

The value of listening

Healthwatch Richmond
Annual Report 2023-2024



Committed
to quality

healthwatch
Richmond upon
Thames

Contents

Foreword	3
About us	4
Year in review	5
Listening to experiences	6
Children's Cancer Care	7
Dentistry	8
Hampton Pharmacy Closures	9
Mind Journey Recovery Hubs	10
Kew Medical Practice Enter and View	11
Phlebotomy	11
SEND Futures	12
Transforming Adult Mental Health Services	12
Hearing from all our communities	13
Reaching out	14
Communications	15
Advice and information	16
Finance	17
A message from our Chief Officer	
20	
Our work plans for 2023/24	21

Foreword

It has been a privilege to produce a report that demonstrates our impact over such a wide range of areas. We have engaged with 8 key services in Richmond upon Thames, achieving important impacts in most, and continuing to take action when change has not been forthcoming.

Our operational work is covered in detail in this report, so the Foreword enables us to take the opportunity to highlight two important themes

Working in partnership

Whilst our work is based on the needs of our community, our success in influencing care is based on our relationships with partner organisations.

To support these relationships, our staff and trustees contribute to 40 regular meetings and many one-off events linking us to 15 key stakeholder groups. This ensures we:

- maintain clear sight of what is happening with in health and social care
- can feed in patient and public experiences where they can have an impact
- work in collaboration with our partners on things we can influence.

The success of our relationships is evidenced by the impact that we have:

- responding to requests by undertaking rapid reviews of services for NHS colleagues
- collaborating on the SEND review to inform a successful CQC/Ofsted inspection
- taking on commissioned work to review Crisis Cafés, Adult Mental Health Transformation and inform the development of Phlebotomy services
- Collaborating with Healthwatch, Local Authority and NHS colleagues around major service challenges like Dentistry, Pharmacy, and Children's Cancer services.

Financial stability

We secured the future of Healthwatch Richmond by winning a multi-year contract.

Whilst this was a huge investment of time, we're delighted to demonstrate exceptional social value, value for money and quality.

As part of a joint bid for our new contract, we are subcontracting the Community Involvement Service – a service separate to Healthwatch, which undertakes Co-production for the NHS and Local Authority – to Richmond CVS.

To offset a 10% reduction in our Healthwatch income from 2024/25, we've established an Expendable Endowment Fund, a form of savings that provides us with a small additional income.

Along with our track record of generating additional income from commissioned work, and our constant focus of delivering value for money, this will enable us to remain financially stable over the medium to long term.

About us

Healthwatch Richmond is the independent champion for people who use health and social care services in the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames. We're here to find out what matters to people and, by sharing their views and experiences with those who have power, to make change happen. We ensure that support meets people's needs and uses limited resources effectively.

We are committed to quality and the continuing improvement of our work. We perform an in-depth audit at every 3 years which informs our strategic planning and development.

Our vision

Everyone in Richmond can get the health and care they need.

Our mission

To understand people's experiences and ensure they help make health and care better.

Our approach

1. **Engage** - reach people where they are to listen to them and make sure their voices are heard
2. **Include** everyone in the conversation, especially those who don't always have their voices heard
3. **Answer** people's questions through our signposting service
4. **Prioritise** our work to meet both the community's and the system's needs
5. **Evidence** collected through well-planned and analysed work gives decision-makers the evidence they need to make meaningful improvements
6. **Communicate** proactively so that everyone has access to the information they need, can take part in decisions, and knows what we have achieved
7. **Partner** with stakeholders including NHS and care services and the voluntary and community sector at Place (Richmond) and ICS level (South West London) to ensure that we understand their priorities and that we can influence change.

Our objectives

1. To remain a financially sustainable and high-performing local Healthwatch
2. To hear from across the whole community through effective and broad community engagement including those whose voices are seldom heard
3. To demonstrate meaningful impact on health and care policy and practice.
4. To develop the reach and effectiveness of our communications, responding to changing behaviours, and making use of new technology and opportunities
5. To provide meaningful and rewarding opportunities to volunteers and the public to participate in our work.

Year in review

Reaching out

- 1,217 people engaged with us or shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care (down from 2,582 people last year – due largely to the differing focus of projects in each year)
- 203 people came to us for clear advice and information about topics such as dentistry, social care or access to support, up from 130 people last year.

