

## Pass it on...

Please forward this ebulletin to your friends, family and colleagues.

Healthwatch Harrow is the health and social care champion for local residents.

Join now and get involved!



Picture: Grounds of Bentley Priory

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... plus more!

## ➡ Our New Blog: Understanding Acronyms

Outreach Coordinator, Sandy Bowman writes "There are many different acronyms used in health and social care that the public may not know, and they can be confusing."

In this blog, I will be breaking down some of the main ones and explaining what they mean in Harrow.

The aim is to help residents understand these terms better, so they can feel more informed, confident, and involved when using local services."



Helping you to navigate local services

The blog is available now on the website. It also features a glossary document, for download. ➡ [More](#)

## ➡ A Christmas Message...

Healthwatch Manager, Yaa Asamany writes "Dear stakeholders, we would like to wish all readers a Merry Christmas and happy 2026.

Thank you for sharing your stories and feedback and facilitating conversations that amplify resident's voices in Harrow.

We look forward to more involvement of the independent voice of residents in the New Year.

Enjoy the festive break!"

From Yaa and the Healthwatch team.

**“Mental Health need not be a hidden condition.”**

Join us today and have your say!

## ➡ Out and About in Harrow!

East Harrow Health & Wellbeing Fair was held on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> December at Canons High School.

The event brought together local services, community groups, and residents to promote health, wellbeing, and community support.



Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> December, staff & volunteers

It was a great opportunity to network with other organisations working in health, social care, and the voluntary sector and to engage with the local community in an interactive and meaningful way (read more on Page 4).

**“Weekend opening helps as I work long hours.”**

Join us today and have your say!

In November, we attended a Harrow Carers event to celebrate Carers Rights Day. The event was well attended even though the weather was so cold.

There were interesting and inspiring presentations from a number of local groups, including Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust (CNWL), Harrow Falls Service and Watford Football Club. Read more about Carers Rights Day on Page 3.

Earlier in the month, we dropped into the 'Bigger Conversation Café' at St Peter's church. The topic this time was on the 'Movember' campaign, and men's health. The event was attended by over 100 local people.

If you would like us to attend your event, please do get in touch!

## ➲ Introducing Harrow RISE

Hestia's Mental Health Community Support Service in Harrow provides support for anyone aged 18+ with a mental health need, who lives in or is registered with a GP in the borough.

They will work with you to identify the best ways that they can support you, with the aim of helping you re-discover your strengths, aspirations and goals.

The support is tailored to your needs, and can include help to access local resources and community networks, and one-to-one wellbeing support with a trained professional who can help you with your long-term goals including building confidence & resilience.



Support that is tailored to you

There are also group activities and workshops aimed at improving wellbeing, making connections and increasing skills for independence.

The service is open daily from 9am - 5pm, Monday to Friday. Find out more online. [➲ More](#)

## ➲ Emergency Dental Treatment - NHS 111

NHS 111 can advise you where you can get seen and, in appropriate cases, organise an emergency dental appointment, which might be at a different practice from your regular NHS dentist but usually nearby.

If you have a regular dentist, contact your practice first. If you don't, or you need advice out of hours, 111.nhs.uk is here for you.

**“ I got my referral for a scan within days. ”**

Join us today and have your say!

## ➲ Carers Rights Day 2025

National Charity, Carers UK writes "This year, Carers Rights Day took place on 20<sup>th</sup> November and our theme was 'Know your rights, use your rights.'

Thank you to everyone who took part and helped to ensure more carers are aware of their rights and feel empowered to use them.



It's important to know your rights

Every day, 12,000 people become unpaid carers for a partner, family member or a friend - many of whom don't see themselves as carers, often unaware of their legal rights and what they're entitled to in terms of support and benefits.

**“ Physiotherapy helps me stay independent. ”**

Join us today and have your say!

Carers should not have to miss out on support designed to reduce some of the pressures caring can bring. Whether they care 24/7 or juggle care with work and family life, are new to caring or have been for many years, and wherever they live in the UK - all carers deserve to understand their rights and be supported to use them if they wish.

As a carer, knowing your rights empowers you with information about what you're entitled to.

This helps you feel confident asking for what you need, as well as challenging things when your rights are not being met - whether that be in the workplace or education, in accessing health or social care, or when interacting with other professionals or at home". Find out more now, online. [➲ More](#)

## ➡ Mental Health - Single Point of Access

Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust (CNWL) writes "The Single Point of Access is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

The service is for people experiencing a mental health crisis who live in Brent, Harrow, Hillingdon, Kensington and Chelsea, Westminster and Milton Keynes. It's also open to children and adults of all ages, to people who haven't previously used mental health services and to carers and family members who might be concerned about someone.



