



Annual report 2019-20

Guided by you

Contents

Message from our Chair	3
Our priorities for the year	4
About us	5
Highlights from our year	7
How we've made a difference	9
Helping you find the answers	15
Our volunteers	19
Our finances	23
Our plans for next year	25
Thank you	27
Contact us	28

Message from our Chair



We are proud to present the Healthwatch Birmingham Annual Report for 2019-20, demonstrating our growth and achievements for our citizens. In this sixth year of delivering Healthwatch Birmingham services we heard even more feedback from citizens and used this to help improve services. Our dedication to hear from our diverse communities in the city is at the heart of our work. Highlights of this year include our:

- report describing patients' experiences of hospital waiting rooms and the improvements made.
- responses to NHS public consultations.
- highly commended work relating to the NHS Long Term Plan, which reported what people thought was important for future health services.

Health and social care continue to face the challenge of adapting services to meet people's needs. They are becoming more integrated and building more links with community groups, which is important in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic. We have an important role in helping Birmingham to recover in a way that is fair for all. Birmingham's citizens have displayed an inspiring show of solidarity, which we are determined to amplify by helping everyone in Birmingham to speak up and be heard. This is particularly important for people who have been disproportionately affected by Covid-19, such as BAME communities, people with learning disabilities, care home residents and those receiving care in their own homes.

Each year we hear more feedback from citizens and use this to help improve services.

Danielle Oum
Healthwatch Birmingham
Chair

We thank those working in the health, social care and the city's vibrant voluntary and community sector, for their support and their extraordinary efforts during the pandemic. These trusted relationships are critical to our success and impact for citizens. We also thank everyone who has shared feedback. You all help to make Birmingham a great city. Together we can make it even better.

Our priorities for the year

Last year 1,884 people told us about the improvements they would like to see health and social care services make in 2019-20. Our three key priorities were:



To help improve the support for hospital patients who have problems with care.



To help ensure that service users' experiences are heard by organisations redesigning services.



To help improve hospital waiting rooms for patients with sensory disabilities.



Healthwatch Birmingham plays an essential role in the city's health and social care sector. They provide a safe and impartial space for the public to provide feedback and share their experiences. They give Birmingham citizens the confidence that their views will be heard and considered by those who commission, design and deliver services.

Councillor Paulette Hamilton, Birmingham City Council

About us

Healthwatch Birmingham is your independent champion for health and social care services. We exist to ensure patients and the public are at the heart of care. We provide you with ways to feedback and have a stronger say about the services you use. We listen to what you like about services, and what could be improved. This could be about general practices, hospitals, dentists, opticians, pharmacists, nursing and residential care homes, or care received in the community. We have the power to ensure that the organisations that design, run or regulate health and social care listen to your views and act on them.

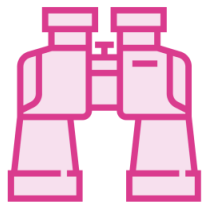
Your experiences prompt and lead our activities and investigations. Our reports focus on improving services for everyone. We also encourage services to involve patients and the public in decisions that affect them. Through our Information and Signposting Service, Healthwatch Birmingham also helps you find out the information you need about services in your area. Sharing your experiences can make a big difference. Our aim is to help make health and care services better for you, your family and your community.

We have worked closely with Healthwatch Birmingham over the past year to help us to hear, understand and act on local people's experiences about what works well and what needs to be improved in local health services. This partnership has proven to be very valuable and positive; we look forward to working with Healthwatch Birmingham during 2020/21.

Gemma Rauer, Assistant Director of Communications & Engagement,
NHS Birmingham & Solihull Clinical Commissioning Group



The team celebrate being 'Highly Commended' at the Healthwatch England conference



Our vision

Patients, the public, carers and service users are at the heart of every change made in the name of service improvement in health and social care in Birmingham.



Our purpose

We are an independent organisation making sure local people are involved in the design, delivery and monitoring of health and social care services in Birmingham. We champion what matters to you about these services and work with others to make sure your views shape the support you need.



Our approach

We collect your views about the health and social care services you use. We include these views in reports and, if appropriate, suggest recommendations to the organisations that commission, design and deliver these services. We share our reports with Healthwatch England, who advise the Care Quality Commission to conduct special investigations if necessary. You can also contact our Information and Signposting Service to find out more about care and support services in your local area. By listening to everyone – across Birmingham's diverse communities – we can make a big difference for all.



