

Healthwatch West Northamptonshire Annual Work Plan

April 2025–March 2026



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Date	Actions	Notes
19/03/2025	HWW Planning Group workshop to review vision, values and strategic priorities. Review of work 24/25. Discuss priorities for 25/26.	GVB updated draft workplan and strategic priorities as per the meeting.
28/04/2025	HWW Advisory Board reviewed and ratified the Annual Work Plan	GVB Finalised version

Summary

The Healthwatch West Northamptonshire (HWW) annual work plan helps provide commissioners and key stakeholders with an overview of planned activity for the next 12 months. It is also a useful tool for review and evaluation.

Each year in February, Healthwatch staff and volunteers review the previous year's work and set the next year's work based on information and intelligence gathered throughout the year along with other partner and stakeholder key priorities.

Healthwatch West Northamptonshire's strategic priorities are also revisited and reviewed at the same time to ensure they are aligned with our Vision and Values¹.

All our work is delivered within a very tight budget, which currently stands at £137,000 per annum to cover staff, volunteer expenses and operational costs, such as office premises, insurance, IT support, payroll, Investing in Volunteers accreditation, etc. To enable us to continue to provide a quality service with an experienced staff team, we also offer bespoke commissioned work to key stakeholders and partners to bring in additional income throughout the year to support the Healthwatch work.

Background

About Healthwatch West Northamptonshire

Healthwatch West Northamptonshire was formed on the 1st of April 2025, previously having been a part of the Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire joint contract. Healthwatch West Northamptonshire is the local independent consumer champion for all publicly funded health and social care in the West of Northamptonshire. We are part of a national network of local Healthwatch organisations. Our central role is to be a voice for local people to influence better health and wellbeing and improve the quality of services to meet people's needs. This involves us visiting local services and talking to people about their views and experiences. We share our reports with the NHS and social care, and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) (the inspector and regulator for health and social care), with recommendations for improvement, where required.

¹ <https://www.healthwatchwestnorthants.com/what-we-do>

Our rights and responsibilities include:

- We have the power to monitor (known as “Enter and View”) health and social care services (with one or two exceptions). Our primary purpose is to find out what patients, service users, carers and the wider public think of the health and social care provided.
- We report our findings of local views and experiences to health and social care decision-makers and make the case for improved services where we find there is a need for improvement.
- We strive to be a strong and powerful voice for local people to influence how services are planned, organised and delivered.
- We aim to be an effective voice rooted in the community. To be that voice, we find out what local people think about health and social care. We research patient, user and carer opinions using lots of different ways of finding out views and experiences. We do this to give local people a voice. We provide information and advice about health and social care services.

Where we feel that the views and voices of Healthwatch West Northamptonshire and the people whom we strive to speak on behalf of are not being heard, we have the option to escalate our concerns and report our evidence to national organisations, including Healthwatch England, our local Integrated Care System and the Care Quality Commission.

Read more about the work we carried out in 2024/2025 in our most recent annual report: (to be published June 2025)

See **Appendix 1** for details of what the legislation says Healthwatch must do.

See **Appendix 2** for our Strategy, Vision and Values.

Key Performance Indicators

Healthwatch West Northamptonshire's performance is monitored by the commissioners of the service on a quarterly basis against Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

Local Healthwatch statutory duties must also be considered, such as membership of the Health and Wellbeing Board for West Northamptonshire.

The Healthwatch West Northamptonshire contract is monitored against six high-level outcome measures.

These are:

1. Local Healthwatch is positioned as a trusted and recognisable brand within West Northamptonshire: a visible, influential, independent body that champions quality and provides consumers with a strong voice.
2. People in West Northamptonshire have ready access to the information/support they need when making health and social care choices, assisted by local Healthwatch systems that signpost to existing sources of support/datasets. Healthwatch will clearly position itself to add value to already existing sources of information and advice, not replicate them.
3. Health and social care services, both local and national, are demonstrably influenced by the delivery of the consumer voice, including the experiences and views of children and young people and those of minority and traditionally marginalised communities, co-ordinated through local Healthwatch, leading to service improvement actions that build on the patient and service user experience.
4. Local Healthwatch provides a credible and influential presence at agreed key local authority and health commissioning and governance fora – most notably as a member of the West Northamptonshire Health and Wellbeing Board: ensuring that consumers have the opportunity to influence and co-design policy and commissioning decisions.
5. Healthwatch will make the views and experiences of local people known to Healthwatch England and make recommendations to Healthwatch

England (and the Care Quality Commission), helping to carry out the role of national champion.

