



Speaking up for better care

Healthwatch Wirral
Annual Report 2025/26



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"Healthwatch Wirral is a vital partner in our health and care system in Wirral, they let us know when things are going well and when there are challenges for our population. Healthwatch Wirral is an integral partner in the work of the health and care sector in our borough. They always act as the voice of the individual and represents that strongly in meetings with local policy makers and service providers."

**Simon Banks,
Wirral Place Director**

Our Chairman's statement

Dear Reader,

It is once again my privilege to introduce the Healthwatch Wirral Annual Report for 2025/26. Whilst the local health and care landscape continues to adapt to pressures, Healthwatch Wirral has remained consistent as an independent voice for the residents of Wirral. Our focus this year has been to ensure that the lived experiences of as many people as possible are not just heard but actively used to shape services.

I am proud of the tenacious and compassionate work of our small staff team and dedicated volunteers. Through our targeted outreach, Enter and View visits, and community engagement, we have shone a light on what is working well and, crucially, where improvements are needed.



Chairman
Bill Wylie

Our Key highlights from this year include:

Deepening our reach

Our focused engagement work has provided vital insight for the commissioning of services for people whose voices often go unheard. This includes our Wirral Carers Survey which highlighted the need for better support for unpaid Carers, the views of people using Day Services during our one-to-one consultation support, and an evaluation of the experiences of people using the Musculoskeletal self-referral pathway pilot.

Holding services to account

Through our Enter and View visits to Arrowe Park A&E, Wirral care homes, and GP Practices, we have provided direct, independent feedback to providers and commissioners to showcase positive work and recommend service improvements.

Proactive Impact

Our work has continued to bridge the gap between people's experiences and service design by constructively challenging on behalf of the residents of Wirral.



As we look ahead, we will continue to focus on reducing health inequalities and supporting the public to feedback on care. The information you share with us helps ensure that decisions are made with people at the heart of care. A huge thank you to everyone who has shared their story with us, and to our partners, including Wirral Council and the NHS, who work with us to make a difference. And to that I must add my personal deep appreciation of the tireless efforts of our CEO, staff members, and volunteers for the many ways in which they go above and beyond to serve the people of our community.

A message from our CEO

Hello and Welcome to Healthwatch Wirral's 2025/26 Annual Report.

I am delighted to share this report which celebrates our collective achievements and demonstrates the power of public feedback.

This past year has been a period of transformation for local health and care. Throughout this time, Healthwatch Wirral has proudly continued to act as the independent consumer champion for our communities. We know that the best services are co-designed with the people who depend on them. That is why we have focused our outreach work across Wirral. Listening to your experiences, challenging assumptions, and ensuring that what truly matters to you is clearly communicated with those who plan and deliver services.

It is important to acknowledge that we have seen a significant increase in issues this year from some of the most vulnerable people across Wirral. People told us that they felt they did not have a voice or were unsure about what would happen next. Healthwatch Wirral aims to respond quickly and keep people informed as much as possible. In some cases, this year, system-wide workforce challenges have made pathways more complex and harder to navigate.

This year, the role of local Healthwatch as a 'critical friend' has come under challenge due to potential changes in legislation which could compromise the independent nature of local Healthwatch and public voice going forwards. We remain confident that, by working closely with the Local Authority which recognises our value and role, we will find a way forward to maintain a service that people can rely on.



CEO
Karen Prior



The independence and impartiality of local Healthwatch is essential. It enables us to:

- “ Share real-time lived experiences to commissioners and decision makers
- “ Improve services and drive positive change
- “ Build confidence and trust
- “ Hear and act upon local voices, especially those from diverse and underrepresented communities

The impact and collaborative approach that Healthwatch Wirral has striven for and achieved are highlighted throughout this report. It also sets out our Enter and View activity and outreach work, demonstrating our commitment to learning and sharing. This work supports improved access to health and care for the public, and the evolving integration of services and development of neighbourhood plans.

We believe that the role of HWW within Neighbourhoods will be crucial, particularly as the provision across Primary Care Networks (PCNs) may vary. Meaningful communication and engagement with Wirral residents will be fundamental to achieving the principles of the 10 Year Plan, which are:

From Hospital to Community: Moving care from centralised hospitals to local "neighbourhood health services" so it is closer to people's homes and doorsteps.

From Analogue to Digital: Utilizing modern technology, such as the NHS App and AI, to free up staff from administrative tasks and allow patients to easily control and manage their health online.

