



Annual Report 2019–20

Guided by you

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Message from our chair



We know many residents will be experiencing very difficult times during the current crisis and that inequalities will have exacerbated the impacts. Coronavirus means we have changed how we work but we are committed to engaging our residents using new ways, and old ways, to safely hear your views and help you access services.

We thank the staff in hospitals, GP practices, pharmacy, care homes, the social workers, the cleaners, mutual aid groups, the residents who continue to follow distancing rules, who have helped their neighbours, those who have donated items to feed residents and staff. And we look forward to working together as lockdown eases, but social distancing continues. We know that these continued distancing measures will also have disproportionate effects on residents who may be at risk, or have health needs.

This report covers our work before the pandemic, from April 2019 to March 2020, our most successful year yet. We engaged with over 2,300 residents. We worked with families through 'Log-On: Parent Power' to help parents make sure their kids are using the internet safely, got sheltered accommodation residents on-line and feeling more connected, and influenced how mental health referrals will be made for residents with language needs. We've gathered views on services for parents of children with learning disabilities, on Whittington Health's plans for the future, and on how oral health is supported in care homes.

The pandemic has also shown us how important it is to provide good quality information. In the past year we've done just that; sharing information on accessing services, and managing health conditions including dementia, prostate cancer, diabetes, depression and anxiety with 100s of residents.

Jana Witt
Healthwatch Islington Chair

The pandemic has shown us how important it is to provide good quality information.

Our priorities

650 people spoke to us in 2019-20 about the improvements they would like to see from health and social care services. Our six priorities for the year ahead have been chosen based on what we heard from you.



Better access to information about health and care services in Islington

- We will support residents to use their devices and navigate the internet



Patient transport services

- We will share your experiences and concerns with decision makers and press for clearer eligibility criteria



Mental health support

- We will work to help services meet the needs of migrant communities



The impact on services from Covid 19

- We will help health and care services understand the issues affecting you



Information workshops, particularly on topics relevant to the Covid 19 pandemic

- We will offer additional support to make these events more accessible



Improving access to primary care

- We will continue to carry out engagement on this issue

About us

Here to make care better

We are the independent champion for people who use health and social care services in Islington. We work to make sure that those running services put people at the heart of care, and our board works to ensure that we are fulfilling our legal and statutory obligations.

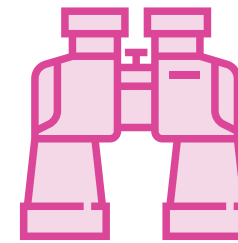
Healthwatch is here to understand the needs, experiences and concerns of people who use services and to speak out on their behalf.

We simply could not do this without the hard work and effort from our staff and volunteers and, of course, we cannot do it without you.

It's important that services continue to listen, so please do keep talking to your local Healthwatch. Let's strive to make the NHS and social care services the best that they can be.

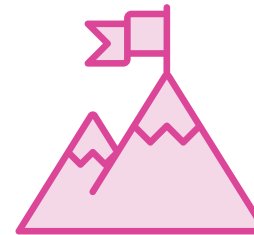
As a board, we are passionate about improving health and social care services in Islington, and we are proud to support the important work of our dedicated staff and wonderful volunteers.

Our board are meeting virtually during the coronavirus pandemic. Visit our website to learn more about them.



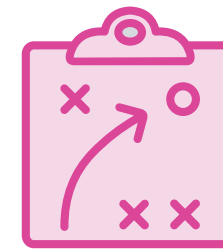
Our vision is simple

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 who 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.



How we find out what matters to you

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



Find out more about us and the work that we do

Website: www.healthwatchislington.co.uk
Twitter: @hwislington
Facebook: www.facebook.com/HWIslington

Highlights from our year

Find out about our resources and the way we have engaged and supported more people in 2019-20.



Health and care that works for you



20 volunteers

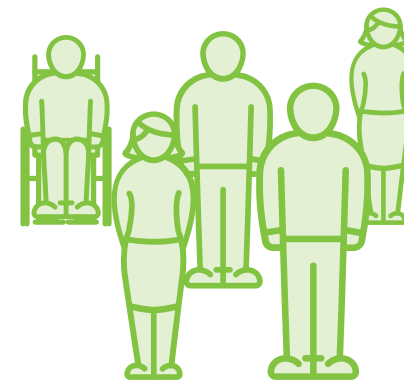
helping to carry out our work.