How we find out what matters to you

People are at the heart of everything we do. Our staff and volunteers identify what matters most to people by:

- collecting feedback through our website.
- answering enquiries to our Information and Signposting Service.
- running surveys and focus groups.
- going out in the community and working with other organisations.



Find out more about us and the work we do

Website: www.healthwatchbirmingham.co.uk

Twitter: [@HWBrum](https://twitter.com/HWBrum)

Facebook: [/HealthwatchBirmingham](https://www.facebook.com/HealthwatchBirmingham)

Highlights from our year

Find out about our resources and the way we have engaged and supported more people in 2019-20.



Health and care that works for you



15 volunteers

helped to carry out our work. In total, they attended 65 events, meetings or training sessions and gave 162 hours to help improve health and social care services.

We employed

10 staff

9.17 of whom are full time equivalent.

Providing support



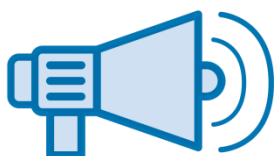
1,884 people

shared their health and social care story with us, 30% more than last year.

474 people

accessed Healthwatch Birmingham advice and information online or contacted us with questions about local support, 25% more than last year.

Reaching out



60,836 visits

to our website, 5,986 people engaged with us through social media, and 2,502 people engaged with us at community events.

Making a difference to care



We published

3 investigation reports

about the improvements people would like to see with their health and social care.

How we've made a difference



Speaking up about your experiences of health and social care services is the first step to change.

Take a look at how your views have helped make a difference to the care and support people receive in Birmingham.



Collecting feedback outside Birmingham Women's Hospital Patient Advice & Information office

Improving support for hospital patients who have problems with care

Service users will benefit from improvements to NHS trusts' Patient Advice and Liaison Services (PALS), following our report into their experiences. Examples of recommendations include every enquirer to Birmingham Community Healthcare Trust PALS receiving a named contact, and more feedback from PALS users at Birmingham Women's and Children's NHS Foundation Trust being used to continuously improve the service.

We worked with seven NHS trusts across Birmingham and 19 community organisations and registered charities.

87 people told us about their experience of PALS. Their experiences were inconsistent between NHS trusts. When PALS worked well people's needs were met, they felt understood and that their voices were heard. However, when PALS did not work well people felt powerless, afraid their treatment had been compromised by contacting PALS, and believed PALS was not acting in patients' best interests.

To tackle this inconsistency, lead PALS officers are sharing best practice. This will help to ensure a more standardised service between NHS trusts. The full report, ['Getting the help you need – How PALS are supporting patients in Birmingham'](#), can be found on our website.



Listening to Wylde Green residents about the services they access

Assessing the impact of changes to primary care services on vulnerable people

We responded to 14 consultations, reviews or listening exercises. One example is a response to a primary care consultation by NHS Sandwell and West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). This highlighted the importance of the CCG fully assessing the impact of service changes on vulnerable people.

The CCG consulted patients of Five Ways Health Centre after the Care Quality Commission (CQC) placed the centre into 'special measures'. The health centre was in an area ranked amongst the 10% most deprived in the country.

The area includes people on low incomes, the elderly, people living in poverty, and those with caring responsibilities; 59% of the practice population are from black and minority ethnic (BAME) groups.

Healthwatch Birmingham recommended the CCG assess the impact of such proposed service changes on vulnerable patients. As a result, the CCG committed to implement impact assessments for future consultations and engagement for primary care services. These will help ensure that the needs of vulnerable patients are more fully understood, and negative effects of service change minimised, in the future design and delivery of primary care services in West Birmingham.



Collecting feedback at Birmingham and Midland Eye Centre

Hospital waiting rooms improved for patients with sensory disabilities

Our report [“What is it like being in a hospital waiting room?”](#) examined the experiences of people in waiting rooms in eight NHS hospitals. We heard the views of patients and conducted focus groups to hear from people with sensory impairments. This investigation was conducted in partnership with third sector organisations.

Our [follow-up impact report](#) shows that our recommendations led to many improvements for patients and carers.

