



Speaking up for better care

Healthwatch Wiltshire annual report 2025/26

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A message from our CEO

This year we have

- Engaged military families, parent carers, young people, people in deprived communities and those facing health inequalities.
- Analysed experiences of childhood vaccinations, unpaid caring, pharmacy services, youth wellbeing and healthcare access.
- Shared evidence and recommendations with decision-makers to improve support, communication and access to services.
- Secured commitments to improve support for military families, parent carers and communities experiencing inequalities.
- Presented local insight to BSW decision-makers, shaping discussions on hypertension, patient data and service planning.
- Worked with Healthwatch Bath & North East Somerset and Swindon to amplify public voice and influence BSW-wide priorities.



CEO, TCF
Kevin Peltonen-
Messenger



“This year has been marked by uncertainty following proposals to close Local Healthwatch services and remove independent patient voice from health and care. Despite this, we have continued to ensure the experiences of Wiltshire residents drive improvements in local services.

Thanks to the dedication of our staff, volunteers, Local Advisory Group members and the wider Healthwatch network, we have tackled health inequalities, championed military families, parent carers and young people, and ensured community voices remain at the heart of decision-making.

About us

Healthwatch Wiltshire 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 30,934 people to have their say and get information about their care. We employed 5 staff and our work was supported by 8 volunteers.



Reaching out:

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

30,717 people came to us for clear advice and information on topics such as how to make a complaint about a GP practice and finding help with hospital transport.



Championing your voice:

We published 7 reports about the improvements people would like to see in areas like childhood vaccinations, food insecurity and being an unpaid carer.

Our most popular report was [‘The health needs and experiences of military families in Wiltshire’](#) highlighting how better health outcomes can be achieved in an area that is home to around a fifth of the British Army.



Statutory funding:

We’re funded by **Wiltshire County Council**. In 2025/26 we received **£177,000**, 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 **Wiltshire**. Here are a few highlights.

Spring

Our new Local Advisory Group prioritised projects on Carers and Pharmacy First, as well as strengthening community insight and guiding engagement to address health inequalities

We supported the ICB to better understand how people use A&E and strengthen planning for winter pressures by visiting waiting rooms and speaking directly with patients about why they were there.

Summer

We spoke to people from Wiltshire's most deprived areas about hypertension to increase awareness and support the ICB to enable better case finding amongst high-risk groups.

We attended Neighborhood Collaboratives in Box, Corsham, Devizes and Westbury to increase working with grassroots community organisations and improve engagement with seldom-heard and isolated communities.

Autumn

Healthwatch Wiltshire engaged young people at college Freshers events, using a 'worry chain' activity to capture concerns and inform future mental health and wellbeing support.

We looked at translation in pharmacies. We found language barriers limiting access, reducing Pharmacy First use, and creating safety risks. This allowed us to highlight the need for improved culturally appropriate support.

Winter

Healthwatch heard from parent carers about gaps in awareness, practical and emotional support, highlighting the need for earlier identification, stronger advice, and improved professional relationships.

Healthwatch Wiltshire supported delivery of a Cancer Bus pilot, engaging communities across Salisbury to raise awareness of cancer symptoms and promote earlier diagnosis through direct outreach.

Working together for change

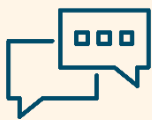
We've worked with neighbouring Healthwatch to ensure people's experiences of care in Wiltshire are heard at the Integrated Care System (ICS) level, and they influence decisions made about services at **BSW ICB**.

This year, we've worked with Healthwatch across **the BSW ICB area** to achieve the following:



A collaborative network of local Healthwatch:

Healthwatch Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire collaborated on an unpaid carers project, highlighting the impact of caring for someone who chooses not to accept help that could benefit them. The project highlighted various areas that could be improved to offer better support to people caring for a loved one.



A big conversation:

We led a wide-ranging conversation with local people on how they thought patient data should be used, bringing together the views of participants through surveys and focus groups.

The project highlighted that while there is strong public support for using health data to improve services and outcomes, this support is not unconditional and depends heavily on trust, transparency, and control.



Building strong relationships to achieve more:

Following the publication of our report ['What are people's views about childhood vaccinations and the vaccination service in Wiltshire?'](#), a summit was held bringing together 40 experts in this field. Attendees fed back that the event enabled them to strengthen their networks and identify new collaborators to support their work.

