

Annual report and accounts 2024-25



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Message from our Chair



6 The feedback local Healthwatch hear in their communities and share with us at Healthwatch England is invaluable, building a picture of what it's like to use health and care services nationwide. Local people's experiences help us understand where we – and decision makers – must focus, and highlight issues that might otherwise go unnoticed. We can then make recommendations that will change care for the better, both locally and across the nation.

Louise Ansari National Director, Healthwatch England

This year the staff and volunteers of Healthwatch Hackney continued to deliver great work finding out what local people think of the health and social care services and how they could be made better. From our core business, I would like to highlight the Enter and View report on all the mental health wards run by East London Foundation Trust on the Homerton Hospital site. The work was trailblazing as few Healthwatches have visited acute mental health wards, and the report provided a deep insight into the issues facing the patients and staff. Other Enter and Views have looked at the service provided by GP practices: it is always pleasing to see that there are often simple changes that Healthwatch suggests that can improve patients' experiences.

In addition to the core business, other Healthwatch projects continue to reach a wide range of the local population. In the System Influencer programme young people have come up with imaginative ideas for getting their peers interested in health, and the public representatives from a variety of our communities have helped design and deliver health services. Our Neighbourhoods events have engaged other residents, and the Father Friendly Borough project has talked to new fathers from a variety of our communities about what support they would find valuable. The project has been extended into the next financial year.

As it became clear that the financial environment would be tough in 2025 Healthwatch Hackney has taken actions, including moving premises from St Leonards Hospital in the south of the borough to a smaller office opposite the Town Hall in Hackney Central, and rethinking the staffing structure.

Finally, as ever, I would like to thank the inspirational staff team, our great volunteers and supporters, my fellow board members and the colleagues that we collaborate with in the voluntary and statutory sectors for all their hard work to improve the experience of health and social care in Hackney.

Deborah Cohen
Chair of the Board of Directors

Message from our Executive Director



Looking back at 24/25 I am once again proud and impressed by everything that has been achieved by our fabulous team of staff and volunteers at Healthwatch Hackney. From delivering the highest number of enter and view reports ever, leading to service improvement in GP practices and mental health services, to an unprecedented amount co-production work between statutory partners and our public representatives. Everything we've done this year has been driven by the spirit of collaboration, with the voice of patient experience at the heart of what we do.

We have faced financial challenges as NHS and local authority cuts start to bite. These challenges look set to increase in the year ahead. We have taken steps to reduce our overheads by moving to smaller, assessible premises for example, and continue to look at how we can make efficient savings. We believe this puts Healthwatch in the best possible position to continue to consistently amplifying resident voices. We are confident that, by taking early action, we have put ourselves in a position of stability and sustainability as we move into 25/26.

A word of thanks also to our Board of Directors, who have worked tirelessly over the last 12 months to improve and professionalise our approach to governance under the leadership of our Chair Deborah Cohen.

Sally Beaven
Healthwatch Hackney Executive Director

About us

Our vision

Our vision is of a borough where the provision of health and social care is equal and accessible to all; where services are of high quality and meet the needs of all communities in Hackney and where residents are at the heart of the design, delivery and improvement of health and social care services.

Our mission

Our mission is to improve health and social care provisions and outcomes for people in Hackney by working to ensure that the treatment and care provided is provided with respect and dignity, valuing diversity, and encouraging participation and working together.

Reaching out



Highlights

3,716 people shared with us **16,022** issues on health and social care services, helping to improve care.

Supporting services to deliver better care

We published **8** Enter and View reports about individual GP surgeries and mental health wards at ELFT, and the final GP Registration Review Report.



Health and social care that works for you

21 volunteers and interns gave **2,051** hours to help improve care in the Borough.



Your views on health and care

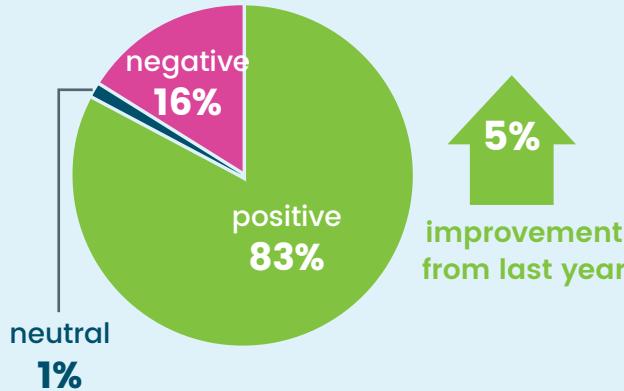
Collecting feedback in the community is critical to our ability to understand the issues that are impacting residents in Hackney. We regularly attend Homerton Hospital, GP surgeries, libraries and community events. We also capture comments made on social media and in online meetings and focus groups.

