



# Local action, strategic influence

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## Annual report 2025/26



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# A message from our Chair

I am delighted to be able to share with you our annual report for 2025/2026. It is hard to believe that we have been making your voice heard by health and social care providers since 2019. Yet this has never been more challenging as we work through the reorganisation in health and the uncertainty for Healthwatch as the plan to abolish us remains part of the government's new health bill. Whilst this report sets out this year's achievements – and there is much to celebrate – it is the future that we need to look to.

Building strong and sustainable networks across providers of health and social care and the voluntary sector is an important part of what we do. Our networks will become increasingly important as health and social care move towards self-scrutiny. We remain committed to making sure that any new ways of working respect the voices of all and that the external and impartial scrutiny that we provide is robust. We will continue to collaborate with partners to make your voice heard, and your concerns acted on.

The Government's 10 Year Health Plan for England sets out changes to the way health care will be delivered. It envisages three shifts – from analogue to digital, from hospital to community and from sickness to prevention. Our mission is to make sure that the implementation of these changes is right for the people of the City of London and that we have our say.

The proposed shift from analogue to digital offers online health care services that can bring benefits, but these changes must leave no group disadvantaged. Importantly, access to GPs and specialists must provide human interaction giving users confidence in the standards and responsiveness of those caring for them.

The shift from hospital to community provides a vision of integrated care being provided closer to home through a neighbourhood model, with health and social care being delivered into local communities in a way that is patient-centred, preventing the fragmentation often seen across and between health and social care organisations. We have already been active in scrutinising these plans and we are committed to continue doing so, keeping you informed and consulted on.

Finally, the shift from sickness to prevention focuses on how joined up action can prevent illness through reducing health inequalities. We know that how and where we live have a huge impact on ill health and longevity. Making sure that resources are directed to the right communities will be paramount.

Whatever our future over the coming months, we will work hard to ensure that those making changes hear your voice, are transparent about what they are doing and that their actions are relevant to the needs of our local community. But we need to do this with you – so keep telling us what you think because how you experience services is vital to making change happen. Thank you for all your support.

Finally, I would like to thank the amazing team at HWCofL for all their hard work, my fellow Board Members, the Corporation of London and all our partners without whom what we do would be impossible.

**Gail Beer**

**Chair, Healthwatch City of London**



# A message from our Chief Executive

I'm proud to present this annual report to you. The past year has been one of uncertainty and change for both Healthwatch and the wider NHS. However, we have continued to work hard as your independent champion as users of Health and Social Care Services.

In our last annual report, I talked about the challenging landscape for health and care which was limited with budget constraints and savings targets. This year has been no different and if anything, more challenging. We have awaited the outcome of the Dash review and then the details of the government's 10-year strategy for health and social care which includes the winding up of Healthwatch England and local Healthwatch.

However, whilst we await the details of this decision, we have continued to listen to our community and feed this back to providers. We've also delivered a wide range of events, including our Health in the City Day, Men's Health Matters, AGM, heart health information event and our ever-popular Patient Panels on subjects including diet and nutrition, skin cancer and befriending services. We were joined at our events by Mary Elford, Chair Homerton Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, Dame Marie Gabriel, Chair North East London Integrated Care Board and Claire Solley, Chair City and Hackney Safeguarding Adults Board.

We have launched our digital apps report, which we'll be revisiting again this year, carried out a visit to the minor injuries unit at St Bartholomew's Hospital and have continued to work closely with the Neaman Practice and published our Enter and View report on our visit there.

We have increased our engagement with the Portsoken community working with the City and Hackney Public Health Team.

I am proud of the impact Healthwatch City of London has made this year. Despite us being a small team, we have made sure people's views are heard and that the community has the information and support you need to access Health and Social Care Services.

**Rachel Cleave**

**Chief Executive, Healthwatch City of London**

**6 I am proud of the impact Healthwatch City of London has made this year. Despite us being a small team, we have made sure people's views are heard.**

# About us

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

We ensure that NHS leaders and decision makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care. We can also help you find reliable and trustworthy information and advice. We are based in the Portsoken Community Centre where you can find us on Tuesdays and Thursdays.



## 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 we have been out and about in the community listening to your stories, engaging with partners, and working to improve care in the City of London. Here is our year at a glance.