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 Wiltshire this year:



Creating empathy by bringing experiences to life

Our Guiding Hands report brings parent carers' experiences to life through vivid storytelling and direct quotes. Detailed lived-experience narratives illustrate anxiety, isolation, and the daily realities of caring, helping readers connect with the human impact behind the findings. By weaving authentic voices throughout and presenting full first-hand accounts, the report moves beyond statistics, enabling decision-makers to better understand families' experiences and the importance of more compassionate, responsive support.



Getting services to involve the public

Through our Unpaid Carers project, we engaged people via surveys, interviews and attendance at local support groups, creating safe spaces to share their experiences. This activity highlighted the emotional and practical pressures carers face, particularly where support is refused, alongside gaps in accessible services. These insights helped co-produce recommendations to improve flexibility, awareness and tailored support for carers locally.



Improving care over time

Following our report into barriers military families face accessing healthcare, 60 professionals from 25 agencies came together at a military summit. The event showcased the power of collaboration, identifying communication as a key priority. Plans are underway to develop a centralised, user-friendly digital resource to improve access to support. The summit generated clear, actionable ideas and ongoing partnership working, with further projects and next steps.

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 improved access to local services for military families

Last year, we continued to champion the need to improve military families' access to local healthcare services

The previous Healthwatch Wiltshire report "*The health needs and experiences of military families in Wiltshire*" showed that many military families are disconnected from local support. This is a key driver of poor health and can magnify mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression.

What did we do

We helped organise a summit focussed on how military families can be better served by health and care services. The summit was attended by 60 professionals from 25 agencies, including NHS, local authority, MoD and VCSE organisations, as well as military family members.

Key things we heard:

The summit allowed participants, many of whom were actively serving in the military, or providing welfare services directly to military families, to work through case studies to identify key areas of improvements.

A key finding was that there was a lack of information being given to families upon arrival in a new area and that improving communication was a key priority.

What difference did this make?

The summit secured a commitment to establish a user-friendly centralised website resource. This app will be a vital communication tool, making it easier for military families to access services on offer in the county

Additionally, the issues highlighted in the original report around families having to rejoin waiting lists when moving areas resulted in Government laying amendments to the Armed Forces Bill so that support for children with an EHCP will transfer without penalty if they are required to move bases.

Wavemakers Young People's Project

Healthwatch Wiltshire's Wavemakers project engaged over 800 young people to understand their experiences of health, wellbeing, education and the future.

Findings revealed growing pressures around mental health, belonging, exams and uncertainty about adult life. These insights are shaping a peer-led approach, empowering young people to influence services, build skills, and ensure their voices drive meaningful improvements in local support.

Key things we heard:

Across all ages, concerns about belonging and acceptance were central, with fears of not fitting in, being judged or feeling unworthy shaping confidence and willingness to seek help.

Mental health pressures were a constant thread, often intertwined with exam stress and uncertainty about the future, leaving many young people feeling overwhelmed and unsupported.



"I'm worried about everyone's safety as there is so much bad happening in the world"

We've worked with young people to co-produce peer engagement projects, building skills such as communication and confidence. This also enables the young people they engage to access support through trusted peers, improving understanding, access, and outcomes.

What difference did this make?

To build on and grow the engagement with young people, we are launching the Wavemakers work experience programme. This will offer Year 10 students a hands-on introduction to Healthwatch Wiltshire and community engagement.

Over four structured days, students design an ethical engagement activity, gather insights from peers, analyse themes, and present their findings.

Hearing from all communities

We're here for all residents of **Wiltshire**. 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:

- Spending time with the MS Society to listen to the needs of service users
- Regularly attending Emmanuel's Yard to speak with people attending the community café and food bank
- Presented findings from our hypertension inequalities report to the Hypertension Steering Group and Population Health Board



Healthcare needs of the LGBTQIA+ community

We explored the healthcare needs and experiences of the LGBTQIA+ community.

People told us about concerns around feeling judged, difficulties disclosing their identity, and a lack of understanding from healthcare professionals. Other issues included inconsistent inclusive practices, limited confidence in services, and environments that did not always feel safe or welcoming.

What difference did this make?

Our findings were shared as part of the NHS LGBT+ Healthcare Review, helping shape wider understanding of specific health needs and inequalities faced by LGBTQIA+ people.

Locally, the report equipped NHS providers with clear evidence of lived experiences, supporting more inclusive, responsive services. Amplifying community voices and driving progress towards safer, more equitable care for LGBTQIA+ people in Swindon and Wiltshire.

Practical support needed for unpaid carers

Unpaid carers across Wiltshire told us that families need more practical support to navigate the complexities of the health, education and benefits system.

To help, we listened to carers and support providers to understand the barriers they face, identifying gaps in support, and highlighting opportunities to improve information, coordination and targeted help so families can access the right support at the right time.

