



Speaking up for better care

Healthwatch Oldham annual report 2025/26

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Acting Chief Executive
Chris McCann

“

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

Our work develops an understanding of patient's experiences of health and social care – particularly seldom-heard voices – and uses this to drive change to improve services for all.

In 2025–6 we have:

- Launched our report on the experiences of people living with learning disability and diabetes, resulting in impact particularly around awareness and prevention information to make this more inclusive for those with learning disabilities.
- Presented findings from our Royal Oldham Hospital engagement events to ensure positive changes to patients as they enter the hospital.
- Listened to experiences of women as part of our Let's Talk Cervical Cancer screening project. We look forward to publishing this report in 2026 and seeing the impact of women's voices on service provision.
- Initiated a piece of work to understand Roma Women's experiences of health care.



Chair
Jacqueline Wood



“Proposed legislative changes have led to a challenging year for Healthwatch Oldham but we have remained focussed on our core work, ensuring health and social services can improve by listening to patients and residents. I thank our staff and volunteers for their continued support and dedication to our work.”

About us

Healthwatch Oldham 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 champion the voices of and work together with local people to influence positive change and to ensure their health and care experience is the best that it can be.



Our values are:

Work as a Team

We will work effectively together and support each other to work flexibly as a team in a compassionate and empathic way.

Listening and Including

We are here for everyone. We will listen to, engage with and include local people to hear everyone's voice regarding their ideas for change in health and social care.

Strengthen Others

We want local people to have the confidence and information to access the care they need. We will act upon the information, feedback and ideas shared with us to enable this to happen.

Be True

We will analyse and report upon the experiences and feedback we receive from local people and services to honestly represent their views and to independently make recommendations for change.

Our year in numbers

In 2025/2026 we supported more than 1750 people to have their say and get information about their care. We employed 5 part-time staff and, our work was supported by a volunteer.



Reaching out:

1218 people shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.

549 people came to us for clear advice and information on topics such as **GP appointments** and **mental health support**.



Championing your voice:

We published a report about the improvements people would like to see in supporting individuals with Learning Disability and Diabetes.

We continued to champion our 2025 reports on secondary cancer and patient experiences of Royal Oldham hospital.



Statutory funding:

We're funded by Oldham Council. In 2025/26 we received **£139,200**, a similar amount to the previous 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 Oldham. Here are a few highlights.

Spring

We presented findings from our Royal Oldham Hospital engagement events and concluding report



Continued to influence key stakeholders to influence recommendations from our secondary cancer report published in 2025.



Summer

We launched our report on the experiences of people living with learning disability and diabetes

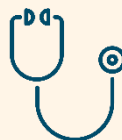


Our Oldham Women's Health event brought over 375 residents together with organisations and services to explore women's health issues.



Autumn

We championed CPR training for sanctuary seekers and supported them to access primary care through our 'No ID' fliers and cards.



We supported Oldham residents living with prostate cancer to take part in a Greater Manchester wide survey.



Winter

We developed our plans for engaging Roma women on their experiences of health building on initial engagement in the autumn.



We prepared our Let's Talk Cervical Cancer screening report based on feedback from over 225 residents and more than 50 professionals.



Working together for change

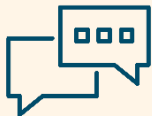
We've worked with neighbouring Healthwatch to ensure people's experiences of care in Greater Manchester are heard at the Integrated Care System (ICS) level, and they influence decisions made about services across Greater Manchester.

This year, we've worked with 9 Healthwatch across Greater Manchester to achieve the following:



A collaborative network of local Healthwatch:

At the start of the collaboration, in 2022, we set out a three year All Age Strategy. Over the lifetime of this strategy, we have met and exceeded all objectives set and agreed. This achievement reflects not just activity, but meaningful progress in how public voice is understood, valued, and used across Greater Manchester. Importantly, this progress has been achieved while maintaining the independence of local Healthwatch and strengthening our collective voice at a Greater Manchester level.



A big conversation:

We listened to thousands of people across Greater Manchester on a wide variety of topics across health and social care. These insights were shared at both local and ICS level to inform strategy, consultations and influence service design.

Our promise to champion the experiences of people and communities throughout Greater Manchester is as strong as ever.



Building strong relationships to achieve more:

The All-Age Strategy has created a clear and practical legacy. We have established a credible, trusted and independent public voice model that complements local statutory delivery while enabling collective influence across the system.

The landscape around us may be changing, but we're still looking ahead and are committed to evolving, strengthening, and championing independent public voice across Greater Manchester.

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 Oldham 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.