From Sickness to Prevention: Shifting the focus from merely diagnosing and treating illness to predicting and preventing it earlier in life.

Healthwatch Wirral will continue to attend boards and groups. We have amplified the voices of the under-represented in many committees where operational and strategic decisions are made. I am incredibly proud of the impact we have made this year.

By listening to your stories—through our community outreach, direct engagement, and feedback channels—we ask the questions that hold decision makers to account and help ensure that services are responsive to local people. This year, we will continue to prioritise the needs of unpaid Carers and those with learning difficulties.

It is important to thank the Wirral residents who have felt confident and comfortable in sharing their experiences and views with Healthwatch Wirral. Our dedicated staff and invaluable volunteers are a credit to the organisation, and I sincerely thank them for their commitment to shaping the future of health and care in Wirral.

Karen Prior,
Chief Executive Officer

The state of health and social care right now

Confidence in Health and Care

People are telling us that they are still facing persistent challenges accessing health services, in particular GP appointments and registering with dentists. Alongside struggling to know where to go for help, and increases in emergency department and corridor care use, people's confidence in the health and care system appears to be low. We are told about people's frustrations towards poor communication and out-of-date information as people are less able to make informed decisions about their care. Confidence in health and care desperately needs to be restored. Joined-up working needs continuous prioritisation and evidence that pressures on the system are being addressed.



Independence and Trust



Trust is built through transparency, accountability, and good care. As an independent organisation, Healthwatch Wirral plays a vital role in amplifying the public voice, ensuring that lived experience shapes how services are designed. Without this independent perspective, those three foundations of trust fall apart. We follow clear lines of inquiry and remain professionally curious as we act as a 'critical friend' by identifying emerging concerns and holding systems to account. Our current health and care system cannot be allowed to lose an independent public voice at a time when trust is needed now more than ever.

Safeguarding and Safety

This year, we saw an increase in concerns relating to safeguarding and patient safety. Financial pressures and ongoing NHS and ICB restructures have affected coordination across the health and care system, contributing to delays and poorer experiences for some patients. We also saw a rise in the complexity of cases brought to our NHS Independent Complaints Advocacy Service. Healthwatch Wirral will continue to highlight these issues and work with partners to improve outcomes for local people.



About us

Healthwatch Wirral 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 for your health and care needs.

Ultimately, we aim to make a difference by supporting services to improve and helping shape better care for today and the future.



Our Vision

To ensure the voice of the individual is heard and services are responsive



Our Mission

To be the local consumer champion for health and care



Our Values

Inclusive – Work with all communities across Wirral

Influential – Be Responsive and make real changes happen

Independent – Act on behalf of consumers by listening and speaking on their behalf

Credible – Value knowledge, seek information, and challenge assumptions

Collaborative – Work in partnership with local people and Health, Social Care, and VCFSE organisations to support the co-design of services

Our year in review

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Staff and Volunteers

We employed **8 staff** (6.1 full time-equivalent), and our work was supported by **11 volunteers**.



Over 7,500

People were supported by us to share their views, with **71** people supported by our NHS complaints advocate.



Over 10,400

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



Over 24,100

Contacts and interactions were made with members of the public, as well as health, care, and VCFSE workers this year.



9 reports published

In relation to our Enter and View activity and our other projects such as Primary Care access (PCARP), the NHS App and independent feedback, consultation for Day Services, and the MSK self-referral pathway evaluation.



Statutory Funding

We're funded through Wirral Council. In 2025/26, we received **£191,255** for core funding. This equates to an estimated real-terms loss of approximately £10,900 (-5.4%) when adjusted for inflation (3.8%).

Key projects this year

Spring

Quality Accounts – We provided an informed Commentary to the annual Quality Accounts for Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS FT, Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS FT, and Wirral Community Health & Care NHS FT.

'Way Forward' Launched – Our 12-month non-clinical *High Intensity Use* programme, providing personalised, community-based support to help reduce frequent attendances to A&E and improve people's health and wellbeing.

Summer

Developed NHS App Training Guide – Designed and focus tested with our volunteers, we created a simple page-by-page instruction for using the NHS App. This was then rolled out to GP Patient Participation Groups.

Review of the Primary Care Access Recovery Plan (PCARP) – Detailed research into how Wirral PCNs are implementing the NHS Access Recovery Plan. We examined digital improvements, patient access, and impacts on health inequalities.