We employed
5 staff

3 of whom are full time.

We received
£156,100 in funding
from our local authority in 2019-20.

Supporting people



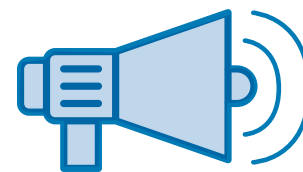
650 people

shared their health and social care story with us.

1,141 people

accessed Healthwatch advice and information at our community events, or contacted us with questions about local support.

Reaching out



3,931 people

engaged with us through our website, with 411 subscribers to our email newsletter.

Making a difference to care



We published
7 reports

about the improvements people would like to see with their health and social care, and from this, we made 25 recommendations for improvement.

How we've made a difference



Speaking up about your experiences of health and social care services is the first step to change.

Take a look at how your views have helped make a difference to the care and support people receive in Islington.

PATIENT TRANSPORT: Challenging decision-makers and raising your concerns

Thanks to your feedback, we were able to hold decision-makers to account.

Healthwatch had already been critical of the lack of public engagement around the re-commissioning of patient transport services. When the new service launched in September 2019 many people got in touch with us reporting poor experiences.

For example, residents who had previously been entitled to patient transport found they were no longer eligible for the service, and family carers were no longer allowed to accompany vulnerable relatives. More broadly, we felt there was a lack of transparency around eligibility criteria for the service.

- We supported individuals to successfully challenge decisions to refuse them transport
- We used our voice to draw attention to your concerns in local and national media
- We met with commissioners to push for change



'My mum is in a wheelchair and uses hospital transport. I'm her carer and am not allowed to travel with her. I don't think this is fair.'

As a result of our work, decision-makers have a much clearer understanding of the problems there are with the current model for patient transport from the perspective of the people who use the service. It is now up to those decision-makers to work to make changes. We are pleased to see that the assessment process is now quicker for example, and we look forward to seeing more improvements.

Dear Healthwatch
Thank you so much for your feedback. I am so pleased I am not the only one who has raised concerns Thank you for working on behalf of patients and escorts.



Women from Islington's Bangladeshi community attending a Healthwatch event at Barnsbury Community Centre

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT: Migrant communities talk to Healthwatch about their experiences

Healthwatch spoke to 73 residents from migrant communities who were living with mental health issues, along with staff from eight support organisations.

We learned that in many cases cultural and language barriers made NHS counselling and talking therapies less effective for members of migrant communities. These services were better suited to second generation members of these communities. A staff member from Islington Bangladesh Association explained:

'Many of the questions that a therapist needs to ask are complex concepts to get across in the Bengali language, and also need to be asked very sensitively. This can be a challenge for time limited services.'

The changes that people told us would improve mental health support included:

- More mother tongue counselling services
- Counselling that is culturally sensitive to the needs of clients, particularly to faith.
- More work to empower people to know more about what mental health means, what's on offer, and what their rights are.

We shared the feedback we gathered with decision-makers. As a result, a new advisory group has been set up to help ensure that the particular needs of migrant communities are fully considered when mental health services are commissioned in the future. Healthwatch, along with one of the support organisations that took part in this research, have been invited to chair the group.



Healthwatch held focus groups to gather feedback on the Supporting Families Service.

A GREATLY VALUED SERVICE: Parents give feedback about family support from Centre 404

Centre 404 is a charity that supports people with learning disabilities and their families. The Supporting Families Service helps families complete health and social care assessments and apply for benefits, as well as grants for equipment and adaptations to the home. They also give advice and information, host a number of support groups and provide a programme of social activities for families.

Healthwatch spoke to 24 parents and family carers, two staff members, and three teams from referring agencies.

Feedback was positive. In particular, parents felt that the service was able to offer the patience and empathy that are sometimes less available in statutory settings.

'I always found them amazing. They are very friendly and they make you feel at home, and like you've known them for years. The same lovely lady helped me twice, and they don't forget something that you might have told them a year ago. It's like, they really care. It's not just a job to them, they really want to help you.'

Suggestions for improving the service included increasing its capacity, and broadening its offer to cover other disability groups. We shared our report with Centre 404 to help them showcase the value of the service to funders.

