

Report to the Oxfordshire Joint Overview Scrutiny Committee

21st September 2023

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Update since the last Health Overview Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) Meeting June 2023: Healthwatch Oxfordshire reports to date:

<https://healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk/reports>

- We held an **Open Forum** on September 21st for people to meet our Board of Trustees, ask questions and hear about our work and activities. <https://healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk/about-us/board-papers-and-minutes/>

We published **Enter and View** reports on visits to the following services:

- Oxford Haemophilia and Thrombosis Centre (July 2023)
- Day Case Unit Horton Hospital (September 2023)
<https://healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk/our-work/enter-and-view>

Key issues we are hearing from the public:

We continue to hear about the lack of access to NHS dentistry, GP waiting times and access, waiting times for Mental Health services, autism diagnosis and SEND.

Overview of Healthwatch Oxfordshire activity April - June 2023

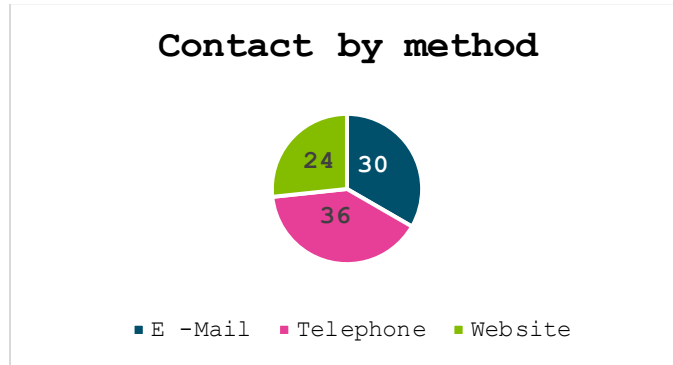
Activity update

- Healthwatch Oxfordshire Annual Impact Report (2022-3) was published on 29th June and available online <https://healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk/report/healthwatch-oxfordshire-annual-impact-report-2022-23/> with public presentation online to the public on July 4th available on video. 26 people attended this event.
- Successful application to NHS South-East Community Participatory Action Research (**CPAR2**) Programme Phase 2 for Healthwatch Oxfordshire to act as host organisation to two community researchers during 2023-4. The researchers from Oxford Community Action will focus over the year on learning research skills and exploring challenges from the impact of the cost of living and impact on black and minority ethnic communities. They will receive training with Reading University, and Scottish Community Development Centre, as well as on the ground support, hosting and enabling in their research through ongoing work with Healthwatch Oxfordshire. The funding covers the time spent by the researchers in training and projects focus over the year.
- Building on our outreach work to hear from **working men** in Carterton, we have supported development of plans for further focused and collaborative work on men in West Oxfordshire via the Oxfordshire Men's Health Partnership in October. We presented on this work at a webinar on 14 June attended by over 12 people nationally on Men's Health hosted by Oxford Academic Health Science Network (available here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W1ostkl-GOY>)
- Outreach included at Witney Pride Festival in May- where we spoke to 60 people, and heard views on health and care services, mental health and access. We later met with a representative of Pride to discuss potential future in depth work.
- We attended other events in some of the ten most deprived areas or groups, including Blackbird Leys 'Marmelade Event' in May to speak about Community research (30 attendees), Witney Larder (Food distribution), Oxford Community Action Community café event (40 attendees).

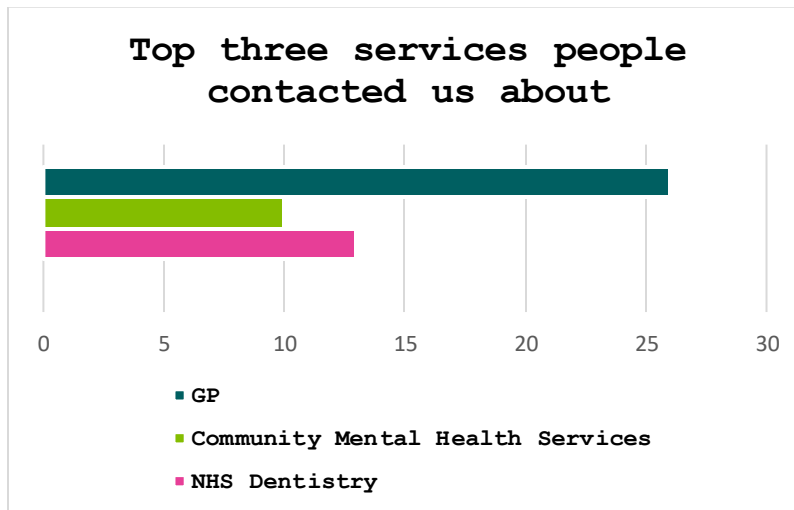
- Other groups we had direct contact with during this time include Africans in the UK (AFIUK) around their cancer workshops, Action for Deafness, as well as attending Health and Wellbeing Network meetings for Barton and Rose Hill, and meeting with Sue Ryder Foundation around palliative and end of life care.