## Spring

- Public Launch of our *Digital Apps: A help or hindrance? Understanding and accessing digital healthcare apps* report
- Carers Afternoon Tea at the Guildhall to mark Carers Rights Week
- Health in the City Day
- Attended City Question time

## Summer

- Visit to St Bartholomew's Minor Injuries Unit
- Adults Social Care Information Events
- Annual Survey
- Skin Cancer Awareness Patient Panel
- CPR Training Session

## Autumn

- Annual General Meeting
- Womb and Ovarian Cancer Prevention Patient Panel
- Barts Enter and View Report Launch
- Neaman Practice Enter and View Report Launch
- Board Meeting in Public with Mary Elford, Chair of Homerton Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
- Diet and Nutrition Patient Panel

## Winter

- Christmas Residents' lunch and engagement event
- Men's Health Matters Event
- Portsoken Health Blood pressure and heart health event
- Adult community rehabilitation team Patient Panel
- RNID Patient Panel
- Carers Rights Day event
- Board meeting in Public with Claire Solley, Chair City and Hackney Safeguarding Adults Board



# Working together for change

Collaboration between Local Healthwatch organisations, whether within a region or across different parts of the country, strengthens local voices, enables shared learning and supports change at a wider level. By working together, Healthwatch can identify common challenges, compare effective approaches and build a stronger evidence base to inform service improvement at both regional and national level.

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

This year, we've worked with Healthwatch across North East London to achieve the following:

## Using insight to drive change

In North East London, this partnership is delivered through the Community Insights Programme with the Integrated Care Board. It brings together the experiences of **193,448 local people** (up from 163,340 last year), and has identified **655,165 issues**, concerns and examples of good practice (previously 540,000). Using the Community Insights System, the eight Healthwatch organisations have produced **1,040 reports** and **396 dashboards** on GP and hospital services alone (previously 822 reports and 317 dashboards). This provides Healthwatch and system partners with a strong source of evidence to spot trends, understand variation between communities and inform planning, commissioning and service improvement.

## Improving access to GP services

Across North East London, we worked with Healthwatch partners to review the GP registration process for people who may not have formal identification. This included understanding how many local practices had signed up to the Safe Surgeries commitment, created by Doctors of the World, and exploring how accessible registration was for people facing barriers to care. The work strengthened collaboration across the region and helped highlight where services can become more inclusive, accessible and responsive.

## Amplifying maternity voices

We continue to lead work on equitable maternity services across North East London. This year, we worked with Healthwatch colleagues across North East London to support bereaved families to speak up and have their voices heard through the National Maternity and Neonatal Investigation.

## Improving access through the NHS App

We also contributed to work on the NHS App with Healthwatch organisations across the country. This helped build understanding of how digital tools can support access to services, while also highlighting the barriers some people face in using online systems. The findings will support future work to improve digital inclusion and make services easier to use.

## Meetings we attend to represent you

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 patients are able to discuss the service provided by the Practice and 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.

As a result of our feedback, the Neaman Practice has advertised its Patient Participation Group (PPG) meetings more widely. These are designed to give a greater voice to patients. The Practice now involves us when there are changes to procedures at the surgery, such as the introduction of AI Scribe.

### 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.

### 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. For example, this year we undertook the Safe Surgeries project which looked at GP registration procedures and patient information across all GP practices in North East London. We surveyed the Neaman and Goodman's Fields Practices. Overall, the registration process was straightforward. However, we found that the Neaman Practice will only accept patients with certain postcodes, which excluded some Portsoken Residents.

### 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. This year we have ensured that there are City Representatives as part of the City and Hackney Public Representatives Programme which is managed by this group. The representatives participate in focus groups, complete surveys and attend meetings about health services to put forward the public voice and experience of accessing services.

### 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. In particular we have raised the issue of the lack of first aid and CPR training for residents, the number of available defibrillators for use outside

of office buildings and in residential blocks, the training of estate teams in safeguarding awareness, the suitability of the Neaman Practice premises, the lack of progress from the Neighbourhood Engagement team, and the changes in the falls prevention pathways.

### **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, has been working collaboratively to increase the pace of change in Health and Social Care.

### **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 that 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. We have ensured that residents' awareness of safeguarding issues has been increased, Claire Solley, the Chair of the Board, attended our Public Board meeting, and making 'safeguarding everyone's business' is the top priority of the Board and Committee in the business plan.

