

healthwatch
Reading
'Making your voice count'

Home of
ReadingVoice
Your local advice & advocacy hub

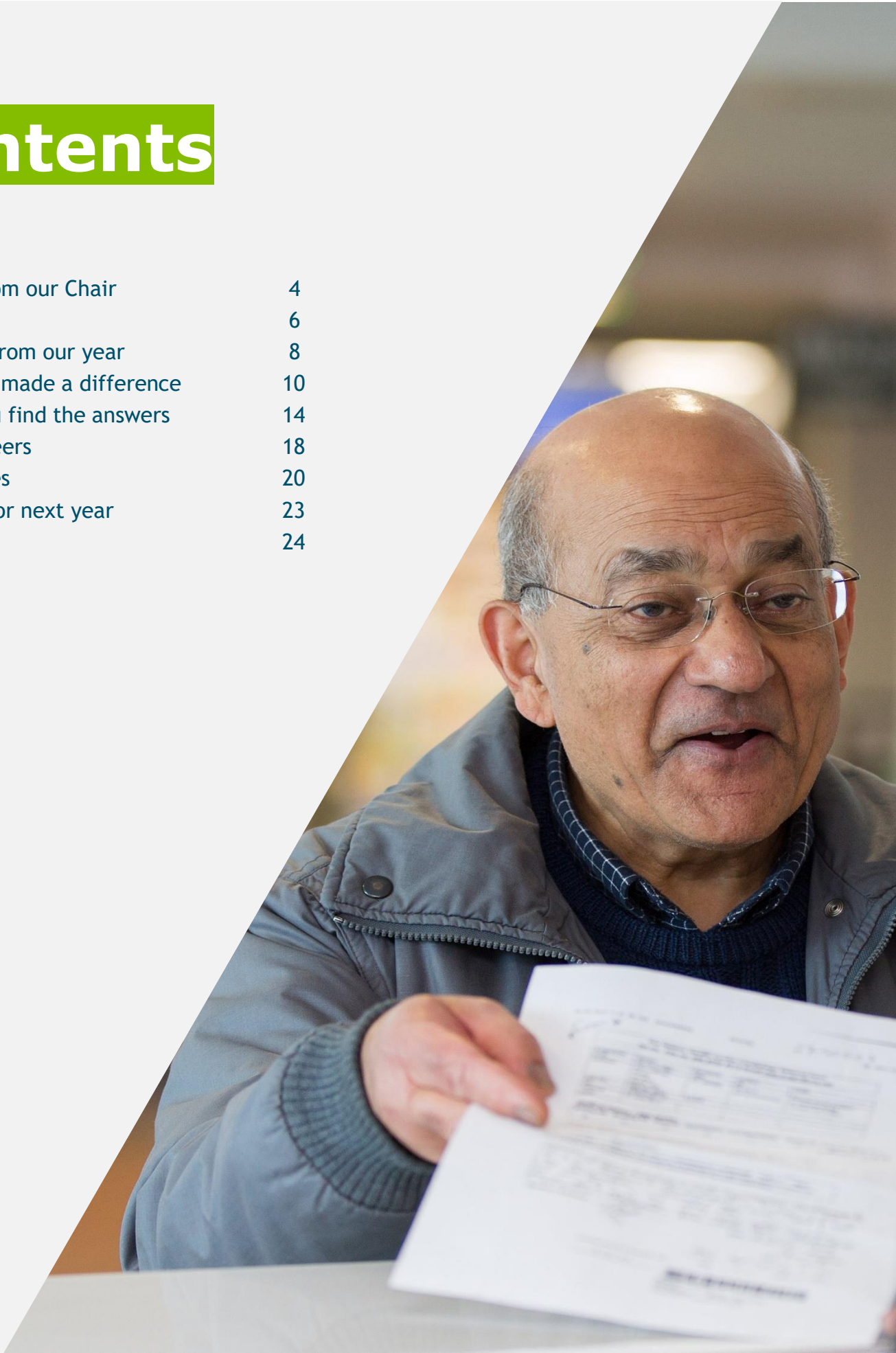


Annual report 2018-19



Contents

Message from our Chair	4
About us	6
Highlights from our year	8
How we've made a difference	10
Helping you find the answers	14
Our volunteers	18
Our finances	20
Our plans for next year	23
Contact us	24



Message from our Chair

The 2018-2019 year began with a joint celebration to mark our 5th birthday, and also commemorate 70 years of the NHS. Despite challenges in funding and increasing demand for our services, Healthwatch Reading is going from strength to strength as this coming year we mark another birthday, the first anniversary of the Reading Voice Advocacy service we manage.

