



# Making it matter

Annual report  
2024/25



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# A message from our Chair

It is my privilege to share with you Healthwatch City of London's 2024/25 Annual Report. This report sets out what we do and how we do it and hopefully gives you an insight into the reach of our work and the benefits we endeavour to bring to our local community.

Ensuring that we make the voice of users of services heard is the primary focus of our work. It's important that providers of health and social care services hear what users of those services have to say about those services. Making this happen is fundamental to our mission.

Our work is driven by those who live, work and study here. What they tell us makes a difference because, as result of what we hear, we can test out if others have the same experiences, and work with providers to better understand the impacts of the services they deliver, how they are delivered and how responsive they are.

As you will see this work embraces a wide range of activities, from carrying out Enter and View visits to preparing research reports and holding our ever popular Patient Panels. You will see in this report the impact we have been able to make in these and other ways.

None of this is possible without building strong networks with those who plan and provide care. We work in partnership with many different NHS and Local Authority groups as well the voluntary sector to ensure that we keep the patient or client at the heart of what we do. That partnership also extends to those who use services because it is vital to bring providers and residents together to create a mutual understanding of what's important, hopefully building a better service. We are an advisor, the eyes and ears of service users and providers. Sometimes, too, we act as a critical friend of providers, taking up issues that really matter to patients.

As ever it's hard to make sure we reach every area of health and social care, and we focus on areas where we receive feedback or hear about issues. Over the next year we will be working harder in the Portsoken area to make sure we are able to scrutinise the impact of services on parts of the population where we know there is a need to create greater access to care and advice. We will be making sure that decision makers appreciate that the Government's 10 year NHS plan, with its focus on prevention, creating greater capacity for care at home and moving from analogue to digital, must be delivered safely and that the interests of patients must be kept at the heart of its implementation.

Finally, I would like to thank the Staff at HWCOL for all their hard work this year, my fellow Trustees for their support, our partners for their commitment to our work and most of all those who live, work and study here for working with us.

**Gail Beer**

**Chair, Healthwatch City of London**



# A message from our General Manager

**6 The impact that Healthwatch City of London has had this year is vitally important. We at HWCoL have been privileged to empower our communities by sharing their experiences of health and social care, enabling greater collaboration between volunteers, providers of care and most importantly those using them. We are proud that we have made people's views central to making care better for the City of London.**

The past year has been busy with Healthwatch City of London working as the independent champion to improve Health and Social Care Services in the City.

It is becoming a challenging landscape for local health and care services, limited by budget constraints and NHS North East London savings targets. However, by listening to our community and collecting their views, we monitor how they experience these services, and feed this back to providers. This helps them understand where they need to focus their attention in order to improve care in the face of continuing budget cuts.

This year, we have been able to extend our popular Patient Panel series, covering varied topics from cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training to mental health and wellbeing awareness, diabetes management and sexual and reproductive health. HWCoL has undertaken two Enter and View visits, held our very successful AGM and our Board meetings in Public, and of course our Health in the City Day which saw over 100 people join us to meet Health and Social Care providers, including the Neaman Practice. Via these events and our newsletters, this year HWCoL has engaged with more residents than ever before.

The impact that Healthwatch City of London has had this year is vitally important. HWCoL has empowered our communities to share their experiences across the health and care landscape and made sure that people's views are heard. All our achievements are possible because of the hardworking staff team, Liesa and Caitlan, our ever-supportive Board (who are all volunteers) and our wonderful volunteer team. Thanks are due to all for their hard work.

**Rachel Cleave**

**General Manager, Healthwatch City of London**





# About us

Healthwatch City of London is the local health and social care champion for the City of London.

We ensure that NHS leaders and decision-makers hear the voice of the people of the City of London. We are based in the Portsoken area in the Square Mile.



## Our vision

For Health and Social Care services to be truly responsive to the needs and requirements of the residents, students, and workers of the City of London.



## Our mission

To be an independent and trusted body, known for its impartiality and integrity, which acts in the best interests of those who live and work in the City of London.



## Our values

- Respecting and encouraging diversity
- Valuing everyone's contributions
- Maintaining Integrity
- Creating inclusiveness

# A year of making a difference

Over the year, Healthwatch City of London has been out and about in the community listening to residents' experiences, engaging with partners, and working to improve care in the City of London. Here are a few highlights.