### **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 in 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. Our role is to ensure that the needs of the City are considered and met and to provide constructive challenge and support to make sure that the service user voice is heard.

### **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. At this Board we have highlighted the perceived lack of engagement from the Neighbourhoods team and supported the board in developing a more robust approach to engagement which is work in progress.

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

This group ensures that both authorities, 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. HWCofL 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.

# Information and signposting

This year many of you have reached out to us for advice, support or help finding services. These conversations also help us to understand where, and how, your care can be made better. We make sure those in the City have access to clear, timely and accurate information to enable them to make the best decisions about their health and care.

## This year, we have helped people by:

- Providing up-to-date information people can trust
- Helping people access the services they need
- Supporting people to look after their health
- Signposting people to additional support services

## We do this through:

- Our monthly newsletters and direct emails which advertise our events and disseminate important information. Our emails reach over 180 people and are more widely distributed via City of London Corporation communications. We also provide editorial content for relevant City communications including Barbican Life Magazine and City Matters.
- Social media posts on X, Facebook, Instagram, and Threads which reach over 970 people.
- Holding Patient Panel sessions which include experts from across health and social care, giving advice on topical issues. Over 100 people have attended these sessions during the year.

- Using our website to share reports, information, to advertise events and promote any Public Health messages. Over the year, the website has had more than 15,000 visitors.
- Our public meetings: over the year we have held our AGM, Board meeting in public with Mary Elford, Chair of Homerton Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, Board meeting in public with Claire Solley, Chair of City and Hackney Safeguarding Adults Board, Why Men's Health Matters Event, Neaman Practice Enter and View report launch, Heart Health Information event, and our Barts Cardiology Enter and View report launch at St Bartholomew's Hospital. You can read more about all of these events later in this report.

## Annual Survey

We want to make sure that we deliver the service you want, therefore every year we ask for your feedback, and our stakeholders for theirs, via our annual survey.

100% of our stakeholders stated that they found us very effective or effective in our role.

**6** 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.



# Bringing health and social care information to you

## Our Patient Panel series

Our series of Patient Panels continued to go from strength to strength this year. Listening to your requests, we have held sessions on a varied range of topics from diet and nutrition to skin cancer awareness.

### Public Launch of our *Digital Apps: A help or hindrance? Understanding and accessing digital healthcare apps* report – April 2025

In our last annual report we gave an overview of our Digital Apps report, which had then been circulated to decision-makers in North East London, to NHS Service providers and the IT leads of the NHS Trusts whose care City residents access. In April 2025 we held a Public Launch and Patient Panel to discuss the findings of our report and how we can make a difference.

We were joined by the Digital Inclusion Lead at Homerton Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust who agreed with both the findings and recommendations, which were to ensure that people who can't or choose not to use technology are not left behind, and that we don't create inequalities in access to services. We also highlighted the need to make sure that people are given the opportunity to learn how to use the technology, as well as ensuring that traditional methods of communicating with health services are always available. One of the three main shifts in the NHS 10 Year Health Plan for England is the move from analogue to digital. This year we will be revisiting this project, looking at the

successes and challenges of this shift, and peoples' experiences since the publication of our report. The lively debate during this Patient Panel highlights the strong feelings many of our residents have about accessing their healthcare digitally, and the disparities in their access.

### Skin cancer awareness – May 2025

We were joined at the Golden Lane Community Centre by Dr Thomas McLeod GP, who is the clinical lead on North East London Cancer Alliance skin cancer risk reduction campaign. Dr McLeod told us about the two different groups of skin cancer, melanoma and non-melanoma, what to check on suntan lotion bottle labels, UVA, UVB and SPF, getting enough Vitamin D safely and what to look for when inspecting moles or dark spots. This patient panel gave attendees really useful and little-known information. It highlights that skin cancer is a topic about which many people know little. We promoted the information from Dr McLeod on our website and advertised the LDN Get Sun Set page on the NEL Cancer Alliance website showing how to stay safe in the sun.

**We are starting the summer season with increasing strong sunlight and longer daylight hours, so advice on skin care is timely and important.**



## Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training – July 2025

We are frequently asked to provide training session on various topics; CPR training is the most requested. In July we hosted another fully booked CPR training session with the London Ambulance Service at the Artizan Library. The certificated course covers adult resuscitation and emergency response.

