

City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committee(s): Health and Wellbeing Board – For information	Dated: 09/05/2025
Subject: Healthwatch City of London Progress Report	Public report: For Information
This proposal: Provides progress information.	
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	£N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of:	Healthwatch City of London
Report author:	Gail Beer, Chair, Healthwatch City of London

Summary

This report details the work of Healthwatch City of London for Q4 2024/25

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

Note the report.

Main Report

Background

Healthwatch is a governmental statutory mechanism intended to strengthen the collective voice of users of health and social care services and members of the public, both nationally and locally. It came into being in April 2013 as part of the Health and Social Care Act of 2012.

The City of London Corporation has funded a Healthwatch service for the City of London since 2013. The first contract for Healthwatch came into being in September 2019 and was awarded to a new charity Healthwatch City of London (HWCoL).

HWCoL is registered on the on the Charities Commission register of charities as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation and is Licenced by Healthwatch England (HWE) to use the Healthwatch brand. The current contract for Healthwatch City of London was awarded in September 2024.

HWCoL's vision is for a Health and Social Care system truly responsive to the needs of the people who live, work and study in the City. HWCoL's mission is to be an independent and trusted body, known for its impartiality and integrity, which acts in the best interests of those who live and work in the City.

Current Position

1.1 The HWCoL team continue to operate from the Portsoken Community Centre and through hybrid working – both at the office and home working.

The communication platforms continue to provide residents with relevant information on Health and Social care services via the website, newsletters, bulletins, and social media.

The team are fully staffed and have a team of volunteers.

Public Board Meetings

1. Board Meeting in Public 14th March 2025

HWCoL held a Board meeting in public on 14th March 2025. This meeting was held online. The agenda covered an update on recently launched projects including the PALS, Digi App reports and output of the Barts Health and Neaman Practice Enter and Views. The team's work around Falls Prevention and attendance at the Health Mela event were also highlighted.

A financial update was also given.

The memorandum of understanding with NEL ICB around public and patient engagement was ratified.

Unfortunately, only one member of the public attended. It is acknowledged that the public response is improved when guest speakers are invited, and future meetings will have guest speakers.

Projects

1. Digital Apps in Healthcare

HWCoL has launched the digital apps report 'Digital Apps: A help or hindrance? Understanding and accessing digital healthcare apps'

The report was produced by the HWCoL team, Matt James, Associate Professor, Bioethics and Emerging Technologies, St Mary's University, Twickenham, and some

of our local residents. The report investigates how people in the City are impacted by the increase in digitisation of health care. It explores what is on offer to patients in the local area, how they work and whether they were easy to use.

The report highlights that local residents find that accessing digital apps can prove difficult and confusing. The findings and recommendations focus on what needs to be improved to reduce the issues and barriers that patients and carers are facing.

The launch event in February was for service providers and the guest speaker was Professor Julia Manning, Dean of Education at the Royal Society of Medicine, and an Honorary Professor of Practice in Computer Science at UCL. Julia has long championed the use of technology but is mindful of accessibility, and the pitfalls of limiting access to digital only. We were joined by Chief Information Officers and Digital leads from the NHS including from the Integrated Care Board (the commissioners of services), Homerton University Hospital and the Primary Care Network to discuss the findings in our report and to explore what we can do locally to make access easier for all not just those who are technologically savvy and for whom English is not a first language.

HWCoL have also shared the report with Healthwatch England research and policy team who will use it alongside similar studies nationally to influence feedback to the NHS and inform Government policy.

In April HWCoL were due to hold a launch lunch with the attendees of the focus group and the digital lead from the Homerton. HWCoL will keep this important issue at the forefront of discussion with CIOs and Digital Leads from across NEL NHS hospitals and service providers by attending the Digital Enabler Board.

The report is attached

2. PALS Report

In March HWCoL launched the 'Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) A review of PALS services available to City of London residents' report.

Each NHS trust is required to provide a PALS service to support patients and their carers with health-related questions, help to resolve concerns or problems when using the NHS and to provide information on how to get more involved in one's own healthcare.

To produce the report the team and a HWCoL volunteer carried out desk-based research looking at how accessible and easy to find the online information on PALS is, and what information was available. It found that the level of information is vastly different between the hospitals.