6. Healthwatch West Northamptonshire demonstrates robust and transparent governance arrangements, strong performance management capabilities and processes. Able to demonstrate its clear accountability to those it is charged with supporting.

Under the high-level outcomes are a set of performance indicators and measures to demonstrate the impact and achievements of Healthwatch West Northamptonshire.

Responding to changes in West Northamptonshire

Unitary Councils

The eight borough and district councils in Northamptonshire and Northamptonshire County Council were replaced with two unitary councils on 1 April 2021, North Northamptonshire, and West Northamptonshire. The two unitary councils decided that it would be most fitting for the public to have dedicated Healthwatch services for each of the local authorities,. On April 1st 2025 the previous Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire service was split into Healthwatch North Northamptonshire and Healthwatch West Northamptonshire.

The West Northamptonshire unitary council serves the areas of Daventry, Towcester, Northampton and South Northants- Healthwatch West Northamptonshire will now serve the people within these areas.

Healthwatch West Northamptonshire Advisory Board Update

In response to the change of council structure, the previous Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire Advisory Board members who represented West and North Northamptonshire, depending on their residency, has now been restructured, with all members supporting the West of Northamptonshire.

The Advisory Board members particularly help champion the voices of:

- Carers
- Mental health service users

- Services for children, young people and families
- Acute services
- Learning disabilities and special educational needs
- Physical disabilities and impairments
- GP services
- Black and Minority Ethnic communities
- Ambulance services, transport, and accessibility

The purpose of the Healthwatch West Northamptonshire Advisory Board is to provide guidance and to oversee the operation and delivery of our work programmes. The Advisory Board is informed by public feedback, the Planning Group, health and care system partners and Healthwatch England.

The Healthwatch West Northamptonshire Advisory Board and Planning Group also uses the Decision-Making policy to help prioritise work and develop future work plans, as well as approving any other proposed projects throughout the year.

Development of this annual plan was led by our volunteers at meetings and through digital communications in March 2025, where they also reviewed and updated our Vision, Values and Strategic priorities.

Planning Group and Working Groups

The Healthwatch West Northamptonshire (HWW) Advisory Board is supported by a Planning Group that receives health and social care information from across the county and updates on all HWW projects. The Planning Group meets every 2 months to discuss ongoing work and future opportunities within the community.

They are supported by time-limited “task and finish groups” for specific work and projects. Volunteers and other members of the public may attend any working or system groups they are interested in or have expertise in, which ensures Healthwatch has as much impact in health and social care within West Northamptonshire.

Annual Workplan 2025 – 2026

The rationale for including topics in our work plan includes:

- Subjects where Healthwatch West Northamptonshire has received a significant amount of feedback from service users which suggests there is a gap in or inequality of service provision.
- Health and social care priorities that have been identified in commissioning intentions from Integrated Care Northamptonshire (ICN), West Northamptonshire Council and other stakeholders.
- Priority areas that align with the work streams of the ICN, local hospital trusts, the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Public Health department of West Northamptonshire and others.
- Areas of concern raised by Healthwatch England, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) or NHS England.

The Planning Group has identified several potential areas for ongoing and future work.

2025/26 HWW Priorities

After the priority-setting workshop was held with the Healthwatch West Northamptonshire Planning Group volunteers and Board Members, clear priority themes and work areas for 2025/26 emerged.

