

# Championing what matters to you

Healthwatch Wigan and Leigh  
Annual Report 2021-22



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# Message from our Chair

As we all know, the rollercoaster of the pandemic was set to bring fresh challenges during its second year. Despite this we have continued throughout to engage with the public, to listen to experiences of health services and social care settings and to work on behalf of us all to bring key findings to the attention of those who can bring about positive change. During the past year, the Wigan and Leigh team have risen to the challenge of virtual meetings, reached out into the community via online platforms and found innovative ways to work with different sectors of the community. Where possible we have ventured out and tentatively restarted our face-to-face work. We have concentrated our engagement with those that may find it more difficult for their voices to be heard and increased our efforts to talk to young people, the deaf community and those that reside in the less affluent areas of the borough where health inequalities seem to be more visible.



**Mick Hodlin**  
Chair

Much of the difference we make is achieved through attending meetings on behalf of the local population. In these meetings we can influence future policies and services by summarising the key messages that local people have told us.

We have represented local people on over 20 different strategic decision-making forums that meet regularly over the past year. This includes various transformation Boards looking at Primary Care, Mental Health, Community Services and Urgent and Emergency Care.



“I would like to take this opportunity to thank the team, including the many volunteers, who have worked so hard over the past year to report on the issues which are of most importance to the people of the Wigan Borough. It is testament to the strength of our team that we have been awarded the contract to continue our work. We are delighted to be able to continue and develop our work and look forward to a very productive year ahead.”

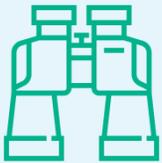
**Mick Hodlin, Chair of Healthwatch Wigan and Leigh Board**



# About us

## Your health and social care champion

Healthwatch Wigan and Leigh is your local health and social care champion. From Wigan North to Atherton and everywhere in between, we make sure NHS leaders and other decision makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care. We can also help you to find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.



### Our vision

A world where we can all get the health and care we need.



### Our mission

To make sure people's experiences help make health and care better.



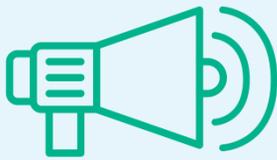
### Our values

- Listening to people and making sure their voices are heard.
- Including everyone in the conversation – especially those who don't always have their voice heard.
- Analysing different people's experiences to learn how to improve care.
- Acting on feedback and driving change.
- Partnering with care providers, Government, and the voluntary sector – serving as the public's independent advocate.

# Our year in review

Find out how we have engaged and supported people.

## Reaching out



**409 people**

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

**46,966 people**

came to us for clear advice and information about topics such as mental health and COVID-19.

## Making a difference to care



We published

**3 reports**

about the improvements people would like to see to health and social care services.

Our most popular report was

**Access to Dentistry.**

which highlighted the struggles people have on the lack of access to NHS dentist appointments.

## Health and care that works for you



We're lucky to have

**33**

outstanding volunteers, who gave up **72 days** to make care better for our community.

We're funded by our local authority. In 2021-22 we received:

**£200,000**

We also currently employ

**7 staff**

who help us carry out this work.

# Advisory Committee

The Advisory Committee plays an important role in contributing to Wigan Borough Healthwatch CIC strategic direction, analysing information and data that is received through the day-to-day work of Healthwatch.

The Committee has been meeting monthly since September 2021 and now has agreed Terms of Reference, developed a Decision-Making Process and has appointed members to various committees who report on activity across Wigan Borough and Greater Manchester.

The Advisory Committee has agreed the reports and action plans on the Access to Primary Care Services and Accessing Mental Health Urgent and Emergency Care in a Crisis projects and evaluated the feedback from local people on what they considered health and care priorities for this Borough.

The Committee considered this data against the Wigan Borough Locality plan priorities, Healthwatch England priorities and NHS England priorities.

As an independent organisation, we feel this approach is important, to ensure an informed decision has been reached and is reflective of the views that have been shared with us.

The thematic areas for Healthwatch Wigan and Leigh for 2022-2023 will focus on the following:

- Care Homes (led by HWWL Authorised Representatives)
- Mental Health
- Communications
- Integration of Health and Social Care.

