

Speaking up for better care

Healthwatch Kensington & Chelsea,
Healthwatch Westminster annual report
2025/26

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Acting Chief Executive
Chris McCann

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“The NHS plays a vital role in our lives, and we know it faces real challenges. Listening to people’s thoughts about their care is one of the best ways to improve services. Every comment, concern, and compliment helps health and care professionals see what works and what needs to change, so care can be safer and better for everyone.

“We want to say a heartfelt thanks to all the local people who have taken the time to share their experiences, and to the health and social care professionals who have listened and acted on that feedback. Your commitment has helped make a real difference for our community.”

A message from our chair



CEO

Katherine Shaw.



Our Bi-Borough team is committed to ensuring every voice is heard. Community engagement and amplifying the patient voice sit at the heart of all we do, as reflected in this report.

Despite the planned changes to Healthwatch, our teams and advisory board remain as passionate and committed as ever. Over the coming year, we will build on this strong foundation to deliver even greater impact for residents in RBKC and Westminster.



About us

Healthwatch Kensington & Chelsea and Healthwatch Westminster 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

Kensington & Chelsea

In 2025/2026 we supported more than **19,333** people to have their say and get information about their care. We employed **2** staff and, our work was supported by **10** volunteers.



Reaching out:

2,230 people shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.

17,103 people came to us for clear advice and information on topics such as **accessing advocacy support** and **finding an NHS dentist**.



Championing your voice:

We published **8** reports about the improvements people would like to see in areas like **hospitals, mental health** and **care homes**.

Our most popular report was **Patient Experience Programme report Q1 25-26**, highlighting people's struggles with **accessibility** and **quality of services**.



Statutory funding:

We're funded by the **Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea Council**. In 2025/26 we received **146,233**, which is **2.1% less** than last year.

Our year in numbers

Westminster

In 2025/2026 we supported **19,604** people to have their say and get information about their care. We employed **2** staff and, our work was supported by **10** volunteers.



Reaching out:

2,140 people shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.

17,464 people came to us for clear advice and information on topics such as **mental health support, navigating the NHS complaint process,** and **accessing NHS services.**



Championing your voice:

We published 7 reports about the improvements people would like to see in areas like **hospitals, GPs, mental health** and **car e homes.**

Our most popular report was **Patient Experience Programme report Q1 25-26,** highlighting people's struggles with **accessibility** and **quality of services.**



Statutory funding:

We're funded by **Westminster City Council.** In 2025/26 we received **£148,677.00** which is **1.6%** less than 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 Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster. Here are a few highlights.

Spring

Our Young People's Mental Health project revealed the pressures that young people face - from education, finances and social media to stigma and unequal access to care.



We responded by working with young people to co-produce a Young People's Preventive Wellbeing Toolkit, improving mental health awareness and promoting more inclusive, accessible and culturally competent care.



Summer

Our cost-of-living partnership found many low-income residents unaware they qualified for dental support, prompting clearer guidance, improved outreach, and better access services.



We responded to feedback on low awareness of available support, working with Local Dental Committee to simplify eligibility criteria and with Safeguarding Adult Executive Board to develop a clear community booklet.



Autumn

As part of our Patient Experience Programme, over 230 patients using primary and secondary care services highlighted that waiting times, accessibility and communication could be improved.



Our insights have been shared with service providers through reports and patient participation groups to improve patients' experiences of care.



Winter

Our community outreach with marginalised groups revealed significant gaps in health information, affecting experiences of services and the quality of support people receive.



Our tailored Know Your Rights sessions reduce these gaps by providing free, accessible advice and ongoing support to communities through regular, targeted outreach and engagement initiatives.



Working together for change

We've worked with neighbouring Healthwatch to ensure people's experiences of care in Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster are heard at Integrated Care System (ICS) level, influencing decisions about services across North West London (NWL).

This year, we've worked with Healthwatch across NWL to achieve the following:



A collaborative network of local Healthwatch:

We strengthened collaboration across local Healthwatch during a period of change, ensuring residents' voices continued to shape health and social care. By coordinating insights, supporting shared priorities, and representing collective experiences at Integrated Care Board level, we helped preserve community voice and influence decision-making across NWL, even amid structural changes and uncertainty.



A big conversation:

Findings from our Patient Experience Programme have helped our ICS better understand the needs of vulnerable communities, including people experiencing homelessness and digital exclusion. These insights have informed improvements in access and quality of care, ensuring that services are becoming more responsive, equitable, and focused on delivering better outcomes for those who need support most.