Autumn

Wirral Carers Survey – We gathered the experiences of unpaid Carers in Wirral, who shared that there were gaps in Carer identification, poor access to support, and the need for more inclusive services and clearer information about Carers' rights.

Review of the Musculoskeletal Self-Referral Pathway – We examined patient experiences of the MSK self-referral process, highlighting the positive access and some digital barriers, with recommendations for improvements.

Winter

NHS App and Independent Feedback Report – Collaborating with 18 other local Healthwatch, Healthwatch Wirral led and researched NHS App use, digital inclusion, and the role of independent feedback within digital healthcare moving forwards.

Consultations of Day Services – Working with Wirral Council, we provided independent one-to-one support to people using Day Services to capture their thoughts on future provision and fed into Wirral Council decision-making.

Other work this year

Equality Impact Assessment Reviews

We developed a bespoke EQIA review tool and worked alongside Wirral Council to review their proposed changes to income allowances, ensuring proper mitigations across equality groups.

ICB Policy Reviews

We continue to review the harmonisation of clinical policies for the C&M ICB. There are a substantial number of policies to be reviewed and Healthwatch Wirral has supported this in a phased approach. The policies range from breast symmetrisation to correction of hair loss.

Health and Wellbeing Strategy

The Wirral Health and Wellbeing Strategy aims to reduce health inequalities, support residents at every stage of life, and improve overall community wellbeing. Healthwatch Wirral has ensured that the public are considered when reviewing the progression of this strategy.

Care Navigation Training

We delivered bespoke training to frontline NHS staff to improve their confidence in engaging with members of the public, conflict resolution, and the importance of empathy. At the end of training, we hosted marketplaces for staff to connect with local organisations to improve signposting and joined-up care.

GP Telephone Report

Following our PCARP work, this research into GP telephones and messaging systems across Wirral highlighted several gaps in access for booking appointments and contacting GP practices via telephone.

Better Care Fund Workshops

Working collaboratively, Healthwatch has asked local health and care providers to effectively monitor outcomes for the public as a measure of the success of jointly funded services.

BRIDGE Forum

Our successful BRIDGE Forum allows local partners to share information and connect people with organisations across the system. This year, we held focused BRIDGE Forum events for Carers.

Board Membership

As members of boards across the health and care system in Wirral, we represent the public voice in decision making and the co-design of local services. Some of these include:

- Safeguarding Board
- Transforming Care Board
- Wirral Place Based Partnership Board
- Quality & Performance Groups
- Care Promise Groups
- Cheshire & Merseyside ICB meetings
- Primary Care Group
- Patient and Family Experience Group

Join our **mailing list** through our website to stay up to date with our work.

Working together for change

This year, we've worked with Healthwatch across Cheshire and Merseyside (C&M).

All 9 Healthwatch organisations across Cheshire and Merseyside are independent organisations. Together, we have worked on several projects this year, providing the wider health and care system access to the experiences and views of what matters to the 2.5 million people across our region.



A network of local Healthwatch

The Cheshire and Merseyside network of Healthwatch organisations is a strong, reliable and reputable source of information, allowing health and care commissioners the opportunity to design services with people at the heart. Close working between local Healthwatch allows us to pool insights and intelligence, input into the ICB and its workstreams, and provide an independent voice for patients in decision making.



Our collaborative projects

Together, the 9 Healthwatch have completed various projects, providing reports and recommendations for Primary Care access, Women's services, Dentistry, and people's experiences using the NHS App. We also visited local acute hospitals to assess how they were meeting Red Line standards on comfort and care when ED overcrowding led to corridor care.



Building relationships to achieve more

Healthwatch Leads meet weekly to remain informed on key developments across health and care. These meetings provide a regular forum for sharing intelligence and insights with colleagues from the Integrated Care Board (ICB), Public Health, the Care Quality Commission, and other key partners.

Additionally, Healthwatch Leads and staff actively contribute to a range of regional boards and partnership forums, ensuring that the voice of local people is represented across Cheshire and Merseyside.

Quotes from Wirral system partners

"NHS Cheshire and Merseyside has continued to progress the harmonisation and review of its clinical policies across the region. This work forms part of the wider programme to reduce variation in access to services and ensure that all policies are aligned with the latest clinical evidence, national guidance, and best practice."