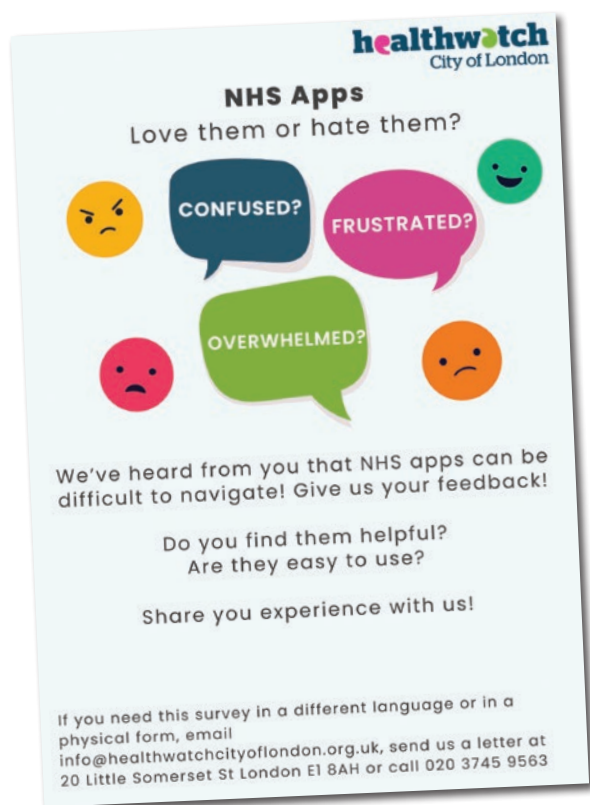
## Spring

- Partnered with the City of London Corporation to discover how many City workers access the sexual health services in the City using non-residential postcodes. Through targeted telephone surveys, delivered essential insights for the City of London Corporation to be able to develop better public health policies, budget allocation and provision.
- Launched a focused investigation into the rising use of digital health technologies. The digital tools used across North East London hospitals and GPs, were mapped and assessed for their accessibility. The findings revealed key gaps in usability and equity, with clear recommendations for improvement.



## Summer

- Carried out an Enter and View visit at St Bartholomew's Hospital, in the Cardiology Department, to explore the communication issues that patients in the City raised with HWCOL. Interviewed managers, staff and patients and distributed a questionnaire for patients. With feedback from 11 staff and 26 patients, the subsequent report was published with specific recommendations for the team at St Bartholomew's Hospital to implement to improve the patient experience of the department.
- Held the first annual Health in the City Day, in partnership with the Neaman Practice. The day was designed for all residents to understand what health and social care services they are able to access and learn about extra provision and support from local and national charities for specific members of the community, including unpaid carers, older people and children. Over 100 residents attended, all having the opportunity to obtain information about support and services available to them in the City.







## Autumn

- Held our Annual General Meeting with guest speakers, Mary Durcan, Chair of the City of London Health and Wellbeing Board and Dr Sue Mann, National Clinical Director for Women's Health and consultant and lead for women's health in City and Hackney. Topics covered during the meeting included access to footcare, the NHS Big Conversation Initiative, digital apps and digital exclusion, as well as accessibility of services in the City.
- Conducted focused research into how the Patient Advice and Liaison Service is provided in NHS Trusts used by City residents. The project explored a number of factors, including accessibility, online and in person.

## Winter

- Hosted a Patient Panel on mental health and social isolation, joined by City and Hackney Talking Therapies, Tower Hamlets Talking Therapies and the Together Better Programme. The session offered advice on how to stay mentally well during winter and shared information on services available to City residents. All information including practical tips and resources were published on our website.

- Celebrated Christmas with a lunch event to highlight the rise of heightened feelings of social isolation during this period. We were joined by over 40 people. The event gave residents a space to connect with others in the community. This event was supported by a Patient Panel on mental health and social isolation with Talking Therapies and the Together Better Programme.
- Partnered with Healthwatch Hackney and NHS North East London to hold a Health Mela in the Portsoken area, to promote staying well and warm during winter, which was targeted towards the Bangladeshi community. Over 40 attendees accessed essential health information.



# Working together for change

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We have worked with neighbouring Healthwatch to ensure people's experiences of care in the City of London are heard at the Integrated Care System (ICS) level, and that they influence decisions made about services across North East London. This year, we worked with Healthwatch across North East London to achieve the following:

## A collaborative network of local Healthwatch

### Turning community insight into system change

The eight Healthwatch continue to develop the Community Insights Programme with North East London Integrated Care Board (NEL ICB). We've processed the experiences of 162,365 people, identifying 536,048 issues. On GP and hospital services alone, we've produced 623 reports and 305 dashboards. The system tracks care trends, highlights what works, and pinpoints areas for improvement – creating a shared evidence base to make services more responsive.

### What good care looks like to local people

We heard from over 2,000 residents about what good care means to them. They told us it should be accessible, competent, person-centred, and trustworthy. These principles are now embedded in the Integrated Care Board's strategy through our partnership work. Together with the ICB, we will measure partners' success and track progress against these standards through our Community Insights system.

### Maternity Equality

Our maternity report helped shape the NEL Maternity Equity and Equality Strategy, leading to commitments on trauma-informed care, cultural competency, multilingual advocacy, and

improved communication. Its impact continues through work on interpreting services and a proposed 24/7 helpline. All three hospital Trusts are improving access for non-English speakers – introducing new clinical processes and bilingual advocates to deliver more inclusive, responsive maternity care.

## Working with the City of London Corporation

We work closely with the City of London Corporation to help them engage with residents and to obtain residents' feedback on service delivery and provision.

This year we have supported the Department of Community and Children Services to promote multiple strategies by holding information events via our Patient Panels series, carrying out surveys and promoting their consultations in our communications.

Importantly, we have supported the City of London Corporation this year to consult on the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, the Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) strategy, Adult Social Care Strategy and the project into the use of sexual health services by City workers.

This allowed the Department of Community and Children Services to hear from over 30 residents who will be directly impacted by these strategies. Their feedback has helped to shape strategy.





## Representing residents at a wider level

We attend many meetings on behalf of residents, students and workers in the City of London, which gives us the opportunity to represent the community and share their thoughts at a wider level. We have included these in our report to give a flavour of the work behind the scenes, and how this translates into action and demonstrable outcomes for those we serve.

### Neaman Practice Patient Participation Group (PPG) and quarterly meeting

Members of our Board attend the Neaman Practice PPG, where users of the service are able to discuss the service provided by the Practice and to give feedback. We also hold quarterly meetings with the Practice partners and the Primary Care Network of City and Hackney. In these meetings, we raise any concerns patients may have. We have also worked with the Neaman Practice in signing up patients to the PPG meetings, through promoting them and ensuring there is information readily available on how to attend.