Simply call, or send an email

The team consists of qualified clinicians who are knowledgeable about different services and options. This helps callers to be directed to the most appropriate service to meet their needs.

**“Not everybody can use a computer.”**

Join us today and have your say!

They provide advice and guidance through a triage process, where the urgency of care required is assessed. The team also have the ability to make appointments for new referrals to see one of our community mental health teams.

The Single Point of Access works closely, at times of mental health crisis, with our crisis resolution teams and our partner organisations from across the public and private sectors, to direct people to services most able to aid their recovery". To find out more, get in touch or visit the website. [➡ More](#)

0800 0234 650 or cnw-tr.spa@nhs.net

## ➡ Harrow Health & Wellbeing Fairs

Central London Community Healthcare NHS Trust (CLCH) writes "Two fantastic Health & Wellbeing Fairs recently took place in Harrow, giving residents the chance to learn about Neighbourhood Health and meet the people who make it happen.

What is Neighbourhood Health? It's all about Integrated Neighbourhood Teams (INTs) - local health and care professionals working together to support you.

Instead of services working separately, INTs join up so you get the right help at the right time, close to home. This means easier access to care and support before problems get worse.



A recent health & wellbeing fair

Why does this matter? For you, no more running around different services - everything is connected for your convenience. For staff, better teamwork, less paperwork, and more time to care.

Who's in your local team? Social care, public health, mental health support, nurses and therapists who visit you at home, your GP practice, plus local charities and community groups - all working together for your wellbeing.

The fairs were packed with activities, from chair yoga, face painting for children, henna art to stalls offering advice on nutrition, housing, employment, mental health, and more. Residents enjoyed free refreshments and friendly chats. We want to say a heartfelt thank you to everyone who came along!"

**“The community midwife was fantastic!”**

Join us today and have your say!

## ➊ Referrals: Working to Improve Experiences

Healthwatch England writes “In 2023, we researched how difficult the process of getting a referral can be. People described how they ended up trapped in ‘referral black holes’, left without updates about their care.

In our follow-up report, we look at whether experiences of referrals have improved, and make recommendations to ensure referral processes work for patients and NHS teams alike.

In our latest research, we found that over six in ten people (62%) were satisfied with the referrals process. But almost one in four (23%) weren’t satisfied, and only 7% of those experiencing a referral issue were satisfied with the process.



Patients have had to chase referrals

One in seven (14%) people ended up in a ‘referral black hole’ - i.e. their referral is delayed, lost, rejected, or not sent. Three in four people (75%) who had an issue with their referral reported at least one negative impact on their health and wellbeing, compared with 36% of those who had no referral issues.

Earlier referral leads to better experiences. Of the 59% of respondents referred during their first GP appointment, 71% went on to be satisfied with the referral process. Satisfaction was 67% when people were referred between their first and third appointment. Only 47% of those needing more than three appointments were satisfied overall.

**“The diabetes nurse was full of useful advice!”**

Join us today and have your say!

Quicker referral confirmation leads to better experiences. People who had referrals confirmed within a month were more likely to report satisfaction with the referral process. For those confirmed within a week, satisfaction was high at 88%.

The right information and choices lead to better experiences. Satisfaction rose to 83% when people got all the information they needed along with a referral. Satisfaction also jumped from 62% to 77% when given any sort of choice (e.g. of location, consultant, or appointment time) at the point people were told they were being referred.



Regular updates lead to ‘better experiences’

Regular updates and support after referrals lead to better experiences. Nearly half of people (47%) said clear communication was among their top three important aspects of a referral. Regular communications after referral increased satisfaction.

Earlier referral with quicker confirmation and better information and choice leads to almost universal satisfaction. Satisfaction rose to 98% for those who were referred between their first and third GP appointment, had their referral confirmed within a week, said they were given enough information, and were given choices.”  [More](#)

## ➋ Introducing ScotsCare

ScotsCare is a London charity supporting first and second-generation Scots resident in London.

They offer a range of financial, practical and emotional support, through services including grant giving for essential household items, and education and training for adults.

ScotsCare also provide sheltered housing for those over 55, or 50 living with a disability (waiting lists apply).  [More](#)

## ➡ Medical Day Care and Sickle Cell - Consultation

London North West University Healthcare NHS Trust (LNWH) writes "We are seeking views on a proposal to move a Medical Day Care Unit from Central Middlesex Hospital to Ealing Hospital, and to expand the sickle cell service at Central Middlesex Hospital.



