



**Annual Report 2024–2025**

# Unlocking the power of people-driven care

**Healthwatch Tower  
Hamlets**

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**"The impact that local Healthwatch have is vitally important. Healthwatch are empowering their communities to share their experiences. They're changing the health and care landscape and making sure that people's views are central to making care better and tackling health inequalities."**

**Louise Ansari, Chief Executive, Healthwatch England**

# A message from our Chair

**I am delighted to welcome you to the third annual report from Healthwatch Tower Hamlets, which has a statutory responsibility to residents.**

**In addition to acting in our local area, publishing independent reports and making constructive recommendations we aim to make sure that local views reach the national level through the Healthwatch network which covers other parts of England.**

**Together with North East London Healthwatch partners, this year we:**

- **Identified 536,048 issues from the experiences of 162,365 people in the area.**
- **Generated 623 reports and 305 dashboards of GP and hospital services alone which will greatly facilitate monitoring of developments.**
- **Engaged with residents who told us that ‘good care’ should be accessible, competent, person-centred, and trustworthy.**

**Each year, we select two topics for close scrutiny that are based on issues that residents have told us about and may align broadly with the strategic priorities and commissioning plans of service providers.**

**The topics we chose for this year were:**

- **Supporting young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) as they transition into Adult Social Care and need to prepare for adulthood;**
- **The management of Long-Term Conditions for men with cardiovascular disease.**

**In 2024, we worked on a project in partnership with Tower Hamlets Place of the North East London ICB, to look at the factors involved in patients deciding to attend A&E rather than other same day access services.**

**To conclude, this year we thank patients and families for 6984 reviews on health and care services which greatly exceeded our target of 4800 reviews and are helping us to raise awareness of issues and improve care.**



**Catherine Moody, Acting Chair, Tower Hamlets**

## About us

# Healthwatch Tower Hamlets is your local health and social care champion.

We ensure that NHS leaders and decision-makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care. We can also help you find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.



### Our vision

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



### Our mission

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



### Our values are:

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

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

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

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

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

# Our year in numbers

We've supported more than 7,621 people to have their say and get information about their care. We currently employ 4 staff and, our work is supported by 45 volunteers.

## Reaching out:



**6,984 people shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.**

**238 people came to us for clear advice and information on topics such as complaints and finding an NHS dentist.**

## Championing your voice:



**We published 73 reports about the improvements people would like to see in areas like maternity and neonatal services, cancer screening services and mental health.**

**Our most popular report was Barriers to access in mental health support, highlighting people's struggles in accessing mental health services.**

## Statutory funding:



**We're funded by Tower Hamlets Council. In 2024/25 we received £149,000, 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 Tower Hamlets. Here are a few highlights.

## Spring

Our research showed how barriers to accessing mental health support services can impact local people and identified improvements decision makers can take to address this.



Successfully gained agreement from all GP practices in the borough to allow us access to carry out our Patient Experience Program at their premises. This was supported by the local Primary Care Transformation Group.



## Summer

Our report on the key factors for patients attending A&E highlighted how NHS local leaders can improve same day access to primary care services



Our Annual Hospital Patient Experience report presentation made recommendations for actions to improve services for patients who attend hospitals within the borough.



## Autumn

Our report on GP Access helped to inform local NHS and council leaders of the difficulties residents experience when accessing GP services.



Our feedback from users of local maternity and neonatal services supported local council leaders during the scrutiny process of these services.



## Winter

We engaged young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) to understand how social care services prepare them for adulthood and transition to adult services.



We spoke to men with cardiovascular disease to hear about how local health offers and services support them to improve their health and wellbeing.