### North East London Integrated Care Board

NHS North East London is responsible for planning and commissioning health services across North East London to meet the population's needs, making sure all providers of care in the region work effectively together. Healthwatch Hackney attends these meeting on behalf of all North East London Healthwatch. We ensure that the needs of City residents are fed back to the Board via the Healthwatch Hackney representative.

### North East London Integrated Care Board Healthwatch Meeting

A meeting with the Chair of the Integrated Care Board and all NEL Healthwatch to share resident involvement and insight gathered by NEL Healthwatch. This gives us direct access to the Board of the Integrated Care system, which allows us to raise any issues directly. It also gives us the opportunity to have open discussions on areas that need improvement, project work, and on any HWCOL concerns.

## **Integrated Care Communications and Engagement Enabler Group**

This group supports and facilitates effective engagement with key stakeholders in the Integrated Care System (ICS) and voluntary sector in the City of London and Hackney. It works on co-produced projects and increased engagement with residents across the City and Hackney. We attend this system-wide meeting to make sure the City's population has a voice and influence on the projects and engagement in the issues that affect their Health and Social Care.

## **City of London Health and Wellbeing Board**

This board aims to align the City's approach to the NHS Outcomes Framework, the Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework and the Public Health Outcomes Framework through improving the integration of services. The goal is to positively influence the health of everyone who lives and works in the City, enabling them to live healthily, preventing ill health where possible, and promoting strong and empowered groups of individuals who are motivated to drive positive change within their communities and businesses. We raise the issues that are of concern to residents, such as access to equitable healthcare, where and when patients are cared for, and other such matters that community members have told us about. This year, we have raised the need for improved and accessible premises for the Neaman Practice, and for an additional GP Practice in the City. Our reports have encouraged more support from the City of London Corporation at Health, Social Care and wellbeing meetings. The Corporation is now a very active participant in important meetings at the local and North East London level.

## **Health and Social Care Scrutiny Committee**

This committee fulfils the City's Health and Social Care scrutiny role in proactively seeking information about the performance of local health and care services and institutions, challenging the information provided to it by commissioners and providers of services for the health service, and testing this information by drawing on different sources of intelligence. Healthwatch City of London has a seat on this committee.

This year, this committee along with the City of London Health and Wellbeing Board have been working collaboratively to increase the amount of change that can be made in Health and Social Care. Recent topics have included immunisations and the special educational needs and disabilities strategy from the City of London Corporation. We presented our 2023/24 Annual Report to the committee.

## **City and Hackney Safeguarding Adults Board**

This committee oversees the discharge of the City of London's and Hackney's responsibilities for safeguarding those adults who have been identified as requiring support and protection. We raise any safeguarding issues that we have been alerted to and monitor historical concerns to ensure they are properly addressed, and statutory requirements are met.

## **City of London Adult Safeguarding Sub-Committee**

This committee is an important sub-group of the City and Hackney Safeguarding Adults Board. It specifically oversees the discharge of the City of London's responsibilities for safeguarding those adults who have been identified as requiring support and protection. We scrutinise the work of the Adult Social Care team and its interaction with other City services such as the City of London Police and Fire Departments.

## **North East London Population Health and Integration Committee**

The purpose of the Committee is to contribute to the overall delivery of the ICB's objectives by providing oversight and assurance to the Board on how improved population health and integrated health and care, resulting better access, experience and outcomes for local people, are being delivered. This includes the seven place-based partnerships and provider collaboratives and their ICB sub-committees. The committee meets on a bi-monthly basis.

## People and Place meeting

The City and Hackney People and Place group meets every two months to discuss how transformation programmes involve residents in their work, providing assurance to the City and Hackney Health and Care Board. Through this meeting we get to gain a further understanding of all the work that is being undertaken across City and Hackney, and ensuring the City has a focus in joint and specific projects.

## City and Hackney Health and Care Board

The purpose of the Health and Care Board is to consider the best interests of service users and residents in City and Hackney, when taken as a health and care system as a whole, rather than representing the individual interests of any of the partner organisations over those of another. Health and Care Board members participate in the Health and Care Board to – as far as possible – promote the greater collective endeavour. The Board meets every two months.

## City and Hackney Subcommittee for the Sexual Reproductive Health Strategy and Action Plan

This group ensures that both boroughs, by working together with shared service providers, deliver accessible services that are fit for purpose. The meeting monitors activity and ensures that funding is spent appropriately according to the needs of local people. HWCOL along with the City of London Corporation team scrutinise this work and ensure the needs of the City are kept at the forefront of the strategy.

## Working with the Neighbourhoods Programme

The future of local healthcare provision will be through the Neighbourhoods model of delivery. This means that providers from the local area will work together and will be responsible for residents' healthcare provision, funded by NHS North East London.

Neighbourhoods bring residents, the voluntary sector, health, education and care services together in City and Hackney's eight Neighbourhoods, to jointly work on what matters to local people and address health inequalities.

To engage with patients, each Neighbourhood runs a Neighbourhood Forum and Action Group. The Forums give residents and professionals the opportunity to find out what is happening locally and to share ideas on improving health and wellbeing. The Action Groups support the work of the Forums to make sure that action is being taken on the ideas shared within the Forums.

