

healthwatch

Reading

Annual Report 2017/18





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Message from our Chair

I'm pleased to say that Healthwatch Reading started and ended the 2017-18 year on a high!

Firstly, our chief executive Mandeep Kaur Sira picked up the national 'engagement in service change' award (pictured on the front cover of this report) at Healthwatch England's annual event in July 2017, for our team's project surveying A&E patients. Healthwatch Reading people aren't in the job for any kind of special kudos, but awards like these are important in bringing the experiences of local people to the attention of national decision-makers and influencers.

In another win, shortly before the end of 2017-18, we were named the successful bidder for a new single Reading advocacy service to deliver four types of advocacy for eligible local people. We are delivering this four-year contract as Reading Voice, a complementary service to Healthwatch Reading, with shared resources, under one roof. Key to the success of Reading Voice is our partnership with Age UK Reading and learning disability charity,

We will continue to remind commissioners who fund us, of the value of our work in championing greater public involvement in the NHS, especially as the health service celebrates its 70th birthday.



Talkback, to provide a pool of expert and empathetic advocates who can help both the general public and vulnerable people, get complaints resolved or have their say about their care and wellbeing.

During the year we also helped local people win their fight against the proposed closure of a Reading mental health care home, and we also gave a voice to people sectioned at Prospect Park Hospital, with a TV interview on BBC South Today about a project we carried out jointly with other local Healthwatch across Berkshire.

Like many other local Healthwatch, we faced funding challenges but we will continue to remind commissioners of the value of our work, in championing greater public involvement in the NHS, especially as it celebrates its 70th birthday.

David Shepherd, chair of trustees

Highlights from our year



This year we had more than **14,400** visits to our website



We empowered **20** people to stop the closure of their mental health care home



We've carried out **10** Enter & View visits



Our reports have tackled issues from **mental health, TB, care homes & homelessness**



We've engaged with **719** people & Influencers via outreach



We've given **151** people information and advice



Who we are



You need services that work for you, your friends and family. That's why we want you to share your experiences of using health and care with us - both good and bad. We use your voice to encourage those who run services to act on what matters to you.

Our mission

Healthwatch Reading's mission is to campaign for better care for our community. We do this by:

- + advising people of their rights, giving them information, and signposting them to other services;
- + advocating on behalf of local people to raise concerns, make a complaint, or support them to have their voice heard;

As well as championing your views locally, we also share your views with Healthwatch England, which makes sure that the government puts people at the heart of national policies.

+ taking action to influence decision-makers, by ensuring they hear the experiences of people, especially the most vulnerable, and involve the public in changing and improving health and care services.

We are an independent, local charity - we are not employed by the NHS or social care services. People know they can talk to us confidentially about their personal experiences and they can access us in a variety of ways - over the phone, online, or by dropping in to our town centre base at Reading Central Library.

We use statutory powers granted to local Healthwatch to:

- + carry out planned Enter and View visits to take a 'snapshot' of how local services are meeting the needs of Reading people in order to highlight good practice and any areas for improvement
- + make information requests from organisations
- + use our seat on the Reading Health and Wellbeing Board to speak up and vote on local issues.

Decision making

Our board and trustees are all volunteers and members of the local community. The trustees of Healthwatch Reading, which is a charitable incorporated organisation, are responsible for the strategic vision, governance and finances. The board oversees our work plan and ensures we listen to our local community. We also ask our local community to suggest issues to help decide our annual work plan. We hold regular board meetings in public, so people can see how we work and get the chance to ask questions.

