

# Championing what matters to you

Healthwatch Dudley  
Annual Report 2021-22

healthwatch  
Dudley



# Your local independent health and social care champion



We listen to what matters most to our communities and share what we hear with people who have the power to make change happen. **Because we believe that local services are stronger when they are shaped by local experience.**

From Halesowen to Coseley and everywhere in between, Healthwatch Dudley makes sure NHS leaders and other decision makers, hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care.

We can also help you to find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.



Inequality in our communities has been magnified to levels beyond belief. This has highlighted more than ever the importance of championing voices, that all too often go unheard.

Our priority is to reduce inequality by enabling decision makers to hear these voices, so they can work to remove some of the barriers people face.

The pandemic and subsequent restrictions have once again challenged how we engage. This hasn't stopped us and we are proud to have stayed connected with our communities throughout the year.

Our team has remained available by phone, email, social media, a form on our website and through a creative array of activities and events, when it has been possible to bring people together safely.

We have remained committed to delivering our statutory functions, which you will see evidenced within this report. Due to the pandemic, we did not make use of our Enter and View powers and have not needed to escalate any concerns to Healthwatch England.

Sally Huband  
Healthwatch Dudley Chair  
Dudley CVS Board

“With NHS and social care facing even longer backlogs, the unequal outcomes exposed by the pandemic are at risk of becoming worse.

Local Healthwatch play an important role in helping to overcome these adversities and are uniquely placed to make a positive difference in their communities.”



Sir Robert Francis QC,  
Healthwatch England  
Chair

## You told us lockdown zooms kept you connected

We listened and hosted lots of online sessions to hear important issues, share wellbeing information and to get people talking.

### Connecting community forums

Café Neuro, a forum for people with neurological conditions, hadn't met since before the first lockdown and asked for help with setting up their online forum. We hosted their first few zoom meetings, got them used to the technology and now they are up and running themselves, connecting, supporting each other and sharing key information about local services.

### Tackling the digital divide

We helped a local couple share their positive experience of keeping their disabled son connected during the pandemic, using free online tools. Paul and Tracy talked about their social isolation fears for their son Chris, at the first of two digital exclusion events, that we hosted in partnership with Sandwell Council of Voluntary Organisations and Dudley CVS colleagues in the summer. The events brought 14 local voluntary and community groups together, to network and share ideas about how digital innovation can be used to prevent social isolation.

We also presented the Healthwatch England 'Locked out' report of digitally excluded people's experiences of remote GP access, which included our research.

### Supporting local partnerships

Throughout the pandemic we have supported Dudley Dementia Alliance by hosting their online meetings, as they recognise that Zoom is a more community friendly online platform for their members.

### Winter wellbeing for older people

Gentle exercise, online safety, debt advice and a live cooking demonstration, from a community centre hosting activities for people living with dementia, were all on the menu at Winter Wellbeing for older people events in December.

We teamed up with Dudley Public Health and local partners to host two Zoom sessions to help older people and those who support them, keep warm, safe and well through the winter.

### Joint event with Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust

In November, Voluntary Sector partners were invited to an online event to share their experience of supporting people who face barriers with accessing health services, as a result of health inequality. **An ideas paper was produced for the Dudley Group health inequalities sub group, to help to shape existing and future hospital services.**



## Helping people through grief

People shared their experiences of grief at an online event that we hosted with partners, where we listened to people and shared information about local services.

**Conversations that took place have been fed into a new Dudley Bereavement Charter, which we supported Dudley Council to develop.**

Dudley Bereavement Charter is for everyone who lives and works in Dudley borough. Whether it inspires people to cross the road to talk to a grieving friend, or makes a local service more responsive to people who are bereaved, the charter is intended to help Dudley to be an even kinder and more caring community.

## Celebrating volunteers

We were delighted to get back into Brierley Hill Civic hall to celebrate the Dudley CVS AGM and Volunteer Awards in the autumn. We will look forward to formally sharing this report with local communities and decision makers once again on 2 November 2022. **3**



## Bringing people back together

We have loved connecting people through our digital forums but know some people aren't online, or don't know how to find us...

The pandemic prevented us from venturing too far last year so, when it has been safe to do so, we have taken every opportunity to get out and about and safely bring people together:

### Learning and sharing

Healthwatch Dudley is part of a Dudley CVS engagement enquiry that has been sharing learning and designing and testing a range of engagement approaches.