What difference did this make?

A suite of recommendations, co-produced with carers and support services, has been shared with Wiltshire County Council. These highlight the need for greater awareness of available support and expanded carers cafés to strengthen peer networks.

Healthwatch Wiltshire will continue to champion these improvements and monitor progress through 2026/27.

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 30,687 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



MS Support Group Insight Drives Diagnosis Improvements

After meeting Becky at one of our engagement events, we visited her MS support group and used members' experiences to help shape our work on improving the MS diagnosis journey.

Becky, who runs a monthly support group for around 25 people living with Multiple Sclerosis (MS), approached us to ask if we could attend one of their sessions to hear members' experiences first-hand. She explained that people often spoke about long waits for diagnosis, difficulties travelling for treatment and inconsistent support, with some describing it as "a postcode lottery".

Following our visit, the experiences shared by the group highlighted clear gaps in the MS diagnosis pathway. Their feedback directly informed our decision to carry out a dedicated project on the MS diagnosis journey, ensuring their voices shaped our findings and recommendations for improving local services.



"It was reassuring to know our experiences weren't just being listened to, but would help improve services for other people living with MS."

Turning Concern into Action Through Signposting

At a Health and Wellbeing event at Corsham Campus, a man approached our stand feeling worried about recent memory symptoms and unsure where to turn for support. With no dementia specialist present, we listened carefully to his concerns and provided clear, trusted guidance at a crucial moment.

We were able to signpost him directly to the community nursing team at the event for immediate support and encouraged him to contact his GP about his new symptoms.

He left feeling more informed and confident about his next steps, demonstrating how timely information and signposting can reduce uncertainty and help people access the right support quickly.

Showcasing volunteer impact

Our fantastic volunteers have given **970 hours** 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.

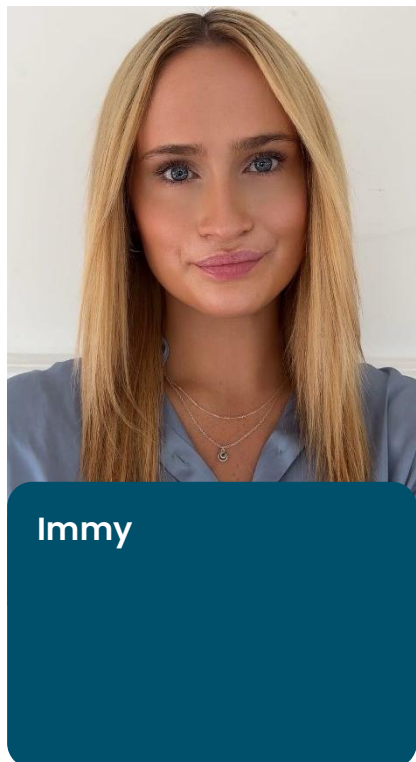
This year, our volunteers:

- Joined us on engagements across the county
- Researched, gathered information and reported on their own project's
- Visited communities to promote our work
- Collected experiences and supported their communities to share their views
- Attended meetings on our behalf to enable us to hear what is going on at local levels – and keep them informed of reports or projects happening in Wiltshire
- Volunteered the equivalent of 129 days (7.5 hours per day)



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.



“Over the past nine months, I have completed my placement as a Project Research and Engagement Officer with Healthwatch Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire. My expectations have been exceeded: I have gained invaluable skills, stepped outside my comfort zone, and grown in confidence.


I attended a wide range of online and in-person events. A highlight was working on the Wavemakers project supporting developing a programme in Wiltshire to engage with young people. I also interviewed Managers from across Wiltshire Council getting their input on how young peoples mental health is considered when they are not able to attend school, their insight has been really valuable and helped shape my research project Beyond Attendance: Parent Carer and Young People’s Experiences of Emotional Barriers to School Attendance in BSW. Alongside this, regular attendance at the Wiltshire and Swindon Youth Work Network kept me connected to local priorities and practice.

I have strengthened my theoretical understanding of research and improved my digital capability, including designing online surveys, analysing data, and communicating effectively online. My confidence has grown through leading focus groups, arranging meetings, and speaking with a wide range of people; presenting, which used to make me anxious, is now something I can do comfortably.


I also supported a range of projects delivered by the Wiltshire team, which strengthened my ability to plan and progress my own work. Overall, this placement has been extremely valuable and rewarding, and I am grateful for the support and guidance I received across BSW. I will take these learning experiences into the final stage of my degree and my future career.”

