



On equal terms

Then and now

Contents

Message from our Chair	3
About us	4
Highlights from our year	5
Theme one: Then and now	6
Theme two: Then and now	8
Responding to COVID-19	10
Volunteers	16
Finances	18
Next steps & thank you	19
Statutory Statements	20

Message from our Chair

How many messages, conversations, statements have been started regarding the 'uniquely challenging year'?

Our Healthwatch Wokingham Borough team reacted as we have always done. Which is to put ourselves in the position of understanding how our community receives its wellbeing services. And to be creative about how we gathered information and communicated.

Also to understand the issues that the community perceive and to relay those to the appropriate organisations and follow them through. Some of these are included in this report.



"I commend our annual report to all readers. The stories here are important. We should use them to be well informed and learn."

Finally, our regular reports to Health Oversight and Scrutiny Committee are well received by councillors as an accurate voice and reflection of our communities experiences of Health and Social Care.



Jim Stockley

About us

Here to make health and care better

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

Helping you to find the information you need

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

Our goals



1 Supporting you to have your say

We want more people to get the information they need to take control of their health and care, make informed decisions and shape the services that support them.



2 Providing a high quality service

We want everyone who shares an experience or seeks advice from us to get a high quality service and to understand the difference their views make.



3 Ensuring your views help improve health & care

We want more services to use your views to shape the health and care support you need today and in the future.



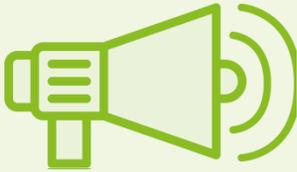
“Local Healthwatch have done fantastic work throughout the country during the COVID-19 pandemic, but there is more work ahead to ensure that everyone’s views are heard. COVID-19 has highlighted inequalities and to tackle these unfair health differences we will need those in power to listen, to hear the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

Sir Robert Francis QC, Chair of Healthwatch England

Highlights from our year

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

Reaching out



We heard from

3,044 people

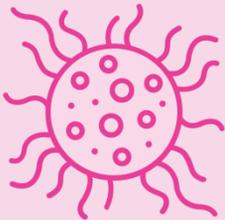
this year about their experiences of health and social care.

We provided advice and information to

130,679 people

this year via our website, social media, online public meetings, newsletter etc

Responding to the pandemic



We individually supported and advised

2,517

people during the COVID-19 pandemic this year.

Making a difference to care



We published

4 reports

about the improvements people would like to see to health and social care services. From this, we made 19 recommendations for improvement.

Health and care that works for you



12 volunteers

helped us to carry out our work. In total, they contributed 158 hours.

We employ 3 staff

One of whom is full time

We received

£100,953 in funding

from our local authority in 2020-21.



Theme one: Access To Information



Then: access to information

The way people have accessed health and care services has changed since prior to the pandemic. Additionally, whilst it has always been important to be able to find information about health services, this was even more important as services had to adapt to the pandemic and so their service offering changed. We ran a survey and produced a report on peoples experiences of health and care services and information during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In terms of information, our survey and report found that some people found it difficult to find information about services, service change and how to access services. Some information was hard to find. Information wasn't always provided in a timely way and sometimes information wasn't updated during the pandemic. Patients were less likely to attend appointments where they couldn't find information about the environment of the building and what COVID-19 safety protocols were in place. The services that people had most difficulty finding the information they wanted were; GP, Hospital and Dentists.

We carried out a mystery shop of GP and Dental websites with volunteers to review the information in light of Covid-19 and the changes to services. We were in dialogue with the hospital about the information on their website and the issues some patient groups had, for example those with a learning disability.



Now: access to information

Our report, 'GP Websites – How Easy Is It To Find Information' made six recommendations to the local Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) on improving information on the 13 Wokingham Borough GP surgery websites.

This included improving information about COVID-19 safety and protocols in the building environment, being accompanied to an appointment, registration and giving feedback and making a complaint.

After seeing the report the CCG agreed to implement the six website recommendations that we made, not only in Wokingham Borough but also GP surgery websites in Reading and West Berkshire, 47 in total. You can read the full report [here](#).



"The publication of the Healthwatch Wokingham Borough report GP Web Sites How easy is it to find information? Is both timely and relevant. The CCG will incorporate the report's recommendations into its wider benefits realisation work stream." Berkshire West Clinical Commissioning Group

Our work regarding a local hospital website.