Reading Voice works hand in hand with local Healthwatch by providing four different advocacy services: Care Act, NHS Complaints, Social Care complaints and Independent Mental Health Advocacy. We deliver this service in partnership with Age UK Reading and the learning disability charity Talkback, to harness the expertise and empathy they have in working with vulnerable people. Our advocates have worked with over 300 people in the first year.

To celebrate our success and to plan for the future, we carried out a stakeholder audit looking at how influential Healthwatch Reading has been.

The results were very positive, praising our work reaching seldom heard groups and the benefits of an independent organisation working local people - as

one respondent told us:

“Healthwatch Reading has a strong influence in the planning and delivery of health and social care services in Reading. They are a very strong voice for patients and are highly regarded within the health and social care system.”

This year we also led some important and innovative projects. These included gathering the views of our LGBT+ community, speaking to young people about whether they know how to find the health and care they need when they arrive in Reading to study, and collecting the views of local people living in care homes.



These projects have demonstrated the depth of our work and our ambition to give a voice to those who often go unheard.

We have also been ambitious about ensuring we can influence decision-makers at the highest level. Working with our local Healthwatch colleagues in West Berkshire and Wokingham, we successfully bid for funding to test out a

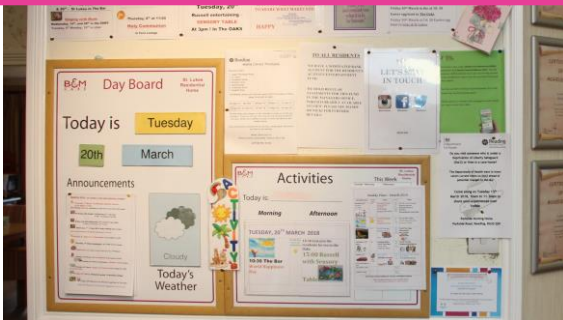
new role of Healthwatch Integrated Care System Officer. The aim is to ensure a single point of contact and liaison between the three local Healthwatch and the Berkshire West Integrated Care System as it seeks to transform local health services.

Finally, we thank our community for trusting us with their experiences so we can help make care better in Reading.

David Shepherd, chair of trustees

Changes you want to see

Last year we heard from almost 1,000 people who told us about their experience of a number of different areas of health and social care. Here are some examples of the changes that you want to see.



- + Care homes should provide a good choice of activities and food, and better access to dentists



- + Health staff should allow more time when they see people with learning disabilities



- + People want health and care professionals to be trained on LGBT+ issues to avoid prejudice



- + Students want more information on how to cope with stress and mental health needs

About us

Healthwatch is here to make care better

We are the independent champion for people using local health and social care services. We listen to what people like about services and what could be improved. We share their views with those with the power to make change happen. People can also speak to us to find information about health and social care services available locally.

Our sole purpose is to help make care better for people.

As Chair of Healthwatch England, it's my role to make sure your Healthwatch gets effective support and that national decisions are informed by what people are saying all over England.

If you were one of the 400,000 people who shared their experiences with us last year, I want to say a personal thank you. Without your views, Healthwatch wouldn't be able to make a difference to health and social care services, both in your area and at a national level. One example of this is how we shared 85,000 views with the NHS, to highlight what matters most, and help shape its plans for the next decade.

If you're part of an organisation that's worked with, supported or responded to Healthwatch Reading, thank you too. You've helped to make an even bigger difference.

None of this could have been possible without our dedicated staff and volunteers, who work in the community every day to understand what is working and what could be better when it comes to people's health and care.

If you've shared your views with us then please keep doing what you're doing. If you haven't, then this is your chance to step forward and help us make care better for your community. We all have a stake in our NHS and social care services: we can all really make a difference in this way.



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Robert Francis'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sir Robert Francis QC
Healthwatch England Chair

Our vision is simple

Health and care that works for you. People want health and social care support that works - helping them to stay well, get the best out of services and manage any conditions they face.



Our purpose

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



Our approach

People's views come first - especially those that find it hardest to be heard. We champion what matters to you and work with others to find solutions. We are independent and committed to making the biggest difference to you.



