



# On equal terms

Then and now

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# Message from our Chair

**“Better together” is a truth that, if we didn’t know already, we really know now. The pandemic has taught us that.**

Healthwatch Sheffield has been part of the city-wide joint effort: public services, voluntary organisations and communities working together to support and care for people during 20-21.

Our role has been threefold:

- Helping people get clear information about changed services, new regulations and responding to problems;
- Feeding back people’s experiences of services to the NHS & Sheffield Council through [our report](#) on the impact of COVID-19, and [monthly updates](#) on what people told Healthwatch about service changes – good and bad- so that responses can be made;
- Highlighting gaps in services such as people not being able to get dentists appointments and using our independence to make the case for change.

The second truth has been the way COVID-19 has underlined health inequality in Sheffield: COVID-19 has disproportionately affected people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities, disabled people (especially those with learning disabilities) and older people in care homes.

**This truth about inequality has always been at the heart of Healthwatch Sheffield and we will be re-doubling our efforts to keep it at the front of our priorities.**

And, the third truth I want to emphasise is that having the independent voice of Healthwatch with and for people and communities, working patiently, and often behind the scenes, is a vital component of helping systems to hear about experiences and to really put people at the centre of their services.



COVID-19 has meant that Healthwatch staff and volunteers have worked remotely during the year. And, remote is not what we want: we will resume our range of face to face conversations as soon as we can do so!

COVID-19 has been tough in so many ways and I want to thank our funders, colleagues in Healthwatch England and other local Healthwatch, system partners and, particularly our staff, volunteers and especially the Strategic Advisory Group for sticking with making change together.

*Judy Robinson*

*Judy Robinson, Healthwatch Sheffield Chair*

# About us

## Here to make health and care better

We are the independent champion for people who use health and social care services in Sheffield. We're here to find out what matters to people and help make sure your views shape the support you need, by sharing these views with those who have the power to make change happen.

## Helping you to find the information you need

We help people find the information they need about services in their area. This has been vital during the pandemic with the ever-changing environment and restrictions limiting people's access to health and social care services.

### 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 & care services**



**Involve those who often aren't heard**



**Help make Sheffield a healthy city to live in**



**“Local Healthwatch have done fantastic work throughout the country during the COVID-19 pandemic, but there is more work ahead to ensure that everyone's views are heard. COVID-19 has highlighted inequalities and to tackle these unfair health differences we will need those in power to listen, to hear the experiences of those facing inequality and understand the steps that could improve people's lives.”**

**Sir Robert Francis QC, Chair of Healthwatch England**

# Highlights from our year

Find out about our resources and how we have engaged and supported people in 2020-21.

## Reaching out



We spoke to

**2111 people**

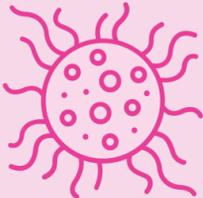
this year about their experiences of health and social care.

We provided advice and information to

**252 people**

this year. This is a 93% increase on last year.

## Responding to the pandemic



We heard from

**567 people**

about their experiences of health, care and support services during the COVID-19 pandemic through our dedicated survey.

## Making a difference to care



We published

**28 reports and briefings**

about people's experiences of health and social care services, and the improvements they would like to see.

We made

**30 recommendations**

to local health and care services.

## Working for you



**40 volunteers**

help us to carry out our work.

**We employ 6 staff**

We received

**£209,952 in funding**

from our local authority in 2020-21.



## Then and Now: Deaf people's access to health and social care



### Then: access to services for Deaf BSL users

**In 2018 Deaf people in Sheffield shared with us their experiences of barriers to accessing health and care services. Our report '[Not Equal](#)' set out what we found.**

It identified that:

- The communication needs of Deaf people are not routinely recorded and flagged by providers of NHS or Adult Social Care
- The Communication needs of Deaf people are not routinely shared between GPs and hospitals
- Provision of British Sign Language (BSL) Interpreters is inconsistent and unreliable, causing people to disengage from services and to suffer unnecessary distress.

We made a number of recommendations relating to requirements under the Accessible Information Standard and the Equality Act, and asked commissioners and providers to do more to understand and learn from patient experience.

However, during the pandemic we heard that Deaf people were still having significant difficulties accessing services. In some instances, new systems (such as phone triage for GPs, and visiting restrictions) were making things harder. We wanted to understand this better, and get updates on what had happened to our previous recommendations.