Signposting and advice

In the first quarter of this year (April to June) Healthwatch Oxfordshire were contacted by 90 people looking for information and advice. People contacted us by either telephone, email or via the live chat function on our website or via the Healthwatch England webform.



The **top three services** people contacted us about were NHS Dentistry, GP services and Mental Health services.



- The top theme people mentioned by people when contacting us about these three services was **access to those services**. All but one of the calls Healthwatch Oxfordshire received about NHS Dentistry was about people being able to access NHS dental services.
 - *“Been trying to find an NHS dentist for my two young children. I have called around 15 dentists in our area - None of them are not taking on new patients and their waiting lists are closed. I have noticed a hole in my child’s tooth. I can’t afford to go private.”*

Service feedback reviews

- **Q1 April- June** we received **86 reviews** via online and paper feedback centre <https://healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk/services>. These comments gained 59 responses directly from service providers; 37 on GPs, 27 on hospitals. In this way people can see how their comments and feedback are taken seriously and can help to improve services for all.

Brief of what we have heard between June and September

GP and dental access remained the top issues we heard about

- **1. Getting an appointment with a GP**
 - *“Because it's so difficult to get an appointment here, I haven't bothered which means that the issue I'm concerned about is just getting worse”*
 - *“It takes weeks to get an appointment, you are asked to call on the day your GP is working. If you don't know you are asked to go on their portal to find out”*
 - *“It says on the website amongst other things it is possible to make appointments, I messaged recently and a week later still no appointment. I sent another message a week later and a doctor phoned me. The centre know I cannot use the phone, I am extremely deaf”*
- **2. Communication with GP surgeries**
 - *“No matter what your need, there is no way to make contact with a GP other than by making a telephone appointment, and for those there's a five/six week wait”*
 - *“I was made to feel unimportant, dismissed my condition and outright rude in his approach and the way in which he conducted himself”*
 - *“My GP retired in early this year. I wrote to the [member of practice team] to ask who my new GP would be. They do not reply to letters”*
 - *“My partner took me in there. It was for 11.15 in the morning, we arrived on time. By the time I had queued to book in it was 11.30 I sat there for another hour and a quarter before they told me it was because I was late I was made to wait, but I wasn't late!”*
- **3. Compliments about GP services:**
 - *“The staff are brilliant - it's the system that is poor”*
 - *“The receptionists are particularly helpful when you ring up. All very nice people”*
 - *“Saw [name], who always listens to me, always asks how I am and remembers what was wrong last time. She is kind, funny and just puts me at ease every time I see her. She is truly amazing, I'm never uncomfortable and always feel like I can ask her anything without feeling stupid”*
 - *“As a patient of almost 12 years, myself and members of our household have always received outstanding service from everyone we have encountered”*
- **Access to NHS Dental Services**

- *“I can't sign up for a dentist anywhere on the NHS ...I have big problems that I want to treat because my teeth hurt. Can you find me a clinic that will not refuse me visits to the NHS and will not offer private visits because I can't afford them”*
- *“....our dentist is going to be completely private I have three children that have had to wait over a year and half to have an appointment with the NHS dentist there....with just a week before their appointment it got cancelled... now we are told they are not doing NHS treatment”*
- *“I'm really struggling with finding an appointment. I need to be seen ASAP...tooth pain for over a week now and at my practice they don't have any appointments.... I've called so many other practices and no one to see me. Private is out of question, I don't have the money”*

Healthwatch Oxfordshire reports to external bodies

Healthwatch Oxfordshire attended and reported what we hear from public to the Health and Wellbeing Board, Health Overview Scrutiny Committee (HOSC), Health Improvement Board (HIB), and Oxfordshire Quality Committee (**5 meetings** in this quarter: HOSC in April and June, and one 'extraordinary HOSC meeting in June, HWBB and HIB meetings in June, Children's Trust Meeting in May, and Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board).

