

# Speaking up for better care

Healthwatch Sheffield 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

There is no getting around it – like all local Healthwatch, Healthwatch Sheffield has had a challenging year.

This is because we have had to get on with continuing to provide a meaningful service to people in Sheffield at the same time as working in an environment where the government is trying to abolish us! So first of all I must thank the staff team at Healthwatch Sheffield – they have all done their best to continue to deliver this important service.

It said a great deal for our relationships and impact that the Sheffield Health and Well Being Board has been united in their belief that an independent public voice must continue to exist locally, whether or not the Government's proposals become legislation.

Our annual report describes a range of actions that we have taken this year, all building on the experience and active participation of members of the public.

I won't run through the whole list here – however we have continued to work at a number of different levels:

## **National**

We have supported statutory agencies and influenced national programmes and policies; this has included contributing to the work of the CQC (Care Quality Commission) when they visited the city, bringing people's lived experience to the Casey Review of adult social care, and providing views to the parliamentary health select committee on palliative care.

## **Neighbourhood**

In the city we have continued to undertake neighbourhood-based work which is consistent with one of the ambitions of the NHS ten year plan – we have prioritised areas that experience disadvantage (for example completing an extensive piece of work in Tinsley) – and making recommendations to providers and commissioners.

## **Targeted work**

We have been able to continue our fantastic Speak Up programme helping to amplify the voices and experiences of groups that don't always get heard. This year we provided grants to organisations working with children and young people.

My thanks again to the staff team, the volunteers, the Strategic Advisory Group and our allies in the voluntary and statutory sectors.



**Interim Chair**  
Mark Gamsu

# 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

In 2025/2026 we supported more than 6,800 people to have their say and get information about their care. We employ 6 staff and our work was supported by 28 volunteers.



## Reaching out:

**2,676** people shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.

**4,191** people came to us for clear advice and information on topics such as mental health support and finding an NHS dentist.



## Championing your voice:

We published **9** reports and briefings about a range of topics, including young carers' experiences of accessing support, what help is needed for people living with long term conditions, and a neighbourhood view of health and care in Tinsley.

This also includes our regular intelligence briefings, where we share what we're hearing from the public with local services to enable them to act on your feedback.



## Statutory funding:

We're funded by Sheffield City Council. In 2025/26 we received **£240,000**, which is 6.7% 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

We published blogs to encourage meaningful involvement in Patient Participation Groups (PPGs), and advised PPG members in the Porter Valley Primary Care Network about working more effectively and collaboratively.

We gave evidence in a roundtable with members of the parliamentary health select committee on palliative and end-of-life care, using our findings to shape the committees understanding of what needs to improve.

## Summer

The Lord Mayor handed out awards to our Community Partners and 'Healthwatch Heroes', to celebrate contributions to patient and public involvement at our Community Voices event.

When the Care Quality Commission (CQC) assessed Sheffield City Council, we ran a session for people in the lived experience CQC focus group, to ensure that everyone could fully share their views.

## Autumn

South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) shared useful delivery information to improve experiences of receiving continence supplies, and advised what to do if things go wrong, after our feedback highlighted issues.

The Casey Commission visited Sheffield to gather evidence to inform recommendations on the national reform of Adult Social Care. We shared local people's views at the visit and submitted further evidence directly to the commission.

## Winter

We told Sheffield Teaching Hospitals that people with long term conditions felt their concerns weren't fully acknowledged at A&E. This influenced their decision to set up a task and finish group with patient representation to drive improvements.

We hosted 3 medical students on social placements. They looked into young people's views on cosmetic procedures and the impact of social media on self-esteem.

# Working together for change

We've worked in partnership with others, including other local Healthwatch in South Yorkshire, to ensure people in Sheffield are heard and influence decisions about local services, whether those decisions are made locally or at the South Yorkshire Integrated Care System (ICS) level.

This year, we've worked with local Healthwatch and other organisations across South Yorkshire to achieve the following:

## A collaborative network of local Healthwatch:



We work with other local Healthwatch in South Yorkshire to ensure that people's views are considered when decisions are made about local provision at a South Yorkshire level.

We are represented by our neighbouring colleagues at the Integrated Care Board (ICB) Executive Board, Integrated Care Partnership, and the Quality, People, Inclusion and Engagement Committee, whilst we have been sharing views from people across South Yorkshire at Local Dental Network meetings.