Trends and insights

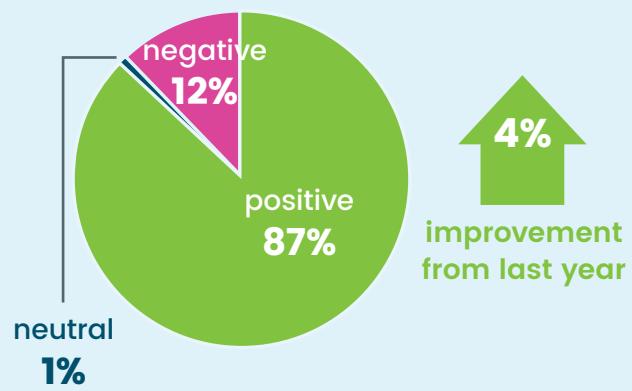
In 2024-2025 we identified and analysed 16,022 issues about local health and care services, based on feedback from 3,716 people.

- 92% collected from social media and provider websites
- 8% collected from Healthwatch Hackney activity (outreach, information and signposting).

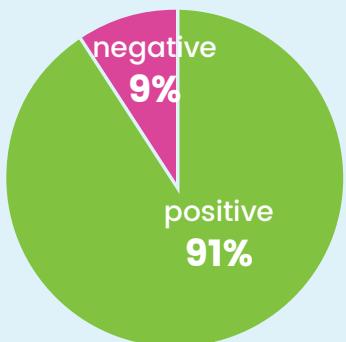
How do people feel about health and care services in general?



How well informed, supported and involved do people feel?

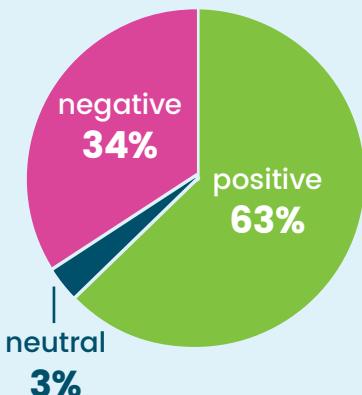


Quality and empathy



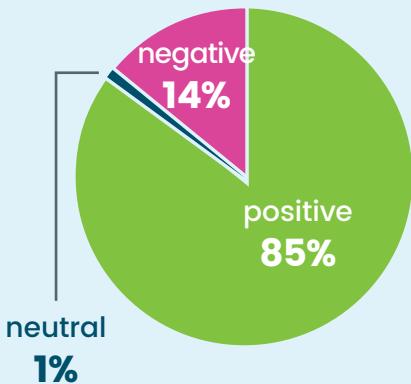
4%
improvement
from last year

Access to services



5%
improvement
from last year

General Practice



5%
improvement
from last year

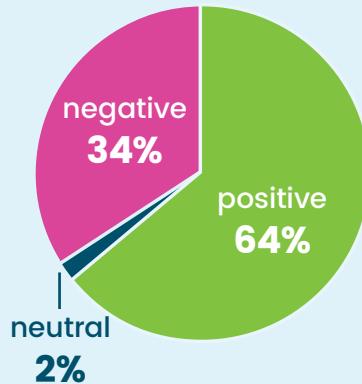
POSITIVES

- ⊕ The vast majority of people receive good quality, compassionate treatment and care, with good levels of support and involvement.
- ⊕ Service access has improved – with patients feeling 7% more satisfied overall, compared with last year. According to feedback, satisfaction is up by 8% on waiting times, by 3% on ability to book appointments and by 2% on telephone access.
- ⊕ Patients are also feeling better informed, with satisfaction up by 8%.

NEGATIVES

- ⊖ Administration remains an issue – around a quarter of feedback (23%) is negative. Staff training, repeat prescriptions and test results are among the issues highlighted.

Homerton Hospital



==

No change
from last year

POSITIVES

- ⊕ Experiences reflect good quality, compassionate treatment and care, with good levels of support and involvement across departments.
- ⊕ Satisfaction has improved by 9% on Maternity and by 2% on A&E, feedback suggests. Inpatients are also feeling more satisfied, with comments indicating caring, supportive and holistic care, across wards.