Making a difference to care

We published 6 reports about the improvements people would like to see to health and social care services including:

Fighting for Pharmacies in Hampton We heard from 700 people how the closure of 2 pharmacies led to queues outside pharmacies, waiting for hours, and to unfilled prescriptions.

IMPACT:

- Prior to our work, applications to open a new pharmacy would have been automatically denied, now they will be considered
- Patient views supported an application to open a new pharmacy in the area which will improve access for residents
- Improvements were made to the remaining pharmacies, easing pressures on staff and customers and improving access to vital medications.

Improving Crisis Care We reviewed the provision of Crisis Cafés for Richmond residents and identified that their open access, holistic approach helps people avoid a crisis. We calculated that for every £1 spent on Crisis Cafés there was £2.59 of benefit to the NHS, patients and carers.

IMPACT:

- The service was recommissioned for 2 years ensuring that residents continue to benefit
- Referrals to the service will increase meaning that more people can benefit.

Health and care that works for you

We're funded by our local authority. In 2023-24 we received £146,000 and we spent £164,000. We are able to spend more than we receive on delivering Healthwatch Richmond because of the income that we generate through additionally commissioned work and interest on our investments.

Our Healthwatch Income will reduce to £131,000 from 2024/25, however, through prudent management and raising extra income, we'll be able to continue delivering for our community.

We employed 4-5 staff across the year who helped us carry out our work.





Listening to 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 feed this back to services and help them improve.

Children's Cancer Care

The national specification for children's cancer care requires Principal Treatment Centres to be on the same site as a children's intensive care unit and other specialist services. Our current provider, the Royal Marsden Hospital does not have these services therefore NHS England sought new providers that could meet these requirements.

The Evelina Children's Hospital (Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust), and St George's Hospital (St George's University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust) both applied.

We became aware of community concern when parents who had been involved in the process raised them at the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

We engaged with NHS England through our South West London Healthwatch Network which led to some small concessions before NHS England consulted on the decision.

Having reviewed all the consultation material, we were left with no option but to issue a formal response that it failed the legal tests for consultations:

- the decision to award the new service to the Evelina Children's Hospital had been made prior to the consultation process
- the consultation had no prospect of altering that decision
- key information including the unintended consequences of the move on staff, patients and families were not dealt with and as a result, unknown and unmitigated risk existed.

IMPACT:

NHS England directly responded to dispute our letter in their decision paper but did not supply evidence that the consultation had altered the decision in any material way.

Our response was referenced heavily in Parliamentary Debate, which ended in a request for the decision to be called in for review:

"[Healthwatch Richmond] concluded that the consultation design "fails the legal test" for consultation and appears to have no prospect of altering the decision to award the new service to the Evelina. [this] consultation has not been transparent and fair.

I urge the Secretary of State to call this in and have it looked at again. The voices of children, parents, clinicians and patient groups must be heard, I do not believe that they are."

– **Munira Wilson MP, Hansard, 13.03.2024**



NHS Dentistry

We have been campaigning for improvements in NHS Dentistry since late 2020 when it first became clear that the pandemic had led to a crisis in an already overstretched service.

In the 12 months from April 2023 – March 2024, over 10 percent of patient experiences we recorded were regarding accessing dentists in Richmond.

We called all 20 dentists in Richmond and many more in the surrounding area to ask if they were accepting new patients and how soon patients could get an appointment.

For much of the year, there were no dentists within an hour's travel of Richmond that could see a new NHS patient within 6 months. Half of dentists had not reported whether or not they were taking new NHS patients in the past 90 days, a breach of their contractual requirements.

We collaborated with the other Healthwatch in South West London to request basic dentistry commissioning data from the South West London Integrated Care Board. Despite multiple attempts, we were unable to obtain even basic data such as:

- the amount of dentistry commissioned,
- the amount of commissioned dentistry that had been delivered
- the size of the underspend.

IMPACT:

NHS South West London agreed that the situation was unacceptable and that they needed to take action.

They told us that they are taking back control of commissioning NHS Dentistry from London wide commissioning arrangements from April 2024. This would enable them to directly control commissioned dentistry and use underspends to resolve the shocking lack of provision for our residents.