They are quite different from other organisations. I feel like I belong. They understand parents' needs.



Share your views with us

You can help services understand the issues affecting care for you and your loved ones by telling us. If you've recently used a service and want to share your experience, we're here to listen.

Website: www.healthwatchislington.co.uk/share-your-views

Telephone: check our website for phone contact details

Email: info@healthwatchislington.co.uk

Long Term Plan

#WhatWouldYouDo

Highlights



Nationally, our network held over 500 focus groups and heard from over 40,000 people.



More than 1,000 people across North Central London shared their views with Healthwatch.



Here in Islington, we decided to talk to local people about the support available for people with dementia.

NHS Long Term Plan

Following a commitment from the Government to increase investment in the NHS, the NHS published the 'Long Term Plan' in January 2019, setting out its key ambitions over the next 10 years. Healthwatch launched a countrywide campaign to give people a say in how the plan should be implemented in their communities.

Working with Healthwatch from Barnet, Camden, Enfield and Haringey we asked people #WhatWouldYouDo to improve the NHS locally. In Islington we held conversations with 198 local residents. We decided to focus on dementia services in particular, and worked with partners supporting our Greek and Somali speaking residents to put on focus groups for people with memory loss and their carers. The changes that people told us they would make to dementia services were:

- Easier access to support from GPs
- Better understanding of the services that are available
- More consistent provision of care plans for people diagnosed with dementia

Our findings have been shared with commissioners across North Central London to inform the design of future services.

The scan confirmed early onset dementia. There was no follow up from the GP or hospital. The scan was done seven years ago. I have no care plan. I live with my mother and do everything for her myself. It is difficult for me day-to-day as I also work.

Helping you find the answers



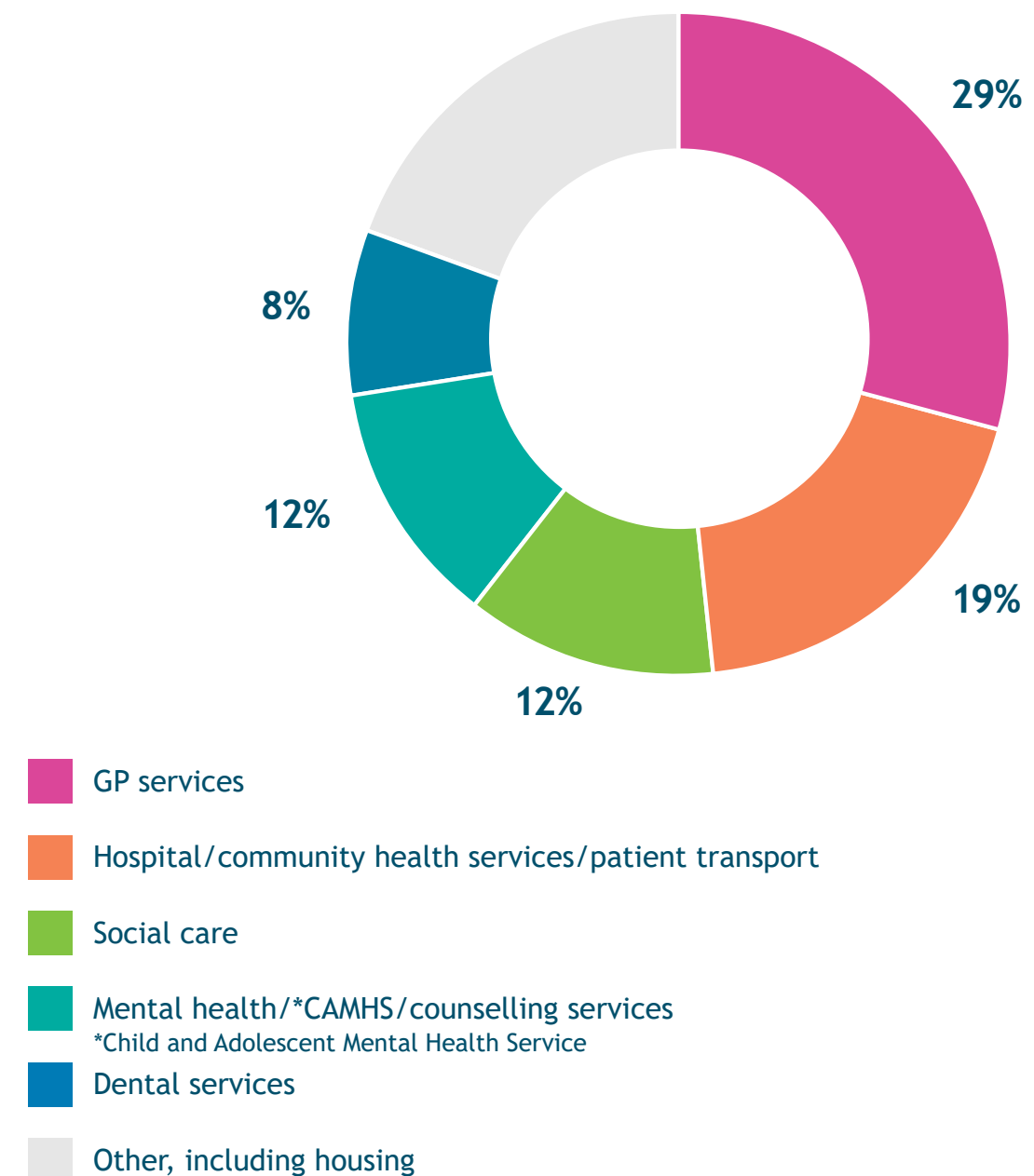
Finding the right service can be worrying and stressful. Healthwatch plays an important role in helping people to get the information they need to take control of their health and care and find services that will provide them with the right support.