NEGATIVES

- ⊖ Satisfaction on Outpatients is down marginally by 2%, compared with last year.
- ⊖ Although waiting times and communication have slightly improved, feedback is around 50% negative for each – suggesting much room for improvement.



Engagement and Co-production

In 2024-25, our Engagement and Co-production team demonstrated the transformative power of inclusive, resident-led collaboration in shaping health and social care. By embedding lived experience at every level – from community outreach to system-level governance – we have influenced decisions, improved services, and deepened trust across City and Hackney.

This year, **44 Public Representatives** volunteered over **1,200 hours** across **20 workstreams**, ensuring that decisions reflected the priorities of the people they served. Through **81 focus groups, 39 strategic meetings**, and **23 training sessions**, these resident experts informed everything from the redesign of hospital discharge protocols to breast screening initiatives and digital inclusion strategies. Our work was rooted in behavioural science, community insight, and a commitment to health equity.

A notable outcome of our impact has been the wide range and diversity of partnerships we cultivated. With over 30 organisations – spanning NHS bodies, local authority teams, universities, and voluntary sector groups – we co-produced solutions to some of the borough's most complex health challenges. Notably, projects like the **Brunch Bunch** provided targeted winter support to rough sleepers, while the **Digital Hackney Downs Project** addressed technology access and self-service barriers in underserved areas. These initiatives not only met immediate needs but laid the groundwork for systemic change.

Our co-production model has been underpinned by a clear charter and framework that supports resident progression – taking them from service users to empowered public representatives. Training and support have enabled individuals to grow into leadership and working roles, resulting in more residents taking their place on key boards, advisory panels, and commissioning groups. Initiatives such as the **Health Literacy Toolkit** and the **Resident Involvement Community of**

Practice have further strengthened our local capacity for informed, impactful engagement across the system.

We are especially proud of our work in breaking down barriers and challenging assumptions. In Hackney Marshes, for example, we built new relationships with **Irish Traveller women**, whose insight transformed our breast screening awareness campaign and revealed unexpected patterns of digital engagement. Similarly, through **STEPS**, we developed new support structures for volunteers with lived experience of homelessness, mental health issues, and substance use – ensuring their voices not only shaped services but also found purpose and recognition.

Following coproduction work between our team of public reps and the discharge team working to improve the experience of patients as they are discharged from inpatient stays, one of our own public representatives used the service and had this to say:

I was discharged from Homerton a week ago and I just wanted to let you all know it could not have gone any smoother. Discharge letter and drugs appeared together and I was asked all pertinent questions. I want to thank [the discharge service at Homerton] for listening to us and changing how discharges happen. It made such a difference. It also makes me and my group feel valued. Coproduction makes sense and I hope it is the way forward!

Learning Disabilities Quality Checkers project

The Learning Disabilities (LD) Quality Checkers project aims to help improve the accessibility and inclusivity of health and care services for learning-disabled patients in Hackney.

We began by consulting colleagues in Tower Hamlets to learn from their experience of delivering a similar project in their borough. This helped us shape our training and co-design sessions with four Hackney residents recruited for their lived experience of learning disability and using health and social care services. Together, we developed the questions used during the quality check visits.

6 I felt welcomed and listened to. They looked at me when I was talking.

The project involves ten visits across health and social care settings. Each visit includes two learning-disabled quality checkers. Roles are agreed prior to each visit, with a focus on assessing how welcoming and inclusive the setting feels, including signage, lighting, waiting areas and use of easy-read information.

This is a collaborative approach. Quality checkers ask questions, take notes and meet with staff such as GPs, practice/centre managers and learning disability leads. After each visit, we debrief and reflect on what was heard and observed.

6 It shows that they're trying to meet the needs of learning-disabled people.

Each report puts the voices of the quality checkers at its heart. Their suggestions and direct quotes highlight what worked well and what could be improved. Common themes include signage, toilets, emergency call cords and general awareness of learning-disabled people's needs. Once all visits are complete a final report will be published, with recommendations to help improve the experience of LD individuals across Hackney.

6 It's very important for people with learning disabilities and people with autism to co-lead training, as they've got a lot of information to give.





Father Friendly Borough project

At Healthwatch Hackney, we believe every parent matters – including dads.

Our Father Friendly Borough Project was set up to improve the health and wellbeing of fathers in Hackney, especially around perinatal mental health (PMH) and parent-infant relationships (PIR). We know that when dads feel supported, families thrive; but too often, fathers are left out of conversations about care, parenting, and wellbeing.