The team also visited each hospital to physically see the PALS offering at each hospital, again it found the information varied, some hospitals have external signage pointing to the PALS office, whilst others had none. This can also be said of the staff knowledge of PALS and its location.

In our report HWCOL have listed out our recommendations, which surround improving the current accessibility and communication that PALS provides, such as, improving the PALS web page to enhance its accessibility features and improving ways patients are able to get in touch with PALS. It is also essential that hospital staff are aware of PALS, where it is located and how patients and family members can access the service.

The report is attached

Support to the City of London Corporation

1. Adult Social Care Advisory Group

HWCOL have agreed to set up and manage an Adult Social Care Advisory group following a request from the City of London Corporation. The terms of reference for the group will be agreed at the first meeting which was scheduled for 13th March. Requests to join the group were sent via mail to the recipients of social care however there were no volunteers. The team are working with the CoL to review next steps,

2. Adult Social Care Annual Survey

HWCOL also offered support for the ASC annual survey by providing help to users to complete the survey.

3. City Advice re-tender

HWCOL advertised the City Advice survey to understand what residents want from the service and their experience of the current service.

Enter and View Programme

Healthwatch have a statutory function to carry out Enter & View visits to health and care services to review services at the point of delivery.

3. Barts Health NHS Trust

The Barts Cardiology Enter and View report is now complete. HWCOL are planning to launch the report with David Curran (Chief Nurse) and Professor Charles Knight at a Public Board in Q1/2.

The Enter and View at St Bartholomew's Hospital was undertaken as a result of feedback from patients about poor levels of communication, in particular in the cardiology department. Ranging from lack of details on appointment letters, including crucial information such as dates, times, or the location of where the appointment is being held, it was identified that there was a need to find out the cause of the problems. Patients have also received both a text message and a letter with contrary details and with no information on who to call to confirm their appointment.

The team spoke to both managers and staff at St Bartholomew's Hospital who are responsible for the communications and administration of cardiology appointments. The team also spoke directly to patients, both in waiting areas and in the wards, which, along with the survey previously distributed, highlighted the areas for improvement. The team followed the initial visit with a secondary visit to talk to more cardiology patients in their outpatient's department.

The report gives recommendations for improved patient experience which have been responded to by the Trust.

The report is attached.

2. Neaman Practice Enter and View

HWCoL undertook an Enter and View visit to the Neaman Practice on 13th February 2025. The visit was carried out by the HWCoL staff team and a Board member. The report is currently being written and should be published in Q1.

Communications and Engagement

4. Patient Panels

Patient panels are designed as information sessions for residents to attend on topics of concern or interest to them. They also are for residents to give feedback on those services and share ideas for improvements. HWCoL's patient panel series attract new residents at every event. Reports from all Patients Panels are published on the HWCoL website. These are now a recognised and useful way of drawing providers and receivers of care together.

1.1 Patient Panel January Neaman Practice Booking System

Dr Hillier, Partner, Neaman Practice gave an overview of the new appointment booking system that has been adopted by the Practice. The Practice rolled out the new system with very little patient engagement or communication. Therefore, HWCoL set up a patient panel for residents to join to understand the new system. We will continue to monitor the effectiveness of this change.

1.2 Patient Panel February Falls Prevention Service

Sarah Lawson, Public Health Registrar and Peter Senior, Manager, Unplanned Care, City & Hackney Place Based Partnership, NHS North East London gave an overview of the present Falls Prevention Pathway and of the review being carried out by the Public Health Team.

City residents were able to share their experiences, highlight current and potential challenges, and propose ideas in order to improve the falls pathway.

More details of this project can be found later in this report.

5. Patient Panel March CPR Training

Unfortunately, this popular session had to be cancelled due to the trainer being unwell.

1. Neighbourhoods Engagement Involvement

2.1 City Action Group

HWCoL attended the second City Action Group meeting in March. The City Action Group is a separate group formed from the Shoreditch Park and City Neighbourhood forums which specifically focus on residents in the City. The lively discussion with residents and the Neighbourhood coordinators ended in agreement that the group should have set terms of reference and awareness of the neighbourhood programme

needs promoting across the City. Despite this being talked about at the last meeting this has not materialised.

It was agreed that a meeting for residents would be held in Q1/2 to inform residents about the priorities for the Neighbourhood. We remain concerned that City don't feel consulted with and feel that they are being told what the priorities are without enough rationale.