External bodies that we attend and these reports can be found online at:
<https://healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk/our-reports/reports-to-other-bodies/>

We also attend the Oxfordshire Place Based Partnership meetings under (Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB)) as well as giving input into committees at ICB level.

Reports currently in draft:

We completed insight gathering during this period and will shortly publish reports on:

- What Does Joined up Care Look Like to You?
- Peoples Experience of using Podiatry Services

Health and Wellbeing Strategy Engagement:

As independent member of the Oxfordshire Health and Wellbeing Board, we have been keen to make sure residents' voices are brought into the development of the new Health and Wellbeing Strategy. We have undertaken engagement to hear from 'the people on the street' and have **reached over 1,124 people** between July and September, the majority through face-to-face outreach – on the streets, at play days and events, and in shopping centres across the county, attending a total of nineteen community events. We also held a joint webinar with Oxford Community and Voluntary Association (OCVA) to listen to the views of voluntary and community sector. What we heard was also fed into the development of the draft strategy, and to a workshop for the Health and Wellbeing Board in early September.

A **detailed report** on who we heard from and what we have heard from all we spoke to will be available here: <https://healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk/report/health-and-wellbeing-board-strategy-engagement-report-september-2023/>

Initial analysis of feedback from 200 responses revealed the following themes:

Q1. What helps you stay healthy and well?

1. Physical activity & exercise
2. Infrastructure & environment
3. Green spaces & nature
4. Access to health care
5. Family & relationships
6. Access to healthy diet & food (See Appendix 1 summary at the end of the report)

Q2. What makes it difficult to stay healthy and well?

7. Cost of living- (food, rent, housing, and access to leisure facilities)
8. Infrastructure & environment (green space, transport, built environment)
9. Access to healthy diet & food- food environment
10. Access to health care (waiting times, GP and dental, and mental health)
11. Work-life balance
12. Mental health support

Q3. What is most important for health and wellbeing?

13. Access to health care
14. Infrastructure & environment (including transport, cycling routes)
15. Access to healthy diet & food
16. Psychosocial support
17. Cost of living/financial support

Healthwatch Oxfordshire will bring people's voices to the draft Health and Wellbeing Strategy, and advocate for an accessible, easy read strategy which reflects what we have heard.

Healthwatch Oxfordshire Board

Q1 report and opportunity to meet the Board of Healthwatch Oxfordshire will take place in public in an Open Forum at Rose Hill Community Centre on 26 September. Report and notes can be seen here:

<https://healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk/about-us/board-papers-and-minutes/>

Don O'Neal was elected as Chair of Healthwatch Oxfordshire in April, as Sylvia Buckingham finished her term of office.

Appendix A

What we have heard about the food and the food environment

During our engagement this summer for the Health and Wellbeing strategy, Healthwatch Oxfordshire heard from 1,124 people across the county. Food and the food environment featured strongly in people's comments and can **contribute on HOSC meeting discussions in the agenda on Oxfordshire's obesity strategy**:

Our first question asked people to tell us '*What helps you stay healthy and well in Oxfordshire?*' Food featured in 107 responses, focusing on needing to have a healthy diet, 'good food', fresh produce, food growing, as well as affordability of food, and access to healthy food. Keeping a healthy weight and support for this also was important. We have summarised some of the issues highlighted by residents about food, along with people's own comments:

Have used Achieve Oxfordshire for weight loss support very good gave me additional support and incentive I needed

The second question focused on *'What makes it difficult for you to stay healthy and well in Oxfordshire?'*

The 'cost of living' in broadest sense was noted by 248 people (22%) – within which 68 responses focused on the cost of food specifically, or cost of healthy food, which in turn impacted on ability to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Families, and those with children spoke about the stresses of food bills and work-life balance. Some people also noted the importance of emergency food support as a back up.

Poverty. I cannot afford to buy fresh fruit and vegetables

The cost of living is crippling my family. As a mother I am constantly worried about how to feed everyone on a shoe string when both of us work it shouldn't be this hard.

Access to cheaper food and bills.

Aldi has cheap fruit and vegetables. Use food larder helps with costs. Use more frozen veggies

Expensive food and cost of living

Cost of Rent and food all very high

Stress from work, price of food

Healthy food is hard to afford I work 2 jobs as the cost of living is high in Oxford and I have no time to care for myself

Food prices have gone up so much. Used to buy branded food now buy own brand.