The City is part of the Shoreditch Park and City Neighbourhood which has around 56,000 residents. Due to the differences in the community's health and social care needs in the City, Healthwatch City of London campaigned to have a separate Forum and Action Group specifically to address the Healthcare needs of City residents. This has now been set up with Healthwatch City of London attending the Action Group and the initial Forum due early next year. The main priorities were decided to reflect those of the Joint City and Hackney Health and Wellbeing Strategy, namely Mental Health, Social Connections and Financial Resilience.



# Listening to patient experiences

## Enter and View at St Bartholomew's Hospital

In response to patient feedback on the poor levels of communication from the St Bartholomew's cardiology department, we undertook an Enter and View in the department, where we were able to directly understand the experiences of patients.

In June, our team, with a group of volunteers, went to St Bartholomew's Hospital and conducted a survey with the managers and staff responsible for the communications and administration of cardiology appointments. At the first visit, we interviewed four managers, six team members, one receptionist and 11 patients. HWCOL followed up the Enter and View by interviewing 15 people attending the outpatients' clinic. This provided us with more insight and depth into the patient experience. Our survey for patients was also available on our website and in physical copy for those who had recent experiences in the Cardiology Department at St Bartholomew's Hospital.



Our findings and recommendations were sent to the team at St Bartholomew's Hospital for comment, and they responded to all our recommendations. Their responses can be found in our report.

### Our three key recommendations

- **Consistency of systems used across the department.**

As there are a number of systems used to record duplicate information, the reduction of these could be beneficial, alongside clear training schedules for staff members using these systems.

- **Consistency of letter templates and patient information.**

Currently each team within the department has a different letter template. This creates inconsistencies, with patients receiving different amounts of information. Some patients receive telephone numbers and email addresses, while others have little contact information. A procedure for checking that information is correct before letters are sent should also be implemented in order to reduce the number of errors.

- **Waiting times for appointments available.**

From our staff interviews, there was an inconsistent response from staff members and managers to the wait times for appointments. There should be more information available to patients on expected wait times.

Our recommendations have been followed up with St Bartholomew's Hospital, and their responses can be found in our report. Our report has had a positive impact and was received well by the Trust. David Curran, Director of Nursing at St Bartholomew's Hospital will be joining a Board meeting in Public to comment on the report.

You can find our report on our website, or you can contact us for a copy.



## Digital Apps: A help or hindrance? Understanding and accessing digital healthcare apps

HWCoL undertook a focused research project in response to concerns from residents regarding their experiences when accessing NHS services.

As health providers increase their use of digital technologies to deliver and support their services, the number of apps and platforms patients and carers have to use has rapidly increased, without the support needed for them to navigate these technologies.

Our report found that many residents felt confused and frustrated when attempting to use these digital apps. During our investigation HWCoL mapped the digital technologies that were currently being used across North East London hospitals and GPs, assessed what was on offer to patients in the local area, how they worked, and whether they were easy to use. Our findings and recommendations highlight where these technologies are falling short in aiding patients care, and what improvements need to be made to ensure equitable access.

HWCoL presented the report to our local Integrated Care Board (ICB), Primary Care Network (PCN), Health and Wellbeing Board, the City of London Corporation and shared on our website to enable us to work collaboratively towards change.

The apps do not communicate or connect with each other; therefore, patients and carers are required to use multiple platforms to access the information they need.

In our report, HWCoL includes our full list of recommendations, our most essential include factors surrounding increasing the accessibility and communication. Our Integrated Care Board and Local Authority should work together to facilitate digital access to all through support, advice and practical help, particularly with setting up and using the basic functions within the NHS app.

Apps need to work together more effectively or be centralised into one app so that patients have fewer apps to access and are able to understand how to use them better.

### Our three key findings

- 1. The lack of accessibility for patients and carers**
- 2. The number of different apps and digital platforms which service-users need to have to access their healthcare remains unclear**
- 3. There is a lack of language and disability access options.**

HWCoL launched the report in February 2025 at an event for service providers where they were joined by Chief Information Officers and Digital leads from the NHS including from the Integrated Care Board (the commissioners of services), Homerton University Hospital and the Primary Care Network to discuss the findings in the report, and to explore what can be done locally to make access easier for all.

The report was then widely shared with Chief Information Officers from North East London ICB, NHS Trusts and stakeholders to drive collaborative action and system wide change. HWCoL will continue to work with local leaders to ensure that, as they develop their digital strategy, there is greater public involvement in those plans.

# Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS): A review of PALS services available to City of London residents

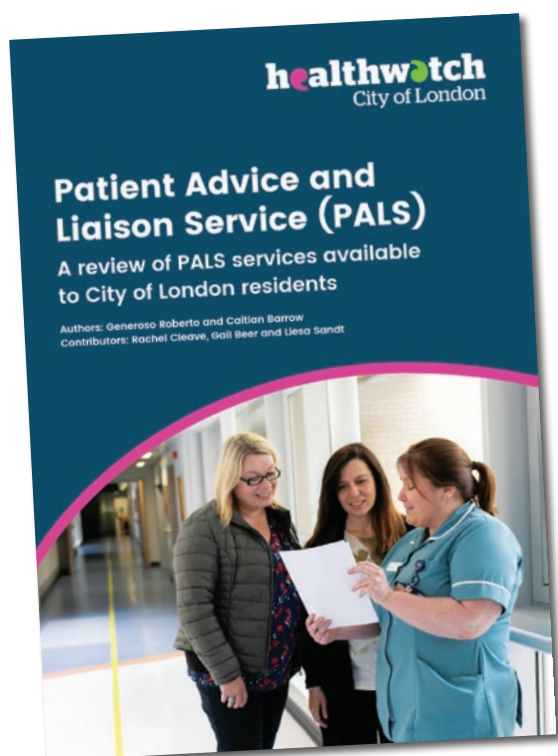
Following some feedback with concerns about access to Patient Advice and Liaison Services (PALS) we undertook a project to look at provision across health services City resident's access.

