

# Impact of Funding Cut on Healthwatch Wokingham

**February 2019**

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## Introduction

This report has been prepared at the request of Wokingham Borough Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee and other interested parties to address the impact of a 10% cut in the Healthwatch Wokingham Borough budget

It has been prepared by both the Healthwatch Operational team and the Board.

Healthwatch is the independent champion for people who use health and care services. It is Healthwatch's role to ensure that the public is informed about new health and care plans so that they have an opportunity to comment on changes introduced locally.

Healthwatch Wokingham has been a very active campaigning organisation over the last 6 years. Highlighting areas of health disadvantage, producing reports to inform its stakeholders and recommend change. Additionally, it has celebrated good practice. Healthwatch has provided a platform for minority and hard to reach communities.

Appointed in 2018, the Chair of Healthwatch England, Sir Robert Francis & author of Mid Staffordshire Inquiry, described funding cuts to Local Healthwatch as "perilous." He said: *"If one thing was clear to me from my enquiries into the incidents at Mid Staffs, it was that to do public engagement well it needs to have a professional infrastructure. Without this, people are too easily ignored and health and care services ignore their voice at their peril."*

## Healthwatch England's latest report "State of support"

### Key messages included:

- Demand for Healthwatch services continues to rise
- Never has it been more important to invest in user research to help ensure the improvements being introduced are informed by what people want and need.
- We are concerned that cuts in specific areas could put the Healthwatch service at risk, denying local communities an independent champion to raise their concerns.

## Healthwatch Wokingham Borough Funding

Established April 2013 as a Community Interest Company to deliver the Healthwatch remit.

Budget set at £107k

The budget has remained the same until competitive rebidding of contract in September 2018, when this was reduced by 10% to £98k

<b>BUDGET</b>	<b>inflation 2013 - 2018</b>	<b>14.50%</b>
	<b>true value</b>	<b>12</b>

2013	£107,677		
2014	£107,677		
2015	£107,677		
2016	£107,677		
2017	£107,677		
2018	£107,677	£15,613.17	<b>£92,063.84</b>
2019	£98,000		
2020	£98,000		
2021	£98,000		

Inflation erosion @14.5% (Office National Statistics) since 2013 = £15.6k = £92k

If the budget had tracked inflation 2018 budget would have stood at **£123k** (£107.6 k + £15.6k )

## Impact of budget cut

### Ability to recruit and retain staff & volunteers

Healthwatch is undertaking some engagement work around the STP and Long Term Plan. We would have liked to have coordinated this piece of work across the whole of Wokingham Borough. However, the small team is working at capacity, limiting our ability to secure additional income for projects outside the core work which would help with our sustainability.

### Project work

Our work is shaped by the concerns that local people raise with us. At the Healthwatch strategy planning away day in 2018, all intelligence was analysed using a decision making matrix in order to score and prioritise.

The board identified 5 priorities:

- Adult Mental Health
- CAMHS
- Carers
- Access to Information and Services
- Working together with other services to share common goals

In previous years we have produced on average of 5 Project Reports a year taking a deeper look at trends and issues identified by our information gathering.

However in 2019, we will focus only on adult mental health.

The Council has a desire to ensure that the Community & Voluntary Sector is delivering according to what Wokingham residents want and need, as well as aligning with local priorities. We believe Healthwatch has an important role to play in supporting this work, but with our current resources, we are unable to make a significant contribution.

### **Sharing our insight with providers**

We share our regular intelligence reports with stake holders and service providers. The volume of these will decrease in line with reduction of major research projects and investigations

### **Use of advertising, promotion and communications**

In order to focus on our engagement work, we have had to dramatically cut our operating budget and this will impact on our ability to pay for regular advertising or producing promotional items for events.

### **Commissioned Work**

One of Healthwatch's strengths is our engagement style and reach. We are able to take independent engagement in a fast, responsive and innovative way. This has been a strength over the last 6 years. Additional commissioned work does deliver value and increases our sustainability and capacity but is difficult to secure with such limited resources.

### **Mystery Shopping**

We have used mystery shopping over the years to test resilience and accessibility of services to minority and disadvantaged groups. Our ability to support and supervise volunteers may impact on our ability to do this in future.

### **Weekend Events**

The reduction in operational budget will reduce our ability to secure weekend staff to have a presence at as many events in the future.

## **Summary**

Over the last 6 years Healthwatch has built a knowledge base of Wokingham Borough's health and social care landscape, directly from the receivers of services. This includes all our hard data, intelligence, insights and our personal connections.

The Board acknowledges that Wokingham Borough has maintained the funding and not reduced it until the 2019 Financial Year. But set against the background of a rising population, inflation and a reduced budget, this will affect our ability to make a contribution to health and care services. With the NHS setting out a long term plan which relies heavily on public and patient involvement in both their own health and in the way services are designed and delivered, maintaining a high performing Healthwatch becomes

even more important. We will continue to strive to deliver an excellent service for the people of Wokingham, but with additional investment, we believe we could offer so much more.

\*[https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/sites/healthwatch.co.uk/files/20181029%20State%20of%20Support%202018\\_0.pdf](https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/sites/healthwatch.co.uk/files/20181029%20State%20of%20Support%202018_0.pdf)



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The banner features four circular icons: a purple envelope icon, a blue Twitter bird icon, a pink smartphone icon, and a green globe icon. Below each icon is its corresponding contact information.

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Twitter	@HWwokingham
Smartphone	0118 418 1 418
Globe	healthwatchwokingham.co.uk

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