

Championing what matters to you

Healthwatch Walsall Annual Report 2021-22



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Your Healthwatch team



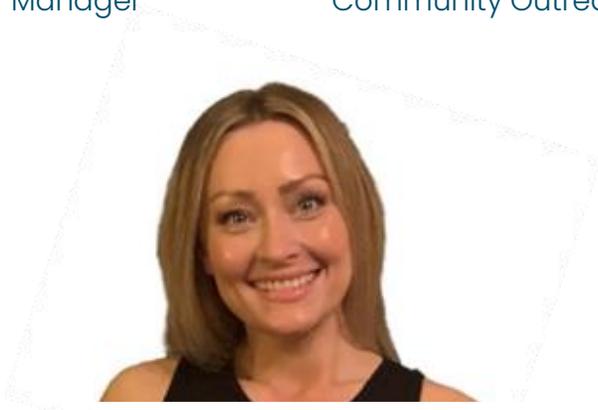
Aileen Farrer
Manager



Karen Kiteley
Community Outreach Lead



Lynne Fenton
Insight-Senior Lead Advocate



Lorretta Higgins
Youth Engagement Officer



Tom Collins
Engagement & Information Lead

Message from our chair



Mandy Poonia - Chair Walsall Healthwatch Advisory Board

Firstly, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the feedback that you provide to us. Without your input we would struggle to know the real challenges our communities face when using and accessing health and social care services in Walsall.

Many changes are taking place in Walsall, with the development of the Integrated Care System. These systems are being developed locally and nationally.

The Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) for Walsall will bring partner organisations together, concerned with improving the care, health and wellbeing of our local population.

Healthwatch continues to strengthen relationships with stakeholders, through representation on the Health and Wellbeing Board, the CCG (Clinical Commissioning Group), Overview and Scrutiny and Walsall Together.

Our collaborative work with the Walsall Together service user group has addressed significant health issues such as diabetes.

Healthwatch continues to gather information locally, through various means, such as surveys, focus groups, one to one conversations and questionnaires.

Our vision is to ensure that our communities receive improved health and social care support and improved access to services, whilst ensuring inequalities are addressed by service providers both in primary and secondary care settings.

We welcome your continuous input, so that we can continue to support and strive for improved health and social care services in Walsall.



“The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown long-standing health inequalities into stark relief. 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.”

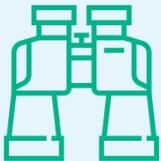
Sir Robert Francis QC, Chair of Healthwatch England



About us

Your health and social care champion

Healthwatch Walsall is your local health and social care champion. From Great Barr to Darlaston and everywhere in between, we make sure NHS, Social Care 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.



Our vision

A Borough where we all can get the health and care we need.



Our mission

To make sure people's experiences help make health and care better.



Our values

- Listening to people and making sure their voices are heard by service commissioners and service providers.
- Including everyone in the conversation especially those who don't always have their voice heard.
- Analysing different people's experiences to learn how to improve care.
- Acting on feedback to strive for change.
- Partnering with care providers and the voluntary sector serving the public.

Our year in review

Find out how we have engaged and supported people.

Reaching out



Over 300 people

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

Almost 300 people

came to us for clear advice and information about topics such as GP access, hospital care, hospital appointments and COVID-19 vaccination issues.

Making a difference to care



We published **16 reports**

about the delivery of services with recommendations that may lead to positive changes in health and social care services.

Our most popular report was

Communication Walsall Manor Hospital

Which highlighted the communication issues that patients/relatives and carers encountered when engaging with Walsall Manor Hospital.

Link: <https://tinyurl.com/mr7nhjsy>

How we delivered the work we did



We're lucky to have

21

volunteers, who gave up their time to make care better for their community.

We're funded by our Local Authority. In 2021-22 we received:

£190,450

which is the same as the previous year.

We also currently employ

5 staff

who help us carry out our work.

How we've made a difference throughout the year

These are the biggest projects we worked on from April 2021 to March 2022.

Spring



Throughout the year, we continued our monthly 'First Friday Focus' meetings to bring service information and service change information to the public.



We continued our 'Engage & Share' (electronic visits & chats) in care and nursing homes, so we could hear from residents and patients about service delivery.