## Womb and Ovarian Cancer – September 2025

North East London Cancer Alliance and leading gynaecological cancer charity The Eve Appeal joined us to promote the second phase of their 'You Need to Know' campaign, to raise awareness of ovarian cancer symptoms and improve early diagnosis, as with all cancers the early diagnosis and treatment support better outcomes. The session promoted the campaign which encourages women in North East London to speak to their GPs if they experience persistent bloating or other unexplained changes in bowel movement or eating habits.

## Diet and Nutrition – October 2025

Held at the Golden Lane Community Centre, this was our best attended session of the year. Joe Alvarez, First Contact Dietitian, Shoreditch Park and City PCN and Neaman Practice presented information to support the health and wellbeing of residents by improving understanding of

nutrition, encouraging healthy lifestyle choices, and promoting access to dietetic services in the City of London. Attendees at this Patient Panel found the information really useful. It highlights the lack of advice available to the population around healthy eating and lifestyle. We published the information from this session on our website and have invited Joe Alvarez back to deliver another Patient Panel this year.

## Together Better and the Befriending Service – December 2025

Yasmin Kauser and Ragini Khurana from Together Better told us about the new Befriending Service run by Volunteer Centre Hackney. The service recruits and trains volunteers to support individuals experiencing loneliness or looking to expand their social circles. Trained befrienders visit weekly, make phone calls, and accompany the person they are supporting on outings, with the first meeting always joined by staff. The Together Better Programme runs weekly events for residents to join including a coffee morning, arts and crafts and exercise classes.

The Befriending Service was a new provision at the time of this session, with residents given all the information needed on what the service can provide, how to access it and who can access it. Following this event, we know of many residents who have now attended Together Better events and referred neighbours to the Befriending service.





## Royal National Institute for Deaf People – February 2026

Held at the Golden Lane Community Centre in February, this Patient Panel with Kate Angus from the Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID) gave us an insight into the work RNID undertake within the City.

The service in the City includes advice on how to use and clean your NHS hearing aids as well free battery checks, free hearing checks, and information on hearing loss and tinnitus.

We learnt that you could get a free initial hearing assessment with RNID which will help signpost you to the right place for further assessment should you need it. We were also reminded that the NHS does provide free hearing aids. The RNID was able to advertise its services at the community centre and across City and Hackney. This session explored the impact of the discontinuation of the use of landline telephone in particular on some of the most vulnerable people in our community. We have been carrying out some research to establish the timescale for this change and what companies such as BT are doing to ensure that all people are able to make contact with friends and family, and importantly not lose their voice.

## Adult Community Rehabilitation Team (ACRT) – March 2026

Online, we were joined by Anna Young, Head of Service, Adult Community Rehabilitation Team & Wheelchair Services who gave us an overview of the vast range of services they provide. ACRT is a community-based service that aims at improving the health, wellbeing, and independence of adults living in the community who have physical or neurological disabilities. They provide care and support to the people to manage long-term health conditions and help them make informed decisions about their health. The team works closely with GPs, nurses, and other services to prevent hospital admissions and help people maintain their health, confidence, and quality of life. The session helped to promote the ACRT team and the range of services it provides.

## Our public meetings

### Board meeting in public with Mary Elford, Chair Homerton Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust – September 2025

We hold our Board Meetings in public to make sure you can speak directly to us about our work and talk to leaders in health and social care. In September we were joined by Mary Elford, Chair of Homerton Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust. Mary gave an overview of the hospital and the Trust, and its positives including no corridor care, the referral from GP to hospital times, and the 'outstanding' rated A&E department. The priorities of the Trust are:

- the development of community services,
- support GPs to engage in community care and the neighbourhoods.
- Developing the new 'integrator' role which is being taken on by the Trust.\*

Mary told us that the patient feedback and insights that the Trust receives from us are used to help shape the Trust's services, and promised to keep a focus on patient feedback and to work with us to ensure a consistent approach going forward. This includes looking at the Patient Advice and Liaison Services (PALS) and the friends and family test, which they also use. We highlighted our finding into the PALS service in our report from 2025.