The Advisory Committee will continue to meet monthly and if anyone requires further information about how to become a Healthwatch Wigan and Leigh Authorised Representative or about our work plan contact 01942 834666 or email [karen.wilson@healthwatchwiganandleigh.co.uk](mailto:karen.wilson@healthwatchwiganandleigh.co.uk)



## PATIENT EXPERIENCE OF CONTINENCE CARE IN THE WIGAN BOROUGH

Continence isn't something that gets discussed much but good continence services play a vital role in keeping people independent and well in our communities.

Healthwatch Wigan and Leigh wanted to hear the patient's experience of continence care in the Wigan Borough and to develop opportunities for voluntary sector organisations to link with services in the Borough providing continence care, support and advice. We sent information through our networks, social media platforms and the Healthwatch website seeking anonymised experiences of patients, carers, and parents, of local residents who have accessed the continence service or related services.

### Project anticipated outcomes

To gain an insight into continence care provided in the Wigan Borough; to provide feedback for services on what works well and what could be improved; to identify gaps in communication and to improve the quality of continence care in the Wigan Borough.

To link the voluntary sector into services providing continence care in the Borough.

### FEEDBACK FROM THE PUBLIC

Healthwatch and Embrace Wigan and Leigh met with the lead Commissioner at Wigan Borough Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), the Clinical Manager and the Clinical Lead for the continence service to were given updates on the service following the resumption to normal service following the Covid 19 outbreak. The lead officer for Embrace had been supporting a local family with some issues for their children for over a year and by bringing the Continence Service and voluntary sector together that issue was resolved in less than 48 hours. A fantastic outcome for a family.

We had very limited response to our requests for patient experiences, however, a member of the public informed Healthwatch that when their spouse had a stroke and was diagnosed with dementia, the family were not informed that help was available and were initially buying products for the patient. They felt that at a time when they needed support, services did not communicate with each other or to the patient and carer, and they waited over 12 months before being referred to the service for an assessment.

### FEEDBACK FROM THE PROVIDER

Thank you for your work on this and in supporting the continence service and the subsequent report.

The Clinical Nurse Specialist Continence and I have discussed the report and we believe that there is still some lack of awareness / clarity with some health and social care professionals about the role of universal services and the role of the specialist continence service within continence.

The continence service does receive and accept referrals from all specialties ie stroke team, neuro team. The Continence service offers and provide regular training to health care teams, social care teams, education, and care home providers. Training has been disrupted during the covid pandemic, but this is very much now re-established and being delivered. Hopefully this will help with people's awareness of the service and communication between services. The continence service is continuing to work with universal services to provide support, education, and expert knowledge in continence. One of our actions because of the report is that the continence service will provide a written update on the work of the WWL community continence service within the Wrightington Wigan and Leigh NS Trust (WWL) newsletter, which goes to all staff.



# Community Pharmacy Support

Healthwatch was contacted by ThinkAhead Community Stroke Groups who had been receiving feed back from their clients about difficulties in getting their medications in blister pack form. They had discussed this with the Stroke Association and Community Stroke team to check if they were hearing the same feedback.

Healthwatch took this information to the Medicines Management team at Wigan Borough Clinical Commissioning Group who explained that there are several factors to consider when patients are referred to their community pharmacy for support to take their medicines safely. Several aids are available to support adherence and although blister packs have historically been one of the most common adjustments made by pharmacies to support medicines taking, there is limited evidence to support them being the 'best' intervention for all patients. There is a lot of work going on regionally to ensure that a wide range of compliance aids are considered for medicines support and that blister packs are only issued where an assessment has demonstrated it is the most appropriate adjustment which will benefit an individual patient.

We were informed that the community teams can continue to refer patients to their community pharmacy for an assessment of medicines support, but this should not be with the expectation that the assessment will specifically result in the provision of a blister pack.

The outcome of this is that ThinkAhead is now linked in with the Assistant Director of Medicines Management who will support them if they continue to have any issues in obtaining support from pharmacies for their patients so she will try and address these with the individual pharmacies to understand what the issues are. Her team can also help if anything is unclear or there are any further questions relating to compliance support or the provision of blister packs in particular.



# Listening to your experiences

Services can't make improvements without hearing your views. That's why over the last year we have made listening to feedback from all areas of the community a priority. This allows us to understand the full picture, and feedback to services to help them improve!