Summer



With online appointments becoming the norm, we assisted a number of patients to get in touch with their GP practices for the support they needed.



We supported the #BecauseWeAllCare campaign which saw 54,000 people, nationally, to come forward to tell us about issues they faced with services.

Autumn



We prepared our 2nd work programme around service user experiences of using the Walsall Urgent Treatment Centre.



We got back out into the communities to enable service users to share their experiences of services during COVID-19.

Winter



When people struggled to see their GP face-to-face, we ensured that they knew about other options available to them.



To support the COVID-19 vaccination programme we updated local vaccination information to ensure people were able to make informed decisions and how and where to get their vaccinations.

How we engaged with Walsall people

Due to COVID-19 and the many restrictions, we worked in different ways to get and keep in touch with Walsall people.

Engagement



**Approx.
2,790
people**



**11
surveys**

We engaged with people in different ways throughout the year. Via our online meetings, drop in sessions, surveys and when we could out in the communities.

We had a number of surveys across the year to identify Walsall service user experiences and feelings about accessing health and social care services.

Outreach



As COVID-19 rules have changed, we returned to face to face outreach in public areas. One of the highlights was our attendance at The Women's International Road Cycle Race 2021.

In addition we have a weekly presence at Walsall Manor Hospital chatting to patients, visitors and staff.

With other opportunities to engage at other venues. When available.

Our Website



**23,449
visitors**

**42,524
page views**

During this year we have seen an increase in people visiting our website. Here they can get COVID-19 local and national updates as well as any local health and social care updates. Other pages visited were our reports section.

Social Media



**2,614
followers**

**Nearly 1,000
posts**

We also increased our presence on social media growing our following across the popular platforms of: Facebook: Twitter, You Tube & Instagram.

Listening to your experiences

Services can't make improvements without hearing your views. That's why over the last year we have made listening to feedback from all areas of the community a priority. This allows us to understand the full picture and feedback to services to help them improve.



Understanding patient issues in Walsall Urgent Treatment Centre (UTC)

Thanks to people for sharing their experiences of using the Walsall Urgent Treatment Centre.

Many people had shared their experiences of accessing and using the Walsall Urgent Treatment Centre over the past 12 months via our 24/7 online 'Service Feedback Centre'. Many were seeking alternative GP appointments placing additional pressures on a support service.

Many of the comments left, were around patient waiting times and communication of where the patient was positioned in the waiting queue.

Whilst collating what people were saying, we also wanted to find out how big the issues of waiting times and communication were and why they were happening? We also considered possible solutions to improve the patient experience overall.

We designed a survey that could be completed by patients whilst waiting and to undertake online after their visit. We were just starting to re-engage with patients after COVID-19 restrictions were lifted but safety of people was still a big consideration, hence this remote style of patient experience capture.

Patient visits were totalling over 200 visits per day. In many cases because patients could not access appointments with their own GP. Also GP staff referring patients to the UTC as well as a number of patients visit from outside of the Borough.



"Good staff but long wait"

"I took my son there after following the advice from NHS111 and was told I would have to wait 5 hours to be seen".

"Had an appointment for 11am but not seen until after 3pm".



What difference did this make

During a focus group we held with a presentation by the Manager of the Urgent Treatment Centre, a patient comment was raised about the lack of cleanliness of the waiting area. This was picked up by a commissioning representative and later discussed with the Manager.

As the area was not cleaned by UTC related employees but the main hospital cleaning staff, additional cleaning schedules were put in place to address this.

We were also able to make a number of recommendations around the display of patient waiting times, patients considering alternative treatment pathways and keeping members of their family safe.

To see/ download the full report: <https://tinyurl.com/2p8jfm5n>

Children & Young People Mental Health – Black Country Wide Joint Health project

Finding out what works and may be what doesn't work in Mental Health services for young people

This was a collaborative piece of work led by Healthwatch Wolverhampton, with input from Healthwatch Walsall, Sandwell & Dudley.

A number of focus groups and surveys were undertaken and completed that captured the experiences of young people seeking to access and those already accessing mental health services.