This project was commissioned by Hackney Council in partnership with the Children and Family Hubs and was developed across three phases:

- focused on carrying out a needs assessment and delivering initial recommendations.
- concentrated on executing the action plan.
- piloting intervention programmes and shaping further recommendations for borough-wide change.

What we did

We engaged directly with over 748 fathers from diverse backgrounds through surveys, focus groups, and stakeholder sessions to better understand their needs and the barriers they face in accessing support. Ten local dads were trained as Experts by Experience (EbEs) and played a key role in shaping the project – from facilitating discussions to co-designing practical solutions.

What fathers told us:

1. Mental health support is limited

Only 12% of fathers we spoke to had used mental health support services.

2. Services don't fit into dads' lives

68% of dads told us they needed services that work outside normal hours.

3. Dads feel left out of bonding support

Only 38% had attended perinatal classes, and many felt they weren't welcome.

4. Fathers want peer-led, community-based support

Fathers said they were more likely to open up in spaces run by other dads or trusted community members – not formal or statutory services.

What we've achieved

Thanks to what we heard from fathers, we created real, practical support for dads in Hackney:

- **Coffee mornings at Homerton Hospital**
Welcoming new dads, offering support and signposting
- **'Dads Who' Fathers Intervention Programme (FIP)**
A father-led support model offering:
 - 1-to-1 virtual support
 - Father Friendly peer support WhatsApp groups

- **Monthly Father Friendly Newsletter**
Sent to over 429 fathers, sharing local services, parenting tips, and events.

- **'What's On in the Borough' weekly WhatsApp Bulletin**

Helping over 40 fathers find local, family-friendly activities every week.

- **Father Friendly website**
A new online hub with easy access to local services, advice, and support for dads.

We're not stopping here. We've made four key recommendations to help services become truly father-friendly:

1. **Make services accessible:** Offer evening/weekend support, use inclusive language, and train staff on how to welcome dads.



2. Co-design with fathers: Involve fathers from different backgrounds in shaping services that work for them.

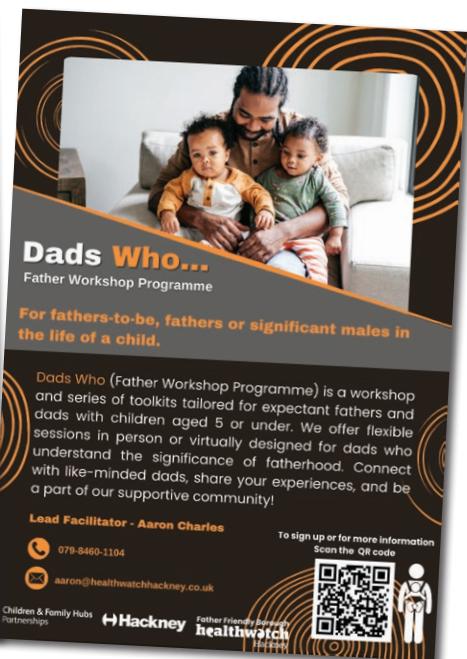
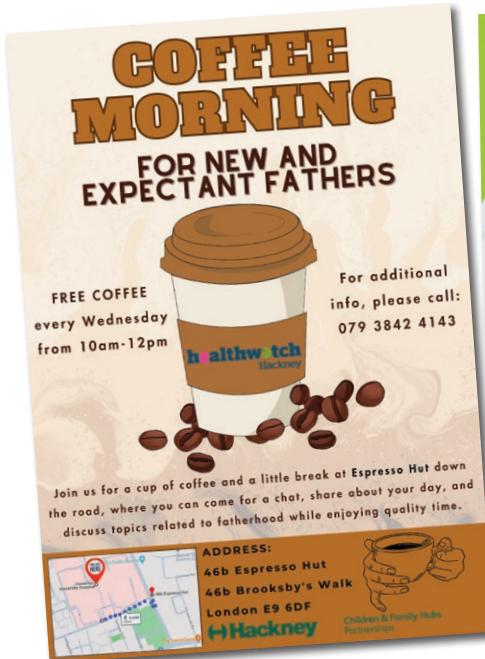
3. Raise awareness: Make sure fathers know services are for them too, not just for mothers.

4. Create culturally safe spaces: Ensure fathers from minority communities feel seen, heard, and respected in every service they use.

Looking forward

Our Father Friendly Borough Project shows what's possible when we listen to dads, value lived experience, and work together.