Clear and accessible communication has remained a key focus to support engagement and understanding among patients and stakeholders. Healthwatch has continued to play an important role in supporting this work. They have reviewed policy summary documents to ensure they are clear, accessible, and easy for patients and the public to understand. Their involvement has helped strengthen the quality of the materials and supports our aim of making policy information more transparent and inclusive, enabling meaningful engagement across Cheshire and Merseyside."

Healthwatch representatives have attended meetings of the Clinical Effectiveness Group, where their input and advice have been valuable in shaping discussions and ensuring that the patient voice is reflected within various aspects of our work."

Olivia Billington,
Digital Transformation and Clinical Improvement Manager



"Healthwatch Wirral continues to play a vital role in championing the voice of local residents and supporting our shared ambition to improve health and reduce inequalities across the borough. Their ongoing partnership with Public Health has been invaluable in helping us design and deliver work that truly reflects the needs and lived experiences of our communities."

This year, Healthwatch has made an important contribution across a range of priority areas, including smoking cessation, gambling harms, drugs and alcohol, and the wider Combating Drugs agenda. Their involvement in key initiatives such as the vaccination programme, oral health and toothbrush campaign, and the continued support of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy has helped strengthen engagement and ensure local people's voices are at the heart of our work."

By working together, we can continue to promote healthier lifestyles, reduce inequalities, and ensure services are responsive, inclusive, and shaped by the communities they serve."

Dave Bradburn,
Director of Public Health, Wirral

"Over the past year, we have continued to work collaboratively with Healthwatch and greatly value the independent insight and constructive feedback they provide. Their contribution plays an important role in supporting us to continuously improve the quality and responsiveness of the services we deliver.

A key area of focus during this period has been the improvement of the discharge pathway for patients transitioning from hospital back into the community. We have worked together to strengthen communication so that patients and their families have a clear understanding of what to expect on discharge, including the support they will receive from community services. Healthwatch has effectively represented the voice of the local community in this work, contributing to the development of key patient-facing documents such as the community nursing leaflet.

They have also provided independent review and constructive challenge through their assessment of Quality Equality Impact Assessments, helping to ensure our processes are inclusive and equitable. In addition, Healthwatch has supported us in strengthening our organisational learning by offering valuable feedback to support responses to concerns and complaints. This has helped us to enhance the way we reflect, learn, and improve. We are grateful for the ongoing partnership with Healthwatch and remain committed to working together to ensure the services we provide continue to meet the needs and expectations of our local communities."

Emma Carvell,
Head of Quality and Experience
Wirral Community Health and Care NHS Foundation Trust



"The work of the 9 Healthwatch organisations across C&M has been instrumental in helping us ensure that patient experience is understood and acted upon across our commissioned services. I have found the work done on Emergency Department waits and corridor care particularly insightful. This is a priority area for the ICB to improve for our population, and the Healthwatch work has strengthened the ICB's UEC improvement plan.

The contribution that Healthwatch colleagues make to our committee and board meetings is invaluable in bringing the voice of the public and patients into the room and undoubtedly improves the decision-making processes in the ICB."

Fiona Lemmens,
Executive Clinical Director
Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board

"Healthwatch Wirral (HWW) is a vital partner in our health and care system in Wirral, they let us know when things are going well and when there are challenges for our population. HWW is an integral partner in the work of the health and care sector in our borough. HWW always acts as the voice of the individual and represents that strongly in meetings with local policy makers and service providers."



**Simon Banks,
Wirral Place Director Strategic Lead –
Mental Health, Learning Disability and Autism**

"Both Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (WUTH) and Wirral Community Health and Care NHS Foundation Trust (WCHC) continue to value the strong partnership we have with Healthwatch Wirral. Throughout 2025/2026, Healthwatch has continued to play an important role as a key partner, helping us to ensure that the views and experiences of local people inform the development and improvement of our Services."

Over the past year, Healthwatch has supported a number of areas across our Organisations, including the Red Line Toolkit, the Patient and Family Experience Group (PFEG), PLACE visits, and our Quality meetings. Healthwatch has also worked alongside our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) and Complaints teams, helping to support early engagement and resolution where appropriate. In addition, we were pleased to collaborate at the Health and Wellbeing event held in the Education Centre, Arrowe Park Hospital."

During 2025/26 Healthwatch worked with WUTH and WCHC colleagues to support individuals who frequently attend the Emergency Department, helping to ensure individuals receive appropriate support and are connected to Services that can best meet their needs."

