



Our Workplan

**1 June 2022 to 31 March
2023**

About us

Healthwatch Reading is your local independent service for everyone who uses publicly funded health and care services. We make sure NHS leaders and other decision makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care.

How we work

If you use GPs, hospitals, dentists, pharmacies, care homes or other support services in your area, we want to hear about your experiences. We can also help you to find reliable and trustworthy information and advice through our signposting service.

Healthwatch Reading is part of a network of over 150 local Healthwatch across England. Last year, the network helped nearly 1 million people have their say and get the support that they needed. We are here to listen to issues that really matter to people in Reading about their experiences of health and care. We are independent and impartial, anything you share with us will remain entirely confidential.

It's really important that you share your experiences – whether good or bad, happy or sad. If you've had a negative experience, it's easy to think there's no point in complaining, and that 'nothing ever changes'. Or, if you've had a great experience, that you 'wish you could say thank you'.

We pass your feedback to the providers and have the power to make sure NHS leaders and other decision makers listen and use it to improve standards of care – your feedback is helping to improve people's lives.

Where possible, we will let you know when changes are planned to services in our community and help you have a say. We encourage those in charge of local care to involve you when changes are being planned to services.

So, if you need advice, or you're ready to tell your story, we're here to listen.

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 ideas that work.

We are independent and committed to making the biggest difference to you.

Introduction

Since 1 June 2022, there has been a new team at Healthwatch Reading. The team is led by Alice Kunjappy-Clifton, Lead Officer.

These changes came about as a result of the contract being awarded to The Advocacy People who now host Healthwatch Reading.

The Advocacy People have hosted Healthwatch West Berkshire since 2015 and Healthwatch Wokingham Borough from 1 April 2022. This means that we can work efficiently and effectively across the three areas known as 'Berkshire West' to bring the public and patient voice to decision makers locally and more widely across the 'patch'.

The Advocacy People also host Healthwatch in Portsmouth and Southend, creating opportunities for sharing and learning across all 5 Healthwatch.

Our work in the first few months has been focused on: getting a team of staff and volunteers in place; making Healthwatch Reading visible to local residents; and further developing our understanding of the health and social care issues local people are facing.

Of course, whilst most of our work is about hearing feedback on other services, we also want to know what we can do differently so that we too can continually improve what we do.

We are recruiting to a new Advisory Board of volunteers who are responsible for ensuring that Healthwatch Reading sets appropriate priorities, adheres to its principles and purpose and operates in an ethical way in the services of the local community.

Our objectives

Objective 1: Obtain the views of local people about their experiences of local health and social care services

We will:

- Raise awareness of Healthwatch Reading across all communities, through a range of activities including:
 - Attending local events and meetings
 - Distributing leaflets and information in places local people visit
 - Increasing our presence on social media
 - Developing our working relationships with voluntary sector organisations
- Ensure there are a range of ways people can contact Healthwatch Reading: phone; email; in person; via social media; website form.
- Identify local barriers that result in certain groups going unheard and how we can help overcome them
- Ensure our staff are trained to use the appropriate engagement techniques to meet the needs of individuals and engage outside support as appropriate, eg translation/interpretation
- Undertake more detailed public engagement on emerging topics and themes

We will check how successful we are by monitoring:

- how people are contacting us and where from to ensure we are hearing from a cross-section of local residents
- numbers of people contacting Healthwatch Reading
- changes made as a result of sharing information with services.

Objective 2: Make the views of local people known to those who make decisions about health and social care services and recommend how those services could or should be improved

We will:

- Share feedback, good and bad, with the relevant services and ask for a response
- Work with local policymakers, commissioners, and health and care professionals to access and act on the evidence that we provide
- Feed the public voice into health and social care decision making and scrutiny forums locally, across Berkshire West and the wider Buckingham, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care System (BOB ICS).

We will check how successful we are by monitoring how our feedback is used and what changes have been made as a result of sharing information with, or asking questions of, services – ‘You said, they did’.