Building strong relationships to achieve more:

We worked with voluntary and community sector partners to develop a Community Intelligence Tool capturing residents' lived experiences. This work is improving shared understanding, reducing duplication, and supporting more coordinated engagement. Next steps include refining the tool and establishing a strategic participation group to guide neighbourhood health service design.

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 **Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster** this year:



Creating empathy by bringing experiences to life

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

Through our Patient Experience Programme at St Mary's Hospital, patients shared concerns about racist comments in a male restroom, leaving them feeling unsafe and unwelcome. We escalated this immediately, prompting swift action to remove offensive material across the hospital and strengthen commitment to inclusive, respectful environments. This led to a renewed focus on patient dignity and belonging. Follow-up visits confirmed meaningful change, with patients reporting they now feel safer, respected, and more confident accessing care within the hospital environment.



Getting services to involve the public

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

Homeless communities we engaged with highlighted the importance of clear advice and effective signposting both at the point of access and after treatment, in building trust and ensuring continuity of care. Our findings from the Patient Experience Programme at Dr Hickey Surgery have directly influenced improvements in the advice and support available, while also informing more responsive, inclusive service design that better meets the needs of people experiencing homelessness and strengthens overall engagement with healthcare services.



Improving care over time

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

We share feedback from our Patient Experience Programme with Chelsea and Westminster NHS Foundation Trust through monthly Patient & Public Experience & Engagement Group meetings, highlighting outpatient issues such as long waits and inconsistent communication. This has led to improvements including Chelsea and Westminster Hospital asking patients about communication preferences and introducing information screens to provide waiting time updates and improve patient experience.

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.



Championing young people's concerns to improve access to mental health care

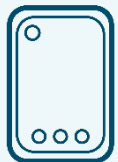
Young people shared their insights and lived experiences, highlighting what helps prevent mental health challenges before they reach a crisis point.

Following our Young People's Mental Health project in 2023, we invited 20 young people aged 18-25 years to share the key factors contributing to poor mental health and prevention measures, as highlighted in our previous report.

What did we do

We held a coproduction event to better understand the impact that various factors – from social media and academic pressures, to stigma and social isolation – have on young people's mental health. Through collaborative discussions, we also listened to young people's suggestions on preventive measures that would support them.

Key things we heard:



72%

of participants stated that social media and online platforms increase feelings of pressure and comparison.

64%

stated that active listening and trust would reduce stigma and help young people speak up about their mental health.

13%

reported concerns about unequal access to services, particularly for ethnic minority groups.

Our work showed how multiple barriers – including low awareness of support, stigma, and unequal access – can prevent young people from accessing timely and appropriate mental health support.

What difference did this make?

The findings will be used to develop a Young People's Preventive Wellbeing Toolkit, co-designed with young people to capture practical strategies and recommendations. The toolkit will be shared with service providers across North West London, as well as with young people, community organisations, and professionals supporting young people's wellbeing to inform service design and improvements to care.

Improving access to care for people experiencing and transitioning out of homelessness

Homeless communities say clear advice and guidance is needed of health services at the point of access and after treatment.

We spoke with over 260 people experiencing homelessness about accessing healthcare. Their insights highlighted the need for more clearer information on navigating services, particularly for migrant communities and those transitioning out of homelessness.

Key things we heard:



65%

of respondents told us they would benefit from clearer information on accessing healthcare and support services.

35%

of respondents said they rely on informal sources, such as social media or word of the mouth, to find health information.



“No one explains things clearly, so we just ask around or look online to figure out what support is available.”

We've worked with homeless communities, particularly migrant groups, to deliver tailored advice and signposting sessions that close knowledge gaps and improve access to essential support.

What difference did this make?

Our work has reshaped service design to better support people experiencing homelessness and those transitioning out of it. We have expanded access to clear, tailored information on dental care, including mobile services for asylum seekers, guidance on HC2 applications, advocacy support, and adult social care. By improving how services communicate and respond to diverse communities, we have helped reduce barriers, support integration into society, and enable more equitable access to essential healthcare services.