During the pandemic ourselves and our neighbouring local Healthwatch were in regular dialogue with the hospital. We highlighted the issues patients had raised about information on the website. The hospital did have existing plans to review and rebuild their website, however based on our feedback they agreed to immediately bring the plans forward. They have included Healthwatch in reviews of their progress and will continue to do so.

Wokingham Borough Dentists websites review

We undertook a review of dentist websites and made several recommendations. We pushed for clearer information regarding: NHS charges and exemptions, private services and charges, contact details for emergency dental treatment and 111, changes to procedures and safety measures in place. We submitted our recommendations to the South Central Local Dental Committee and received the following response from them: "the findings show inconsistencies in the quality and reliability of the information provided by high street dentist websites."



" I have no jurisdiction over the websites of the individual dental practices but I will highlight the problem". Berkshire Local Dental Committee

It remains to be seen whether our recommendations will be implemented, however we have shared our report with Healthwatch England who are continuing to campaign to NHS England. You can read our report [here](#).

Share your views with us



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



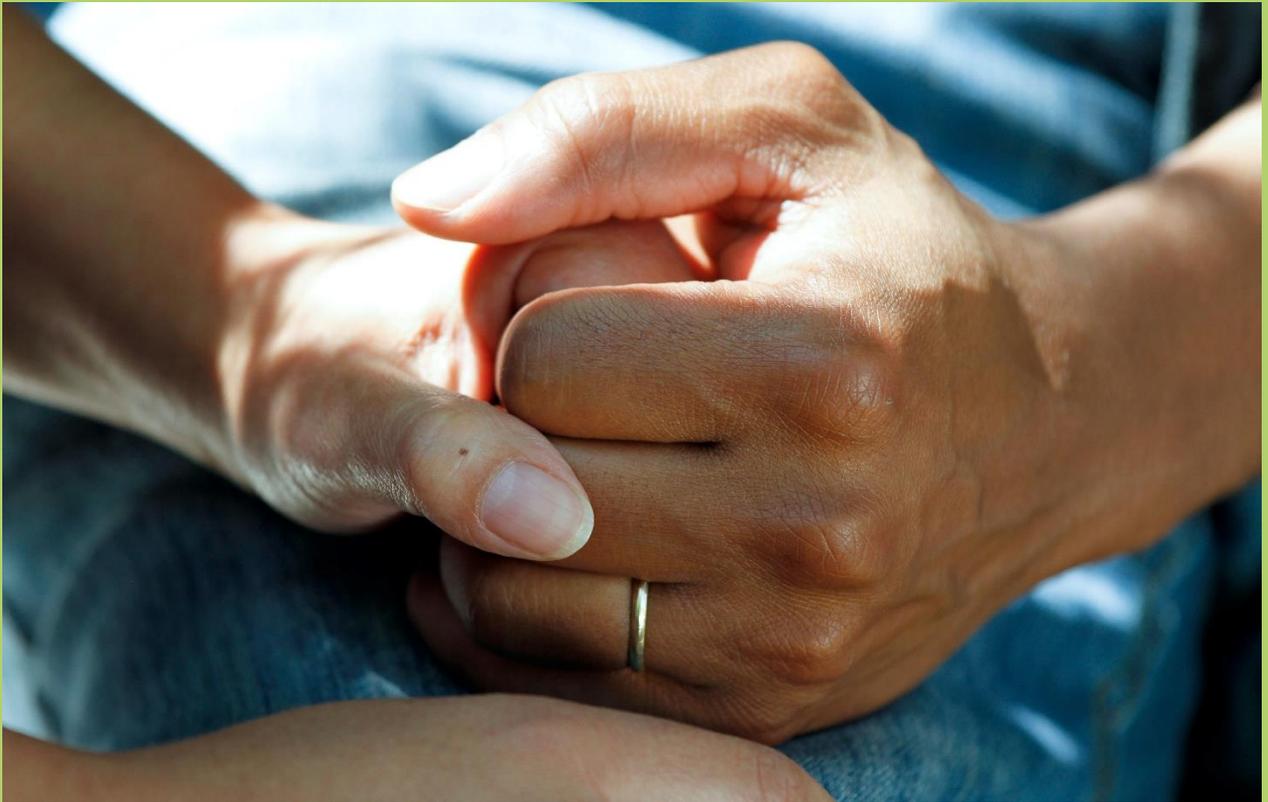
www.healthwatchwokingham.co.uk



0118 418 1418



enquiries@healthwatchwokingham.co.uk



Theme two: Carers Experience During COVID-19



Then: Carers experiences

The worries, sadness and restrictions of the past year have been difficult for everyone. But from people's feedback (received via e-mail, phone, our website and social media) Healthwatch Wokingham became aware of some specific effects on a particular cross-section of residents: unpaid carers.

