

Sent via email
2 May, 2023

Dear Dr Minh Alexander

Request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000

Further to your FOI requests, which we received on 12th April 2023. Please find our response to your questions below and note that they are a combined response for both Healthwatch Birmingham and Healthwatch Solihull:

1. How many concerns were raised with Healthwatch Birmingham by members of the public about services provided by University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust?

Of the total number of experiences heard by Healthwatch Birmingham and Healthwatch Solihull each year, the figures in the table below are the number of concerns raised with us about University Hospitals Birmingham.

	Healthwatch Birmingham	Healthwatch Solihull*
2018	46	0
2019	43	0
2020	41	4
2021	56	36
2022	188	114
2023	94	57

*Please note we were awarded the contract for Healthwatch Solihull in July 2020, and hold no data prior to this date.

2. How many of these concerns were raised by patients or by the families of patients?

All the above concerns were raised with Healthwatch Birmingham and Healthwatch Solihull by patients or their families/carers through the recognised feedback mechanisms advertised on our websites. In addition, in 2021, a former member of staff at the Trust raised concerns informally and privately with our Chair.



3. How many of the concerns constituted Safeguarding concerns which Healthwatch escalated through normal multiagency Safeguarding channels, such as to the local authority?

None constituted safeguarding concerns appropriate for escalation via these channels.

4. On how many occasions did Healthwatch raise a concern with system regulators (the Care Quality Commission and NHS England or its predecessor bodies) as a result of information received from the public, patients or their families about services provided by UHB?

Quarterly reports of all data are shared with the CQC and triangulated with their insight.

Over the course of 2021, we raised additional concerns with the CQC on several occasions following an increase in negative feedback and concerns from the public received by Healthwatch Birmingham and Healthwatch Solihull, and intelligence personally received by our Chair. We had also noted UHB's poor performance in published NHS waiting list statistics and we raised these issues with the CQC. As a result the CQC agreed to meet us monthly to update us on their monitoring of UHB. These meetings continue.

We have not raised any concerns about UHB directly with NHSEI.

5. Was Healthwatch alerted by the PHSO in August 2022 about PHSO's concerns of UHB's poor leadership and culture and poor learning from clinical failure and incidents?

Healthwatch Birmingham and Healthwatch Solihull were not alerted by the PHSO in August 2022, and only became aware of the PHSO's statutory warning to UHB via reports in the media in March 2023. We issued a public statement about this [Statement on Parliamentary Health Service Ombudsman \(PHSO\) and University Hospitals Birmingham \(UHB\) - Healthwatch Birmingham](#)

We have subsequently met the PHSO to discuss concerns about UHB.

6. Has Healthwatch ever triggered the Emergency Concerns Protocol in regards of services provided by UHB, and if so, please give a summary of the reasons for triggering the protocol and the dates when Healthwatch triggered the protocol.

Healthwatch Birmingham and Healthwatch Solihull does not have the power to trigger an Emergency Concerns Protocol.



In addition to your FOI request you also wrote to Richard Burden, Chair of Healthwatch Birmingham and Healthwatch Solihull in an email received 11th April 2023. We agreed, via email, that we would include our response to your queries in that letter as part of this FOI response.

Your email asked:

'I wonder if in view of the clear and current public interest in University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust, and the extraordinary omission of any patient complaints data from Mike Bewick's phase one rapid review on clinical safety at UHB, whether Healthwatch Birmingham should now publish its anonymised data on all concerns and complaints received about UHB.

I can see no objection on grounds of confidentiality and privacy if the data is anonymised and aggregated.

A series of such data going back over years would be valuable in helping to set the current concerns about UHB's culture, clinical performance and safety into context.

Furthermore, Healthwatch Birmingham's dataset can be argued to be a more independent dataset that has not been controlled by the UHB board, and may have added value in this respect.'

Where we have permission to publish feedback heard from members of the public all this data is published via our website feedback centre at both Healthwatch Birmingham and Healthwatch Solihull.

In addition, to this feedback being published we also publish our Investigation Reports which are all available on our website including our Impact Follow-up reports.

<https://healthwatchsolihull.org.uk/reports/>
<https://healthwatchbirmingham.co.uk/reports/>

Whilst we aim to maximise the number of full experiences published, we need to respect the wishes of individuals who do not want that to happen. We also have a robust moderation policy which may prevent feedback being published. We do however use our full data sets in any aggregated data reports, respecting the privacy of individuals.

In a subsequent email to Andy Cave and Richard Burden you asked the following.

'Regarding the online feedback, I have looked at this, but it's of limited use knowing that it's only part of the data, and that people with possibly the most



serious issues will write in specifically to you as opposed to just leaving website feedback.

I think I saw on my travels that Healthwatch Torbay used to produce an annual evidence document, which gave a very broad summary of the number of concerns received for the year and the number of "serious complaints" received. I don't know how they defined "serious complaints".

Do the commissioners of Healthwatch services, or the DHSC as the ultimate funder, proscribe the publication of Healthwatch complaints data and/or require that it is reserved for them only in confidential reporting?'

Our statutory reporting is done through our Annual Report published by the 30th June each year. All requirements for this report are laid out by Healthwatch England and met by both Healthwatch Birmingham and Healthwatch Solihull each year. The reports can be found:

<https://healthwatchbirmingham.co.uk/reports/annual-reports/>
<https://healthwatchsolihull.org.uk/reports/annual-reports/>

Yours sincerely



Andy Cave
Chief Executive Officer
Healthwatch Birmingham & Solihull