Just prior to publishing this report, we learnt that the ICB had not in fact taken any action.

We are left without assurance that the ICB will have the information that they need to understand the scope of the challenge, or the control to take action to improve this situation.

Whilst disappointing, we now have clarity over where accountability lies and we will take appropriate actions during 2024/25 to hold SWL ICB to account.



Hampton Pharmacy Closures

In Autumn 2023, two pharmacies in Hampton closed and a third pharmacy was undergoing renovations which significantly limited capacity. Concerns were raised by residents, Councillors, clinicians and health and social care professionals.

To understand the impact of the closures we quickly collected responses from around 1 in 6 households in Hampton North and visited 5 community locations including GP practices and the remaining pharmacies and found:

People forced to queue outside of pharmacies in all weathers

Increased Waiting Times: 79% of survey respondents reported that waiting times had become worse or significantly worse, and 35% stated they waited 30 minutes to 1 hour for their prescription to be ready since the two pharmacies closed.

Poor Access: 113 people reported accessibility challenges at Station Approach pharmacy. While some people reported that their own accessibility needs weren't met, many expressed concern for others. In particular, the concerns relate to vulnerable people having to stand and wait for prolonged periods of time in the cold or rain.

Concern for Staff: 10% of respondents reported concerns about, and empathy towards, pharmacy staff and thanked them for working under such incredibly difficult conditions.



IMPACT :

We asked Boots to respond to our findings and recommendations. Their response acknowledged the disruption caused by the closures and committed to the following measures: increased opening hours; made over the counter medicines, consumer healthcare products and retail items available to purchase; and implemented a text message service for prescriptions.

"Thank you for all the work Healthwatch Richmond is doing on the pharmacy situation in Hampton North. What a fantastic response - you did a great job."

- Councillor for Hampton North

In addition, the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment for Richmond was amended to reflect this unmet need. This makes it possible for new pharmacies to open in the area. The findings of our report have been submitted in support of an application giving residents of Hampton a strong voice in the decision.

Our research was raised to parliamentary select committee by Healthwatch England.

"Healthwatch Richmond did a really interesting piece of work recently that focused on the permanent closures of two Boots stores in a local area, which put huge pressure on a third branch... Closures across the country are causing huge issues, and they disproportionately affect people who struggle to get to their local pharmacy."

- Head of Policy, Public Affairs & Research, Healthwatch England

Mind Journey Recovery Hubs

Healthwatch Richmond was commissioned to review Richmond Borough Mind's 'Journey Recovery Hub' to inform the business case for recommissioning and to identify any improvements that should be made.

Journey Recovery Hubs, also known as Crisis Cafés, provide out of hours support to people in or approaching a mental health crisis. This service aims to help to de-escalate problems, provide support and help people to manage their mental health issues.

Our work identified that the service was a valuable investment of NHS funds delivering a positive return on investment in the region of £2.59 for every £1 spent.



IMPACT:

By reviewing this service, we ensured that services users' experiences were at the heart of the commissioning process. The service was recommissioned for 2 years and our work will inform the model for Crisis Cafés across South West London.

"The report was very helpful in enabling us to demonstrate the usefulness of the Crisis Café and it has been awarded a 2-year contract to continue. It helped to focus on the cost to the NHS if this service is not available and highlights that local people can access a crisis service for support without having to be referred – which is a key selling point. The plan is for the rest of the boroughs to review their crisis café and have a SWL approach to the model."

– **Senior Transformation Manager Mental Health, NHS South West London**

Kew Medical Practice Enter & View

During July and August 2023, Healthwatch Richmond conducted two Enter and View visits to Kew Medical Practice. The Care Quality Commission had last inspected the practice in 2016 and so we decided to conduct a review to assure Kew residents of the general quality of the service.

Overall, this was a positive review and we commend the practice on their performance.

IMPACT:

Without this work, the practice would not have been inspected by the CQC for more than 8 years leaving a significant gap in assurance.

Our rapid action in visiting the practice provided evidence that bridged this gap. This enabled the regulators and commissioner to take assurance that there were no major concerns that should trigger future action.

Phlebotomy

In October 2023, Kingston Hospital commissioned Healthwatch Richmond to engage patients around its pilot which made hospital requested blood tests available outside of the hospital.