## A big conversation:



We joined other Healthwatch from across England to ensure local voices are heard at a national level. We shared views on the development of NHS Online, and the draft 'Guidelines to Working in Partnership with Patients and Communities to deliver the 10 Year Health Plan', and how this might support the health and care system to work with communities.

We have also been working with other local Healthwatch to plan and deliver action in response to national plans to abolish the Healthwatch network.

## Building strong relationships to achieve more:



After making a referral to the Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee about Continuing Health Care (CHC), we met with system partners to discuss the next steps and plan how people with lived experience can contribute their views to inform improvements.

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 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.**

At the Sheffield Health and Wellbeing Board in September, we arranged for someone to share their insights into the care they had received since being diagnosed with melanoma skin cancer. Their story helped system leaders to understand how care could be improved and the holistic impacts of living with cancer and having treatment.

## Getting services to involve the public



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

We run the Health and Care Public Forum, which brings together local people with those working to make health and care better.

The Forum has helped to shape communications and work plans, including the development of the Sheffield care suite model, and Sheffield Teaching Hospitals' Patient Safety Incident Response Plan.

## Improving care over time



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

In 2024, our Palliative and End of Life Care report informed the all-age South Yorkshire ICB All Age Palliative and End of Life Care Strategy. It was then submitted in evidence to the Health and Social Care Committee's Independent Expert Palliative Care inquiry, and informed what we said in a national roundtable discussion to inform improvements.

Locally, Sheffield Teaching Hospitals responded with a set of actions to improve care, and planned to increase the skills and confidence of staff delivering end of life care, across all wards.

# 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.



# A neighbourhood view of health and care

**Local people suggested that one of our work priorities should involve working in a particular area of Sheffield to get a neighbourhood view of the health and care system.**

We decided to focus on Tinsley after considering our intelligence, public health data and because residents there asked us to.

## What did we do?

We spoke with around 60 people who live and use services in Tinsley, through in-depth interviews, focus groups, and 1-1 conversations. We also gave people information to help address the issues that came up when sharing their experiences of care, support and wellbeing.



## Key things we heard:

- **There is a large information and advice need in the area – exacerbated by language and digital barriers.**
- **There is low awareness of some services such as Adult Social Care and mental health support.**
- **Travel barriers to the city centre and other neighbourhoods further worsen access to secondary care and wider support.**
- **The low identification of carers puts strain on families.**
- **Some people felt that social needs were not being met due to a shortage of activities and places to socialise in the area.**

We made formal recommendations to providers and commissioners, and held a roundtable discussion to inform improvements for people in Tinsley, which led to further actions being agreed.

## What difference did this make?

- Seven Hills Primary Care Network (PCN) will approach the local primary school to offer in-school services to children, and health education sessions for families.
- Sheffield Talking Therapies will link in with local groups and share promotional materials in the area to raise awareness of their service.
- Sheffield Teaching Hospitals will ensure that Tinsley is represented when discussing bus links to the Northern General Hospital, in bus franchising talks with South Yorkshire Combined Mayoral Authority.

# Neighbourhood health and care information projects

## We delivered health information projects to improve wellbeing and access to care and support

Great Places Housing Group funded us to deliver health information projects in two areas they provide social housing – Wybourn and Richmond Park Estate.

We heard from 412 people across 31 community groups. They told us what wellbeing provision they wanted in their area, shaped our community information events, gave feedback on health and care services, and received personalised information and advice about care and support.

### Acting on feedback:

- People wanted to know about activities and support available locally, so we made information guides for each area.
- People asked for health checks, and information on topics like mental health support, healthy living, substance use, and the cost of living. We delivered fun community information events, and arranged for 41 services from the NHS, local authority and voluntary sector to connect with over 200 people across the 3 events.
- Some people felt unable to go to large events so we ran a series of health and wellbeing breakfast mornings where people heard from local services, took part in wellbeing activities, gave feedback on care, and received information to help them access support.



## What difference did this make?

- Local and city-wide services better understand what wellbeing provision people want in the two areas, and have acted on it. For example, a new parent support group was set up in Richmond Park Estate.
- We helped improve access to services, by connecting over 200 people face-to-face with a range of services that could help with their information and support needs, in their local area.
- People are more aware of support and local activities due to our outreach, information and advice work, and services sharing our information guides with them.