Our people:

Trustees:

- + David Shepherd - chairman
- + Gurmit Dhendsa - financial and strategic development
- + Monica Collings - public health and mental health services

Our Board:

- + Sheila Booth - physical disabilities

- + Francis Brown - North Reading Patient Voice
- + David Cooper - hospital services
- + Douglas Findlay - young people and pharmaceutical services
- + Tony Hall - care for the elderly and GP services
- + James Penn - South Reading Patient Voice
- + Sue Pigott - learning disabilities
- + David Shepherd - commissioning of services
- + Helena Turner - community engagement, young people and mental health

Staff team:

- + Mandeep Kaur Sira - chief executive
- + Carl Borges - advocacy services manager
- + Rebecca Norris - manager (on sabbatical)
- + Pat Bunch - interim projects and engagement manager
- + Phil Healy - digital information officer
- + Shahanaz Uddin - Healthwatch officer
- + Catherine Williams - interim policy and insights manager



Our open meetings are great opportunities for the public and professionals to discuss local NHS & social care services

Your views on health and care



Women at the Reading Community Learning Centre share their experiences with Healthwatch Reading staff member Catherine Williams



People who had been homeless told a Healthwatch Reading focus session how services had treated them

Listening to people's views

Healthwatch Reading is guided by five quality statements set by Healthwatch England, the second of which covers 'community voice and influence'. This means we work hard to enable and support local people to understand how their health and social care system works, express their views and share their experience.

We also have a key role in ensuring the voices of the vulnerable, disadvantaged and people and communities who are ignored or excluded, are listened to.

We did this during 2017-18, by:

- + Interviewing more than **40 voluntary or sectioned mental health inpatients** at Prospect Park Hospital, in a joint project with five other local Healthwatch in Berkshire. They told us nurses and other staff treated them kindly but there was not enough staff to give them time, information and activities.
- + Hearing experiences from **19 people who had been recently homeless** about how they access local health services and attitudes of staff towards them. Access to dental care was the most common and significant problem and we heard evidence of people removing their own teeth.
- + Running a TB knowledge and attitudes survey answered by 326 people, nearly half of whom were young people aged 16-35, from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds including Nepali, Pakistani Indian and Black African. Most people had heard of TB but they held various misconceptions about it and felt that local people needed to know more about it.
- + Helping **20 people living in the community in a mental health care home** to have their say about council proposals to close down their home. All of them opposed the move due to the importance of the home in moving them towards independence as well as preventing readmission into hospital.
- + Speaking with **50 people in the general population, including working age people**, during spot checks at two GP surgeries. They said they were concerned about not being able to see doctors they knew.



We have a key role in ensuring the voices of the vulnerable, disadvantaged and communities who are ignored or excluded, are listened to.

- + Meeting **30, mostly older frail people**, across various Reading care homes (in an ongoing project which will report its findings in 2018-19)
- + Launching a survey to find out how **people who identify as LGBT+**, experience local health and care services (in an ongoing project whose findings will be published in 2018-19)
- + Jointly running a special forum with **representatives of 14 different charities** and other local organisations to hear their views of the mental health needs of their clients. Charities felt people were being 'passed around' without proper support.

We used Enter and View to follow up on concerns raised with us by individuals, to check if services had improved after recent Care Quality Commission inspections, or to offer people help, time and opportunity to have their say.

Overcoming engagement barriers

We successfully gathered views from a wide variety of people because we used engagement methods that acknowledged the barriers people may face in participating. Some of the methods we used included:

- + visiting Prospect Park wards at various times of days, evenings and weekends over a seven-day period, so we could build up a picture of staffing and ward life around the clock;
- + running focus sessions at homeless hostels and offering participants supermarket vouchers to take part;
- + targeting young people from different backgrounds by running stalls at Reading University and college 'Freshers' Fairs' or Open Days, and using eye-catching promotional material showing flags of target countries of origin;
- + carrying out regular visits to a mental care home to build relationships with residents and produce a film of their views;
- + working with the local LGBT charity Support U to inform the way we designed a survey.

Making sure services work for you

We used our statutory Enter and View powers to visit Prospect Park Hospital, Circuit Lane and Priory Avenue GP surgeries and the St Luke's, Northcourt Lodge and River View care homes.

We used Enter and View for a variety of reasons, such as to follow up on concerns shared by individuals; to check if services had improved after recent quality inspections; or to offer people help, time and opportunity to have their say.



Our Info & Advice stand is on wheels, so we can easily get out and about to community events

Our projects prompted services or commissioners to take action such as:

- + exploring what extra activities could be put on for mental health inpatients
- + deciding against a care home closure
- + ongoing checks on GP surgeries, that eventually led to change of providers
- + a commitment to work with communities to reduce the stigma of TB.

