Annual report 2019-20
Guided by you
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“Healthwatch isn’t a thing – it is small group of highly committed individuals who make a huge difference to people’s lives and make a big difference to West Berkshire.”

**Mark Landreth-Smith,**
**Christians Together in Newbury**

Shaw House Newbury

Healthwatch West Berkshire has continued to make a very real impact on local health and care services provided to the local community that we serve. This is entirely due to the enthusiasm and vigour shown by the Chief Officer and HWWB staff and the willingness of volunteers to be involved.

I take great pride in the fact that I can report that the work of HWWB has been recognised nationally, for our work in relation to the homeless and rough sleeping we were presented by Healthwatch England with the 2019 award for Improving Health and Social Care.

We have continued our work on rough sleeping and issues facing individuals facing disabilities, pursuant to the publication of our “Voice of Disability” report. We have held, and will continue to hold, events involving our BAMER (Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic, Refugee) community. We have carried out a project on maternity services used by women in West Berkshire and the report will be issued shortly. The project has, once more, highlighted cross-border issues that impact on healthcare provision in West Berkshire.

We took part in a nationwide Healthwatch England survey in relation to the NHS Long Term Plan (LTP) and, due to the diligence of our volunteers, managed to encourage over 300 people to complete the survey – the 7th highest number of respondents in the country.

We had planned to hold several key events, including a first seminar on “End of Life”, but these were overtaken first by purdah due to the General Election and then the lockdown due to the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus. The latter has meant the postponement of several planned ‘Enter and View’ events. This time last year, I could not have envisaged that the pandemic, expected for so long, would materialise in 2020 and the SARS-CoV-2 virus wreak world-wide havoc with such terrible consequences for so many, in particular front-line NHS staff and care home residents.
Working and social lives have been changed and like many other organisations much of our work has moved further into the virtual domain. We have published a daily on-line coronavirus update designed to provide information and support for the people of West Berkshire and are undertaking several on-line surveys on the effects that the coronavirus had, and continues to have, on health and social care.

In terms of healthcare, the coronavirus has fundamentally changed the way in which people interface with GP surgeries with much greater reliance on digital technology. This is undoubtedly the future of primary healthcare and beyond - and HWWB will have an important role in ensuring that the underprivileged and those unable to adapt are not left behind and overlooked by the NHS.

Changes in the NHS structure are moving on apace in West Berkshire with the introduction, in particular, of Primary Care Networks and the BOB (Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West) Integrated Care System (ICS). I am pleased to say that, despite depleted resources, HWWB has a seat at the various tables to represent the health and wellbeing interests of the local community and ensure that the patient voice is heard.

In conclusion, I believe that we are continuing to make a difference for the better for the local community. We could not have done this without the willingness of statutory and Health and Social care organisations to listen to us, to work with us and to respond positively to the issues raised on behalf of local people.

Mike Fereday
Healthwatch West Berkshire Chair
Our National Healthwatch England Award 2019/20

HWWB is delighted to have won the "Improving Health and Social Care” Award at the National Healthwatch England conference on 1st October 2019. Beating off stiff competition from 140 entries and a short list of 29 to scoop one of the five main awards from our national body Healthwatch England presented by the Chair of Healthwatch England Sir Robert Francis, QC.

“I attended the Healthwatch England national conference which provided an opportunity to hear about some of the work being done by local Healthwatch organisations in other parts of the country. It was also my privilege to see Healthwatch West Berkshire pick up a National Award for its work on listening to homeless people and taking forward issues on their behalf. It was good to see the volunteers and Healthwatch staff honoured in this way.”

Adrian Barker – Healthwatch West Berkshire Board Member
“Joining Andrew, Alice and Board Member Dr Adrian Barker for the Healthwatch England Conference and awards ceremony in Birmingham last October was a real treat for me. Here at The Advocacy People, we see the work of HWWB as a key part of our portfolio, and as the kind of work on which we want to build in the future, drawing on the synergies between the work of Healthwatch and Advocacy providers. To be there to see the West Berks team scoop an award for Improving health and social care was the icing on the cake. I have no doubt that the team will continue delivering great outcomes for the people of West Berkshire.”

Matthew Hilton, CEO The Advocacy People
Our local priorities (2019/20)

Last year 13,000 people told HWWB about the improvements they would like to see health and social care services make in 2019-20. These were our six priorities for last year based on what you told us.

**Voice Of Disability**
Our VOD Report was discussed formally at the Health & Well Being Board in May 2019 with a list of Wellbeing recommendations, then launched to the public to help elicit change.

**Black Asian Minority Ethnic & Refugee**
With glaring disparities in health outcomes nationally we set about building on our outreach work to address long term inequalities in the BAMER community.

**Fibromyalgia In Young People**
Continuing our previous work, we created awareness among this seldom heard group via an event with key speakers.

**Rough Sleepers**
We continued to work with the voluntary and statutory services to ensure rough sleeper numbers fell and were treated equitably.

**NHS Long Term Plan**
Ensuring we were at the heart of building the local submission for the *BOB Integrated Care system (ICS) LTP plan*.