This year we helped 1,141 people get the advice and information they need by:

- Providing advice and information articles on our website.
- Answering people's queries about services over the phone, by email, or online.
- Talking to people at community events.
- Promoting services and information that can help people on our social media.

Here are some of the areas that people asked about.

People who contacted our information service asked for information about their entitlements, advocacy, support to complain, or help to access services. The services their queries related to were as follows:



DIGITAL INCLUSION: Local residents in social housing and sheltered accommodation improve their skills

Healthwatch has been helping some of our older residents to understand the benefits of being online and develop confidence with their devices, thanks to a partnership scheme with Clarion Housing.

Between December 2019 and March 2020, our staff and volunteer digital champions gave support to 44 residents of social housing, and supported living schemes at Foxham Road, Hawberry Lodge, Ash Court and Cope House.

I set up a phone password today and learned how to save and find contacts, and find my own phone number. I also learned Whatsapp and sent a message for the first time.

A fiction fan learns how to download book reading applications to her tablet at a drop in session in January



As well as visiting the schemes we provided twice monthly drop in sessions open to all.

Residents who found it hard to text or touch small icons on the screen were shown how to interact with their phones using the voice activated digital assistant. Others wanted help with online shopping, or to register on the housing portal that allowed them to pay bills or request repairs online. We showed everyone who participated where to access trustworthy sources of information online, and how to search the web and bookmark the sites they felt would be most useful to support their health and wellbeing.

Help making a complaint:

Christine suffers with Parkinson's. She had a fall last year and was discharged by the hospital into a local care home that had no nursing support, when she needed rehabilitation. She became very ill. Her daughter, who is also her carer, contacted Healthwatch and got information on how to make a complaint. We also told her about local support available for Parkinson's and for her own role as a carer, and referred her to the NHS complaints advocacy service.



Accessing support for ADHD:

Holly was in year 10 and wasn't considered by her GP to have severe enough ADHD to be referred to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service. Her mother was worried because her daughter's school was managing her ADHD as misbehaviour, and she was concerned that this was affecting her daughter's self-confidence. Healthwatch found out that it was possible to self-refer, and let them know how to proceed. They were able to get an assessment booked for 12 weeks' time.



Entitlement to GP services:

A German-national who had been living in the UK for a decade was refused access to a local GP other than as a tourist. With all the confusion surrounding Brexit, both the practice manager and the receptionist had mistakenly believed that she was only entitled to this more limited form of access. Healthwatch flagged the issue up with commissioners and the resident was happy to get an apology from the practice concerned.