Helping you find the answers



Healthwatch Reading staff member Shahanaz Uddin takes a call from a member of public ringing our five-day-a-week helpline

How we have helped the community get the information they need

One of our key roles is to provide advice and information to the public about how to find services, how to resolve concerns, people’s rights when using NHS or social care, and which other organisations might be able to help them.

The number of people who contacted Healthwatch Reading with specific issues, totalled 353 in 2017-18. As the chart below shows, most people (151) were seeking information and advice.

We deliver our information and advice service through various methods, including:

- + a telephone helpline, Monday-Friday 9am-5pm
- + online guides on our website, including template complaint letters
- + our drop-in service at our offices in Reading Central Library

- + home visits to people with mobility issues
- + facilitated communication using interpreters or translators
- + talks and Q&As with community groups
- + information stalls at Reading locations
- + leaflets and posters
- + tweets signposting people to information, advice and events.

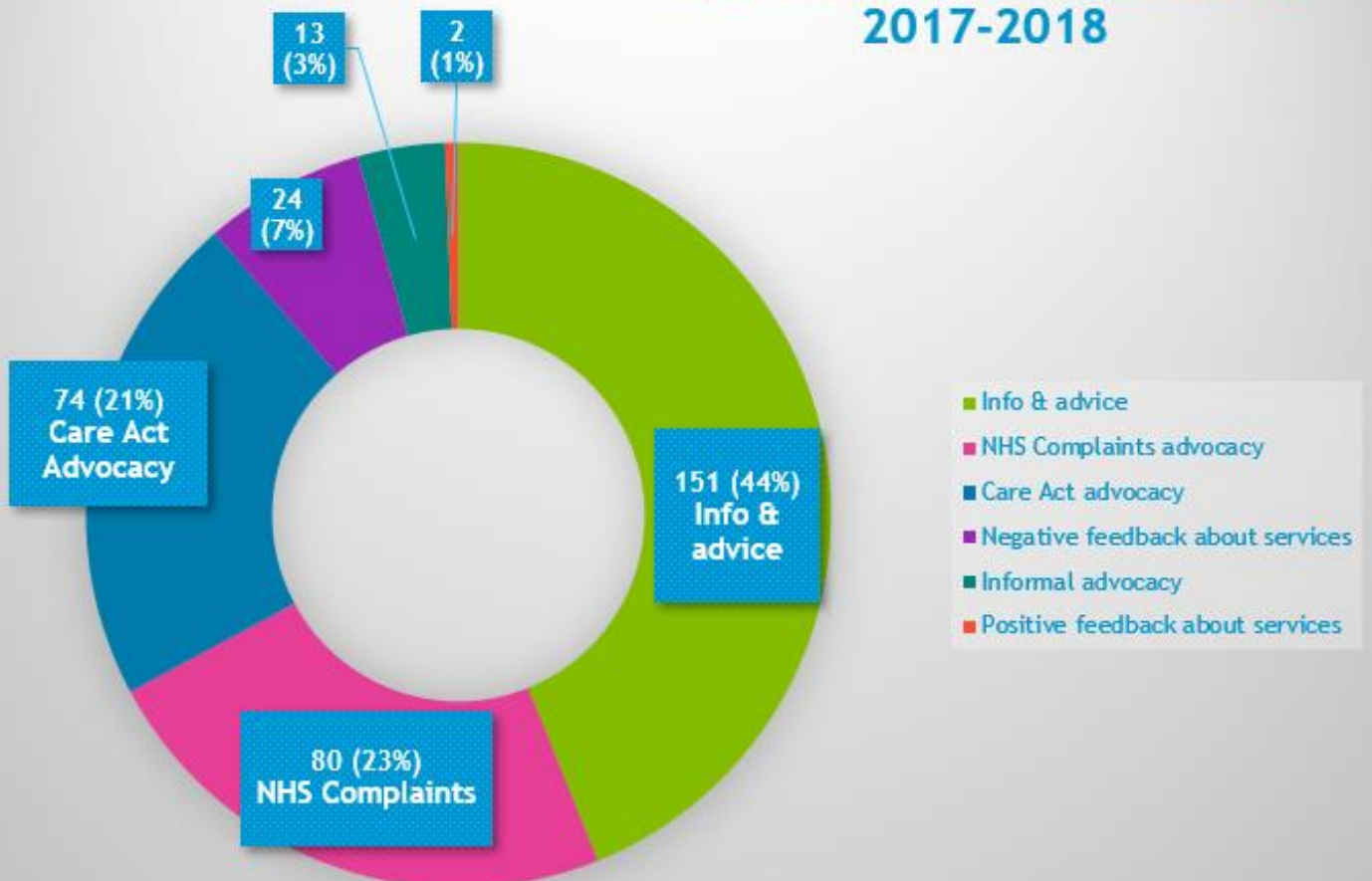
Our advice might include explaining how to self-refer to health services (such as Talking Therapies or 111), how to get support from a local charity (such as Age UK Reading), or more general advice, like how to find a local NHS dentist.