**Mental Health**
Our Thinking Together Crisis Review was used in the Berkshire CCG Crisis Service review; and we continue to work with service users and voluntary groups to improve services.
About us

Here to make care better

The network’s collaborative effort around the NHS Long Term Plan shows the power of the Healthwatch network in giving people that find it hardest to be heard a chance to speak up. The #WhatWouldYouDo campaign saw national movement, engaging with people all over the country to see how the Long Term Plan should be implemented locally. Thanks to the thousands of views shared with Healthwatch we were also able to highlight the issue of patient transport not being included in the NHS Long Term Plan review – sparking a national review of patient transport from NHS England.

We simply could not do this without the dedicated work and efforts from our staff and volunteers and, of course, we couldn’t have done it without you. Whether it’s working with your local Healthwatch to raise awareness of local issues, or sharing your views and experiences, I’d like to thank you all. It’s important that services continue to listen, so please do keep talking to your local Healthwatch. Let’s strive to make the NHS and social care services the best that they can be.

I’ve now been Chair of Healthwatch England for over a year and I’m extremely proud to see it go from strength to strength, highlighting the importance of listening to people’s views to decision makers at a national and local level.

Sir Robert Francis QC
Healthwatch England Chair
Our vision is simple
Health and care that works for you. People want health and social care support that works – helping them to stay well, get the best out of services and manage any conditions they face.

Our purpose
To find out what matters to you and to help make sure your views shape the support you need.

Our approach
People’s views come first – especially those who find it hardest to be heard. We champion what matters to you and work with others to find solutions. We are independent and committed to making the biggest difference to you.

How we find out what matters to you
People are at the heart of everything we do. Our staff and volunteers identify what matters most to people by:
• Visiting services to see how they work, we did 1 Enter & View visit this year
• Running surveys and focus groups
• Going out in the community and working with other organisations

Find out more about us and the work we do
Website: www.HealthwatchWestBerks.org.uk
Twitter: @HealthWWBerks
Facebook: @Facebook.com/HealthWatchWestBerkshire
Highlights from our year

Find out about our resources and the way we have engaged and supported more people in 2019-20.
Health and care that works for you

26 volunteers
helping to carry out our work. In total, 1006 hours of volunteer time Up 67%

We employed
4 staff
full time equivalent of 2.6 staff, an -18% decrease from the previous year

We received
£98,000 in funding
from our local authority in 2019-20, -5% less than the previous year

Providing support

306 people
shared their health and social care story with us, incl. online surveys 393% more than last year. (62 people last year)

32782 people
accessed Healthwatch advice and information online or contacted us with questions about local support, 5% more than last year

Reaching out

1,854,394 people
who have viewed or engaged with us through our website & social media, a 30% increase and 2,300 people engaged with us at community events

Making a difference to care

We published
2 reports with 2 pending reports
about the improvements people would like to see with their health and social care, and from this, we made 17 recommendations for improvements from the reports published
How we’ve made a difference
Speaking up about your experiences of health and social care services is the first step to change.  

Take a look at how your views have helped make a difference to the care and support people receive in West Berks.

**BAMER**

It is recognised widely from available data that the Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and Refugee (BAMER) community nationally suffers poorer health/ well-being outcomes and there are few reasons to believe West Berks would escape these trends – though lack of good data remains an issue in itself.

We were also concerned that with the demise of a group called Altogether representing ethnic minorities locally, no forum existed to promote or engage with West Berkshires many BAMER communities.

Our first exercise working jointly with West Berkshire Council’s Building Communities Team (BCT) and The Berkshire School of English was to create a highly successful 'World Food Day at the Riverside Community Centre. However, the event needed following up and lots more work to build trust & meaningful connection to help realise any meaningful change long term.

With the agreement of key local clinicians we knew, we therefore decided to utilise our contacts to start to discuss some of the more important topics around health. Therefore, we ran an event aimed at family health and wellbeing 'Staying Well For you and Your family'.

We managed to secure some prestigious local medics to give short presentations and importantly many were from the BAMER community, alongside the Chief Executive of West Berks Council, Head of West Berks Public Health. This added more weight to the audience’s responses. We also ran a range of joint table exercises, to try to understand the challenges faced and produced a video and report of the event.

The event covered acute long-term pain, Mental Health, Cancer including screening issues, GP surgeries and public health challenges. There were also information displays by 20 community and health service providers for visitors to engage with. The turnout was a little disappointing, not helped by India playing locally in the Cricket World Cup, which we could not have foreseen.
Following this event two more forums took place with the heading ‘Community Connections’. It was decided that the next event would encompass sport and family, so a West Berkshire Cricket World Cup and Mela was put into planning for May 2020.

It captured the imagination of both the BAMER community and also important local organisations like Greenham Common Trust, Berkshire Cricket Consortium, again supported by BCT and with a new organisation Communities United (formerly Community Connections) helping to organise the event.

Sadly, with challenges around the availability of grounds and the dates of Ramadan, the emergence of the Covid 19 outbreak meant the event had to be postponed until Summer 2020 at the earliest. However, it remains a key way of HWWB hearing from the BAMER community and strengthening our connections.

