

# Annual Strategic Priorities Report

## 2024/25

### Purpose

This report sets out how and why Healthwatch Bucks has chosen its strategic priorities for the year. It will help our partners and the public to understand the decisions we've made.

### Background

Our mission is to ensure that the collective voice of people using health and social care services is heard, considered and acted upon.

Our priorities help us to understand what areas we will focus on next year. They help us to target our efforts.

These include:

- Our engagement with Bucks residents
- Engagement with other organisations
- Which meetings we attend
- Which individuals we talk to
- What projects we do to fulfil our statutory duties under the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

Healthwatch Bucks' priorities need to do a number of things.

They should:

- Take account of feedback (what people have said to us so far)
- Reflect both health and social care
- Cover both primary and secondary care
- Take account of what is going on more broadly within health and social care in Buckinghamshire and across England
- Reflect what Healthwatch England is doing

- Show parity of esteem (so mental health and wellbeing is just as important as physical health and wellbeing)
- Allow us build on our experience as an organisation
- Let us to focus on areas where we can make a difference to health and social care in Buckinghamshire

Our priorities in 2023/24 were:

- ☑ Primary care (with a focus on community pharmacies)
- ☑ Social care (with a focus on hospital discharge)
- ☑ Children and young people's experiences of health and social care.

We took a cross cutting interest in:

- + Health Inequalities

Our focus for our 'core' projects this year was aligned to these strategic priorities. We also took on 'non-core' paid work which sat outside these priorities, but which adhered to our code of conduct. This ensured that any additional work was aligned to our mission and vision as the local Healthwatch for Buckinghamshire.

See Appendix 1 for how the projects we undertook last year reflected those priorities.

## Inputs and decision-making process

Appendix 2 shows what feeds into how we decide our priorities, in addition to what we have done so far.

These include:

- Analysis of our 'Voices' (website, project and signposting feedback and data)
- Healthwatch England priorities
- Buckinghamshire Council strategies (including Happy, Healthier Lives a plan for Buckinghamshire 2021-24 and the Opportunity Bucks programme)
- Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board's Digital and Data strategy
- Department of Health and Social Care Women's Health Strategy

These priorities were discussed at an away day of staff and directors on 26 February 2024 and agreed at a meeting of the board on 10 April 2024.

## Priorities

Taking into account the information above, and the priorities we've set in recent years, Healthwatch Bucks has agreed the following priorities for 2024-25:

- Children and young people's experiences of health and social care.
- Women's Health
- Social Care

Healthwatch Bucks will take a cross cutting interest in:

- + Health Inequalities.
- + Digitalisation of services

Healthwatch Bucks works across the whole of health and social care. We will engage with the key pieces of work that are being done across the health and social care system. We will continue to engage with the Integrated Care System (covering Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West) to ensure that the voices of Bucks residents are heard at this level.

'Children and young people' is carried over from 2023/24 – this is because we feel there is still more we can do this year to hear from children and young people about their experiences of health and social care.

In addition, this year we will also be running regular snapshot surveys that may sit outside our priority areas but will capture insights about topical issues e.g., primary care.

We listen to what you have to say; we influence others to listen to what you say; we make sure that what you say makes a difference, locally and nationally, to health and social care provision.

**NB. Alongside our 'core' Healthwatch function, we also undertake separately 'paid for' projects for partners such as Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust (BHT) and the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB). The scope of this work sits outside of this paper but adheres to our code of conduct. (Appendix 3).**

## Appendix 1 – Projects and Reports

All completed reports are available on our [website](#) – along with responses from providers and follow-up reports. These are set against our 2023/24 priorities.

Status	Project (publication date)	Children and Young People	Social Care	Primary Care
Completed	Awareness of Community Pharmacy in Buckinghamshire, 'What are pharmacies for?' (August 2023)			
Completed	Your Experiences with the Age UK Discharge Support Services (November 2023)			
Completed	Continuing Healthcare in Buckinghamshire – your feedback (November 2023)			
Completed	Discharge Bed Hubs in Buckinghamshire (February 2024)			
Ongoing	Transitions in health care for young people with additional needs			

## Appendix 2 – Strategies and Data informing 2024/25 priorities

### Priority Areas from ‘Voices’

#### Informing our priority on social care

We heard from 572 people in the period January 2023 to December 2023. We continue to receive the highest volume of feedback in relation to primary care (general practice, dentistry, pharmacy and optician services.) The lowest volume of feedback came from people using social care. There’s a number of reasons why this may be the case – and a couple of of these reasons may be that more people use primary care, and that Healthwatch Bucks is generally better known in the primary care space. In 2024/2025 we would like to hear more about Bucks residents’ experiences of social care; by making it one of our priority areas we will actively promote feedback opportunities in this area.

We will continue to engage with residents about their experiences of primary care and ensure this feedback is shared with commissioners and providers.

By service type, the breakdown of feedback is as follows:

Service Types	2021	2022	2023
Primary Care	331	407	386
Secondary Care	68	62	67
Mental Health Care	24	31	35
Urgent & Emergency Care	25	59	57
Social Care	18	26	27
<b>Total</b>	<b>466</b>	<b>585</b>	<b>572</b>

#### Feedback sentiment

We record both positive and negative feedback. In 2023, we noticed a decrease in negative feedback across all service types.

	2021	2022	2023
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Service Type	Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive
Primary Care	79%	21%	83%	17%	74%	26%
Secondary Care	66%	34%	71%	29%	63%	37%
Mental Health Care	100%	0%	100%	0%	83%	17%
Urgent & Emergency Care	50%	50%	78%	22%	64%	36%
Social Care	87%	13%	88%	13%	80%	20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>28%</b>

## Healthwatch England Priorities

Informing our cross-cutting priority on health inequalities and our priority on women's health.

