



Annual Report 2024–2025

Unlocking the power of people-driven care

Healthwatch North and
West Northamptonshire

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"The impact that local Healthwatch have is vitally important. Healthwatch are empowering their communities to share their experiences. They're changing the health and care landscape and making sure that people's views are central to making care better and tackling health inequalities."

Louise Ansari, Chief Executive, Healthwatch England

A message from our Chair

Welcome to the final annual report for Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire 2024/2025.

As from 1st April 2025 there will no longer be a joint Healthwatch for Northamptonshire but two separate local Healthwatch bodies covering West Northamptonshire and North Northamptonshire; and I am very pleased to be able to let you know that I will continue the great work that Healthwatch does as the Chair of Healthwatch West Northamptonshire going forward into 2025/2026.

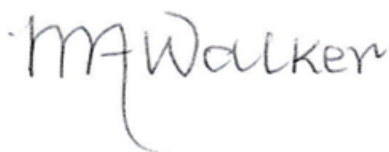
2024/2025 was an exceptionally busy year for Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire (HWNW) as this report will show. Along with representing the public at health and social care meetings, providing a signposting and feedback service, going out to the public at numerous outreach events and activities, we produced 14 reports.

All of this was achieved on a very tight budget of only £195,000 to cover all health and social care issues raised by the public across the county, and my heartfelt thanks go to all our wonderful volunteers and Advisory Board members who led the work and the dedicated staff who supported its delivery.

Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire had their own work program throughout the year, supported by a grant from the Northamptonshire Integrated Care Board. They were also shortlisted for a national Healthwatch England Impact award for their work with children, young people and families waiting for an Autism or ADHD diagnosis. Well done, Young Healthwatch.

Our work culminated in a wonderful event in March with the Eastern European communities to celebrate Spring and the importance of all communities getting involved in health and care research to improve services.

More information about the work we undertook and the impact we have made can be found throughout this report and we hope you enjoy reading about our work, achievements and impact across Northamptonshire in 2024/2025.



Morcea Walker MBE DL

Chair Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire



A message from our CEO

Connected Together CIC, of which I have had the privilege of being its CEO since April 2016, began delivering Healthwatch Northamptonshire in April 2013.

In the 12 years we have run the contract across the whole of the county we have gathered a wealth of knowledge, information, experience and public feedback, and sadly this is the final annual report as a countywide service.

As mentioned in the Chair's introduction, Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire will no longer be a single entity from 1st April 2025. It will become two separate organisations representing local people in West Northamptonshire and North Northamptonshire local authority areas.

Those residents living in West Northamptonshire can continue to contact us via our existing phone numbers and information at the end of this report and our website and social media has already been updated and rebranded as Healthwatch West Northamptonshire.

Healthwatch North Northamptonshire will now be run by Support Northamptonshire. They can be contacted by emailing info@healthwatchNN.org.uk or by telephoning 07902 976135.

With many thanks



Kate Holt

CEO, Connected Together CIC



My personal thanks go to all those wonderful volunteers and staff who have made the countywide Healthwatch journey over the past decade so worthwhile and all the public who have provided their feedback to help improve health and social care services over the years.

Kate Holt, Chief Executive, Connected Together CIC

About us

Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire is your local health and social care champion.

We ensure that NHS leaders and decision-makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care. We can also help you find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.



Our vision

A world where we can all get the health and care we need. "Healthwatch North and 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"



Our mission

To make sure that people's experiences help make health and care better.



Our values are:

- 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 year in numbers

This year we've supported more than 1,327 people to have their say and get information about their care. We employed 7 staff, and our work was supported by 15 volunteers.

Reaching out:



399 people shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.

255 people came to us for clear advice and information on topics such as how to navigate the new GP Anima system and accessing NHS dental services.

Championing your voice:



We published 14 reports about the improvements people would like to see in areas such as ophthalmology, mental wellbeing and children's services.

Our most popular report was Make Your Voice Count, highlighting people's struggles and experiences with maintaining their physical and mental wellbeing.

Statutory funding:



We're funded by West Northamptonshire Council and North Northamptonshire Council. In 2024/25 we received £195,000.

A year of making a difference

Over the year we've been out and about in the community listening to your stories, engaging with partners and working to improve care in North and West Northamptonshire. Here are a few highlights.

Spring

The Patient Transport report detailed public feedback on transport issues for accessing medical appointments and provides recommendations for improvement.



The NGH Ophthalmology Enter and View visit highlighted friendly staff and clean facilities, with issues like long waits and parking. Actions include better communication, information screens, and inclusivity.



Summer

The Research Engagement Network (REN) project identified that low awareness and complex processes limit research participation. Future efforts will focus on publicity and community involvement to enhance engagement and equity.



Our report for Corby's Willowbrook Health Centre led to improvements in accessibility and dementia-friendly design. Our feedback shaped plans for the new Community Diagnostic Centre (CDC), including a dedicated dementia care pathway.



Autumn

The St. Andrews Healthcare Enter and View shares real experiences and offers practical steps to improve staffing, communication, and specialised care in secure inpatient services.



The KGH Ophthalmology Enter and View positively impacts service delivery by highlighting strengths, identifying clear areas for improvement, and promoting patient-centered feedback.



Winter

The KGH Maternity Department Enter and View Revisit highlighted key concerns while acknowledging staffing improvements, urging decision-makers to enhance conditions for patients and staff.



The NGH Maternity Enter and View Revisit showcased meaningful improvements in patient experience and staff wellbeing, including enhanced communication tools and support initiatives.



Working together for change

We've worked to ensure people's experiences of care in Northamptonshire are heard at the Integrated Care System (ICS) level, and they influence decisions made about services.

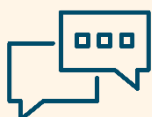
This year, we have achieved the following:

A collaborative network of local Healthwatch:



We strengthened ties with neighbouring Healthwatch teams and the Northamptonshire ICB through joint workstreams. Our work within the REN (Research Engagement Network) project saw us elevate seldom—heard voices into county-wide insight shared with Integrated Care Northamptonshire (ICN), shaping the Community Engagement Framework and influencing ICB strategy on inclusive research participation.

The big conversation:



In 2024, our partnership with the ICB and delivery of various projects deepened relationships with VCSE organisations such as Bridge and The Hope Centre. By co-facilitating focus groups with people facing homelessness, addiction, and socio-economic barriers, we ensured their voices directly informed local health research and planning. This collaborative approach has strengthened trust in our work and embedded community experience in shaping ICS-level decisions.