We deliver information and advice through a telephone helpline, online guides, a drop-in service, community talks, facilitated communication with interpreters and more.



Reasons people contacted us 2017-2018



Sometimes people need support if they are unable to resolve concerns on their own. We can support these people through informal advocacy (trying to nip a problem in the bud with a quick, satisfactory solution), or supporting a person to make a formal NHS complaint about serious concerns.

We provided NHS Complaints advocacy to 80 people during 2017-18. The chart below shows that most of these were about the Royal Berkshire Hospital, their GP surgery, or community or mental health care.

Under the NHS Constitution, people have a right to have their complaints investigated and for organisations to provide a response that might include an explanation, an apology, different care for the patient, or general changes of improvements for the whole organisation.

Our NHS Complaints advocacy service is free, independent and confidential and covered issues from administration mistakes to care failings.

Top themes reported by the public to us 2017-18

Poor quality care (67 people)

Problems accessing services (37)

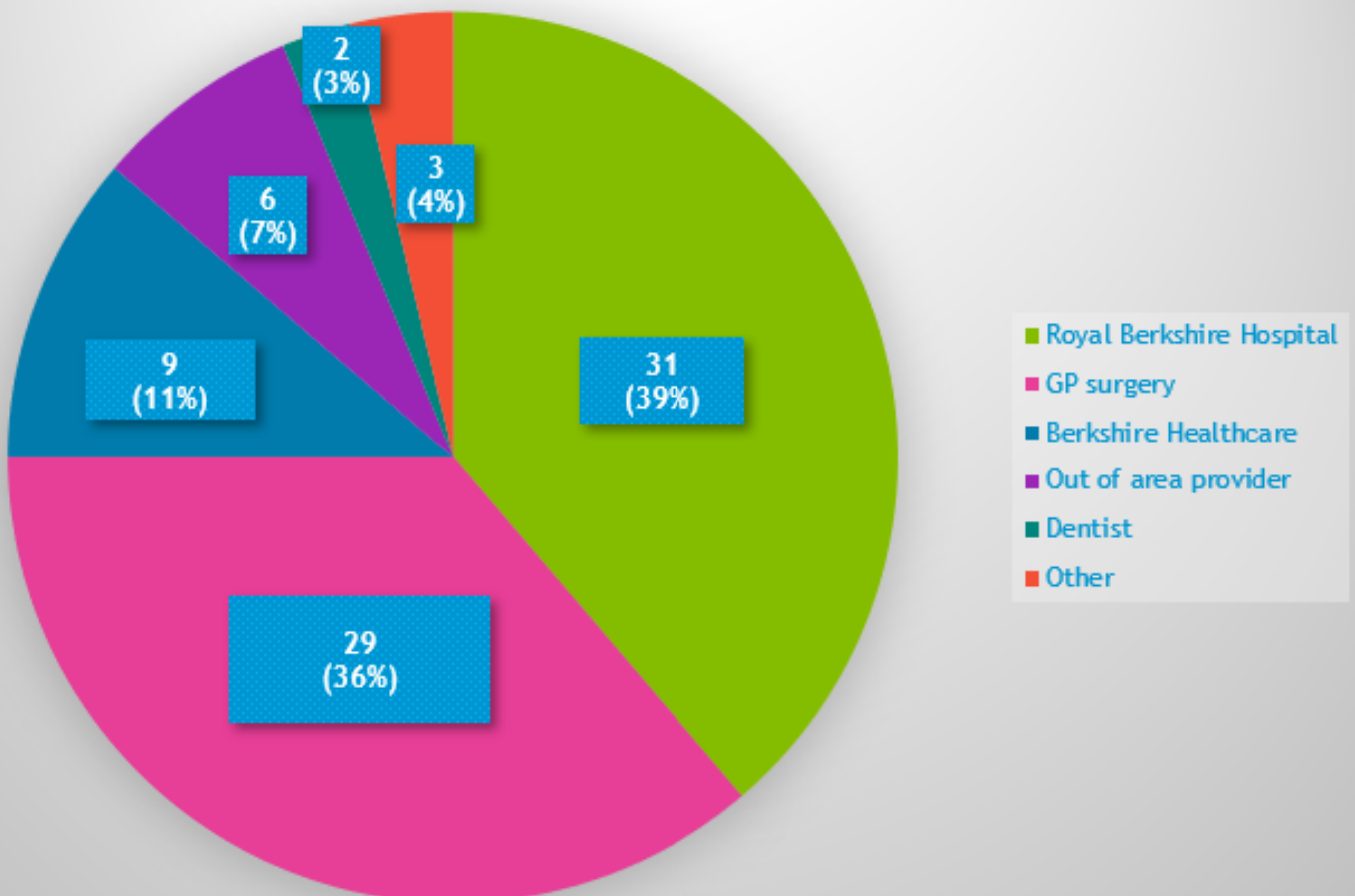
Administration/communication issues (23)