Contact us to get the information you need

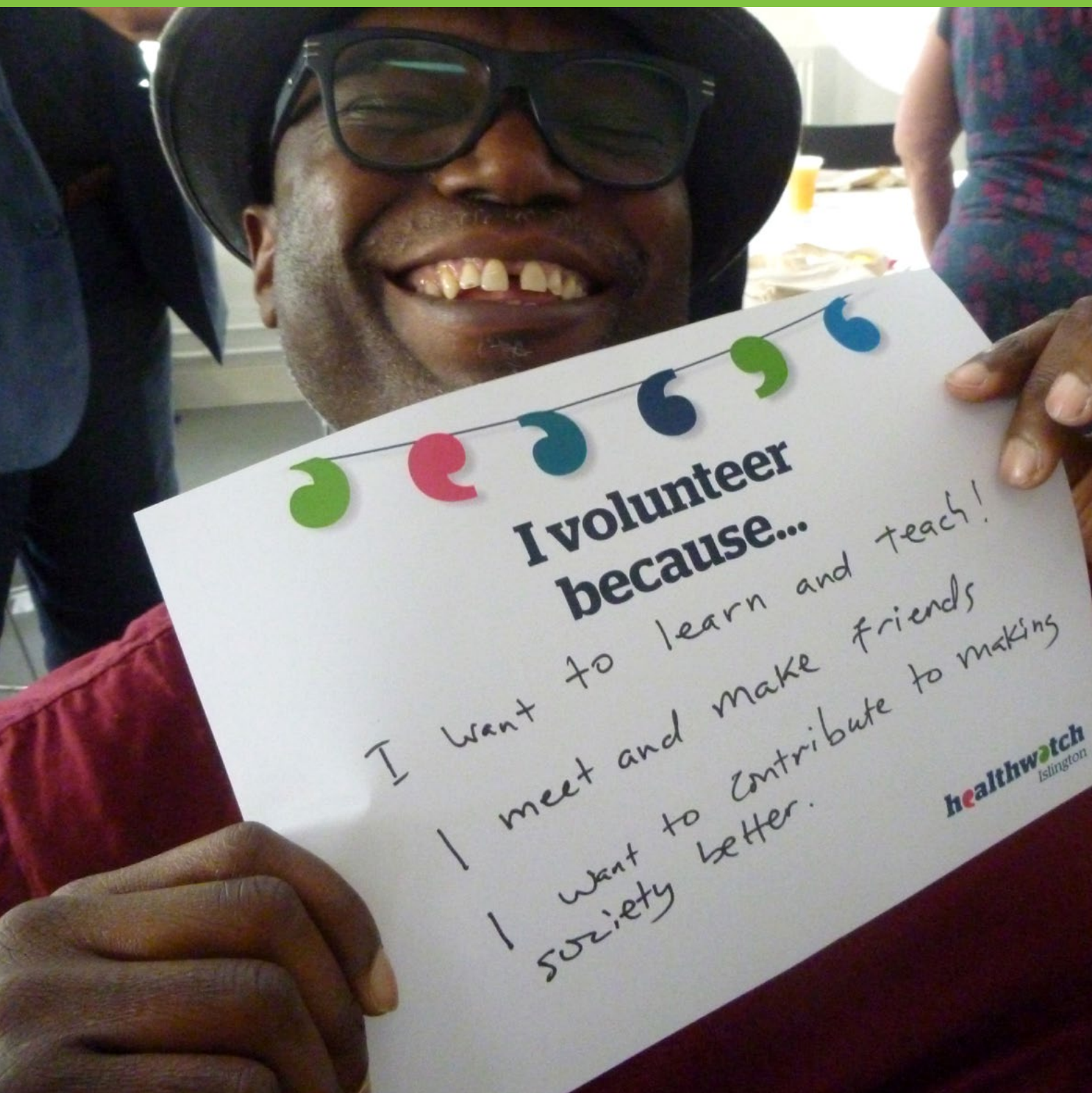
If you have a query about a health or social care service, or need help with where you can go to access further support, get in touch. Don't struggle alone. Healthwatch is here for you.

Website: www.healthwatchislington.co.uk/advice-and-information

Telephone: 07538 764436

Email: philippa.russell@healthwatchislington.co.uk

Volunteers



At Healthwatch Islington we are supported by 20 volunteers to help us find out what people think is working, and what people would like to improve, to services in their communities.