Building strong relationships to achieve more:



We worked with local partners to deliver a respiratory insight project in Northampton's area, identified as a priority by West Northamptonshire Council. By gathering lived experience through community groups, we supported Integrated Core Northamptonshire in shaping commissioning plans with practice, community-led recommendations for more inclusive respiratory care.

We've also summarised some of our other outcomes achieved this year in the Statutory Statements section at the end of this report.

Making a difference in the community

We bring people's experiences to healthcare professionals and decision-makers, using their feedback to shape services and improve care over time. Here are some examples of our work in Northamptonshire this year:

Creating empathy by bringing experiences to life



We captured the lived experiences of young people and families waiting for Autism and ADHD diagnoses, highlighting the emotional strain and lack of support during long waits. By sharing these powerful stories with the ICB, we helped decision-makers see the real impact behind the data. Our findings directly informed service improvements, including better communication with families and the introduction of PINS (partnership for inclusion of neurodiversity in schools) demonstrating how personal voices can shape more responsive, inclusive care.

Getting services to involve the public



Through Young Healthwatch's work evaluating Teen Clinic Daventry, we helped bridge communication between services and the community by gathering and amplifying young people's voices. This empowered local providers to tailor care, reduce stigma, and create a safe space for mental health support. As a result, 63% of users felt welcomed and safe, and services were better aligned to young people's needs. This project showcased how involving young people leads to meaningful service improvements and greater trust in local care provision.

Improving care over time



We are gradually working towards improving access to NHS dental care for young people in Northamptonshire. Through ongoing focus groups and collaboration with Public Health and commissioners, we're raising awareness of inconsistent access and dental pain experiences. Though change is slow, this project continues to highlight young voices, aiming to influence service improvement and policy. Our consistent efforts, such as distributing oral health kits and gathering feedback, are small but meaningful steps toward long-term change in dental care equity.

Listening to your experiences

Services can only improve when they understand what's not working. Your experiences shine a light on issues that may otherwise go unnoticed.

This year, we've listened to feedback from all areas of our community. People's experiences of care help us know what's working and what isn't, so we can give feedback on services and help them improve.



Patient Transport

Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire received feedback from the public regarding the issues being faced across Northamptonshire about transport to clinical appointments. Through our collected feedback, we were made aware of the difficulties experienced in attending medical appointments in Northamptonshire and the surrounding counties.

Due to the geographical size of West and North Northamptonshire, there are many rural areas, and public transport can be limited when travelling between towns. These challenges have been acknowledged by local authorities and local area partnerships are addressing the issues within their community workshops. North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire councils offer community transport options on their websites, which help direct members of the public to access local voluntary car schemes.

Service users told us that they have no means of attending their health appointments by private transport and are unable to finance taxis or other paid-for options, such as voluntary car schemes that incur fees. Some struggle with the cost of transport, especially when public transport is not easily accessible in more rural areas. Members of the public also told us that they often need to take multiple public transport trips due to a lack of direct trips to health service providers.

What did we recommend?

- Local voluntary patient transport services should find ways to improve their advertisement, local awareness and exposure of their services. This could be done through increased promotion of their services through flyers placed around local communities, advertisements in local parish newsletters, and increased visibility within local general practices and hospitals
- Hospitals and outpatient departments could collaborate with local services to help support their offers, and departments can ask patients about their ability to access their appointments. If there is a need for patient transport services, they could then share key information about voluntary services that can support the patient

Read the full report [here](#)

All reports can be read at www.healthwatchwestnorthants.com/news-and-reports

Northampton General Hospital Ophthalmology Enter and View

On the 8th of February 2024, Healthwatch Representatives who consisted of two volunteers and one staff member from Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire, aimed to view the services provided by the department from the perspective of the service users. The Healthwatch Representatives were joined by NGH's Head of Patient Experience and Engagement and the Directorate Manager of the Ophthalmology Department.

Healthwatch aims to conduct regular evaluations of selected health and social care services within the community. Conducting these reviews helps us to directly support and give valuable feedback to services that have been identified as needing focus.

Northampton General Hospital's rating from the CQC – Care Quality Commission was noted as requiring improvement, and this was kept in mind during our visit to the various services. Although we do recognise that this rating is representative of the whole hospital and not a specific rating for the Ophthalmology Department. To read the CQC report, please visit www.cqc.org.uk/location/RNS01/inspection-summary#care



We asked patients 3 questions

1. How were their interactions with staff members during their visit to the Ophthalmology Department?
2. If there was anything that they wanted to highlight as a good experience regarding their appointment?
3. If there was anything that could be improved about their appointment?

Northampton General Hospital

Ophthalmology Enter and View

What did we recommend?

- A refresh on the paint work, as in many areas it is peeling and chipping, causing areas of the service to look visually unappealing
- There were a few areas on the floors where the flooring was lifting and peeling back and to mitigate this, duct tape was used. To reduce the risk of someone tripping these need to be replaced or fixed
- In the waiting room of the Ophthalmology Outpatients Department, we recommend that more is done to keep patients engaged while they wait for their appointment
- We noted that the posted information and the use of notice boards across the departments could use some improvement. The size of the font used for important notices and patient information could benefit from being increased, or alternatively, the size of the printed flyers could be increased
- Some of the notices were not relevant; it is suggested to review the current posted information to ensure that they are kept up to date and relevant to the needs of those attending the clinics
- Patients expressed some concerns over the length of waiting times and the lack of communication regarding the expected wait times. We suggest that more could be done to update and communicate with patients regarding the expected waiting times for each clinic. By ensuring that notice boards that display clinic timeframes and expected wait times are kept up to date, it will ensure that patients' expectations are managed
- Parking is a concern across the whole of Northampton General Hospital. Due to the length of time it is taking patients to find a parking spot, we feel this is an issue that needs to be addressed.

Read the full report [here](#)

All reports can be read at www.healthwatchwestnorthants.com/news-and-reports

Integrated Care Northamptonshire: Engaging in Research Collaborative Project

Integrated Care Northamptonshire (ICN) successfully bid and secured funding from NHS England and the Department of Health and Social Care in October 2023 for the delivery of a Research Engagement Network (REN) Project in Northamptonshire.