Services will be moved, under plans

The Medical Day Care Unit provides a range of nurse-led day treatments and procedures like intravenous drips, infusions and injections. It is open from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday and most people attend by appointment.

Our sickle cell day care service at Central Middlesex Hospital shares space with the Medical Day Care Unit. This service provides blood transfusions and pain relief for our sickle cell patients. We want to expand the sickle cell day care facility to better meet the needs of the local population. The service would remain at Central Middlesex Hospital.

**“I found the assessment too complicated.”**

Join us today and have your say!

Moving the Medical Day Care Unit to Ealing Hospital would create the space we need at Central Middlesex Hospital to expand the sickle cell service. We have funding from NHS England to do this.

Also, the unit could work alongside the hospital's Same Day Emergency Care services, where some patients who might otherwise have been admitted to hospital are assessed, diagnosed and treated on the same day they arrive."

Share your views, in a brief survey. [➡ More](#)

## ➡ Become an NHS App Ambassador

The local NHS writes "The NHS App is making it easier than ever for patients to manage their health, from booking GP appointments and ordering prescriptions to viewing test results and records.

The NHS App Ambassador programme is inviting NHS staff and community members in North West London to spread the word.

Ambassadors play a simple but important role - helping people discover the app, showing them how to use it and supporting those who may find digital tools challenging. Whether you're a GP receptionist, pharmacist, volunteer or community leader, you can make a difference.



Could you be an app ambassador?

As an ambassador, you'll get access to training, resources, and a supportive network across the country - plus the chance to develop your skills while supporting better patient care.

The NHS App is helping patients take control of their health and saving practices valuable time. By becoming an ambassador, you can be part of that change in your own community." [➡ More](#)

## About the NHS App...

The NHS App gives you a simple and secure way to access a range of NHS services. Download the NHS App on your smartphone or tablet via the Google play or App store. [➡ More](#)

**“I want a named social worker.”**

Join us today and have your say!

## ➡ AI - What Are the Risks and Opportunities?

Healthwatch England writes "Our latest research shows that while most men turn to the NHS most often for information on staying healthy, one in five are now using platforms such as TikTok, Instagram and YouTube and almost one in 10 are using Artificial Intelligence (AI) chatbots.

Men in England continue to face worse health outcomes than women. They face higher rates of heart disease, cancer and suicide, which is one of the leading causes of death for men under 50. Healthwatch England's recent research found that these inequalities are reinforced by gaps in awareness, understanding, and engagement with health services.



Information could be misleading or inaccurate

Men are increasingly exposed to misinformation that can harm their wellbeing. Though online content can be instant and engaging, it's not always accurate. AI systems don't always understand an individual's full medical context, and social media platforms are generally designed to reward attention rather than accuracy.

When these become the first places people look for advice about their symptoms, misinformation can spread quickly and potentially cause harm.

Healthwatch England has recommended creating a dedicated men's health section on the NHS website, offering clear, accessible information."

Read more now in the full article. [➡ More](#)

**“A lovely experience at maternity.”**

Join us today and have your say!

## ➡ Healthcare and Older People - New Report

Age UK has launched the tenth anniversary of its State of Health and Care of Older People report, revealing a troubling picture of declining health among an ageing population, unequal access to services, and growing pressures on unpaid carers and frontline staff.



There are now fewer GPs, per person

The report shows that while the number of older people in the UK continues to rise, healthy life expectancy at age 65 has dropped to 11.2 years for females and 10.1 years for males. However, these declines are not shared equally: the more deprived an area, the shorter the period of life spent in good health, on average.

**“Medication delay at Discharge.”**

Join us today and have your say!

Older people with more advantages often age well, while others face worsening health, limited support and fewer opportunities to live independently.

In the face of a rapidly ageing population, the growth in the number of full-time equivalent GPs has not been keeping pace and there are fewer older people receiving social care support compared to a decade ago.

Most services are over-stretched and unpaid carers and staff alike are under intense pressure. Many older people who need help from the NHS or social care cannot access it quickly - and sometimes not at all.

Read more in the full report. [➡ More](#)

## ➡ Community Ambassadors Programme

Healthwatch Harrow is actively seeking to create a programme of Community Ambassadors as a way to reach out to more people in the borough and to ensure that all of the diverse voices across our communities are represented in our work.