# Working together for change

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

**This year, we've worked with Healthwatch across North East London to achieve the following:**

## Turning community insight into system change



**The 8 Healthwatch continue to develop the Community Insights Programme with NEL ICB. We've processed the experiences of 162,365 people, identifying 536,048 issues. On GP and hospital services alone, we've produced 623 reports and 305 dashboards. The system tracks care trends, highlights what works, and pinpoints areas for improvement—creating a shared evidence base to make services more responsive.**

## What good care looks like to local people



**Following on from work which started in 2023, we heard from over 2,000 residents about what good care means to them. They told us it should be accessible, competent, person-centred, and trustworthy. These principles are now embedded in the Integrated Care Board's strategy through our partnership work. Together with the ICB, we will measure partners' success and track progress against these standards through our Community Insights system.**

## Maternity Equality



**Our 2023 maternity report helped shape the NEL Maternity Equity and Equality Strategy, leading to commitments on trauma-informed care, cultural competency, multilingual advocacy, and improved communication. Its impact continues through work on interpreting services and a proposed 24/7 helpline. All 3 hospital Trusts are improving access for non-English speakers—introducing new clinical processes and bilingual advocates to deliver more inclusive, responsive maternity care.**

**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 Tower Hamlets this year:**

## Communities Keeping Well



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

**We participated in a 'Communities Keeping Well' workshop to hear from residents about how they could be better supported in preventing long-term conditions. The programme has now funded several resident-led activities and programmes in Tower Hamlets to help people look after their health and wellbeing in a more accessible and holistic way.**

## Engaging with older adults



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

**We worked with Tower Hamlets CVS and local voluntary and community organisations to identify the support needs for older people's mental health.**

**We attended a session highlighting "Hidden Voices" in health and care to present our findings on Barriers to Accessing Mental Health Support in Tower Hamlets, ensuring that older people's voices are heard and taken into consideration when planning mental health service provision.**

## Improving Primary care services over time



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

**We conducted a commissioned project examining the key factors influencing people's decisions to attend the A&E. We asked participants if they had attempted to contact their GP before visiting the A&E and heard from many residents about their struggles to access GP appointments.**

**The findings from the feedback collected were used to inform the development of the Same Day Access Hubs, which will enable more people to access GP services quicker.**

# Listening to your experiences

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

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



# Listening to your experiences

## The Key Factors Involved in Patients Deciding to Attend A&E

Last year, we spoke to patients to find out their experiences before coming to the hospital.

This project was part of the Same Day Access Programme supported by the Tower Hamlets Together partnership and sought to reduce patient demand at the Accident and Emergency (A&E), Urgent Treatment Centre (UTC) and Children's Accident and Emergency (A&E) services at the Royal London Hospital.

### What did we do?

We spoke to a total of 425 patients who shared their feedback.

The feedback was collected through in-person visits to the A&E, UTC, and Children's A&E.

### Key things we heard:



**45%**

of respondents would have preferred to have had an appointment with their GP instead of going to A&E.

**41%**

stated they had contacted their GP practice before going to A&E.

**64%**

would accept a same-day appointment with a GP dependent on the severity and urgency of their condition.

**38%**

of respondents would accept a GP appointment within 48 hours.

Our work showed how improving access to urgent, same-day GP appointments could help to reduce demand on A&E services.

### What difference did this make?

Our work supported the NHS North East London ICB to identify changes needed to the current pathway that should streamline the patient experience and benefit the local health system in time.

# Listening to your experiences

## Young People with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities Being Supported to Prepare for Adulthood and Transition to Adult Services

Last year, we spoke to young people to explore the experiences of social care services supporting them with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), preparing them for adulthood and transitioning to adult social care services.

### What did we do?

We spoke to 27 young people, parents, and carers who shared their feedback on services.

We collected feedback through face-to-face interviews with the help of local services that support young people with SEND.

### Key things we heard:



**40%**

of respondents reported that they felt unable to make their own decisions

**17**

was the average age at which respondents had been told that planning for their adulthood would start

**42%**

rated their relationship with their social worker as neutral or negative, or they were unsure about it.

Our work showed that planning for adulthood should start earlier to allow detailed plans with achievable goals to be developed.