“It was great to meet service providers face-to-face and to ask questions instead of trying to figure it out online”

**Local resident, Healthy Living event in Wybourn**



“Healthwatch Sheffield’s work in Richmond Park this year has been invaluable, both in engaging residents and assisting with revitalizing of the area’s wider developments plans.

From their work residents have received the bespoke health support they require and the groundwork has been laid for future vital projects in the area.

A new support group for parents of young children, which starts this month and will run fortnightly in Richmond Park, is a prime example of this.”

**Felix Dyer, Community Partnership Manager, Great Places Housing Group**



# 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.

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:**

- Giving grants to 6 organisations to design and deliver projects which focus on children and young people's views and experiences of health and social care.
- Visiting people who experience barriers to care and having their say, where they live. For example, in care homes, temporary accommodation for homeless young people, and refugee and asylum seeker accommodation. We also reached people with no place to stay through the Archer Project.
- We have shared what people and communities have told us through the various publications that we share with decision makers, including our 'Community Insights' blogs, bimonthly briefings, 'Your Voice Counts' and project reports.



# Improving understanding and identification of young carers

## **We gave Sheffield Young Carers a micro-grant to run a project on what matters to them**

Sheffield Young Carers ran workshops and sessions to hear from young people and their cared-for parents. They suggested ways to improve how services interact with young carers, and co-produced resources to help more young carers to be identified.

### **What difference did this make?**

The resources they produced have been distributed around Primary Care Sheffield general practices, and on the Sheffield Teaching Hospitals intranet.

The hospital has also invited Sheffield Young Carers to present at a Patient Experience and Engagement Group meeting, to share insights with representatives across hospital departments. Their resources were also included in their Carers Week display packs.

# Helping reduce barriers to mental health care in people using substances

## **People using substances and those supporting them felt that access to mental health care needed to improve**

We heard that people couldn't always access the mental health services they needed due to using substances. They felt there was a lack of joined up working between services, and people were falling through the gaps and missing out on vital support.

We shared this feedback with Sheffield Health Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust, who took action to make improvements.

### **What difference did this make?**

Sheffield Health Partnership University responded by scheduling a meeting with drug and alcohol support service Likewise, to agree clearer pathways and practical arrangements to improve how our services work together to support adults with co-existing mental health and substance use needs.

# 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 4,191 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
- Signposting people to additional support services
- Delivering an in-person information and advice service, through our breakfast sessions at a neighbourhood community centre, and new weekly city centre drop-in



# Improving access to NHS dental care in groups at risk of health inequalities

**Responsive community engagement and partnership working helped people to overcome access barriers to dental care.**

We phone dentists in Sheffield every two months to find out who is accepting new NHS patients. We shared this information with 45 individuals and 25 community groups this year, including those attended by people with learning disabilities, refugee and asylum seekers, people experiencing financial hardship, and homelessness.

When we visited a conversation group for people learning English, we learnt that most people didn't have a dentist and couldn't find one that would accept NHS patients.

We provided details of dentists accepting NHS patients, and the tutors arranged for medical students to come in to support the group with accessing a dentist. As a result, 7 adults and 9 children were able to access NHS dental care.

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## Helping Arabic speakers understand and access care

**People who speak Arabic told us they had difficulty understanding and accessing care due to language barriers**

To address the specific issues we had heard, we translated information resources into Arabic, including 'What is Adult Social Care?', 'Help with Health Costs', 'Referrals and Right to Choose', 'NHS Dental Care', and 'Tips for getting the most out of your GP appointment'. They were printed and shared through community groups, and made available on our website.

As a result, more Arabic speakers accessed the information needed to overcome barriers to care, such as long waits for autism assessments, travel costs, and not understanding how adult social care works. People told us they valued having the information they needed to take the next steps to getting the right care.



# Showcasing volunteer impact

Our fantastic volunteers have given **665 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 community groups and events to share information resources, and support people to give feedback on their experiences of care.
- Influenced our strategic approach, and shared their views with providers and commissioners to help shape local health and care plans.
- Analysed data, and designed communication materials.
- Attended board and committees to make sure that the views of local people and communities were heard in health and care discussions and decision-making.
- Reviewed and responded to local NHS Quality Accounts.



