



Annual Report 2024–2025

Unlocking the power of people-driven care

Healthwatch Sheffield



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"The feedback local Healthwatch hear in their communities and share with us at Healthwatch England is invaluable, building a picture of what it's like to use health and care services nationwide.

Local people's experiences help us understand where we – and decision makers – must focus, and highlight issues that might otherwise go unnoticed. We can then make recommendations that will change care for the better, both locally and across the nation."

Louise Ansari, Chief Executive, Healthwatch England

Foreword

Written by Mark Gamsu, member of our Strategic Advisory Group



I should not be writing this foreword. Until a few weeks ago Judy Robinson our then Chair would have been writing it... and doing a better job than me. Sadly Judy died while on holiday.

Judy has been Chair of Healthwatch Sheffield for 9 years. Some of us have known her for longer.

I first met Judy when she was Chair of INVOLVE which was a bit like a regional Council of Voluntary Service in the days when the Government had regional offices.

Subsequently she was also chair of NAVCA (the National Council for Voluntary and Community Associations) - there is a consistency here.

She was a passionate and determined advocate for the voluntary and community world, and brought her experience and sophisticated understanding of our sector to challenge and collaborate with the statutory sector - particularly the NHS.

She was clear about the need to address inequality and honest about the sector's strengths and weaknesses.

We were lucky to have Judy represent us at both the Sheffield Health and Wellbeing Board and the Sheffield Health and Care Partnership.

Having said this, she was clear that all work including that of Healthwatch had to be built on the experience, voice and opinions of the public - particularly those communities who are easy to ignore or not listened to.

So, this leads me on to this year's annual report.



**Judy Robinson, Healthwatch Sheffield
Chair from 2016 to 2025**

Foreword

First – it is so important to recognise the tremendous achievement of Healthwatch Sheffield in securing a 10 year contract with Sheffield City Council. This is not just about being good at bidding. This is about being seen to be an important and relevant contributor to the wellbeing of the city – challenging and helping organisations to be better through bringing the lived experience of the public to the table in an evidence-based way.

This success was only possible thanks to the hard work of Lucy Davies our Chief Officer and the whole of the Healthwatch team, both paid and voluntary.

It is so important at a time of instability – the NHS is being reorganised again – that there are points of stability and connection. Healthwatch is one of those points.

This annual report is full of practical examples of work where we have made a real difference. Some of the things that stand out for me are:

- Our work with communities and people in the city who are too easy to ignore. This includes people from the African Caribbean Community, young people in homeless accommodation, women who have experienced domestic abuse, refugees and asylum seekers ... and more.
- Through this work we have explored issues that include Long Covid, sexual health services, pulmonary rehabilitation and telephone access.
- The way we try to work in collaboration with others – this includes the wider voluntary sector, other local Healthwatch and statutory bodies such as the NHS Integrated Care Boards.

There is one more important thing I would like to say about Judy – she was good company! It was always fun to have coffee with her – clear about her opinions and sharing with her information about what we each knew was going on (ok, gossip!) All of this was fun, but it's an essential characteristic to have in this complicated world.

We will miss you Judy...
thank you.



Judy (third from left) with some of our staff team, marking the launch of our new contract in 2025

About us

Healthwatch Sheffield 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

A city where people have an equal chance of a healthy life



Our goals

- Find out what matters to local people
- Influence and improve health and care services
- Involve those who often aren't heard
- Help make Sheffield a healthy city to live in



Our year in numbers

We've supported more than **26,518** people to have their say and get information about their care. We currently employ **7** staff, and our work is supported by **26** volunteers.

Reaching out:



1,533 people shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.

4,985 people came to us for clear advice and information on topics such as **finding an NHS dentist** and **making a complaint about a service**.

We also reached around **20,000** people with information about Long Covid that we co-designed with communities.

Championing your voice:



We published **7** focused reports about the improvements people would like to see in areas like **Long Covid services**, **support for older people** and **support for survivors of domestic abuse**.

We also published **6** of our regular '**what have we been hearing?**' briefings, to share people's views with services in a timely way.

Statutory funding:



We're funded by **Sheffield City Council**.

In 2024/25 we received **£224,976** 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 Sheffield. Here are a few highlights.

Spring

After we highlighted concerns about out of date and incorrect phone numbers, Sheffield Teaching Hospitals did work to improve public information about their phone systems, and added an extra number for people to use.