PALS offers confidential advice, support and information on health-related matters. They provide a point of contact for patients, their families and their carers. In response to ongoing concerns about its accessibility, we undertook this piece of research and set out to better understand how PALS can be located, contacted, and accessed, give residents more confidence in the service and give providers some insight into the user's experience. Our team went to local hospitals, including University College London Hospital, Royal London Hospital, St Bartholomew's Hospital and Mile End Hospital to see directly how accessible the service is for patients and families.

## Our three recommendations

1. **Standardising the navigation process to get to the PALS webpage, e.g. having all PALS pages in the same place or having a link on the home page.**
2. **Language should be user-friendly and consistent across the websites to ensure PALS advice is as accessible as possible.**
3. **Developing downloadable leaflets that provide detailed information about PALS services, including translations and easy to read versions.**

Our report contains a full list of recommendations, which include improving the current accessibility and communication that PALS provides, such as simplifying the PALS web page to make it more user-friendly and improving ways patients are able to get in touch with PALS.





# Championing the community's views

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**Healthwatch City of London works to make sure the views of residents, students and workers are heard by their local health and social care services.**

## Our work with the Neaman Practice

The Neaman Practice is the only GP Practice situated in the City, providing care for 80 percent of City residents.

We work very closely with the Neaman Practice, to ensure that patients' voices are heard and that they are able to access the best care available. We have continued to hold our quarterly meetings with the Practice, involving their Partners and Operations Manager, which creates an opportunity to talk about any concerns patients may be facing, as well as any issues the Practice may be experiencing.

In spring 2025, we became aware that a limit had been applied to the Practice for text messaging. Patients very quickly noticed this, as they had not been receiving adequate messages. We raised this on behalf of the Practice at the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Primary Care Network (PCN) and will continue to highlight the issue of adequate messaging to enable a change in the text message contract.

### The new booking system

In early 2025, the Neaman Practice changed the way patients could book appointments. This was an attempt by the Neaman Practice to increase access to doctors and reduce waiting times through an online triaging system.

This created issues for many patients who were unaware of the changes taking place and created concern for those who are not able to use the internet. We raised this directly with the Practice and stressed the importance of communicating the change effectively and reassuring patients.

We set up a Patient Panel for a Neaman Partner and GP, Dr Hillier, to go through the new booking system with patients. Over 40 patients joined the session. This resulted in the development of a 'how to' guide that we were able to share on various sites and publications in the City. We were also able to reassure those who don't access the GP Practice via the internet, smartphones or the NHS app, that they would have equality of access through analogue systems.

We subsequently held two focus groups, with a total of 17 people, one for patients and one specifically for carers, to explore how improvements to the new system could be made. This work is ongoing and we will continue to liaise with the Practice and patients to refine and improve the system, as well as monitor its effectiveness.

### Future work

We conducted an Enter and View at the Neaman Practice in February 2025. Initial findings found areas of concerns surrounding the privacy and confidentiality patients received in the waiting room. A full report will be published in Q1 of 2025/26.



## Our work on the Falls Prevention Service

City and Hackney public health have commissioned the Staying Steady falls prevention service since 2005. This includes strength and balance classes for people aged 55 and over who are at risk of falling (due to problems with strength and balance), have had a fall, or who are worried about having a fall.

In October 2024, Healthwatch City of London was informed by M.R.S Independent Living that the funding for the Staying Steady classes in the City would stop in early 2025. This change was brought about by the City and Hackney Public Health team, to prioritise Public Health investment in primary prevention activity with a broader reach.

As a result of our intervention, we were successful in securing funding for the continuation of the classes, whilst a review of the service was carried out. Since then, we have joined the City and Hackney Falls Prevention group which is made up

of City and Hackney Public Health team and falls prevention service providers. The group is reviewing the current falls prevention pathways offered by the City and Hackney Public Health Team.

We have carried out resident engagement on behalf of the City and Hackney Public Health team to ascertain the services residents would like to see, what level of understanding they have of the services already provided, their experience of falls and the services in place to prevent falls, and the pathway experience after a fall. This work has been carried out in close collaboration with Healthwatch Hackney.

We were invited to attend meetings held by Age UK City of London, and the Older People's Reference Group, where we spoke to residents and obtained their feedback. A survey was also undertaken and distributed across City and Hackney with 90 responses. A full report from this and further engagement work will be written and submitted to the City and Hackney Falls Prevention group for inclusion in the pathway review.

# Informing and reaching you

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**We make sure those in the City have access to clear, timely and accurate information so they can make the best decisions for themselves and their family.**

## **This year, HWCOL 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

## **We do this through:**

- Holding Patient Panel sessions, which include information on topical health and social care issues with key guest speakers. Over 100 people have attended the sessions, receiving expert advice on a number of areas.
- Producing monthly newsletters, which promote local health and wellbeing services that are available to local residents. We also provide editorial content for relevant communications and media outlets, including the City of London Corporation's information services, and Barbican Life magazine. We also use Facebook to reach residents' groups in the various City Estates.
- Sharing important updates from local health and social care services on their social media platforms, which reach over 950 users.
- Using our website to share the published reports and news, promote events and any information regarding health and social care, to which, over the year, there have been 13,728 visits.
- We also held many events throughout the year, which bring together hundreds of people. These include the Annual Health in the City Day, our annual Christmas event, our AGM as well as other community-based activities.