## Now: Ongoing barriers for Deaf people

**With the service changes that the pandemic had brought, we wanted to refresh what we had heard in our 2018 report, so that the current experiences of Deaf people were heard.**

Together with some key local partners, we held a focus group to explore current experiences and shared this with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). We also highlighted the experiences of Deaf people in our regular "What have we been hearing?" roundups, which we share with providers and commissioners in the city. Overall the picture showed us continued barriers to accessing care, most of which were already described in our 2018 report, but some of which had become more prominent during Covid.

In February 2021, we supported Citizens Advice Sheffield to share Susan's story. Susan's husband Ronnie passed away last year – they are both profoundly Deaf and in a video, Susan shared her experience of trying to communicate with services during his last few months of life. Thanks to Susan sharing her powerful story, we were able to have fresh conversations with commissioners and service providers about this critical issue.

At the end of the year Sheffield Teaching Hospitals committed to a refreshed set of actions to address the issues, and we started to hear some positive examples of good communication for Deaf inpatients. The CCG also told us that our work to highlight the experiences of deaf people has changed the conversations that they are having about interpreters as the interpreting contract review continues.

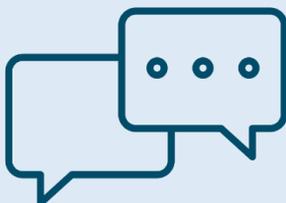
**"Sheffield Teaching Hospitals have been trialling new approaches to supporting deaf patients attending for surgery....We are looking to learn from our patients through their feedback about what we can do better, with a view to refining our approach as we go along."**

**There is still a lot of work to do, and we know that too often, Deaf people continue to face significant barriers to accessing care.**

This coming year we will continue to highlight both good and poor experiences of care which Deaf people share with us, and carry on talking to commissioners and providers about the changes that can be made to help make a difference. We will also be starting a monthly BSL Vlog in partnership with Citizen's Advice Sheffield – this will help us share information about services with Deaf people in Sheffield, as well as give an opportunity for them to talk about their experiences.

### Share your views with us

If you have a query about a health and social care service, or need help with where you can go to access further support, get in touch. Don't struggle alone. Healthwatch Sheffield is here for you.



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

 **0114 253 6688**

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

 **0741 524 9657**



# Then and now: Accessing Dentistry



## Then: access to NHS dental services

**Before Covid-19, we had identified that access to NHS dentistry in Sheffield and South Yorkshire appeared to be better than many other areas in Yorkshire and Humber.**

At the end of 2019 we did an exercise to look at availability of NHS dentistry in Sheffield. We phoned 69 (almost all) dental practices in the city. We found that 70% of the listings on nhs.uk provided up to date and accurate information about availability, and 36% of all practices were currently accepting new NHS patients.

Talking to other local Healthwatch in the region, this helped us to identify that availability of NHS dentistry in Sheffield was broadly good in comparison to many other places. There was some availability in most parts of the city, although we acknowledge that for some people with particular needs, it wasn't always easy to find a dentist that they could access.

The pandemic impacted significantly on people's ability to access dentistry across the country, as capacity was reduced in order to implement the necessary safety measures for Covid-19. For many people in Sheffield, this meant that accessing the dental care they needed became difficult, and we started to receive an increasing number of enquiries from people who needed help with this.



## Now: Ongoing dentistry issues

**Since April 2020 we have had 49 enquiries about dentistry. Thanks to people sharing their experiences with us, we were able to identify the themes and issues which were impacting on Sheffield residents.**

Across the board people's access was reduced, but later in the year as provision re-opened a lack of equity became more apparent. People who didn't previously have an NHS dentist found it far harder to get treatment, and we heard from a number of people who were offered private care by dentists unable to treat them on the NHS.

We shared our findings with local dentistry commissioners, as well as other key partners such as the Sheffield Health and Wellbeing Board. As part of the Healthwatch Network, our information also contributed to two national reports from Healthwatch England, informing discussions with both NHS England and the Government.



**"I have contacted at least 25 surgeries in Sheffield today, all of which are not accepting NHS patients. However what I did find is most of them [are] happy to take on if I pay private [...] Being a single mum, running solely off one working income I cannot afford to do this."**

An important part of our work on dentistry has been helping people to get information about what dental care is available and how to access it. We have done this through:

- Talking to people one to one on the phone to give them information and advice about their particular situation
- Sharing links to information on social media
- Publishing information articles on our website

We have stayed in touch with dentistry commissioners to help us understand what information to get to people.