The aim of the REN project was to work in partnership with voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) organisations to engage under-represented groups and communities, such as under-served groups with protected characteristics, as well as other health groups, to improve participation in NHS research.

The ICN wanted to better understand what the barriers to health and social care research were within Northamptonshire and asked Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire (HWNW) for support and collaboration on this topic.

What did we do?

To deliver this project, HWNW agreed to engage with the community through a survey and two focus groups, which would help to gather key information from community members about engaging in research and would also explore the barriers of research engagement. The survey for residents in Northamptonshire was designed for anyone over the age of 11, as this would ensure that young people's voices could be captured as a part of the project.

For the two focus groups, we worked with two local service providers, Bridge and The Hope Centre.

For further information on the Bridge please visit [Bridge Substance Misuse](#) and for The Hope Centre please visit [Northampton Hope Centre](#).

Our findings from the survey and focus groups gave insight into the barriers and motivating factors that affect engagement in health and social care research.

Between the focus groups held at Bridge and The Hope Centre and the survey, over 150 people shared their views with us.

Based on the feedback from the participants, we have 3 recommendations that have been made to the Integrated Care Northamptonshire and other community services that are looking to develop and engage the community in health and social care research.

Integrated Care Northamptonshire: Engaging in Research Collaborative Project

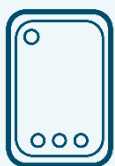
What did we recommend?

- Improving the approach for the promotion and publicity of research opportunities by increasing the use of social media, to help raise awareness
- Ensuring the background, purpose and aims of the research are clear and easily understandable
- There is great benefit in collaborating with local community members for support with research and eliminating barriers within communities.

We received the following response from the integrated care system:

The outcomes and recommendations following the engagement undertaken by Healthwatch reflects the wider outcomes from sessions overseen by other VCSE organisations. The feedback and data collected will be fundamental in shaping how we communicate with communities regarding research and wider engagement opportunities, which will support us to improve outcomes and reduce inequality.

Key things we heard:



76%

of respondents felt that they did not or were unsure whether they had a role in research.

14%

of participants felt that they knew how to influence changes in health and social care.

Read the full report [here](#)

Read the easy report [here](#)

All reports can be read at www.healthwatchwestnorthants.com/news-and-reports

Corby Willowbrook Health Centre Community Diagnostic Services Enter and View

Community Diagnostic Centres (CDCs) are specialised healthcare facilities that focus on providing a range of diagnostic services to patients in their local communities. These centres play a crucial role in improving access to timely and accurate diagnostic tests, which are essential for diagnosing various medical conditions and facilitating appropriate treatment.

In December 2023, Healthwatch England initiated a project about understanding people's experiences of diagnostic services.

As part of this process Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire volunteered to get involved, although North and West Northamptonshire's new CDCs were not finished being built, we visited one of the centres currently providing diagnostic services, which was Corby's Willowbrook Health Centre, to hear people's views and experiences of community diagnostic services and acute diagnostic services.

What did we do?

We were asked to carry out an accessibility assessment and viewed the facility through the Patient-Led Assessments of the Care Environment (PLACE) guidelines, intended to support those with disabilities and dementia to ensure that services are accessible. Further information can be found at digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/areas-of-interest/estates-and-facilities/patient-led-assessments-of-the-care-environment-place

Sixteen patients participated in our short survey, and we were able to make 4 recommendations from our findings, which were to:

1. Enhance parking facilities, including dedicated drop-off areas and increase the availability of spaces for patients and their families and carers
2. Improve the signage and notice boards, and increase the available patient information, including relevant information for patients and ensuring notices and signage are easily visible
3. We recommend that the televisions that are currently not in use be repurposed to be able to show relevant information and/or entertainment for patients
4. Consider expanding the waiting room space to accommodate more patients

Corby Willowbrook Health Centre Community Diagnostic Services Enter and View

We received the following response from the service provider:

Claire Day, the Community Diagnostic Centre, Deputy Programme Manager said "I would just like to say thank you to Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire for their visit. We would like it noted that this is a temporary solution for us to deliver our CDC services, whilst our building is being built on the Willowbrook site. I do, however, note the comments and suggestions made about improvements which could be made to make things better for patients, and I am happy to share this with the manager of the building, to see if they could incorporate them in future."



Read the full report [here](#)

All reports can be read at www.healthwatchwestnorthants.com/news-and-reports

St Andrews Healthcare Secure Inpatient Services at Northampton Enter and View Visits

Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire (HWNW) were eager to gain an understanding of the experiences of mental health inpatient care service users in Northamptonshire.

Who is St Andrews Healthcare

St Andrews Healthcare is a charity that provides specialist mental health care for patients who experience complex conditions and challenging needs. Their services are available for individuals in our community, as well as those across the UK. To find out more information, please visit www.stah.org/who-we-are

St Andrews was visited by the CQC in July 2023, and the report was published in January 2024 and was given the overall rating of “Requires Improvement”, this rating was reflected in the forensic inpatient and secure wards and areas of concern were kept in mind during our visit. To read the full CQC report please visit www.cqc.org.uk/location/1-121538260/inspection-summary#mhforensic

To carry out our review of these services, we partnered with the East Midlands Provider Collaborative for Adult Secure Care, known as IMPACT. To find out more information about IMPACT, please visit www.nottinghamshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/impact-eastmidlands/

Together, our organisations collaborated to carry out the Enter and View visits.

The purpose of the project was to visit a variety of mental health inpatient wards within St Andrews to gather an in-depth look at the different services and the experience of patients, families and carers and staff on the wards.

HWNW staff and volunteers were required to undergo safety training before entering the facilities, which was provided by IMPACT and St Andrews Healthcare.

To facilitate the visits, we accompanied IMPACT on their regular service reviews, as this allowed us to have IMPACT representatives guide and support our team of staff and volunteers.

St Andrews Healthcare Secure Inpatient Services at Northampton

Enter and View Visits

We visited a total of 6 wards, which included:

- Acorn Ward – Low Secure Learning Disability and Autism Ward
- Fern Ward – Low Secure Learning Disability and Autism Ward
- Maple Ward – Blended Women's Low and Medium Secure
- Willow Ward – Blended Women's Low and Medium Secure
- Cranford Ward – Older Men's Medium Secure Ward
- Bracken Ward – Women's Medium Secure Ward

What did we recommend?