# 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.

**69** In 2016 I retired from General Practice and Health Management and joined Healthwatch Sheffield on the Advisory Board.



Trish

Healthwatch was quite new and it was good to be helping set up how it would work. The staff were very welcoming and made me feel one of the team. We had to work hard to ensure we were hearing from patients and users and then to get those messages heard by the different organisations.

I enjoyed visiting clinical sites and nursing homes and reporting users' opinions. I now look at the NHS as a user but with a clinical background.

I have been very proud to represent Healthwatch Sheffield at many meetings and have really enjoyed standing up for the users' point of view when sometimes it is overlooked. Being part of the team has been rewarding and I would like to thank them.

**69** I have volunteered with Healthwatch Sheffield since it started in 2013. I joined because I wanted to give something back.

I weighed 2 lbs when I was born and have used services all my life. I've used home care for 42 years, and both my parents had cancer so I've learnt a lot about what good and bad care looks like.

I have enjoyed talking to people in hospitals and working with other volunteers in the Health and Care Public Forum, especially the work we have done to improve Pharmacy services. It is good to be part of something and make a difference.



Lee

## 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](http://www.healthwatchsheffield.co.uk)



0114 253 6688



[info@healthwatchsheffield.co.uk](mailto: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.**

Our Healthwatch Strategic Advisory Group (SAG) consists of 10 volunteer members who work to provide direction, oversight, and scrutiny of our activities.

They ensure that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community.

Throughout 2025/26, the SAG met 7 times and made decisions around our revised approach to work planning, and our involvement in the Local Healthwatch Working Together Group, which responds to plans to abolish local Healthwatch, and acts responsively on our behalf when needed.

## 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, text, 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 and make printed copies available.

# 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.

**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.

## Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Sheffield is currently represented on the Sheffield Health and Wellbeing Board by Mark Gamsu, Interim Chair.

During 2025/26, our representative has effectively carried out this role by updating the Board with key intelligence from our work with local people and helping to bring the perspective of local people into the discussions at meetings.

Healthwatch Sheffield is represented on South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board by Kym Gleeson, (Healthwatch Manager at Healthwatch Rotherham) 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	£240,000	Expenditure on pay	£216,165
Additional income	£45,530	Non-pay expenditure	£16,655
		Office and management fee	£67,760
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£285,530</b>	<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>£300,580</b>

We used £15,050 of our reserves this year, to cover the expenditure in excess of our total income. This enabled us to have extra capacity in our community outreach team.

## Additional income is broken down into:

- £10,000 from Great Places Housing Group for work on a project.
- £27,886 from the Sheffield Health & Care Partnership for facilitating and supporting patient and public involvement.
- £7,644 from the University of Sheffield for hosting student placements.

# Next steps

## In 2026/27 we will:



- Continue to fulfil our statutory duties, focusing our efforts on hearing from those with the poorest health outcomes, and providing people with information to support access to the care and support they need.
- Follow up on work carried out and published in 2025/26, including our Tinsley report, hospital discharge, experiences of trans and non-binary people using GP services in Sheffield, and our 6 Speak Up projects which focus on the experiences of children and young people.
- Advocate to maintain a local independent voice model in Sheffield, working with system partners to consider local provision for the future.

## Our team

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

### Our staff

**Lucy Davies** Chief Officer  
(Left in October 2025)

**Laura Cook** Policy & Evidence Coordinator  
(Head of Healthwatch Sheffield from November 2025)

**Holly Robson** Operations Manager

**Anna Harman** Information & Advice Officer

**Winnie Lutakome** Community Outreach Lead

**Harry Frost** Community Outreach Lead  
(Started in February 2026)

**Husam Hassan** Community Outreach Lead  
(Left in September 2025)

**Sarah Fowler** Community Outreach Lead  
(Left November 2025)

**Mina Clarke** Project Support

### Our Strategic Advisory Group

**Mark Gamsu** Interim Chair

**Trish Edney**

**Tim Furness** (Stepped down in October 2025)

**Janet Harris**

**Verni Tannam**

**Harry Frost** (Stepped down in January 2026)

**Charlotte Killeya**

**Ahude Bicer**

**Eric Watts**

**Shirley Kirkland**


**Liz Baldwin**

**Brendan Warner-Southwell**

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

**Healthwatch Sheffield**  
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