**"This person's dentures broke, and they are struggling to find a dentist in order to get new ones. They have rung a couple of different dental practices - none of the practices triaged her on the phone [...] The caller was having trouble eating"**



**To find out more**

[Read our dentistry briefings online](#)



## Responding to COVID-19

**Healthwatch plays an important role in helping people to get the information they need, especially through the pandemic. The insight we collect is shared with both Healthwatch England and local partners to ensure services are operating as best as possible during the pandemic.**

**This year we helped people by:**

- Linking people to reliable **up-to-date information about COVID-19**
- Providing up to date advice on the **COVID-19 response locally**
- **Supporting the community volunteer response** as part of our host organisation, Voluntary Action Sheffield
- **Helping people to access changing services** – we had a 93% increase in our information enquiries this year, as people needed support to understand how services were working differently. For example, many people called us to find out how to access patient transport to get to hospital, or how to get urgent dental care
- Producing regular **"What have we been hearing?" updates** to help highlight the experiences of people accessing services during Covid.

## Case Study – Our regular roundups



Early in the pandemic, we started writing "What have we been hearing?" roundups, which we shared with key people in the city to help them know more about people's experiences accessing care and support. Sharing information regularly, and in a timely way, enabled us to have more impact as the pandemic emerged.

For example, the feedback that we shared about people's experiences of wearing masks led to a joint agreement between the Clinical Commissioning Group and providers to make **exemption cards** available. We also acted as a contact point for people who wanted more information about mask exemptions, and were able to post out printed cards to individuals who couldn't access them in other ways.



**Mark Gamsu**  
@markgamsu



In **#sheffield** the contribution that **@HWSheffield** has made to ensuring that we still hear from the easily ignored and excluded has been tremendous - and really helped **@NHSSheffieldCCG** keep in touch w what has been happening during the **#pandemic #COVID19**



### Contact us to get the information you need

If you have a query about a health and social care service, or need help with where you can go to access further support, get in touch. Don't struggle alone. Healthwatch is here for you.



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**0741 524 9657**



## Our volunteers

**At Healthwatch Sheffield we are supported by 40 volunteers who help us find out what people think is working, and what improvements people would like to make to services.**

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

- Helped people have their say from home, carrying out surveys over the telephone and online
- Created digital content on our websites and social media
- Carried out website reviews for local services on the information they provide
- Helped with the local volunteering efforts of shopping and collecting prescriptions for those self-isolating or shielding
- Moved Strategic Advisory Group meetings online – and increased their frequency to help steer our work through the pandemic
- Provided feedback and insight to shape local services as part of the Improving Accountable Care Forum





### Strategic Advisory Group – Beth Kyte

I have been a member of the Strategic Advisory Group for around 2 years. I attend meetings, during which we feed back on various reports and consultations in order to help inform Healthwatch Sheffield's strategy and priorities.

For instance, I have been involved in supporting Healthwatch Sheffield to form a response to a recent strategic review of Adult Social Care in Sheffield and I am also representing Healthwatch Sheffield as a proxy rep on an 'experts by experience' panel that is helping inform the development of a new model of homecare.

### Improving Accountable Care Forum (IAC)

The [IAC forum](#) was set up by the Accountable Care Partnership (ACP) and Healthwatch Sheffield to ensure that patients, carers and the public have the opportunity to influence the work of the ACP on an ongoing basis. A group of around 15 volunteers meets monthly to talk directly to professionals and decision makers about developments in health and social care services in Sheffield. They listen to presentations and give feedback - professionals are asked to provide a response/update following the meeting to show where the group's input has made a difference. As well as the regular volunteers, we welcome people who may want to join the group for particular meetings because they are interested in what's being discussed. Follow us on social media or get in touch if you want to know more about what's happening at IAC.

**The Sheffield Accountable Care Partnership (ACP) is an alliance of health and social care organisations that work together to deliver care.**

**Sheffield** ACP  
Accountable Care Partnership



### Volunteer with us

Are you feeling inspired? We are always on the lookout for new volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering, please get in touch with our volunteering lead, Holly Robson.