Our Engagement Officer, Alice Kunjappy-Clifton, has led brilliantly on this work, engaging with the Muslim community, South Asian community, Black Community and the churches helping to bring this together with our new West Berkshire Diversity Forum (WBDF).

“I am very pleased to say that HWWB has been instrumental for the Macmillan cancer education project. The project aims to promote cancer awareness and support patients from different communities (including BAMER) in accessing services under the BW CCG. One of the HWWB events in October last year I attended was the turning point for the [Macmillan] project to build networks with people and services in Newbury”

Mrs Nisha Tiwari Sharma
Macmillan Cancer, South Reading, Community Development Educator
Having successfully run an inclusive event with over 70 people attending, in partnership with key local Voluntary Sector Groups (WBLIN), West Berks Mencap, Enrych and the Volunteer Centre, The Voice of Disability Report was formally discussed at the West Berkshire Health and Well Being Board (WBH&WBB) in May 2019. The Board accepted that the recommendations should be actioned in a range of ways including an audit at Royal Berkshire Hospital of disabled facilities from toilets to access. The full launch of the report was affected by a period of Purdah in May, but its launch in August struck home with extensive media coverage in September.

In May 2019, The Board accepted that the recommendations should be actioned in a range of ways including an audit at Royal Berkshire Hospital of disabled facilities from toilets to access. The full launch of the report was affected by a period of Purdah in May, but its launch in August struck home with extensive media coverage in September.

As a result of the report, West Berkshire Council agreed to put disability at the heart of all its strategy documents going forward, though decided against having the Disability External Scrutiny Board report directly to the WBH&WBB. We remain concerned this is a mistake and that disabled issues will not be addressed unless this happens.

There remains, it seems an unconscious bias that we’ve done ‘disability’ and more attention is not needed.

The WBH&WBB had scheduled for HWWB to report back on the recommendations and responses to the VOD report and in March 2020, but due to Covid-19 this has had to be moved back to later in 2020 or possibly even 2021.

HWWB may have to revisit the Report to update for the effects of Covid-19 on the lives and wellbeing of the disabled Community to make this a useful document when it is next discussed. We are pleased to have identified a few champions from the Disabled Community to help lead on work on this vital next stage.

Covid-19 disproportionately affects disabled people, so we will re-energise our campaign to keep disability matters at the forefront of Health & Wellbeing in 2020/21.
MATERNITY

A number of quite distressing cases that came to our attention where care seemed anything but ‘good and it seemed questionable if the mothers choices, or best interests, were really considered both before, during and crucially after pregnancy.

HWWB had taken part in an ICS wide maternity survey with colleagues at Healthwatch Buckingham leading, but we felt it needed West Berkshire’s unique geographical elements investigating and adding when it comes to the use of cross border services such as Maternity.

So, we set up a survey and received over 190 responses. It showed some key findings namely that only 39% used the Royal Berkshire Hospital (RBH), yet almost all the attention of the Berks West CCG was focused on RBH, as was that of the BOB ICS.

We also alarmingly found almost equal levels of dissatisfaction at the other three Hospital Trusts used by West Berkshire women giving birth. Namely Great Western, Basingstoke and John Radcliffe in Oxford, with over 25% dissatisfied and 9% actually describing giving birth as traumatic.

HWWB decided to write a full report and take it to the WBH&WBB in 2020. This was due to take place in March, but the Board Meeting was postponed due to Covid 19.

Therefore, we will take it to the next Board that’s appropriate.

Additionally, HWWB found that although Reading Maternity Voices was well thought of and consulted on by all the local statutory Health bodies responsible for maternity, it did not itself consider what happened at the three other trusts that dealt with over 60% of West Berkshire’s maternity cases.

Therefore, it was decided that we would launch a West Berkshire Maternity Group for recent and future ‘mums’ to create feedback specifically around West Berkshire’s women’s experiences and gain support from the four Trusts to keep it going and ensure it was consulted and listened to.

"HWWB plays an important role in and for our community. Supporting and promoting the physical and mental health needs of everyone from conception to end of life. Importantly they advocate strongly for vulnerable groups in our society, playing a vital role representing us all on key Boards and forums locally. They are a friendly and approachable team and if they cannot find someone to help they will know someone who can”

Rosemary Lilley, Newbury Family Resource Centre
ROUGH SLEEPERS

Our ground breaking Rough Sleepers Report changed how rough sleeping was dealt with in West Berkshire.

All of its key recommendations were actioned via the Health and Well Being Board, including the creation of a specific Homeless Strategy Group reporting to the Health and Well Being Board. The group is made up of the West Berkshire Council’s Housing Team /Community Mental Health Team/ District Councillors, Health Outreach, TV Police, Voluntary Sector (Eight Bells, West Berkshire Homeless, Newbury Soup Kitchen, Loose Ends), Swanswell Drug & Alcohol Service, Sovereign Housing, Two Saints, etc.

The Homeless Strategy Group has ensured a co-ordinated response from both statutory and voluntary services. This ensures no Rough Sleepers are overlooked.