We value the contribution Healthwatch Wirral makes through its involvement across these activities and look forward to continuing our work together in the year ahead."

**Janelle Holmes,
CEO
Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and
Wirral Community Health & Care NHS Foundation Trust.**

"We very much value the input and response from our colleagues at Healthwatch Wirral who support our Adult Social Care work programme. Our partnership is established and mature, and our work together is very beneficial to people in receipt of services locally, and also for our Carer community. Their objective and resilient view, and their flexibility to support the Council is commendable"

**Jayne Marshall,
Assistant Director
Strategic Commissioning and Integrated Partnerships
Wirral Council**

Making care easier together

Helping people navigate the complex health and care system

Many people struggle to understand where to get the right help they need at the right time. Other times, they may face barriers and need assistance to get timely support.

Some of the ways we have assisted people this year are:

- Assisted patients at our in-person hub location at Arrowe Park Hospital
- Liaised with transport services for patients with access difficulties
- Linked people with social prescribers to improve their wider needs
- Offered NHS advocacy support to get important outcomes to NHS complaints
- Assisted in changing consultant and introduction of medication by injection, leading to better pain management and fewer symptoms
- Supported in expedited access to outpatient appointments and surgeries
- NHS complaints advocacy interventions led to patients getting treatments



Listening to your experiences

Taking action:

Being truly person-centred, we are always willing to go the extra mile for people.

- A patient reported to us waiting around 7 hours for assessment in A&E after ambulance admission. They emphasised the issue was “not against any staff... who were excellent, working under stress,” but related to delays in medical review. They noted PALS processes “took several weeks” to respond, while Healthwatch “were excellent and acted much faster,” with the ability to escalate with senior department staff. An Enter and View was arranged so that Healthwatch could visit the premises.
- A carer described a series of crises involving an older relative, including an emergency hospital admission and concerns about their care. They reported feeling “at a loss... and didn’t know where to turn” while trying to navigate complex hospital systems and advocate for appropriate support. Healthwatch provided consistent support, helping the Carer understand services, navigate systems, and access appropriate care. They described this as a “lifeline,” adding that Healthwatch “explained hospital systems... and how to manage these in my relative’s best interest.” This support contributed to improved coordination of care and informed discharge planning.

“Shining through all their knowledge of Health, Social Care and Private Care Systems, is an enormous depth of compassion and respect which Healthwatch shows towards service users and carers. Their commitment to Best Practice across all Services is the hallmark of their own work. Thank you Healthwatch for making a horrendous experience more manageable and for saving my sanity.”

— Local Stakeholder

Services can’t improve if they don’t know what’s wrong. Your experiences help us to highlight issues that may otherwise go unnoticed. This year, we’ve listened to feedback from all areas of our community. Hearing people’s experience of care helps us know what’s working and what isn’t, so we can give feedback on services and help them improve.

This year, over **10,400 people** shared their experiences of health and care services in Wirral with us.

What did you tell us this year?

1. Positive experiences with caring and supportive staff:

Many people highlighted to us the kindness and professionalism shown by staff across hospitals and GP practices this year. This was particularly important for those feeling anxious or vulnerable. We heard many examples of staff taking time to explain procedures, including allowing companions to stay or catering care to individual needs.

2. Challenges accessing appointments and services:

People frequently reported difficulty getting appointments, especially with GP practices (e.g., limited availability, needing to call at specific times, and being directed to online systems that not everyone can use). Right now, dentistry access remains a significant concern—we received many calls and feedback that people cannot access NHS dentistry at all.

3. Long waits and delays in care:

Waiting times were a consistent concern across services. People described long waits for GP appointments, hospital treatment, ambulance conveyances, and time spent waiting in urgent care (sometimes in unsuitable environments with the increase in corridor care). These delays appeared to affect diagnostics and prescriptions.

4. Communication and information needs improvement:

Many people said they were not kept informed about their care. Appointment letters were missing information, they had difficulty contacting departments, a lack of updates while waiting, and were not being told about results or next steps, as examples. Some also felt healthcare conversations were not handled discreetly or sensitively.

5. Mixed experiences of digital access and inclusion:

People had varied experiences with digital systems like PATCHS and the NHS App. While some found them quick and convenient, others struggled due to a lack of digital skills and their personal preference for other channels. Several people said they still needed phone or face-to-face options to access care, but these options were not presented to them.

