



Annual Report 2024–2025

Unlocking the power of people-driven care

Healthwatch Oldham

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“The impact that local Healthwatch have is vitally important. Healthwatch are empowering their communities to share their experiences. They’re changing the health and care landscape and making sure that people’s views are central to making care better and tackling health inequalities.”

“The feedback local Healthwatch hear in their communities and share with us at Healthwatch England is invaluable, building a picture of what it’s like to use health and care services nationwide. Local people’s experiences help us understand where we – and decision makers – must focus, and highlight issues that might otherwise go unnoticed. We can then make recommendations that will change care for the better, both locally and across the nation.”

Louise Ansari, Chief Executive, Healthwatch England

A message from our Chair

Listening to the views of local people regarding their experiences of local health and care services is critical to the work of Healthwatch Oldham and throughout 2024/25 we worked with different Oldham communities to achieve this.

We worked closely with key partners to run health events for local people (including an Active Healthy Families Event at Oldham Library where we had over a thousand visitors) and were able to provide information, advice and health checks, signpost people to further support and receive information and insight about local services at each of these events.

We were also able to publish a report regarding your views on secondary/metastatic cancer services, work with local GP Practices to help develop Patient Participation Groups, publish your stories regarding care experiences and conduct an Enter and View visit to Maternity Services at The Royal Oldham Hospital. Reports from all this work are still available to view on our website, and this annual report provides more information on our key work activities.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank everyone who attended our events, took part in our surveys or provided us with feedback about their health and care experiences. This provided information about what matters to you and gave us key data to share with local services regarding your views on what they are doing well and any opportunities for improvement. This information helped us to shape our work programme for 2025/6 as we continue to explore your feedback on what matters to you and to help local people to access key services. We will also continue to work with seldom heard groups to ensure that their voices are also represented within our feedback.

2024/5 has been an important year for Healthwatch Oldham and involved key changes to our management. After a period of interim support, we recruited a new Lead Officer to help us develop and manage our future work programme and activities. Our Board continues to grow and develop, and we have been able to recruit new local people to help us provide strategic oversight of our work.

Working in partnership with other organisations is crucial to our work, and we work closely with Healthwatch colleagues across Greater Manchester (GM) on joint projects. In 2024/5 we were able to provide local data regarding Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services and services that support the menopause, to ensure the voices of Oldham residents are heard within GM. We also work closely with the GM and Oldham health and care organisations responsible for planning and delivery of local services to ensure that the voices and experiences of Oldham people are heard and to act as a critical friend when we hear of opportunities for improvement, which can influence key health care decisions.



Our work would not be possible without the continued hard work of our staff, volunteers and Advisory Board members. I am proud to work with them and thank them all for their ongoing dedication. I would also like to thank Action Together, which hosts Healthwatch Oldham, and all our funders and partner organisations for their continued support. I very much look forward to continuing to work with you all over the next year.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'J Wood', with a horizontal line underneath.

Jacqueline Wood, Healthwatch Oldham Chair

About us

Healthwatch Oldham is your local health and social care champion.

We are the independent champion for people who use health and social care services. We're here to ensure that those running services put people at the heart of care.

Our sole purpose is to understand the needs, experiences and concerns of people who use health and social care services and to speak out on their behalf.

We focus on ensuring that people's worries and concerns about current services are addressed. We work to get services right for the future.



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

We've supported more than 3,362 people to have their say and get information about their care. We currently employ 5 staff and our work is supported by 11 volunteers.

Reaching out:



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

447 people came to us for clear advice and information on topics such as GP accessibility and finding an NHS Dentist.

Championing your voice:



We published 5 reports about the changes people would like to see in areas like an improved secondary cancer pathway, better access to CAMHS services and providing better resources in establishing their local PPG.

Our most popular report was Understanding Secondary/Metastatic Cancer, highlighting the struggles patients can have in accessing appropriate diagnosis and treatments for secondary cancers.

Statutory funding:



We're funded by Oldham Council. In 2024/25, we received £139,300.

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 launched our Young People's Mental Health survey, looking into the views and experiences of health and care from those who are the youngest in our society.



Attended various health walks throughout the borough of Oldham to help share our services with those in attendance, and also provide information and signposting where we could.