190 Richmond residents shared their views and experiences with us. We found that:

- Location, travel and cost play key roles in decisions around phlebotomy appointments
- There was very limited awareness of phlebotomy services outside of Kingston Hospital. People were not aware of the possibility of getting their blood drawn at GP practices
- People were positive about the service they had received at Kingston Hospital. Many comments described the service as outstanding from an organisational, skill and human perspective.

IMPACT

It is too soon to claim impacts from this, but over the coming years we hope to see:

- Increased phlebotomy services at GP Practices
- Increased awareness of phlebotomy services at GP Practices
- Improvements to online booking services.



SEND Futures

In Summer 2023, we collected the experiences of 103 Richmond upon Thames parent carers of the support and services provided to children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and their families. We also asked 21 professionals working in Richmond upon Thames about their experiences of working and supporting children with SEND in the borough.

While recognising successes and positive outcomes, there are the systemic challenges that have been experienced by service users, parent carers and professionals. These include:

- A lack of clear communication between services and parents
- Inaccessible information regarding services and legal processes
- Issues with the completion, accuracy and updating of Education, Health and Care Plans
- Difficulties in accessing holistic support for children and their families

Additionally, we emphasised the significance of recognising and celebrating the unique abilities of individuals with SEND, fostering a more inclusive and understanding community.

IMPACT

Our recommendations, drawn from the experiences of our community, were included in plans to reduce wait times for autism and ADHD diagnosis and improve the quality of information in Education, Health and Care Plans.

Transforming Adult Mental Health Services

South West London & St George's NHS Mental Health Trust (SWLSTG) are transforming their services to make improvements to how they operate. As a part of this transformation, SWLSTG has implemented new roles and interventions, developed a social support model, and streamlined the pathway for referrals through the system. The aim of the new model is to improve the way that care is delivered in the borough.

To support this much needed improvement, we are conducting a three phase review of the Transformation of Adult Mental Health services.

- **Phase 1:** This review took place in March 2023. We contacted 200 patients by email, text and phone calls to collect their experiences. These results form a baseline against which improvements will be measured
- **Phase 2:** This review took place across November – December 2023. We contacted 400 patients by email, text and phone calls to collect their experiences
- **Phase 3:** This review will take place in Summer 2024 and identify the impact of the transformation.

As well as enabling us to evidence how changes to care impact patients, our work has informed the roll-out of the transformation programme as it develops.

IMPACT:

As this programme of work is ongoing we will report impact in our next Annual Report.



Hearing from all our communities

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 feed this back to services and help them improve.

Hearing from all our communities

Reaching out

In addition to the roughly 1,400 people reached through our project work, we engaged over 500 people through 35 outreach events last year. Over the course of these events, we rebuilt relationships that had faltered during the pandemic including with organisations including: ETNA Community Centre, Castelnau Community Centre and Linden Hall Community Centre. We also engaged with groups that we'd engaged previously including Shepherd's Star, St James' Church, and the new Health and Wellbeing Fairs run by RUILS.

We have had good engagement with people from different communities, particularly those from minority ethnicities or who speak English as an additional language. This has been an ongoing priority for us because these groups are often excluded from decision making and influencing NHS and social care.

Focus of group	Number of sessions
Age Well	9
Socio-economic Deprivation	9
EAL/Minority Ethnicity	8
Live Well	4
Carers	4
Disability	2
Faith	1
Start Well	1
Gender / Sexual orientation	1
Long Term conditions	1
Number of groups engaged	35

We attended more events in 2022/2023 due to work priorities that year that favoured an outreach approach compared with 2023/24 that favoured research approaches.

Our plans for engagement in 2024/2025 identified the following groups to engage with: younger groups and children's centres; carers; those with disabilities and/or long-term conditions; and gender/gender identity and/or sexual orientation based groups.

Communications

Communications are a core part of the work of a Local Healthwatch. They are one of our most powerful tools for reaching people, gathering their views, encouraging people to seek advice from us and engaging people with our activity. They also promote opportunities for the public to have a say and to support the work of our partners by sharing their news and opportunities.

Our communications are both extensive and effective, enabling us to reach people around 99,700 times and enabling people to engage with us almost 19,500 times in 2023/24.

