate the GP registration process. By turning to us for support, they were made aware of their rights under the NHS Constitution and were able to make informed decisions about their care.

C is a resident of Westminster who moved to the UK in 2022. When he and his wife first arrived in the UK, they were unaware of the fact that they should register with a GP, and instead relied on private healthcare. They decided to transition to an NHS GP after two years and tried registering to a local practice that was accepting new patients.

Despite falling within their catchment area, they were denied registration. C did not understand why this was the case, so he emailed us asking why their registration was denied and what he could do to remedy this. We made him aware of his rights under the NHS Constitution and advised him to reach out to GP Practice Manager to clarify the reason why he was denied registration. We also explained to him the potential reasons why he might have been denied registration (i.e., the surgery in question mainly caters to local university students).

After clarifying the GP registration process with him, C was satisfied with our conversation and the overall response:

"Thank you! All very clear and I have all the information I need."

Supporting a resident to access wheelchair equipment in Kensington & Chelsea

This Case highlights the importance of effective communication and timely intervention in healthcare provision. By ensuring that all parties were aligned and responsive, we were able to resolve the resident's issues and help them get the equipment they needed to support their wellbeing. Through persistent communication and coordination, they finally received the correct cushions and backrest. We were able to address her immediate physically needs but the whole experience had deeply affected the individual's mental well-being.

Healthwatch Kensington & Chelsea received an email compliant from a local resident with concerns about their wheelchair and cushion provision. Despite multiple attempts to resolve the issue through the relevant healthcare providers, they experienced significant delays and miscommunication, severely affecting their physical and mental health.

After reviewing the detailed timeline, Healthwatch contacted key healthcare providers involved in their case. We advocated for their needs and verified the correct specifications for the required equipment. Through sending relevant emails and making phone calls, we successfully resolved the situation, and the resident was able to receive their equipment.



Volunteering

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

This year our volunteers:

- · Visited communities to promote their local Healthwatch and what we have to offer
- · Collected experiences and supported their communities to share their views
- Carried out Enter and View visits to local services to help them improve

As a Healthwatch volunteer for over six years, I have served my local community as a Community Champion and Enter & View representative for Healthwatch Westminster, I have visited health and social care settings to gather user feedback. And experiences.

As a Community Champion, I shared winter wellness information at local food banks, ensuring clear and empathetic communication.

I have also supported Enter & View visits to observe service quality and gather user insights. I am excited to continue promoting wellness and supporting Healthwatch in Gathering community feedback on NHS Services.



Anna Velkova Healthwatch Westminster

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I have been volunteering with Healthwatch Kensington & Chelsea for about seven months now. So far, I have been attending the regular monthly meetings, which keep me updated on current projects and allow me to connect with other volunteers.

Due to my work schedule, I am unable to participate in person for engagements and Enter & View visits. However, I still contribute by reviewing quality accounts and look forward to researching and scoping Healthwatch projects. I am pleased that there are various ways to volunteer and contribute to Healthwatch Kensington and Chelsea.



Sabrina Racine Healthwatch RBKC

Do you feel inspired?



We are always on the lookout for new volunteers, so please get in touch today.

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www.healthwatchwestminster.org.uk

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Finance and future priorities

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

Healthwatch Kensington & Chelsea income and expenditure

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from Government	£150,105	Expenditure on pay	£81,375
Additional income	£1,667	Non-pay expenditure	£8,836
		Office and management fees	£33,027
Total income	£151,772	Total expenditure	£123,238

Healthwatch Westminster income and expenditure

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from Government	£154,095	Expenditure on pay	£88,530
Additional income	£336	Non-pay expenditure	£8,415
		Office and management fees	£35,042
Total income	£154,431	Total expenditure	£131,987

Additional income is broken down by:

- £1,667 received from Healthwatch England for our health inequalities project focusing on maternity services across North West London.
- £336 received from the local ICS to support their winter planning campaign.

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 top three priorities for the next year are:

- 1. Supporting local residents to address concerns about changes to primary care. This will include looking at proposed changes to same day access for GP appointments, and changes to services offered by local pharmacies.
- 2. Tackling health inequalities by working with communities who have told us they need further support. Project areas include mental health needs of people experiencing homelessness and digital exclusion being faced by older adults.
- 3. Strengthening our strategic links by working closely with local boards and committees.



