# How volunteering makes a difference

Across England our volunteers are making a difference to services in their local communities every day. Hear their reasons for volunteering and the difference they feel they are making for their community.

In honour of volunteers’ week, we asked our volunteers to tell us why they enjoy volunteering for Healthwatch. Hear their stories about how they make a difference and get valuable experience from volunteering with us.

## Willow

Willow has been volunteering for Healthwatch Somerset for nearly three years.

“I am taking a Uniform Protective Service Level 2 Course at college. I hope to work in an emergency call centre. So Healthwatch gave me the opportunity to gain experience of talking to people about health and care issues. Volunteering also contributed to my Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award.”

“I enjoy going out to meet and talk to people at events. It helps to build my confidence and communication skills. I feel that I am helping people to tell their experiences. And hopefully that will make a difference for other people who use services.”

## Graham

Graham has been volunteering from Healthwatch Southwark for four years.

“Having recently retired, after a reasonably successful IT career in the health and care sector, I wanted to continue to use my knowledge and skills and give something back to the service and community.”

“I can see the difference Healthwatch can make locally, and that is very rewarding.”

“Healthwatch helps to provide a stronger patient voice. When I worked in the NHS, I was always told that patient should be at the centre of everything – but often we failed in that aspiration. By amplifying the patient voice – Healthwatch helps to redress that.”

**“Volunteers can often more readily make connections to local communities, particularly those which might otherwise be hard to reach. This can give them more confidence in voicing their needs, with a greater expectation they will be listened to.”**

## Colleen

Colleen is one of Healthwatch Bucks newest volunteers who has been with them only a few months.

“I think Healthwatch is a really interesting organisation. I didn’t know you existed, but I think the whole concept of an organisation feeding back to the NHS is vital.”

“Healthwatch does something valuable. I happen to have an academic interest in health inequalities and Healthwatch is in a position to look at them and do something about them.”

## Vincent

Vincent has been volunteering for Healthwatch Derbyshire for nearly 8 months and has found his experience truly rewarding.

“I decided to volunteer with Healthwatch because I am passionate about healthcare and making a positive impact in my community. As a student, I wanted to gain experience and skills in a real-world setting, and Healthwatch provided the perfect opportunity.”

**“Knowing that our efforts will have a direct impact on enhancing the quality of life for people accessing these services is truly rewarding.”**

Overall, volunteering with Healthwatch has been an incredibly enriching experience that I am grateful for.”

## Nat

Nat has been volunteering for Healthwatch Wolverhampton for 3 years.

“I enjoy helping, supporting and working with other people and I’m a firm believer in doing so for those less fortunate that myself or who have different challenges in life.”

“There is the opportunity for those who don’t feel heard to be heard, for those who don’t feel seen to be seen – and to give them hope that they are not alone.”

## Allen

Allen has been volunteering for Healthwatch Coventry for about two years, after a hospital stay highlighted to her the need for improvement.

“I enjoy being an Enter and View representative, going into hospitals to better understand any concerns the patients have with the NHS.”

“Listening to everyone’s concerns and thoughts around the NHS services helps to make a difference. It gives patients and health professionals a voice so hopefully we can move the NHS forward and improve the service we all get.”

## Catherine

Catherine has been volunteering for Healthwatch Coventry for five years, after retiring from the health service.

“I enjoy the opportunity to meet and work with so many people from different areas of health and community provision and services within Coventry.”

“Volunteering makes a difference as it helps us to consider what communities really need and help access to health and community services.”

## Bernie

Bernie started volunteering at Healthwatch Hartlepool in 2018 after taking flexi retirement as an occupational therapist.

“I enjoy working with like-minded people, meeting new people and giving something back to the community.”

“I was involved with organising World Mental Health Day due to my Lived Experience of Mental Health. I arranged with Stagecoach Hartlepool (local bus company) to support our event, and they offered a free bus service for the public to attend.  They also had donation buckets on their buses leading up to the event, which raised nearly £500 which will be donated to two local charities.”

## Meet Sheeran

Sheeran has been volunteering for Healthwatch Kirklees and Calderdale for 5 years.

“I feel like I’m part of the team and am made to feel valued. I make a difference to the permanent staff by helping with their admin. The work Healthwatch does is very important and I’d like to think I contribute to enabling the staff to concentrate on what matters and not getting bogged down in the paperwork.”

## Interested in getting involved?

Sound like an interesting opportunity? Healthwatch are always looking for more volunteers to help us continue to make a difference and improve care across England.

Get in touch with your local Healthwatch today to find out more about the variety of role available to get involved with.

[How to get involved](https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/what-can-i-do-volunteer)