People are at the heart of everything we do

We play an important role bringing communities and services together. Everything we do is shaped by what people tell us. Our staff and volunteers identify what matters most to people by:

- + Visiting services to see how they work
- + Running surveys and focus groups
- + Going out in the community and working with other organisations

Our main job is to raise people's concerns with health and care decision-makers so that they can improve support across the country. The evidence we gather also helps us recommend how policy and practice can change for the better.





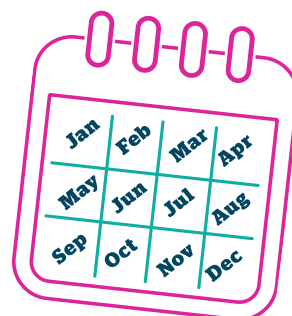
Highlights from

our year

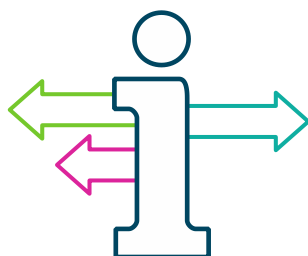
Find out about our resources and the way we have engaged and supported more people in 2018-19. **Our resources:**



Almost 1,000 people shared their health and social care story with us



We have 11 volunteers helping to carry out our work. In total, they gave up more than 200 hours of their own time.



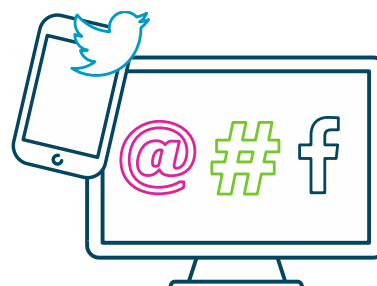
More than 200 people accessed Healthwatch advice and information online or contacted us with questions about local support, 20% more than last year



We visited 19 services via Enter and View and engagement visits to understand people's experiences of care.



We made 19 specific recommendations to decision-makers that they have said they will act on to improve health and care for our community



8% more people than the previous year engaged with us through our social media.



How we've made

a difference

Changes made to your community

Find out how sharing your views with your Healthwatch Reading has led to positive changes for a wide variety of people in our community.

We show that when people speak up about what's important, and services listen, care is improved for all.

Take a look at how we have made a difference.

Amplifying the voices of 'seldom heard' groups

When we visited a diverse range of local charities in Reading to hear first-hand the experiences of staff and the people they support, we found many common themes.

So we brought the findings together in a 'Seldom Heard' report and challenged both the NHS and local authority to do better.

Our project allowed us to understand and voice the 'top three priorities' for people with learning disabilities, recently arrived refugees and asylum seekers, women from ethnic minority backgrounds learning English, and people who had experienced homelessness. While each group had unique experiences, they also faced common barriers, leading us to call for:

- + People to get information, at the right time, in a format that is suitable for their needs
- + People to know their individual rights and have these rights respected
- + People to receive good quality and culturally sensitive care.

As well as being formally considered at Reading's Health and Wellbeing Board, our report led to new opportunities for people with different needs to connect with decision-makers.

Staff and service users of Reading Learning Community Centre, and the Reading Refugee Support Group were invited to Patient Voice group meetings run by Berkshire West Clinical Commissioning Group, to share their experiences and work directly.

Reading Borough council has also said the Healthwatch findings will be taken into account as part of its review of community services commissioning in 2019.

Healthwatch Reading visited Reading Refugee Support Group to find the 'top three priorities' of staff and people to help improve experiences of accessing health and social care



LGBT+ project leads to action on equality for all

Thanks to our project to understand the experiences of people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT+), an equality and diversity committee has been set up to shine a light on actions the NHS and local authorities take for a wide range of people.

We partnered with local LGBT+ charity SupportU to carry out a survey to find out whether gender identity or sexuality affects people's experience of using the NHS or care services.

We found:

+ Nobody felt they had been discriminated against by the NHS but 17% had experienced some prejudice, due to professional's lack of knowledge or respect

+ 37% of people had sought help for depression, a much higher rate than the general population (this has been confirmed in national studies too)

+ People called for services to have more visible signs to show they are LGBT+-aware and friendly.

In response to our report, the Berkshire West Integrated Care System (a partnership of health and care providers and decision-makers), created an equality and diverse committee that now meets every three months to not only look at LGBT+ issues, but also race, disability, and other characteristics protected by law. Healthwatch Reading attends as permanent member and the committee is already looking at representation of different people among staff and leadership of organisations, as well as care and attitudes towards service users.