Statutory statements

The Advocacy Project holds the contract for Healthwatch Westminster and Healthwatch Kensington & Chelsea. Registered office: The Advocacy Project c/o SEEDs Hub, Empire Way, Wembley HA9 0RJ

Healthwatch Westminster and Healthwatch Kensington & Chelsea use 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

The Advocacy Project Board of Trustees has overall oversight of our work. We also have two local advisory boards, made up of local experts who are responsible for setting our priorities and regularly reviewing progress. We currently have six advisory board members per borough.

Throughout 2023/24, the Westminster Advisory Board met six times and the Kensington & Chelsea Advisory Board met five times. They made decisions on matters such as which priorities we should be focusing on, and which communities to target through our work.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities. This includes using data and insights provided by the public to decide which issues we should focus on. We also run coproduction sessions where members of the public and partners can comment on our 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 2023/24, we have been available by phone, and email, provided a web form on our website and through social media, as well as attending 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 and share through our newsletter and social media channels. We will also have a printed copy available for residents to review.

Responses to recommendations

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

In our local authority area, for example, we take information to local scrutiny committees, the Safeguarding Adults Board, the Westminster Vulnerable Health and Communities Committee and the RBKC Adults and Health Select Committee.

We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in the North West London Integrated Care System. For example, we worked with the ICS on a commissioned piece of work to support their winter planning work, and shared feedback about vaccine hesitancy and the response to public health messaging. We also wrote to the ICS with our concerns about changes to same-day GP access. We also share our data with Healthwatch England and the CQC to help address health and care issues at a national level.

Enter and view

This year, we made seven Enter and View visits. This consisted of three visits to GP practices in Westminster, three visits to GP practices in RBKC and one visit to Chelsea and Westminster Hospital. Following these visits, we made **31** recommendations to improve patient experience.

Location	Reason for visit	What we did as a result
GP Practice – Barlby Surgery – Kensington & Chelsea	Scheduled enter & view visit – part of an ongoing programme	Wrote a report with six recommendations to improve accessibility – we are continuing to follow up with the provider to ensure changes are made.
GP Practice – Elgin Clinic - Westminster	As above	Wrote a report with four recommendations to improve accessibility. The practice manager has responded with details of how they plan to address these.
GP Practice - Dr Ramasamy and Partners - Kensington & Chelsea	As above	As above
GP Practice – Grand Union Health Centre – Westminster	As above	Wrote a report with eight recommendations to improve accessibility. The practice manager has responded with details of how they plan to address these.
GP Practice – West Ten GPs – Kensington & Cheslea	As above	Wrote a report with six recommendations to improve accessibility – we are continuing to follow up with the provider to ensure changes are made.
GP Practice – Dr Hickey's Surgery – Westminster	As above	Wrote a report with three recommendations to improve accessibility – we are continuing to follow up with the provider to ensure changes are made.
Chelsea and Westminster Hospital – Eye clinic, plastics clinic and two out- patient waiting areas	Enter & View collaboration requested by Chelsea and Westminster Hospital following previous patient feedback.	Report in progress – recommendations will be made to improve experience for patients in out- patient areas at the hospital.

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Kensington & Chelsea and Healthwatch Westminster are represented on the Joint Health and Wellbeing Board by Cleo Chalk, Healthwatch Service Manager. During 2023/24 our representative has effectively carried out this role by attending board meetings and supporting the launch of the health and wellbeing strategy.

2023 – 2024 Outcomes

The table below lists outcomes from 23/24 which have not been included elsewhere in the report.

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
Best foot forwards: community perspectives of podiatry services	From our podiatry report, we have received confirmation from the service that they will follow our recommendations to change appointment times and offer targeted support for patients who are older, digitally excluded or living with disabilities.
Engagement with local residents (Westminster and RBKC) about their experiences with emergency care/ London Ambulance Service	Our findings from this work fed directly into the new London Ambulance Service strategy, and in particular our findings informed changes to the way people can escalate concerns.
Developing our communications channels – improving content and reach of our website and developing social media channels	Our website reach has increased substantially, with 34,000 views on the RBKC website and 19,000 views on the Westminster website across 23-24. People accessing the website can view information about changes to local services, as well as advice and guidance about different types of care. We are also now active on Instagram, X and Facebook.

healthwatch

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