healthwatch Manchester

# Speaking up for better care

## Healthwatch Manchester Annual Report 2025/26

healthwatch Manchester

# Contents


| | |
|---|---|
| A message from our Chair | 3 |
| About us | 4 |
| Our year in numbers | 5 |
| A year of making a difference | 6 |
| Working together for change | 7 |
| Volunteering at Healthwatch Manchester | 8 |
| Listening to your experiences | 9 |
| Hearing from all communities | 12 |
| Information and signposting | 14 |
| Finance and future priorities | 16 |
| Statutory statements | 18 |

**Chief Executive Officer**
Neil Walbran

*An eventful year with Healthwatch Manchester lobbying and campaigning for independent citizens' voice in health and care as well as getting on with everything else we needed to do.*

*Our campaign took us into a national network for local Healthwatch where we worked constructively to bring about amendments to the Health & Care Bill – and it paid off with MPs calling for amendments to scrap the clauses abolishing Healthwatch.*

*Meanwhile we got stuck into our extensive workplan for 25/26 and I'm pleased and proud to report that our biggest area of work paid off wonderfully.*

*Our review of compliance with standards for disabled people by GP Practice resulted in an automatic large-scale improvement by primary care in Manchester. From now on, if you're sensory disabled/impaired or learning disabled you can now better understand information and be better understood in our GP practices.*

*As we move forward into what may or may not be our final year as Healthwatch I'm glad that's one of the legacies we leave for this city.*

# A message from our chair

*It is my pleasure, as Chair of Healthwatch Manchester, to introduce this Annual Report and reflect on another year of listening, learning and making a difference for the people of Manchester.*

*At Healthwatch Manchester, we believe that everyone should have the opportunity to share their experiences of health and social care and know that their voice matters. Every conversation, survey, engagement event and piece of feedback helps build a clearer picture of what is working well, where improvements are needed, and how services can better meet the needs of our diverse communities.*

*This year, we have continued to reach people whose voices are too often unheard, supporting residents to access information, navigate services and raise concerns with confidence. We have worked alongside communities experiencing health inequalities, ensuring that lived experience remains at the heart of service improvement and decision-making across the city.*

*This year, our lived experience-led work helped GP practices improve awareness and implementation of the Accessible Information Standard, demonstrating the impact of collaborative, co-produced improvement.*

*Perhaps most importantly, this year's feedback has reinforced just how much local people value Healthwatch Manchester. Residents consistently describe us as an independent, trusted and confidential organisation that provides a safe place to be heard. For many, we are more than a source of information—we are an advocate, a critical friend to the health and care system, and a bridge between communities and decision-makers.*

**Chair**
Amanda Smith

*I would like to thank everyone who has taken the time to share their experiences with us this year. I also extend my sincere thanks to our dedicated staff, volunteers, Board members and partners, whose passion and commitment make this work possible. Within an uncertain landscape, together, we will continue to ensure that the voices of Manchester residents shape better, fairer and more accessible health and social care services for everyone.*

# About us

Healthwatch **Manchester** 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

To enable real and long-term improvements to the health and social care of the people and communities of Manchester.

### Our mission

Healthwatch Manchester is an independent not-for-profit organisation driven by national government policy, mandated by legislation and its local membership and supported by the Local Authority. Through engaging and informing the people and communities of Manchester as their consumer champion and influencing the design and commissioning of services, Healthwatch Manchester seeks to improve access to and experience of health and social care.

### Our values are:

- Be independent, non-political and impartial in our activities
- Be non-judgmental, open and transparent, and seek the trust of local people
- Actively engage with seldom heard communities
- Value the people and communities of Manchester and their contributions
- Act as a critical friend and always challenge constructively
- Reflective of a strong evidence-base
- Realistic and influential
- Innovative and adaptable
- We are a local listening service
- We provide information and signposting
- We work with local people to improve health and social care services

# Our year in numbers

In 2025/2026 we supported over 500 people to have their say and get information about their care. We employed **5** staff and, our work was supported by **3** volunteers.

## Reaching out:

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

**242** people came to us for clear advice and information on topics such as **accessing mental health** services and **finding an NHS Dentist.**

## Championing your voice:

We produced **86** reports as a result of our **Accessible Information Standard(AIS) compliance** in GP Practice project which addressed the concerns of Manchester's citizens with **differing communication needs**.

Our most popular report was the **'Meeting the Standard?'** which detailed the extent to which GP Practice in Manchester meet the AIS.

## Statutory funding:

We're funded by **Manchester City Council**. In 2025/26 we received **£152,059,** which is **3% 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 Manchester. Here are a few highlights.