This work has been helping our team to consider where and why Healthwatch engagement takes place and to share our experience with wider Dudley CVS colleagues.

### Black Country and West Birmingham ICS Healthier Futures

We ran workshops at a 'Co-producing our strategy for people and communities' event at the Hawthorns Stadium in West Bromwich in March.

### Living well – feeling safe

In the autumn we listened to and signposted 61 people at a Dudley Council hosted Living Well Feeling Safe event and at a cancer awareness day with Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust.

Both activities in the Merry Hill shopping centre, enabled us to listen to local people and raise awareness of Healthwatch Dudley and how people can get involved.

### Hawbush Community Gardens

We met people at the Integrated Plus allotment which supports people who have been referred by their GP for social prescribing support.

We listened to challenges clients face and heard how the holistic support they receive, is making a difference to their mental health and wellbeing.

**A story we captured was shared at a national social prescribing conference.**

“Being outside is so good for you and since I have been coming here my mental health has been much better. People are incredibly welcoming and accepting. We've got an amazing group of people, all with different skills. Everyone has a role, even if it's sitting by the fire and chatting with other people – that's just as important.”

Anne, Hawbush client

## What it's like to be me

Our focus on inequality has seen us support a Dudley CVS pilot of co-creation with local groups, who feel less likely to be heard but who help people facing some of the biggest challenges in the borough.

The project invites people to take part in participatory research asking, "What it's like to be me". We're at the beginning of the journey and the stories that are already emerging, will equip groups with powerful evidence of the difference being made locally, what matters to people and where there are service gaps.

### Listening to refugees and asylum seekers

Dudley CVS has secured funding for a new programme offering enhanced social prescribing interventions for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

As part of this programme Healthwatch Dudley has been engaging with people from within these communities to identify their experiences of accessing healthcare services. **Outcomes from this work will feed into the newly established NHS Refugee Pathway Group.**

### Dudley refugee and asylum seeker voluntary sector network

Local residents, voluntary sector organisations and strategic partners came together in September to pull together resources for supporting refugees and asylum seekers from Afghanistan. The network is quickly gaining momentum identifying lots of opportunities for collaboration, networking and sharing of local intelligence. **Challenges faced by refugees and asylum seekers are being gathered in a variety of ways and shared with relevant partnership boards to ensure their voices are heard and the right support is available.**

"I don't have a dentist, I had pain in my teeth in 2012, I just turned up at a surgery and they pulled out the teeth that hurt. I haven't been back since."

Ben,  
Congolese Asylum Seeker

"I haven't been able to get a GP appointment for a year, every time I try to book there isn't an interpreter and I can't communicate. The hospital has called many times but I don't understand what they are saying. I got mixed up with a prescription as I didn't understand how much medicine to take."

Ali,  
Syrian Refugee



# Listening to local people

## Helping Deaf people to be heard

Our first face to face community meeting since the outbreak of Covid-19 took place in the summer with twelve members of Dudley Deaf Focus Group.

Deaf people told us about their experiences of getting access to information and health care during the pandemic and received the latest information from Dudley Council Public Health, about how to remain safe as Covid restrictions began to be lifted.

In October, we supported Deaf people to review Urgent Treatment Centre services on a visit to the Russells Hall Hospital site. Participants reviewed alert systems and discussed training, awareness, interpretation, communications and how information is shared with the Urgent Treatment Centre by primary care.

In March the group met with Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust to give feedback on hospital services and to make suggestions on how services could be more accessible.

Dudley Deaf Focus Group is supported by Healthwatch Dudley and Dudley Council Deaf Support Service. The group of 15 local Deaf people have a sole aim of improving communication for Deaf people by working with organisations in a positive and constructive way. (See front cover picture)

## Spotlight on primary care

The Covid-19 pandemic presented unique challenges to how health services operate. High Oak GP Surgery transferred to the Brierley Hill Health and Social Care Centre, and the Pensnett High Street surgery was transformed into a Respiratory Assessment Centre for Covid-19 patients.

Brockmoor, Pensnett, Brierley Hill and Dudley have some of the highest levels of deprivation in the country and we were keen to hear about the positive and negative impact of the move on local communities.