- City Hospital has introduced patient held call systems allowing people to leave waiting areas without the anxiety of missing their appointment.
- Birmingham and Midland Eye Centre staff now guide visually impaired patients to their appointments.
- Birmingham Dental Hospital now makes announcements in clinics to ensure patients with hearing impairments or sight loss know when it is their turn.
- At the Royal Orthopaedic Hospital details of clinics that regularly over-run are shared with operational managers to identify causes and increase efficiency.
- At University Hospitals Birmingham a patient, who is an architect by profession with expertise in signage, is assisting work to help patients find the correct waiting room.
- Birmingham Children’s Hospital and Birmingham Women’s Hospital reception staff now have bold, visible sensory awareness badges stating ‘I am here to help with sensory awareness’.

Long Term Plan

#WhatWouldYouDo

Giving people a say in the NHS Long Term Plan

Following a commitment from the Government to increase investment, the NHS published the 'Long Term Plan' in January 2019, setting out its key ambitions over the next 10 years. Local Healthwatch across the country were asked to find out what people want from health and support services for the next decade. Working with Healthwatch Solihull, more than 690 people shared their views with us.

Healthwatch Birmingham was 'Highly Commended' at the national Healthwatch conference for our NHS Long Term Plan report. This gave recognition to our impact in ensuring people's views were heard and considered by the NHS. The report can be found on [our website](#).

The public's priorities included:

- access to the help and treatment I need when I want it (44%)
- jointly choosing the right treatment with the relevant health and care professional (38%)
- being able to stay in my own home for as long as it is safe to do so (48%)



690 people shared their views with us

Our recommendations to the NHS:

- clearly lay out how the health and social care system will improve communication pathways with patients.
- address individual and community skill gaps for self-care.
- eliminate local gaps in meeting the Accessible Information Standard.
- reflect on the availability of services to support individuals, with improvements made to referral pathways, waiting lists/times and the distribution of services.
- implement actions, where waiting times are unavoidable, to support individuals to self-care.
- detail how assets within communities will be supported and developed, identifying and addressing any gaps across Birmingham and Solihull.
- address how local NHS services will work across all partners to reduce the stigma of mental health, disability and other conditions, support individuals and build self-efficacy for self-care.

By addressing these in the development of the plan, the NHS will better enable local communities to look after their own health.



My health is very important for me and I want to be listened to regarding my health and involved in care management.
Birmingham resident