This year our volunteers:

- Raised awareness of the work we do at events, and in the community.
- Visited services to make sure they are providing people with the right support.
- Helped support our day-to-day running.
- Trained as digital champions and supported people at risk of digital exclusion.
- Listened to people's experiences to help us know which areas we need to focus on.

ORAL HEALTH: Care home residents are well supported by staff to maintain healthy mouths and teeth

Thanks to the work of our volunteers, we can feel reassured that the quality of oral health care is good in care homes in Islington.

Healthwatch volunteers visited six local care homes and spoke to residents, relatives and staff. They asked about teeth and mouth cleaning, whether anyone had any problems with eating and drinking, and how often residents saw a dentist. They were impressed with what they found:

- Residents were well supported with care of their teeth and dentures
- Staff were well trained in oral health issues
- Staff said that the support provided by the Oral Health Promotion Team from Whittington Health was really valuable

Volunteers did feel that support could be even better if more information about dental care was given to relatives when their loved



'I last saw a dentist five years ago. I don't need to because I have dentures and they're comfortable.'

ones first entered the home, and if residents had more consistent access to dental check ups. We shared these suggestions with the homes in a report on our visits.

It is a fantastic report and we will continue to improve our services based on the recommendations.

Fatma Makalo, Centre Manager, Bridgeside Lodge



Volunteer with us

Are you feeling inspired? We are always on the lookout for new volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering, please get in touch.

Website: www.healthwatchislington.co.uk/volunteer

Telephone: 07538 764457

Email: jennifer.kent@healthwatchislington.co.uk

Our volunteers

We could not do what we do without the support of our amazing volunteers. Let's hear from some of the team and find out what it's like to volunteer.



Sue, active resident

'I like meeting people and talking to them and observing how people are treated and what could be done better. I think Healthwatch plays a very useful role in our community. They treat volunteers like colleagues and the atmosphere is always friendly at meetings and on visits. Other organisations could learn a lot from Healthwatch!'



Rose, carer

'I think the thing that is most personally satisfying about volunteering for Healthwatch is shaping the future of health and care services - working with ordinary people who use services and using their feedback to make those services better.'



Kate, student

'Volunteering with Healthwatch has been and continues to be a very rewarding experience. The team have always been incredibly accommodating of my needs and other commitments, notably university, and have always shown genuine care for my health and wellbeing. Thank you Healthwatch!'

I thoroughly enjoyed my role as a Healthwatch Digital Champion. It's been brilliant to be part of a project that encourages and supports people taking their first steps in getting online. It's been such a joy to witness their 'a-ha' moment.

Being part of the project has also helped me with my own confidence as I've met lovely individuals from various backgrounds and I feel more connected to my local community.'