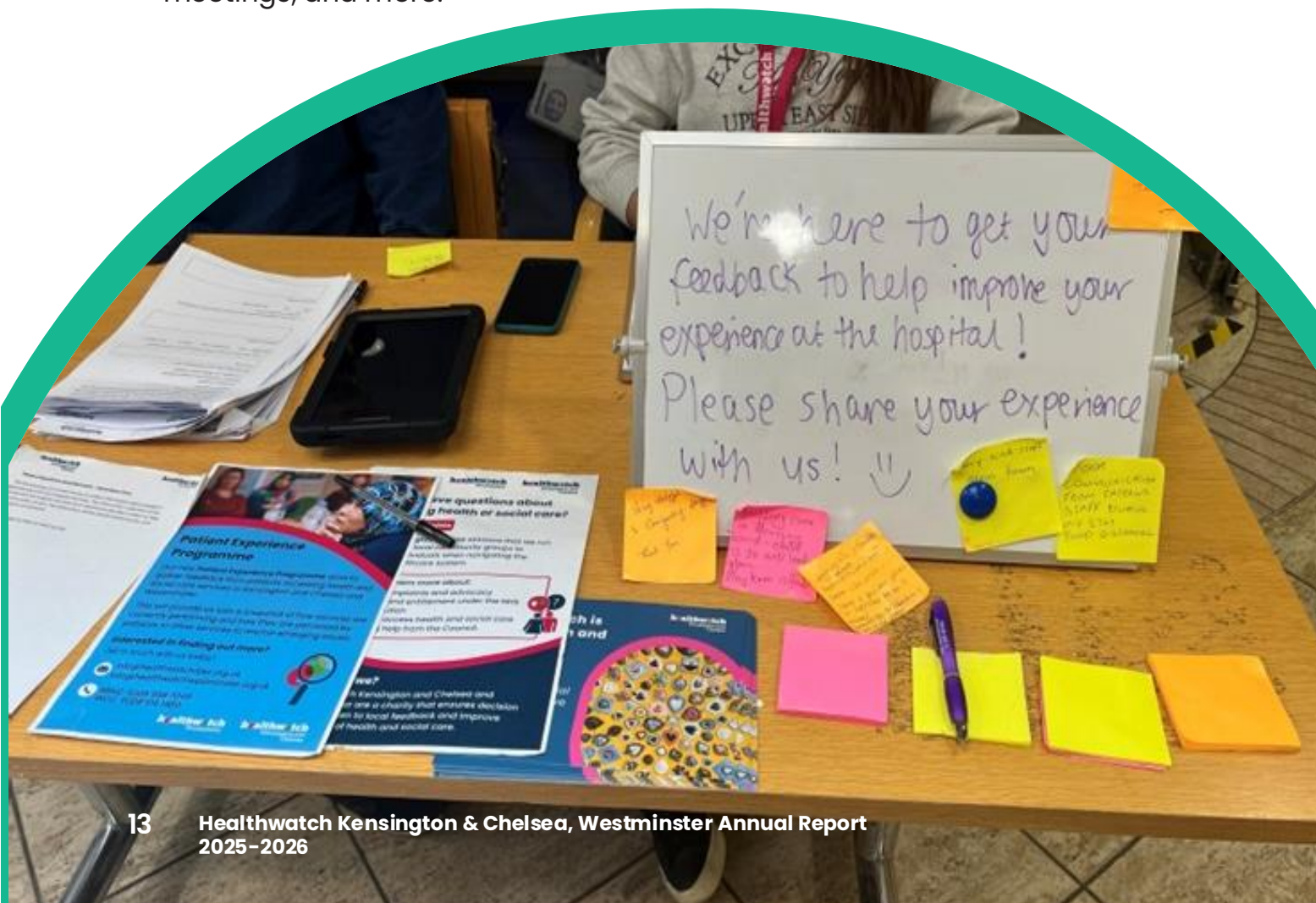
Hearing from all communities

We're here for all residents of **Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster**. 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:

- Attending forums to deliver free, tailored advice and signposting services through our Know Your Rights Programme to vulnerable communities, including people with disabilities.
- Working with statutory services and community organisations, especially in deprived wards, to reach people facing socio-economic challenges, i.e. housing, unemployment, and more.
- Sharing our findings to amplify residents' voices at strategic meetings, i.e. Health and Wellbeing Board, Safeguarding Adult Executive Board, scrutiny meetings, and more.



Improving understanding of social care within digitally excluded communities

We investigated access to social care for the elderly community.

People told us during our outreach at digital hubs that they faced barriers accessing online services, including booking and rescheduling appointments. Many lacked digital skills and confidence, while others had concerns about how their personal data is used and protected, limiting their willingness to engage with digital healthcare services.

What difference did this make?

Our findings informed discussions at the Council's Digital Inclusion Steering Group, highlighting the need for tailored workshops. This has supported the development of enhanced training on accessing digital services and improving understanding of data security, helping build confidence and enable more people to engage with online healthcare.

Helping disabled residents access health and social care

Our Know Your Rights programme allowed us to hear directly from disabled residents about persistent barriers to accessing health and social care.

