



Speaking up for better care

Healthwatch Barnsley annual report 2025/26

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Acting Chief Executive
Chris McCann

“

The NHS plays a vital role in our lives, and we know it faces real challenges. Listening to people’s thoughts about their care is one of the best ways to improve services. Every comment, concern, and compliment helps health and care professionals see what works and what needs to change, so care can be safer and better for everyone.

“We want to say a heartfelt thanks to all the local people who have taken the time to share their experiences, and to the health and social care professionals who have listened and acted on that feedback. Your commitment has helped make a real difference for our community.”

A message from our chair

Responding to challenge, change and uncertainty.

This has been a difficult year for Healthwatch Barnsley. Alongside the day-to-day challenges facing health and social care, we have also had to respond to the unsettling news that Healthwatch is proposed to be abolished under the government's new Health Bill which is currently making its way through Parliament. This uncertainty has inevitably created concern but has also reinforced just how important and independent champion for patients, service users and carers remains.

During the year we also experienced changes within our staff team, and I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to our work during this period of transition, and to recognise the commitment, resilience and professionalism shown by colleagues and volunteers alike. Their dedication has ensured that the voices of local people have continued to be heard, even in challenging circumstances.

Despite the uncertainty Healthwatch Barnsley is still very much open for business. We remain committed to listening to people's experiences, speaking up on issues that matter and working with partners to help improve services across Barnsley



Chair of Healthwatch
Barnsley Local
Advisory Group
Christine Key



“On behalf of the Local Advisory Group I would like to thank everyone who has shared their views with us and supported our work this year. We will continue to serve our communities with the same determination and purpose in the year ahead.”

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

In 2025/2026 we supported more than **3,000** people to have their say and get information about their care. We employed **5** staff and, our work was supported by **10** volunteers.



Reaching out:

2,700 people shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.

700 people came to us for clear advice and information on topics such as **making a GP appointment** and **finding an NHS dentist**.



Championing your voice:

We published **6** reports about the improvements people would like to see in areas like **Women's Health and Adult Safeguarding**.

Our most popular report was Herwatch Magazine, highlighting people's stories around Women's Health.



Statutory funding:

We're funded by **Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council**. In 2025/26 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

Raised awareness of a promotional offer by a national discount store who were offering discounted packs of pain killers which went against best practice.



Raised awareness of hospital pharmacy dispensing prescriptions without a PIL (Patient Information Leaflet).



Summer

Worked with NHS South Yorkshire to provide information to residents on the criteria for weight loss drugs that have recently been approved by NHS.



Raised concerns with a GP Practice with regards to their online triage system. Patients advised of a 24-hour response time but then were being offered appointments the same day, which they were unable to attend.



Autumn

We worked with the Health Visitor and GP Practice to put support in place for a new mum who was struggling to get medication for Her newborn baby that was prescribed by the Hospital.



Worked with the Oral Health Advisory Group to look at what provision is available for care home residents.



Winter

Worked with CHC Team (Continuing Health Care) regarding a local care home unlawfully charging top-up fees to bridge the financial gap.



Worked with services to get a housebound resident some support with household repairs and a befriending service.



Working together for change

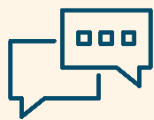
We've worked with neighbouring Healthwatch to ensure people's experiences of care in **Barnsley** are heard at the Integrated Care System (ICS) level, and they influence decisions made about services in South Yorkshire.

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



A collaborative network of local Healthwatch:

The four Local Healthwatch in South Yorkshire work together to represent the wider area at meetings convened by the Integrated Care System. We are represented at various Board and collaborative meetings to advocate for the views and experiences of people across the wider region, not just Barnsley.



A big conversation:

As part of the ongoing commitment to improving care, the Department of Health and Social Care worked with Healthwatch England to bring together Local Healthwatch organisations from across the country through an online event. The session enabled meaningful discussions around remit, challenges and resources of the new NHS Trust currently being developed in line with statutory requirements set out in law.



Building strong relationships to achieve more:

As part of our Enter &View programme we have visited care homes in Barnsley speaking to staff, residents and their families. Following each visit, we publish reports outlining our findings and make recommendations to the service on areas for improvement. Working in partnership with public, service providers and stakeholders to help ensure the best possible care is provided.

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 shared a resident's experience of accessing dental care with our Oral Health Group which includes representatives from the Local Dental Network. By having direct access to these services, we were able to get the resident the help she needed. Due to past trauma, she was unable to have an extraction without general anesthetic and was having to seek emergency access to control a recurring infection .



Getting services to involve the public

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

We are always championing the voice of our deaf and hard of hearing residents who continue to face the same barriers when trying to access healthcare. At a recent Sensory Loss Awareness event we were also able to capture the experience of interpreters and feed this back to services.