Visit our webpage for the final report Link: to web page:

<https://healthwatchwalsall.co.uk/our-reports/>

Engage & Share

As we could not conduct visits to service delivery venues such as residential care homes, we developed a digital way of being able to talk to residents, relatives and staff about the services they received or delivered. This was named 'Engage & Share'. Chats were arranged over the phone or by computer tablet.

Some of the main issues identified were around COVID-19 effects and lack of activities. We conducted Engage & Share across differing types of supported living and care home settings, enabling more vulnerable people to have their say and be heard.

Link to our reports: <https://healthwatchwalsall.co.uk/our-reports/>

Other work we delivered

During the year we also looked at other issues or services that were highlighted to us, to help people make a difference.

Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment

Healthwatch Walsall developed a simple survey to capture local people's views and experiences of using pharmacy services. This was made available online and hard copy paper surveys were made available at local pharmacies. Healthwatch Walsall were able to gather 142 responses online and hard copy from the public.

Link to report: <https://tinyurl.com/yey22acs>

Accessing Walsall Health & Care Services

This survey was open to Walsall residents only, who had accessed or had tried to access any Walsall Health or Social Care services in the last 12 months. We developed a survey that was available online and a paper copy which was used at the 'Women's International Cycling Event a stage that was held in Walsall on the 5th October. We had 85 respondents.

Link to report: <https://tinyurl.com/3m7723fs>

Living and Managing with Diabetes In October 2021

As part of the Walsall Together service user engagement, Healthwatch Walsall held a successful Diabetes Awareness event for members of the public and providers of clinical and non-clinical support organisations to network and give patients a better understanding of all the support that people can access. Through the diabetes peer support group and through our engagement around living and self management of diabetes, a service user has highlighted how this support has had a positive impact on their health and helping to control their diabetes.

Their story can be read, please click here: <https://tinyurl.com/42ywkve5>



It was pleasing to note that so soon after easing of COVID-19 restrictions a number of support organisations attended the event to promote their own service to the public.

During the year and following on from our previous Living and Managing with a long-term health condition survey, it became apparent that a public information and awareness raising session would be extremely useful.

This led to the above diabetes event being held.

Attendance and interest was high, supported by informative presentations and lived life experience. We were supported by a number of partner organisations and it provided an opportunity for discussions and networking.

What difference did this make

People discovered more about diabetes and the support that is available for those living with the diabetes.



"It gave me a kickstart to hear from other people some of whom have bigger issues than myself".

"The weight management team at Darlaston tried everything. They were fantastic".



Quote from Aileen Farrer, Healthwatch Walsall Manager

"It was really good to be back out face to face meeting the public of Walsall and being given the opportunity to provide them with the latest information to support them with their health and wellbeing. Thank you to all that supported the event".

Our work with Walsall Together



Patient and Service User Engagement April 2021-2022

Healthwatch Walsall were commissioned by Walsall Together (WT) in 2019 as part of the patient, service user and citizen engagement around 6 priority areas: Diabetes, Cardiology, Respiratory, Mental Health, End of Life & Palliative Care, and best start in life early child. This has been to ensure that patient and service user engagement and involvement has been and continues to be at the forefront on Walsall Together priorities for changes in service delivery.

What have we done during this financial year?

- We held more than 15 virtual workshops to capture patients lived experiences.
- We engaged with over 200 people through our workshops and engagement.
- We tabled 3 reports on living with and managing respiratory and heart conditions and end of life and palliative care.
- Presented several patient/service user stories to Walsall Together Partnership Board to ensure that the patient voice is listened to and acted upon at the highest level.

The reports can be found at: <https://healthwatchwalsall.co.uk/our-reports>

The programme team for Walsall Together have been using the intelligence in order to look at how positive changes can be made to improve patient care pathways based on the views from local people.

We held 7 Service User Group meetings to bring people together with lived experience to share views and support the redesign of care pathways. The Service User Group is made up of a number of individuals, or people, who represent those with long term health conditions and experiences of health and well-being inequalities. This group has also been pivotal in sharing updates on health and social care change.

Some of the presentations and discussions have been for example around shared care records and what this means to people in Walsall, how social prescribing is developing and helping to support people, what is meant by and how patients are supported through the Walsall Care Navigation Centre.