Its separate monthly operational committee (DARM) looking at each and every case, joint working & intelligence sharing has led to numbers of Rough Sleepers reducing from over 35 to under 10. This has also enabled WBC to secure long term injections of Rough Sleeper Initiative funding and the running of the ‘Housing First’ scheme, which gets Rough Sleeper’s off the street prior to helping with any ongoing issues/addictions, our ‘Access to Health’ Homeless Card helped ensure Rough Sleepers received access to GP and other services locally.

The introduction of a dedicated Winter Plan also meant there was no need for a charity run Night Shelter, as all but a small cohort of Rough Sleepers were housed over the winter by a co-ordinated response with statutory and voluntary sector. We remained committed to our Report’s goal of ending involuntary rough sleeping by 2020, an aim which still seems achievable.

"West Berkshire Homeless supports local homeless people, the majority of which also suffer from long term physical and mental health issues. It is important that Healthwatch continues to be an advocate for us and those we support”

Erica Gasser, West Berks Homeless

A ‘Rough Sleeper’s’ tent by the Kennet and Avon canal, Newbury (2017)
"Healthwatch West Berkshire been invaluable to me and my department at the Royal Berkshire Hospital with providing much needed support and sponsorship of the FM awareness event in Newbury last year and attracting media participation to raise awareness and support. Their work around the community and their ability to engage all stakeholders has been fantastic and I wish them all the best in continuing to do the same”

Dr Deepak Ravindran, Clinical Lead Pain Medicine, RBH
HWWB Raising Awareness of Seldom Heard Groups

As part of an international awareness campaign, HWWB joined forces with Dr Deepak Ravindran of the The Department of Pain Medicine at RBH to raise awareness of the *Fibromyalgia/ Chronic Fatigue Spectrum* of conditions, particularly among young people. Over a three month period we undertook a range of activities, including:

- Launching a #TurnWestBerksPurple campaign
- Creating an *Independence From Fibromyalgia* event (4th July) bringing together sufferers with specialists, experts from health/wellbeing services, and important local figures

HWWB Turns West Berks Purple

Continuing on from our previous Community Engagement Programme, HWWB engaged with a range of local businesses to highlight the *Fibromyalgia Spectrum* in a visually impactful way. The WB Community Hospital and Newbury Corn Exchange, along with local GP surgeries and a number of independent businesses created displays featuring the colour purple and promoted #TurnWestBerksPurple. Additionally, we used social media to create noise and raise awareness.

As part of our ongoing engagement with Newbury College, we held a competition to design a poster, which was used in the run up to the *Independence From Fibromyalgia* event, to publicise it. Businesses and organisations in the community displayed the poster, local advertising was placed and media interviews were undertaken – including ITV news and BBC Berkshire.

As a result the *Independence from Fibromyalgia* event was oversubscribed.

The event featured four short films by young sufferers, including speeches by Richard Benyon, MP and Steve McManus, CEO of RBH, as well as presentations and displays by eminent medics, West Berks Therapy Centre, Floating Point floatation therapy, the CAB and West Berks Fibromyalgia Support Group. With over 70 attendees, the event was agreed to be highly successful.

“We are delighted to work in partnership with HWWB and Dr Ravindran from RBH. We were pleased to help with this initiative and for various departments to be involved with the event, which gave young people in the area a chance to fact find, share experiences and socialise within our college’

*Julie Barker, Newbury College*
Student Placement and Young Carers

We have had a very successful relationship with Newbury College over the years, with lots of students covering worthwhile projects including: teenage cancer, diabetes, mental health, fibromyalgia & more. Using reports, surveys, video and striking posters to cover off topics important to young people as part of our Healthwatch Youth programme.

This year Anya and Charlotte managed to bring two areas HWWB covered into one project - that of young carers. The BBC estimates there are over 700k young carers in the UK, who often don’t even realise they are a ‘carer’ – it’s just what they have always done.

Working with Newbury College and our students on placement, we set out to discover more. We decided to develop a Young Carers Survey piloting it at the college, then working with West Berkshire Young Carers to roll-out across 2020/2021 enabling us to highlight young carers issues in West Berkshire.

If you would like to help HWWB with this project, have experience of being a young carer or would like to help out with our youth projects, then get in touch with us via 01635 886 210 or contact@healthwatchwestberks.org.uk
Long Term Plan

#WhatWouldYouDo
NHS Long Term Plan

Following a commitment from the Government to increase investment in the NHS, the NHS published the ‘Long Term Plan’ in January 2019, setting out its key ambitions over the next 10 years. Healthwatch launched a countrywide campaign to give people a say in how the plan should be implemented in their communities.

Here’s a summary of our work and what we found.

What do people want?
Working with Healthwatch Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Reading and Wokingham we asked people #WhatWouldYouDo to improve the NHS locally. The top issues that people told us they wanted services to focus on are:

- ‘very important’ to access help and treatment when needed
- more important to see any available health professional when first seeking help, rather than waiting longer to see a professional they
- people with a disease specific condition, said the wait for their initial assessment/ diagnosis was ‘slow or very slow’
- Quicker access to diagnosis and support

HWWB has been an active member of the West of Berkshire Safeguarding Adults Board Voluntary and Community Sector subgroup, ensuring that the voice of the residents of West Berkshire is represented.