Due to their high level of involvement with health and social care services - on behalf of the people they care for - carers and carers support groups contact us for information or to give their feedback. From these contacts we were hearing that:

- existing carers were finding their responsibilities had increased and the pressures greater.
- other people had taken on caring responsibilities for the first time, often overnight.

This feedback was corroborated by national surveys. **National Statistics (ONS) reported:**

Almost half (48%) of UK adults report providing help or support to someone outside of their household during April 2020. 32% were helping someone who they did not help before the pandemic and 33% reported giving more help to people they helped previously.



Now: Carers experiences

We wanted to ensure carers in the Borough in 2020-21 could voice their current experiences so that health and social care decision makers would be aware of the challenges they were facing in the present, and be able to plan how to meet their and their loved ones' needs in the future.

What we wanted to know:

- Up to date information about the experiences of carers in Wokingham Borough
- Feedback about the services and support which they had/hadn't been able to access during the pandemic period.
- Ideas about what would help the wellbeing of carers in the borough.



**"I certainly had no time to make banana bread and do Zoom quizzes.
Having to do caring all myself with almost no support"**

To gather the experiences of Carers we carried out a survey comprising an online questionnaire. To explore the questions raised in more detail, we ran three focus groups with members of ASD Family Help and Promise Inclusion (local voluntary sector groups working with families affected by autism and/or learning disabilities including carer support) and Wokingham Young Carers.



"A noticeable impact on the progress of dementia with regard to my cared-for, due to a lack of external contact/stimulation with others "

We continue to analyse the data from the survey and focus groups. Here are some of the issues that we have discovered so far:

- 2 out of 3 questionnaire respondents didn't know their rights as a carer.
- 30% didn't know what a carer's assessment was.
- 40% weren't registered as a carer with their GP.
- Negative impact of caring on mental health (84%) and physical health (62%)
- Negative impact of caring on family wellbeing (73%)
- 78% said the number of hours of care they provided had increased.

Our full report with findings and recommendations will be published at the beginning of July and we will be sharing it with service providers and commissioners.



Responding to COVID-19

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

This year we helped people by:

- Providing up to date advice on the COVID-19 response locally
- Linking people to reliable up-to-date information
- Supporting the vaccine roll-out communication
- Even closer collaboration with voluntary and community sector and the people they support
- Helping people to access the services they need
- Supporting communities who find it hardest to be heard or get the support they need
- Signposting vulnerable people to the local support they needed.
- Moving all our team online and attending stakeholder virtual meetings.
- Developing key guides for people during the pandemic which were published on our website.
- Giving advice to people about accessing dental treatment during the pandemic.

Engaging and Providing Information During COVID-19



During Covid-19 our opportunity to engage face to face with Wokingham residents had to change due to social distancing requirements.

In addition to our help desk we utilised our website and social media presence to keep the public informed and updated regarding: Government advice, local health and care services and where to get help and support from the voluntary and community sector. We also had a monthly column in our local Wokingham paper.

Healthwatch Wokingham were also able to engage, provide advice and information via the variety of boards we sit on. For example, we sit as the Health Champions on the Learning Disability Partnership Board (LDPB), which is an empowering and inclusive network whose aim is to break down barriers and enable positive outcomes for people with learning disabilities and their families.

During this year, the LDPB has run regular roadshows for members of the Learning Disability community, their carers and families. Via video conference, topics included subjects such as 'Celebrating World Mental Health week' and 'Transitioning out of covid-19 isolation'.



"I liked that we talked about Mental Health as it is very close to my heart and is effecting more and more people in more ways during the lockdown and coming out of lockdown also. I am proud that the LDPB is discussing this and how to ease anxiety and overload."

Participant In Learning Disability Partnership Roadshow

Engaging and Providing Information During COVID-19

During Covid-19 the number of interactions on our website and on social media grew throughout the year and significantly increased compared to 2019-2020.