## **Annual Survey**

Every year we ask for feedback on the work we carry out, and we also ask our commissioners and Health Providers for their views.

This year, 75 percent of respondents found us very effective, 25 percent of respondents finding us effective. Notably, we have been effective in holding providers to account and in being a collaborative partner.

**I believe in the last year Healthwatch have made great contributions to the needs of the patients. They have always advocated for the needs of the patients. They push and work hard to create an inclusive approach to healthcare in the city.**

## **Our work in the Portsoken Community**

One of Healthwatch City of London's key priority is to engage with residents in the Portsoken Community.

We do this through a number of different ways, including holding targeted events and working with local Healthwatch, such as Healthwatch Tower Hamlets to ensure the local GP Practice in the Portsoken area, Goodman's Field Medical Practice, is listening and adhering to patient's feedback.



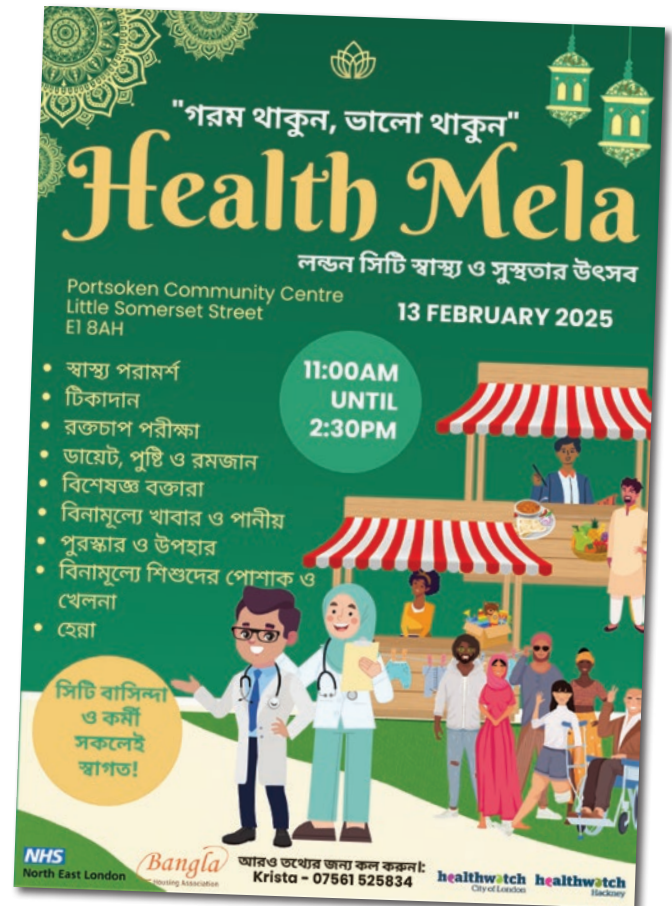


## Health Mela

In February, NHS North East London in partnership with Healthwatch City of London and Healthwatch Hackney held a Health Mela event at the Portsoken Community Centre to promote staying well and warm in winter, primarily in our Bangladeshi community.

We were proud to attend and help host the event, along with other health service providers and organisations working to help residents of the City. It was a great event that saw over 50 residents access health advice, the food pantry, vaccine information and blood pressure checks. The event is also a great example of co-production, with volunteers working with North East London and Healthwatch to design and deliver this event. Volunteers were also essential in the promotion of this event, with the leafletting of local estates.

As a result of this event, we were able to meet lots of local residents and volunteer groups as well as Court of Common Councillors. We are following up on the event with some more activities specifically for the residents in this part of the City.



# Health in the City Day

At the end of June, we held our first Health in the City Day in collaboration with the Neaman Practice.

This was a hugely successful event which saw nearly **100 local residents** come along to meet us. We were joined by both Dr Chor and Dr Hillier from the Neaman Practice, and representatives from health services and community services, including:

North East London Cancer Alliance, Diabetes UK, City Advice, Representatives from the City of London Adult Services and the Children's team, Mental Health Voice, City Carers Community, Older People's Reference Group and the Forget Me Not Café, the Together Better Programme and Social Prescribing team from the Shoreditch Park and City PCN.

6 **As the first health in the City event it was very well attended compared to other events. Well done for your hard work.**

The Health in the City Day was able to bring together services and residents, creating the space for local services in Health and Social Care to share what they are offering and what residents can access in the City.



6 **I thought it was excellent. Well attended and enabled us to engage with clients and partners, in particular the Neaman practice.**

Residents were also able to receive helpful health and wellbeing advice directly from organisations as well as from useful leaflets available. Residents were also able to ask questions and seek information from services, such as how they are directly engaging with City residents and how City residents are able to access their services.

6 **What a great event it was last Saturday! Not only was there a rich supply of information and provider contact, but the atmosphere was so pleasant and welcoming.**

**Cynthia White, Chair, Older People's Reference Group.**

It was also great to see organisations making connections with each other to work together in the future.





# Our public meetings

Public meetings are an important part of what we do and give residents and local health and social care services the opportunity to hold us to account, as well as hear about our work. At each meeting, we are also joined by a speaker on a subject of interest in Health and Social Care. This year we held three Public Meetings, our AGM and two Board meetings in Public.

## AGM with Mary Durcan and Dr Sue Mann

Each year, we hold our Annual General Meeting (AGM) to update the community and our stakeholders on what we have achieved, and to hear directly from those in our community.