Lynne Mason, Safeguarding Adults Board
Using the Healthwatch England (HWE) survey and their national campaign around the Long Term Plan (LTP) #WhatWouldYouDo we took part locally in one of the biggest national surveys ever to take place.

HWWB distributed the survey digitally, and via libraries, GP’s, local press and the Community Hospital to gain responses to the survey. With a target of 250 responses, we achieved 342, the highest in the BOB ICS region and 7th highest out of 152 Healthwatch in England. We also ran three focus groups around Learning Disability (LD) and Mental Health Crisis (MH).

Working with our Learning Disability Partnership Board (LDPB) and West Berks Mencap’s Friendship Skills group, HWWB set out to not only complete the surveys with the groups, but also to find out more about issues around health in the future, and how the LTP affects how their health will be dealt with.

The HWE survey was not LD friendly, taking far longer to complete than it should (30-40 minutes).

It was clear health issues really mattered, especially the belief that members of the group should be addressed directly, not via carers or family. Additionally, it was important that everything should be understandable – not overly complex or medicalised.

There was great enthusiasm from all who took part and they agreed they wanted consulting in future about all changes affecting their treatment.

Our MH focus group was held with Eight Bells and Open for Hope. Centring around Crisis, it had some stark findings, with GPs seen as vital for patients through the journey from crisis to a more balanced state.

The MH crisis phone service was heavily criticised for poor local knowledge and the fact it often went through to an answerphone.

This feedback not only helped the BOB ICS submission, but contributed to the Berkshire West CCG Crisis Review.
Helping you find the answers
1: Unreasonable Waiting List
A client rang to say that his wife had waited 20 weeks to be seen by a consultant regarding gall stones, and is now on a 10 week waiting list. She was on very strong medication for the pain. We spoke to their GP surgery and PALS at the hospital. This led to the woman being given a cancellation, and having the operation much sooner.

2: Patient Transport
A housebound wheelchair user called needing help to get to a hospital appointment. Their daughter usually assists but due to a back condition was unable to. The patient needed transport to the hospital and back, as well as assistance at the hospital on arrival. We spoke to PALS at RBH. The PALS team said there was help available, and informed us the person needed to call their GP to arrange the transport, which we advised, solving the problem.

3: Unwell Rough Sleeper
We were contacted by Newbury Soup kitchen about a service user struggling with being on the street and unwell, even though it was the height of summer. We used the Homeless Strategy Group’s new escalation protocol and the person was contacted and temporarily housed in a local B&B while recuperating. This improved level of cooperation and communication stopped the situation becoming much worse as it might have done prior to our work on Rough sleepers.
Here are some issues we have raised following feedback received from West Berkshire residents

Case Study: MATERNITY

A husband rang HWWB saying that he would like to complain about the treatment his partner received at hospital. The HWWB team visited the wife and husband to hear about her birthing experience, which has left the wife and husband traumatised.

The woman had transferred from London to Calcot to be near relatives for support during pregnancy. She tried to get her maternity care and midwifery support from the local Maternity Unit. However, she encountered an initial problem that she needed to register with a local GP before she could register with the hospital. This caused her a lot of anxiety as she was near to her due date of delivery.

Because she was so near her due date for delivery, she was referred to a Consultant straightaway.

The conversation with the Consultant was also traumatic as the woman was told that she must have her baby in the Delivery Suite (for higher risk births) as her Body Mass Index (BMI) was not suitable for the Birth Centre (low risk births).

This caused confusion as her previous hospital, in a different area, had categorised her as low risk and her birth plan reflected that she would like to be cared for at the Birth Centre rather than a Delivery Suite.

The Consultant did not explain to the client why her new hospital had a different assessment BMI criteria to her previous hospital.

“We linked with HWWB, they helped us create and strengthen links with local women and families using maternity services. They have helped us to gain feedback from the community and have introduced us to BAMER groups. We value their input”

Emma Taylor, Chair, Reading Maternity Voices Partnership
The patient was so concerned she decided to have a conversation with the Manager of the Birth Centre, who eventually agreed to have the woman admitted to the Birthing Unit. However, on being induced the maternity process was also found to be very unsatisfactory.

When she asked for pain relief she was not heard & indeed both she and her husband felt patronised by the staff. Due to the rapid speed of the delivery, which was in itself very worrying for the couple, the birth had to be managed using instruments.

This left the couple feeling the staff were more concerned about the instruments than the health of the baby or mother. The staff on the ward post-natal were also felt to be unsupportive.

Indeed when the couple complained, despite speaking to many staff members, the couple were told that the birth had not been ‘traumatic’.

HWWB helped the woman take the issue to PALS and raised it at the quarterly meeting with the CEO. The woman was adamant this situation shouldn’t happen to another woman at the hospital in future, hence her getting in touch with HWWB.

This case, alongside other issues raised has led to HWWB undertaking a large-scale Maternity Survey and Maternity workpiece, as detailed earlier in this report.
A grieving 85-year-old widow contacted HWWB about concerns around the care of her late husband in hospital.