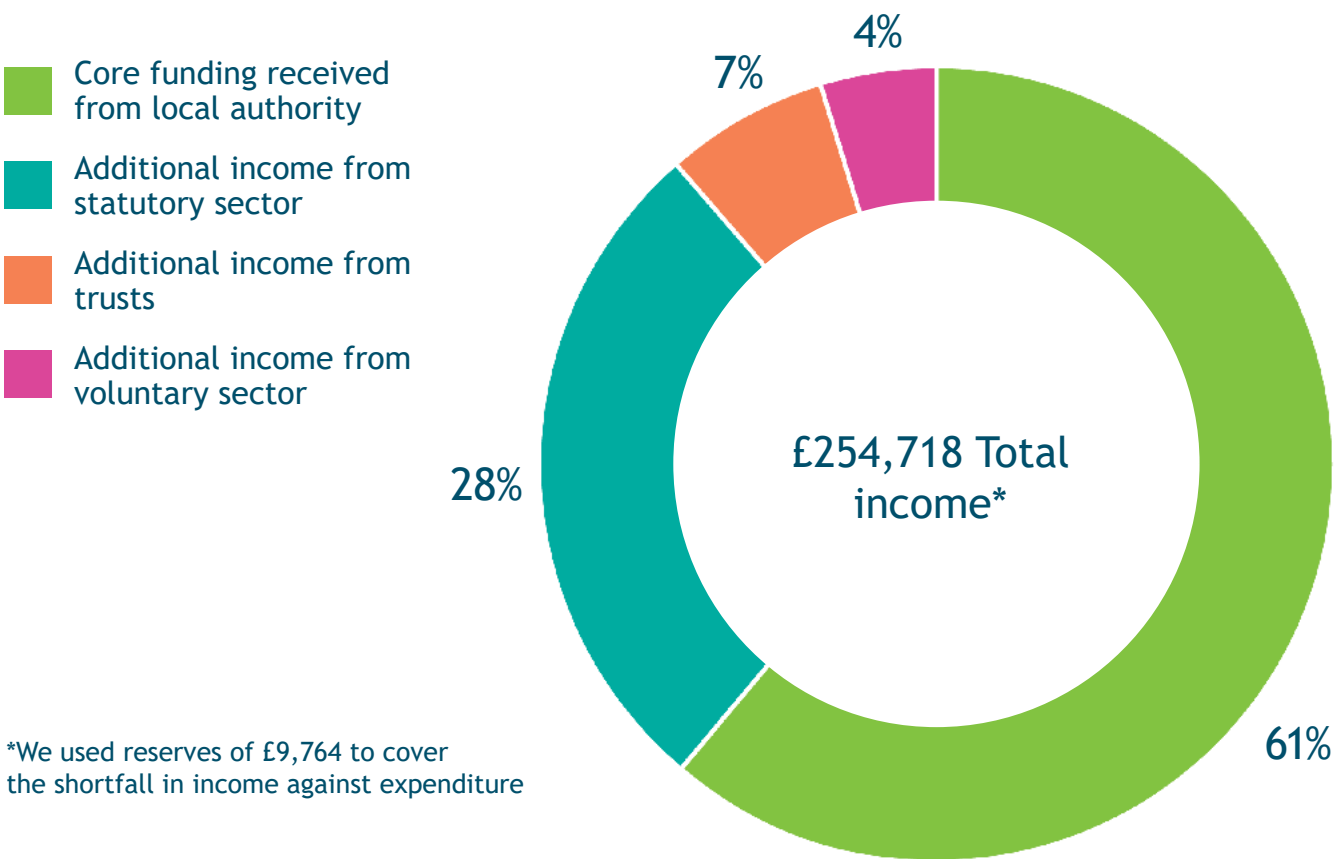
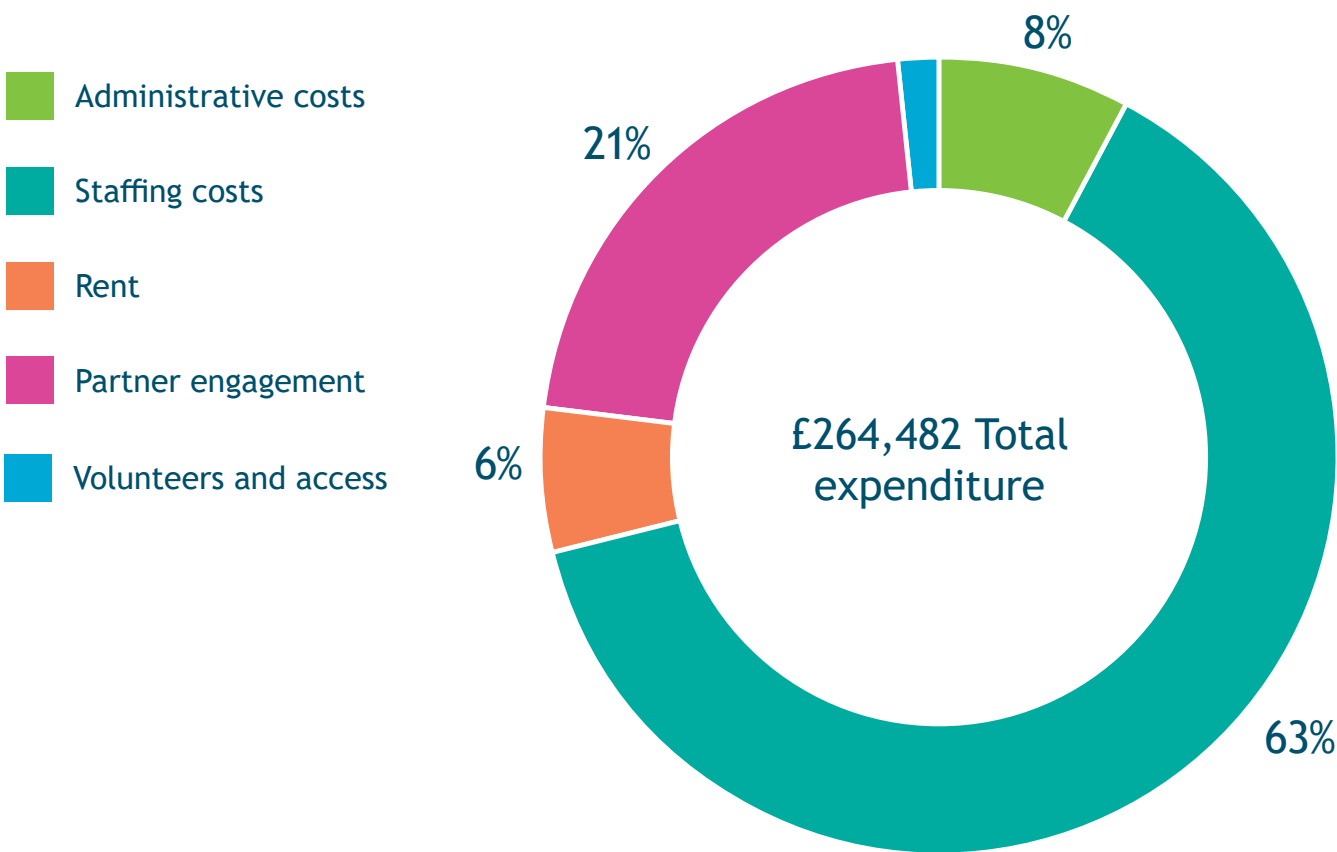
**Rachel,
Healthcare assistant**