We want to see these changes embedded into Family Hubs, perinatal care pathways, and all services that support parents.



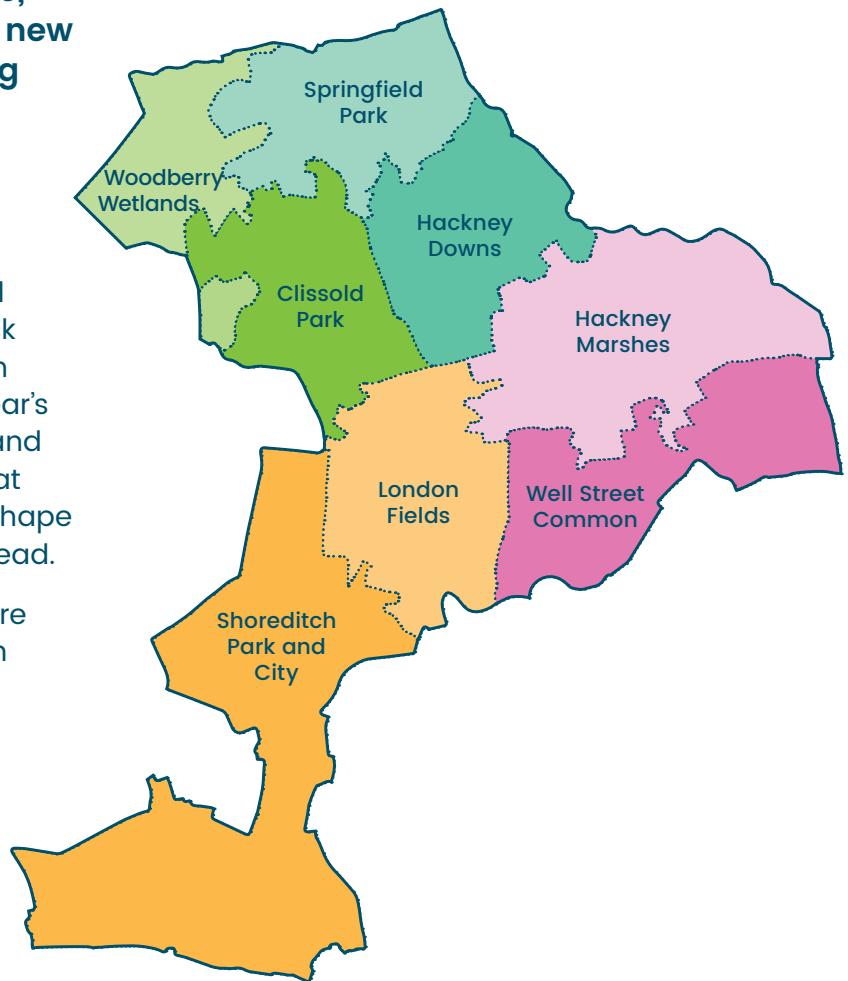


City and Hackney Neighbourhoods Programme

The City and Hackney Neighbourhoods way of working brings residents, health and care services, community organisations and local authorities together to improve health and wellbeing. The aim is to make services more joined-up, accessible and shaped by local people. Healthwatch Hackney continues to support this work by helping to build stronger connections between communities and decision-makers. Following a programme restructure, we supported the recruitment of a new cohort of Facilitators, strengthening engagement capacity across the Neighbourhoods.

We worked closely with local partners to produce a new set of Neighbourhood Insight Reports, triangulating hyper-local data, case studies and resident feedback to provide a picture of health and care in each Neighbourhood. Building on last year's reports, these now include further data and insights, offering a clear snapshot of what mattered most to people. This will help shape Neighbourhood priorities for the year ahead.

Neighbourhood priorities for 2024–25 were based on last year's Insight Reports, then selected by residents and professionals during Neighbourhood Action Groups. Each Neighbourhood identified two key issues to focus on. Action Groups met quarterly, alongside Neighbourhood Forums, to explore these issues in more depth and co-design ways to address them.



Topics explored over the past year included:

- **Well Street Common:** Disability support, health support for children and young people and access to services through community navigation and digital inclusion.
- **Shoreditch Park & City:** Mental health support for groups facing barriers to engagement.
- **London Fields:** Digital exclusion and health inequalities among older and ethnic minority residents; childhood obesity and nutrition.
- **Hackney Marshes:** Children and young people's access to support; barriers to active lifestyles.
- **Hackney Downs:** Navigation support for people with long-term conditions; childhood obesity.
- **Clissold Park:** Access to primary care and health information; financial security and community-based support.
- **Woodberry Wetlands:** Tackling isolation linked to long-term conditions; sexual and mental health support for 18–25s.
- **Springfield Park:** Using community spaces to improve digital inclusion; access to GP appointments for young people.