These are the things we MUST do:

- Produce a 24/25 annual report for Healthwatch in Northamptonshire by the 30th of June 2025 and continue to demonstrate impact.
- Hold an annual meeting open to the public for Healthwatch in Northamptonshire for 2024/25.
- Feedback any learning to Commissioners – current contract ends 31st of March 2027.
- Recruit and induct new staff to maintain capacity.
- Recruit and induct new volunteers to maintain capacity.
- Continue to review policies and update the volunteer handbook.

- Provide a signposting and feedback service to the public for West Northamptonshire.
- Hold 4 meetings in public per year for the HWW Advisory Board.
- Attend 12 Outreach events with the community.
- To continue to promote HWW and recruit volunteers.
- Support Young Healthwatch and engagement with children and young people.
- Continue to attend provider and commissioner meetings across greater Northamptonshire, e.g., Health and Wellbeing Board, ICB Board meetings, to ensure the public and public views are represented at all levels.
- Respond to Providers Quality Accounts.
- Respond to health and social care consultations when appropriate.
- Reaccreditation of Investing in Volunteers

The additional priority areas that HWW discussed at their planning workshops were:

- Older People, Ageing Services and Dementia Care
 - A focus on Dementia, including training on dementia
 - Enter and Views in care homes, possibly to homes that focus on dementia care
 - End-of-life care within a cultural framework
- Prioritising Healthwatch Awareness and Community Engagement
 - Working to ensure we prioritise engagement within local communities in West Northamptonshire
 - Increasing communications and visibility to increase knowledge and awareness of the service within local communities
- Maternity
 - Specifically, black women and respective maternal health inequalities
- GP Services and Primary Care
 - The new GP Anima System and issues relating to the use of the service
 - Blood tests- access and waiting times
- Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards
 - (DoLs) training for staff and volunteers

- Engaging with diverse communities
 - Engagement within outdoor leisure and wellbeing services
 - Healthwatch presence at festivals and community events
- Northampton General Hospital
 - A&E department
- Dentistry
 - Keeping a watch on local issues related to dentistry
- NHFT
 - Keeping a watching brief on NHFT reduction of services.
- University of Northampton
 - Involving students studying health and social care in a research project which involves community engagement
- ADHD/ASD/Learning Disabilities
 - Keeping a watch on local issues related to SEND, ADHD/ASD Diagnoses and advice for waiting well
- Mental Health
 - MIND services
- Sickle Cell
 - Continuing to support the advocacy for sickle cell services and support locally
- Environmental factors affecting health and wellbeing
 - Carbon emissions and climate change

With a limited budget of £137k per annum, it is not possible for HWW to cover all areas of health and social care in West Northamptonshire. Therefore, it was agreed that along with the MUST DO work, the following areas would be prioritised for additional work throughout the year (these are ordered by priority):

1. **To prioritise Older People, Ageing Services and Dementia Care**– we will do this by ensuring our Enter and View visits focus on care homes in West Northamptonshire, with one of our care home visits to be within a home that specialises in Dementia care. We will prioritise Dementia education, and we will train our staff and volunteers on Dementia Awareness.
2. **To prioritise working to raise awareness of Healthwatch West Northamptonshire and to increase the visibility of our service**– we will do this by increasing the use of communications and social media, including

partner organisations to spread awareness. We will produce posters, flyers and leaflets to spread across the community in West Northamptonshire

3. **To raise impact through regular community engagement, especially in diverse communities**– We will increase our in-person engagement, aiming to be in the community 2–3 times per month. We will regularly attend community events and seek out opportunities to engage with diverse communities locally.
4. **To focus on the health inequalities experienced by ethnic minority women in Maternity Care**– this will be done through a piece of work focusing on ethnic minority women and their experiences with maternity care and possible issues around accessing care, details yet to be finalised.
5. **To involve University of Northampton students in a piece of community research**– working with the future leaders within health and social care to support the community and engage with local individuals about a key health and wellbeing issue, details to be finalised.
6. **To keep updated on the current provision of dentistry in West Northamptonshire**– we will continue to keep a watching brief and report public feedback and themes to services. We will continue attendance at the Northamptonshire Oral Health Alliance (NOAH) meetings and quarterly meetings with the CQC
7. **To focus on the issues surrounding GP practices and Primary Care Services in West Northamptonshire**– We will continue to attend relevant Primary Care Operational Delivery meetings and will stay informed by regular updates from the ICB, regularly reporting any public feedback and themes to services.