Summer

Delivered our Active Healthy Family Forum to 1192 people at Oldham Library. The day included various health taster sessions, such as family Yoga, family boxing, and Funky Fitness and Fun Sessions.



We followed up our Enter and View visit at the Royal Oldham Hospital Maternity Services and were pleased that improvements had been made, especially with staff morale.



Autumn

We held a public enquiry event at Oldham Library to consult with Oldham residents about what work we should include in our workplan for 2025/26.



We hosted a forum at the Sholver Community Centre where local residents were able to obtain information from a variety of local support services as well as get involved in some chair base exercises.



Winter

We were able to publish our secondary/metastatic cancer summary report, highlighting our findings of the work that has taken place over the past six months.



We have been able to put together our workplan for 2025/26 following the insight provided by Oldham residents, along with local stakeholders.



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 at the Greater Manchester ICS.

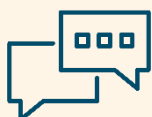
This year, we've worked with 9 Healthwatch across Greater Manchester to achieve the following:

A collaborative network of local Healthwatch:



We have progressed into the second year of our partnership agreement with the ICS, as part of a network of 10 local Healthwatch to amplify the voices of people across the region. We've contributed to regional strategies, produced GM-wide reporting, and launched shared platforms to strengthen our insight. Our representative ensures lived experience is heard and influences decisions across the ICS.

Voices from our communities:



We listened to thousands of people across Greater Manchester on topics like ADHD, Menopause, Pharmacy, Urgent Care and CAMHS. These insights were shared with the ICS and used to inform strategy, consultations, and influence service design. By working together across the region, we've made sure the experiences of individuals and communities are central to how health and care services are planned and delivered.

Building strong relationships to achieve more:



In November, Healthwatch in Greater Manchester hosted a conference, bringing together ICS leaders, Healthwatch staff, the VCSE sector and communities. We presented our work across the network, the importance of Healthwatch work and explored new ways of working, including stronger patient representation and co-production at the ICS level.

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:

Supporting patient voice groups across Oldham



Supporting Patient Participation Groups to find alternative ways of hearing the patient's voice.

Healthwatch Oldham has supported PCN leads to mirror a successful Patient Participation Group (PPG) model whereby a central PPG is formed rather than having individual PPGs in Oldham Central. This has proven to be a more successful way of receiving feedback, identifying patterns and forming solutions. Oldham North are now considering adopting a similar model.

Getting services to involve the public



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

Our themed health and wellbeing forums connect the community to local services, what's available to them and how to access them. In August 1192 adults and young people attended our Active Healthy Families forum in collaboration with Oldham Libraries, Heritage and Arts. 30 health and social care services and projects attended the forum to share information and raise awareness of their services. In addition, several interactive sessions (e.g., health walks) took place, providing an excellent networking opportunity.

Improving care over time



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

In June 2024, we followed up on our Royal Oldham Maternity ward Enter and View. We were pleased to see that our previous recommendations had made impact, including, a new 'welcome' sign in various languages, posters at patients' bedsides advising devices to be turned off at night, clearer signs in place with pictures for the exit procedure, staff's positive feedback regarding job satisfaction, recruitment drives for new roles and training/development offered over the last 6 months. In addition, women now consistently receive interpreter support, birth plans are now being discussed at 28 weeks, and work is ongoing to produce posters in different languages.

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.



Listening to your experiences

Patient insight – experiences of secondary cancer care

We gathered insight from secondary cancer patients and healthcare professionals working with secondary cancer patients to gain a better understanding of issues people are facing around their cancer care.

What did we do?

We launched two surveys, for people living with secondary cancer and for professionals. In addition, we held 3 focus groups online to ensure accessibility across Greater Manchester. 68 patients & 19 professionals completed our surveys, and 10 patients attended our focus groups. We published a findings report in February.

Key things we heard:



74%

said they did not receive information on the signs and symptoms of secondary cancer at the end of their primary cancer treatment.

35%

waited longer than 28 days for their secondary cancer diagnosis.

47%

said that communication between professionals was inadequate, meaning they felt the need to repeat themselves

Our work showed that many people with secondary cancer encounter similar challenges, which include diagnosis and referral delays, limited information on signs and symptoms, inadequate communication from professionals, lack of emotional and psychological support, and out of date secondary cancer statistics.

What difference did this make?