Working with Healthwatch Bury we supported those living with prostate cancer to complete surveys and attend a focus group with an NHS Urology consultant. The Oldham patient described how the focus group was "very open, informative and we all took something away from it". This research, based on a better understanding of people's lived experience, will be used to inform future patient care.



Getting service information to the public

By connecting services together we can help improve care for everyone.

We provided information about the two-hour rapid response team to the Cancer Care Coordinator for Maggie's Oldham. Awareness of this service improves the support Maggie's can provide to local families, supporting them to access timely healthcare and reducing presentation at Accident and Emergency departments.



Improving care over time

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

Healthwatch Oldham have continued to work with Royal Oldham Hospital and the following actions have been implemented since our report published in 2025: the purchase of 20 additional wheelchairs, increased cleaning in communal areas, signage has been refreshed, and a follow up meeting to obtain patients views in order to improve the main entrance area. We will continue to work with the hospital to review these changes and seek further improvements.

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.



Experiences of living with a Learning Disability and Diabetes

Last year, we championed the voices of adults with learning disabilities (LD) and diabetes to make services more accessible.

We launched a survey to better understand the experiences of individuals. We also carried out focus groups to hear from both individuals with LD and diabetes and their support workers.

Key things we heard:

80%

of survey respondents said they were not referred to a structured education diabetes course

Our findings highlight key challenges which are negatively impacting the ability of people with LD to prevent, self-manage, and access appropriate support, including:

- Access to Structured Diabetes Education Courses
- Communication with healthcare professionals
- Accessible information and advice
- Experience at diagnosis
- Access to specialist support



“I want a better understanding of Diabetes – in a format that someone with a learning disability can understand.” Focus group participant with LD

What difference did this make?

The report has been sent to GP practices across Oldham, and we presented the report at a ‘lunch and learn’, drawing attention to the findings and key recommendations along with a pool of resources for GPs to use. The Good Health Group who had already committed to renewing the LD champion’s programme utilised our report to increase engagement across practices. Two local providers of diabetes courses committed to making adjustments to increase accessibility for those with LD.

Hearing from all communities

We're here for all residents of Oldham. 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:

- Working closely with local organisations who support Roma, Traveller and Gypsy communities to develop a piece of work to understand Roma women's experiences of healthcare
- Regular engagement with sanctuary seekers to support their access to healthcare
- Hearing from adults with learning disabilities about their experiences



Helping sanctuary seekers access healthcare

We challenged refusals to register patients without ID for GP services.

Through regularly attending a Red Cross drop-in for sanctuary seekers (refugees and migrants) it became apparent that a number had been refused registration as new patients with local GP surgeries as they didn't have proof of identity. We increased our communication around this, raised it at a meeting with contacts in the system and re-distributed 'No ID' flyers and cards to empower and inform sanctuary seekers. We also asked the Primary Care communications team to promote the 'Doctors of The World' training.

What difference did this make?

The local Red Cross have informed us that since this work took place they have not received further reports of sanctuary seekers being refused registration.

Championing resources for support adults with learning disabilities

We hear from adults with learning disabilities and those who care for them that they experience barriers in access to information.

We have regularly shared resources produced by Oldham charity OPAL such as their easy read guides to annual health checks and 'LD and cancer', supporting adults with learning disabilities and those caring for them with the information they need to navigate services.

Supporting LGBT+ communities on smoking cessation

Tailored health messaging can increase the impact of these messages for different communities .

We connected the coordinator of an over 60s LGBT+ community group with the opportunity to shape a smoking cessation campaign for the LGBT+ community.

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 549 people have reached out to us for advice, support or help finding services. 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



How to contact us...

0161 622 5700

info@healthwatcholdham.co.uk

www.healthwatcholdham.co.uk

HWOldham

Healthwatcholdham

What we do...

Listen to our feedback

Influence a change in

Help with any NHS services

De-registered patient supported

Thanks to one patient's feedback, we've identified a barrier to accessing healthcare which could impact many others.

A patient contacted us in February because his GP Practice had de-registered him from their patient list. He had been informed that this was because he had not accessed their services for a while, even though he had received a prescription three months prior. After his attempts to liaise directly with the surgery were unsuccessful, he reached out for support. We contacted the surgery and were able to confirm that he had been re-registered and was able to collect his medication.

The Practice Manager advised that de-registration letters had been sent to all patients who had not accessed the service for three years or more as they have high numbers of patients who emigrate abroad and do not inform them. This raised concerns about the impact this may have on patients who experience inequalities, such as vulnerable adults and those with language or literacy challenges and raised questions about how patients are identified who have potentially emigrated. The Locality Director is raising the issue within NHS GM to look at both the policies around de-registering patients and communication when this occurs.