Young people with visual and hearing impairments should be provided with more opportunities to take part in activities and hobbies.

### What difference did this make?

The findings and recommendations will be shared with senior leaders and local stakeholders to help develop improvements on local SEND services for young people.

# Listening to your experiences

## Supporting Men with Cardiovascular Disease to better manage their condition

**Men in Tower Hamlets told us that more is needed to raise awareness of the support services available.**

**We spoke with 35 men about their experiences of managing a heart-related condition. Their stories highlighted a need for better awareness of support services available and a more tailored approach to activities and programmes to ensure they are accessible to everyone.**

### Key things we heard:



**Having a disability or a health condition that restricts your mobility can make it difficult to travel to activities and participate in exercise.**

**Many respondents told us that they were not always aware of the support services available to them.**



**“As I have severe knee arthritis and COPD [...], I am not very active, but I do most household chores.”**

**“A lot of the information is online, it should be more accessible for the elderly. Leaflets about gym services should be more targeted at the elderly**

### What difference did this make?

**Our report recommending a more tailored approach to planning activities, programmes and sharing information about them will be shared and presented to the key stakeholders in the borough, including the Tower Hamlets Council and ELoPe (East London Cardiovascular Disease Prevention).**

**We will ask them to provide responses to our recommendations to achieve more accessible services in the future.**

# Listening to your experiences

## Patient Experience in Tower Hamlets

In 2024–25, we spoke to 6,984 residents about their experiences of health and social care services within Tower Hamlets.

### What did we do?

We completed 154 health care visits to speak to residents about their health and care services. The majority of visits during this year took place at local GP practices across the borough and at Royal London Hospital.

We completed visits to Mile End Hospital including their Community Diagnostic Centre.

### Key things we heard:



**23%**

of respondents did not find it easy to get an appointment with their GP.

**31%**

of respondents thought communication between their GP and hospital was good.

**79%**

of respondents rated the quality of care and treatment received from their GP as good.

Appointment availability, getting through on the telephone and online consultation were noted as areas of ongoing concern for patients throughout the year.

Staff attitudes towards patients, and the quality of treatment provided to patients were generally positive areas during 2025–26.

### What difference did this make?

We were able to present our findings and recommendations from our patient experience engagement to the Tower Hamlets Primary Care Transformation Group on a quarterly basis to help improve local health and care services.

We shared data and insights with some GP practices who contacted us to get a better understanding of what their patients were feeding back to us to help support improvements to their individual practices or health centres.