3. Falls Prevention Engagement

As reported HWCOL raised at the Health and Wellbeing Board and the City of London Corporation that Public Health will be stopping the Staying Steady Course in the City provided by MRS Independent Living. The Public Health team are currently planning a full falls prevention programme that will be rolled out across both City and Hackney. HWCOL now sit on the steering group. HWCOL have held a Patient Panel exploring the Falls Pathway within City and Hackney, conducted a survey for residents to tell us their concerns around falling, what services they have used or are currently using to prevent further falls and what they would like to see.

The team also visited AGE UK City of London group, and gained some first-hand feedback on the service, and also attended the Older Peoples Reference Group open meeting to hear feedback.

The results of this engagement will be used to feedback to the City and Hackney Public Health team to inform their decisions on the future provisions in the Falls Prevention pathway.

4. Health Mela Event

In February, NHS North East London in partnership with Healthwatch City of London and Healthwatch Hackney held a Health Mela event at the Portsoken Community Centre to promote staying well and warm in winter primarily in the Bangladeshi community.

HWCOL helped to host the event, along with other health service providers and organisations working to help residents of the City. The event had health advice, the food pantry, vaccine information and blood pressure checks. As a result of this event the team met local residents from the Portsoken Area, volunteer groups as well as court of common councillors. This event was a successful event for us to attend, it has given us the opportunity to open the discussion with Portsoken Councillors on how to better engage with Portsoken residents on their health needs. A meeting has been arranged for HWCOL to meet with the Councillors in Q1. The Population Health Hub are also looking into improving engagement with residents in the area, so there is a possibility of this work being co-produced. Rachel Cleave is meeting with the programme manager in Q1 to discuss.

5. Annual Survey

HWCOL launched its annual survey on its service delivery in April for residents. The stakeholder survey will be launched after the Easter break.

6. Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment

HWCoL supported the distribution and advertising of the City and Hackney Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment. HWCoL's Chair, Gail Beer, is on the steering group overseeing this work.

7. Objectives review and Annual Business Plan

The HWCoL Board and Team met in early April to have the annual review of objectives and local priorities. It was agreed that both the objectives and priorities will have slight changes made to them but on the whole will remain the same. In Q1 HWCoL will produce a workplan and updated business plan that will be shared in the next report to this Board.

8. NHS Funding

Due to the recent announcements on the abolishment of NHS England and the cuts to NHS and ICB funding there will inevitably be changes to some areas to the work carried out in partnership with the NEL ICB and Healthwatch. The public rep programme which is currently managed by Healthwatch Hackney will no longer receive funding. This programme provides public reps from both the City and Hackney for engagement with NHS Services.

HWCoL are in conversation with the NEL ICB teams to discuss the best options for public engagement to continue.

Issues raised on behalf of residents

1. Neaman Practice Booking system

As raised in the last report the Neaman Practice have introduced a new appointment booking system. HWCoL were contacted by several concerned residents that the system was confusing and more importantly that they had not been informed of the change. HWCoL had a discussion with the Practice who explained the new system, and why it had been implemented. HWCoL held a Patient Panel with Dr Hillier (who has overseen the roll out) for concerned residents. To support residents HWCoL held a focus group to deep dive into the issues raised by residents which took place in Jan 2025. The team will also hold a focus group specifically for carers on 11th April.

Feedback from the patient panel, survey and focus groups will be co-ordinated and fed back to the Practice.

Planned activities for Q1

- Launch of Barts Enter and View Report
- Report on Falls Prevention Engagement
- Report of Neaman Practice Enter and View
- Report on engagement on Neaman Practice Booking System
- Healthwatch City of London Annual survey
- Production of Healthwatch City of London Annual Report
- Continued work with CoL to set up the Adult Social Care Advisory Group
- Production of three year work plan

- Increased engagement with the Portsoken Community through Court of Common Councillors
- Health in the City event

Conclusion

The team at Healthwatch City of London are proud to have produced three detailed reports in the past quarter. Engagement across all City communities is the main priority for the year ahead.

Appendices

1. Digital Apps: A help or hindrance? Understanding and accessing digital healthcare apps
2. Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) A review of PALS services available to City of London residents
3. Barts Health NHS Trust Cardiology Department Enter and View Report

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