"The Committee will monitor, discuss and collectively take action to drive improvements in ensuring and promoting Equality and Diversity across the Berkshire West Integrated Care System." RBC/BWCCG



Healthwatch Reading at the Reading Pride Festival in September 2018, to share our project findings with revellers

Healthwatch
Reading with
residents at St
Luke's care home



Views of care home residents to inform new standards

Conversations about Care was our biggest project of the year, involving visits to 14 Reading care homes over 10 months to listen to 213 older people talk about their wellbeing and daily lives.

As a result, Reading Borough Council says it will use the findings to inform work it has begun on redrafting standards for the care it expects in the residential homes where it places people who are eligible for social services-funded support.

The NHS is also going to take action on care planning, and access to dentists and eye health care.

Our visits found that the top three things that matter most to people in care homes are:

- + Food choices
- + The way staff respond to them
- + Access to activities.

Three quarters of residents said they could see a GP when needed but only 26% could see an optician and even fewer, 21% could see a dentist when needed. Many people also told us they felt lonely, despite being surrounded by other people:

Our report also highlighted examples of good practice, such as stimulating environments and activities at care homes such as St Luke's in Emmer Green.

"The findings of the Healthwatch Reading report can positively influence standards of care going forward." RBC



Have your say

Share your ideas and experiences and help services hear what works, what doesn't, and what you want from care in the future. Staff are based at our central Reading office (pictured) from Monday to Friday.