Improving care over time

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

We recently provided feedback from families who are caring for people with dementia. They reported to us that although the initial referral and diagnosis was a good experience the follow up support wasn't great and left many of them struggling to cope. We were able to feed this into the work being done around Dementia in Barnsley and our report was used when planning service delivery.

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.



Championing community concerns around Women's Health

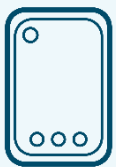
Last year, we championed the voices of our community to gather feedback on women's experience of healthcare in Barnsley

Issues were raised by residents when we ask what our priorities should be. There were concerns around mis-information regarding the menopause, ladies telling us they were being dismissed by GP's and not feeling listened to.

What did we do

We created a survey focused on women's health to better engage the population of Barnsley. We provided an online version; we spoke to groups we visited and held an event in Barnsley Town Centre where residents could come and speak to us and enjoy a crafting activity.

Key things we heard:



55%

of women under 18 told us mental health and wellbeing was a priority for them.

34%

Of women aged 45+ told us healthy ageing and long term conditions were their priority.

20%

Of all the women we spoke to told us that cancer remains a priority for them.

Our work showed how women's priorities change during their life course with younger women being more concerned around mental health and well being and as we age, we become more concerned around menopause and long-term conditions.

What difference did this make?

By listening to women's concerns we were able to involve other services in Barnsley and put together Herwatch, a magazine based on women's experience in Barnsley alongside myth busting and agony aunt features.

Increasing the awareness of Safeguarding within the community

Working with Barnsley Safeguarding Adults Board to bring more education and information on what safeguarding is and how to raise a concern.

During the life of the project our Engagement Officer (Adult Safeguarding) spoke to residents, handed out leaflets and attended events informing residents of different types of safeguarding and how to raise a concern.

Key things we did:

500

The number of people we signposted to other service for support.

20

The number of volunteer Community Safeguarding Champions we recruited



“Tracy delivered a powerful and practical presentation focused on empowering families to access the support they need to live healthy, informed and confident lives.” – Chrissy Sykes, founder of My Body is My Body Programme.

We've worked with residents across the borough, raising awareness, signposting and recruiting Community Safeguarding Champion and although the project has now ended, we hope we have left a lasting legacy and work will continue through the Champions.

What difference did this make?

We saw an increase in the amount of low-level safeguarding concerns being made, which enabled services to react quickly and prevent matters from escalating.

We also built up connects between other support services and were able to get multi-agency involvement to ensure the right outcome for residents who at times were in desperate need.

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:

- Engaging with College Students at Fresher Events and Wellbeing Events to ensure we are capturing the voice of young residents..
- We have reached out to the more deprived area of our communities by attending Foodbanks, Pantry's and Community Shops..
- We share feedback anonymously with service providers and commissioners, making sure that local voices have an input.



Cost of travelling to hospital appointments is worrying

Listening to worries about travelling to hospital when finances are already stretched.

On a visit to a local foodbank we heard from one lady, who was really struggling to make appointments at the hospital with her consultant due to the rising cost of living and other financial pressures. She was trying to defer her appointment.

What difference did this make?

We gave the resident information on the Healthcare Travel Cost Scheme (HTCS) and supported her to check her eligibility. Although she has to pay for the travel initially, she now knows she can claim in back. This has also improved her mental health as she knows she can attend the appointments and get the help she needs with her condition.

Supporting a resident with mental health problems who feels ignored

We were contacted via email from a resident who has various mental health problems caused by past trauma.

We received a cry for help from a resident who we had dealt with over other matters in the past. He was really struggling with his mental health and had not been able to see a member of his mental health team for nine weeks.

What difference did this make?

We contacted the Customer Service Team at SWYFT (South West Yorkshire Foundation Trust) to raise this as an immediate concern. We also contacted Re-Think as we had previously referred for some advocacy support. The SWYFT did have a record of his complaint and had asked the resident to provide consent which hadn't been returned. We worked with both ReThink and SWYFT to get the resident the support he needed as quickly as possible to stop his condition escalating further.

Information and signposting

When you're struggling to find an NHS dentist, looking for help about how to make a complaint, or need advice about a good care home for a loved one – we're your first port of call.

This year people 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.

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



Signposting for support with finances

We were introduced to Raymond via another service who had been supporting him with his two disabled sons.

Raymond was worried about finances as he was struggling to pay heating bills and was worried he was going to cut his food budget which would effect his two disabled sons.

We referred Raymond to the Warm Homes Team and More Money in your Pocket website. He was able to get help with his fuel cost and also got referred to his local food bank.

We also introduced him to Shaw Lane Mens Shed, where he could attend weekly sessions and interact with other people outside of his caring environment..



“Healthwatch Barnsley supported me when I was at my lowest and got me some support with heating and eating, as well as giving me a new hobby!”