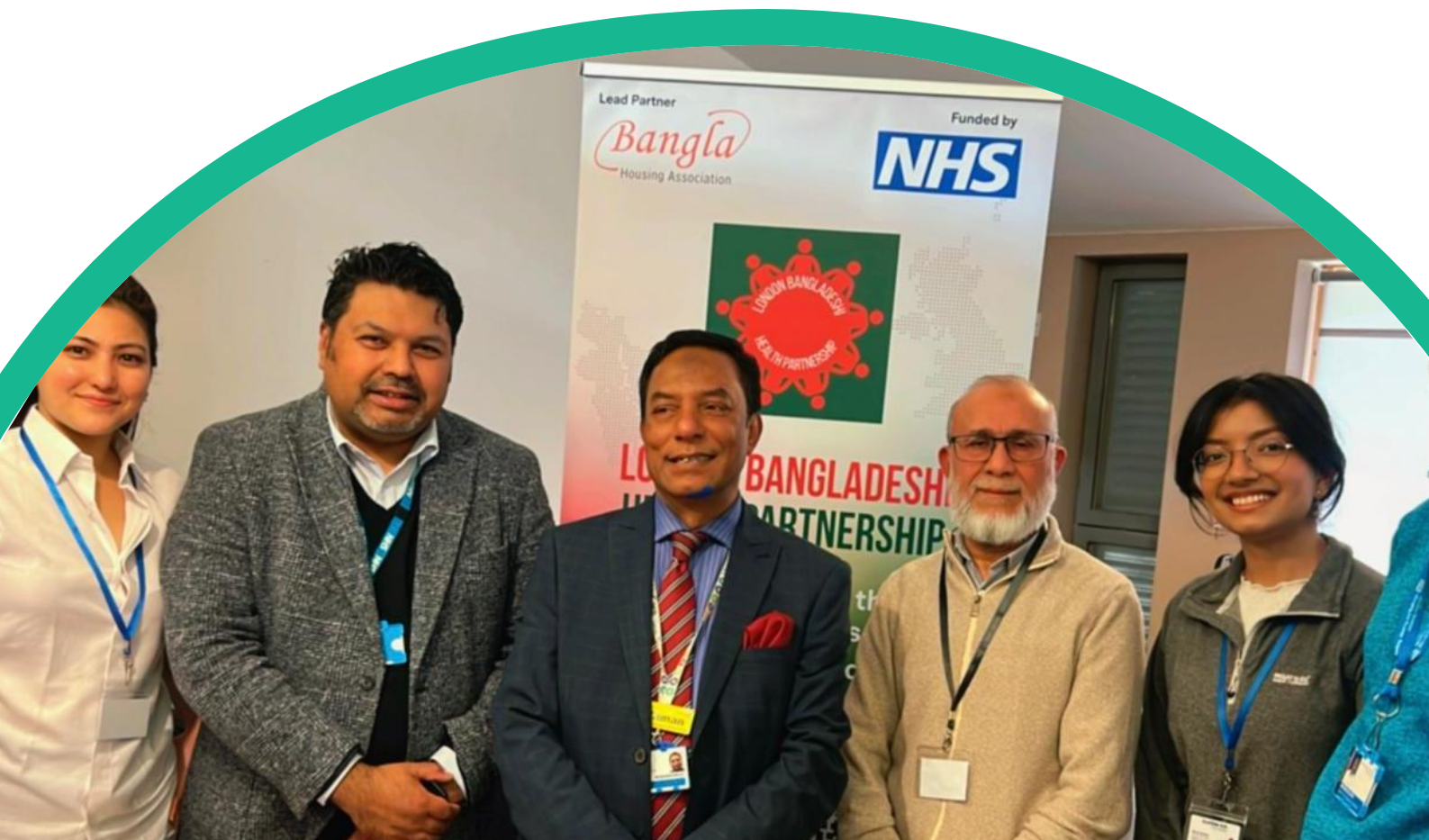
# Hearing from all communities

We're here for all residents of Tower Hamlets. 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:**

- Continuing our work experience programme for local secondary school students to gain experience working in a professional environment and helping to improve their confidence and communication skills.
- Attending the Council of Mosque's Community Cohesion event, Bangladeshi Health and Wellbeing event, Bangladeshi Health Summit, and the Bangladeshi Men's Health Fair to increase awareness of our work and provide information and signposting.
- Holding forums with parents with recent experience of local maternity or neonatal services. This allowed them to hear from local NHS Maternity and Neonatal leaders, tell their stories and voice how maternity services could be improved.



# Hearing from all communities

## Understanding barriers preventing people from accessing mental health support

**We investigated access to mental health support in Global Majority communities.**

**People told us about language barriers, cultural stigma around mental health, and a lack of accessible information about the services available. Other concerns involved the lack of representation of Global Majority communities in service delivery.**

### What difference did this make?

**The Mental Health Partnership Board (MHPB) agreed to look how to embed our recommendations within the services they oversee.**

**MHPB will use our surveys from this project to test them out under their Barnsley Street pilot to obtain feedback from service users about how they are receiving the service.**

## Listening to women's experiences of maternity and neonatal care in Tower Hamlets

**Through a group discussion at the Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnership quarterly meeting, we heard from women about the maternity care they had received.**

**Women reported not being offered appropriate pain medication post-labour, and a lack of postnatal mental health support for a service user with a history of postnatal depression. We also heard that information about postnatal support services, including breastfeeding, is not well-promoted.**

### What difference did this make?

**Maternity and Neonatal service leaders acknowledged communication about postnatal support services might not always reach all service users effectively.**

**These issues will continue to be monitored to ensure that maternity services provide adequate pain medication for women and offer better information about the postnatal support services available.**

# Information and signposting

Whether it's finding an NHS dentist, making a complaint, or choosing a good care home for a loved one – you can count on us. This year 238 people have reached out to us for advice, support or help finding services.