We've had encouraging conversations with NCA Cancer Care Committee, NCA Patient Experience Group and GM Cancer Alliance (GMCA). Moving forward both NCA and GMCA have assured us that they are now working as a GM wide working group to improve secondary cancer patient care experience, and the report will help to guide this work. Initial areas of focus include, addressing patient concerns regarding language used during consultation, improving diagnosis timelines to enable a timelier diagnosis, and adapting procedures to improve relaying information regarding signs and symptoms of secondary cancer at the end of primary cancer treatment. The report findings will also be incorporated into the 2026 GMCA conference.

Listening to your experiences

Patients experience of Royal Oldham Hospital

Children and young people say more education and information are needed to highlight the risks of smoking and vaping.

We spoke with over 63 people at Royal Oldham Hospital to understand their experiences, 6 of whom were inpatients, 34 outpatients, 10 staff members and 13 visitors. Their feedback highlighted the need for a review of several parts of the hospital.

Key things we heard:



40%

experienced challenges parking.

19%

drew attention to older parts of the hospital feeling tired, outdated or poorly maintained.



"I had to park on double yellow lines in the car park, as there was no other option."

We're now working with the Estates Team and the Chief Officer to explore realistic changes that can be made consequence of our report. With the goal of running a repeat survey in 12 months-time, we look forward to hearing how patients/visitors/staff experiences of the hospital will change.

What difference did this make?

From our preliminary discussions, our report has already started contributing to discussions on allocating budget to improve the Royal Oldham hospital entrance which much of the feedback we received focused on. There has been recognition of the issues with signage, maintenance of older parts of the hospital and parking challenges (including how to better promote the overflow carpark). We look forward to continuing these conversations.

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:

- Hosted two Healthy Family Forums within the borough to give residents the opportunity to speak to us in person and other local service providers.
- Held a public engagement event at Oldham Library to help understand residents' opinions on what we should be focusing on for 2025/26.
- The feedback from patients and professionals in our secondary/metastatic cancer report has been well received within the sector, and we are working with key stakeholders going into the new financial year.



Hearing from all communities

Hearing seldom heard communities – secondary cancer patients

Secondary cancer patients tell us how they felt their patient experience was different to patients with primary cancer.

Secondary cancer patients explained how this negatively impacted on mental, physical and emotional health.

What difference did this make?

NCA and GMCA agree that our findings are important and reflect the secondary cancer patient voice. They have assured us that they are looking at changes they can make to enable a better standard of care throughout the secondary cancer pathway. The report also gave people living with secondary cancer a platform to speak openly about the challenges they face and contribute to how aspects of health care can and should be better.

Understanding young peoples' view on mental health services available to them

Children and young people in Oldham told us about what impacts their mental health, what services/support they knew about and whether they access them.

Following on from the Greater Manchester (GM) pathway to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) report, which listed several recommendations including providing clear information regarding what to expect from CAMHS, creating a single point of access, and improving communication during the waiting period, Healthwatch Oldham wanted to better understand experiences across Oldham, specifically from young people.

What difference did this make?

NHS GM have said that the GM CAMHS report has directly impacted their ongoing mental health transformation work and has responded to each key recommendation (e.g., providing regular updates via text/emails to reassure young people and families during the waiting period). With this feedback, we look forward to working with ICB leaders in Oldham to implement the recommendations from our localised report on publication.

Information and signposting

Whether it's finding an NHS dentist, making a complaint, or choosing a good care home for a loved one – you can count on us. This year, 447 people have reached out to us for advice, support or help finding services.

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



Information and signposting

Attending Healthwatch Forum led to a volunteering role

By attending a local Healthwatch Oldham event, Tony discovered an opportunity to volunteer with OPAL, an Adult Learning Disability day service.

Tony had recently retired. He attended our Healthwatch forum to learn about health and care activities and opportunities that might be of interest to him. At the event, he got talking to the OPAL team, who encouraged him to sign up as a volunteer.

Tony has recently celebrated his one-year volunteering anniversary with OPAL and loves the work he is doing; he also brings members along to our HW events so they can find out more about local health and care services and activities.



“Healthwatch Oldham gave me an opportunity volunteer with a service that is close to my heart. If I’d not gone to the event I wouldn’t have been able to sign up”

Improving care through signposting to the rapid response team

Amanda was concerned about her elderly mother who was having regular falls.