# Spotlight on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Our volunteer Mohammed has been engaging with the Muslim community in the local area and at the mosque in Wigan. His approach to capture peoples' experiences and concerns around using health or social care services has been extremely versatile. Mohammed has engaged directly with individuals at his local shops and cafes and listened to their stories. He has also translated and handed out questionnaires in Arabic, Kurdish and Urdu to be inclusive of all the voices in his communities. Alternatively, individuals could have their say online via web links or QR Code if they preferred.



Mohammed also asked the Imam at the mosque if he would disseminate information about the role of Healthwatch and why it is so important that the voices of all our local people are captured. The Imam was key in raising this awareness and building confidence amongst this community so they would tell us about their own experiences and recognize in doing this they can influence how services are run.

We want to continue to build these relationships and are hoping to celebrate Eid by joining these families for breakfast. Our next steps are to install information and communication boxes at the Mosque to allow continuous dialogue as well as meeting with the Imam at the Leigh Mosque to widen our reach and aim to be inclusive to all the needs of the people of this Borough.

## Accessing care through General Practice

Healthwatch Wigan and Leigh have received a significant number of comments from the public with concerns about not being able to access the services at their GP. Consequently, we identified four key areas to explore within this piece of work.

- We wanted to find out whether the information provided on GP websites was easy to navigate, accessible and up to date.
- We wanted to understand how people wanted to make appointments and how easy this was for them and how it had changed due to the pandemic.
- We wanted to hear about the digital platforms people were using to access their surgery; and what was working well for them.
- We also carried out interviews with professionals working in the primary care setting to contextualise people's experiences from a clinical perspective and to find out how these changes had affected working practices.

From July to October using, online, telephones and face to face methods we:

- Completed 265 questionnaires
- Interviewed 32 people
- A team of volunteers led a review of all GP websites in the borough. We targeted marginalized cohorts of the community including the homeless, deaf and hard of hearing and our veterans.

### Key Findings

- Patients want choice
- Patients are not feeling valued
- Some patients felt at increased risk because they were unable to access care because the digital technology the practice was choosing to use was not accessible or available to them
- Patients are finding it difficult to book appointments
- Patients were liking being able to order repeat prescriptions using the practice website or 'MY GP' app.

### Response

'We remain on this journey of improvement, establishing forums to support practices to share learning and experience with the goal of creating a more consistent and standardised approach for patients, and we believe that improvements are starting to be seen. This includes practices engaging with patients through working relationships between staff and PPG members to receive feedback discuss and agree areas for improvement.'

Provided by CCG Primary Care Committee (14.03.22)



### What next?

To work in partnership with Patient Participation Groups (PPG) to support them to engage with their own patient cohort to capture specific patient needs to continue to reduce the barriers to accessing care.

# Dentistry

The most common theme that we receive calls about through our information and signposting role is from people seeking access to NHS dentist services.

We have worked with local Healthwatch organisations in Greater Manchester, and with Healthwatch England, to raise the profile of the issues around local people and their challenges accessing NHS dentistry services.



We are pleased to have made links with the Chair of the Wigan and Bolton Local Dental Committee and Dental Advisory to Greater Manchester who has worked with us to facilitate access to an NHS dentist for children and vulnerable adults. He has also supported us to clarify information patients may be unclear about and treatment pathways they have been offered to make sure they are fully informed before making decisions about their care and treatment.



Thank you so much for your help. A dentist called me today and I have arranged an appointment for my 2 children on the 2nd of December!

Thank you for your help – I've had a call from a dentist with an appointment for my elderly mum.



We have also escalated the issue to Wigan's Health and Care Scrutiny Committee who have overwhelmingly given their support for Healthwatch to put pressure on the system to improve access to NHS dentistry.

The impact of our work recently made it into the Manchester Evening News followed by an article in the Sunday Times. We hope that this, and the support and endorsement of the work being undertaken by Healthwatch England and Healthwatch in Greater Manchester in relation to their work highlighting the challenges with accessing NHS dentistry services raises the profile on this subject.

Unfortunately, we don't hold a list of dentists – but if you use this link, you can check by your post code: <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-dentist>  
If you suffer severe dental pain, there is an emergency dental line: 0333 332 3800.