Healthwatch England will continue to focus on health inequalities in 2024-25 and on hearing more from people who are likely to face poorer health outcomes than the rest of the population. This includes highlighting issues such as women's health [Our position on women's health | Healthwatch](#) and the 'Share for better care campaign', [Share your feedback to improve care in your community | Healthwatch](#), a joint campaign with the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

## Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire & Berkshire West Integrated Care System (BOB ICS)

Informing our cross-cutting priority on digitisation of health and care services.

In May 2023, the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Care Board published their Digital and Data strategy. The strategy outlines three core objectives;

1. **Digitise our providers** – meeting a foundation level of digitisation across the system. By 2024 our providers should have procured and implemented their Electronic Patient Records to start a convergence journey across the care providers by 2025 to continue to digitally enhance the joined-up care model for

patients across our ICS enabling clinical teams to provide safe and effective care.

2. **Connect our care setting** – using technology and data to improve citizen experience when receiving care. By 2024 the system will grow its virtual care capacity in secondary care to over 750 virtual “beds” for patients to receive hospital care within their homes by enhancing our current digital infrastructure. By 2025 patients will be able to digitally interact with their care plans across primary and secondary care through the NHS App and other patient portals thanks to a common set of integrated technologies which will enhance patient experience.
3. **Transform our data foundations** – using the information we receive to enable all of our organisations to provide safe and efficient care including planning for future needs of patients. By the end of 2023 a single shared care record will be in place for patients enabling clinical teams across health and social care to provide safe and effective care reducing duplication and clinical errors. In addition the ICS will be able to use a single system to understand the current and future clinical needs of the patients that live and receive care within the ICS and plan future services according to local needs.

[Read the digital and data strategy.](#)

## Buckinghamshire Council

Informing our priority on children and young people and our cross-cutting priority on health inequalities

### ‘Health and Wellbeing Strategy’ 2022– 25

The Buckinghamshire Health and Wellbeing Board is a group of representatives from Buckinghamshire Council, Healthwatch, NHS, Public Health and the voluntary sector.

Their priorities, as outlined in the Buckinghamshire Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022–2025, are;

#### Start well

- 1 Improving outcomes during maternity and early years
- 2 Improving mental health support for children and young people
- 3 Reducing the prevalence of obesity in children and young people

#### Live well

- 1 Reducing the rates of cardiovascular disease
- 2 Improving mental health support for adults particularly for those at greater risk of poor mental health
- 3 Reducing the prevalence of obesity in adults

### Age well

- 1 Improving places and helping communities to support healthy ageing
- 2 Improving mental health support for older adults and reducing the feelings of social isolation
- 3 Increasing physical activity of older people

Source: [Our priorities | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

## Opportunity Bucks programme

Opportunity Bucks is the council's flagship programme to improve opportunities for people in Buckinghamshire.

It is the local response to the government's [Levelling Up White Paper published in February 2022](#) which sets out 12 national missions designed to spread opportunity across the whole UK and improve everyday life and life chances for people in underperforming places.

A significant challenge we face is the perception that Buckinghamshire is an affluent area without the same need as other parts of the country. The reality is that Buckinghamshire, like everywhere, has areas of affluence and other areas where health, work and education outcomes are poorer.

### Areas of focus

The Opportunity Bucks programme focuses on 10 wards in Buckinghamshire across three areas where people are experiencing the most hardship. Our [ward partnerships](#) work with the communities to bring about improvements to their local areas:

- Aylesbury
  - Aylesbury North
  - Aylesbury North-West
  - Aylesbury South-West
- Chesham



- High Wycombe
  - Abbey
  - Booker, Cressex & Castlefield
  - Ryemead & Micklefield
  - Terriers & Amersham Hill
  - Totteridge & Bowerdean
  - West Wycombe

Source: [Opportunity Bucks | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

## Department for Health and Social Care

Informing our priority on women's health

In 2022, the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) published a 10-year Women's Health Strategy for England with a view to:

- Improving health outcomes for all women and girls and the way in which the health and care system engages and listen to all women and girls.

The strategy was informed by feedback from thousands of women across the country revealing that they feel their voices were not always listened to, and there was a lack of understanding or awareness among some medical professionals about health conditions affecting women. The strategy references the health inequalities facing women; women live on average longer than men but spend more of the life in poor health which affects their ability to work and participate in day to day activities.

Source: [Women's Health Strategy for England - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

## Appendix 3 – Healthwatch Bucks Code of Conduct for Client Services

Healthwatch Bucks adheres to the following key principles in all the work it carries out:

- + **Our Scope** – any work that we carry out needs to be aligned with our vision and mission as an organisation:

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Our vision is that your experiences, ideas and opinions make a positive difference to the way health and social care is provided in Buckinghamshire.

Our mission is to ensure that the collective voice of people using health and social care services is heard, considered, and acted upon.

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- + **Independence** – Healthwatch Bucks is an independent organisation and as such reserves the right to share information that it believes to be in the public interest.
- + **Transparency** – Healthwatch operates transparently and publishes its findings.
- + **Data protection** – We do not pass personal data gathered as a result of any services delivered on to any third party.
- + **Not for profit** – Healthwatch Bucks does not seek to make a profit as a result of its activities. Its project costs will be transparent.
- + **Safeguarding** is an absolute priority for Healthwatch Bucks. All our staff and volunteers have safeguarding training and we will adhere at all times to our safeguarding policy.
- + **Respect** – Healthwatch Bucks has clear policies against any form of discrimination and will apply these as part of its work in all areas.
- + **Valuing our Volunteers** – volunteers are at the heart of Healthwatch Bucks and any project that we do must be conducted in a way that supports and values our volunteers.