If you want to leave feedback on any health or care service in Wirral, visit our feedback centre at:

www.speakout.healthwatchwirral.co.uk

Our priorities

Our three priorities for **last year** were:



Carers: We held special BRIDGE Forums to showcase support for Carers. We highlighted gaps in provision with a widespread survey on Carers' access to services. We are also members of the Carers Partnership Board and contributed to Carers' events to promote and share available support.



Learning Disabilities: We worked alongside Wirral Council to provide consultations for people who use Day Services, providing independent support for these individuals to ensure their voice and thoughts were properly captured for Wirral Council in their plans for future commissioning.



Sensory Impairments: Our HIU project allowed us to work closely with people with sensory impairments. This included linking clients with Wirral Society of the Blind and Partially Sighted, improving their access to GP services, and referring them to Healthy Homes teams and occupational therapists to make their homes more suitable for their conditions.

Our three priorities for **next year** are:

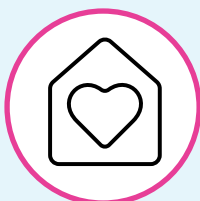
Prevention: We will continue to help the public make informed choices about their health and care needs by promoting what is available in our communities such as Pharmacy First, Enhanced Access appointments within GP practices, and utilising self-care to divert system pressures.



Urgent and Emergency Care: As Wirral residents continue to appear to be confused about which service to use, we will promote alternative ways to get help. We will also respond to problems with communications and monitor the use of Temporary Escalation Areas (corridors) and their impact.



Primary Care and Neighbourhoods: Learning from local pilots, we will consider good visions of 'locally-led' services during upcoming plans to empower Neighbourhoods. We will promote organic models, integrate local services, and put people's voices at the heart of planning.



Way Forward: Healthwatch's High Intensity Use project

What was Way Forward?

Healthwatch Wirral's non-clinical High Intensity Use (HIU) programme, designed to support people who frequently attend urgent and emergency care. Rather than focusing on treatment in hospital, we gave personalised, community-based support to help connect people with available support and feel confident in managing their health and wellbeing. Many people who attend A&E frequently deal with a mix of long-term conditions, health anxiety, past trauma, loneliness, and difficult life circumstances. Our project ran from March 2025 to March 2026.

What did we achieve?

- “ We closely supported 22 people over 12 months with 1:1 interventions and support.
- “ Of our cohort, **A&E attendances reduced by 52.70%.**
- “ Non-elective admissions (**unplanned hospital stays**) **reduced by 52.88%.**
- “ Estimated cost avoidance: £129,831 (Attendances £107,070. Admissions £22,761).
- “ Estimated net savings: £64,756 – around £1.99 saved for every £1 invested.

How did we do it?

- “ Built trusted 1:1 relationships and supported people to understand what was driving their repeated emergency service visits.
- “ Helped people access the right service first time (e.g., GP, Urgent Treatment Centre /Walk-In services, and community support).
- “ Supported people to keep up with planned appointments, letters and referrals.
- “ Helped address everyday issues that affect health and wellbeing (e.g., housing, debt, bereavement, and social isolation).

What did we learn?

During our time developing this project and offering support, we found that people often need joined-up help that looks at the whole picture: physical health, mental wellbeing, and practical life pressures. Consistency also matters a great deal. If support stops suddenly, some people can quickly feel overwhelmed again. We also found that common areas for repeated attendances were for cardiovascular and respiratory support. We will continue to work with the NHS and community partners to strengthen pathways, so more people get help and avoid reaching crisis points.

“I don't know what I would have done without your help [...] you've helped me in so many ways.” – One person we supported during the Way Forward project

Day Services consultations

What were the consultations?

At the start of 2026, we supported Wirral Council's consultations with people who use Day Services and Wirral Evolutions services by providing independent, in-person engagement to help individuals understand the questions and share their views about how Day Services might operate in the future. Aligning with our priority for those with learning disabilities, we worked with Mencap Wirral and visited 7 Day Service locations, twice, over 2 months. We encouraged people to express what mattered to them, what they enjoy, and their thoughts about Day Services moving forwards.

What did we achieve?

Our goal was to make sure that people could take part in an accessible and supportive way, capturing the individual's own views, not anyone else's. We got to know the people, helped them understand the questions and the wider implications, explained in clearer language when needed, and gave them the time and space to think about and share their views.

Our collaboration with Wirral Council and Mencap Wirral was a great strength, and we are privileged to have been the independent support for a piece of work that required great sensitivity and trust.

