



**Healthwatch Barnsley**

# Unlocking the power of people's voice

Annual Report 2024 to 2025

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*"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, Chief Executive, Healthwatch England**

# A message from our Chair

**I am pleased to introduce this Annual Report for Healthwatch Barnsley, which is my first as Chair of the Local Advisory Group (LAG). This group was formed in July 2024 and replaces the previous Strategic Advisory Board.**

During this past year, we have been able to strengthen the relationship with Barnsley CVS who I am happy to say have been awarded the contract to deliver the Healthwatch Barnsley service until 2029.

Given the challenges patients currently face within a highly constrained health and care system, the importance of our work at Healthwatch Barnsley has never been greater. Over the past year, we have consistently gathered the lived experiences of individuals and provided feedback to service providers with the purpose of fostering positive change. As an independent organisation, we champion public opinion to enhance health and care services.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Healthwatch Barnsley Team, including all staff, volunteers and members of the Local Advisory Group for their hard work. They engage with the community to identify issues via local health and care forums, partnership boards, community events, and targeted projects. Additionally, our Information and Signposting function plays a crucial role by listening to people and directing them to appropriate advice or support.

This ongoing process involves collaboration with our local health and care service providers and Integrated Care Board to address and highlight relevant issues and opportunities.

I invite you to explore detailed insights into our activities during 2024-25 in this report.



"By supporting a healthcare system that is both holistic and preventative in its approach, I believe that services can be bettered by reflecting and responding to the views and needs of the people who use them."

**Christine Key, Chairperson, Local Advisory Group**

## About us

# Healthwatch Barnsley 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.



### Our vision

To bring closer the day when everyone gets the care they need.



### Our mission

To make sure that people's experiences help make health and care better.



### Our values are:

**Equity:** We're compassionate and inclusive. We build strong connections and empower the communities we serve.

**Collaboration:** We build internal and external relationships. We communicate clearly and work with partners to amplify our influence.

**Impact:** We're ambitious about creating change for people and communities. We're accountable to those we serve and hold others to account.

**Independence:** Our agenda is driven by the public. We're a purposeful, critical friend to decision-makers.

**Truth:** We work with integrity and honesty, and we speak truth to power.

# Our year in numbers

We've supported almost 3,000 people to have their say and get information about their care.

We currently employ 5 staff and, our work is supported by 10 volunteers.

## Reaching out:



**2,400** people shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and to improve care.

**390** people came to us for clear advice and information on topics such as finding an **NHS dentist** and support with **accessing GP services**.

## Championing your voice:



We published **5** reports about the feedback people have given us in areas like **Adult Social Care** and **website accessibility**.

Our most popular reports were our **Enter and View Report** from the **Community Diagnostic Centre** and our **Adult Social Care Feedback Report**.

## Statutory funding:



We're funded by **Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council**. In 2024/25 we received **£150,000**, which is the **same as** last year.



# A year of making a difference

Over the year we've been out and about in the community listening to your stories, engaging with partners and working to improve care in Barnsley. Here are a few highlights.

## Spring

Attended the Optometry Forum to give an insight into how deaf people find it difficult to book and attend an NHS Eye Test without the support of a BSL Interpreter.



Held focus groups with our Learning Disability groups looking at the re-design of SWYFT website to give feedback on the accessibility and design.



## Summer

Our volunteers conducted a Mystery Shopper exercise on Adult Social Care and presented a report ahead of Barnsley Council's Peer Review in the autumn.



Our Engagement Officers attended a range of summer galas and events to collect feedback on health and social care services from all ages.



## Autumn

Our volunteers were involved in the annual Patient Led Assessments of the Care Environment (PLACE Assessments) at Barnsley Hospital and Kendray.



We completed our Enter and View visit to the Community Diagnostics Centre located within the Glass Works and spoke to staff and patients.



## Winter

Attended various Winter Wellbeing events throughout the borough speaking to residents about their experiences of health and social care.



Provided feedback and case studies to South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board to inform the upcoming review of the dementia pathway specification.



# Working together for change

**We've worked with neighbouring Healthwatch to ensure people's experiences of care in Barnsley are heard at the Integrated Care System (ICS) level, and they influence decisions made about services at NHS South Yorkshire Integrated Care System (NHS SY ICB).**

This year, we've worked with Healthwatch across South Yorkshire to achieve the following:

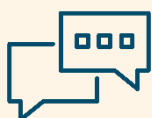
## A collaborative network of local Healthwatch:



Healthwatch in South Yorkshire meets bi-weekly, where we share knowledge to identify any countywide issues where collaboration would be beneficial to improve health inequalities across South Yorkshire.

Working together, we make sure that a local representative from our network attends all high-level meetings, ensuring that the needs and experiences of local people are considered in the planning and delivery of health and social care services at a regional level..