We heard that that people couldn't always find information they needed that was up to date and easy to understand. As soon as we were aware of service changes caused by COVID-19 we were able to respond quickly and inform people through our social media channels and website. Our reach for our web articles and posts on social media this year where the article or post was read by an individual:



65,381 individual views



24,406 individual web views

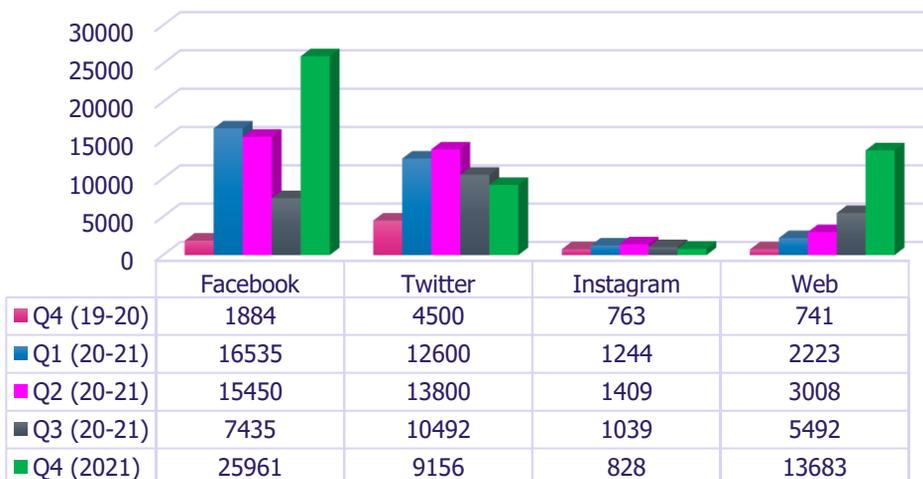


46,048 individual views



4,520 individual views

Social Media and Website Reach



Engaging and Providing Information During COVID-19



To ensure we were hearing the voice of those who were vulnerable we worked collaboratively with our voluntary and community sector partners. For example we regularly attended the CLASP adult Learning Disability group weekly Zoom meetings to pick up any health or social care issues and to provide easy to understand, up to date advice and information.

This year we helped CLASP members with:

- Pharmacy and prescription problems at beginning of the pandemic
- Updates on latest national and local guidance related to COVID-19
- Signposting to services like Talking Therapies
- Updates on the Covid-19 vaccines and plans
- Raising and resolving issues related to annual health checks and being registered with a GP surgery
- Following up issues related to Covid-19 vaccines



" CLASP welcome the support we receive from Nick and Joanne at Healthwatch, and have come to rely on them to share with us the latest information on Covid, vaccinations and updates on what is happening to improve the health for those with learning disabilities ". **Manager CLASP Wokingham**

Top four areas that people have contacted us about:



33% on GP Services



16% on Mental Health



18% on Hospital Services



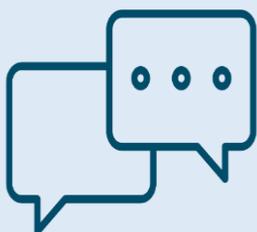
25% on Vaccines

Case Study

Early in the pandemic, we heard from members of the Learning Disability community about various issues relating to their prescription from pharmacies. We liaised with the Thames Valley Pharmacy Committee to resolve the issues. For example at the beginning of Covid one local pharmacy withdrew all Monitored Dosage System (MDS) medicine blister packs from patients. These enable some people to manage their daily medicines. They were replaced by the standard medicine cartons. For one Learning Disabled individual this meant they had to get help to take their medicine accurately and this made them feel they had lost some independence. Liaising with the Pharmacy Committee we were able to find an alternative local Pharmacy who were prepared to provide MDS pack and deliver them.



“ My nomad packs make a difference to me because I can manage my medication”
Member of Learning Disability Group



Share your views with us

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

www.healthwatchwokingham.co.uk

0118 418 1418

enquiries@healthwatchwokingham.co.uk

NHS Dentistry



The provision of Dental services have been severely impacted during Covid-19 due to safety guidance. This reduction in service has affected people nationally. We heard from residents about the difficulty they were having getting an appointment with an NHS Dentist. They were also having trouble finding up to date information and advice.

We created an advice and information article on our website titled 'Getting an NHS Dentist Appointment During Covid-19'. This included information on how to find a local dentist, additional availability and how to access urgent dental care.



"I couldn't find the dental information I was looking for until I found it on the Healthwatch Wokingham website." **Wokingham Resident**

Vaccination

We heard from residents who wanted easy to understand information about local vaccination plans, venues, prioritisation and what to expect if they had to go to a mass vaccination centre. Some vulnerable residents told us their 2nd vaccines had been cancelled without explanation or that they had not been called for 2nd vaccine within the 12 week limit.