3 More than anything, connecting with other people, not just other residents, but also other organisations. We've got some informative leaflets about local provision for older people that we're interested in.



This engagement is coordinated through the Neighbourhoods Resident Involvement Alliance, a partnership between Healthwatch Hackney, Hackney CVS and Volunteer Centre Hackney. Together, we support the planning and delivery of meaningful, resident-led engagement. Healthwatch Hackney also attended regular Neighbourhood Leadership Group meetings, where funding to tackle health inequalities was discussed. We supported Facilitators to present proposals that reflected local priorities and made the case for targeted investment based on the above priorities.

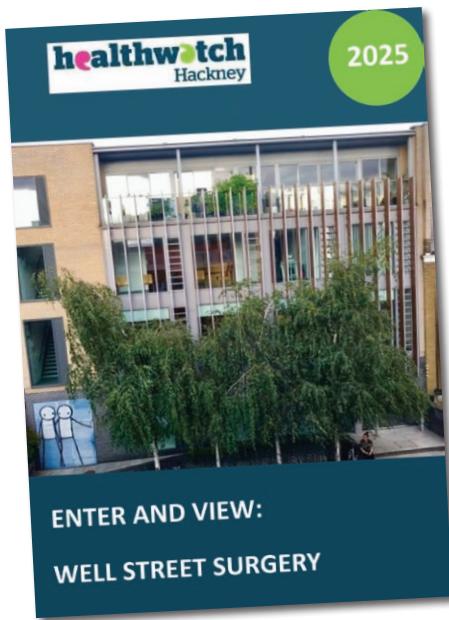
By continually listening to people's experiences and sharing what we learn, we help shape services to work better for City and Hackney residents.

6 Thank you for the event today, it was very helpful to discuss and find out about social prescribers. I haven't heard of them before so it was useful to understand how they can support and I can pass this information on to friends and neighbours.



Healthwatch investigatory reports

Well Street Surgery Enter and View Report



What was the problem?

Healthwatch Hackney received consistent feedback from our People's Feedback Panel raising concerns about patient experience at Well Street Surgery. Key issues included difficulties with booking appointments, communication with reception staff, and how patient feedback and complaints were handled. While many patients were positive about their care from clinical staff, there were also concerns about continuity and accessibility, especially for more vulnerable groups.

What did we do?

In response, we carried out an Enter and View visit in October 2024. To prepare, we gathered and analysed 262 pieces of patient feedback

collected over a 15-month period, reviewed the latest CQC report, and assessed the surgery's website and public information. During the visit, we interviewed patients, staff, and the surgery manager, and observed the practice environment and interactions.

Following the visit, we met with the manager, reception team, and clinical staff to discuss our findings and presented a set of practical, evidence-based recommendations designed to improve patient experience and ensure more responsive care.

What difference did it make?

The surgery welcomed the opportunity to reflect on our findings and has already begun addressing several of the issues raised. Improvements underway include increasing transparency around patient feedback with a "You Said, We Did" approach, making accessibility adjustments in the reception area and disabled toilets and enhancing reception staff training and communication. The surgery also committed to revitalising its Patient Participation Group and improving interpreter access for patients with limited English.

These changes demonstrate the practice's willingness to learn from feedback and take action.

We will continue to monitor progress and we look forward to a follow-up visit to assess impact and gather further insights from patients.

 **Thank you for sharing. We will pick [the report] up in our discussions with the Practice.**

Head of Primary Care Delivery in City and Hackney



This is one of eight Enter and View visits we did as part of our commitment to ensuring high quality, patient-centred care. We also visited The Riverside Practice, Trowbridge Surgery and the ELFT mental health wards at Homerton Hospital. You can read the reports on our website.

4th GP Registration Review

What was the problem?

NHS guidelines clearly say that patients don't need to show proof of address or ID to register with a GP. However, we continued to hear from residents – especially those in vulnerable situations – that they were still being asked for these documents and facing difficulties registering.

What did we do?