Further operational project plans will be developed to deliver the work on these priorities throughout 2025/26 and further work and priorities will be added based on the needs of the system and the input of our volunteers.

This plan will be reviewed on an ongoing basis by the HWW Planning Group, Advisory Board, commissioners and key stakeholders.

See **Appendix 3** for a detailed list of all work and meetings.

Appendix 1:

What does the legislation say about Healthwatch

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, which was amended by the Health and Social Care Act 2012, outlines the main legal requirements of Healthwatch. This is underpinned by many other regulations which give more detail about how activities should be undertaken.

The law refers to the roles of:

- Local authorities – who are required to make provision for Healthwatch.
- Providers of Healthwatch services (referred to as Healthwatch).
- Healthwatch England – whose main role is to provide advice and support to every Healthwatch

Legislative frameworks are often complex. It is important to consider what legislation states about Healthwatch, local authorities and Healthwatch England. It says:

- What they must do (duties)
- What they may do (powers)
- What is prohibited

Local authorities must make provision for the following statutory activities:

- Promoting and supporting the involvement of local people in the commissioning, the provision and scrutiny of local care services.
- Enabling local people to monitor the standard of provision of local care services and whether and how local care services could and ought to be improved.
- Obtaining the views of local people regarding their need for, and experiences of, local care services and importantly making these views known to those responsible for commissioning, providing, managing, or scrutinising local care services and to Healthwatch England.

- Making reports and recommendations about how local care services could or ought to be improved. These should be directed to commissioners and providers of care services, and people responsible for managing or scrutinising local care services and shared with Healthwatch England.
- Providing advice and information about access to local care services so choices can be made about local care services.
- Formulating views on the standard of provision and whether and how the local care services could and ought to be improved; and sharing these views with Healthwatch England.
- Making recommendations to Healthwatch England to advise the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to conduct special reviews or investigations (or, where the circumstances justify doing so, making such recommendations directly to the CQC); and to make recommendations to Healthwatch England to publish reports about issues.
- Providing Healthwatch England with the intelligence and insight it needs to enable it to perform effectively.

Appendix 2: Healthwatch West Northamptonshire Strategy and Vision

Our vision

'Healthwatch West Northamptonshire will be a strong, resolute, and independent community champion. We will give local people a voice and work in partnership to influence the design and quality of health and social care provision so that all local people have an opportunity for an improved quality of life.'

– Healthwatch Staff and Volunteers

Our values

- We will be accessible and visible
- We will be independent and objective
- We will be open, honest, and transparent in all that we do
- We will be inclusive and embrace diversity and equality, reflecting the diverse needs of local people
- We will listen to and understand the views and needs of local people
- We will speak up for local people and enable people to speak for themselves
- We will be fair and credible
- We will seek out and use evidence, including that from the public, to inform our work
- We will strive to make a positive difference and champion the best possible health and social care for local people

Our strategy

We have five strategic priorities:

1. To deliver our statutory functions.
2. To champion the views of all people who live in or use health, social care or wellbeing services in Northamptonshire and commit to prioritising issues relating to health inequalities.
3. To recruit and develop staff and volunteers in West Northamptonshire to continue to build the capacity of Healthwatch West Northamptonshire as an independent consumer advocate of health, social care and wellbeing.

4. Working alongside community partners for improved health, social care and mental health outcomes for adults, including vulnerable adults and carers.
5. To work for improved health, social care and mental health outcomes for children, young people and families.

Appendix 3: Workplan timescales and priorities

This table summarises all work plan activities, including routine and project work, and forecast timing for 2025/2026. It is reviewed on an ongoing basis.

In the event that new or unanticipated work arises during the year, which is determined to be a higher priority (following use of the decision-making policy) and/or the scope or time/resource requirement of any current project extends, Healthwatch West Northamptonshire and Connected Together (the contract holder) reserve the right to revise the agreed 2025/26 work plan and deliverables as appropriate through discussion with the commissioner.