Attitude of staff (17)

Referral delays (15)

Medication/prescription problems (13)

NHS Complaint cases 2017-18



Making a difference together



Local advocate Pauline Foy, pictured left, helped us with a project to boost the diversity of volunteer community first responders

Working with other organisations

Healthwatch Reading is committed to a collaborative approach with service providers, commissioners, regulators and other local system leaders to bring about change.

During 2017-18, we demonstrated this approach through a range of projects, including:

Primary care

We worked closely with the Care Quality Commission to share local intelligence we collected at Circuit Lane and Priory Avenue surgeries.

Evidence we collected from people about the quality of care at Circuit Lane and Priory Avenue surgeries, helped the Care Quality Commission and local commissioners understand what improvements were urgently needed.

This helped the CQC to understand if improvements had been made since it had rated both surgeries (run at the time by the same provider) as inadequate.

We also shared our intelligence with the North and West Reading Clinical Commissioning Group. The CCG's GP chairman agreed to a request by the Healthwatch Reading board to come to a meeting held in public to answer questions about why patients had been let down by the practices.

The CCG eventually decided to end its contract with the provider and we were invited to sit on a panel to help choose a local NHS practice to take over Circuit Lane Surgery, and to also advise on communication about changes at Priory Avenue.

Mental health

In a unique project, all six local Healthwatch in Berkshire worked together for the first time to follow up on similar concerns that had been separately reported to us, about Prospect Park Hospital. This enabled us to visit 11 times over a week to capture views of more than 40 people staying as voluntary or sectioned inpatients.

We joined up with the five other local Healthwatch across Berkshire to capture the views of more than 40 people staying as voluntary or sectioned inpatients at Prospect Park Hospital.

The project involved us sharing tasks: one Healthwatch designed posters to tell patients we were coming, another coordinated with Berkshire Healthcare before, during and after the visits, another designed the semi-structured questionnaire, and another supplied a large pool of volunteers to assist staff from all six Healthwatch in collecting feedback.

Healthwatch Reading's main role, aside from speaking to patients, was to write the final report. We also secured media coverage of the findings on BBC South Today, presented the report to a Reading Borough Council committee and shared findings with the CQC.

Urgent care

We were invited to present findings of our A&E report to the committee of Healthwatch England (HWE) in July 2017, shortly after winning the 'engagement in service improvement' category of the HWE annual awards.