### Board meeting in public with Claire Solley, Chair City and Hackney Safeguarding Adults Board – January 2026

Claire gave an overview of the responsibilities of the Board, its make up and how it operates across both City and Hackney. The main objective of the board is to ensure that local safeguarding arrangements are in place and organisations safeguard adults at risk of abuse in City and Hackney. The board has three core partners: the local authority, the integrated care board and the police. It also includes many other partners, such as health trusts, advocacy services, criminal justice, the fire brigade, Department of Work and Pensions, voluntary sector services and Healthwatch City of London and Healthwatch Hackney. Claire also outlined

the new strategic objectives of the Board for 2025 – 2028 which include making safeguarding everybody's responsibility.

Safeguarding is an area that affects us all, and hosting this meeting gave the CHSAB and HWCOL the chance to emphasise that point to attendees and advertise where to go to seek help or to report a concern.

### Annual General Meeting – October 2025

Held at St Giles' Cripplegate Church, Barbican, we gave an update on our work over the previous year which included our reports on Digital Apps, Enter and Views and the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). We also talked about our Patient Panel series, public meetings and events.

**Very informative and lovely people attending. I will miss Healthwatch and all the work they do.**

Dame Marie Gabriel, Chair North East London Integrated Care Board (NEL ICB) joined us as our guest speaker to talk about the NHS 10 Year Health Plan for England and how NEL ICB will be implementing proposed changes. This event gave residents the chance to speak directly to Marie about the impact on local services and how they are delivered. In the 10 Year Health Plan for England there has been a shift from treating sickness to preventing illness, moving acute care to community-based services and the aim to develop a long-term health strategy which is aligned with the health priorities of the government. Residents were keen to hear how this would impact them and be reassured that these moves would not lead to exclusion of any groups.

**Dame Marie Gabriel was excellent. A good choice of speaker.**

Marie talked about how the board functions and said that discussions take place on how best to allocate and deliver the £6.5 billion budget for North East London by using local neighbourhood structures. Marie recognised the need to work flexibly with residents and embrace change.

We were also supported at the event with stallholders from City Advice, IMAGO, Age UK City of London, Dragon Café and Gloji.

\*The NHS Integrator is a collaborative infrastructure and leadership function designed to coordinate the shift from hospital-centric care to proactive, community-based care

## Our information events

### Health in the City Day

On the hottest day of the year last June, we held our second Health in the City Day where we brought health information to our community. Attended by over 60 local people, the event enabled representatives from health services, voluntary and community organisations to meet residents and talk about the wide variety of services available.

Tapping into local resources to promote health and wellbeing, we had a range of organisations and teams including, Dr Chor from the Neaman practice, the Primary Care Network Team who provide out-of-hours GP services and also offered blood pressure and blood sugar checks on the day, City Carers Community, Older Peoples Reference Group, Age UK City of London, Dragon Café in the City, Advocacy Project, Better Together, NHS NEL Cancer Alliance, Gloji (City and Hackney Smoke Free Service).

**It was a well organised event. It is useful to have hold it annually as it connects different groups from the borough together.**

The event not only gave residents a chance to ask questions in an informal setting, it also allowed the service providers and charities to network and build relationships, connecting Health and Social Care across the City. Most importantly, this event has provided residents with an opportunity to talk to service providers informally and learn more about local services.

### Why Men's Health Matters Event – February 2026

An event driven by demand from local residents and hosted at St Bartholomew's Hospital in February, over 30 people attended this session on men's health. Attendees had the chance to hear from Dr Samantha Strumier, Lead Uro-Oncology CNS and Advanced Practice Nurse at St Bartholomew's Hospital on Prostate Cancer Awareness, and David Curran, Director of nursing at St Bartholomew's Hospital on services provided at the hospital.

**Information helpful and reassuring and easy to understand.**

Dr Chor from the Neaman Practice joined us and talked about services available for men in the City including those provided by his surgery. The event highlighted the importance of having prostate cancer screening tests and the signs and symptoms which are referenced in the government's men's health strategy.

The event also shone a spotlight on the many established and new services available for men in the City, some of which had stalls to promote their services. Our thanks to the Proper Blokes Club, RNID, Shoreditch Trust and City Dudes who joined us.