Helping patients find information while waiting

Janice contacted us for help as her daughter had been referred to an Orthodontist back in January 2024.

Janice’s daughter is Autistic and about to enter year 11 at school, where she should be facing stress over exams. Janice wanted to make the next year as smooth as possible and hoped the Orthodontist treatment could be started before her daughter entered the next school year.

We talked Janice through how to find her YRK code from the referral which would enable her to check on the national database where her daughter was on the waiting list and if it had been allocated to an Orthodontist.



“Thank you to Healthwatch Barnsley for helping me to access the online portal for my daughter's referral, I have been able to communicate with the team, and I am hopeful for an appointment very soon.”

Showcasing volunteer impact

Our fantastic volunteers have given up 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:

- Took part in Patient Lead Assessment of the Care Environment (PLACE)
- Collected experiences and feedback from their communities to share their views
- Helped on engagement events by facilitating craft sessions and engaging with young people.



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.



Lyla

"I enjoy volunteering with Healthwatch Barnsley and going to events with them when I can."

Lyla joined us as she was at a bit of a loose end during the Summer holidays. She wanted to learn different things and was really keen to show off her crafting skills.

Lyla first joined us when we were doing an engagement event in Barnsley Town Centre. We were looking to speak to residents about Women's Health but knew as it was holiday time people would have younger children with them – Lyla came up with the idea of making keyrings to keep them entertained and it worked a treat

"Dr Liz Norris has been involved in community and voluntary services in Barnsley since taking early retirement due to ill health. She joined Healthwatch Barnsley Local Advisory Group in 2024 as a representative of Barnsley CVS Trustee Board.

As a former GP in the town Dr Liz was able to bring invaluable insight to the group. Dr Liz decided to retire from the Barnsley CVS Trustee Board at their AGM in December where she received thank you cards and gifts from both Barnsley CVS and Healthwatch Barnsley.

Thank you Dr Liz for all your support and we hope you enjoy your retirement!



Dr Liz Norris

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



01226 320106



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 Government	£150,000	Expenditure on pay	£134,060
Additional income	£19,000	Non-pay expenditure	£1,732
		Office and management fee	£9,508
Total income	£169,000	Total Expenditure	£145,300

Additional income is broken down into:

- £19,000 Received from Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council for hosting an Engagement Officer (Adult Safeguarding) from April to October 2025

Integrated Care System (ICS) funding:

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

Please note

The figures provided are an estimate as the accounts for Barnsley Community and Voluntary Services are still being finalised for this financial year.

Finance and future priorities

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 in the Local Authority and our local Integrated Care System to help develop a culture where, at every level, staff strive to listen and learn from patients experiences to make health and social care better.

Our top priorities for the next year are:

1. To work more closely with the Health & Wellbeing Board and Barnsley 2040 Board to gain insight on the priorities for Barnsley and to feedback from residents.
2. To close our feedback loop with residents by publishing newsletters, magazines and social media posts that are meaningful and relevant.
3. We plan to target areas of the community which we seldom hear from. We will be making ourselves known to these groups by going out into the community and engaging with them face to face
4. We will revisit the recommendations made in our Enter & View reports to see if any improvements have been made and how this has impacted on residents..

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 Barnsley Local Advisory Group consists of **7** 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 2025/26, the Board met **7** times and made decisions on matters such as **our Enter & View Program, priorities for the coming year and approving reports**. 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, social media and we will share with service providers.

Statutory statements

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 our local authority area, we take information to the Barnsley Place Health and Care Quality and Safety Committee (QSC), Barnsley Safeguarding Adults Board, Urgent and Emergency Care Board, Barnsley Involvement and Inclusion Leads, Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

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

Healthwatch representatives

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

During 2025/26, our representative has effectively carried out this role by **attending meetings and workshops arranged by the Board**.

Healthwatch **Barnsley** is represented on South Yorkshire Integrated Care Partnerships by Healthwatch Doncaster and Integrated Care Boards by Healthwatch Rotherham. Healthwatch Barnsley currently represents the South Yorkshire Healthwatch at the ICB System Quality Group


Statutory statements

Enter and view

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
Galtee More Residential Care Home, Doncaster Road, Barnsley	To evaluate how the service is being experienced and run .	Wrote a report with recommendations – shared with the provider, commissioners and Care Quality Commission.
Mapleton Court Care Home, Stacey Avenue, Grimethorpe	To evaluate how the service is being experienced and run.	Wrote a report with recommendations – shared with the provider, commissioners and Care Quality Commission.
Belle Green Court Care Home, Belle Green Court, Cudworth	To evaluate how the service is being experience and run.	Wrote a report with recommendations – shared with the provider, commissioners and Care Quality Commission.

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 www.healthwatchbarnsley.org.uk

 01226 320106

 hello@healthwatchbarnsley.org.uk

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