Using the skills, knowledge, and experience of all the members of the 'Service User Group', working together to help us continually improve plans for health and care services in Walsall. The feedback received is taken back to the Partnership and is used to inform and shape service development.

Our work with Walsall Together



Paul Higgitt - Senior Engagement Lead

From the engagement work and recommendations from the 'Living And Managing With Diabetes' report, we have developed a Walsall Diabetes Peer Support Group to bring people together and share experiences of living with and managing diabetes. We have also had several presenters giving advice on topics such as medicines management, nutrition, and healthy living.

We have also been involved in the Resilient Communities part of Walsall Together. This is a Partnership working group looking at tackling the wider inequalities that people face in our communities and looking at plans and strategies to improve the lives of people who face many challenges both health and socio economic.



Phil Griffin - Walsall Together Service User Group Chair

We have collaborated with patients, service users and carers over the last year with the aim of finding out what they think of health services they are accessing or have accessed. This has been hugely challenging given the need to move to different types of engagement media from those we were able to use initially before the pandemic began.

Using different engagement approaches we have learned a lot about services patients have accessed or are still accessing and have shared our findings in the form of engagement reports with the local providers of services and those that commission them with the intention that this would help to improve services at the point of delivery right across the patient journey.

The aim is to enable and empower communities and individuals to access the care they need as early as possible by building resilient communities and having accessible primary care and other community-based specialist services with access to hospital and specialist services when there is a need.

Three ways we have made a difference for the community

Throughout our work we gather information about health inequalities by speaking to people whose experiences aren't often heard.



Bringing the needs of disability groups to our 'New Build A&E'

It's important that the needs of disability groups are heard especially at the design of services.

We liaised with the Project Lead for the new A&E build at the Walsall Manor Hospital and asked to have the input of disabled service users at the design stage. This included visually impaired, deaf and hard of hearing groups.

Three zoom meetings were held during COVID-19 with each group representatives. Able to share previous experiences and examples of poor facilities. Offering ideas of design, lighting, colours and equipment aids to improve future visits. It was raised that a changing room/ toilet area was needed for people with complex needs.



Getting services to involve the public

Services need to understand the benefits of involving local people to help improve care for everyone.

We were asked by the Local Authority to deliver a special survey to residents in care and nursing home (seldom heard) to ascertain their level of service and their needs.

Many of the participants had varying levels of cognitive response but it was important to allow them to share their views.



Improving care over time

Throughout the year we supported a number of Walsall residents to be able to access their health and social care needs. We signposted people with needs ranging from: GP access, cancelled hospital appointments, timely results and accessing COVID-19 vaccinations.

Due to our excellent partnership working arrangements, information on how we have supported people and the issues they have face are regularly reported to the relevant organisations.

Advice and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch Walsall is here for you. In times of worry or stress, we can provide support and free information to help you understand your options and get you to the help you need. Whether it's finding the right service you need, how to access services, how to make a complaint or passing on a service compliment. – we are here to help and guide.

This year we helped people by:

- Providing up to date local and national information on COVID-19.
- Linking people to reliable support and information.
- Supporting the COVID-19 vaccination and booster programme.
- Holding health & social care information events online.
- Having a befriending service.



Giving support and Signposting to people who needed it.

During our year we have stepped in to support Walsall people when they needed it. From contacting their GP surgery when they couldn't get through to finding support organisations they didn't know existed.

After undergoing life changing surgery - due to illness, a lower limb amputee contacted Healthwatch Walsall. This service user was discharged from hospital to home with no care package in place. The service user lived on their own and due to their sudden loss of mobility was struggling to undertake daily tasks such as personal care and cooking. The house was also not suitable for a wheelchair user and required some home modifications such as ramps and rails to make it fit for purpose.

Healthwatch Walsall contacted Walsall Healthcare's Lead Nurse for Safeguarding. As a result of a safeguarding concern being raised, an emergency interim package of care was put in place. The next day the service user had two carers attend the home to meet the health and care needs of the individual. A referral was also made to the Occupational Therapy Team for a home assessment to be undertaken so the home could be modified accordingly. The service user had ramps fitted in and outside the house.



"Thank you so much Healthwatch Walsall. This would have not been possible without you".