Channel	Followers	People Reached	Engagements
Bulletins	1,259	1,259	3,145*
Social Media	2,274	81,400	9,516
Website	-	17,000	6,777

* Engagement exceeds reach for Bulletins because subscribers can engage with multiple pieces of content.

In addition to our own effective communications, we work closely with partners from across the community to promote our work and our messages. This is difficult to track accurately as we do not always own the monitoring of this. Where we can monitor partner communications, it enhances engagement with our work by 25%-50%.

This combination of our communications routes and our partners, as well as using innovative channels such as text messages, targeted advertising and printed materials distributed in the community and through doorstep deliveries, enables us to be highly effective and to reach those who are digitally excluded.

IMPACT

The reach and engagement of our communications drives strong response rates to our projects.

A good example of this over the year was that, in little over a month, we were able to collect responses about the impact of pharmacy closures from around 1 in 6 households in Hampton North.



Advice and information

Over the last year we signposted over 200 people to find answers to their questions.

While we've seen an increase in people contacting us about GP services and pharmacy, there has been a marked decrease in the number of people contacting us in relation to dentistry and COVID vaccinations. Nonetheless, we receive a request to help find an NHS dentist every two weeks.

The table shows the support we provided to people with queries over a very wide range of subjects.

Subject of signposting query	Number of people supported
GP Practice	52
Other	39
Request for information	24
Dentist	23
Kingston Hospital	15
Pharmacy	13
West Middlesex Hospital	13
Mental Health Services	7
Richmond Council	7
Emergency Services	4
Hounslow & Richmond Community Healthcare	3
Residential Care	3
Total	203

Behind each of these numbers is a person and a story, often requiring more than one conversation to help them to resolve their need.

Being able to help people through our signposting work is often complex but always highly rewarding, and it makes a big difference to the people who use our service too.

"Whenever I need help I always think I know who to call - Healthwatch. You always help me and it is so needed. I wish they had it back in my day."

"The person called back to say that our help was amazing. A district nurse is now going to come visit and the GP is referring to social prescribing. The caller was very grateful."

"I was so grateful to talk to you today, you helped reassure me. You supported me, took the time needed to dispel my worst fears and you answered all my questions with kindness. Thank you."

- Feedback from signposting service users

Complex signposting issues

In 2022–2023, we noted that while there was a reduction in the number of patient experiences logged, there was an increase in the proportion of issues that require multiple contacts or some form of intervention from us to resolve.

We began monitoring complex signposting in 2023. Over 10% of the experiences that we've logged required multiple contacts or some intervention to resolve. **Some examples of this sort of work include:**

We spoke to someone at an English as an Additional Language event who was struggling to find an NHS dentist. We found an NHS dentist who was offering appointments within 3 weeks and a 25 minute bus ride away from where they lived.

“Thank you so much for the information about the dentist. It’s greatly appreciated.”

– **Signposting Service user**

A person contacted us about long wait times for their child’s surgery at Kingston Hospital. The injury was preventing their child from doing any sport which was significantly affecting their mental health.

“Thank you for your reply! I’m really frustrated about the existing situation, we don’t know how long we need to wait.”

– **Signposting Service user**

We advised the parent to speak to their GP about Patient Choice which should enable them to exercise choice over providers and waiting times and that they could also self-refer into musculoskeletal physiotherapy in the meantime.

We received a call from someone with severe cognitive impairment who was struggling to receive the help they needed at medical appointments at West Middlesex Hospital. They had ongoing cardiovascular issues and were struggling to process the information about their appointments.

We spoke to their GP and got them a referral to the Learning Disabilities Nurse at West Middlesex Hospital as well as following up with Rethink community advocacy. Because of our wider work we were able to put the GP directly in touch with the correct person at the hospital.

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.

Our income and expenditure

Income	£	Expenditure	£
Healthwatch Income	£146,000	Staff costs	£136,100
Additional income	£27,500	Operational costs	£27,800
Total income	£173,500	Total expenditure	£163,900

This financial statement provides figures accurate to the nearest £100.

In addition to our contractual Healthwatch income, we generate 'Additional Income' through commissioned work. This enables us to make a small surplus, ensuring our future financial stability, whilst investing more in delivering Healthwatch activity that we receive from our contractual income. In 2023/24, we spent 12% more on delivering Healthwatch activity than we received through the Healthwatch contract.