We were commissioned by the hospital to talk to people about why they didn't attend group sessions of pulmonary rehabilitation after referral. This work will help the hospital improve access and develop the service.



Summer

We shared what we'd heard from older people of Asian and African Caribbean heritage. They told us what was needed to create more inclusive and accessible services for Sheffield's ethnically diverse communities.

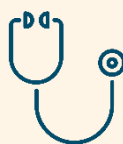


We secured a new 10 year contract from Sheffield City Council; this enables us to keep building trusted relationships with people and communities, working together for better health & care services in our city.



Autumn

As part of a Healthwatch England project, we worked with SAYiT to hear from 73 transgender and non-binary people about their experiences of GP services. These views will inform a national report.



Our round table discussion on the Future of Social Care gave our community partners the opportunity to meet with Abtissam Mohammed MP. They gave their views on how the government can improve social care.



Winter

We presented our work on Long Covid to the local Health and Wellbeing Board. They committed to actions to support people with long covid in areas such as employment.



In partnership with Women's Aid, our Your Voice Counts briefing shared the views of women who have experienced domestic abuse. This has been shared to influence local plans such as the work on women's health hubs.



Working together for change

We work in partnership with others, including neighbouring Healthwatch, to ensure people in Sheffield can have a say in how local services are shaped

Whether decisions are made at a South Yorkshire level, or here in Sheffield, we work with others to support the involvement of local people in health and social care services.

A collaborative network of local Healthwatch:



Healthwatch in South Yorkshire meet regularly; we share knowledge to identify any county-wide issues where collaboration would help us to improve services for local people.

A representative from our network attends South Yorkshire-wide meetings on issues such as dentistry and mental health; this ensures that the needs and experiences of local people are considered in the planning and delivery of health and social care services at a regional level.

The big conversation:



After our previous work to highlight the inequalities faced by deaf and hard of hearing communities, NHS South Yorkshire has [taken action](#) to improve care for deaf people using health services. They have also developed the [BSL information](#) section on their website.

Along with other local Healthwatch, we contributed to the development of the NHS [South Yorkshire Insights Bank](#) – a place for organisations to share what they've heard from the public. This digital platform is designed to make community voices count in shaping local health and care services.

Influencing change locally:



We run a monthly public forum for the Health and Care Partnership in Sheffield. Staff from health and social care services visit the forum to get views on work taking place to improve health and social care. Hearing from the group gives a patient and public perspective to help shape work.

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 Sheffield 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.

In February we hosted a [roundtable discussion](#) with Gill Furniss MP, and invited our Community Partners to take part. The discussion focused on long term health conditions; Gill heard directly from our partners about how these impact on people and communities in Sheffield, with a particular focus on the inequity of experience for different groups.

Supporting services to involve the public



By involving local people, services help improve care for everyone.

We were contacted by members of patient groups in the Porter Valley Primary Care Network (PCN) who were looking at ways to increase patient involvement in individual GP surgeries, and in the work of the network. Our team worked with patients and staff to plan and host an event, bringing people together to share ideas about strengthening patient voice. This helped support the formation of more patient groups in the network, with a renewed focus on the importance of patient involvement across the PCN.

Improving care over time



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

Over the years, we've reported on the experiences of people with sensory loss and disabilities who have not had their communication needs met by the NHS. This year, prompted by our feedback, Sheffield Teaching Hospitals chose visual impairment as one of their quality objectives. This started with a focus on communication, but after involving local groups they widened the work to include staff training, and the purchase of aids and equipment to improve the experiences of patients with visual impairments.

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

Sexual health services for young people in homeless accommodation

This year we continued to champion better access to services for this group

Through our Speak Up Grants [in 2023](#), we heard from young people at Sheffield Foyer about their experiences of sexual health services. Young people said they needed services close by to get screened for sexually transmitted infections; when asked what would stop them from going to a sexual health clinic, the top answer was 'lack of transport'. This year we wanted to find out if things had improved.

What did we do?

- Following the 2023 report, we met with staff from health services to create an action plan – our recommendations included more 'roving' services, more drop ins, and better access to self-testing kits
- In [Autumn 2024](#) we re-visited the hostels to find out what had changed – we spoke to 26 young people, and 15 members of staff. We also spoke to services to get updates on their work.