t: 0118 937 2295

e: info@healthwatchreading.co.uk



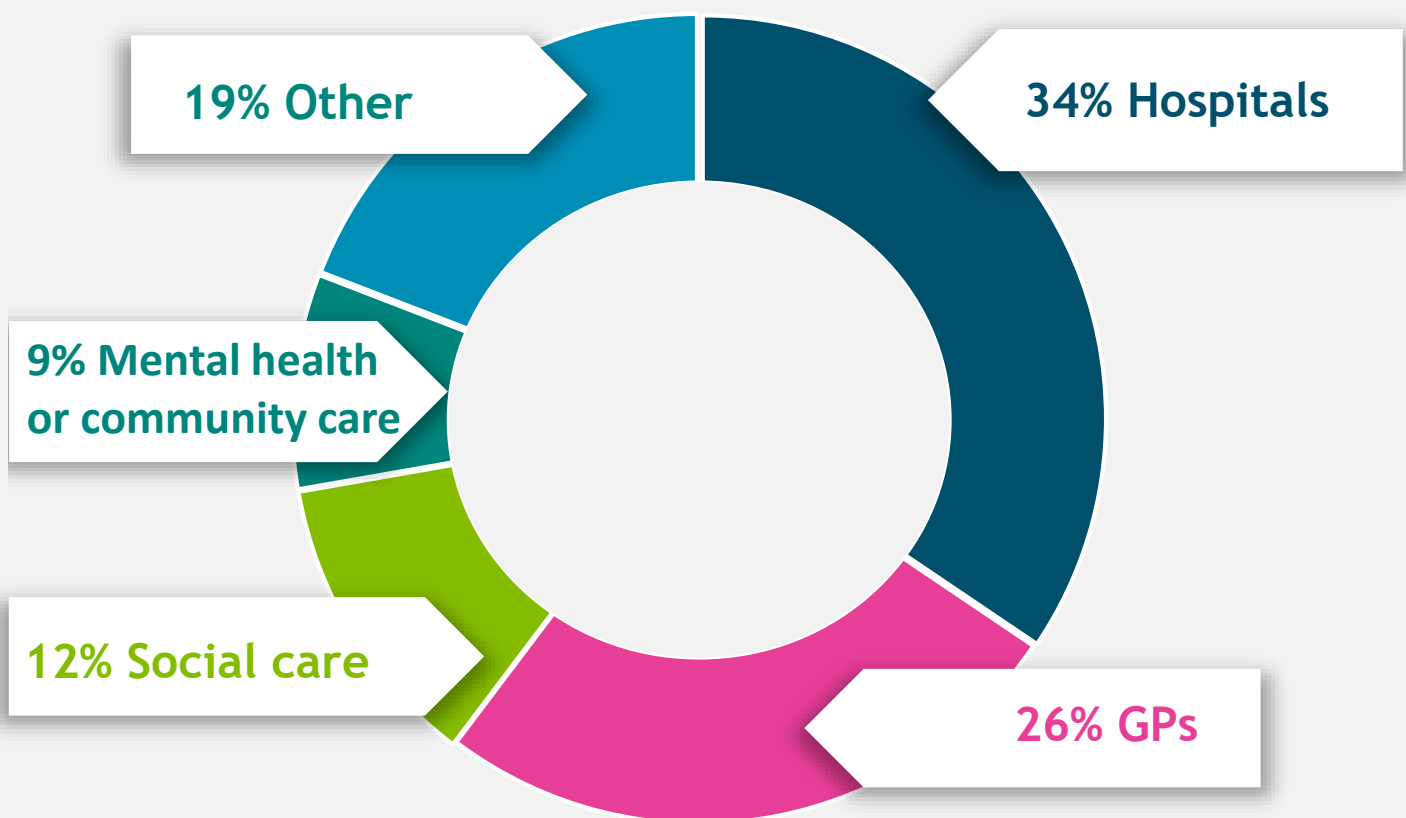
Helping you find

the answers

What services do people want to know about?

People don't always know how to get the information they need to make decisions about their own health and care. Healthwatch Reading plays an important role in providing advice and pointing people in the right direction for the support they need.

Here are the most common services that people ask us about:



How we provide people with advice, information or advocacy

Finding the right care or support can be worrying and stressful. There a number of organisations that can provide help, but people don't know where to look.

Last year we gave specific information to 209 individuals as well as targeted advice to specific groups.

You can come to us for advice and information in a number of ways including:

- + Specific advice and information blogs online
- + Our 'contact us' form on our website
- + At community events
- + Our social media channels
- + Over the phone
- + Or drop in to our central Reading base



Helping students find their way

At Freshers' Fairs in September 2018 we handed out a free A5 card guide to students starting their studies at Reading College or the University of Reading, after they had filled in one of our surveys.

Our aim was to ensure students - many from overseas or outside of the borough - could get all the information they needed in one place, about local GPs, dentists, sexual health services, mental health support and more.

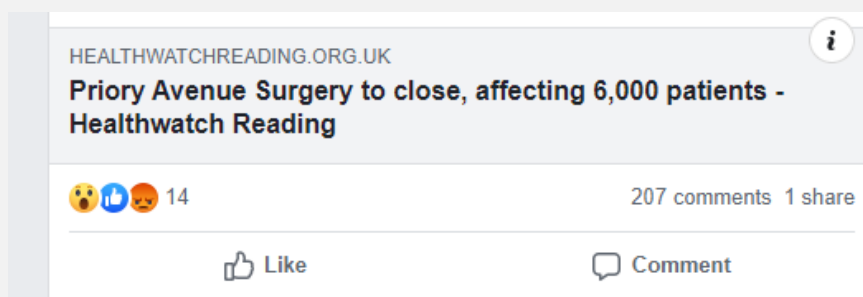
The University Health Centre now keeps a stock of the cards on its reception to hand out to students. We also have an online guide for students on our website.

Timely advice for patients affected by GP surgery closure

When 6,500 patients were told that Priory Avenue Surgery in Caversham was closing at the end of June 2018, we used all our available channels to ensure people were fully informed about their rights and options.

This included posting advice on a local Facebook group (see below) where more than 200 people raised concerns; visiting the surgery six times to assist people with knowing their choices and completing forms; attending two public meetings held by NHS leaders overseeing the closure, taking phone calls, publishing comparison tables of other local GP practices, and distributing our own one-page guide on how to choose a new GP surgery.

Afterwards we gave feedback to an NHS-led review on how it manages future surgery closures.



Our Reading Voice service is run by advocacy services manager Carl Borges (pictured).



Providing statutory advocacy via our Reading Voice service

Since 1 April 2018 we have been official providers of four types of advocacy that people are entitled to for free as part of an all-in-service known as Reading Voice.

Advocacy is separate to our statutory Healthwatch remit, but the work is often related, so we share staff, information and expertise so that people can get help from the same place. We work with Age UK Reading and the charity Talkback, to provide this service.

The four types of advocacy are:

+ Statutory NHS Complaints Advocacy: to help any Reading resident resolve their concern or complaint about health services

+ Statutory Care Act Advocacy: to help isolated vulnerable adults such as people to have their say on care needs and plans during discussions with social workers

+ Statutory Independent Mental Health Advocacy: to help any Reading person who is detained for mental health treatment at Prospect park Hospital, to know their rights, understand their care and have their say

+ Social Care Complaints Advocacy: a non-statutory service to help Reading adults with a complaint about social care that has been arranged for them by the council.