**This year, we've helped people by:**

- Providing up-to-date information people can trust
- Helping people access the services they need
- Supporting people to look after their health
- Signposting people to additional support services



# Information and signposting

## Support for resident with no food

**A resident contacted us for advice as they had no food or financial support.**

**A male resident contacted us stating he had no food and was feeling depressed due to being refused additional food vouchers from a support scheme. He requested financial support as his pension credit would not commence for another two months.**

**We were able to support the resident by signposting him to various local organisations and charities that assist with food and financial support.**

## Providing information on cancer screening services

**Our team hosted a stall at the Idea Store in Whitechapel as part of their Health Information Week.**

**As part of the Health Information Week, we were able to support many residents by providing general information about local health services, including cancer screening services.**

**Our research from the previous year, which focused on access to cancer screening services, prompted some residents to approach us for information on breast and bowel screening.**

**Our team provided information about who the tests are available to, how it is done, and why they are beneficial, helping to raise awareness amongst residents.**

## Helping residents to raise complaints about negative experiences

**Throughout the year, our team heard from many residents in Tower Hamlets who had experienced poor treatment and care.**

**Residents contacted us regarding various services, including GP, hospital, dental, pharmacy and housing services.**

**We heard from a resident whose medical records contained incorrect information. Another resident who is an asylum seeker told us about their poor experience with a dental service that had charged them for the treatment even though they are entitled to free dental care.**

**We were contacted by a resident living in a flat which was in a poor condition due to damage from flooding and having no furniture. They had contacted their housing association for support but expressed they had not received any help.**

**With each case, we supported these residents by providing information about whom to contact to make a complaint and signposting to relevant organisations.**

# Showcasing volunteer impact

Our fantastic volunteers have given 305 days 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:

- Visited local services, such as Idea Stores, events and community centres to promote Healthwatch and our work.
- Collected and supported their local communities to share their experiences with health and care services.
- Designed leaflets and posters to promote our services on social media.
- Supported building partnerships by contacting local organisations to promote our research projects.
- Carried out Enter & View visits to GP practices and Pharmacies and co-produced reports to help improve these services for patients and staff.



# Showcasing volunteer impact

## At the heart of what we do

From finding out what residents think to helping raise awareness, our volunteers have championed community concerns to improve care.

**“This opportunity significantly boosted my confidence in professional communication, project management, and health-related research. It also deepened my understanding of health and social care services, particularly in how local organizations, such as Healthwatch, work with marginalized communities”.**



**“I became more comfortable managing tasks independently and became more proactive in my approach to work. This experience has also given me a better understanding of the importance of community engagement and inclusivity in shaping healthcare services”.**

*Jannah*

**“During my internship at Healthwatch, I acquired a diverse range of skills. I learned how to effectively handle data, engage interpersonally, administer surveys, perform data input and analysis and deal with patients. Beyond these technical skills, I gained a broader understanding of healthcare”.**



**“Initially, I believed healthcare was limited to experiences with GPs and healthcare facilities. However, Healthwatch opened my eyes to the extensive scope of healthcare and the various career paths within it. Additionally, it highlighted the critical importance of social healthcare and its impact on overall well-being.”**

*Paula*

### 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.healthwatchtowerhamlets.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchtowerhamlets.co.uk)



0800 145 5343



[info@healthwatchtowerhamlets.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchtowerhamlets.co.uk)

# Finance and future priorities

We receive funding from Tower Hamlets 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	£149,000	Expenditure on pay	£119,000
Additional income	£6,500	Non-pay expenditure	£14,500
		Office and management fee	£22,000
Total income	£155,500	Total Expenditure	£155,500

## Additional income is broken down into:

- £1,500 received from the local authority for the Community Insights System.