Feedback from the event was very positive:

**This was a very good opportunity to learn more about prostate cancer and the refreshments were excellent.**





## Neaman Practice Enter and View report launch

We undertook an Enter and View visit to the Neaman Practice in February 2025. The visit was carried out by the staff team and volunteers. The report from that visit was launched in November where we were joined by Dr Chor, Dr Hillier and Sinead Downes, the Practice Manager. The event was well attended with the Partners answering lots of questions from residents. The report has been distributed in the community centres, at the Practice and on our website.

The main recommendations made in the report are:

1. Improved communications with patients.
2. Clarification on the booking process for follow up appointments
3. Consistency in staff knowledge on processes used at the surgery i.e. medicines reviews
4. Private space for patients in the reception area

The Neaman Practice welcomed the report and have put in place new and improved processes to address our recommendations.



## Our report launches

### Barts Enter and View report launch

In October, we were at St Bartholomew's hospital to officially launch our Cardiology Department Enter and View report. This was hosted by Professor Charles Knight OBE, chief executive of St Bartholomew's Hospital, and David Curran, Director of Nursing. The report made several recommendations regarding administration practice within the team, namely improving communication with patients and training of administrative staff. It was heartening to hear that our recommendations have now not only been adopted within the department, but across all outpatient departments within the Trust. The report was strongly welcomed by the Trust.

**I'm a Barts patient who has experienced comms problems - now much improved.**



# Making a difference in the community

We bring people's experiences to healthcare professionals and decision makers, using their feedback to shape services and improve care over time. Here are some examples of our work in the City of London this year:

## Getting services to inform the public

### Introduction of AI Scribe at the Neaman Practice

Last year we helped the Neaman Practice inform its patients about the new appointment booking system. Using the lessons learned from this, the Practice asked us to help tell patients about the introduction of AI scribe in the surgery in September. We publicised the change in our newsletter and supported them to present at their PPG meeting.

### Adult Social Care Information sessions

In partnership with the City of London Adult Social Care team, we ran a series of events to inform residents of the services offered by the team at the Corporation of London, giving residents an opportunity to ask questions about any aspect of social care in particular what they are entitled to or can access in range of services

The sessions were led by the Lead Occupational Therapist and the Adult Social Care team and held in the Guildhall, the Portsoken Community Centre and the Golden Lane Community Centre to reach as many residents as possible. The sessions covered the new Housing Assistance Policy, the Sensory Needs Process, information on Occupational therapy and the additional adult social care services offered in the City.

Residents who attended told us that they found the information very useful and were now much better informed about the services and help they can access. We are now working with the City of London Corporation to establish an Adult Social Care Advisory Board which will be consulted on service provision and communication with the Adult Social Care team.

**6 Very helpful event to provide how to access adult social care and how services are provided locally.**

### Visit to St Bartholomew's Minor Injuries Unit

In August the HWCoL team visited to the Barts Minor Injuries Unit (MIU) to find out more about how it works. This followed some issues raised by residents about what appeared to be under-utilisation and limited opening times. The team discussed staffing levels, the profile of people seeking treatment at the unit, services provided, and pathways for follow up care/appointments. We also gained a better understanding of how the unit is run by Royal London A&E department, funding, patient numbers, and how uptake might be increased in order to take pressure off A&E.

The report highlights the need to raise awareness of the unit, and we are pleased to report that since we have advertised this service, we've received fantastic feedback from several residents who have been treated there.

# Hearing from ALL our communities

We are here for all residents of the City of London. That is why, over the past year, we have worked hard to reach out to those communities whose voices may go unheard.

## Portsoken Community Engagement

One of our main priorities is to engage with residents from all communities in the City. Those who live in the Portsoken area of the City have not always been heard when it comes to Health and Social Care. This year we have made huge strides to address this. With the help of their elected councillors and working with the City and Hackney Public Health team, we conducted a community survey to better understand residents' priorities. Findings indicated a strong interest in diet and nutrition, as well as cancer screening. In addition, a focus group meeting was held with Portsoken residents, community representatives, and stakeholders to explore health literacy needs in greater depth. Key themes identified included women's health, diabetes, hypertension, and dentistry. Language was highlighted as the primary barrier to accessing appropriate health information.

As a result of these sessions, we were able to deliver an educational event on blood pressure management and heart health. The event which took place in March at Portsoken Community Centre and was well attended by local Bangladeshi residents.