In October we were joined by guest speakers, Mary Durcan, Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board and Dr Sue Mann, National Clinical Director for Women's Health, along with organisations from the Health and Social Care sector. These included City Advice, IMAGO and the Family Information Service from the City of London Corporation and this enabled these organisations to provide information to our attendees on their services and how they can help support local residents.

### Good to connect with other City of London Groups

We updated attendees on what we achieved in the previous year, which can be seen in our previous Annual Report.

Mary Durcan outlined her role as the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board, the role of the Board and how it shapes and advises on service provision in the City. Dr Sue Mann gave an overview of both her roles, National Clinical Director for Women's Health and Lead for Women's Health in City and Hackney. She shared the importance of raising awareness for women's health. In City and Hackney, she has overseen the roll-out of the menopause café and brings women together, both in small groups and on larger scales to create open discussions to educate and reduce the stigma that surrounds women's health.

### The information provided by Dr Mann and her enthusiasm is very good to hear

Members of the public were then able to ask questions. Concerns included:

- Accessing community services through Homerton Hospital
- Access to St Leonard's including physiotherapy
- Secondary care provision and referral pathways
- Current local healthcare structures

Addressing these issues remains a priority for us, as we want to ensure that City residents are able to access the health and social care services they require within their local area.

We aim to hold three additional board meetings in public where guest speakers talk about services that are important to those using services and are able to ask questions.





# Our Patient Panels

Our Patient Panels have gone from strength to strength this year. They have become an important part of the local landscape. We have been able to connect with more people through this popular vehicle and enabled attendees to suggest future topics. This year we held eight Patient Panels reaching over 100 people, with each session attracting new members of the community.

Patient Panels bring together members of the community with an expert in the field to explore and create greater understanding of the subject, enabling feedback to service providers that they can take away.

At the end of the sessions, we produce a report with the information on our website and in our newsletters ensuring that we spread the knowledge.

## City of London health and wellbeing strategy

We were joined by Head of Strategy and Performance at the Department of Community and Children's Services from the City of London Corporation, who provided an overview of the strategy's aims, structure, and priority areas. City residents participated in the session, contributing to a meaningful discussion on the key themes of the strategy and broader health and wellbeing challenges within the Square Mile.

Participants raised several key issues, including the financial insecurity faced by unpaid carers, the need to address social isolation, the visible rise in homelessness across the City and concerns over limited access to affordable food.

## Medicines management

We were joined by the Lead Pharmacist at the Neaman Practice. The session provided a comprehensive overview of medicines management services available at the practice, alongside an introduction to the newly launched national Pharmacy First scheme. The critical importance of annual medication reviews was highlighted, along with an explanation of how patients can now access treatment for seven common conditions directly through community pharmacies.

## Sexual and reproductive health strategy

The session was led by Public Health Specialist from the City and Hackney Public Health team, who presented the strategy's key priorities, living well with HIV, achieving zero new HIV transmissions, reducing the spread of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and addressing the needs of vulnerable populations and individuals with complex needs.

The panel also explored local and digital sexual health services available to City residents, including STI testing kits, routine contraception, and access to emergency hormonal contraception.





## Cardiopulmonary resuscitation training

We held two interactive sessions in partnership with the London Ambulance Service aimed at increasing community awareness and confidence in responding to cardiac emergencies. Attendees received hands-on instruction in recognising the signs of cardiac arrest, placing an unconscious person in the recovery position, performing Basic Life Support and using a defibrillator. The sessions also sparked important discussions around the availability and visibility of defibrillators within the City, reinforcing the critical role of CPR in saving lives. As a result of these sessions, 20 people are now trained to use defibrillators, and in basic life support.

## City of London Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) strategy and consultation

The session was led by the Projects and Strategy Officer at the City of London Corporation and attended by City residents. The Officer outlined the co-production of the strategy in collaboration with local stakeholders and residents. The strategy envisions a City where all children and young people feel safe, enjoy good mental health and wellbeing, and are supported to thrive and transition successfully into adulthood. Attendees highlighted the critical need for personalised, one-to-one support in schools and stressed the importance of ensuring that all schools attended by City children are properly resourced to meet diverse needs.



**LET THE CITY OF LONDON CORPORATION KNOW WHAT YOU THINK OF THE SEND 2024-2028 STRATEGY.**


The City of London is currently consulting on its Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) strategy.

Come along to the Golden Lane Community Centre on Thursday 15 August from 11am to 1pm with Hannah Dobbin, Strategy and Projects Officer and Ellie Ward, Head of Strategy and Performance to have your say.

You can read the strategy here:  
<https://forms.office.com/e/dzJaFDS4A9>

Refreshments will be provided.

To register, please visit [healthwatchcityoflondon.org.uk/events](https://healthwatchcityoflondon.org.uk/events) or scan our QR code



## Diabetes with Diabetes UK

Aimed at improving awareness and understanding of diabetes among City residents, a representative from Diabetes UK led the session, providing clear guidance on the health impacts of diabetes and how to effectively navigate NHS services when living with, or caring for, someone with the condition.

The session also outlined local support available to residents, including Diabetes UK's educational resources, GP-led care, and peer support groups.

## City of London adult social care strategy and consultation

The session was attended by residents and staff from the City of London Corporation, including Strategy Officer and Head of Strategy and Performance at the City of London Corporation. The discussion focused on key issues including accessibility of services, digital exclusion, the role of technology in promoting independence, and the need for improved coordination across care pathways.