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

**0114 2536688**

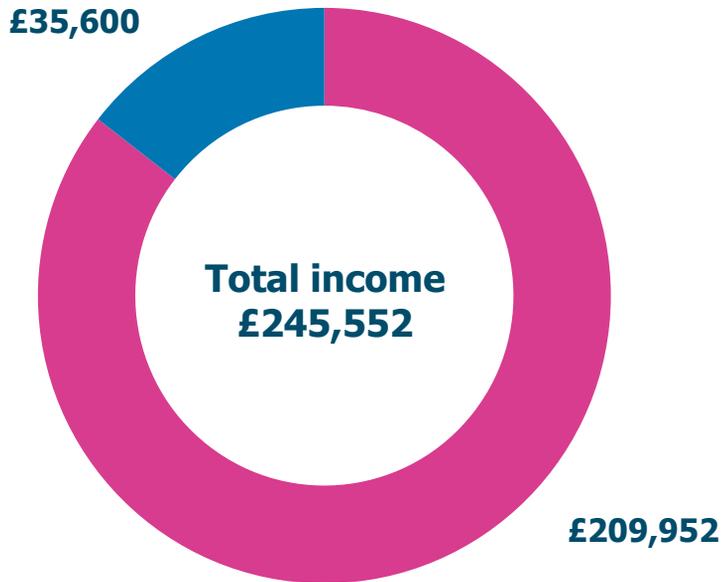
[H.Robson@healthwatchsheffield.co.uk](mailto:H.Robson@healthwatchsheffield.co.uk)

# Finances

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

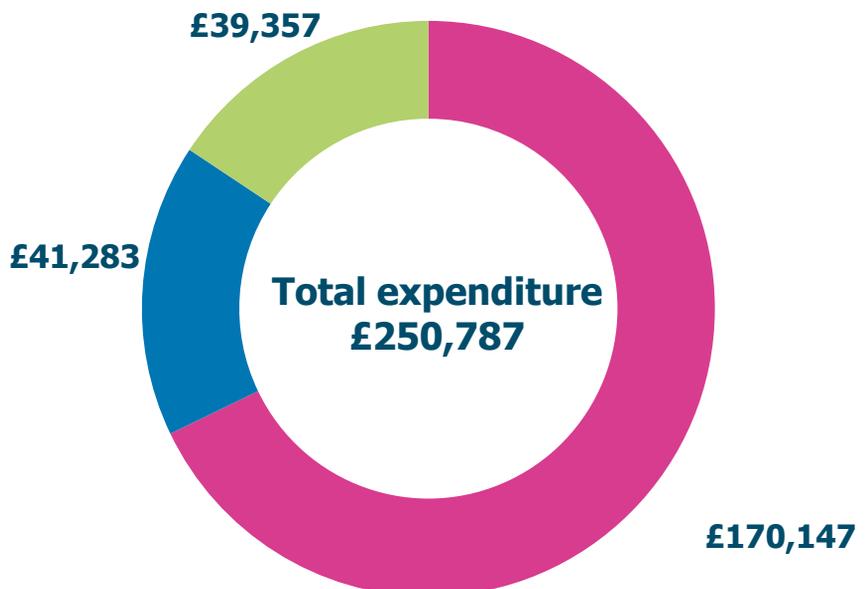
## Income

- Funding received from local authority
- Additional funding - incl. ACP, Health and Wellbeing Board



## Expenditure

- Staff costs
- Activity Costs
- Support and administration





# Our role as a local Healthwatch

## About us

Healthwatch Sheffield, The Circle, 33 Rockingham Lane, Sheffield S1 4FW – hosted by Voluntary Action Sheffield (VAS).

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 consists of 9 members who work on a voluntary basis to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny to our activities. The group ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community. Through 2020/21 the group met 11 times – they also link with the board of Voluntary Action Sheffield as part of our governance arrangements.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our priorities – our decisions are informed by:

- Insights from our information and enquiries
- Intelligence gathered through surveys
- Feedback from local voluntary and community groups
- Views shared at our public meeting
- Our understanding of what is happening in Sheffield services

## How do we reach out to people?

We use a wide range of approaches to ensure that as many people as possible have the opportunity to provide us with insight about their experience of health and care services. During 2020/21 we have been available by phone, by email, provided a web form on our website, attended virtual meetings of community groups and forums, provided our own virtual activities and engaged with the public through social media.

We are committed to taking additional steps to ensure we obtain the views of people from diverse backgrounds who are often not heard by health and care decision makers. This year we have done this by sharing paper copies of surveys via foodbanks and developing a paper freepost feedback form. We have also worked closely with voluntary sector organisations to help us reach different communities, such as our work with the Chinese Community Centre to explore the impact of Covid-19 on the people they support. Through the use of micro-grants to organisations we were able to diversify who we heard from in our Covid-19 survey – we heard about the experiences of disabled people and people from a range of ethnicities. We have also been building up our [community partnerships](#) with groups, developing ways to work more closely with organisations who support different communities in Sheffield.