## The wider conversations:



We have continued to work with Healthwatch in South Yorkshire and NHS South Yorkshire (ICS) on the inequalities faced by our deaf and hard of hearing communities when accessing health and social care. We have worked with Healthwatch in South Yorkshire and the ICS on the Insights Bank, which will become a library of reports available throughout South Yorkshire to prevent us from repeating the same questions.

## Building strong relationships to achieve more:



Within the town, we are an active member of the Barnsley Involvement and Inclusion Leads Group. This ensures that engagement activity and findings are shared throughout the borough to include as many groups as possible, preventing duplication of questions. It also helps us to reach more residents and build up a stronger picture of what is working in Barnsley.

We've also summarised some of our other outcomes achieved this year in the Statutory Statements section at the end of this report.

# 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 **Barnsley** this year:

## Creating empathy by bringing experiences to life



**Hearing personal experiences and their impact on people's lives helps services better understand the issues people face.**

We regularly attend the Think Local Act Personal Adult Social Care meetings and recently introduced a woman who cares for her dad and had been having some issues with the care he has been receiving via Adult Social Care. She was able to talk about her experience with commissioners and service providers, bringing real issues to the table, painting a picture of the difficulties she has been having. She will now be attending further meetings to help improve the service.

## Getting services to involve the public



**By involving local people, services help improve care for everyone.**

South West Yorkshire Partnership Trust were looking at redesigning their website and wanted to ensure they were providing the best experience for people with learning difficulties who wanted to access the website. We were asked to collect feedback and ideas on how the new website should look. We designed some activities and brought small groups of people together to test what works on the current website and what changes they would like to see. Our report has now been submitted to developers.

## Improving care over time



**Change takes time. We work behind the scenes with services to consistently raise issues and bring about change.**

We have worked with NHS South Yorkshire and other local Healthwatch in South Yorkshire to raise issues faced by the deaf community when accessing health and social care services. We have been able to provide case studies and were able to present a people story to the Integrated Care Board to highlight the difficulties. Following this NHS South Yorkshire made BSL one of their priorities for their Equality Delivery System (EDS), which will definitely raise the profile of this work.



# Listening to your experiences

**Services can't improve if they don't know what's wrong. Your experiences shine a light on issues that may otherwise go unnoticed.**

This year, we've listened to feedback from all areas of our community. People's experiences of care help us know what's working and what isn't, so we can give feedback on services and help them improve.



# Listening to your experiences

## Sharing your experience of Adult Social Care

As part of our priorities for 2024/25 we were asked by the people of Barnsley to look at people's experiences of Adult Social Care.

### What did we do?

For this project we conducted a survey, online and in person with community groups. We also conducted a mystery shopper exercise where our volunteers made enquiries face to face, via the telephone or by using websites.

### Key things we heard:



**83%**

**of respondents told us their mental health suffers because they are not able to do simple tasks independently..**

**29%**

**of respondents told us they rely on help from friends and family and never considered applying for a social care assessment.**

### What people said

"I think I might have had a home assessment some years ago and was offered some home modifications, but I moved home shortly after so never took it up."

We have worked with carers and local groups to ensure they are aware of how to request an assessment and where to go for advice and information on Adult Social Care.

### What difference did this make?

Our Mystery Shopper report contributed to Barnsley Council's Peer Review in October 2024, where we also took part in a focus group. We have been able to present feedback to various teams which will assist with future planning and service reviews.

# Listening to your experiences

## The importance of ongoing dementia support

**Often, a treatment plan is agreed on diagnosis of dementia, but what happens next?**

Following an outreach session, our Engagement Officer was approached by a staff member there who was concerned about her parents; she said that her father had dementia and had deteriorated over recent months.

### Key things we heard:



**The family were concerned about their dad's behaviour. When he was out, their dad was struggling to find his way back home and also had been found urinating in a street, close to a school.**



**"Things have deteriorated and we have been managing, but you don't realise how bad it has got until you look back, but who do we talk to?"**

With the agreement of the family, we contacted the Memory Service and we also referred them to South Yorkshire Police, who were offering tracking devices in conjunction with Barnsley Council.

### What difference did this make?

A medication review was carried out and a tracking device was set up. The family feel more confident in being able to find their dad if he goes missing. We also introduced their mum to Barnsley Independent Alzheimer's and Dementia Support.



# Hearing from all communities

**We're here for all residents of Barnsley. That's why, over the past year, we've worked hard to reach out to those communities whose voices may go unheard.**

Every member of the community should have the chance to share their story and play a part in shaping services to meet their needs.

**This year, we have reached different communities by:**

- Holding outreach sessions in libraries, Barnsley Hospital and Barnsley Hospice and attending local events.
- Attended groups and events in all parts of Barnsley Borough.
- Engaging with Faith groups, the Refugee Council and groups supporting learning disabilities.