As a result of resident feedback, the consultation period was extended to ensure broader participation across the community. Healthwatch City of London produced a report summarising the session and promoted the accompanying survey to encourage further input. In response to the discussions, a new Adult Social Care Group is being established in partnership with the City of London Corporation, enabling residents who access care services to directly shape future provision.

## Mental health and social isolation

Held in partnership with City and Hackney Talking Therapies, Tower Hamlets Talking Therapies, and the Together Better programme. The session was attended by residents and staff from Talking Therapies who provided an overview of local talking therapy services and how individuals and families can access mental health support to improve overall wellbeing.

A project officer from the Together Better programme also gave a presentation on how the initiative empowers residents and volunteers to engage in activities designed to support both physical and mental health, combat loneliness, and strengthen community connections.

# Showcasing volunteer impact

Our fantastic volunteers have given 200 hours in support of our work. Thanks to their dedication to improving care, we can better understand what is working and what needs improving in our community.

## This year, our volunteers:

- Worked on desktop research for our projects
- Were essential in helping write our reports
- Carried out enter and view visits to local services to help them improve

## At the heart of what we do

From finding out what residents think to helping raise awareness, our volunteers have championed community concerns to improve care.

**6** I'm Steve Stevenson and I've been a Trustee of Healthwatch City of London since 2019, when HWCOL first won the contract. Over the years we've helped residents of the City of London give feedback on their Health and Social Care services. I also sit on the Health Scrutiny Committee at the City of London Corporation. HWCOL is there to make sure that the services provided for you are done so correctly. The best thing about this role though is, being out and about and talking to everyone across the City.

**Steve Stevenson, Trustee and Treasurer, Healthwatch City of London**



**6** Hi, I'm Generoso and I've been a volunteer with Healthwatch City of London for two years now. I've helped with research and writing the recent reports on their Enter and View visits and PALS, all of which has given me great insight into different aspects of healthcare and the patient experience. I've also attended a few events where I met a whole range of people from across the City. It's great being part of the Healthwatch Team, I feel that we achieve a lot of good work that is making a difference for City residents.

**Generoso Roberto, Volunteer, Healthwatch City of London**



**Be part of  
the change**

If you've felt inspired by these stories, contact us today and find out how you can be part of the change.

[info@healthwatchcityoflondon.org.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchcityoflondon.org.uk)

[www.healthwatchcityoflondon.org.uk](http://www.healthwatchcityoflondon.org.uk)



# Finance and future priorities

We receive funding from the City of London Corporation under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to help us do our work.

## Our income and expenditure

INCOME	2024-25 £	EXPENDITURE	2024-25 £
Annual grant from the City of London Corporation	93,200	Pay costs	66,263
Additional income (NHS NEL for public engagement)	5,000	IT and telephone costs	5,571
Total income	98,200	Audit and accountancy	1,320
		Insurance	1,136
		Operating costs (Events, printing, postage)	6,671
		Total expenditure	80,962

Rent payments are not included due to late invoicing and will be in next year's accounts.



## Next steps

Over the next year, we will keep reaching out to every part of the community, 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 priorities for the next year are:

1. **Deliver** 10 patient panels to inform you about Health and Social care topics that are important to you.
2. **Hold** a summer information event in June and our AGM in October. Both events will give residents important information on local Health and Social Care services and on the work of Healthwatch City of London.
3. **Undertake** two research projects – Emergency pathways in Barts and UCLH and access to dentistry in the City.
4. **Carry out** an Enter and View at the Physiotherapy department at St Leonard's Hospital in order to report on the provision of services and make recommendations for improvement.
5. **Increase** engagement with the Portsoken community – hold two engagement events and increase representation from residents.
6. **Maintain**, train and utilise a dedicated team of volunteers. To attend focus groups to give the City's perspective, research and write reports for projects, help with HWCOL events and carry out Enter and View visits.
7. **Scrutinise** how the City of London Corporation awards and monitors its contracts for Social Care provision. Focus on the patient/resident feedback elements of the contracts. Review feedback from patients via the annual social care survey and analyse safeguarding statistics.

# Statutory Statements

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Healthwatch City of London, Portsoken Community Centre, 20 Little Somerset Street, London E1 8AH

Healthwatch City of London 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.

The Healthwatch Board consists of eight members, five Trustees and three Board Associates 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 2024/25, the Board met ten times and made decisions on matters such as the objectives and priorities, both for our business plan and our local priorities as well as budget setting and organisational design.

### Methods and systems used across the year to obtain people's experiences

HWCoL uses 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 2024/25, HWCoL has 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.

HWCoL ensures that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. HWCoL will publish it on our website as well as making it available in print.

### Responses to recommendations

All providers from whom HWCoL requested information for recommendations responded. 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

HWCoL ensures that people who can make decisions about services hear about the insights and experiences shared with us.

For example, in our local authority area, HWCoL takes information to the City of London Health and Wellbeing Board and the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Board. HWCoL also takes insight and experiences to decision-makers in NHS North East London. For example, HWCoL sits on the Integrated Care Partnership Board and the Population Health and Integration Committee. HWCoL also shares our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

### Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch City of London is represented on the City of London Health and Wellbeing Board by Gail Beer, Chair. During 2024/25, our representative has effectively carried out this role by providing information and performance reports at each committee.

Healthwatch City of London is represented on North East London Integrated Care Partnership Board by Rachel Cleave, General and Manager, and North East London Integrated Care Board by Healthwatch Hackney.





# healthwatch

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