Routine activities

Work Area/Theme	Notes	Timescales	Who is responsible	Updates
Horizon scanning and mapping with Providers/ Commissioners	Meetings with CEOs/Chairs/directors. Joint meetings with the CIC Board and Healthwatch.	Ongoing	Chair/ HWW Manager	Ongoing. Meetings listed in CEO and Chair updates to the quarterly HWW Board Advisory meetings
HWW Advisory Board meetings	Strategic direction.	Ongoing	Chair	Quarterly
HWW Advisory Board development	Strategic direction: Board briefings held every 3 months with CEO.	Ongoing	Chair/ HWW Manager	Ongoing
HWNW 24/25 Annual Meeting	Date to be agreed	TBA	Chair/ HWW Manager	
Planning Group	Operational direction	Ongoing	HWW Operations Manager	Bi-monthly Ongoing

Task and Finish Groups	Ad hoc and project-based. See projects.	Ad hoc	All	
Consultations	HWW Advisory Board to determine and be responsive to changing demands.	Ongoing	HWW Operations Manager/ All	Ongoing
Dentistry	Monitor concerns raised by the public	Ongoing	HWW Operations Manager /HWW Advisory Board	Ongoing
Marketing strategy/ PR/Comms	Work in conjunction with the Northamptonshire Integrated Care communications team and West Northamptonshire Council to publicise key messages.	Ongoing	HWW Operations Manager/ Junior Healthwatch Officer	Weekly social media posts. Monthly newsletters. Press releases as required. Friday update emails to all volunteers.
Website/newsletter/ social media	Monthly newsletter, regular social media postings on Facebook and Twitter, HWW website to be reviewed	Ongoing	HWW Operations Manager/ Junior Healthwatch Officer	Ongoing
Engagement Events	HWW Board to determine key high-profile events with West Northamptonshire and review priorities and resources available. Bookings of events are ongoing and subject to providers releasing dates of events. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12 Outreach events 25/26 	Ongoing	HWW Operations Manager/ All	Ongoing

Signposting and outreach	Web and telephone service	Ongoing	HWW Operations Manager/ Junior Healthwatch Officer / Business Manager	Ongoing
Engagement with seldom heard groups	<p>We work or have links with the following groups for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northamptonshire Children's Trust (CYP & Diversity) • ICB Health Inequalities & Diversity Workstreams • Autism East Midlands (CYP) & Young Carers (CYP) • Deafconnect (Hearing impaired CYP and adults) • Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) • Change Grow Live, Substance Misuse Service 	Ongoing	HWW Operations Manager/ Junior Healthwatch Officer	Ongoing
Patient Engagement Groups/Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend essential NHFT/NGH/SAH/ UHN meetings to enable information sharing about the patient/service user experience, prioritising those linked to main project work areas. 	Ongoing	HWW Operations Manager/ Junior Healthwatch Officer / Volunteers	Ongoing

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information sharing meetings with CQC/NCC/UHN/ ICB re residential and domiciliary care providers. 			
Intelligence reporting to HWE, Local Services and CQC	As per the agreed research area and report production, quarterly data sent to HWE and uploaded to HWE database. Quarterly data from enquiries and feedback sent to service leads quarterly	Quarterly	HWW Operations Manager	Ongoing
Quality Accounts Responses	NHFT/NGH/KGH/SAH/EMAS	Late April/ May	HWW Operations Manager / Chair/ CEO/ Advisory Board	Annual
Volunteer Management/ Strategy/Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain a regular programme of training to ensure the maintenance of capacity. Healthwatch England standards and updates are regularly monitored for necessary training provision. Support the current cohort of volunteers and increase the current level of capacity. Ensure targeted recruitment to sustain existing capacity 	Ongoing	HWW Operations Manager/ Junior Healthwatch Officer / Volunteers	Ongoing