# Hearing from all communities

## Accessible changing facilities for older children with disabilities

**We provided feedback to Barnsley Hospital from carers of disabled children.**

During 2023/24, we received feedback telling us how difficult it was to attend outpatient appointments with an older disabled child. There were no toilets/changing facilities available in the hospital with a hoist facility, making outpatient appointments a source of distress and anxiety for both the young person and the carer (there was sometimes a wait of over an hour for a hoist to be brought from elsewhere).

### What difference did this make?

This was communicated to the Estates and Facilities office within the hospital and a provision was made with the patients and their carers where they had access to facilities on the children's ward during outpatient visits. The Estates team then looked at repurposing a room within the hospital. The parents and carers along with patients have been included in the design of the new facility which opened in the spring of this year (2025).

## Improving understanding of health and social care with refugees and asylum seekers

**We link with our migrant community via a weekly drop in session with other services and a local connection with our Refugee Council.**

To help, we created a quick guide to how a GP practice works. We shared this with the local Council's "Homes for Ukraine" scheme, and NHS Social Prescribing Link Workers.

### What difference did this make?

During August 2024 a large group of anti-immigration protesters attacked a hotel on the Rotherham/Barnsley border causing widespread damage and attacking police officers. This was really unsettling for large parts of our communities as there were threats of more riots over the following days. As we had already built up a relationship by attending different groups and sessions we were seen as a trusted voice and were able to deliver information on what plans were being put in place to keep people safe and where people could go for help and support during this difficult time.

# Information and signposting

Whether it's finding an NHS dentist, making a complaint, or choosing a good care home for a loved one – you can count on us. This year 390 people have reached out to us for advice, support or help finding services.

**This year, we've 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





## You are never too old to learn new skills

**After spending most of his adult life with a substance use disorder, Benny was ready to make real changes.**

Working with services and freeing himself of drugs and alcohol, he was keen to improve his life and show to others how far he had come.

We signposted Benny to some Adult Learning Taster Sessions to build up his confidence and to increase his basic skills.

Benny was supported by a group for people with similar issues to himself, but was asked to leave following friction with an ex-partner. Benny later asked for our support to build bridges with this group. We attended a mediation session between Benny and the group lead, also assisting with setting ground rules for Benny's return.



"Tracy at Healthwatch really helped me move on to my next chapter, I have enrolled in some basic courses which I am loving and I am back receiving support from my group."

## Social isolation

**Irene was feeling lonely and isolated. She was aware of groups close to where she lived, but wasn't confident attending them and preferred individual contact.**

We contacted Irene and discussed a number of options with her, including a referral to Age UK Barnsley for their befriending service as they can do this via telephone.

We also suggested contacting B:friend, who operate in her area and offers a befriending service where a volunteer comes to your home every week.

We gave Irene links to the Live Well Barnsley website and talked about getting a referral to Social Prescribing via her GP.



"Healthwatch Barnsley were really helpful in providing me with information on where I can go to for support. I'm hoping in time with some individual support I will be able to gain more confidence."

# Showcasing volunteer impact

Our fantastic volunteers have given their time to support 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:

- Have helped us to carry out our mystery shopper exercise.
- Kept us supplied with worry worms, which we use to engage with people at events.
- Carried out PLACE (Patient Lead Assessment of the Care Environment) at Barnsley Hospital and Kendray Hospital.



# Showcasing volunteer impact

## 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.

"I love being able to give back to my local community and especially when it is a cause close to my heart."

**Jayne supported us on our Mystery Shopper exercise, bringing her experience of caring for a person with disabilities.**

"I want to ensure that all Barnsley residents receive the care and advice they deserve when accessing Adult Social Care as it is stressful enough without obstacles being put in our way."

**Jayne**



"Health issues forced me to step down from national positions, but I wanted to utilise my 50+ years in the NHS."

**Maggie joined our Local Advisory Group in 2024 bringing with her a wealth of knowledge and experience.**

"Meeting and finding people and communities who are not always accessing services is difficult but it is important to recognize that voluntary, community and faith groups can be a rich area to gain information."

**Maggie**



### 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.



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



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[hello@healthwatchbarnsley.org.uk](mailto:hello@healthwatchbarnsley.org.uk)

# Finance and future priorities

We receive funding from Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to help us do our work.