- St Andrews as an organisation could benefit from reviewing the hiring and retention methods and approaches, to increase staff numbers within wards and the retention of those staff
- Increase the offer of activities for patients within the wards, to ensure they continue to stay engaged and improve in their treatment journey
- Increase the communication between staff on the ward and patients' families and carers
- Improve the décor present within Willow
- Work with family members and service users to improve the support for people with ASD and their specific sensory needs
- Increase the availability of specialty courses for staff to take part in that would support their confidence and care of patients on the ward
- Initiate conversations within St Andrews about staff and patients' feelings of their safety on the wards



St Andrews Healthcare Secure Inpatient Services at Northampton Enter and View Visits

We received the following response from the service provider:

We welcome the feedback that Healthwatch have provided and thank you for investing your time to come and visit our secure services in Northampton.

St Andrew's Healthcare vision is that everyone living with a mental health need is heard, valued and has hope for their future. Our mission is to be a leader in helping people with complex mental health needs transform their lives.

Fitzroy House and William Wake House were built in line with current guidance, but we want to reassure you that we constantly assess our environments to ensure they meet changes to guidance and align with legislation.

We pride ourselves on engaging with our patients when designing our clinical spaces and incorporating their feedback at every opportunity.



Read the full report [here](#)

All reports can be read at www.healthwatchwestnorthants.com/news-and-reports

Young people's experiences of vaping in West Northamptonshire

In the Autumn of 2023, Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire (YHW) was commissioned by Public Health West Northamptonshire to gather the views of young people in West Northamptonshire who use vapes or similar nicotine products.

West Northamptonshire's Public Health team wanted to understand the motivation for young people in the local area to use vapes and electronic cigarettes. The aim of the work was to be able to build a specific service for young people to support them in stopping vaping.

Vaping is not safe for children and young people, due to their developing lungs and brains, which can leave young people more sensitive to the effects that vaping can cause.

In the UK, the minimum age for the sale of vaping products is 18 and it is illegal to sell nicotine vaping products to anyone under the age of 18 or for adults to buy them on behalf of anyone under 18.

Key statistics:

69%

of vape users across the country are thought to be currently aged 11 to 17.

Although it is illegal for young people to buy nicotine vaping products, there is thought to have been an increase in youth vaping, with 1 in 5 children and young people having tried vaping.

To complete this work, focus group questions were devised by the Public Health team for us to ask young people in a focus group or in a one-to-one setting.

In May and June 2024, 11 young people took part in this work. Eight in a focus group setting and 3 in one-to-one interviews.

From our findings, we were able to make 3 recommendations, which were:

- Provide information to young people about how to spot counterfeit goods, including vapes
- Provide information to young people about addiction and the impact that vaping can have on their health and wellbeing
- Design a stop vaping service that has various options for young people to access, acknowledging that one size does not fit all young people

Young people's experiences of vaping in West Northamptonshire

We received the following response from Public Health West Northamptonshire:

The insights Healthwatch gathered on young people's views on vaping have been reviewed and added to other engagement work that the Public Health team and Ngage have completed. This has provided an understanding of young people's experiences of vaping and what types of support they want to reduce vaping. This has been used to consider the options for supporting young people, and Public Health are now planning on working with the Stop Smoking team to pilot an offer for young people who want advice and support to stop vaping. This is alongside the development of guidance for schools and working with Ngage to design and deliver training, education and communications on smoking and vaping, for schools, children and young people and their families.

Ngage is a drug and alcohol service for young people aged 10 –25 in Northamptonshire, for more information about Ngage please visit aquarius.org.uk/our-services/young-peoples-services/northampton-yp/



"They are really easy to get hold of."

"I don't know why I started, the packaging and flavours looked nice."

"I started because of peer pressure and now I feel like I have to have a vape."

- Young people in Northamptonshire

Read the full report [here](#)

Read the Easy Read report [here](#)

All reports can be read at www.healthwatchwestnorthants.com/news-and-reports

Young people and their families' experiences of Autism and ADHD diagnosis in Northamptonshire

In the Autumn of 2023, Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire (YHW) was commissioned by Northamptonshire's Integrated Care Board (ICB) to carry out research exploring the experiences of young people and their parents and carers who were waiting for an assessment of Autism and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) or those who had been recently diagnosed.

To complete this work a survey was designed by Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire and shared across the county. The survey was then adapted for parents and carers.

The survey looked at the support that was needed, accessibility and struggles that young people and their families had while waiting or being recently diagnosed with Autism or ADHD in Northamptonshire.

Between January and February 2024, a total of 322 people responded to the survey. 115 young people between the ages of 11 and 18 and 209 parents and carers of 11 to 18-year-olds. This is thought to be around 5% of those on a waiting list in Northamptonshire.

To gather the responses, we worked with local schools and partners.

Although every school in West and North Northamptonshire was contacted and offered a paper version of the survey, all responses were gathered online.

What did we recommend?

- Offer more help or support to young people and their families when they receive a diagnosis for Autism or ADHD, this should be in a format that they can understand easily, with signposting to relevant organisations
- Work with schools to better support pupils in school. Including Autism and ADHD training for all staff, Autism and ADHD awareness across schools including peers
- Better support for young people and their families with sleep and advice. Including better access or utilisation of the school nursing teams
- Regular updates for young people and their families about where they sit on the waiting lists for Autism and ADHD diagnostic services and appointments
- Better support for young people and their families while waiting for a diagnosis of Autism and ADHD

Young people and their families' experiences of Autism and ADHD diagnosis in Northamptonshire

Across Northamptonshire it is estimated that there are between 2,444 and 3,154 children and young people with Autism. It is believed that there are around 2,200 young people on a waiting list for Autism or ADHD diagnostic services. The figure for children and young people with ADHD is currently not known.

The current waiting times for a young person from referral through to the first face to face appointment is around 60 weeks, with the wait sometimes around 3 and a half years from referral to diagnosis or further support.

We received the following response from the Northamptonshire Integrated Care Board (NHS):

Northamptonshire ICB welcomes this Young Healthwatch report on young people and their families' experiences of Autism and ADHD diagnosis in Northamptonshire. In the last 5 years, nationally and locally, there has been a significant increase in demand for children and young people requesting an assessment for neurodiversity. We recognise this has resulted in an increase in waiting times and we are keen to work with young people to improve the type of support we can provide with the resources available to use.

This report is very important in helping us to develop our offer. With the diversity of age, gender and where our young people live, there is a good representation to better inform our work moving forward. Families have demonstrated through this survey that the majority of young people do get support, however there is a significant number who do not seem to be able to get the help they need.