Another service user had recently undergone treatment for cancer. They had tried to book an appointment for their Covid-19 vaccine but were told they needed a letter from their Oncologist confirming it was safe for them to have the vaccine.

The service user contacted Healthwatch Walsall, who signposted them to their GP, CCG and NHS 111 in the first instance. The GP and the CCG confirmed to the service user they needed a letter from their Oncologist.

The service user contacted Healthwatch Walsall again, we contacted PALS at Walsall Healthcare Trust, where the patient had undergone their cancer treatment about the issue. PALS contacted the Oncologist who wrote a letter confirming the patient could have their covid-19 vaccine.

Within 48 hours the patient received their confirmation letter and had their covid-19 vaccine.



"Thank you Healthwatch Walsall. I am very grateful for your help. I was trying to sort it but it was like banging my head against a brick wall".



Volunteers

This year our volunteers:

- Helped people have their say from home, carrying out surveys over the telephone and online.
- Carried out telephone reviews for local services on the information they provide and assessing their accessibility.
- Promoted Healthwatch to other members of their community so that they too could share their health & social care experiences.



Being a volunteer you can get involved in many ways like helping us out at events or undertaking Enter and View opportunities, to playing a strategic role guiding Healthwatch to meet the needs of Walsall people.

Every volunteer brings skills and something different to our Healthwatch. We thank them for that.



Roger

I have been using the services provided by the NHS all my life. I have had a number of health problems which have been addressed excellently by the NHS.

I was convinced that everyone enjoyed the same very high quality of service that I and the members of family have received throughout our lives.

Roughly 15 years ago I was instructed by my GP to attend a public meeting on a new medical centre. I attended the meeting and came away totally shocked. I discovered that not everyone enjoyed the same high quality of service that my family and I had received. I heard for the first time, stories of the poor quality of the health services others had received.

As a result, I became involved with the statutory voluntary groups which were supposed to help and improve the quality of the services. Almost nothing was achieved until the present management of Healthwatch Walsall took over.

I am classed as a “volunteer” I have undertaken “Enter and View” training. Prior to the pandemic I undertook a small number of visits. Even during the pandemic, I have followed the work undertaken by the HWW staff.

The “First Friday Focus” gatherings have taught me a lot about various aspects of NHS services in Walsall. The Reports about the local services highlight the strengths and weaknesses in the local services.

There is an ongoing campaign to make the existence and purpose of HWW better known across the Borough and indeed across all age groups. This is vital as it provides a route for our fellow residents to find support and guidance on health matters and a channel through which adverse comments about the local services can be directed.

The latest monthly report is an excellent guide to the work that HWW carries out. The one thing that it does not mention is the fact that we get great value for our money. We have in Walsall in HWW great advocates/campaigners/educators on matters relating to the NHS.



Mark

Healthwatch Advisory Board Member

I found that commencing as a volunteer Board member during the pandemic rather difficult, as all the meetings were virtual, which was not ideal for a newcomer. I was not always sure what was expected of me and had some confusion around role expectations. However, with a clarifying induction and support from Aileen, and my first “real” meeting in Blakenall, I feel better prepared and somewhat clearer.

I would certainly recommend the role of Healthwatch board member to anyone who is motivated, and feels that they might be able to fulfil the role. I happen to have a health background, although this is not essential by any means. It is satisfying to know that one is contributing to maintaining standards and excellence in local health and social care, which are crucial to us all.



Do you feel inspired?

We are always on the lookout for new volunteers, so please get in touch today



www.healthwatchwalsall.co.uk



0800 470 1660



info@healthwatchwalsall.co.uk

Befriending Service

During COVID-19 lockdown and restrictions we have reached out to socially isolated individuals via our befriending service. We continue to run the service and stay in touch with people, naturally we are always interested when they have accessed health or social care services.



“I look forward to being called weekly. I speak once in a while to family, so my call is important to me and I'm never let down not having it. I can ask any questions I need to and we talk about anything I bring up. I feel its like having a pen pal. I can also get information I need” .