The session featured a presentation by Ijeoma Imo on "Understanding Your Heart Health." covering key information on hypertension and highlighted as a significant risk factor for cardiovascular disease and diabetes. Lifestyle management strategies were emphasised, including reducing salt intake, maintaining healthy blood sugar levels, managing cholesterol, increasing physical activity, smoking cessation and reduced alcohol consumption.

Following the success of the event, another focus group was held to establish other priorities the community has, and where Healthwatch can provide support. These were identified as booking GP appointments (the majority of the community attend the Goodman's Field practice in Tower Hamlets) and access to Pharmacy First. We now have a group of residents who we can talk to and hear from, enabling us to identify their issues. Healthwatch will work with the community and the Practice to address their concerns.

**This was a good event and good to learn more about the effects of high blood pressure on Bengali families.**





## Unpaid Carers

In June we marked Carers' Week with a tea party at the Guildhall at which we were joined by Dragon Café in the City and Imago, the carers' support service. Dragon Café led an embossed foil card-making workshop which was followed by a tea party with plenty of sandwiches and cake. City of London Officers joined to show their support and thanks to the unpaid carers' community. Carers' Week 2025 focused on the theme "Caring About Equality," highlighting the disadvantages and financial, physical, and social inequalities frequently faced by unpaid carers.

In November we joined Imago at their Carers' Rights Day event St Giles' Church, Barbican. We met many unpaid carers from across the City alongside representatives from Age UK, City recycling team, City of London Police and City Advice. Through this event, we met two Portsoken residents who have subsequently joined our focus groups on Health Literacy.



# The future landscape in health and social care

Most people and communities want to access health and care as close to home as possible, in a way that is most convenient for them and that gives them what they need when they need it.

For a long time, the NHS and wider health and care system have worked to create an environment in which local services can work together, be co-ordinated, funded and delivered in a consistent way. This endeavour has had mixed results. In the 10 Year Health Plan for England, the Government sets out how creating a neighbourhood health service will achieve this goal.

Neighbourhood health will work as a collaborative effort between the NHS and local authorities, alongside wider partners, combining the NHS's responsibility for our health services with local authorities' responsibility for adult and children's social care services and public health. This is intended to facilitate two of the Governments three main shifts, namely, the shift from hospital to community, and the shift from sickness to prevention.

The City and Hackney neighbourhoods programme was launched in 2018 and was designed as a means to enable more preventative and joined up care, and as a mechanism to address health inequalities. City and Hackney are split into eight neighbourhoods areas, with the City being part of Shoreditch Park and City.

In the City, the City and Hackney Development Board will develop a Neighbourhood Health Plan that defines local ambitions, with the Health and Wellbeing Boards being given statutory responsibility for development and oversight of these plans.

The new role of NHS Integrator is a collaborative infrastructure and leadership function designed to coordinate and deliver the shift from hospital-centric care to proactive, community-based care. For the City of London, this role will be hosted at the Homerton Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust.

Of course, all of these changes cannot take place without engagement with local residents. Hackney CVS run the engagement side of Neighbourhoods health. This engagement happens via Neighbourhood Forums and Action Groups.

Healthwatch City of London have campaigned to have a dedicated City Neighbourhood Forum and Action Group, which we achieved last year. This year, the City will have its own facilitator and will no longer be reliant on a resource which it shares with the rest of the Shoreditch Park and City Neighbourhood.

We will be working very closely with all parties, the City and Hackney Health and Care Board, the City Health and Wellbeing Board, the facilitator and the Neighbourhood forums to see greater impact locally.

# 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	2025-26 £
Annual grant from the City of London Corporation	93,000.00
Additional income	5,000.00
<b>Total income</b>	<b>98,000.00</b>

EXPENDITURE	2025-26 £
Expenditure on pay	66,586.31
Non-pay expenditure	15,916.40
Rent	1,432.86
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>83,935.57</b>

The additional income of £5,000 shown in the above table is received from North East London Integrated Care Board for public engagement on behalf of the ICB.