We worked with Dudley Integrated Health and Care (DIHC) to interview people who attended the High Oak Surgery in Pensnett, to get their views on where it might be permanently located and what local services might look like in the future. **Our independent report containing interview themes was produced for the DIHC Board and will complement a wider listening exercise to be carried out by the Trust.**

## Mental health listening events

In November, we listened to people's experiences of accessing Woodside Day Centre and heard their questions about the future of the service supporting adults living with mental ill health, following closure of the site. The building closed during the pandemic and Dudley Council is deciding how services will be delivered. **30 people took part in a series of virtual and face to face consultation events hosted by Dudley Council. We compiled an independent report highlighting issues, concerns, ideas and opportunities that were discussed by people who attended.**

Supporting you to have your say

We want more people to get the information they need to take control of their health and care, make informed decisions and shape the services that support them.

Providing a high quality service

We want everyone who shares an experience or seeks advice from us to get a high quality service and to understand the difference their views make.

Ensuring your views improve health and care

We want more services to use your views to shape the health and care support you need today and in the future.

# Involving communities in decision making

## Finding the best people for the job

Dudley Integrated Health and Care NHS Trust (DIHC) asked us to involve a panel of local people to support senior manager recruitment. We hosted an online information session with the Chair of the Trust and further planning sessions, so that people taking part felt confident to fully participate and to prepare questions ahead of each interview panel.

We involved 19 members of the public with DIHC Director of Strategy, Chief Operating Officer and Director of Nursing in face to face recruitment panels.

We were delighted to support Dudley College Health and Social Care students to be involved. Young people welcomed being able to add the experience for their CVs and are keen to support our future work.

## Dudley Adult Social Care Portals

People now have easier access to online information about adult social care, thanks to our volunteers and friends. Following our virtual People's Network where Dudley Council introduced their new adult social care portals, we hosted our first hybrid feedback session in partnership with Queens Cross Network. People with a range of wellbeing experiences zoomed into our face to face forum, enabling a wider range of people to test the new website, that will give people with Internet access, quick and easy access to information, giving local people more control.

We facilitated further testing sessions in December, for people with a wide range of health and wellbeing experiences and a session specifically for people with sight loss to examine access with screen reading software for visually impaired people. Visit: <https://adultsocialcare.dudley.gov.uk>

**Our sessions enabled local communities to scrutinise systems, ask sometimes challenging questions, and suggest system improvements from the perspective of people who will be using the site.**

We supported a further communications session which enabled local people to share ideas about promotion and to plan short films featuring members of the testing group.



**Adult Social Care  
in Dudley**

Better connected



*"Healthwatch Dudley were involved with the Dudley Citizen Portal implementation from start to finish. Whether people have visual needs or learning difficulties, you cannot develop a successful system without your target audience being involved at all stages. We made changes along the journey as a result of community feedback and cannot thank Healthwatch Dudley enough for their involvement."*

**Marie Spittle**

Head of Access & Prevention  
& Interim Head of the Integrated Commissioning  
Dudley Council

## Listening, informing & influencing...

In addition to our statutory Dudley Health and Wellbeing Board seat, Healthwatch Dudley is present at a wide range of Boards and forums across the health and care landscape.

We will continue to make the most of these opportunities to ensure local people have a clear and influential voice.



## Working with autistic and learning-disabled people to improve their GP surgery experience

We have been funded by the Learning Disability and Autism Board to carry out a peer led project to review how GP practices interact with learning-disabled and autistic people.

In preparation, Healthwatch Dudley staff and volunteers joined Healthwatch Sandwell to receive autism and learning disability awareness training from our project partners Autism West Midlands and, Dudley Voices for Choice.

We hosted our first Black Country Star Network coffee shop session with local people who shared their ideas for the future of the project. The group talked about their experience of autism, what works for them, where there are gaps in service provision, how they would like to see the project develop and what healthcare professionals they would like to involve moving forward.

This project links to our Enter and View function and in the coming months we will be working with local groups and organisations including Glasshouse College, Discover U, Riverside House, Jasmine Community Gardens, Autistic Parents, and Healthwatch Dudley friends and volunteers, to put learning-disabled people in the lead.