“Just wanted to let you know how brilliant you are and you've helped me all this time I've known you. It's great talking to you about anything lol we can talk for hours. I'm so thankful I've got you Lynne specially through my hard times in bad health. Keep up the good work Lynne like I said before, I got my voice back talking to you every week you are a true friend, thank you for helping me and being there to listen to all my problems. Thank you my friend”.



Finance and future priorities

To help us carry out our work we receive funding from our Local Authority under the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

Income		Income	
Funding received from Walsall Local Authority	£190,450	Staff costs	£136,901
Additional funding	£63.00	Operational costs	£13,082
B/F 20/21	£17,156	Support and administration	£34,979
Total income	£207,669	Total expenditure	£184,962

B/F Balance available for future years £22,705 currently being utilised to pay for an additional member of staff to focus on getting the voices of young people heard.

Top two priorities for 2022–23

1. Discharge from Walsall Manor Hospital – to residents own homes, respite, social or nursing care.
2. Young persons project to be defined by young people and delivered in the later part of the year 2022/23.

Next steps

The pandemic has shone a stark light on the varying levels and difficulties of services: access, testing, diagnosis and treatment of many conditions, as well as the impact of existing inequalities when using health and care services. Highlighting the importance of championing the voices of all and importantly those who often go unheard.

Over the coming year, our goal is to make sure Walsall peoples voices are heard, and decision makers reduce the barriers people face, regardless of whether, for example: where people live, differing levels of education, differing levels of income or race that indicate health inequalities.

Young Healthwatch

Our Youth Engagement Officer is carrying out a young peoples project, recruiting young volunteers to obtain service experiences and views of other young people in Walsall.

These experiences and views will be analysed and will lead to our second work project

Statutory statements

About us

Engaging Communities Solutions holds the contract to deliver Healthwatch Walsall and is based at Blakenall Village Centre, 79 Thames Road, Blakenall, Walsall, WS31LZ.

Healthwatch Walsall 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 Advisory Board consists of 9 members who work on a voluntary basis to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny to our activities. Our Board ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community. Through 2021/22 the Board met 6 times and made decisions on matters such as approving publication of reports, agreeing future work priorities, escalation to CQC x2 and escalations to Safeguarding.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities. Over the year we collate service reviews from our website, record service user issues that are called in and undertake a listening survey to ascertain the key issues, themes and services that our forthcoming projects/work may be drawn from.

Methods and systems used across the year's work to obtain people's views and experience.

We use a wide range of approaches to ensure that as many people as possible have the opportunity to provide us with insight about their experience of health and care services. During 2021/22 we have been available by phone, by email, provided a webform on our website, provided a feedback centre/rate and review system, zoom online drop-in sessions and public accessible meetings around service information, delivery or changes to services as well as attended virtual meetings and engaged with the public through social media platforms.

We are committed to taking additional steps to ensure we obtain the views of people from diverse backgrounds who are often not heard by health and care decision makers. This year we have done this by, having paper copy surveys with paid envelopes to capture the digitally excluded experiences, held engagement events in varied and local community venues to attract local groups and individuals to share their experiences and views.

We ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. We publish it on our website, send it to our network contacts, our partners and have hard copies available to send or give out on request. In addition we send to a group that has its own talking newspaper, to be made into an audio book/file and have in the past made a short version video for YouTube.

Responses to recommendations and requests

We had 2 providers who did not respond to requests for information or recommendations. This year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we did not make use of our Enter and View powers. Consequently, no recommendations or other actions resulted from this area of activity.

Health and Wellbeing Board

Healthwatch Walsall is represented on the Walsall Health and Wellbeing Board by Mandy Poonia, Chair Walsall HAB. During 2020/21 our representative has effectively carried out this role by attending 100% of the HWBB meetings plus attending development and training sessions.

2021-2022 Outcomes

Project / Activity Area	Changes made to services
Walsall Urgent Treatment Centre	Increased sanitation & cleaning schedules.
New A&E pre-build meetings with disability, visually impaired and deaf/hard of hearing groups	Many of the experiences shared have gone into the design of the new build from use of tactile surfaces, signage, use of colours and ways of communicating.
After raising repeated contact issues for the public with GP practice(s)	Group practice owners updated to new telephone system.



healthwatch

Walsall

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YouTube Healthwatch Walsall 2020