We ended the year with a surplus as a result of:

- additional income generation activity
- continuing good practice with managing costs
- savings on planned tendering costs.

The contractual income for Healthwatch Richmond has been reduced by 10% from 2024/25.

To mitigate this, we have invested unspent funds in an Expendable Endowment Fund. The recurrent income from this, whilst modest, will bolster our 'Additional Income', and help us to remain financially sustainable and to continue delivering Healthwatch activity beyond our contracted level

■ Healthwatch ■ Other ■ Staff ■ Operational

A message from our Chief Officer

Meeting the Challenges of the Future

Last year we spoke about the need to meet the challenges of the next 10 years of Healthwatch. We've already described how we have created the conditions that make 10 years a timeframe for planning. The largest future challenges we face come from our environment.

Centralisation

There is a clear drive towards centralisation and away from a borough focussed approach. Whilst this presents opportunities for us to work across a larger footprint, our primary focus is local. Richmond is our identity. We must work hard to retain this, demonstrate the impact of our work, understand and champion the interests of our community in Richmond and demonstrate the value of working at a Richmond level.

Pressures across NHS and Social Care

Creating impact is increasingly difficult. Centralisation does not help this as decision makers are further removed from, and less accountable to, our community.

Where we identify issues, financial and workforce challenges present real limitations on what can be done to improve care. Continuing to work closely with partners will be key to our future impact.

Developing partnerships

Given our environment, our partnerships will be keys to unlock our future success.

Within Richmond

After winning the new Healthwatch Contract and securing our financial future, we're working to set up a sub-contract with our colleagues at Richmond Council for Voluntary Service.

Whilst we have had a strong, long-term working relationship, this new contractual relationship will bring improvements to:

- Strategic coordination of our work across the Local Authority, the NHS and Healthwatch
- Co-production across the borough and opportunities for people in decision making
- Collaboration between Healthwatch, NHS, Local Authority and the voluntary sector.

Within South West London

We collaborate with other Healthwatch to ensure the experiences of people in Richmond influence decisions made about services at South West London ICS level. To do this we have a small shared staff resource hosted by our colleagues in Sutton.

With the support of this team, we have embedded learnings from over 1000 residents into the ICS' strategies and priorities. There is more to do however as we work together to tackle Dentistry and other issues that work across South West London.

Our work plans for 2024/25

General Practice

There have been many changes in general practice over the last 5 years. There is an increased push towards online booking methods and contact routes. Remote or virtual consultations have continued in the post-pandemic world. The Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme, which increased the number of pharmacists, physiotherapists, Physician Associates, mental health link workers and social prescribers in practices, has been expanded since its introduction in 2019.

We will review how these changes have affected Richmond residents and general practices by conducting a thorough review of patient and staff experience. We will make meaningful recommendations about what systems work for both patients and practices in Richmond.

Day Centres

After the pandemic, the use of day services has changed with clients presenting higher levels of needs and fewer people attending. We will conduct Enter and View visits to understand the experiences of clients and carers to inform the Council's future provision.

Transforming Adult Mental Health Care

We will complete phase 3 of our review of the Adult Mental Health Transformation and report on the impact that the process has had on patient care and experience.

Healthy Living - Richmond Moves

Following our review of what would help residents to eat more healthily, stay more active, stop smoking, and reduce their alcohol intake, Richmond Council is putting in place local resources and information to help people live more healthily.

Whilst this is in itself a huge impact, we will support the communications of this over 2024/25 to ensure that as many people as possible benefit from these opportunities.

We're also helping other areas to learn from Richmond's approach by supporting our Public Health partners to present our work and the impact at industry events where Healthwatch and Council professionals will benefit from our advice and to access our data collection tools.

Kingston Hospital Inpatient Nutrition

Following up on our pre-pandemic review, we'll be returning to Kingston Hospital to review the improvements that they have made to meal provision. We'll also gain assurance on the overall standard of care and identify any areas that require further activity.

Volunteer recruitment

During 2024 we will refresh our volunteering offer, including volunteers in our Enter & View and engagement activities, working with Universities to develop volunteer placements and identifying new and rewarding ways for people to contribute and gain skills.




**Committed
to quality**

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We are committed to quality and the continuing improvement of our work. We perform an in-depth audit at least every 3 years to support this.