## Mental Health Urgent & Emergency Care in a Crisis project

We have been continuing our work on our Mental Health Urgent & Emergency Care in a Crisis project, led by our Engagement Officer Andrea.

The purpose of this project is to listen to the experiences of Wigan and Leigh residents who have accessed urgent and emergency treatment during a mental health crisis, collecting their positive experiences as well as any potential difficulties they've faced while accessing this care. Here are some of the pieces of engagement work we undertook this.

### Mental Health Support Hub

In November, we attended the Mental Health Support Hub to hear from the people using the service what it was like for them. Some of the comments received included:



It's brilliant – people understand you and are here for you.



I have now built up my communication skills and can now talk to people. I have made new friends in my community.



We have also supported this service by signposting them to some animal therapy and art therapy services. We are also looking for a music therapy service to support the hub, so please contact us if you have any recommendations.

# Mapping of Mental Health Voluntary Community Sector Enterprises

During the time Healthwatch was undertaking their project on Access to Urgent and Emergency Care In A Crisis, it came to light that providers of services and residents didn't know who, where and how to access any mental health voluntary community faith sector enterprises/organisations.

Healthwatch raised this issue at the Mental Health Wellbeing Task Group which is a part of Wigan Boroughs Mental Health Strategy 2021\_24 and many more arenas.

Since raising this issue the newly appointed Voluntary Community Sector Transformation Manager for mental health services is starting to hold community workshops with the voluntary and community organisations. As they want to make sure they are a part of the new mental health pathways and that their voices are heard and listened to.



# Advice and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch Wigan and Leigh is here for you. In times of worry or stress, we can provide confidential support and free information to help you understand your options and get the help you need. Whether it's finding an NHS dentist, how to make a complaint or choosing a good care home for a loved one – you can count on us.



## Examples of Advice & information articles produced this year

NHS Covid Pass – what is it and how do I get it?

<https://healthwatchwiganandleigh.co.uk/advice-and-information/2021-07-21/nhs-covid-pass-what-it-and-how-do-i-get-it>



Avoiding falls – elderly fall prevention

<https://healthwatchwiganandleigh.co.uk/advice-and-information/2021-07-26/avoiding-falls-elderly-fall-prevention>

Accessing mental health support

<https://healthwatchwiganandleigh.co.uk/advice-and-information/2021-08-04/accessing-mental-health-support>



Getting an autism diagnosis and assessment

<https://healthwatchwiganandleigh.co.uk/advice-and-information/2021-08-04/getting-autism-diagnosis-and-assessment>

How do I get a social care needs assessment?

<https://healthwatchwiganandleigh.co.uk/advice-and-information/2021-07-27/how-do-i-get-social-care-needs-assessment>



## What is Continuing Healthcare?

<https://healthwatchwiganandleigh.co.uk/advice-and-information/2021-09-01/what-continuing-healthcare>



## What are Personal Health Budgets?

<https://healthwatchwiganandleigh.co.uk/advice-and-information/2021-08-31/what-are-personal-health-budgets>

## What can your NHS dentist do for you?

<https://healthwatchwiganandleigh.co.uk/advice-and-information/2021-08-24/what-can-your-nhs-dentist-do-you>

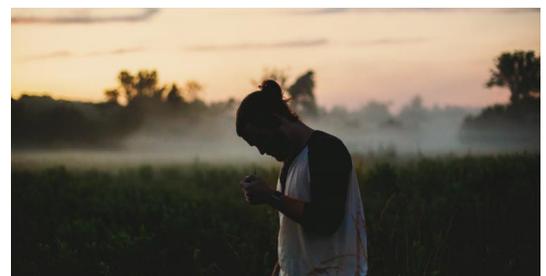


## Covid Oximetry @home

<https://healthwatchwiganandleigh.co.uk/news/2021-08-10/covid-oximetry-home>

## Prostate cancer – know the facts

<https://healthwatchwiganandleigh.co.uk/advice-and-information/2021-09-06/prostate-cancer-know-facts>



# Engagement Activities

In July, our Engagement Officers Andrea and Lisa visited The Brick in Leigh and the Mercure hotel in Wigan, two overnight shelters for homeless people, to speak to them about their experiences of accessing health and social care in Wigan and Leigh during the COVID-19 pandemic.