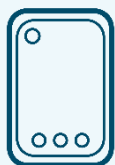
This report shows there is still a lot of work that needs to be done in Northamptonshire and indeed nationally to better understand what type of support children and young people would find the most beneficial.

For this report, we were shortlisted for the Healthwatch Impact Award and received a letter of support from our local MP Lucy Rigby, who quoted:

Your report on Young people and their families 'experience of Autism and ADHD diagnosis in Northamptonshire has clearly made a real impact, influencing positive changes in care pathways, training and early support in schools. The fact that this work has contributed to projects like the Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in schools' initiative is something to be incredibly proud of. It's a great example of how listening to people's experiences can drive real and meaningful change.

Young people and their families' experiences of Autism and ADHD diagnosis in Northamptonshire

Key things we heard:



31%

of young people said they had no support from any organisation after diagnosis

44%

of young people did not think that the services available to them had helped them in comparison to 26% feeling that they had helped

The most selected things that young people said they struggle to deal with were education, social skills, mental health and maintaining positive relationships with friends or peers



"I would love answers and would like my assessment to go fully forward, so I know where I stand when getting help. It's hard to get help when people are saying 'well that might be autism or ADHD so we will wait till we find out'. it's very hard."

- Young person

Read the full report [here](#)

Read the Easy Read report [here](#)

All reports can be read at www.healthwatchwestnorthants.com/news-and-reports

Kettering General Hospital Ophthalmology Enter and View

Our visits result in our service making recommendations for ways that service providers can continue to provide effective and satisfactory care. Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire's (HWNW) aim with this Ophthalmology Unit visit was to evaluate the services provided within Kettering General Hospital's Eye Unit (KGH), including Ophthalmology Outpatients and the Spencer ward.

Kettering General Hospital's last rating from the CQC – Care Quality Commission was noted as requiring improvement. To read the report, please visit www.cqc.org.uk/location/RNQ51

HWNW have a statutory right to enter Adult Health and Social Care Services to view the premises and to speak with both patients and staff members. We used our ability to enter services and review through a format called Enter and View. Please visit to find more information

network.healthwatch.co.uk/guidance/2019-04-23/guide-enter-and-view?gad_source=1&gclid=



We preplanned and arranged this visit with the team at KGH, allowing time for staff and patients to have notice.

Before our visit HWNW posters were distributed and displayed within the Ophthalmology Department, informing patients about what HWNW does as an organisation.

Healthwatch representatives used an Enter and View template to guide them through the visit and walked around and reviewed the department.

By walking around, observing the surroundings of the Ophthalmology Department, speaking and asking questions to both staff and patients, Healthwatch was able to gather a thorough understanding of how the service was functioning.

These findings were documented and summarised by our Healthwatch representatives, who then expanded and reported on them within the report.

Kettering General Hospital Ophthalmology Enter and View

What did we recommend?

- The unused sockets within the waiting areas have plug covers placed on them to ensure patient safety, especially in the children's waiting area
- The availability of antibacterial wipes should be checked regularly, especially in lesser-used areas such as the outpatient waiting area 2
- The water fountain in the outpatient waiting area 2 needs to be fixed, we recommended raising this with building maintenance, as this will improve the experience of patients attending the clinic
- In the main outpatient waiting room, the large TV to be connected to display notices or TV programmes for patients
- We noticed an unused display board in the waiting area 2 that could be used for patient information
- We felt that alongside the notice boards that it may be useful, given the nature of the department, for information to be available in Braille, for those with limited or no sight
- Based on the feedback heard, we feel that better signage could be installed at the main hospital entrance to aid patients who arrive this way
- We understand that parking is a hospital-wide issue, and through our enquiries service, we frequently hear that patients accessing Kettering General Hospital face this problem. Therefore, we believe it is appropriate to recommend that upper management at the hospital address this issue

We received the following response from Kettering General Hospital:

We were delighted to welcome Healthwatch to our hospital to give a patient perspective insight into our Ophthalmology Services. Their observations and feedback will help us to understand how we can further improve the experience that service users have whilst using our services. The visit covered both our inpatient and outpatient areas within Eye Care, which gave Healthwatch an insight into the patient journey when referred to these areas. We note the recommendations from Healthwatch and will ensure that an action plan is in place to monitor the progress of these actions

Read the full report [here](#)

All reports can be read at www.healthwatchwestnorthants.com/news-and-reports

Northampton General Hospital Maternity Enter and View Revisit

In October 2024, our team, which included two Healthwatch staff and two volunteers, revisited the Maternity Department at Northampton General Hospital (NGH) to see whether the previous report's recommendations had been listened to and acted.

We looked at the previous reports' recommendations and briefly observed the environment of the department during our visit.

To read our previous report, please visit www.healthwatchwestnorthants.com/report/2023-09-08/northampton-general-hospital-maternity-report

We did not conduct a full Enter and View at this time so did not speak to patients.

We spoke to two members of staff and a member of the senior management team to see if the staffing within the department was still an issue, and if the international recruitment drive had been successful.

As with many areas within the NHS, recruitment continues to be an issue in the department, which at the time was still understaffed. However, the international recruitment drive organised by the department has resulted in 25 new starters since the last 15-step visit. A recruitment day in April 2024 was also very successful, with potential staff able to apply and have an initial interview on the same day. Staff retention within the department continues to be quite good.

General nurses were still being used within the maternity department, but they were unable to undertake specialist maternity duties.

The Birth Centre within the department was not fully staffed, so it was unable to be fully utilised, therefore, most births within the department occur on the labour ward.

Staff did highlight that 50% of births at NGH are caesarean sections (either elected or medically necessary), meaning that half of the patients would not have any use for the Birth Centre.

Northampton General Hospital Maternity Enter and View Revisit

In relation to shift length, which was mentioned by staff during the last visit as an issue, some flexibility had been introduced where possible, e.g. shorter twilight shifts when this does not compromise patient safety.

In conclusion, where possible, many of our recommendations from the initial report had been acted upon.

There appeared to be a real desire from staff and management to try to ensure that the patient experience was considered when making decisions within the department, and the appointment of the Patient Experience and Engagement midwife have given this a focus within the Maternity Department.