Key things we heard in 2024:



50% of young people had accessed a self-testing kit – but not everyone knew this was an option

Only 1 young person said transport was the main barrier to using services – a significant improvement from 2023

Hostel staff wanted **more training** in sexual health so they could provide better support to residents

There was an increased **need for information** in other languages



What difference did this make?

Since we began this work in 2023, services have worked to improve accessibility by introducing:

- More drop in clinics in different locations around the city
- More translated resources – both printed and online
- Better access to self-test kits, including at the hostels
- A mobile sexual health van delivering STI screenings and advice
- Sexual health nurses visiting more community settings



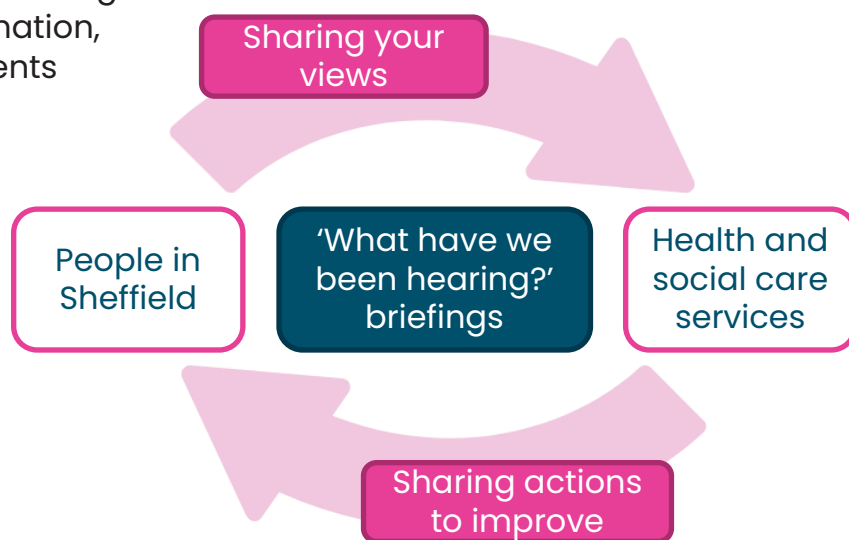
Listening to your experiences

What have we been hearing?

Our bi-monthly briefings are a snapshot of the feedback shared with us – they cover a wide range of topics, helping services to understand the experiences of people using health and care services in the city

This year we looked at 2,375 pieces of feedback to help us identify themes and issues around areas such as GP practices, Continuing Healthcare (CHC), homecare, patient transport, prescriptions and pharmacy. We heard positive examples of good quality care, such as the kindness and professionalism of staff, as well as challenges such as long waits for care, inadequate information, and lack of reasonable adjustments for people with disabilities.

We also worked with services to help improve the way we share this information, and the way that they respond. Each briefing has an update from services on actions they are taking to address the issues raised, making it easier for the public to see the difference their feedback makes.



What difference did this make?

Throughout the year, our briefings have included responses from the NHS about a number of issues; these describe actions being taken to improve the experiences of patients.

For example, in response to feedback about wheelchairs not being available for patients, Sheffield Teaching Hospitals have committed to creating a wheelchair hub, and are identifying funding for this. This will make it easier for patients to find a wheelchair when they are visiting the hospital, and improve access to the site for people with mobility issues.



“There were no wheelchairs available when we got to hospital and had to walk a long way to get to the ECG unit which was very painful for me”

Hearing from all communities

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

Addressing health inequity is a priority for our work – this means we focus more of our time and resource hearing from the people who experience the poorest health outcomes in Sheffield.

This year, we have reached different communities by:

- Spending more time in areas of the city where income is lower and healthy life expectancy shorter – for example Tinsley – as part of our priority 'A Neighbourhood Focus on Health and Care'
- Prioritising speaking with people who were most likely to go unheard when the NHS were consulting on their 10 year plan– for example people living in care homes
- Partnership working with community groups across the city, which helps us to hear from the people they support. Our 'Your Voice Counts' briefings have helped highlight the experience of these groups



Hearing from all communities

Refugees and asylum seekers in Sheffield

We heard how people newly arrived in Sheffield were having challenges getting the healthcare they need

We published our [‘Your Voice Counts’](#) briefing, capturing what we’d heard from refugees and asylum seekers through our community outreach work. This included challenges understanding how to access health services, language barriers in getting health information, and the impact of low incomes on staying healthy.