We are keen to involve people of all ages, abilities and cultural backgrounds, to support our work as volunteers and to hear the views from all sections of the community, especially from those who sometimes struggle to be heard but we need your help.

Are you part of a particular group within your community? Please let us know if you are interested in becoming one of our Ambassadors.



Ambassadors have an important role

Ambassador Asha writes "I wanted to volunteer with Healthwatch Harrow to support people in sharing their experiences and gathering feedback from the local community with the aim of improving local health and social care services.

I care about making services easier to access and understand, and I am keen to gather information and feedback to share with the team. By doing this, I hope to contribute to positive changes for both service users and health and social care staff.

My goal is to ensure that service users can receive fair, effective, and efficient care that meets their needs, and ensure that they feel heard and comfortable when sharing their feedback.

Why I wanted to be an ambassador? I chose to be an ambassador for two groups, one for young people and another for visually impaired individuals of all ages.

By drawing on my lived experience, I hope to share my own experience, raise awareness of challenges that other visually impaired individuals face, and help to make services more accessible and inclusive."

## ➡ A Message from Jaya

Healthwatch volunteer Jaya writes "I recently started volunteering with Healthwatch Harrow. Having lived in Harrow for more than 20 years and experienced both positive and negative aspects of the local health services, I wanted to help ensure that residents' voices are heard by those who make the decisions.



Healthwatch Volunteer, Jaya

Yaa Asamany and Sandy Bowman from Healthwatch Harrow organised a stand at the Harrow Health and Wellbeing Fair. I volunteered to help and was joined by Kadar, another new volunteer, as well as Mary, an experienced volunteer who has been with Healthwatch for several years. Yaa and Sandy were also there.

Although the fair was quieter than expected, we still had several visitors share their comments and experiences of healthcare in Harrow. Many of their concerns echoed my own - issues accessing NHS dentists, difficulty getting GP appointments, and long A&E wait times. Kadar recorded the feedback on an iPad, which will later be compiled into a report and passed on to decision-makers through the proper channels.

Volunteer Action Harrow, who organised the fair, provided plenty of tea, coffee, and snacks to keep us going. They also held a raffle for visitors and volunteers, and I was lucky enough to win a prize.

Overall, I really enjoyed my first task as a volunteer and look forward to contributing more to improving healthcare services in Harrow."

**“The dementia nurse was full of useful advice!”**

Join us today and have your say!

## ➡ How to Stay Well this Winter

Winter comes with a higher risk of health issues, particularly for older people or those with long-term conditions and compromised immune systems.

Being cold can raise the risk of higher blood pressure, heart attacks and strokes. The cold, damp weather can aggravate existing health problems, making you more vulnerable to respiratory winter illnesses. But there are things you can do to stay well.



Heat rooms to (at least) 18°C

**Get your vaccines and boosters.** Protect yourself and others by getting your flu vaccination, and if you are in an at-risk group your COVID-19 booster.

**Keep warm during the day.** Wrap up in lots of layers of thin clothes, even when you go to bed. Keep doors closed to block draughts. Try to heat rooms you regularly use to at least 18°C. Make sure you're getting the help you're entitled to with your heating costs.

**“Parking at the hospital can be a challenge.”**

Join us today and have your say!

**Keep moving.** Move around indoors and try to get outside for a walk. Avoid sitting for more than one hour.

**Wrap up at night.** Wear layers to bed, including socks. Use a hot water bottle or an electric blanket. Don't use a hot water bottle and electric blanket together. Keep your windows closed at night.

**Stay hydrated.** Regular meals and hot drinks can help you keep warm.

**Eat well.** Make sure you eat a balanced diet with lots of seasonal fruit and vegetables. And try to eat at least one hot meal a day.

**Have your medication on hand.** Make sure you have the right medicines at home in case you get poorly. Ask your pharmacist if you're not sure what medications you should have.

**Stop the spread of germs.** Protect yourself and others by washing your hands with warm, soapy water, covering your mouth when you cough or sneeze, and wearing a mask in public spaces.



Take regular meals and hot drinks

**Look after your mental health.** The winter months can take a toll on our mental wellbeing, so make sure you're looking after your mental health, just as you do your physical health. If you are feeling down, speak to someone - a friend, family member, or a healthcare professional like your doctor.

For more tips, visit the Healthwatch website. [➡ More](#)

## ➡ Harrow Warm Hubs

Run by local charities and community organisations, hubs provide a welcoming space for Harrow residents to meet and get involved in activities.