Read the full report [here](#)

All reports can be read at www.healthwatchwestnorthants.com/news-and-reports

Kettering General Hospital Maternity Enter and View Revisit

Our team of two Healthwatch staff and one volunteer revisited the Maternity Department at Kettering General Hospital (KGH) in August 2024 to see if our previous report's recommendations had been listened to by the department. We did not conduct a full Enter and View and did not speak to staff or patients.

To access the original Kettering General Hospital Maternity Visit Report, please follow the link below:

<https://www.healthwatchwestnorthants.com/report/2023-08-02/kettering-general-hospital-maternity-visit-report>

We looked at each of the previous recommendations and briefly observed the environment of the department during our visit.

What did we find?

We looked to see if parking had been improved for patients, as this was a key issue heard during our previous visit. We found that there had not been any significant changes to the parking areas, with crowded bays and tight spaces. At the time of our visit, some spaces were available, however, they quickly filled, and patients and their families were seen circling and struggling to find spaces.

We looked to see whether the environment was still clean and safe, and we found that there had been quite a few changes to the structure of the department due to issues with the building's integrity and RAAC (Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete).

While the environment of the whole department appeared to be clean and well maintained, there was some concern around the areas where services were temporarily being held while the building's damage and structural issues were fixed, particularly in the Rockingham Wing. We noted upcoming plans for the outpatient department to be moved to peripheral sites while building maintenance took place.

We noted that to transfer some of the patients between department units, patients were being wheeled through the areas where construction was taking place, which raised concerns. However, the Maternity Department leads assured us that they are aware of this issue and are doing what they can to ensure patient risk and safety is a priority. We also noted that when the Sir Thomas Moore ward is temporarily used to house patients during construction, some patients would have to be wheeled outside and transported over a busy road, which is a real concern during the winter season.

Kettering General Hospital Maternity Enter and View Revisit

We looked to see if the visual environment was still welcoming and well decorated. Overall, the department was relatively well decorated, however, we did note that the Rowan Ward was not up to standard, with stained floors and old fixtures, and the walls appeared to be chipped, with paint peeling.

We asked if the Kettering Maternity Midwives Base was still closed for staff to access. We were told the bases are now available for midwives to access, with three hubs situated in Wellingborough, Corby and Kettering. We were pleased to hear this information, as these bases are key in supporting community midwives.



Read the full report [here](#)

All reports can be read at www.healthwatchwestnorthants.com/news-and-reports

Teen Clinic Daventry: An Evaluation

What is Teen Clinic Daventry?

Teen Clinic Daventry is a unique service based in Daventry in West Northamptonshire, where young people in the town can access free support for physical, sexual and emotional health all in one place. Teen Clinic Daventry brings together different organisations with the common goal of a one-stop drop-in health service for young people aged 11-18.

In response to the growing mental health challenges and the heightened awareness of young people's wellbeing concerns following the COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with the long waiting times many young individuals face when seeking support, Teen Clinic Daventry was established to provide much-needed guidance and assistance to local youth.

This is the first clinic of its kind in Northamptonshire and serves a population that may struggle to access services otherwise, due to the location of the town and socioeconomics of the local area. The establishment of the Teen Clinic Daventry helps to alleviate some of these challenges in the local community, by providing free access to healthcare professionals through an informal, drop-in service. Teen Clinic Daventry grew from a public health project targeting children and young people in the Daventry area.

The Teen Clinic Daventry's youth forum discusses health issues, clinic progress and website development. Outside agencies are invited to attend and to date, the clinic has welcomed more than 270 young people through its doors. One of the aims of Teen Clinic Daventry is to improve health literacy in young people and to empower them with positive health choices.

Key supporters are the local Care Network, Northamptonshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, local secondary E-Act academies, Northamptonshire Children's Trust, Service Six, MIND, Daventry Town Council and West Northants Council.

This collaborative multi-agency approach means that young people can explore physical, mental and sexual health concerns with a team of skilled professionals.

For more information on the Teen Clinic in Daventry please visit www.teenclinicdaventry.co.uk

Teen Clinic Daventry: An Evaluation

In the Autumn of 2023, Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire was commissioned by Teen Clinic Daventry to carry out an evaluation of the Teen Clinic in Daventry.

This involved conducting a survey of young people in Daventry and the creation of a series of videos that highlighted the importance and impact the Teen Clinic has had on young people locally and service providers.

Please see the videos here: www.healthwatchwestnorthants.com/teen-clinic-daventry-videos

To carry out this work, Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire designed a survey that was shared via social media and the Healthy Young Daventry Network. The survey aimed to gather the views and experiences of young people in Daventry who had accessed the Teen Clinic, assess awareness of the service among those who had not used it, and identify barriers to access.

Between March and May 2024, a total of 108 young people responded to the survey. To gather responses, we attended local events in Daventry and the Teen Clinic Daventry and survey responses were gathered online and in person.

What did we recommend?

- Increase the visibility and awareness of Teen Clinic Daventry among young people and their families in Daventry
- Increase the knowledge of the services offered at Teen Clinic Daventry, specifically informing young people of the sexual health services that they can access at the clinic
- Encourage conversations with young people around breaking the stigma of reaching out for help and support that is available to them; with a focus on males to encourage more young men to attend

Read the full report [here](#)

All reports can be read at www.healthwatchwestnorthants.com/news-and-reports

15 Steps Visit Kettering General Hospital

In January 2025, five members of Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire and EnFold visited Kettering General Hospital NHS Trust to review and give feedback to the hospital about the Children's areas from the view and perspective of children and young people.

This was done using the 15 Steps Challenge that was established by NHS England.

Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire are 11–24-year-olds who live in Northamptonshire. They ensure that children and young people have a voice in health and social care locally.

The group is made up of diverse young people, including those who are carers, have a physical disability or who are neurodivergent. Despite their differences, they are all young people.

Their role is to ensure they consider all young people and their possible differences and how they may impact them when completing tasks.

EnFold is a charity which provides a range of support services for adults and children with or without an Autism diagnosis in Northamptonshire. The Young People's Autism Advisory Project (or YAAP for short) is an EnFold group for young people 11–25, who want to help their community become more Autism aware and friendly.

For more information about EnFold, please visit enfold.org.uk

What did we do?

On the day of the visit, Young Healthwatch and EnFold volunteers visited the Paediatric Emergency Department and Skylark Children's Ward. Staff from Kettering General Hospital and Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire accompanied the young volunteers on the day, and full training was provided to ensure all staff and young volunteers were prepared prior to the visit.