Helping residents access primary care

Carers in Failsworth told us they were unclear about where to go for care

We consistently receive feedback from Oldham residents about access to timely GP appointments. This year we have had a focus on 'other' NHS services that people can access i.e. NHS 111, Pharmacy First, 24hr Rapid Response Team, NHS guidance website and self-referral services and options such as Eye Care, Emergency Dentist, physiotherapy services.

For example, 22 service users of the Failsworth Health and Carers group engaged with the Healthwatch Oldham team to learn about primary care services, how these can be accessed and when to access them. Many were unsure of what NHS 111 offers and had not heard about the two-hour rapid response team, only some knew about the Pharmacy First services. We were able to signpost eight service users to various services and groups across Oldham and promote self-referral services.

We are currently liaising with the Integrated Care Board about formatting a document and communications strategy, highlighting all of the self-referral services and how to access these, to improve awareness and communication.

Showcasing volunteer impact

Healthwatch Oldham is grateful for the dedication our volunteers have shown to improving care, helping us to better understand what is working and what needs improving in our community.

This year we have not actively recruited new volunteers but our fantastic volunteer has:

- Supported our Forum event, helping people to complete our cervical screening surveys
- Collected experiences and supported their communities to share their views



Finance and future priorities

We receive funding from Oldham Council under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to help us do our work.

Our income and expenditure:

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from Government	£139,200	Expenditure on pay	£94,675
Additional income	£5000	Non-pay expenditure	£1,896
		Office and management fee	£22,000
Total income	£144,200	Total Expenditure	£118,571

Additional income:

- £5000.00 from the Integrated Care Board for work with Roma women's healthcare.

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.

We will be continuing to work with local partners to develop a system-wide approach to Oldham resident voice and influence, prioritising insight from communities experiencing the greatest health inequalities, and ensuring that patient voice and experience is influencing how health and care services are shaped and delivered. This work is helping us to understand what a future model for this work will look like in Oldham, given the national context for Healthwatch.

Our top three priorities for the next year are:

1. To launch our Let's Talk Cervical Cancer Screening report and work to ensure the recommendations are acted upon
2. To plan, deliver, report on and publish a research project exploring the experiences of seldom heard communities accessing health and social care services
3. To follow up on recommendations made through previous research projects to ensure feedback continues to influence and we can understand the impact of our work.

Statutory statements

Healthwatch Oldham is contracted to Action Together, 80 Union Street, Oldham, OL1 1DJ (registered charity no. 1165512).

Healthwatch Oldham 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 eight 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 five times and made decisions on matters such as changes to the operational model in light of national changes. 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 share it with Oldham Council, NHS GM, the Northern Care Alliance, Pennine Care and local media outlets.

Statutory statements

Responses to recommendations

All providers responded 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 Oldham Safeguarding Adults Board and the Quality, Safety and Safeguarding Strategic Group. We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level, and Healthwatch Greater Manchester to help address health and care issues across Greater Manchester.

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Oldham is represented on the Oldham Health and Wellbeing Board and the Integrated Care Partnerships Committee by Laura Windsor-Welsh, Oldham Locality Director.

During 2025/26, our representative has effectively carried out this role by providing insight into the patient voice on various topics and linking workplan priorities to public health strategic insights.

Our representative presented the Healthwatch Oldham priorities for 25–26 at the start of the year to the Health and Wellbeing Board and also presented the findings of the Learning Disabilities and Diabetes report to the Integrated Care Partnership Committee.

Healthwatch Oldham is also represented in the Oldham Engagement and Insight Network and is a member of the Leads group which is developing the Oldham Engagement Framework for engaging with residents across Oldham.

Statutory statements

Enter and view

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
N/A	N/A	N/A

2025 – 2026 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
Secondary cancer report	<p>Following meeting and presentations to NCA Clinical Cancer committee, NCA Cancer Patient experience group, GM Cancer Alliance, the following feedback has been provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report is timely and reinforces both the published evidence base and the priorities that underpin the GM metastatic cancer strategy; primarily that secondary cancer patients care needs need to be better addressed. • Greater Manchester NCA are dedicated to ensuring better care for secondary cancer patients and are therefore working towards embedding a localised set of standards through various working groups, which we have been invited to • It has been recognised that communication regarding secondary cancer at the end of primary care treatment needs to improve. GM Cancer Alliance are looking to work with healthcare professionals (including GPs) to ensure referral processes are understood, and risks of secondary cancer are explained.
Active Healthy Families Forum	<p>140 community members engaged with the event held April 2025 to find out about different health/care and wellbeing services available to themselves and their families. 25 health and care-related stalls and services were in attendance and talked to members of the public about their offer and how they can support.</p>

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