A large portion of our time this year was spent planning, conducting and completing our Accessible Information Standard Project which include visiting all **84 GP Practice** in Manchester to assess their knowledge, understanding and implementation of the standard. The results from these visits have been published in a publicly available league table on our website to showcase the best and worst performing Practice. Finally, the report itself was presented by HWM at the June 2026 Health and Wellbeing Board at Manchester City Council.

We continued our support and maintenance of both our Men's and Women's Health & Care Forums. Manchester Men Speak Up and Manchester Women Together were once again regularly updated with relevant health and care news, advice and some fantastic interviews about testicular cancer to the home birthing service. We will continue to support these platforms and keep the content, advice and information coming your way.

Outreach is one of the most important functions we perform at Healthwatch Manchester. That is why we spent a significant amount of time and effort over the last year visiting **20 local libraries, leisure centres, community venues and food banks** among other locations, speaking with communities around the city about their health and social care experiences. Keep an eye out for us over the next year and pop over for a chat with our lovely outreach team.

# Working together for change

We've worked with neighbouring Healthwatch to ensure people's experiences of care in Greater Manchester are heard at the Integrated Care System (ICS) level, and they influence decisions made about services across Greater Manchester.

This year, we've worked with 9 Healthwatch across Greater Manchester to achieve the following:

## A collaborative network of local Healthwatch:

At the start of this collaboration in 2022, we set out a 3 year All Age Strategy. Over the lifetime of the strategy, we have met and exceeded all objectives set and agreed. This achievement reflects not just activity, but meaningful progress in how public voice is understood, valued, and used across Greater Manchester. Importantly, this progress has been achieved while maintaining the independence of local Healthwatch and strengthening our collective voice at a Greater Manchester level.

## A big conversation:

We listened to thousands of people across Greater Manchester about a wide variety of topics across health and social care. These insights were shared at both local and ICS level to inform strategy, consultations and influence service design.

Our promise to champion the experiences of people and communities throughout Greater Manchester is as strong as ever.

## Building strong relationships to achieve more:

The All-Age Strategy has created a clear and practical legacy. We have established a credible, trusted and independent public voice model that complements local statutory delivery while enabling collective influence across the system.

The landscape around us may be changing, but we're still looking ahead and are committed to evolving, strengthening, and championing independent public voice across Greater Manchester.

# Volunteering at Healthwatch manchester

Over the last 13 years, we have worked with a number of fantastic volunteers who have all helped Healthwatch Manchester produce some invaluable work

This year, our three volunteers have worked hard on a variety of projects. From providing high level feedback on our reports and resources to coming along with the team to conduct groundbreaking Enter and View visits, the volunteering team have done a wonderful job this year.

Here are some quotes from our volunteers explaining their roles and experience at Healthwatch Manchester:

"I've been a member of HWM's Citizen Reader Panel for three years and remain impressed by the breadth of services they offer to my fellow Mancunians. Having the opportunity to provide feedback on their various reports means I see the detailed analysis and practical solutions the team offer so that services can continue to improve and meet the needs of the public better."

Janet, Member of the Citizens Reading Panel

"I worked with Healthwatch Manchester on an Enter and view visit for a mental health assessment unit based within Wythenshawe hospital. I found the process informative and felt incredibly supported by the HWM team from planning through to the on-site visit.

They took the time to listen to myself and the other volunteer and our lived experience when considering how the space might be improved. After the visit, the team kept us informed of any subsequent updates from the trust involved and made us feel part of the process from start to finish."

Dan, Enter and View Volunteer

# 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.

# Accessible Information Standard Compliance in GP Practice

**Over the last year, we spent time visiting each GP Practice in Manchester to assess their knowledge and understanding of the Accessible Information Standard (AIS).**

The AIS sets out how providers of NHS and publicly funded adult social care services should ensure disabled people and people with impairments or sensory loss can access and understand information about NHS and adult social care services and receive the communication support they need to use those services

## What did we do

We devised a six-question survey designed to assess each Practice on how they meet their patients' differing information and communication needs. After visiting and scoring all 84 Practice in Manchester, we created a League Table which is available on our website for the duration of the project.

## Key things we heard:

**20%** **of GP Practice provided signposting to the correct advocacy providers for the city**

**18%** **of GP Practice are compliant with the AIS (*based on the findings from our surveys*)**

**94%** **of GP Practice have a good understanding of the AIS following our survey and intervention**

This review and subsequent support has had a significant effect on increasing compliance with the AIS. Moreover, we can conclude that perseverance in the face of resistance to this form of intervention is best conducted in the spirit of cooperation, collaboration and overall assistance in achieving the standard.

## What difference did this make?

After a year of surveys and support, awareness and compliance with the Accessible Information Standard has increased in Manchester's GP Practice, subsequently improving services for patients with differing information and communication needs.