Impact of our contribution

"[...] Sessions were well facilitated, with strong staff preparation and effective delivery from Healthwatch and Wirral Mencap, ensuring independence and clarity. People who access the service were engaged through approaches such as icebreakers and one-to-one conversation, supporting meaningful participation. Where needed, questions were clarified by advocates and responses were accurately captured. Some individuals shared concerns, including fears about services closing and being separated from longstanding friendships. Despite this, the workshops achieved their purpose, enabling people who access the service to share their views and have their voices heard." – Parent Carer

"Healthwatch played a vital role in ensuring that the voices of people who access day services are heard, valued, and reflected in shaping meaningful and inclusive change. Their professional, friendly, and motivating delivery of the workshops provided independence and credibility, supporting people to understand the questions, express their views with confidence, and ensure those views were accurately captured. It was a pleasure to work in collaboration with Healthwatch throughout this process." – Jean Stephens, Assistant Director, Adults Social Care, Wirral Council.

Research and reports

Our reports bring together the views and experiences of Wirral residents to improve local health and care services. We conduct research, collect surveys, perform Enter and View visits, collaborate with partners, and gather evidence to understand what is working well and where change is needed. Each report explains why we chose that area, what our findings were, and our recommendations for system improvement.

You can find all our published research and reports on our website.

www.healthwatchwirral.co.uk

GP Primary Care Access Recovery Plan

We evaluated how well Wirral GPs are implementing the Access Recovery Plan. We engaged with patients, staff, managers. We saw improvements to general access levels and identified some areas for improvement including improving communication to patients and ensuring robust EQIAs were in place.

Wirral Carers Survey

For Carer's week, we reached out to unpaid Carers to gather their views on how they are getting support. We highlight the need for better identification, more inclusive primary care services, improved access to information and assessments, and stronger communication to help Carers understand and use their rights effectively.

Wirral MSK Self-Referral Review

This report summarises our independent work engaging with those who had used the self-referral pathway for the Wirral Musculoskeletal Service. Most found the process straightforward with positive accessibility and staff experiences. However, some challenges with digital-only access were identified.

NHS App and Independent Feedback

Healthwatch Wirral led a national report, bringing together over 1,700 experiences from over 19 local Healthwatch regarding using the NHS App and leaving feedback about services. We emphasised the importance of maintaining accessible channels, improving App support, and protecting independent feedback systems.

Enter and View

Enter and View is a statutory power of HWW to observe how health and social care services are run, capture people's experiences, and make recommendations. We talk to service users and choose visits based on the information we receive (e.g., local intelligence, CQC reports, or if we have not visited a site before). E&V visits are snapshots of the service and HWW does not recommend or deter in relation to any care provider.

You can find all our published Enter and View reports on our website.

www.healthwatchwirral.co.uk

Hillgrove Residential Home

Residents appeared engaged, with positive feedback from families. The environment was being actively improved through refurbishment, while staff were experienced, well trained, and worked positively with health services. There were infection prevention control inconsistencies on arrival, and some gaps in medication recording, and areas for improvement for dementia-friendly signage.

Mariners Park Care Home

Residents were comfortable and well cared for with strong person-centred care, effective medication management, and good access to GP services were evident, alongside a notable reduction in falls. Ongoing challenges included access to dental services, and a small number of environmental improvements were identified by the Healthwatch Wirral authorised representatives.

Nazareth House Care Home

Staff demonstrated compassionate care and good engagement, supported by appropriate staffing, strong infection prevention control, and effective safety systems. Residents were active and engaged, with positive relationships, training, and communication reported by staff and families. Ongoing challenges included access to dental services and some hospital discharge issues.

Arrowe Park Hospital

This visit examined 'Temporary Escalation Areas' to understand the process and implications for corridor care during peak hospital times. Staff wellbeing, including the impact of Moral Injury, was recognised, with existing practices such as regular staff huddles in place and opportunities to strengthen support and escalation. Future work is needed to review patient safety and experiences.

Our wonderful volunteers

This year, we welcomed new volunteers to our team and are grateful for the valuable contributions they have made. Our volunteers have helped with focus testing, reading materials, administration duties, and carrying out Enter and View visits by being authorised representatives.

Our fantastic volunteers gave **1,231 hours** to support our work this year alone, equating to a monetary value of **£36,960**. We value our volunteers very highly and thank them for their dedication and commitment to Healthwatch and our vision.