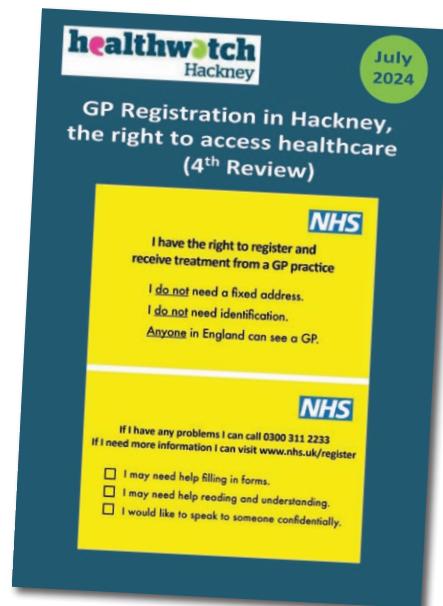
Building on our earlier work, we carried out a fourth review of how GP surgeries in Hackney handle new patient registrations. We used mystery shoppers to check what people experience when trying to register. We found that two practices were still asking for proof of ID and address, so we followed up with them directly.

What difference did it make?

As a result, in our most recent mystery shopping, we found that all practices were following NHS guidance. We also recommended that GP practices join the Safe Surgeries programme to help make services more inclusive. This has now been taken forward by North East London ICB, who are working on a project to support more practices across the area to sign up.

Thomas Clark, Primary Care Delivery Manager commented:

I would like to thank Healthwatch Hackney for their 4th review of GP registration processes in City and Hackney. Through this and previous reviews there has clearly been significant progress with removing barriers to GP registration for City and Hackney residents. Additionally, I feel that local GP practices deserve recognition for their engagement with the review and willingness to act on Healthwatch's feedback. I hope that the ICB primary care team, Healthwatch and local practices can maintain a collaborative dialogue to ensure that local GP services remain accessible for all. The primary care team will certainly continue to monitor the situation and encourage all practices to sign up to Safe Surgeries.



System Influencers programme

The System Influencer Programme is all about empowering young people in City and Hackney to have a real say in shaping local health and care services. We work with young people aged 16–25 who live, study, or work in the area. Over the course of around 12 weeks, these young “Influencers” volunteer their time to co-design and develop projects focused on improving services for people their age.

Our goals

- **Make services better for young people:** Your voices matter! Influencers help design or improve services, so they reflect the needs and experiences of young people.
- **Help professionals see things differently:** By sharing real-life experiences, Influencers help health and care staff better understand the challenges young people face.
- **Build trust:** The more young people are involved in shaping services, the more trust is built between them and professionals.

In the past year, 30 local young people took part in the programme, working alongside 10 brilliant mentors from Hackney’s health and care teams. Together, they brought seven unique projects to life – all aimed at improving services for young people in meaningful ways. These include:

- **Sexual wellness initiative:** Making vital information more accessible and helping young people feel empowered to take control of their sexual health.
- **Mindful youth:** Sharing young people’s honest views on mental health and how services could better support them.
- **Health literacy and substance misuse:** Helping young people make informed decisions by boosting their understanding of health and wellbeing topics.



Changes we have seen

- **Inspired learning:** Several Influencers have gone on to study health and social care at college after being part of the programme.
- **Fresh perspectives for professionals:** Mentors have gained new insights that are shaping the way they work with young service users.
- **Wider recognition:** One project, using peer learning to support year 6 children's understanding of periods, made such a splash that the local council is exploring ways to roll it out across the borough!

What our Influencers and Mentors say:

 I learnt a lot about sexual health and the laws around it. We even used what we learnt to help educate other young people. It boosted my confidence so much!

Fatimah, Influencer

 The Influencers put in such hard work to organise and run an event about physical activity and emotional wellbeing. Despite juggling new responsibilities, they delivered a brilliant, informative session. It's been a pleasure working with them – we're excited to keep supporting this amazing programme.

Aretha, Mentor

People's feedback panel

Every two weeks, a team of volunteers meets online to read through the most recent patient feedback about all health services in the borough, from opticians and pharmacies to GPs and hospital services. We identify trends in service provision, compliments and complaints.

When we find serious issues, we bring them to the service provider's attention, with suggestions for improvements. Likewise, when we find exceptionally good practices, we share them with the service providers to acknowledge their good work.

We held 24 panel meetings between 1 April and 31 March. As a result, we flagged 189 issues to GP Practices, Homerton University Hospital, pharmacies and dentists in the Borough.

What difference did it make?