	and ensure the availability of the right mix of volunteers to support the agreed work programme (communicating with different groups).			
Young Healthwatch (YHW)	Ensuring YHW has regular meetings and project work to focus on, which compliments our focus on CYP services	Ongoing	YHW Lead – Junior Healthwatch Officer	Ongoing
Integrated Care Board & ICN	<p>Involvement in workstreams. Previously involved in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICB Board • Integrated Care Partnership Workshops • ICB Development Sessions • UHN CYP Board & UEC Oversight Group • UHN Patient & Carer Experience and Engagement Committee • STAH Rapid quality review 			
Annual Report	In process – will be for the 2024-2025 HWW year of work	30 th of June	HWW Operations Manager/ All Staff/ CEO/ Chair	

Regular Meetings Attended by Staff and Volunteers

Name of Meeting	Representative
HWW Advisory Board	All Advisory Board & Staff
HWW Monthly Briefings	All Advisory Board & Staff
Joint CTCIC/HWW Board meetings	All Advisory Board & Staff
West Northants Health and Wellbeing Board	HWW Operations Manager
WNC Executive PLACE Delivery Board	HWW Operations Manager
ICB Board Development Sessions	HWW Operations Manager
ICS Strategy Development Board	HWW Operations Manager/ Chair
Integrated Care Partnership	HWW Operations Manager
ICB NHSE NIHR Research Engagement Network	HWW Operations Manager/ Chair
UHN Patient & Carer Experience and Engagement	HWW Operations Manager
University Hospitals Northamptonshire (UHN) CYP Board	HWW Operations Manager
Combined Place Based Partnership	HWW Operations Manager
Community Cohesion & Engagement Network	HWW Operations Manager
The Midlands Vulnerable Migrants & Health Network	HWW Operations Manager
STAH Rapid Quality Review	HWW Operations Manager
East and West Midlands- Healthwatch England Regional Network	HWW Operations Manager/ CEO/ Chair
NHS NICB Integrated Information Sharing Meeting	HWW Operations Manager
MHLDA Collaborative Executive Board	HWW Operations Manager
MHLDA Population Health and Prevention Pillar Meeting	HWW Operations Manager
NHFT Complaints Review Committee	HWW Operations Manager

CYP UEC Oversight Group	HWW Operations Manager
Engagement Practitioners Forum	HWW Operations Manager
Family Help Partnership Board	HWW Operations Manager
Northamptonshire CYP Neurodevelopmental workstream	HWW Operations Manager
Youth Offer Board	HWW Operations Manager
Best Start in Life Strategic Board	HWW Operations Manager
MNVP (Maternity) Quarterly Meeting	HWW Operations Manager
Management Board - Youth Offending Service	HWW Operations Manager
Community Diagnostic Centre Programme Board	HWW CEO
DDaT Transformation Board Meeting	HWW CEO
Primary Care Operational Delivery Group Formal	HWW CEO
Northamptonshire Oral Health Alliance	(To be filled)
West Northants Local Area Partnerships (LAPs)	(To be filled in May 2025 when WNC meeting restructure is completed)
Northamptonshire Safeguarding Adults Board	Chair
NSAB Communications and Engagement sub-group	Chair
NSAB Quarterly Performance sub-group	Chair
NHS Complaints Review Committee	Volunteer
NGH Quarterly Dementia Steering Group	Volunteer
ICAN PAG	Volunteer
Diverse Communities Forum	Volunteer

About Connected Together

Connected Together Community Interest Company (CIC) is the legal entity and governing body for Healthwatch West Northamptonshire.

The remit of the Connected Together CIC includes:

- Contract compliance
- Legal requirements
- Financial and risk management
- Sustainability and growth
- Agreeing strategy and operations
- Agreeing policies and procedures

Connected Together CIC is a social enterprise which aims to be first for community engagement across the county West Northamptonshire and beyond.

By using our expertise and experience, we can help you in delivering community engagement programmes including workshops, research, surveys, training and more. Contact us to find out how we can help your community.

We welcome ideas and suggestions for projects that benefit West Northamptonshire and its community.

Find out more at www.connectedtogether.co.uk