During our Know Your Rights sessions with local disability organisations, residents told us that they face ongoing difficulties accessing GP appointments, specialist referrals and NHS dental care, alongside high costs and poor communication from services. Many said their communication and accessibility needs are not consistently asked or recorded, particularly when using online systems.

What difference did this make?

Our Know Your Rights programme with disability organisations has led to our membership of a local Disability Forum, strengthening relationships with disabled residents and amplifying their lived experiences at Disability Access Group meetings. This has supported ongoing dialogue with services to improve accessibility, communication and patient experience, ensuring resident voices directly inform service understanding and development.

Information and signposting

When you're struggling to find an NHS dentist, looking for help about how to make a complaint, or need advice about a good care home for a loved one – we're your first port of call.

This year **36,979** people have reached out to us for advice, support or help finding services. Through our online information and signposting service, we connected with **35,000** people, while a further **1,979** engaged through community outreach, phone-ins, Have Your Say forms, and emails. These conversations also help us to understand where, and how, your care can be made better.

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



Improving access to urgent mental health support for students

Following Luke's experience, services are improving how urgent mental health concerns are identified, escalated, and supported to ensure timely access to appropriate care.

Luke, a student, contacted us after struggling to access timely mental health support while feeling suicidal. We immediately escalated his concerns to safeguarding teams and contacted the hospital he had approached to ensure urgent intervention.

As a result, Luke was able to access appropriate mental health services and connect with local community support groups. Our borough managers now attend Strategic Participation Group meetings, using cases like Luke's to influence improvements in the council's mental health strategy and strengthen crisis response pathways.



“Healthwatch Westminster saved me!”

Improving access to NHS dentistry

Samantha felt she was being denied appropriate NHS dental care after being advised she needed root canal treatment and later discovering her NHS referral had not been submitted.

Samantha raised concerns about pressure from her dental practice to choose private treatment as well as delays in her NHS treatment referral, and poor communication, including an unanswered complaint and difficulty contacting Central London Community Healthcare (CLCH) dental services

We supported the resident by contacting the dental practice, prompting them to acknowledge her concerns. We also signposted her to NWL ICB and CLCH specialist dental triage services who confirmed that her referral had been prioritised for NHS endodontic treatment.



“Thank you very much for forwarding the direct contact number for the triage service. I have been able to talk to a member of the team and get the help I need!”

Showcasing volunteer impact

Our fantastic volunteers have given **845 hours / 121 days equal to £10,317.45 saved based on a £12.21 minimum wage** 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 communities to promote our work
- Collected experiences and supported their communities to share their views
- Carried out enter and view visits to local services to help them improve



At the heart of what we do

Through listening and action, our volunteers have helped amplify community voices and improve awareness and care. Here's what our Volunteers have to say:



Fana

Volunteering with Healthwatch has been a really valuable experience for me. Its given me a much deeper understanding of how the NHS work's and the challenges people face when trying to access care. Speaking directly with residents helped me see first hand the concerns within the community and how important it is for their voices to be heard.

This experience has not only built my confidence but also confirmed my passion for care.

Because of my time with Healthwatch , I feel more prepared and motivated to start my Nursing course in September.

I have been a Volunteer with Healthwatch since it began in 2013, its been an incredibly rewarding journey. Over the years, ive gained so much experience and contributed to many projects that support the improvement of local health and care services.

Even after all these years, Healthwatch is still an organisation I feel proud to represent. I am grateful to have been part of its Journey from the very beginning.



Anna

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.healthwatchrbkc.org.uk

www.healthwatchwestminster.org.uk



0208 968 7049

0208 106 1480



Info@healthwatchrbkc.org.uk

Info@healthwatchwestminster.org.uk

Finance and future priorities

We receive funding from **[your local authority]** under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to help us do our work.

Our income and expenditure:

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from Government	£294,910	Expenditure on pay	£236,944
Carried over from last year	£43,346	Non-pay expenditure	£30,362
		Office and management fee	£70,825
Total income	£338,256	Total Expenditure	£338,131

Finance and future priorities

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 four priorities for the next year are:

1. Developing our two core programmes.

Our Patient Experience Programme is delivered by trained volunteers in health settings, and aims to capture patients experiences of healthcare so that we can make recommendations to the people who pay for and provide healthcare services.

Our Know Your Rights Programme is delivered by Healthwatch Officers at community groups in partnership with local VCS organisations. We deliver advice, information and signposting sessions to support people to know their rights under the NHS constitution, how to access healthcare, and how to make a complaint and get advocacy support when things go wrong.

2. Young People's Mental Health:

Following our previous research on Young People's Mental Health, we plan to support wider efforts on action for young people's mental health. We will facilitate co-production sessions with young people to create information and signposting resources for young people to support awareness and access to mental health services.