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.healthwatchwiltshire.co.uk

 01225 434218

 info@healthwatchwiltshire.co.uk

Finance and future priorities

We receive funding from Wiltshire County 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	£177,000	Expenditure on pay	£152,083.67
Additional income	£12,991.67	Non-pay expenditure	£21,964.00
		Office and management fee	£12,210.00
Total income	£189,991.67	Total Expenditure	£186,257.67

Additional income is broken down into:

Integrated Care System (ICS) funding:

Healthwatch across BSW received funding from our Integrated Care System (ICS) to support new areas of collaborative work at this level, including:

Purpose of ICS funding	Amount
Community engagement with deprived communities to understand barriers to hypertension testing and treatment	£6,666.67
Community engagement activities across BSW to understand public views on new proposals for using patient data to plan local services	£6,325

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 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. Access to services
2. Quality and experience of care
3. Continuity, integration, and operational management

Proposals to carry out projects linked to these priorities will be submitted to our Local Advisory Group for authorisation to proceed.

Statutory statements

Healthwatch Wiltshire is hosted by The Care Forum, The Vassall Centre, Fishponds Bristol, BS16 2QQ

Healthwatch Wiltshire 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 Local Advisory Group (LAG) consists of 5 members who work voluntarily to provide direction, oversight, and scrutiny of our activities.

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

Throughout 2025/26, the LAG met 4 times and made decisions on matters such as setting priorities for 2025/26 and identifying specific areas to focus project work. 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 as well as sharing with the B&NES Health & Wellbeing Board, BSW ICB and partners who have supported our work throughout the year.

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 Health and Wellbeing Board as well as routinely share feedback with NHS providers to ensure patients voices are heard.

We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in BSW. For example, along with Healthwatch in Swindon and Wiltshire, we presented insights from the Asian community and people living in deprived communities to the Hypertension Steering Group and Population Health Board.

We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Wiltshire is represented on the Wiltshire Health and Wellbeing Board by Kevin Peltonen-Messenger (CEO of TCF).

During 2025/26, our representative has effectively carried out this role by ensuring public voice is included in all discussions as well as making members aware of the key issues and themes we hear from the public.

Healthwatch Wiltshire is represented on Integrated Care Partnerships by Amritpal Kaur and the BSW Integrated Care Board by Kevin Peltonen-Messenger.

Statutory statements

Enter and view

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
We did not use our statutory Enter and view powers over 2025/26		

2025 – 2026 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
Wavemakers Project – what young people are telling us about health, education and the future www.healthwatchwiltshire.co.uk/report/2026-06-24/report-wavemakers	Developed a work experience package for young people to access through their school
Guiding Hands - enabling parent carers to get the help they need www.healthwatchwiltshire.co.uk/report/2026-06-24/report-guiding-hands-enabling-parent-carers-get-help-they-need	Raised the need for earlier identification, stronger advice, and improved professional relationships with strategic planners
How should patient data be used? www.healthwatchwiltshire.co.uk/report/2026-06-18/report-how-should-patient-data-be-used	Supported the ICB to understand the public's view on using patient data in new ways to plan services
What parents told us about childhood vaccinations www.healthwatchwiltshire.co.uk/report/2026-02-17/report-what-parents-told-us-about-childhood-vaccinations	Shared insights around parental decisions to, or not to, vaccinate children to support local improvement strategies
Empowering the patient - how to increase the understanding and testing of high blood pressure www.healthwatchwiltshire.co.uk/report/2025-11-04/report-empowering-patient-how-increase-understanding-and-testing-high-blood	Directly informed the ICB of some of the reasons behind inequalities within Asian and deprived communities

Statutory statements

2025 – 2026 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
<p>"I eat once a week maybe" - The health impacts of food insecurity www.healthwatchwiltshire.co.uk/report/2025-10-22/report-i-eat-once-week-maybe-health-impacts-food-insecurity</p>	Fed into development of local food strategies within BSW
<p>The strain of unpaid caring www.healthwatchwiltshire.co.uk/report/2025-08-29/report-strain-unpaid-caring</p>	Amplified the voices of unpaid carers across BSW
<p>Evaluating the effectiveness of the Pharmacy First service in Wiltshire www.healthwatchwiltshire.co.uk/report/2025-08-22/report-evaluating-effectiveness-pharmacy-first-service-wiltshire</p>	Shared insights with Public Health to support uptake of Pharmacy First
<p>"I can't make them accept help" www.healthwatchwiltshire.co.uk/report/2025-08-20/report-i-cant-make-them-accept-help</p>	Increased awareness of carers caring for someone who does not accept help

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