Our report had revealed findings of a survey of 10 per cent of people attending A&E over a 7-day period. The award and presentation have meant that HWE can raise the themes in their discussions with national NHS decision-makers.

Voluntary sector

We worked closely with the Reading Advice Network to jointly facilitate a special forum attended by 14 local charities and organisations to discuss the mental health needs of their clients. As well as giving a presentation on the Reading 'map' of available services, we also helped run small group discussions. Many charities felt people were being let down by statutory services, so we presented findings in a jointly written report, to local health and social care commissioners.

Championing public involvement

A key challenge for us during 2017-18 was keeping pace with changes to the structures that plan and fund local services and ensuring the public voice is heard and central to their work. This included the new Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STP) and the Berkshire West Integrated Care System (initially known as an accountable care system) which involves Royal Berkshire Hospital, Berkshire Healthcare and commissioners working to get the best out of the local 'NHS pound'.

The Berkshire West Integrated Care System agreed to our proposal for a Healthwatch ICS Officer who will liaise with three local Healthwatch and the ICS, to ensure the public voice is at the heart of NHS transformation.

These organisations sought out regular input from Healthwatch in Reading, Wokingham and West Berkshire, but our small teams had to juggle attending these meetings with our prime function of assisting our own communities to have their say. To remedy this, Healthwatch Reading led a joint proposal with Healthwatch West Berkshire and Healthwatch Wokingham to argue the case for a funded Healthwatch ICS Officer. The ICS agreed, and a full-time postholder will be recruited for 2018-19. Their main role will be to liaise between the three Healthwatch and the ICS, sharing information about the public feedback we each collect and how this can feed in to the work of the ICS to improve local services.

On all the various committees we attend, we point out that having Healthwatch at the table is about facilitating public involvement, rather than acting as a sole representative of all the views of the Reading public. So we will advise, for example, that running an online-only consultation will not be accessible to all and various methods are needed to capture the views of different people.

During 2017-18, we accepted referrals for 56 people who were entitled to Care Act Advocacy, to help them have their say during social care assessments, reviews, or safeguarding enquiries.

Working together to deliver advocacy

We continued our effective partnership with Age UK Reading and the learning disability charities Talkback and Reading Mencap, to jointly deliver the third year of the Care Act Advocacy service. Our advocates help people who are entitled to this statutory advocacy, to express their views about how they want to live their lives and receive care, during social services care assessments, reviews, or safeguarding investigations.

During 2017-18 we received 74 referrals, 56 of which we accepted (14 were outside of the scope of Care Act Advocacy and 2 were out of area). The table below shows the primary need of clients.

The success of our advocacy services has led to an expansion of the type of advocacy we will provide in 2018-19, as outlined in more detail on page 21.

Needs of Care Act Advocacy clients

Brain/head injury:	2 people
Deemed 'vulnerable':	12
Dementia diagnosis:	3
Lacks capacity:	5
Learning disability:	18
Mental health:	8
Physical disability:	8

Involving local people in our work

We involve local people by:

Informing people

We hold special events to help the public understand major changes to local services. This included a special question and answer session we arranged at our annual general meeting held in July 2017, to allow the public to quiz Royal Berkshire Hospital chief executive Steve McManus on everything from a shortage of carparking spaces to the impact of Brexit on staffing.

We continue to send out a monthly newsletter, visit patient participation groups at GP surgeries, attend meetings of North and West and South Reading Patient Voice groups, and regularly take part in discussions on BBC Radio Berkshire about local issues.

Being transparent

We hold Healthwatch Reading board meetings in public, so people can see how we work and make decisions and understand local issues.

We explain and encourage people to exercise their democratic right to have a say and question decision-makers. For example, we helped one person submit a question to the Health and Wellbeing Board on lower male life expectancy in Reading, we worked with care home residents to facilitate a presentation of their petition to Reading Borough Council, and we regularly publicised opportunities for people to attend open meetings of Reading clinical commissioning groups, where decisions were made about local health services.