Volunteer
Norma Ovens

"I have recently retired after 51 years as a Registered Nurse. My career spanned various disciplines within the NHS, including District Nursing Sister and Practice Educator, Midwifery, and Palliative Care. I also worked as a Nurse at Wirral Ark Homeless Hostel. I wanted to continue as a Patient advocate, which is why I decided to join Wirral Healthwatch as a volunteer. Although aware of Healthwatch nationally, I discovered more about our local branch following a talk given to my PCN Cooperation group by Jacqui Canning, which inspired me to find out more. I had no idea how much effort the organisation contributes towards acting as a voice for the vulnerable in our area and I'm really pleased to be able to make a small contribution to such a valuable and worthwhile cause."

— Norma

"Although I spent my career doing something entirely different, I came from a family where various members were involved in health and social care, and I have always had an interest in it. Following my retirement, I decided that I would like to spend some of my free time doing something where I could make a contribution in the local community. I became a member of my GP Patient Participation Group and subsequently served on a patients group representing a number of GP practises across Wirral. I could see what a positive contribution Healthwatch were making in the locality and couldn't wait to get involved. I'm so glad I did and I'm now one of their authorised representatives. I've been struck by the professionalism, dedication and friendliness of everybody working at Healthwatch Wirral. I've felt that my contribution has been valued and hope that it's made a difference to the various activities that I've been asked to support. As a volunteer, I really couldn't ask for more."

— Stephen

"Volunteering is fulfilling and worthwhile, and is helping me develop my skills in a nurturing environment"

— Penny

Next year, Healthwatch Wirral's **Citizen's Panel** will gather the views and experiences of real people to help shape local services. This group will meet regularly to share views, discuss issues, and express their thoughts with the design of Wirral services moving forwards.

If you are interested in joining our Citizen's Panel, or in becoming a volunteer, please contact us at **0151 230 8957** or email **info@healthwatchwirral.co.uk**

Financial & statutory statements

How do we receive funding?

We receive funding from central government under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to carry out our statutory duties. This money is delivered via **Wirral Council**, as part of Local Reform and Community Voices (LRCV) grant.

We also receive some additional funding to carry out short-term projects and evaluations.

Our income and expenditures

Income		Expenditure	
Funding Received from LA to deliver Healthwatch statutory activities	£191,255	Operational Costs:	£22,095
HWW NHS Complaints Advocacy Support	£20,250	Staffing Costs:	£158,721
		Office Costs:	£30,689
Total income:	£211,505	Total Expenditure:	£211,505

What we do

At Healthwatch Wirral, our role is simple: we utilise our statutory powers, duties and activities to help make health and social care work better for everyone. As an independent organisation, we are designed to give local people a powerful voice in shaping their health and social care services, both for today and for the future.

How we work

We listen to your experiences with health and social care services and ensure that those who plan and deliver these services hear your views. We recognise that various factors such as culture, employment, education, access to technology, transportation, discrimination, and place of residence can significantly impact health. We are dedicated to amplifying the voices of those who are often unheard and working to reduce barriers and improve health outcomes for all.

Listen. Share. Influence.

'Foundations of Quality Improvement should always have what patients tell us about their treatment and care at the heart of everything, as a system, that we plan and do. We must be able to evidence that all actions and decisions made come back to this, making certain that everyone feels respected, involved and valued at each and every part of the journey. We should all feel confident that we are either giving or receiving quality care.'

- Healthwatch Wirral, Age UK Wirral, NHS England and Emergency Care Improvement Support Team, Wirral System

Our Statutory Functions Include:

- Obtaining people's views about their needs and experiences of local health and social care services and sharing these views with those involved in the commissioning, provision and scrutiny of care services.
- Promoting and supporting the involvement of people in the monitoring, commissioning and provision of local health and social care services.
- Providing information and advice to the public about accessing health and social care services and options available to them.
- Conducting 'Enter and View' visits to health and social care services and reporting our observations and findings.

The uniqueness of Healthwatch

We are uniquely placed to listen, observe, gather, interpret and report on the lived experience of local people to provide knowledge to help inform decisions about the planning and provision of both health and social care.

We gather data to help identify and address inequalities and we have aligned our priorities again this year to the principles of Core20Plus5 focussing on the Plus5 element and to include Carers, Language & Translation, Sensory Impairment and Interpretation support, ensuring that HWW priorities are in tune with the local system.

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