Helping you find the answers

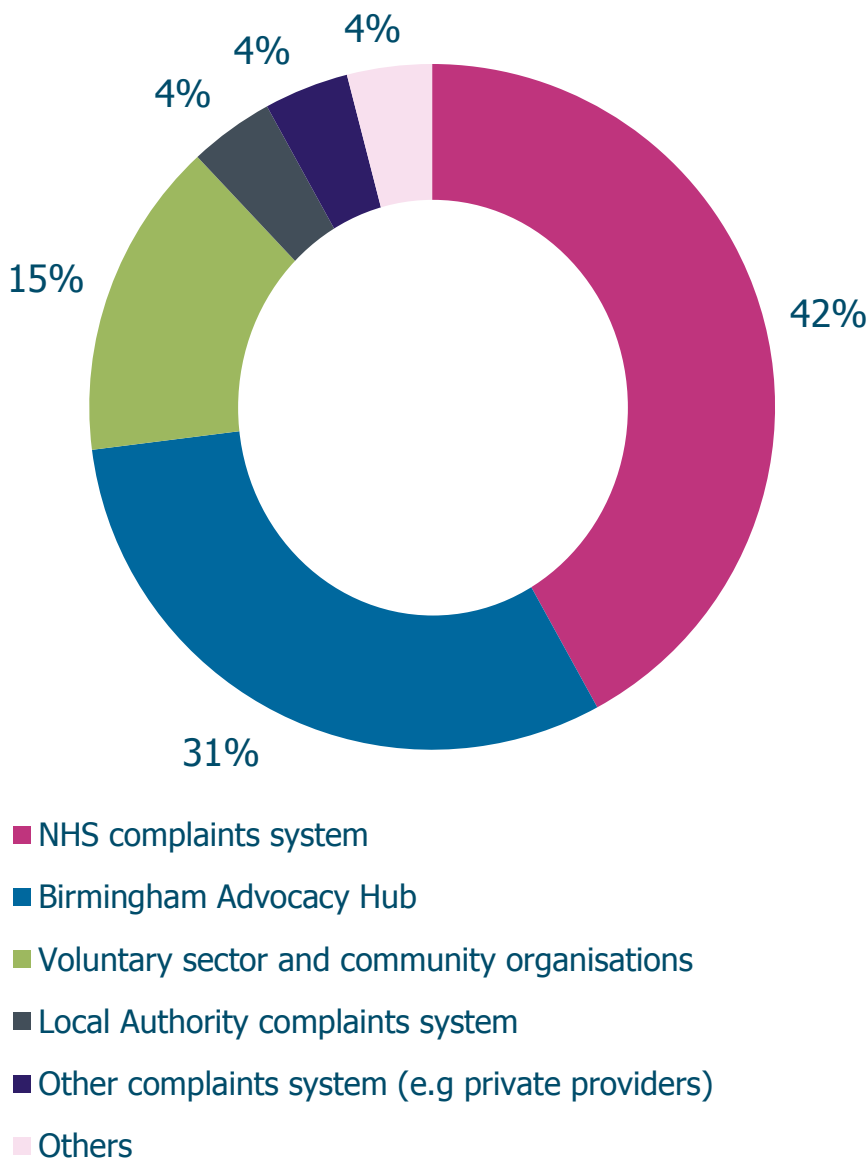


Finding the right service can be worrying and stressful. Healthwatch plays an important role in helping people to get the information they need to take control of their health and care and find services that will provide them with the right support.

This year we helped 474 people get the advice and information they need by:

- providing advice and information articles on our website.
- answering people’s queries about services over the phone, by email, or online.
- talking to people at community events.
- promoting services and information that can help people on our social media.

We signposted people to the following organisations:



Case study: Finding help following medical complications

As a result of contacting our Information and Signposting Service, Mrs M was able to gain the information she needed to contact organisations to support her.

Mrs M had an operation for Crohn's Disease in 2008. She was told this would not affect her fertility, yet following a complication with the operation, Mrs M was informed she could now only conceive through IVF.

Mrs M applied for fertility support through the NHS but has been told that she does not qualify as her partner already has two children. This disqualifies her from accessing treatment according to IVF rules in her area.

Our Information and Signposting Service guided her toward support including Fertility Network UK, a campaigning support network which deals with failures in provision, and the Equality Advisory Support Service, which deals specifically with failures in equality legislation. Mrs M was also referred to Birmingham Advocacy hub, who are helping with her ongoing deliberations with the NHS.

Christine (our volunteer) and Mark (Volunteer and Community Officer) collecting feedback





Case study: Support with a complaint about a GP and complex personal issues

Mrs C contacted us about her father. We listened to her and signposted her to organisations that could support Mrs C and her father at a difficult time in their lives.

Mrs C's father needed home visits from a GP. Over Christmas, her father required an ambulance visit, which the GP refused to attend. Mrs C complained to the surgery and received an apology. However, she was then contacted by the Practice Manager who removed Mrs C and her father from their list of patients. Mrs C did not want to move GPs and wished to make a complaint.

We signposted her to the regulator responsible for the GP surgery and referred her to an advocate to help her navigate the NHS complaints system.

During the call Mrs C shared with us that she is a full time carer and suffers PTSD following a serious sexual assault. We therefore also gave her details for The Rape and Sexual Violence Project which deals in counselling survivors of sexual abuse.

Mrs C told us that Healthwatch Birmingham was the first service to listen to her and make her feel that she wasn't in the wrong.



Contact us to get the information you need

If you have a query about a health or social care service, or need help with where you can go to access further support, get in touch. Don't struggle alone. Healthwatch Birmingham is here for you.

Website: www.healthwatchbirmingham.co.uk

Telephone: 0800 652 5278

Email: info@healthwatchbirmingham.co.uk

Volunteers



Healthwatch Birmingham is supported by 15 active volunteers. They help us find out what people think is working and what they would like to see improved about services in their communities.

This year our volunteers:

- donated 162 hours across 65 events.
- raised awareness of the work we do at events, in the community and with health and care services.
- visited services to make sure they are providing people with the right support.
- supported our day-to-day operations.
- listened to people's experiences to help us know which areas we need to focus on.
- introduced us to organisations they have connections with to help us build strong relationships.
- helped us break down some of the barriers to connecting with the more seldom heard and vulnerable communities of Birmingham.
- helped us engage with 2502 people through community events to listen to their experiences of care.

Our volunteers help improve Patient and Liaison Services (PALS) in Birmingham

Thanks to the hard work of our volunteers and their involvement with our PALS research project, positive changes were made to services as a result of our final recommendations.