Posters were placed in the areas that we visited to inform the public about the visit, so that they could talk to Young Healthwatch if they wanted to.

The report was written by Young Healthwatch volunteers in their own words, allowing the young volunteers to express their own opinions. The report is based on what they observed on the day of the visit and of the people they spoke to.

15 Steps Visit Kettering General Hospital

What did we recommend?

- If unable to fix, cover the broken skirting board in the waiting room of the Accident and Emergency department to ensure that no one gets hurt
- Change the way the noticeboard is displayed in the Emergency Department by changing the title or splitting the board into two sections to showcase the information
- Add a sign displaying that there is free Wi-Fi available
- Signage from the Paediatric Emergency Department to the Skylark ward is mostly good and easy to navigate, but a sign immediately outside of the Accident and Emergency department would be very helpful. This will save patients from having to ask for help or walk around trying to find directions
- Make improvements to the Skylark Ward waiting room to improve safety and patient experience by adding entertainment for teenagers and minimising trip hazards
- We recommend adding 'Are you a young carer?' to the check-in form, as they may have additional difficulties that can be overlooked
- There could be some colours added to the flooring of the hallway as you enter the Skylark Ward itself, with dots (similar to those on the walls) or with some footsteps/fish, for example
- Display that other drinks can be requested by the drink dispenser

We received the following response from Kettering General Hospital:

The visit from the Young Healthwatch and EnFold was a rewarding, informative and enjoyable experience for the Paediatric Emergency Department and Skylark Teams. The feedback on the day and the summary report have meant we have been able to make some immediate changes, as well as ideas for the long-term decisions related to future estates work. As a service, we would like to invite the team back in 6 months to see the sensory room and review the changes we have made based on their feedback. We would also like to extend an invitation to consider the inclusion of a younger persons-focused visit to the Adult Emergency Department. Thank you again to all the young people who came. We are very grateful for the time and energy you have given us, and we value the opportunity to work in partnership with you.

Read the full report [here](#)

Read the easy read report [here](#)

All reports can be read at www.healthwatchwestnorthants.com/news-and-reports

Young People's Experiences of Oral Health in Northamptonshire

Good mouth and dental health allows you to speak, eat, breathe and smile confidently without pain, discomfort or embarrassment. Most dental problems are preventable and can be treated in their early stages by following a good dental health routine.

Tooth decay is the most common dental disease affecting toddlers, children and young people in England.

Every child who has teeth is at risk of tooth decay. In England, there are currently significant challenges for people accessing NHS dentists. People lost their right to register with an NHS dentist in 2006 when a new NHS dental contract was introduced to pay dentists per 'unit of dental activity' rather than getting paid per person registered on a list of permanent patients, combined with set fees for each treatment delivered.

The contract means that dentists have no long-term obligation to see patients on the NHS unless they are undergoing active treatment or dental work already carried out is under guarantee.

The contract is unpopular with dentists, with many cutting back NHS work and leaving people without NHS appointments, often with little warning.

Last year, Healthwatch England supported the call by MPs on the Health and Social Care Committee to reintroduce permanent registration rights for patients.

www.healthwatch.co.uk/news/2024-11-20/publics-confusion-over-right-register-nhs-dentist

What did we do?

To complete this work, 10 focus group questions were devised by Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire and Public Health in North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire. To support this, Public Health provided Healthwatch with age-appropriate oral health advice in the form of a leaflet and a toothbrush and toothpaste for every young person who took part.

In December 2024, two focus groups were held. One in the West at Kingsthorpe College and one in the North at Kingswood Secondary Academy. There was a total of 35 young people who took part in this work.

Young People's Experiences of Oral Health in Northamptonshire

What did we recommend?

- Although most children and young people who were spoken to across both focus groups had a positive experience, it is still concerning that knowledge about oral hygiene and access to services is inconsistent and that some young people have reported being in pain for quite a while before getting access to services. Therefore, Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire recommends that we continue to work with commissioners, service providers and Public Health to raise awareness of and campaign for better access to dentistry for all
- As there are national issues with access to dentistry for all ages, there is potential to carry out a more in-depth survey with children, young people and families across the whole of Northamptonshire, which we would very much welcome to be a part of

We received the following response from North Northamptonshire Council:

We would like to thank Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire for sharing this report with us, which will contribute to our understanding of oral health in Northamptonshire. Special thanks to the young people involved; we value their insights and will feed their views into our communications, especially those aimed at young people.

We received the following response from Northamptonshire's Integrated Care Board:

Integrated Care Boards (ICB) are now the responsible commissioners for Dental services. It is recognised that access to NHS dental care in Northamptonshire has been challenged over recent years. Northamptonshire ICB is committed to ensuring that patients have access to NHS dental services in the county and is determined to do all it can to ensure easier access to high-quality dental care for their patients.

Read the full report [here](#)

Read the easy read report [here](#)

All reports can be read at www.healthwatchwestnorthants.com/news-and-reports

Make Your Voice Count – An Exploration of Mental and Physical Wellbeing in Northamptonshire

In January 2023, the 10-year Live Your Best Life Strategy was published by Integrated Care Northamptonshire to improve the outcomes for the health, care and wellbeing of local people.

www.icnorthamptonshire.org.uk/icp/#IntegratedCareNorthamptonshireStrategy2023-IntegratedCareNorthamptonshireStrategy2023

The strategy outlined 10 Core Ambitions, which included:

- The best start in life
- Access to the best available education and learning
- Opportunity to be fit, well and independent
- Employment that keeps people and families out of poverty
- Good housing in places which are clean and green
- Feel safe in homes and when out and about
- Connected to family and friends
- Chance for a fresh start
- Access to health and social care when they need it
- Valued for who they are

What was the Make Your Voice Count Project?

The Make Your Voice Count Project was designed with the aim of gaining a greater understanding of people's current physical and mental health and their wellbeing, including how they manage their wellbeing, with an aim to support individuals within the community.

With this we explored the correlations between the experiences of an individual's living environment and community with their wellbeing, in terms of what people liked and disliked about living in Northamptonshire. We also explored the topic of poverty and cost of living and the impact that can have on maintaining wellbeing.

Make Your Voice Count – An Exploration of Mental and Physical Wellbeing in Northamptonshire

One of Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire's (HWNW) core functions as an organisation is to hear the views and experiences of health and social care from the people within our community.