“Working on the project together with Healthwatch means we can all share skills and knowledge making a difference in people’s lives as a collective. All partners involved in the Black Country Star project were chosen because of the importance of hearing people’s voices and working in co-productive ways.”

Sarah Offley, Chief Officer,  
Dudley Voices for Choice



We met with Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust to review how Healthwatch Dudley volunteers can safely return to supporting patient led assessments of the care environment in hospital settings. Visits will resume in spring 2022.

## As your local Healthwatch we have statutory functions to:

- Listen to what people like and what could be improved and share their views with those who have the power to make change happen.
- Share information with Healthwatch England, our national body, to help improve the quality of health and care services across the country.
- Work closely with health and care providers, regulators and inspectors, including the Care Quality Commission, to act on people's views and make recommendations on how services can be improved.
- Hear what people are saying locally and nationally as we're involved in a number of groups that work to help make care better for everyone.
- Connect with our network of local Healthwatch organisations.
- Have our own independent board, which sets our priorities based on what local people tell us, ensuring people in Dudley borough are listened to and have an Influential voice.

## Our vision

Is to be a strong, independent and effective champion for people who access health and care services.

## Our mission

Is to be the voice of Dudley borough for promoting outstanding health and care services, so that local people can influence how services are planned, purchased and provided.

## Our approach

**People's views come first – especially those that find it hardest to be heard.**

We champion what matters to you and work with others to find solutions to problems. We are independent and committed to making the biggest difference to your healthcare.

Our income	£
Funding received from local authority to deliver local Healthwatch statutory activities:	206,000
Income generated for additional activities:	13,830
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>219,830</b>

What we have spent	£
Staff costs including salaries, pensions & travel expenses:	118,878
Overheads including accommodation costs and professional fees:	22,889
Running costs including telephone, printing, postage, office equipment leasing etc:	9,633
Hosting events & workshops:	718
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>152,118</b>

Our reserves at 31st March 2022 total £92,974 and will be carried forward into 2022/23.

This figure includes a staffing underspend due to vacant Chief Officer and Engagement posts (now recruited). Our reserves also include additional income which has already been committed to community projects in 2022/3. Our generated income allows our team to be sustained beyond our grant allocation, enabling us to have even greater reach and impact, supporting local people to be heard to influence decision making in health and care.

**Our income and expenditure is reported fully in the audited accounts of Dudley CVS for the year ending 31st March 2022.**



## Looking forward



The impact of inequality will continue to be a primary focus for our work in the coming year:

- **Homelessness** Regular ‘tea and toast’ drop-ins for homeless people living in supported accommodation, to hear experiences of health inequality and to signpost people to local services.
- **Asylum Seekers and Refugees** Regular contact will continue with refugees and asylum seekers, meeting targeted prevention fund priorities.
- **Carers** A programme of engagement activities in partnership with Dudley Carer Coordinator and local organisations will take place at the Russells Hall Hospital Health Hub.
- **Community Information** We will review our approach to community information training and our important information giving role.
- **Learning disability and Autism** We will progress our Black country Star project to give learning-disabled and autistic people a more influential voice in primary care.
- **Policies and Procedures** Dudley CVS has been reviewing policies and procedures and working with the Healthwatch England Quality Framework to ensure that our standards continue to be upheld.

## About us

The Healthwatch Dudley contract is held by Dudley CVS, who provide us with invaluable access to communities, local charities and grass roots organisations, who may not otherwise have a strong voice.

Dudley CVS is in the process of bringing people with diversity of lived experience and knowledge together, to form a new sub

committee to independently lead Healthwatch Dudley. This new committee will support the team to ensure future activity and priorities, continue to deliver Healthwatch statutory functions.

To complement this, our team is working with strategic stakeholders, to review how beliefs and values, to ensure they remain at the heart of shaping an exciting future for Healthwatch Dudley.

It is an immense pleasure to have joined the Healthwatch Dudley team as this report is being presented and to reflect on what has been a challenging time for many of us.

I believe the work presented is testament to the resolve of residents, colleagues, our Board and partners, that such creative ways of listening and supporting people have been identified and delivered.

I bring with me, close to two decades of experience of working closely within the NHS, health and social care and the voluntary sector. I am excited about working with this established team and building on our core objectives, whilst diligently championing people’s views on health and social care.