## World Alzheimer's Day Event

Tuesday 21st September marked World Alzheimer's Day, an international awareness day to spread information and resources about dementia. The team, along with some of our fantastic volunteers, spent the morning at Wigan Grand Arcade offering information about the disease, as well as local support and resources, and gathering general feedback on health and social care from the public.

## Wigan Cohesion, Inclusion & Equality Event

The team and our volunteers were delighted to attend the Wigan Cohesion, Inclusion and Equality Event in September. It was an excellent opportunity for the community to come together and learn and listen to find out how we can build community cohesion. They heard some wonderful speakers and started some powerful conversations.



## Ashton Deaf Club Bingo Night

Our Engagement Officer Andrea had a fantastic time engaging with the members of Ashton Deaf Club at one of their bingo nights in September. Andrea shared with them some information about what we do at Healthwatch Wigan and Leigh, and will be back soon to continue to collect their experiences on GP access and urgent and emergency care for mental health.

Some members also asked for support and advice in writing letters of complaint from the Independent NHS Advocacy Service we provide, which we will be happy to provide.

# Volunteers

We're supported by a team of amazing volunteers who are the heart of Healthwatch Wigan and Leigh. Thanks to their efforts in the community, we're able to understand what is working and what needs improving in NHS and social care.

This year our volunteers:

- Helped people have their say from home, carrying out surveys over the telephone and online.
- Carried out website and telephone reviews for local services on the information they provide and assessing their accessibility.
- Continued to help with the local volunteering efforts supporting those who need it.



# VOLUNTEERS



## Mohammed

Our volunteer Mohammed has been engaging with the Muslim community in his local area and at the mosque in Wigan. His approach to capture peoples' experiences and concerns around using health or social care services has been extremely versatile.

He has also translated and handed out questionnaires in Arabic, Kurdish and Urdu to be inclusive of all the voices in his communities.



## Wendy

There are a wide range of projects to work on from calling GP practices to check on how patients have been able to access services during the pandemic, to manning a stand at public events to let people know about Healthwatch, what it does, how it works and how to make contact. There is a great deal of flexibility whether you want to offer a couple of hours a week or more.



## Shahriar

"I have been at Healthwatch as a volunteer for several months and I can honestly say that it has had a profoundly positive impact on my life both personally and professionally. Through Healthwatch I have gained so much experience."



### Do you feel inspired?

We are always on the lookout for new volunteers, so please get in touch today.



<https://healthwatchwiganandleigh.co.uk/>



01942 834 666



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

# Finance and future priorities

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

Income		Income	
Funding received from local authority	£240,000	Staff costs	£134,643
Additional funding	£0	Operational costs	£46,358
		Support and administration	£30,771
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£240,000</b>	<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>£211,772</b>

## Top three priorities for 2022–23

1. Improving our volunteering experience.
2. Increasing the voices of those that are seldom heard.
3. Using the patients voice to help the changing health and care system understand what people think and feel.

## Next steps

The pandemic has shone a stark light on the impact of existing inequalities when using health and care services, highlighting the importance of championing the voices of those who all too often go unheard.