During further visits to asylum seeker accommodation, we heard about difficulties with a new digital platform for booking GP appointments – we shared this feedback with Primary Care Sheffield who had introduced the system. We also heard about difficulties accessing the minor ailments prescribing service, which we escalated to the South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB).

What difference did this make?

- Our briefing was used by Public Health to help inform the Sheffield Health Needs Assessment for Asylum seekers and Refugees
- The ICB took action to address the difficulties with the minor ailments scheme, ensuring that refugees and asylum seekers had access to medications such as pain relief and cream for athletes foot
- Primary Care Sheffield responded with actions they were taking to help people access appointments in different ways

Your rights to healthcare for teens

We heard how teenagers were not always clear on their rights when it comes to accessing healthcare

To help, we set up a mini-project to focus on this, with the support of university students on placement with our team. They spoke to young people and to healthcare providers to identify the key information needed to support young people understand their rights.

What difference did this make?

We produced [Your Health, Your Rights: A Teen’s Guide](#) – this information resource put together information about different services available, and young people’s rights to treatment and confidentiality. It helped answer questions for teens such as ‘when can you see a doctor alone?’ and ‘when will they speak to your parents?’

Information and signposting

Whether it's finding an NHS dentist, making a complaint, or choosing a good care home for a relative – you can count on us.

This year **739 people** have reached out to us by phone, by email, or in person for advice, support or help finding services.

We've helped people by:

- Providing up-to-date information people can trust, to support them with their health and social care needs
- Making our information more accessible. This includes adding an easy read section to our website, starting a [weekly in-person drop in](#), and taking our information out to community spaces and events
- Signposting people to additional support services, and helping them access the services they need



Accessible information for patients with visual impairments

Sarah got in touch following a breast screening, where she was told it wasn't possible to get her results in large print

Sarah had been happy with the information she was given at her appointment, but was upset when she was told the hospital couldn't provide her screening results in large print.

With her permission we shared this feedback with the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). As a result, Sarah received a call from the hospital to apologise and assure her she would receive her results in the format she needed.



“Being told I couldn't get my results in large print made me feel isolated and upset.”

Getting a Covid booster Vaccine

Peter contacted us for help to get the right booster vaccine for his wife

Val had previously experienced significant side effects from the Covid vaccine, so wanted to get a specific brand for her booster.

Their GP couldn't provide the brand, or give them information on where it was available. Peter made calls to NHS 119, NHS England and numerous pharmacies but nobody had been able to help – they were both left feeling frustrated and worried.

We contacted South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) who were able to give us information on vaccine deliveries, and after a number of phone calls we located a pharmacy that had the vaccine in stock.

Because we've had previous enquiries about vaccines, we know how to raise these issues in the ICB, making it easier for us to help people like Peter and Val.



“It was such a relief to be able to get the vaccine we needed.”

Our volunteers

Our fantastic volunteers have given **nearly 800 hours** to support our work this year. 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 community events and supported people to share their views
- Carried out research and data analysis to help us focus on the key issues for local residents
- Shared their views to help shape health and care plans for the city, and to help shape our work
- Attended boards and committees in the city to put the voice of Sheffield people at the centre of discussions



Our volunteers

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.

Volunteers get involved in a wide range of roles at Healthwatch to support our work – including going out and about speaking to local residents, and behind the scenes carrying out research and analysis.

Hannah started volunteering with us in December and has helped with lots of different aspects of our recent projects.

"I started volunteering with Healthwatch to build confidence and help to make a difference in Sheffield communities.

I have been able to help with office based background research, going to events in Healthwatch project areas to talk to local residents and professionals, and writing up our findings from these events.

I have really enjoyed everything I've been involved with so far but my favourite part is the people at Healthwatch who make you feel so welcome and encouraged.

I am really pleased that I feel like I've been able to use some of my Human Geography degree skills when doing some of the research and I am proud that I have been able to build a lot of confidence."



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.healthwatchsheffield.co.uk



0114 253 6688



info@healthwatchsheffield.co.uk

Statutory statements

Healthwatch Sheffield is hosted by Voluntary Action Sheffield, The Circle, 33 Rockingham Lane, Sheffield, S1 4FW

Healthwatch Sheffield 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.