3. Enter and Views: Mental Health Hostels:

A core part of our Enter and View Program this this year will be visiting MH hostels in the bi-borough to determine what is going well and what could be improved for those undergoing mental health rehabilitation.

Finance and future priorities

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.

Cont.

4. Carer's Experience Project with an emphasis on cancer carers.

We have heard concerns from the community regarding carer's experience. That coupled with being told by local third sector organisations that those who would count as carers, but do not identify as carers, being left out, inspired this piece of our work program.

Statutory statements

The Advocacy Project, The Stowe Centre, 258 Harrow Road, London, W2 5ES.

Healthwatch Westminster, Kensington & Chelsea 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 **16** 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 2025/26, the Board met **8** times and made decisions on matters such as transforming our core programmes, including but not limited to Patient Experience, Know Your Rights, and Enter and Views. 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 2025/26, 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 and provide hard copies upon request.

Statutory statements

Responses to recommendations

We had no 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 Adult Social Care and Health Select Committee, Health and Wellbeing Board and the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in the North West London Integrated Care System. For example, we attend the Bi-borough Place-Based Partnership meetings to share what we are hearing from residents on relevant topic areas. We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Kensington & Chelsea, and Healthwatch Westminster is represented on the Joint Health and Wellbeing Board by Gina Aston, Impact & Involvement Manager at The Advocacy Project.

During 2025/26, our previous representative effectively carried out this role by attending the board and raising concerns such as support for people who have a learning disability and also do not speak English.

Healthwatch Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster is represented on NWL Integrated Care Partnerships by Blessing Ogunoshun.

Statutory statements

Enter and view

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
Beachcroft House Care Home, 111 Shirland Road Westminster W9 2EL	An example of an elder care facility. Did this visit through the lens of examining safeguarding	We made recommendations surrounding resident choice and advertising their safeguarding procedures to residents.
Garside House Nursing Home-Sanctuary Care 131-151 Regency St, Westminster SW1P 4AH	An example of an elder care facility. Did this visit through the lens of examining safeguarding	We made recommendations surrounding resident isolation, and timely repairs.
Norton House Care Home, 10 Arneway St, Westminster SW1P 2BG	An example of a GP practice in Westminster,	We made recommendations surrounding the practice's strong safeguarding environment, its quality management culture, and staffing levels
Ellesmere House Care Home 9 Nightingale Pl, SW10 9NG	An example of an elder care facility in RBKC.	We made recommendations to continue their best practices of staff wellbeing, clear standards of reporting, and family engagement.
St Charles Hospital-Mental Health Centre Exmoor Street, Kensington & Chelsea W10 6DZ	An example of a mental health facility in RBKC	We made recommendations regarding required building repairs and improving activity schedules for residents.
Loveday Kensington, 2 Kensington Square, London W8 5EP	To observe and highlight examples of Good practice and high-quality care within a residential care home	Increase opportunities for residents to engage with and participate in their local community, both within and outside care home.

Statutory statements

2025 – 2026 Outcomes





Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
Cost of living community partnership work	Healthwatch teams have reached out to local community champions to diversify support services for residents impacted by the cost of living by integrating resilient services and staying warm and safe advice and signposting during the winter periods.
North West London ICB's NHS 10-year plan development	Our petition on the independence of patient voice has reached the threshold for a government response, marking a significant step in elevating this issue nationally. This has strengthened the visibility of concerns around maintaining independent patient representation within evolving health and care structures.
Improving oversight through partnership with the Care Quality Commission and POhWER	Insights from POhWER on serious concerns raised through NHS complaints advocacy have been shared with the CQC, strengthening oversight of provider quality. This has informed ongoing discussions and positioned us to influence improvements in care, with outcomes now being monitored through regular meetings and reporting structures.

healthwatch
Westminster

healthwatch
Kensington and
Chelsea

The Stowe Centre
258 Harrow Road
London, W2 5ES

Healthwatch Westminster

-  www.healthwatchwestminster.org.uk
-  0208 106 1480
-  info@healthwatchwestminster.org.uk
-  @hw_westminster
-  hw_westminster
-  Healthwatch Westminster

Healthwatch Kensington & Chelsea

-  www.healthwatchrbkc.org.uk
-  0208 968 7049
-  info@healthwatchRBKC.org.uk
-  @healthwatchRBKC
-  healthwatch_rbkc
-  Healthwatch Kensington and Chelsea

Healthwatch England

-  www.healthwatch.co.uk
-  03000 683 000
-  enquiries@healthwatch.co.uk