Our volunteers were involved with designing and piloting the survey, hearing people's experiences, analysing the data and helping to write the final report.

We aim to publish a follow-up impact report by the end of July. Volunteers will be involved, wherever possible, with this piece of work.



Listening to people's experiences at Birmingham Children's Hospital

Through their dedication, knowledge and enthusiasm our fantastic volunteers have driven important improvements to health and social care services across Birmingham. We know we can rely on their adaptable approach to help the city face many of the difficult challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Mark McKinley, Volunteer and Community Officer, Healthwatch Birmingham



Volunteer with us

Are you feeling inspired? We are always on the lookout for new volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering, please get in touch with Healthwatch Birmingham.

Website: www.healthwatchbirmingham.co.uk

Telephone: 0800 652 5278

Email: volunteering@healthwatchbirmingham.co.uk

Our volunteers

We could not do what we do without the support of our amazing volunteers. Meet some of our team and read what they get up to.



Christine Spooner

I really enjoyed working on the PALS project and being part of something that has made a difference to services in Birmingham. I also helped with the Long Term Plan, introducing Healthwatch staff to another organisation I volunteer for, CASBA, that provides advocacy support for vulnerable people. It was a privilege to help people with learning disabilities have their say to improve services.



Mustak Mirza

It was great being involved with the PALS project, I felt valued and part of something that made a real difference. I also helped Healthwatch staff at an engagement event at Birmingham Central Mosque, I helped break down language barriers enabling us to get more feedback to improve services and raise awareness of Healthwatch.



Tim Phillips

I helped with the design of the PALS project. I also helped Healthwatch staff to build links with the Disability Resource Centre, who I'm a trustee with. This enabled Healthwatch to reach some of the service users that use the DRC, and get more feedback for the survey.

Our Board

The Healthwatch Birmingham Board has held quarterly meetings and continues to operate with clear strategic leadership, a robust risk management and financial management process. Subgroups include the Strategy, Audit and Finance subgroups. This year we have welcomed two new Board members: Dr John James and Fiona Taylor. We have also said goodbye to Charles Ashton-Gray and Gareth Dellenty and thank them for all their hard work and commitment and wish them well for the future.

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| Neelam Heera | Jasbir Rai – Company Secretary |
| Dr John James | Dr Peter Rookes |
| Danielle Oum – Chair | Fiona Taylor |
| Graham Parker | Catherine Weir |
| Tim Phillips – Volunteer Representative | Qadar Zada |

We would like to pay tribute to Mike Hughes, a former Non-Executive Director of Healthwatch Birmingham, who passed away earlier this year. Mike was a passionate advocate of patient involvement in healthcare, and his insights and experiences helped make us the strong organisation we are today.