## Integrated Care System (ICS) funding:

Healthwatch across **North East London** also receive funding from our Integrated Care System (ICS) to support new areas of collaborative work at this level, including:

Purpose of ICS funding	Amount
Representation on NEL ICS Strategic meetings	£5,000
	£
	£

# Finance and future priorities

## Next steps:

**Over the next year, we will keep reaching out to every part of society, especially people in the most deprived areas, so that those in power hear their views and experiences.**

**We will also work together with partners and our local Integrated Care System to help develop an NHS culture where, at every level, staff strive to listen and learn from patients to make care better.**

## **Our top three priorities for the next year are:**

- 1. Sharing our independent research and reports with leaders within health and social care that have a meaningful impact of local people's health and wellbeing.**
- 2. Co-producing and co-designing of our work with our valued volunteers.**
- 3. Engaging with older people from the Jewish, Somali, Vietnamese and Chinese Communities that we don't currently hear from.**

# Statutory statements

Healthwatch Tower Hamlets, Unit 104 The Pill Box, 115 Coventry Road, Bethnal Green, E2 6GG.

The contract holder is Your Voice in Health and Social Care, 45 St. Marys Road, Ealing, W5 5RG.

Healthwatch Tower Hamlets 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 Board consists of 4 members who work voluntarily to provide direction, oversight, and scrutiny of our activities.**

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

**Throughout 2024/25, the Board met 5 times and made decisions on matters such as setting our priority research topics and approving any recommendations for our Enter and View visits.**

**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 2024/25, 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 take copies to engagement events, publish a monthly newsletter, social media posts, and share it via link or email with relevant stakeholders.**

# 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 Strategic Advisory Group, Primary Care Transformation Group, Tower Hamlets Together board, North East London Cancer Alliance, Mental Health Partnership board, Public Health senior leadership team where we share what we have heard with decision-makers at the local authority level.**

**We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in North-East London Integrated Care System. For example, we meet with 7 other Healthwatch at the NEL level and discuss local issues, current projects and insights within NEL ICS engagement team and feedback our reports into the NEL community insight system.. We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.**

## Healthwatch representatives

**Healthwatch Tower Hamlets is represented on the Tower Hamlets Health and Wellbeing Board by Matthew Adrien, Service Director of Healthwatch Tower Hamlets.**

**Healthwatch Tower Hamlets is represented on NHS NEL Integrated Care Partnerships by Matthew Adrien, Service Director, Healthwatch Tower Hamlets and NHS NEL Integrated Care Boards by Matthew Adrien, Service Director, Healthwatch Tower Hamlets.**

# Statutory statements

## Enter and view

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
<b>Barkantine GP Practice</b>	<b>High volume of feedback which happened to be significantly negative.</b>	<b>Wrote a report with recommendations – the service followed up on these, and patient safety improved.</b>
<b>Massingham Pharmacy, Nash Pharmacy and Bell Pharmacy</b>	<b>To explore how community pharmacies are coping with providing these enhanced services.</b>	<b>Wrote reports for each with recommendations to improve patient safety/feedback opportunities.</b>

## 2024 – 2025 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
<b>Barriers to accessing mental health services</b>	<b>Mental Health Partnership board agreed to use the findings and recommendations from this report to produce a list of action points for the board to take forward.</b>
<b>Maternity work</b>	<b>Various commitments by maternity leaders to improve services has been made including trauma-informed care, cultural competency, multilingual advocacy, and improved communication.</b>
<b>Same Day Access project</b>	<b>Remodelling of same day access services to reduce the amount of people attending hospital A&amp;E.</b>

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