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

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

### **Our top local priorities for the next year are:**

- 1. Deliver 10 patient panels to inform service users about health and social care topics** that are important to them and impact on day to day lives. Responding to the requests of local people.
- 2. Continued engagement with Portsoken residents**, building upon the relationships established this year with the Bengali community and to increase engagement with the Latin American Community. Supporting the work to address health inequalities
- 3. Work with City Advice to provide support for city workers.** Understand the issues facing the hidden worker community, working with the provider to help signpost to city workers who can help. Give insights to the CoL on the impacts of funding changes.
- 4. Scrutiny of Adult Social Care.** Undertake a mystery shop to better understand residents' experiences of contacting Adult Social Care for support. Scrutinise the CQC report in relation to safeguarding. Support the development of user faced responses and initiatives.
- 5. Projects:**
  - a) **Understand emergency pathways.** The process used to assess, and direct patients with urgent health needs to the appropriate care setting. Especially looking at pathways for patients with pre-existing conditions such as cancer or heart problems.
  - b) **Waiting list management** – research how waiting lists are cleansed by health providers, where decisions are made, how patients are informed and appeal process and the impact on local users
  - c) **Social prescribing in the City** – undertake a project to understand the use of social prescribing in the City, who provides it, how many people use it, how is it being used to support people who are on more than 10 different drugs a day.
  - d) **Patient communication** – building on our previous project on digital apps, to carry out a project which aims to understand more in depth about the effects of the shift from analogue to digital in healthcare, the remaining scope for the use of traditional means of communication and patient satisfaction with the different forms of communication.
- 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.

# Statutory Statements

Healthwatch England  
2 Redman Place  
Stratford  
London E20 1JQ

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

Our Healthwatch Board consists of five Trustees and three Associate Board Members who work voluntarily to provide direction, oversight, and scrutiny of our activities.

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

Throughout 2025/26, the Board met 11 times and made decisions on matters such as priorities for resident engagement, projects, and financial expenditure. We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities.

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

We use a wide range of approaches to ensure that as many people as possible can provide us with insight into their experience of using services.

During 2025/26, we have been available by phone and email, provided a web form on our website and through social media, and attended meetings of community groups and forums.

We ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. We will publish it on our website and provide copies at all our public events.



## Responses to recommendations

We had 0 providers who did not respond to requests for information or recommendations. There were no issues or recommendations escalated by us to the Healthwatch England Committee, so there were no resulting reviews or investigations.

## Taking people's experiences to decision-makers

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

For example, in the City and Hackney area, we take information to the City of London Health and Wellbeing Board, the City and Hackney Health and Care Board, and the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Committee.

We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in North East London Integrated Care Board. For example, we represent all North East London Healthwatch on the Population Health and Integration Committee of the Integrated Care Board as well as attend fortnightly insight meetings with North East London Healthwatch. We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level and with North East London Community Insights system at a local level.

## Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch City of London is represented on the City of London Health and Wellbeing Board by Gail Beer, Chair.

During 2025/26, our representative has effectively carried out this role by producing a report to every meeting to highlight the work carried out by Healthwatch and raise issues from the community.

Healthwatch City of London is represented on North East London Integrated Care Partnerships by Rachel Cleave, Chief Executive, the North East London Population Health and Integration Committee by Rachel Cleave, Chief Executive, the Health and Care Scrutiny Committee by Steve Stevenson, Treasurer and Trustee and North East London Integrated Care Boards by Sally Beavan, Chief Executive, Healthwatch Hackney.

## Enter and view

Location	Reason for visit	What we did as a result
Neaman Practice	Patients raised safety concerns	Wrote a report with recommendations – the service followed up on these, and patient safety improved.

# About us

## Healthwatch City of London Board

**Gail Beer** Chair

**Lynn Strother** Trustee

**Malcolm Waters** Trustee

**Steve Stevenson** Treasurer and Trustee

**Judy Guy-Briscoe** Trustee

**Janet Porter** Board Associate

**Stuart MacKenzie** Board Associate

**Dr Cynthia White** Board Associate

## Staff Team

**Rachel Cleave** Chief Executive

**Leisa Sandt** Communications and Engagement Officer (left Dec 2025)

**Caitlan Barrow** Volunteers and Projects Officer (left Aug 2025)

### Welcome to:

**Farheen Shaik** Communications and Engagement Officer (joined Nov 2025)

**Neherun Ali** Communications and Engagement Officer (joined Feb 2026)

### Our thanks to:

**Leisa Sandt** who was with us for three years, during which time her reliable and steady approach to her role was much appreciated. Leisa has returned to Australia and is continuing her career in public health with MIND Australia.





# healthwatch

City of London

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