During this year, our Healthwatch Sheffield Strategic Advisory Group (SAG) consisted of 7 members who worked on a voluntary basis to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny of our activities. The group ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our local community. Through 2024-25 the group met 7 times.



We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities; in January and February 2023 we consulted widely to decide what we should focus on for the next 2 years – we are now coming to the end of that workplan, and at our contract launch event in February 2025 we talked to our partners and members of the public about what we should focus on next. We will also be looking at all the feedback we have had in the last 2 years to help us make this decision.

How we hear from people

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 partner with community organisations to help us hear from an even wider group of people across Sheffield, and we carry out different focussed pieces of work to hear about specific services, or the experiences of specific communities. 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 make printed copies available.

Statutory statements

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.



Locally: In our local authority area we take information to the Sheffield Health and Wellbeing Board, the Sheffield Health and Care Partnership Board, and the Health Scrutiny sub-committee. These meetings bring together decision-makers and partners across the NHS, the City Council, the voluntary sector and others. We also regularly attend meetings and committees that focus on specific services, for example sexual health, dentistry, or mental health services, to share local people's insights on care.

Regionally: We take insight and experiences to decision-makers in the South Yorkshire Integrated Care System, for example the South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board and the South Yorkshire Integrated Care Partnership, where we share representation across the four Healthwatch in South Yorkshire.

Nationally: We share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level. They use national trends to push for improvements by NHS England and the government.

Formal referrals

This year, we used our formal powers to make a referral to the Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee on the subject of Continuing Healthcare (CHC). After we had heard about poor experiences of CHC, we asked the committee to look at the way this was working in our area; after an initial discussion it has been added to the committee workplan for 2025-26.



Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Sheffield was represented on the Sheffield Health and Wellbeing Board by Judy Robinson (our Chair). During 2023-24 Judy carried out this role effectively by sharing key intelligence with the Board from our work with local people, giving an update at every public meeting.



Healthwatch Sheffield is represented on South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board by Lucy Davies (our Chief Officer) and the South Yorkshire Integrated Care Partnership by Fran Joel (Chief Officer at Healthwatch Doncaster).

Finance

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

Our income and expenditure:

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from Sheffield City Council	£224,976	Expenditure on pay	£207,156
Additional income	£61,865	Non-pay expenditure	£9,788
		Office and management fee	£58,072
Total income	£286,841	Total Expenditure	£275,016

Additional income is broken down into:

- £1,083 from Sheffield City Council Public Health for taking part in the Collaboration for Health group
- £1,000 from Healthwatch England for work on a project around trans and non-binary people's experiences at their GP
- £800 from Healthwatch England for facilitating Healthwatch Engagement Leads Network meetings
- £5,096 from the University of Sheffield for hosting student placements
- £20,000 from Sheffield Teaching Hospitals for a project on Pulmonary Rehabilitation (actually received in 2023-24)
- £6,000 ICB grant for engagement work (actually received in 2023-24)
- £27,886 from the Sheffield Health & Care Partnership for facilitating and supporting public and patient involvement

Next steps

Next steps:

We will start work to deliver the commitments in our new contract, and involve our partners in refreshing our strategy.



This will describe how we will hear from Sheffield's diverse communities, and support services to involve people in shaping health and social care services across the city.

Addressing health inequalities will remain a priority – we will focus more of our time on hearing from those with the poorest health outcomes.

Three key areas of focus for next year:

1. Continue our Neighbourhood focus on health and care, with projects to support better access to health information in Richmond Park and Wybourn – delivered in partnership with Great Places Housing Association
2. Through our Speak Up microgrants scheme, we will work in partnership with community organisations to hear the voices of children and young people
3. Establish our Feedback Volunteer role, enabling us to spend more time in health and social care settings to hear feedback about people's care

Our team

We would like to thank those who worked as part of our team this year.

Our staff

Lucy Davies Chief Officer
Laura Cook Policy & Evidence Coordinator
Holly Robson Operational Support Officer
Anna Harman Information & Advice Officer
Winnie Lutakome Community Outreach Lead
Husam Hassan Community Outreach Lead
Sarah Fowler Community Outreach Lead
Mina Clarke Project Support

Our Strategic Advisory Group

Judy Robinson Chair
Trish Edney
Lucy Fox
Tim Furness
Mark Gamsu
Janet Harris
Verni Tannam

And all the rest of our volunteer team – thank you.

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