Whether you're trying to stay warm, need a hot drink, or just want friendly company, you're always welcome.

Visit the website, to find a nearby venue. [➡ More](#)

**“Popping into the chemist did the trick!”**

Join us today and have your say!

## ⇒ Think Pharmacy First!

Pharmacists can offer advice on a range of illnesses, such as coughs, colds, sore throats, ear infections and aches and pains.

They can also give advice about medicines.

This includes how to use your medicine, worries about side effects or any other questions you have.

Most pharmacies can offer prescription medicine for some conditions, without you needing to see a GP, this is known as 'Pharmacy First'.



What can your pharmacist do for you?

Ask a pharmacist to find out what they can offer. You can also read more online. [⇒ More](#)

## Latest Newsletters

- ⇒ Harrow Council - Harrow People Newsletters [⇒ More](#)
- ⇒ Harrow Carers - Newsletters and Bulletins [⇒ More](#)
- ⇒ Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital - Articulate Newsletters [⇒ More](#)

## News Summary

- ⇒ The latest news from London North West University Healthcare NHS Trust [⇒ More](#)
- ⇒ The latest news from Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust [⇒ More](#)
- ⇒ The latest from NHS North West London [⇒ More](#)
- ⇒ NHS ready for double whammy of winter flu-demic and strikes [⇒ More](#)
- ⇒ Adult safeguarding caseloads continue to mount, government data shows [⇒ More](#)
- ⇒ A&Es under siege from hiccups and ingrowing toenails [⇒ More](#)
- ⇒ Free 'morning after pill' for women at high street pharmacies thanks to NHS expansion [⇒ More](#)
- ⇒ 'Life-changing' AI support helping stroke patients get a second chance [⇒ More](#)
- ⇒ Age UK reveals the nation's most hated and loved exercises [⇒ More](#)
- ⇒ GPs managed record number of online requests in October [⇒ More](#)
- ⇒ NHS artificial intelligence (AI) trial to diagnose prostate cancer up to a month faster [⇒ More](#)
- ⇒ Personalised 'living drug' to offer "hope of cure" for aggressive leukaemia on NHS [⇒ More](#)
- ⇒ Social care practitioners to form part of neighbourhood health teams [⇒ More](#)
- ⇒ NHS maintained almost all care for patients during doctors' strike [⇒ More](#)
- ⇒ The assisted dying bill explained [⇒ More](#)
- ⇒ Waiting list down as NHS 'approaches its limit' ahead of strikes and flu [⇒ More](#)
- ⇒ Overseas care staff visa numbers down by 81% over past year [⇒ More](#)
- ⇒ Hundreds more blood cancer patients to receive life-giving drug on NHS [⇒ More](#)
- ⇒ National strategy to define what constitutes good-quality adult social care [⇒ More](#)
- ⇒ Record numbers of people with type 2 diabetes benefit from NHS ' soups and shakes' [⇒ More](#)
- ⇒ Care workers given pay rise as Rachel Reeves increases national living wage in Budget [⇒ More](#)
- ⇒ NHS issues flu jab SOS with worst of winter only weeks away [⇒ More](#)
- ⇒ Age UK responds to Government's 10 year NHS plan and neighbourhood services [⇒ More](#)
- ⇒ Adult social care faces £600m overspend due to mounting demand, finds ADASS [⇒ More](#)
- ⇒ NHS hospitals trialling 15-minute blood test for life-threatening conditions in children [⇒ More](#)
- ⇒ Home care funding £2bn short of minimum required in England, finds provider body [⇒ More](#)
- ⇒ Department of Health appoints new social care chief [⇒ More](#)

# Be an Ambassador for Healthwatch Harrow

**Make local healthcare better for everyone**

**What are the main health and social care issues in your community group or place of worship?**

The voices of people in your community don't always reach the decision makers. You can change this by becoming a Healthwatch Harrow Ambassador.

Your connection with people through shared cultures, beliefs, languages, and interests is important. You are in a unique position to share valuable feedback with Healthwatch Harrow.

**The information you give to Healthwatch Harrow is anonymised.**

## Healthwatch Harrow is independent

- We champion your views on health and social care in Harrow
- We regularly meet the people who commission health and social care services
- We tell the commissioners what you say and what you need

## How to become a Healthwatch Harrow Ambassador

For more information about this voluntary role, please contact

[healthwatchharrow.co.uk](http://healthwatchharrow.co.uk) | 020 3432 2889 |  
[info@healthwatchharrow.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchharrow.co.uk)

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### our partners