Being placed within Dudley CVS helps to maintain our independence and impartiality. I look forward to working with you all as we collectively navigate the challenges and opportunities ahead, to demonstrate even greater impact as a result of our diverse engagement in the coming year.

**Jason Griffiths**  
Healthwatch Dudley Chief Officer

## What people say about us...

"Healthwatch Dudley has been involved in a diverse range of activities as the Borough has emerged from the pandemic. The thoughtful and person-centered approach Healthwatch staff adopt has been an asset to local people and helped Public Sector bodies to improve."

**Matt Bowsher**

Director of Adult Social Care  
Dudley Council

"Healthwatch Dudley provides an important link between people who have experienced health or social care services so that their voice is heard and in a collaborative way can improve and shape future care and support.

Views from a Healthwatch Dudley event informed the Dudley Empowerment Partnership and resulted in the making of short recipient developed films, to explain how direct payments work. These films have been shared on social media and on the Dudley Council direct payments page."

**Annette Darby**

Team Manager, Access & Prevention  
Dudley Council

"As we came out of the first Covid wave, the team supported us with interviews leading to successful recruitment of senior DIHC posts. They produced a report from conversations they had with patients, to better understand views on the relocation of one of our practices, and they collaborated with us to host a 'Dementia and Me' event, which gave a platform for local voices to be heard and to influence the 2023-2025 Joint Dudley Dementia Strategy. Healthwatch Dudley attends the DIHC Board, adding a unique and transparent perspective to our processes and provide constructive challenge to ensure we are truly focused on the views of our local communities."

**Stephanie Cartwright**

Director of Strategy, People and Partnerships, Dudley Integrated Health and Care NHS Trust

*"The Trust and Healthwatch team have worked together for some time and this benefits all who visit our sites and use our services. We find their support in reaching our diverse communities very helpful. The team also supports our patient led assessments of the care environment (PLACE) where I personally value the independence Healthwatch Dudley brings."*

**Jannine Dyke**

Facilities Contract Manager  
The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust

## A word from a few of our fabulous volunteers!

"As former health providers, we now find ourselves accessing services. We love volunteering with Healthwatch Dudley as we feel able to objectively see what does and doesn't work. With Healthwatch its not just a paper exercise, as our ideas are genuinely taken into account. And it's good to highlight that not everything is negative – some things don't need changing as they are already working well."

**Rachel Horne and Andy Kang,**

"I enjoy volunteering with Healthwatch Dudley as it helps to improve people's access to health care – a universal need for everyone. I have helped to improve Dudley Adult Social Care Portals, taken part in PLACE training and assessments at Russell's Hall Hospital and am helping to develop the Black Country Star project to share learning-disabled and autistic people's ideas to improve their GP access." **Nick Griffiths**

"I first came to Healthwatch Dudley for help as wanted to share my experience of being a carer for my mom who was living with dementia. I began volunteering as I had so much knowledge to share and getting involved gave me a focus away from my caring role. I really value my relationship with Healthwatch Dudley and I know there is always someone for me to turn to when I need them." **Dawn Green**

"The Living Well Feeling Safe Partnership is proud to work alongside Healthwatch Dudley in raising awareness of the partnership which helps keep vulnerable and older people safe, well and independent in their homes and communities. Healthwatch Dudley's support at all the partnership meetings and outreach events across the borough is invaluable to the effectiveness of the partnership. Many thanks to the Healthwatch team and their volunteers."

**Paul Grainger**

Health & Wellbeing Manager  
Dudley Council

## Our staff team:

**Jason Griffiths**

Chief Officer

**Sally Huband**

Chair

**Deb Attwood**

Community Information and Engagement Officer

**Dr Robert Dalziel**

Participatory Research Officer

**Melissa Guest**

Communications Development Officer

**Monika Narad**

Community Engagement Officer

**Lorna Prescott**

Engagement Lead



Thank

you

*Remembering Stuart Steele,  
a dear friend and valued  
Healthwatch Dudley Volunteer.*

**The small print...** This report can be viewed at: [www.healthwatchdudley.co.uk/reports](http://www.healthwatchdudley.co.uk/reports) and has been circulated to Healthwatch England and our local authority Dudley Council. The Healthwatch trademark (including logo and Healthwatch brand) is used in line with the terms of the licence agreement.

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