The woman felt that there were inaccuracies on the notes. Working with our local health complaints service run by The Advocacy People a resolution meeting was arranged with the hospital.

In the meeting the consultant explained that a Trainee Doctor had indeed not spoken to them in an appropriate manner or explained the treatment plan fully. The Trainee Doctor had also been insensitive in talking to the woman about her husband health situation and it was agreed these learnings would be taken back to Clinical Governance for assessment. Despite the Trainee Doctor also mistakenly thinking a blood test for sepsis had been carried out, the Consultant confirmed that this would not have in the end altered the treatment plan, which helped ease anxiety for the woman.

The woman was thankful to both the Advocacy People and HWWB saying she had gained so much knowledge and insight into care and treatment and clinical processes in an Acute Hospital setting and such experience of the NHS Complaints Procedure.

Since the meeting she has said she would like to work with HWWB as a volunteer, particularly around our End of Life work and the planned conference.
We were contacted to look into why an LD patient, who was needle phobic, but needed regular blood tests at the Community Hospital had suddenly had their usual procedure changed.

Previously the patient had one of their arms anaesthetised using a local anaesthetic cream at the hospital, waited for 20 minutes and then the had their blood taken, without any real anxiety. However, the patient received a letter saying the carers would in future need to apply the cream prior to the blood test before attending the hospital. This made no sense as it was unknown which arm or site would be chosen by the nurse to take the blood from, which caused high anxiety for both the patient and their carers.

HWWB raised this with both the provider and in our quarterly meeting with the Trust, but still have not received a satisfactory answer as to why these ‘reasonable adjustments’ could not still be made. We will continue to raise this and other issues around needle phobic disabled patients who are disproportionately affected.

This cohort may miss out on flu jabs (despite being in a vulnerable group). Additionally, they may miss out on community dental care, as there are huge delays in finding specialist care for needle phobic patients who may be in pain or have abscesses - or in one case had no feeling for pain so had a long term infection left untreated as they could not be found a slot.

"We had the opportunity to work with HWWB. The whole experience was excellent. HWWB went out of their way to ensure that the sessions were fun and informative. I was most impressed."

Cathy Black, West Berks Mencap

Case Study: Learning Disability (LD) PATIENT
Finding the right service can be worrying and stressful. Healthwatch plays an important role in helping people to get the information they need to take control of their health and care and find services that will provide them with the right support.

This year we helped 13,000 people get the advice and information they need by:
- Providing advice and information articles on our website
- Answering people’s queries about services over the phone, by email, or online
- Talking to people at community events
- Promoting services and information that can help people on our social media

Here are some of the areas that people asked about:
Volunteers
Our volunteers

We could not do what we do without the support of our amazing volunteers. Meet some of the team and hear what they get up to.

Jane
"Why do I like to volunteer for HWWB, it offers the chance for me to give something back to the local community I live in and I hope make some sort of difference with in that community. I enjoy doing it, as you also get to meet many wonderful people from all walks of life”

Karen
"Why did I volunteer? Did I, or did you twist my arm?!
I volunteer because I can use my knowledge of local faith and community groups, listening skills and expertise in domestic abuse to “bring something to the table” in various aspects of Healthwatch’s work within our West Berkshire community”

Adrian
“I have been involved with Healthwatch one way or another since it started, but it was only in June 2018 that I re-joined the Board (having had to leave it for a couple of years while I was a lay member on the CCG (as this is a conflict of interest).
It is good to be able to contribute in some small way to the bigger picture through the Board, but also to get involved in a few of the day to day activities”
At Healthwatch West Berkshire we are supported by 26 volunteers who help us find out what people think is working, and what people would like to improve the services in their communities.

This year our volunteers:

- Raised awareness of the work we do at events, in the community and with health and care services.
- Visited services to make sure they are providing people with the right support.
- Helped support our day-to-day running.
- Listened to people’s experiences to help us know which areas we need to focus on.

Volunteers helped launch the HWWB Voice of Disability Report

Thanks to our volunteers and working with local disability organisations in West Berkshire we successfully put the issue of disability back on the minds of local statutory bodies, not only in health and social care, but also departments such as Transport, Environment, Waste and the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP).

‘Ali’, a wheelchair user, has been one of our new ‘stars’ volunteering to help us launch the Voice of Disability Report at Hungerford Railway station.

The station perfectly exhibits how hard access still remains for disabled people, with the only options to gain access from the car-park to the London platform are via a staircase and bridge, or to cross at the uneven level crossing on a steep hill.

Additionally, Ali has helped us with vital intelligence and acted as a spokesperson with the media.

Ali says, she enjoys working with HWWB, feeling both her experiences and insight as a disabled person can be used as a positive; also knowing that her views are being listened to is really important to her.
Finances
We are funded by our local authority under the Health and Social Care Act (2012). In 2019-20 we spent £115,997.
Our plans for next year
Message from our Chief Officer

After a successful 2019/20 it was vital that we pushed on with some further exciting new projects and also capitalised on the good work already carried out around projects such as Rough Sleeping and BAMER (Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic, Refugee) inclusion. HWWB also, for the first time, put in two award entries into the *Healthwatch England National Awards* and we were ecstatic to be told we had made the final short list.