Statutory advocacy is funded by central government via local authorities, who must contract with an organisation that is independent of the NHS or council and whose staff who have completed mandatory training.



Are you looking for help?

If you have a query or need help with where you can go to access further support, get in touch. Don't struggle alone. Healthwatch is here for you.

w: www.healthwatchreading.co.uk

t: 0118 937 2295

e: info@healthwatchreading.co.uk



Our volunteers



How do our volunteers help us?

At Healthwatch Reading we couldn't make all of these improvements without the support of our volunteers who help us in a wide variety of ways:

- + Raise awareness of the work we do in the community
- + Visit services to make sure they're meeting people's needs
- + Support our day to day running by e.g. governance
- + Share views and experiences at our regular board meetings which we use to set our work

Our volunteer board members share local intelligence, help set our projects and give feedback on our reports, at the regular meetings we hold at Reading Central Library.



Every little bit helps...

We're grateful to the unpaid time and effort our volunteers give - we couldn't do our work without them. So here's a big thanks to....

Trustees:

- + Monica Collings
- + Gurmit Dhendsa
- + David Shepherd, chair, and our representative of the Reading Health and Wellbeing Board

Board members:

- + Sheila Booth
- + Francis Brown
- + David Cooper
- + Douglas Findlay
- + Tony Hall
- + Karen Hampshire (North and West Reading Patient Voice)
- + James Penn (South Reading Patient Voice)
- + David Shepherd (chair of trustees)
- + Helena Turner