# Enter and View at the Southmoor Suite

**At the start of the year, we performed an Enter and View visit to the newly developed Southmoor Suite. This is a dedicated space for patients experiencing a mental health crisis who come to the Emergency Department of Wythenshawe hospital.**

The purpose of our visit was to:

- Observe the environment and routine of the venue
- Speak to patients about their experience, focusing specifically on the appointment booking system and consultations.
- Give staff an opportunity to share their opinions and feedback about the service.

## Key findings from our visit:

Upon our unannounced arrival, we found the **department was locked and unstaffed**. After being shown into the Suite by a member of staff, we were surprised to find there were **no other staff or patients present** in the department.

After a short wait, the Team Manager of the Mental Health Liaison Team arrived and explained how the Southmoor Suite is **used for low-risk patients.**

The Team Manager told HWM that the department is not well staffed and admitted that the department has not been used at times in the past due to there **not being enough staff to operate it.**

## What happened following our visit?

We **produced a full list of recommendations** based on the findings from our visit to the Suite. For example, **asking Greater Manchester Mental Health Foundation Trust to complete a full access audit** and signage review as well as improved A&E staff's familiarity with the use and necessity of the Southmoor Suite.

Our report details both our **internal and external observational findings,** as well as findings from speaking with Management.

**The Trust have kindly provided a response** to our report which can be found, along with further key findings and recommendations, in **the full report.**

# Hearing from all communities

We're here for all residents of Manchester. 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:**

- Supporting the Jain Samaj community to receive appropriate food options in Manchester's hospitals.
- Highlighting the importance of women's mental and physical health through our awareness interview with the founder of The Inspirational Women Chizzy Ijeh.
- Conducting multiple outreach sessions at The Bread and Butter Thing's affordable food hubs, directly reaching families in poverty.

# Reaching different communities through our men's and women's health & care forums

## World Mental Health Day: Shining a light on suicide interview

**The Manchester Men Speak Up forum regularly highlights the importance of talking about mental health which is why we included 'Speak Up' in the name. For World Mental Health Day, we wanted to encourage this conversation.**

In October, Forum Lead Daniel collaborated with the Shining a Light on Suicide Campaign to help raise awareness of mental health and suicide.

Adele Owen, Greater Manchester Suicide & Bereavement Support Program Manager, spoke with Daniel about the worrying statistics for death by suicide in Greater Manchester. Adele spoke passionatly about the importance of speaking to someone when you're feeling depressed and suicidal.

We recorded, produced and published this interview in time for World Mental Health Day. Following this, we promoted it across our social media channels to reach as many vulnerable people as we could in the hope that people will get the conversation started and speak up about mental health.

## Raising awareness of Manchester's Infant Feeding Team

**The Manchester Women Together forum produced numerous interviews, blogs and information bulletins over the year promoting different support services available for women such as the Infant Feeding Team.**

Earlier in the year, Forum Lead Ada sat down and spoke with the Manchester Infant Feeding Team to learn more about the free support available for parents across the city.

This 'Question and Answer' style interview was an important session aimed at educating people with newborn babies on the most asked questions.

The team kindly answered questions about breast milk production, pain whilst breastfeeding and dietary changes to help make feeding your baby a more confident and enjoyable experience.

You can watch our interview and find the free resources on Manchester Women Together here.

# 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 460 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
- Supporting people to look after their health
- Signposting people to additional support services

# Referrals to Advocacy Services

**Over the last 12 months we have worked closely with the VoiceAbility advocacy service, both referring patients directly and through spreading awareness in GP Practice**

Over the past year, we have directed citizens of Manchester directly to the VoiceAbility advocacy service 43 times through our Information and Signposting service. VoiceAbility are one of the UK's largest providers of advocacy and involvement services.

Moreover, as part of our Accessible information Standard in GP Practice project, we provided all 84 GP Practice in Manchester with accurate contact details for both the VoiceAbility and Coram Voice advocacy services.

We also requested each GP Practice display the advocacy service information in their waiting room. This would improve their position on our AIS League Table.

This initiative saw 25% of the total number of GP Practice in Manchester begin signposting to these advocacy services.

# General Information and Signposting

**As briefly mentioned above, Healthwatch Manchester provide an Information and Signposting service as part of our contractual obligation.**

Over the year, we log all information and signposting contacts thoroughly to establish any trends or outliers in our general knowledge of services.

This year, 38% of contacts we received were in relation to a GP Practice, and 35% were about the hospital service. We also received enquiries about pharmacy services (9%) this year and 10% were regarding dentists. This latter figure is a marked decrease from our statistics for 2021-2024.

Our data also revealed that women are far more likely to contact Healthwatch Manchester than men. In fact, 69% of contacts we received over the last year came from women.