We were genuinely all shocked that in a packed hall of our peers at the Birmingham’s National Conference Centre we were named winners for our work on Rough Sleepers. But, as I said when we brought the award back to West Berkshire, it really was something to be shared between many organisations, individual heroes and the people of West Berkshire who refused to accept that a much shortened life expectancy on the street was acceptable in 2019 for their fellow residents.

Though the award was the absolute highlight of the year, our report has underlined many other issues that need looking at and I felt what we did going forward really mattered to us – *and then Covid-19 arrived*, just after Christmas and our year changed.

We acted early to become an information hub between commissioners, providers of service and our residents, volunteer groups and newly set up Covid 19 crisis bodies. We closed our office to safeguard the public and our staff on March 13th and set up to work remotely. We produced daily Covid-19 update newsletters to cascade out a huge swathe of information about changes to everyday services and acute response to the Covid-19 pandemic, which initially came in hourly. We repurposed our Website, attended and ran meetings online using a variety of digital tools and undertook daily team meetings, to ensure we had the correct information in place.

We also ensured key meetings continued to take place and set up new online update meetings with Adult Social Care, the voluntary sector. In addition, we attended weekly briefings with the Berkshire West Clinical Commissioning Group and with Royal Berkshire Hospital (RBH). We fed back vital patient feedback on the challenges the public was facing about where to reach a service or simply how to get their prescription. The Community response in West Berkshire was remarkable and often filled gaps as they occurred, looked after the vulnerable and those not known to services.

Andrew Sharp, Chief Officer Healthwatch West Berkshire

> ‘I felt what we did going forward really mattered... then Covid arrived’
What are Healthwatch West Berkshire’s future priorities?

We had identified a challenging work plan going forward before the Covid-19 pandemic changed all our lives. With the dreadful loss of so many lives in West Berkshire and across the country we have changed not only how we operate day-to-day, but also what our future priorities need to be.

We plan to Address the following:

▪ The Covid-19 Recovery Plan:
  
  NHS / Health Services (Hospitals, Primary Care, Community Health)
  Social Care (Care homes, domiciliary care, Advanced Care Planning, carers)
  
  ▪ BAMER health inequalities - including Covid-19
  ▪ Maternity Service standards
  ▪ CAMHS (Child, Adolescent Mental Health Services)
  ▪ Long Term Plan /ICS
  ▪ Local Cancer Services

How we plan to address them?

Having been involved in changes to local Health services during the Covid-19 lockdown, HWWB will ensure that patient voices are heard as recovery planning develops around services such as Primary Care, Outpatients, A&E, Mental Health, Dental, Maternity, Long Term Conditions, Screening & Prevention.

Increased waiting lists, extended hugely by the Covid-19 lockdown, need to be managed equitably and that the ‘new’ ‘normal’ methods of health service operation does not throw up additional health inequalities or affect disproportionately the residents of West Berkshire.

Care Homes
Care homes have borne the brunt of the deaths from Covid-19 and also some of the longest periods of isolation from family and loved ones. HWWB needs to ensure that health inequalities are not made worse and challenges around isolation and access to mental health services are put in place.

As care homes may have to restrict visitors for some time to come we also need to be able to find ways to listen to the residents and their families views ongoing in case our Enter & View powers to visit remain difficult to execute.

Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic, Refugees

The BAMER community, as identified in recent Government and Public Health England reports, have seen a very high toll of fatalities in the Covid-19 outbreak both in their communities and in those fulfilling their jobs, often as ‘key workers’ in care or in the NHS.

Over the last 18 months we have been working hard trying to connect & listen with various BAMER communities in West Berkshire, which is made more challenging by the fact there are relatively small numbers in our area, but we have made good progress- with more to do.

Even before Covid-19, health outcomes were worse for the BAMER community than in the general population.

Therefore, a priority next year is to ensure their voices are heard and steps are taken to reduce inequalities in both access, treatment, outcomes and safety at work in caring professions, if ethnicity remains a factor with Covid-19.

We remain committed to supporting our newly formed West Berkshire Diversity Forum and ensuring its voice is heard.
Maternity

Our Maternity Survey highlighted some worrying levels of dissatisfaction for almost 25% of women having babies in West Berkshire. This is made more complex by the fact that the women of West Berkshire use four different trusts from Great Western in Swindon, Basingstoke Hospital and John Radcliffe in Oxford, as well as Royal Berkshire Hospital (RBH), Reading. Yet the Berks West CCG concentrate most of its attention and public engagement on only RBH.

We have started a fledgling organisation for West Berks ‘Mums’ virtually, which needs to gain traction and find its ‘voice’. We will continue to work with our newly formed focus groups, the Health and Wellbeing Board and providers of maternity services to ensure levels of satisfaction with maternity services from the women in West Berkshire improves markedly and rapidly.

Child Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)

Having completed some initial focus group work on CAMHS as a part of our overall MH work and because of some worrying cases brought to our attention, it has become clear that all is not ideal with how our young people and their families are finding the right help. While more resources are finding their way into MH and into CAMHS services – some more complex conditions can still wait up to eighteen months for a diagnosis and with Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) becoming much more thought of as a driver of overall health outcomes, with the path seemingly ‘set’ by the age of 17, HWWB intends building on our work to put a coherent report together with some concrete recommendations.