Feedback from GP Practice following our email flagging patient feedback:

We have looked at how we can speed up the process for newly registered patients to access care more promptly and have made improvements, with reception staff being trained to show greater flexibility where a patient indicates they are looking to book an appointment when registering. The analysis of patient feedback from Healthwatch Hackney is very useful in helping shape improvements, and we remain grateful for your input.



Information and signposting

This year we've helped 973 residents with signposting and information. Here is some of the their feedback:

6 **Thanks a million to you and Healthwatch Hackney for helping me with the delivery of much needed medication.**

Hackney resident, May 2024

6 **I recently had a negative experience with my GP and contacted Healthwatch for support. Sara called me back promptly, listened without interruption and helped me feel understood. She clearly explained my options, which gave me the confidence to proceed with my complaint. She also provided helpful resources and offered further support if needed. I couldn't have asked for more and am deeply grateful for her kind and thoughtful assistance.**

Hackney resident, July 2024

6 **Thank you for helping me to get my prescriptions from my GP who was malingering. Due to your interventions, my prescriptions are arriving earlier and my health has been improving.**

Hackney resident, September 2024

6 **I had my first Physiotherapy session this week, which is progress.**

Hackney resident, January 2025

6 **You made my life easier.**

Hackney Resident, February 2025

6 **I have clear health information.**

Anonymous Respondent to Public Satisfaction Survey, April 2025

6 **You helped me find a GP that knows how to deal with sickle cell.**

Anonymous Respondent to Public Satisfaction Survey, April 2025

Info Exchange Meetings

Our online information exchange meetings bring together experts and residents, to provide information and give you the opportunity to have your questions answered. Last year we had six meetings:

- **Eating disorders in adults** in which we explored the realities of living with an eating disorder and discussed strategies for support and recovery
- **Donating blood**: NHS Blood and Transplant joined us to talk about how donating blood saves lives.
- **Complaints Charters**: We explored how to make a complaint and launched the updated version of the complaints charters.
- **Dry January**: Alcohol Change UK and the British Liver Trust joined us to discuss how to reduce alcohol consumption throughout the year and its benefits to our liver and wider health.
- **Virtual first aid workshop with the British Red Cross**: Participants discussed barriers to helping others in a medical emergency and learnt how to use items from everyday life to help.

66 residents attended the meetings online and 204 watched the recordings online. 100% of the participants fed back that the meetings met or exceeded their expectation.

6 It is just great to meet with professionals and be able to ask questions directly.

Participant in Love your Liver, July 2024

6 I often find that lived experiences provide insights that experts sometimes cannot. People who are actually experiencing a disease or illness can offer invaluable lessons that deepen our understanding. While professionals bring a theoretical background, it is the real stories of individuals that teach us in a more relatable and impactful way about what these experiences are truly like.

Participant in Donating Blood Saves Lives, September 2024



Our Board



Deborah Cohen
Chair



Yas'ina Christopher
Joint Vice Chair



Maggie Gibbons



Anthonia Onigbode
Treasurer



Rebecca Thomas
Joint Vice Chair



Terry Stewart
Left in 2024

Our volunteers

This year our volunteers:

- Collected experiences and supported their communities to share their views
- Carried out 8 Enter and View visits to local services to help them improve
- Contributed to our social media
- Gave their time to support us at community events



Our staff

Sally Beaven

Executive Director

Ivanka Kolar

Father Friendly Borough
Co-production Assistant
Manager

Ann-Marie Ruddock

System Influencer project

Kanariya Yuseinova

Father Friendly Borough
Manager (*Left November 2024*)

Catherine Perez Phillips

Deputy Director

Fabien Decodts

Neighbourhoods
Involvement Manager
and Learning Disabled
Quality Checker project

Liya Takie

Finance and Office Manager
(*Left May 2025*)

Sara Morosinotto

Enter and View and
Volunteer Manager

Krista Brown

Co-production and
Engagement Manager

William Alego

Father Friendly Borough
Co-production Assistant
Manager (Engagement)
(*Left September 2024*)

Finances

INCOME	2024-25 £	2023-24 £
Funding from local authority to deliver local Healthwatch statutory activities	150,000	150,000
NHS North East London / ICB / additional LBH contracts	351,969	310,537
Other income	139,652	60,947
Total Income	641,621	521,484

EXPENDITURE	2024-25 £	2023-24 £
Operational costs (including project direct expenses)	150,463	142,396
Staff costs	398,491	348,278
Total expenditure	575,927	490,647
Balance brought forward	65,694	30,837



healthwatch

Hackney

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