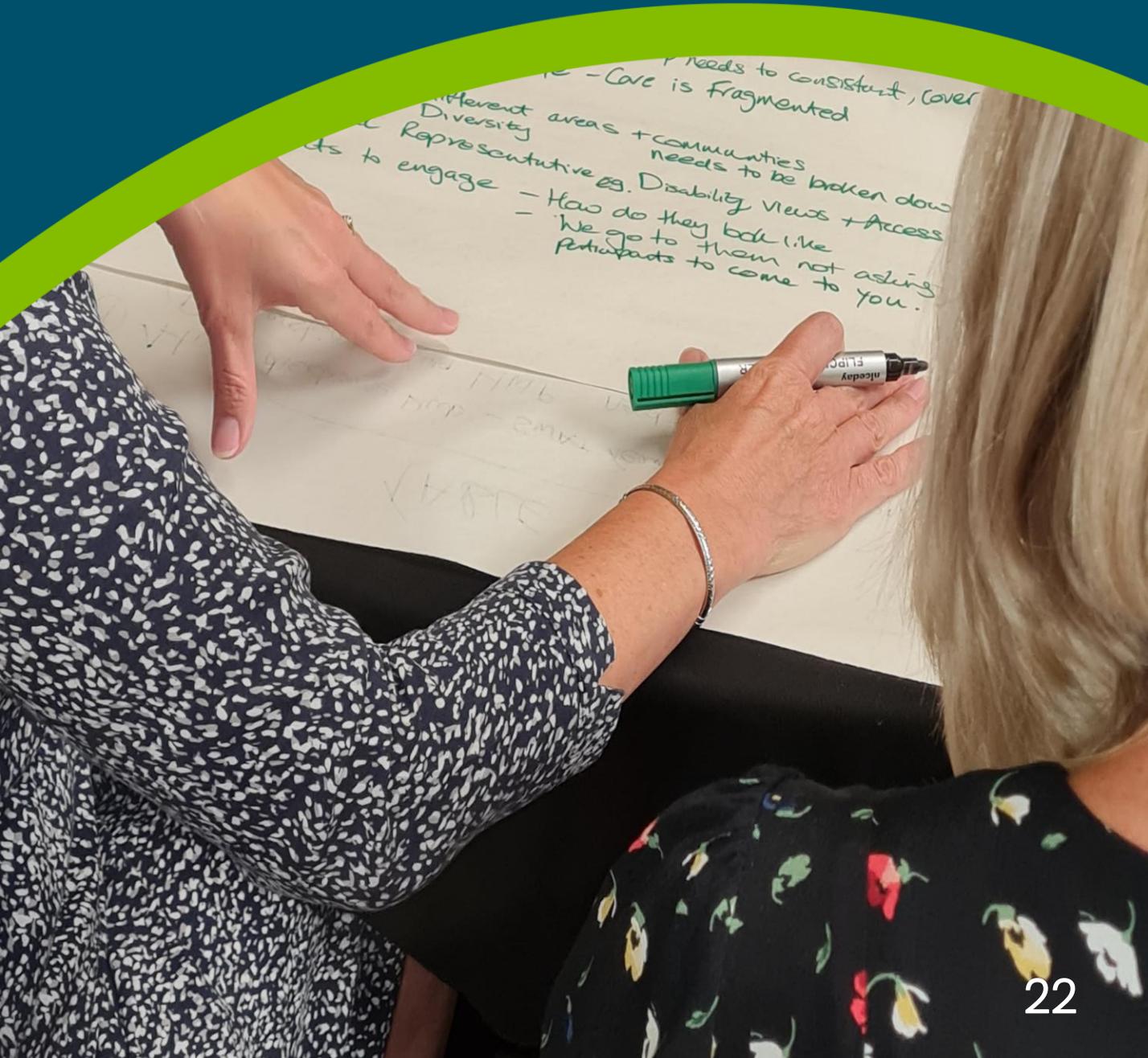
Over the coming years, our goal is to help reduce these inequalities by making sure your voice is heard, and decision makers reduce the barriers you face, regardless of whether that's because of where you live, income or race.

# Statutory statements

## About us

Wigan Borough Healthwatch (Community Interest Company). Ashland House, Dobson Park Way, Ince-in-Makerfield, Wigan, WN2 2DX

Wigan borough Healthwatch CIC uses the Healthwatch Wigan and Leigh 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 Wigan and Leigh board consists of 8 members who work on a voluntary basis to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny to our activities. Our board ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community. Through 2021/22 the board met 6 times and made decisions on matters such as finance, governance and our ways of working.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities. We have an Advisory Committee which comprises of 16 local residents, who direct our work priorities based on the comments we gather and feedback on public experiences of health and social care.

### **Methods and systems used across the year's work to obtain people's views and experience.**

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 2021/22 we have been available by phone, by email, provided a webform on our website, provided a feedback centre/rate and review system, 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, for example, by working with the deaf community.

We ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. We publish it on our website and share it widely with groups and networks that we work with.

### **Responses to recommendations and requests**

We had 1 provider who did not respond to requests for information or recommendations.

This year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we did not make use of our Enter and View powers. Consequently, no recommendations or other actions resulted from this area of activity.

There were no issues or recommendations escalated by our Healthwatch to Healthwatch England Committee and so no resulting special reviews or investigations.



**healthwatch**  
Wigan and Leigh

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