When reviewing the data by age, we found that the group we hear from most often (23%) is aged 65-79. Only 3% of those who contacted HWM were people between 18-24.

# Finance and future priorities

We receive funding from Manchester 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 Government | £152,059 | Expenditure on pay | £118,253 |
| Additional income | £0 | Non-pay expenditure | £18,893 |
| | | Office and management fee | £17,400 |
| **Total income** | **£152,059** | **Total Expenditure** | **154,546** |

**Over the next year, we will keep reaching out to every part of society, especially people in the most deprived areas, so that those in power hear their views and experiences.**

We will also work together with partners and our local Integrated Care System to help develop an NHS culture where, at every level, staff strive to listen and learn from patients to make care better.

### Our top three priorities for the next year are:

1. Review of AIS compliance within our hospital trust
2. Review of health and care integration in hospital discharge
3. Support for managers of full-time-care providers in AIS compliance

# Statutory statements

**Healthwatch Manchester, First Floor, Railway Cottage, 33 Collier Street, Manchester, M3 4NA.**

**Healthwatch Manchester uses the Healthwatch Trademark when undertaking our statutory activities as covered by the license agreement.**

## The way we work

**Involvement of volunteers and lay people in our governance and decision-making.**

Our Healthwatch Board consists of seven members who work voluntarily to provide direction, oversight, and scrutiny of our activities.

Our Board ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community.

Throughout 2025/26, the Board met five times and made decisions on matters such as our budget and future workplan. We also arrange wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities.

## Methods and systems used during 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 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.

# Statutory statements

## Responses to recommendations

We sent four Freedom of Information Requests to ICNH Limited, NHS England, Manchester City Council and NHS Greater Manchester. All providers responded to our requests.

There were no issues or recommendations escalated by us to the Healthwatch England Committee, so there were no resulting reviews or investigations.

## Taking people's experiences to decision-makers

We ensure that people who can make decisions about services hear about the insights and experiences that citizens have shared with us. For example, in our local authority area, we take information to the Manchester Quality and Clinical Effectiveness Group.

We also take relevent insight and experiences to decision-makers in the Greater Manchester Integrated Care Board (ICB). For example, we present collective intelligence from across the region to strategic forums such as the Quality and Performance Committee, the System Quality Group, the Integrated Care Partnership Board and the Children and Young Persons Board, and thematic system groups.

This is often done collaboratively through the Healthwatch in Greater Manchester Network, bringing together local insight from all ten boroughs. By working together in this way, we can highlight both common themes and local variation, ensuring that the voices of Manchester influence decisions at every level of the ICS. We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

## Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Manchester is represented on the Manchester Health and Wellbeing Board by our chair Amanda Smith.

During 2025/26, our representative has effectively carried out this role by attending each meeting and speaking up on behalf of Manchester citizens.

Unlike the other Healthwatch in Greater Manchester, Healthwatch Manchester is not represented on its Integrated Care Partnerships or Integrated Care Board.

# Statutory statements

## Enter and view

| Location | Reason for visit | What you did as a result |
|---|---|---|
| 84 GP Practice in Manchester | Assess understanding and compliance with the Accessible Information Standard (AIS). | Produced a report detailing the findings which was presented to our Health and Wellbeing Board. |
| The Southmoor Suite | To review the service provision and learn about this new department. | Produced an Enter and View Report detailing our findings and recommendations. |
| Manchester Integrative Medical Practice – Longsight Medical Centre Site | We had received many negative contacts from citizens of Manchester regarding this Practice. | Produced an Enter and View Report detailing our findings and recommendations. |
| The Robert Darbishire Practice | We had received many negative contacts from citizens of Manchester regarding this Practice. | Produced an Enter and View Report detailing our findings and recommendations. |

| Project/activity | Outcomes achieved |
|---|---|
| Review of Accessible Information Standard Compliance in GP Practice | Improved awareness and compliance with the AIS |
| Addressing Jain food options in hospitals | After meeting with the hospital trust, we helped reestablish the provision of Jain friendly food options in Manchester hospitals |
| Understanding public opinion of Artificial Intelligence in health and care | Through an online survey, we collected primary data from Manchester citizens which indicated general opposition to the use of AI in health and care |
| Maintenance of both our Men's and Women's Health & Care Forums | We produced a series of interviews about different health conditions, services and organisations to spread awareness and start important conversations about them. |

healthwatch Manchester

**Healthwatch Manchester**
**Railway Cottage, 33A Collier Street,**
**Manchester, M3 4NA**

www healthwatchmanchester.co.uk

0300 078 0669

info@healthwatchmanchester.co.uk

/Healthwatch Manchester

@HealthWatchMcr

@healthwatchmcr

@healthwatch-england

@healthwatchmcr.bsky.social