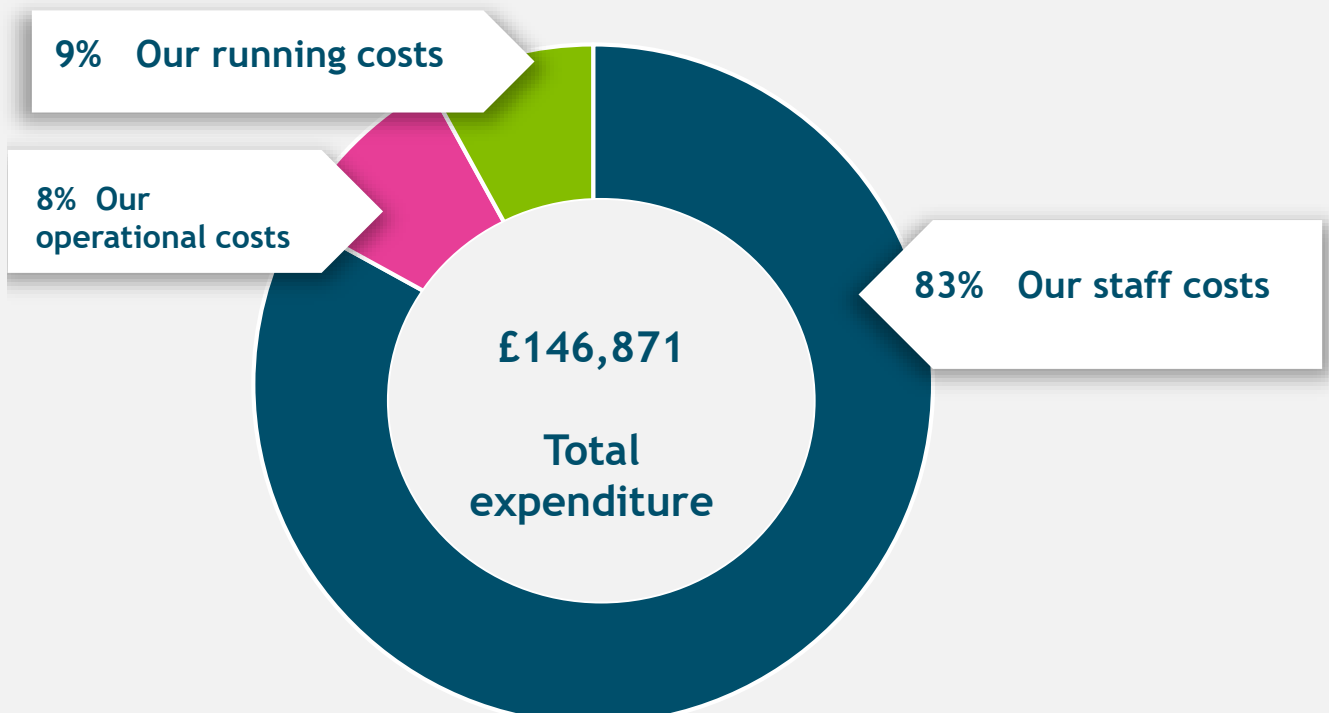
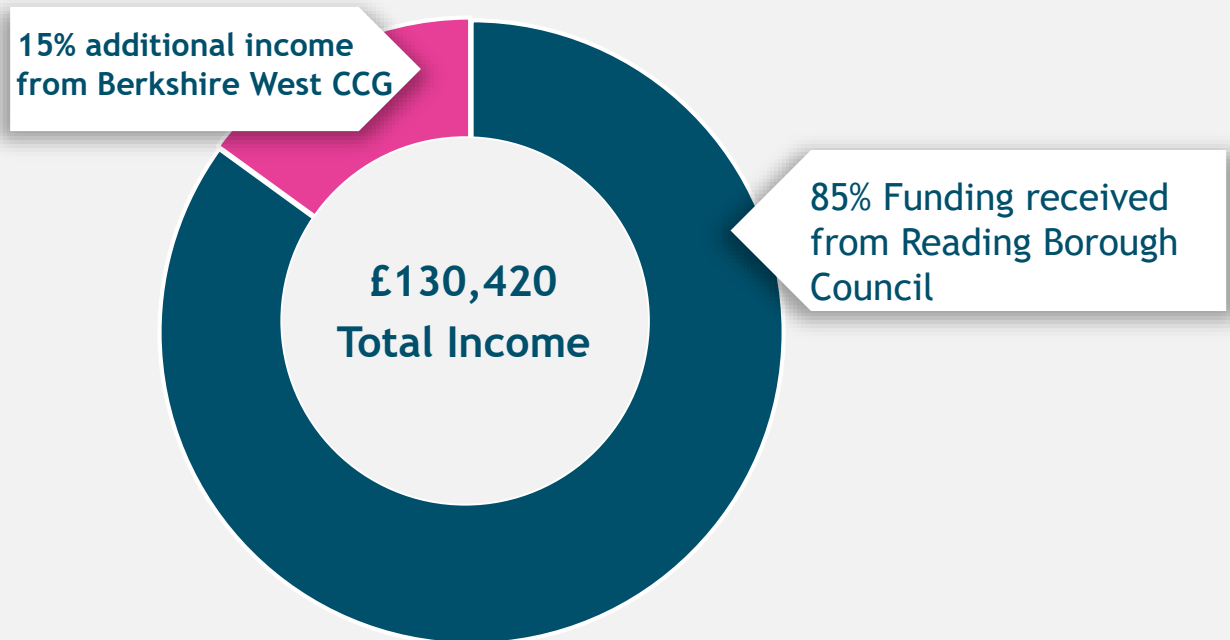
Our finances



How we use our money

To enable us to fulfil our Healthwatch contract, we are funded by our local authority. In 2018-19 we spent £146,871.

We also received £19,920 of additional income from Berkshire West Clinical Commissioning Group.





**Our plans for
next year**

Message from our CEO

Time never stands still for local Healthwatch, as our staff and volunteers can testify. We continue to hear wide-ranging issues from the public, while local services undergo yet more government-led reorganisation.

Looking back on 2018-19, we have:

- + amplified the voices of seldom heard groups, such as LGBT+ people, which has led to a renewed local focus on equality and diversity
- + revealed quality of life issues in care homes as the council prepares to write new standards
- + expanded our advocacy provision, including Independent Mental Health Advocacy at Prospect Park
- + and relaunched our website.

Looking ahead to 2019-20, we plan:

- + To influence the new integrated care system and GP-led primary care networks, with findings from a major engagement project on how extra NHS funding should be spent
- + To visit the local NHS Walk-In Centre and emergency department, to see if the way people use these,

has changed as GPs offer more appointments outside working hours

- + To explore views of digital advances, like video consultations with doctors and the new NHS App.

Underpinning our role as an independent champion for people, is our philosophy of using constructive challenge to help improve local services.

Thank you to Reading people, our voluntary sector partners, and organisations that fund and provide health and social care.



Mandeep Kaur Bains
Healthwatch
Reading chief
executive

Contact us

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- + <https://healthwatchreading.co.uk/>

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.

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