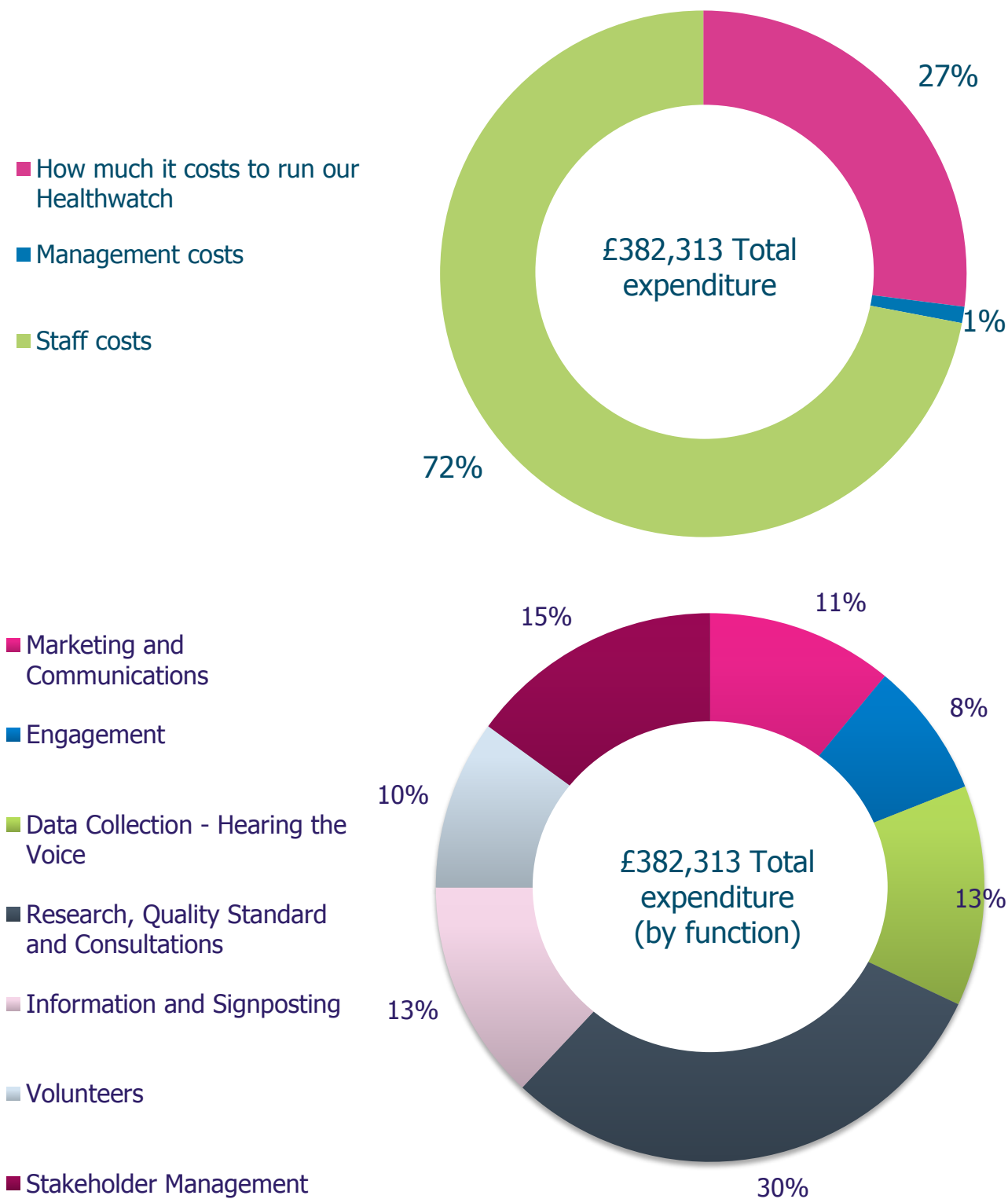
Danielle Oum, our chair, talking to Sir Simon Stevens, Chief Executive of the NHS, at the Healthwatch 2019 conference



Finances



We are funded by our local authority under the Health and Social Care Act (2012). In 2019-20 we received £398,071 funding from Birmingham City Council and spent £382,313.



Our plans for next year



Message from our Chief Executive

I am proud that Healthwatch Birmingham has continued to grow and I would like to thank the citizens who have shared their experiences with us. You have helped to improve health and social care in Birmingham. I would also like to thank everyone who has supported us and our dedicated staff, volunteers and Board members.

The Covid-19 outbreak has highlighted many health inequalities in Birmingham. We will continue to hear from as many diverse communities in Birmingham as possible. This feedback is used to deepen understanding of these inequalities and help to improve health and social care services.

We worked hard to gather feedback on people's experiences during the Covid-19 lockdown and used it to continuously inform providers of gaps in their services, helping them to respond to people in need of support. At the same time, we provided individual citizens who contacted us with information about sources of support.

In the wake of Covid-19, we will strive to hear more feedback that demonstrates inequality, helping ensure that everyone is able to access the services and support they need.

In the next year Healthwatch Birmingham will:

1. Highlight inequality and drive improvement by engaging more and more with communities that were disproportionately impacted by Covid-19.
2. Grow our partnerships with organisations in the VCSE sector that supported vulnerable populations during the Covid-19 outbreak.



Andy Cave
Chief Executive Officer, Healthwatch Birmingham

3. Support health and social care in the restoration and recovery of services, while holding providers and commissioners to account for implementing positive changes for the public who we proudly serve.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'A. Cave'.

Andy Cave
Chief Executive Officer
Healthwatch Birmingham

In the wake of Covid-19, we will strive to hear more and more feedback that demonstrates inequality, helping ensure that everyone is able to access the services and support they need.

Thank you

Thank you to everyone that is helping us put people at the heart of health and social care, including:

- members of the public who shared their views and experiences with us.
- all of our amazing staff and volunteers.
- all of the voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations that have contributed to our work.



Contact us

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