## Our income and expenditure:

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from the Government	<b>£150,000</b>	Expenditure on pay	<b>£158,955</b>
Additional income	<b>£32,362</b>	Non-pay expenditure	<b>£6,592</b>
		Office and management fee	<b>£15,228</b>
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£182,362</b>	<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>£180,775</b>

## Additional income is broken down into:

- **£31,393** received from Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council for hosting an Engagement Officer (Adult Safeguarding)
- **£683** received from ADASS (Association of Directors of Adult Social Services) for performing a mystery shopper exercise ahead of the Adult Social Care Peer Review
- **£285.93** from Healthwatch England as a bursary to cover travel and accommodation for the Annual Conference

## Integrated Care System (ICS) funding:

Healthwatch Barnsley have not received any additional funding from NHS South Yorkshire during this financial year.

**Please note:** The figures are an estimate as Barnsley CVS accounts are not finalised until later in the year.



# Finance and future priorities

## Next steps:

**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 three priorities for the next year are:

- 1. Urgent and Emergency Care Centre (A&E).**
- 2. Women's Health.**
- 3. Social Isolation Issues**



# Statutory statements

**Healthwatch Barnsley, 23 Queens Road, Barnsley, S71 1AN is hosted by Barnsley Community and Voluntary Services, 23 Queens Road, Barnsley, S71 1AN.**

**Healthwatch Barnsley 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 Local Advisory Group consists of 6 members who work voluntarily to provide direction, oversight, and scrutiny of our activities.

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

Throughout 2024/25, the Board met 5 times and made decisions on matters such as taking work forward on our Enter and View project, agreeing to accept the ADASS Mystery Shopper commission and ensuring 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 experiences of using services.

During 2024/25, we have been available by phone, email, text, a form on our website and through social media. We also 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, share via our mailing list and provide links using local newsletters.



# Statutory statements

## Responses to recommendations

We had **one** provider 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 our local authority area, we take information to the Quality Improvement Board for Adult Social Care, Barnsley Safeguarding Adults Board, Barnsley Mental Health, Learning Disabilities, Autism and Dementia Partnership, Barnsley Involvement and Inclusion Leads Group and Urgent and Emergency Care Board. We share insights with our Health and Wellbeing Board, Place Partnership Committee, Barnsley Place Delivery Group, Barnsley Place Health and Care Quality and Safety Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in NHS South Yorkshire Integrated Care System. For example, in collaboration with Healthwatch in Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield we are represented at the meetings listed below and share any reports with the South Yorkshire Insights Bank. We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

# Statutory statements

## Healthwatch Representatives

Healthwatch Barnsley is represented on the Barnsley Health and Wellbeing Board by Lesley Cooper, Healthwatch Barnsley Manager.

During 2024/25, our representative has effectively carried out this role by attending meetings of the Health and Wellbeing Board and actively participating in workshops.

Healthwatch in South Yorkshire are represented at system-level at the following meetings

- NHS South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board by Lucy Davies, Chief Officer, Healthwatch Sheffield.
- NHS South Yorkshire Integrated Care Partnership by Fran Joel, Chief Operating Officer, Healthwatch Doncaster.
- South Yorkshire Mental Health Strategic Delivery Group by Kym Gleeson, Manager, Healthwatch Rotherham.
- South Yorkshire System Quality Group by Lesley Cooper, Manager, Healthwatch Barnsley.

# Statutory statements

## Enter and view

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
Community Diagnostics Centre – The Glass Works	Randomly selected	Wrote a report with recommendations – the service is following up on these

## 2024 – 2025 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
South West Yorkshire NHS Foundation Trust website review	<p>Held focus groups for residents with learning disabilities and their parents/carers</p> <p>Provided a written report to SWYFT.</p>
<b>Priority 1 –</b> Adult Social Care	<p>Conducted a survey and collected feedback from service users and their carers. We provided a written report and published it on our website.</p> <p>Organised a Mystery Shopper exercise and provided a report for ADASS (Association Directors Adult Social Services) ahead of Barnsley Councils Peer Review.</p> <p>Provided two lay members to attend the Adult Social Care Quality Improvement Board.</p> <p>Attended Carers Strategy meetings and Think Local Act Personal meetings. Took part in the Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Group looking at Barnsley Carers (All Age).</p>

# Statutory statements

## 2024 – 2025 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
<b>Priority 2 –</b> Mental Health (including dementia)	<p>Produced an employee wellness plan and guide, which will be available for download from the new Barnsley CVS website.</p> <p>Attended Barnsley Place Mental Health, Learning Disabilities, Autism and Dementia Partnership meetings.</p> <p>Provided feedback and case studies to NHS South Yorkshire as part of the review of the Memory Service.</p> <p>Attended My Big Voice Event.</p> <p>Worked with My Barnsley Too, providing activities and information as part of the “Do you see me?” LD Celebration Week.</p>
<b>Priority 3 –</b> GP services (and how they work)	<p>Publish an information guide on how to access GP services and alternatives. Providing ongoing feedback about GP services to Healthwatch England, to help form a national picture.</p> <p>Planning an Enter and View visit to a GP surgery (June 2025).</p>





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