We produced information detailing local roll out plans and locations. A video article about what it is like to go to a mass vaccination centre. Frequently asked questions and messages from local clinicians.

We were able to resolve queries and issues with 2nd vaccines through membership of Clinical Commissioning Group Covid Action Group.



Contact us to get the information you need

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



www.healthwatchwokingham.co.uk



0118 418 1418



enquiries@healthwatchwokingham.co.uk



Volunteers

At Healthwatch Wokingham Borough we are supported by 12 volunteers to help us find out what people think is working, and what improvements people would like to make to services.

This year, for example, our volunteers:

- Helped with checking and testing our surveys prior to them being shared with the public.
- Attended online meetings on behalf of Healthwatch.
- Carried out website reviews for local services on the information they provide.
- Raised awareness about the difficulties for those who are deaf or hard of hearing when interacting with service providers when wearing masks.
- Alongside our colleagues at Help and Care we were assessed in 2020 by NCVO (National Council for Voluntary Organisations) against key standards including: volunteer involvement, commitment to our volunteers, communication, satisfaction and many more. We were delighted to achieve the Investing in Volunteers award which we will wear with pride.



Working with the Town and Borough council in ensuring disabled access in the town centre

Lynn was involved in a town centre walk-through before the re-opening of retail and business in June 2020. Due to social distancing requirements, there was a new one-way system with barriers in place. The group looked at pedestrian access to essential services such as dentists and opticians and the barriers that people with disabilities may face.



Attending meetings on behalf of Healthwatch

Our volunteers come from a variety of backgrounds and Roger is one of our long-standing volunteers and has been involved with patient transport in other voluntary roles. He has attended several meetings on Healthwatch Wokingham's behalf, including the South-Central Ambulance Service AGM. Roger is able to represent the interests of the Wokingham population and feedback any important updates to the Healthwatch team.



Helping to ensure GP and Dental websites provide useful information

Volunteer, Dean, has learning disabilities that make it harder for him to access digital information. Alongside others from CLASP group, Dean helped to audit the online information provided by dentists and doctors in Wokingham. This fed into our reports - Wokingham Borough Dentists Website Review GP Websites Review and How Easy Is It to Find Information project.



Volunteer with us

Are you feeling inspired? We are always on the lookout for new volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering, please get in touch at **Healthwatch Wokingham Borough**



www.healthwatchwokingham.co.uk

0118 418 1418

enquiries@healthwatchwokingham.co.uk

Finances

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

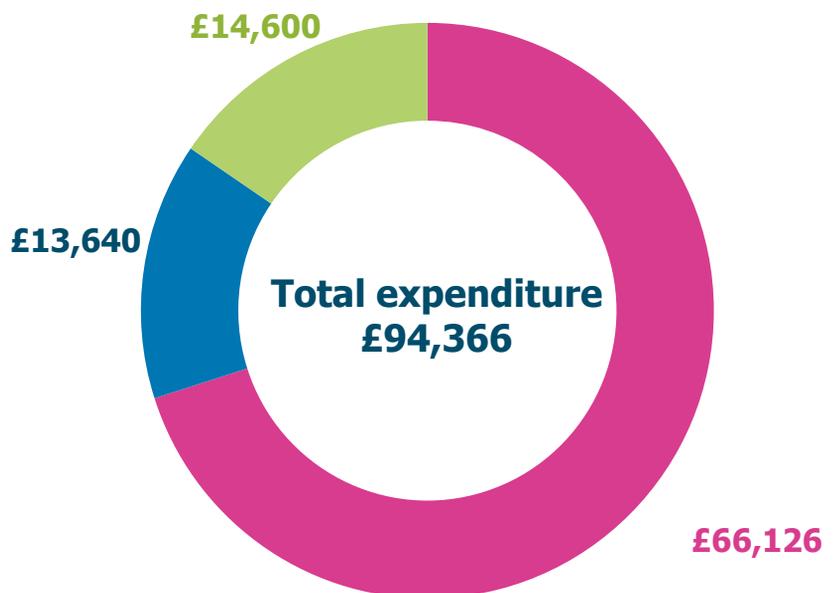
Income

- Funding received from local authority



Expenditure

- Staff costs
- Operational costs
- Support and administration



Next steps & thank you

Top three priorities for 2021-22

- Access to GP Services
- Social Care
- Mental Health

Next steps

- Refreshing our volunteer offer and development of new volunteer roles.
- Developing a Healthwatch Ambassador Programme to increase our reach to seldom heard communities.
- Delivering our Enter and View Programme as Government COVID-19 guidance allows.