Finances



We are funded by our local authority under the Health and Social Care Act (2012). In 2019-20 we spent £264,482.



*We used reserves of £9,764 to cover the shortfall in income against expenditure

Our plans for next year



COVID-19 has led to many changes to health and care services: non-urgent treatment being postponed, a reduction in face-to-face appointments, care homes limiting public access. It will be our role to help services to understand the impact that these changes are having in the wider community:

New beginnings

As lockdown eases, we will be moving to our new offices at Manor Gardens Welfare Trust. We have a long history of working together with Manor Gardens and others based within the building, including Age UK and the Stroke Project. We are part of the Food Poverty Alliance hosted by Manor Gardens and regular attendees at their Health Exchange briefings. The new space will give us more flexibility and we are sure it will strengthen existing partnerships and help us create new ones.

Of course our events and activities mainly take us out of the office and when it is safe to do so we will still be meeting residents in locations all around the borough. At the time of writing this report, we're not sure when that will be. In the meantime, we continue to talk to people over the phone and internet. We're here if you need help accessing services, or want to give your view.

Many thanks to the team at Voluntary Action Islington who have hosted us since we were first set up back in 2013.

In diversity there is strength and we commit to work with partner organisations to ensure that the voices of communities who may feel marginalised are heard. Our work with Diverse Communities Health Voice has helped us to help decision-makers to better understand community needs. This year, a member of the group will chair an Equalities Task and Finish Group of the borough's All Age Mental Health Board to help ensure that the particular needs of our black and minority ethnic communities are fully considered when mental health services are designed.



Our digital inclusion work started within this partnership and we are extending that out to more partners, and supporting more residents to be less isolated. Of course IT isn't as great as seeing people in real-life but in the short term it can help us connect with others and access vital services from home.

As a member of the Fairer Together Borough Partnership, we will champion residents' views and have committed to work with statutory and community colleagues to make Islington a fairer place

Emma Whitby
Healthwatch Islington Chief Executive

Thank you

Thank you to everyone that is helping us put people at the heart of health and social care, including:

- Members of the public who shared their views and experience with us.
- All of our amazing volunteers.
- Our Diverse Communities Health Voice Partners: Arachne, Community Language Support Services, Eritrean Community in the UK, Imece, Islington Bangladesh Association, Islington Somali Community, Jannaty, the Kurdish and Middle Eastern Women's Organisation and the Latin American Women's Rights Service.
- The Elfrida Society, Help On Your Doorstep, and Islington Borough User Group
- Network provider Three for sharing internet skills with our residents as well as funders Clarion, Awards for All, Cloudesley and Islington Council.
- University College London National Institute for Health Research for their support.



Contact Us

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