Cost of food, can limit amount of fresh fruit & veg purchased

Cost of living. Expensive to buy healthy foods. Easy to buy already made meals

Cost//expensive to eat and stay healthy

A number of people made use of emergency food provision

BBL Larder cost £3.50 per week which is quite expensive when you are on benefit

Having help with the larder & food banks which would never have been here before

Access to cheaper healthy food. Getting food from a food bank

Many comments focused on the impact of the unhealthy food environment, noting proliferation of 'fast food' options and 'temptations' of 'junk foods' high in fats, sugar and salt. This again, made it challenging for people to make healthy choices, even though they were aware of healthy eating habits and information.

35 comments noted the temptations of a 'junk food' environment- noting processed foods, limited healthy options, and promotion of sugary foods...making healthy choices hard to take:

High sugar and high fat foods endlessly promoted and cheap

Food temptation – too many junk foods

Expensive food and too much junk food

Distraction of junk food/ /Cost of living too expensive

Too much ultra processed foods in shops, cafes and takeaways in town.

High sugar and high fat foods endlessly promoted and cheap

Work in a nursery and healthy eating difficult parents buy a lot of pre packed snacks that are not healthy.

Too many tempting snacks

There should be no junk food

Sugar cravings -cheap sweets

A further 30 comments noted the impact of ‘fast food’ or hot food takeaways and pressures on people, including their proliferation in certain areas, as well as the impact on people’s food choices where fast food was more affordable than healthy foods:

too many fast food places in Cutteslowe and Summertown

Too Many takeaways

Volume of takeaways accessible in Blackbird Leys

Too many junk food places

Lack of good eateries (mainly takeaways or pizza very little places to walk

Price of fast food too cheap, healthy food is expensive

Fast food/Stress

Fast food chains (food easy to get).

Cost of living/access to healthy food most shops cafes sell limited healthy options

easy access to cheap fast food

Speaking to small shopkeepers in Oxford their comments indicated their view that more could be done by local councils to support and encourage healthier food shops, for instance through rate or rent incentives:

As a shopkeeper (oxford - ethnic foods) there are no healthy options for people to buy food and the biggest business takes over.

As a small shopkeeper the cost of renting is very stressful and cost of living.

If people want healthy choices of food then small businesses need better support from the city council the business rates and costs of starting up are so high and there is no support. They need to work with the local shopkeepers rents are so high businesses rates are so high that private businesses can't afford to come

Other comments about food, included pressures of lack of time to cook, balancing caring for family, work and food demands,

Food prices, lack of time for cooking or having time for myself

work commitments and do not have the time to cook

Food availability when there is no time to cook

Cooking different meals. ADH for children

Others focused on ability to maintain a healthy weight and need for more accessible and affordable support. Access to affordable leisure services and gyms, including swimming were highlighted strongly in cost of living comments:

Weight loss support charged me and too expensive

Cost of anything class based, gym memberships, swimming etc - too expensive and can't deem it as a necessity budgeting wise.

Sedentary lifestyle was seen as impacting on ability to maintain healthy weight:

I used to sit 14 hours a day 7 days a week in work, and constant snacking

Working from my house is very sedentary

When asked 'What's most important to you to support health and wellbeing in Oxfordshire?' food and food environment again featured as something people would like to see support and action on:

This included comments again about cost of living and financial support, as well as being able to access affordable health and wellbeing support including affordable healthy foods, and leisure activities including gyms. Comments also included tackling the unhealthy food environment.

Enough income to be able to buy fresh fruit and vegetables. I live in a flat with no outside space, I cannot grow my own.

Cheaper food

More foodbanks/ Food banks are a godsend for people like me/ Larder helps a lot of people

A decent income where I can buy food

The cost of good food is hard to hold up against cheap fast food

Ensure everyone has easy access to food banks, community larders & fridges. When these are set up they need to be in more rural areas and outlying villages + suburbs with public transport access. Not everyone can walk or jump in a car when they need to get food

Support with food literacy and cooking skills was also seen as important:

Ensuring a healthy upbringing for our young generation better knowledge for all about food.

More cooking lessons

More affordable help to training on low cost food meals

Lack of healthy eating education, I am unable to cook as I lack the skills to do so, tend to eat fast food.

Some comments related specifically to support to people with obesity:

Access to mental health services in Witney and bariatric surgery post op support

More support for people with multiple health issues, more support for people struggling with obesity.

Mody diabetes support group. Opportunity to swim in therapeutic pools but no hoist for very overweight people. General more opportunity for people to come together to support and share hobbies