Objective 3: Promote and support the involvement of local people when decisions are being made about local health and social care services

We will:

- Work with the other 4 Healthwatch in the BOB ICS area to ensure public and patient voice is represented at system level and there are clear routes for feedback.
- Share local consultation activity and encourage participation.
- Check organisations are seeking public views when changes are being proposed and, if they are not, ask them to do so.

We will check how successful we are by:

- Recording when we ask questions of services and what changed as a result – ‘You said, they did’.
- Checking meeting minutes reflect questions we have asked and following

up thereafter.

- Sharing what changes we have made as a result of asking questions – ‘You said, they did’.

Objective 4: Provide information and advice to local people about accessing health and social care services and the options available to them

We will:

- Keep up to date with and share information about local and national health and social care services and developments, online via social media and our website.
- Share information published by other credible sources to help ensure public health messages are reaching a wide audience.
- Respond to enquiries from members of the public via phone, email, website form and in person.

We will check how successful we are by:

- Recording queries and responses so we can audit the quality and take action if required, eg staff training
- Asking people who contact us to complete a short survey to tell us how we did
- Sharing “You said, we did” information in response to feedback about our service delivery

Objective 5: Make the views and experiences of local people known to Healthwatch England so that they are fed into the national picture

We will:

- share with Healthwatch England our
 - anonymised quantitative data (the numbers) on themes and trends on a quarterly basis
 - reports and Annual Report
- support Healthwatch England activity such as national surveys
- respond to requests for qualitative data – local stories behind the numbers.

We will check how successful we are by:

- Recording queries and responses so we can audit the quality and take action if required, eg staff training
- Work with Healthwatch England to ensure our information is shared in a timely way in an agreed anonymised format
- Meeting the deadline for completion and submission of the Annual Report.

Our priorities to 31 March 2023

- **Recruitment of volunteers** to support delivery of the service and ensure the work of Healthwatch Reading is effective and focused on the right priorities.
- Healthwatch England are conducting a national survey on **maternal mental health**. We have supported the survey locally and will be publishing local findings alongside the Healthwatch England report.
- **Asylum seekers** physical and mental health and wellbeing of those living in local Home Office Contracted Accommodation.

- **Building Berkshire Together** are undertaking an extensive public consultation on the future of the Royal Berkshire Hospital. Healthwatch Reading will help with the consultation to ensure local people have a real say on the future of one of their local hospitals.
- **Jointly plan and present** a session on self-neglect to the local voluntary sector with the West of Berkshire Safeguarding Adults Board VCS sub-group.
- **Review** the reports undertaken by the previous Healthwatch Reading provider and plan follow-up as appropriate.

Local 'watchlist'

We have identified the following as key areas of priority for the coming twelve to fifteen months. We will monitor feedback received and escalate issues as appropriate.

One of these areas, or indeed new themes, may emerge over the coming months as a topic/topics for more in depth exploration. Many of the highlighted issues are present nationally, as well as locally. We are very aware of the breadth and depth of concerns about health and care services and therefore will react accordingly within our capacity to do so.

- **GP access** – a national and local issue, we are keeping abreast of what's happening locally and sharing information about 'what service when' and self-care as appropriate.
- **NHS dentistry** – a national and local issue, we are keeping abreast of developments and availability of NHS emergency and routine appointments.
- **Maternity** – a national and local issue regarding quality and equality of maternity care.
- **Cost of living crisis** – impact on local people and subsequent impact on local health and social care services.
- **Continuing Health Care (CHC) funding** – together with the other 4 Healthwatch in the BOB ICS area, Healthwatch Reading are bringing the

public voice to the All Age CHC Transformation Programme. The programme aims to ensure equality of access and experiences for people across the system.

- **Support for carers** to have time out to pursue interests outside caring, through provision of respite and other support services.
- **Mental health support for children and young people.**