“COVID-19 has highlighted and multiplied many of the inequalities that existed pre pandemic and increased health inequalities are a central part of that. We need to further reach out and understand the experiences of seldom heard individuals and communities in order to address this”.

Neil Bolton-Heaton – Head of Healthwatch - Wokingham, Bracknell Forest, Windsor, Ascot and Maidenhead, Slough, Hampshire.

Thank you to



- Members of the public who shared their experiences and views with us.
- All our amazing staff and volunteers.
- Wokingham Borough Community and Voluntary organisations.
- Health and Social Care service providers and commissioners within Berkshire.
- Help and Care for providing us with infrastructure, backup and support.
- Our other local Healthwatch neighbours.
- Wokingham Borough Council.



Statutory statements

About us

Healthwatch Wokingham Borough CIC, Town Hall, Market Place, Wokingham, Berkshire, RG40 1AS.

Healthwatch Wokingham Borough CIC Number 08561195.

Healthwatch Wokingham Borough uses the Healthwatch Trademark when undertaking our statutory activities as covered by the licence agreement.

The way we work

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

Our Healthwatch board consists of 4 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 2020/21 the board met 3 times and made decisions on matters such as: our Community Investment Fund and GP website review research.

Methods and systems used across the year 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 2020/21 we have been available by phone, by email, provided a webform on our website, attended virtual meetings of community groups and forums, provided our own virtual activities and engaged with the public through social media and via our web site articles.

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, regularly attending the adult Learning Disability weekly Zoom meetings to hear about any health and social care issues they were facing during COVID-19. We were also health champions on the Learning Disability Partnership Board. We engaged with Carers via online focus groups to hear their experiences of caring during Covid, we connected to Facebook groups of diverse communities.

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 web site, share links to the report via social media, share it with Wokingham Borough Council and community and voluntary sector partners and where possible this year will place hard copies in community spaces, for example libraries.

2020-21 Board Memberships, Strategic Partnerships, Collaboration

During the pandemic it has been important to work collaboratively with key partners and boards. In addition to the Health and Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Board, we have as examples:

- Been members of the task and finish group for the Berkshire West Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and ran focus groups for Carers and Learning Disabled Adults to input into the strategy.
- Represented Healthwatch strategically with locality CCG's, Hospital Trusts and the Integrated Care System. As examples, we were members of the CCG Covid Vaccine Action Group, Engagement Group and Inequalities Group. With our Healthwatch partners in West Berkshire we have provided information to feed into the Berkshire West ICP Urgent and Emergency Care Board Recovery Planning exercise. We have also input to the Royal Berkshire Hospital discharge planning exercise and the hospitals rebuild plan public engagements.
- Member of Learning Disability Partnership Board.
- Member of Children's and Young People Partnership Boards.
- Member of Wokingham Integrated Partnership Group.
- Member of Wokingham Carers Forum.

Enter and View

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.

Sharing Insight

All of the insight we received from the public in Wokingham Borough, in addition to all of our reports published in this financial year were shared with Healthwatch England for input to any of their national campaigns, reports. Where appropriate insight is shared with the Care Quality Commission. In addition our insight is shared locally with the Health and Wellbeing Board, Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Wokingham Borough Council commissioners.

Health and Wellbeing Board

Healthwatch Wokingham Borough is represented on the Wokingham Borough Wellbeing Board by Jim Stockley, Chair of Healthwatch Wokingham Borough. During 2020/21 the focus has inevitably been COVID-19 and response and management. We have contributed by promoting and sharing the COVID-19 response. We have identified communities which need special support. At the same time we are involved in the Wellbeing Board workshops.



**Healthwatch Wokingham Borough,
Town Hall,
Market Place,
Wokingham,
RG40 1AS.**

www.healthwatchwokingham.co.uk

Tel: 0118 148 1418

Email: enquiries@healthwatchwokingham.co.uk

Twitter: [@HWwokingham](https://twitter.com/HWwokingham)

Facebook: [@Healthwatchwokingham](https://www.facebook.com/Healthwatchwokingham)

Instagram: [healthwatchwokingham](https://www.instagram.com/healthwatchwokingham)

This page is intentionally left blank