Championing equality and diversity

We have been chosen by South Central Ambulance to help measure their equality and diversity performance. We do this by facilitating meetings between SCAS and a wide range of people from Reading's community.

We also helped the SCAS Charity recruit 50 new volunteer community first responders, especially women and people from different ethnic backgrounds, by holding special community recruitment events.



Royal Berkshire Hospital chief executive Steve McManus addresses the Healthwatch Reading AGM in July 2017 before taking questions from members of the public who attended.

it starts with
YOU



Healthwatch Reading staff member Pat Bunch (pictured right) with Sue, a resident at a local care home.

There's no beds in Prospect Park if anyone had a relapse and then we'd be shifted to London or down south and I can just see a revolving door..."

Claire speaks out against the closure of a Reading mental health care home.



#ItStartsWithYou

Claire brings us into the garden of Focus House, a care home for people with mental health needs, to show us the rabbits she helps look after. Explaining their therapeutic value, she tells Healthwatch Reading: "I have days sometimes, or I have many days in a row, where I wouldn't necessarily go out, but because I've got them, I've got to buy their veg and that gets me into town."

Phil, a keen violin player, explains how he arrived at Focus House after spending 22 years at three different hospitals, which was like being "in the dark ages". On arrival, he said "the feeling was...like it was in a family home, like in the kitchen where we congregate and eat lots of good things".

Sue likes the fact everyone gets together to eat and she praises the staff for getting to know them well and helping her remember to take her medication. The thought of having to leave Focus House makes her so upset she says it could make her self-harm.

Julia, the mother of another resident, says the potential closure of the home is "worrying the life out of me" because her daughter had not coped with a previous move out of a home.

These views were all captured on a short film created by Healthwatch Reading to help empower the residents to have their say about Reading

Borough Council's proposal to shut down their home. In a succinct summary at the end of the film, Ray issues a challenge to the council: "You can see the health of a society by the way it treats their poor and vulnerable."

Healthwatch Reading spent months supporting residents through the consultation. We requested from RBC officers, a simple question and answer paper, to help people wade through the formal language of the council consultation documents. We also encouraged people to take part in the consultation in any way they felt best able. Some people told us they felt the consultation questions were leading or they did not always like filling in forms. So we offered them an opportunity to have their say in another way, by filming their views. This was done with their signed consent and showing them the final edited version.

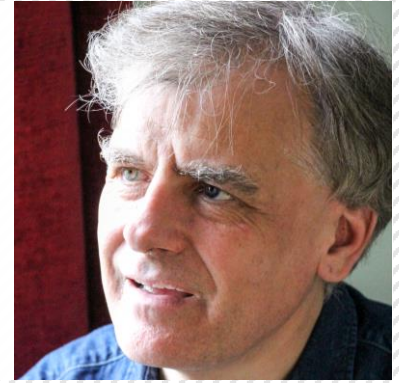
The powerful testimonies of residents won councillors over, and a decision was made to keep Focus House open.



Healthwatch Reading staff member Catherine Williams helps a relative of a Focus House resident understand the council's consultation plans

Spending 22 years in hospital was like the dark ages...here it's like a family home."

Phil describes what Focus House means to him.



The film was shown at the council meeting that decided the fate of Focus House. Claire also presented a petition, signed by hundreds of supporters, telling the meeting that without the home, there was a risk of people relapsing and being readmitted to Prospect Park Hospital. The powerful testimonies of the residents won councillors over, and a decision was made to keep Focus House open, but to alter its status to

supported living accommodation, with familiar staff on hand to support them to live as independently as possible.

We urge Reading people to continue to share their stories and experiences with us, with the confidence that their voice can make a real difference - as the Healthwatch England campaign slogan says: **#ItStartsWithYou!**

You can see the health of a society by how it treats their poor and vulnerable."

Ray's message to the council.



Victory! Smiles after RBC agrees to keep Focus House open

Our plans for next year

person's involvement in the assessment, planning or review process, and this includes four specific considerations.

The appropriate individual cannot be:

- already providing treatment to the person in a professional capacity or on a paid basis
- someone who does not want to support them
- someone who is not able to, or available to, adequately support the person

an enquiry into abuse or neglect or who has been judged in a review to have failed to prevent abuse or neglect.