HWWB are also concerned about self-harm levels and eating disorders in our young people and will have to factor in the dramatic effects of the Covid-19 outbreak on our young people’s lives and their normal patterns, as well as the effect it has on their mental health.

Long Term Plan/ ICS

By always being ‘in the room’ we have influenced the LTP submitted by our BOB ICS to NHS England prior to Christmas 2019. Covering approximately 2 million people it maps out how changes to transform services announced nationally by NHS England will be put into practice locally in terms of things like Cancer services, Maternity, and how LD services operate in future. It aims to use its larger scale to help commission services operating across the whole BOB area more efficiently. These will include services such as Ambulance, Cancer, Maternity - while still keeping the local touch for front line services such as GP’s.

It’s vital that with Berkshire West CCG’s already merged from four into one CCG in Berkshire West, that local accountability and patient voice still counts. We have raised our concerns about the merger of the three current CCG’s making up the BOB ICS, into one, which though denied, has a new CEO in place and three new Managing Directors for each constituent area - it seems pre-merger!

We have worked hard all year to ensure the voice of West Berkshire residents is heard by attending key ICS meetings, often as far as Amersham or High Wycombe with no new resources. However, we are delighted a new Joint HW ICS officer is being funded by the BOB ICS.

Cancer Services

With the opening of a new cancer wing at West Berkshire Community Hospital we have committed to working with the Newbury Cancer Care Charity (NCC) to find out more information around those using the services and also those who do not. We hope to build on our relations not only with NCC, but also with smaller less well known groups whose outcomes are often much worse than the more well known cancer diseases, such as Breast, Bowel or Prostate.
What difference do we hope to achieve?

With all the work we undertake our hope is that firstly patients and residents voices are heard, listened to and acted upon by those with the power to enact change, commission or provide good services in health and social care to all our residents in West Berkshire. We will do this using our influence on key committees and Boards, working as a critical friend, being prepared to ask the tough questions, but also to assist where our expertise and connections can help.

Working with our colleagues locally in other Healthwatch from Wilts to Bucks, we will work with residents, their families, carers, service users and voluntary organisations who know specific health conditions or have more rounded experiences of social care better than we could ever hope to have, to drive change, improve services and root out inequalities or simple unfairness based on geography, age, sex, disability, ethnicity, beliefs, marriage/civil partnerships or maternity/pregnancy.

HWWB will ensure that as new structures such as the BOB ICS yield more commissioning power that the local voices are not drowned out and that the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak do not cement in inequalities already in place or in fact create new ones – HWWB is the people’s voice, we are the people’s champion.

Andrew Sharp
Chief Officer, Healthwatch West Berkshire
Some of our media coverage

Newbury Weekly News
Healthwatch up for national award
Team recognised for work to end rough sleeping in district

Newbury Weekly News
Report highlights effect of austerity on disabled
Range of issues affecting local people revealed at launch of value of disability

Peter Cod
West Berkshire Homeless

that's thames valley

Communities talking together

Newbury Weekly News

THE READING CHRONICLE

Penny Post
Celebrating local life in & around:
Newbury • Thatcham • Hungerford • Berkshire Downs
Reading • Marlborough • Wantage • Swindon

Andrew Sharp
Healthwatch West Berkshire
Some of our media coverage
Thank you

Each year our list of people & organisations we have to thank grows!

Firstly, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our amazing Volunteer Board Members, (Mike Fereday, Lesley Wyman, Martha Vickers, Adrian Barker, Karen Swaffield, Judy McCulloch & Amanda Cunnington), our volunteers, our hard working small team (Alice, Michelle & Nathan), the support from our partners on the WB Health and Wellbeing Board (who are often brave at looking at our sometimes problematic findings). Thanks also to our Health & Social Care partners, who are open and transparent & welcome our findings as key in helping improve services. To our remarkable voluntary sector, who daily perform miracles. Finally, I want to personally thank Sam Dolton, our Joint Healthwatch ICP Officer who has now left, but who made such a positive impression with everyone he met.

Best wishes for the future and thanks for being so open to working with us to Dr Cathy Winfield, Chief Officer of Berkshire West CCG for seven years, as well as Fiona Wise, Executive Lead of BOB for the last two years, both of whom have led vital health organisations through some very difficult changing times. Also to all the residents of West Berkshire who daily remind us why what we do matters- thank you!
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HWWB was, and remains, pleased to have played a small part in helping West Berkshire initially deal with the Covid-19 outbreak - though the hard work and sacrifices of so many in the local NHS, care, social care, emergency services, back-office logistics and managers, alongside the community cannot be underestimated and deserves great credit.

"Healthwatch West Berkshire stepped-up and provided us with crucial support as the COVID-19 crisis deepened. Their approach to partnership working and ability to make things happen is outstanding"

James Wilcox – CEO of Fairclose Centre, Newbury
A West Berks District Nurse in action during the Covid-19 crisis