After each fall, it was Amanada who would support her. We provided Amanada with information for the 2-hour rapid response team.

We were later contacted by Amanda, who explained that after another fall, they had contacted the rapid response team, who promptly arrived at the house to safely lift her mum and complete an assessment. The rapid response team contacted the Community Physio and Occupational Therapist (the family had been waiting for a home visit for over 6 months), who were able to complete an assessment three days later. A profile bed was subsequently sent so B could sleep downstairs.



“The rapid response team has provided a wonderful service and care, thank you to Healthwatch Oldham for promoting the service and passing on the details to my daughter.”

Showcasing volunteer impact

At the heart of what we do

From finding out what residents think to helping raise awareness, our volunteers have championed community concerns to improve care.

"I have volunteered for Healthwatch Oldham for 8 years. I think the reason I have continued is because they provide such a great resource for local people to have their say and keep informed about health and care services and what's available to them.

Over the last year, I have been encouraging people to complete online surveys and contact Healthwatch for advice and information, helping at the forums and have led health and Nordic walks at these events. This is a great opportunity to get people engaged in being more active provides a stepping stone to accessing local health walk groups.

At the last event I gathered feedback from participants on being part of a walking groups here's what they said " it Feels safer in a group" "seeing the season change is wonderful", "I get to meet new people" "Build new relationships" "find new routes and see different areas of Oldham" "it's free and keeps you active and mobile" "having a led walk keeps you motivated" " I get to find out what's going on in my community"

Away from my Healthwatch Oldham volunteering it's wonderful to see the team come along to local health walks and talk to group members about health and care and ways Healthwatch can support them – by doing this they are providing a support offer which is inclusive and accessible – just ones of the reasons why it's great to volunteer and work collaboratively with the team



Alan

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.healthwatcholdham.co.uk



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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	£110,183
Additional income	£2,885	Non-pay expenditure	£3,651
		Office and management fee	£28,000
Total income	£142,085	Total Expenditure	£141,834
Surplus of £251 (carried forward)			

Additional income is broken down into:

- £885 received from Healthwatch Trafford for work on the Pathway to CAMHS Project.
- £2,000 received from Healthwatch Bury for the Greater Manchester Network activities.

Next steps:

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 three priorities for the next year are:

1. Cervical Cancer Screenings – exploring barriers to accessibility
2. Availability of Day Centre Support for the Elderly Asian community
3. Availability of accessible and flexible support for Young Carers

Statutory statements

Healthwatch Oldham, Action Together CIO, Medtia Place, 80 Union Street, Oldham, OL1 1DJ

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 8 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 2024/25, the Board met four times and made decisions on matters such as Healthwatch Oldham policies and procedures, and the 2025/2026 workplan priorities. We also ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities to enable the advisory board to decide key 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 2024/25, 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 will be shared across our networks.

Statutory statements

Responses to recommendations

We have not had any 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 Mental Health Board, the Oldham Safeguarding Adults Board, the Quality, Safety and Safeguarding Strategic Group, the OCO Patient Experience Group, and the Primary Care Commissioning Committee. 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 Anna Howarth, Healthwatch Oldham Manager.

During 2024/25, 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.

Statutory statements

Enter and view

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
Royal Oldham Hospital Maternity Services	To follow up on concerns raised from our previous Enter and View.	Wrote a report with recommendations – the service followed up on these, and significant improvements have been made.

2024 – 2025 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
Secondary Cancer Pathway	Northern Care Alliance and Greater Manchester Cancer Alliance have recognised the importance of our findings, commenting that clinical language used by professionals is under review, procedures around receiving appropriate information at the end of primary care treatment are being implemented, and a working group has been established to review diagnosis timelines.
Royal Oldham Hospital	Our report has started contributing to discussions on allocating budget to improve the Royal Oldham hospital entrance. There has been recognition of the issues with signage, maintenance of older parts of the hospital and parking challenges (including how to better promote the overflow carpark). We are in discussion regarding a follow-up survey to review outcomes for these latter areas next financial year.
Children and Young People's (CYP) mental health services	Whilst we will not be able to feedback on outcomes on our localised CYP report until next financial year, there were several outcomes achieved following the GM CAMHS report, including strengthening communication during waiting period (promoting access to non-clinical updates and providing regular updates to ensure referrals are still active).

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