Healthwatch Reading
advocacy services manager
Carl Borges giving a
presentation to Reading
social workers

What next?

As we enter our sixth year of operation, we are proud to announce we will be running a new one-stop-service advocacy service known as Reading Voice from 1 April 2018. This is due to winning a contract with Reading Borough Council to bring four different types of advocacy provision together. This means we will be providing:

- + Statutory Independent Mental Health Advocacy for Reading people sectioned at Prospect Park Hospital (a service previously provided by another provider, Seap);

We have won a contract to deliver four types of advocacy from 1 April 2018.

- + Social Care Complaints Advocacy, a new non-statutory service to help any Reading adult with a complaint about any social care that has been arranged for them by the council;
- + Statutory NHS Complaints Advocacy, which we have provided in Reading since 2014; and
- + Statutory Care Act Advocacy, which we have coordinated and provided since 2015.

Reading Voice is run in partnership with Age UK Reading, and learning disability charity Talkback, and involves a pool of 11 local advocates with the empathy and expertise to help a wide variety of people. Advocacy helps people know their rights and options, make their own choices and have their say. Advocates don't tell people what to do or work for the NHS or council.

To support the new service we have launched a standalone website at

www.readingvoice.org.uk, which includes self-help advice, template complaint letters and referral information. We have also produced leaflets for each type of advocacy, in English, and Polish, Urdu and Nepali (see example, below).



ReadingVoice
Your local advice & advocacy hub



Alongside the expanded advocacy service, we have a full programme of engagement work planned for 2018-19, which aims to help a wide range of people influence the shape of local services.

This includes continuing our aim to visit every care home in Reading to get the views of residents about daily life and how their care and wellbeing needs are met.

Early in 2018-9 we will publish our findings of a survey we ran jointly with the charity Support U, of the LGBT+ community about their experiences of health and social care services.

We plan to talk to university and college students about how their health needs - including mental health issues - are met.

We also hope to go out and listen to people who use drug and alcohol services, in light of Reading Borough Council's new strategy due out for tackling drink and substance misuse.

Another area of focus will be looking at the health of university and college students in our town - an issue of increasing national concern, particularly the mental health needs of young people.

We will also continue to monitor the experience of the general population affected by changes at Circuit Lane Surgery and Priory Avenue Surgery, whose care has been taken over by local NHS GPs after a Leeds-based firm running both surgeries ended its contract at the end of March 2018. Further changes at other GP surgeries in Reading are planned, with the development of larger primary care 'hubs', better access to GPs outside of normal working hours and more care shifted from hospitals into the community, and so we will strive to ensure patients are kept informed, consulted on, and get opportunities to influence the shape of new services.

Another ongoing project is to inform the priorities of the Berkshire West Integrated Care System (ICS) by working with the new Healthwatch ICS Liaison Officer to ensure they understand the experiences and needs of Reading people and how these should fit into wider regional plans to transform care.

Finally, to ensure people can get help at their fingertips, through computers, tablets and smart-phones, we are also working on a refresh of our website, informed by research that Healthwatch England has carried out to improve the way we give information and advice and collect feedback.

Priorities for 2018-19

1. Visiting care homes to find out about the daily lives of residents
2. Understanding the experience of drug and alcohol users
3. Checking the quality of primary care at various GP services
4. Delivering a top-class advocacy service
5. Collecting experiences of university and college students

Our finances



Income	£
Funding received from local authority to deliver local Healthwatch statutory activities	110,000
Additional income	80,442
Total income	190,442
Expenditure	£
Total expenditure	171,200
Balance brought forward	19,242



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Our annual report will be publicly available on our website by 30 June 2018. We will also be sharing it with Healthwatch England, CQC, NHS England, Clinical Commissioning Group/s, Overview and Scrutiny Committee/s, and our local authority.

We confirm that we are using the Healthwatch Trademark (which covers the logo and Healthwatch brand) when undertaking work on our statutory activities as covered by the licence agreement.

If you require this report in an alternative format please contact us at the address above.

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