## 2020-21 priorities

Priority	Work Undertaken	Impact
<b>Accessing Support for Recessive Genetic Conditions</b>	We worked with the Community based Genetic Literacy and Support project to hear from people about their experiences	Report complete and recommendations made for change – to be published quarter one 2021/22
<b>Impact of Covid on the delivery of health and care services</b>	Report based on surveys, enquiries, and group feedback  Regular 'What we are hearing' roundups  Evidence briefing on Disabled People and Covid-19	Sharing regular insights enabled timely operational responses to issues – see case study on p. 11  Disability briefing led to local authority action plan on issues including respite, social care and travel
<b>Mental Health</b>	Our report 'The Mental Health Journey' looked at the experiences of individuals seeking support in relation to their mental health	The stories will be used as pen portraits to inform the crisis care transformation work happening in Sheffield
<b>Adult Social Care</b>	Highlighted experiences of residents and relatives in relation to visiting during Covid-19  Worked with the local Council developing virtual care home visits  Did work to support people in having a say around plans for Homecare	Increased insight into experiences in care homes, linked to local authority quality monitoring  Increased diversity of people having a say on new homecare model

## Representation at meetings

As part of our role, Healthwatch takes what we are hearing to decision makers and people in positions of power – this includes having seats on different boards in the city. For example, Healthwatch Sheffield is represented on the **Sheffield Health and Wellbeing Board** by Judy Robinson (Chair) and on the **Healthier Communities and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee** by Lucy Davies (Chief Officer). Our staff and volunteers between them attend a wide range of additional meetings; this helps us stay in touch with developments in health and care, support and promote the involvement of people in shaping services, and bring insight to influence decisions that are made.

## Healthwatch England

Healthwatch England is the umbrella body which support the network of local Healthwatch; they use information from the network to build a picture of what is happening across the country and raise issues at a national level. This year they have used our local information to help produce national reports on subjects such as dentistry and access to GPs - they use these reports to help them talk directly to NHS England and national bodies about areas of concern.

## Our publications this year

Reports	Briefings
<a href="#">Listening to you</a>	<a href="#">Submission to the Race Equality Commission – Race and Health</a>
<a href="#">Impact of Covid-19 on the Chinese Community</a>	<a href="#">Dentistry in Covid</a>
<a href="#">Carers' Access to GPs</a>	<a href="#">Care Homes Visiting in Covid</a>
<a href="#">The Mental Health Journey</a>	<a href="#">"What have we been hearing?" (monthly reports)</a>
<a href="#">Impact of Covid on Health and Care Services</a>	<a href="#">Impact of Covid on Disabled People</a>
<a href="#">Annual Report 19/20</a>	
<a href="#">Quarterly activity reports</a>	

# Next steps & thank you

## Top four priorities for 2021-22

- Maternity Services for Black and Asian women
- Services for autistic adults
- People having a say in new health and care structures (regional and Sheffield-based structures)
- Impact of Covid-19 – new health challenges, changes to services

## Next steps

- We hope that in the coming year we will be able to re-start physical visits to services
- We will work on developing our information offer in response to the increasing demand, including making it more accessible to different groups and providing information in different ways
- Our recently refreshed strategy sets out ways in which we will focus on seldom heard communities and issues of equity in the next 3 years. This is a major focus for us

**“We will... speak up about unfair health differences – we will work with people and communities to help share their experiences, raise their concerns and challenge those in a position of power to listen and act”**

## Message from Our Chief Officer



In developing our strategy for the next three years, we have placed health equity at the centre of our work. We have challenged ourselves to think, in practical ways, how we can focus on and address inequality under each of our aims. At the moment, people across Sheffield do not have an equal chance of a healthy life. We will be an organisation that speaks up about unfair health differences - we will work with people and communities to help share their experiences, raise their concerns, and challenge those in a position of power to listen and act. We want to say a huge thank you to everyone who works with us in different ways – we couldn't do this alone.

**Lucy Davies**

# Thank you to....

- Members of the public who shared their views and experience with us
- The voluntary and community groups who have been generous with their time and knowledge
- Our partners in health and care services
- The wider team at Voluntary Action Sheffield
- The Healthwatch Network and Healthwatch England
- Our staff and volunteers

## Our Strategic Advisory Group (SAG)

Judy Robinson - Chair

Beth Kyte

Verni Tannam

Janet Harris

Simon Duffy

James Lock

Asma Rabeha

Marim Alfakih



## Our Staff Team

Lucy Davies – Chief Officer

Holly Robson – Operational Support Officer

Nikola Bakalov – Engagement Officer

Sarah Fowler – Community Outreach Lead

Joanna Sansom – Administrator

Laura Cook – Policy and Evidence Co-ordinator

**“We’re all in this together. And we can only succeed together.  
So the rule of the game is: together.”**

WHO Director-General, March 2020

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