We utilised this information and decided to embark on a 4-month campaign to engage with people locally and to hear their views and experiences with their own health.

HWNW created a Task and Finish Group comprised of members of HWNW's Planning Group, Authorised Representatives from the organisation, as well as members of the West and North Northamptonshire councils, to develop the project approach and survey questions. The group helped to construct and pilot the survey, which ensured that the questions were co-produced and reviewed prior to the survey launch.

The survey went live on July 8th, 2024, and ran until November 1st, 2024. The survey was shared by HWNW extensively across social media and HWNW online resources and shared at 12 community events that HWNW attended during the life of the project as a part of the campaign's engagement.

Based on the feedback from the 482 participants, when expressing their needs and what they would like to see offered within the community as well as what was identified within our key discussions, we have made the following 7 recommendations:

- Continue to fund organisations that encourage a sense of community and social connection, and increase the offers for those between 35 and 64 years of age
- Increase the availability and affordability of public transport
- Increase the reach of support services and community social groups
- Increase support for neurodivergent individuals
- Service improvement, many people voiced dissatisfaction around the quality and availability of mental and physical wellbeing support and health care services
- Increase awareness of coping strategies for stress to benefit mental wellbeing
- Maintain funding for green spaces

Make Your Voice Count – An Exploration of Mental and Physical Wellbeing in Northamptonshire

We received the following response from West Northamptonshire Council:

The Make Your Voice Count report provides a good understanding of the health and wellbeing of our local communities, from the community perspective. The findings align with other community insights that West Northamptonshire Council and partners have gathered through a range of programmes and highlight the importance of the building blocks for health, ensuring that the places we are born, grow, work and live enable us to live healthy lives. It also highlights the importance of community connections and mental wellbeing, alongside ensuring people have access to services which support people to live a healthy life. The findings will inform the delivery plan for West Northamptonshire's Prevention Strategy.

We received the following response from Integrated Care Northamptonshire:

Thank you for undertaking this vital piece of engagement. We note the recommendations highlighted within the report and can assure that we continually engage with the public to seek their views and experience of services to help us improve, noting that there are elements of this report that are provided by our wider system partners.

North Northamptonshire Council was asked for a response, but none was received by the date of publication.

Read the full report [here](#)

All reports can be read at www.healthwatchwestnorthants.com/news-and-reports

Hearing from all communities

We're here for all residents of Northamptonshire. That's why, over the past year, we've worked hard to reach out to those communities whose voices may go unheard.

Every member of the community should have the chance to share their story and play a part in shaping services to meet their needs.

This year, we have reached different communities by:

- Engaging with individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds, including those of Eastern European descent (e.g. Romanian, Polish, Latvian), by hosting culturally relevant events and attending traditional celebrations to build trust and gather meaningful feedback
- Ensuring the voices of people living with dementia are heard by speaking directly with them and their carers at engagement and support groups run by local organisations such as Northamptonshire Carers, so their experiences are reflected in our work
- Gathering feedback through our enquiries service and at community engagement events, to ensure local voices are heard by NHS leaders and the Integrated Care System, demonstrating how lived experience can drive positive change



Hearing from all communities

Fostering trusted relationships through the Health and Care Research for All: Strengthening Eastern European Voices programme.

We investigated research engagement and health and social care access barriers through a new Research Engagement Network project with the ICB. People told us about language barriers, trust issues and a lack of cultural understanding among service providers. We identified a need for awareness and engagement from the system with their communities.

What difference did this make?

By actively listening and creating safe spaces for open discussion, we built new relationships and gave local Eastern European communities a platform to share their views. Many participants said they felt “heard for the first time” and appreciated being part of shaping future health research and community insights.

The Impact:

- Our findings have been shared with regional and national partners to help influence more inclusive research practices
- Community feedback directly informed recommendations for more accessible research methods and culturally sensitive engagement
- We have laid the foundation for continued dialogue between communities and researchers, helping to build trust and long-term involvement

This work demonstrated the power of hearing directly from those with lived experience and the value of co-producing solutions that reflect the diversity of our local population.

Information and signposting

Whether it's finding an NHS dentist, making a complaint, or choosing a good care home for a loved one – you can count on us. This year 399 people have reached out to us for advice, support or help finding services.

This year, we've helped people by:

- Providing up-to-date information people can trust
- Helping people access the services they need
- Supporting people to look after their health
- Signposting people to additional support services



Lack of available dental care for families and children

Thanks to the feedback from many families regarding the lack of available and accessible dentistry care for their children, we were able to utilise their voices to help drive a project that engaged with children between 10–16 years of age about their dental wellbeing.

People expressed concerns for people, especially children who are suffering due to a lack of dental care, with practices locally changing from offering NHS services to private services and orthodontists closing down practices with no plan for the children currently receiving services.



“My child is almost six years old, and I have never been able to register them with a dentist.”

“There are no dentists available, my child is 10 years old, and their back teeth are falling out and rotten and I can not get an NHS dentist.”

Because of voices like these and many more we captured; we used these to bring awareness to the issue locally and took our concerns to system platforms such as the Integrated Care Board of Northamptonshire and the CQC.

In response to the need for improvement of access to dentistry for our local families, the local NHS system announced a 3-year Dental Recovery and Commissioning Plan that includes focuses in areas of high deprivation for children and young people.



“My child has braces and they missed an appointment, when we went to rebook, we were told they were no longer undertaking NHS work. I am worried about my child’s dental health now as they haven’t been seen for months.”

Showcasing volunteer impact

Our fantastic volunteers have given 70 days/490.5 hours to support our work. Thanks to their dedication to improving care, we can better understand what is working and what needs improving in our community.

This year, our volunteers:

- Visited communities to promote our work
- Collected experiences and supported their communities to share their views
- Carried out Enter and View visits to local services to help them improve
- Attended local meetings within our health and social care system to stay informed and share their views



Showcasing volunteer impact

At the heart of what we do

From finding out what residents think to helping raise awareness, our volunteers have championed community concerns to improve care.

"My volunteering experience at Healthwatch West Northamptonshire was wonderful. It provided me with adequate exposure to the practical nature of the public health field and made me understand how various decisions taken at the board level can have a significant impact on the wider population.

Gabriella and the team were really helpful, made me feel comfortable and gave me the platform to adequately contribute to the community.

I'm grateful for the opportunity and experience."

Uchenna



"Volunteering on the Eastern European Research project has been an enriching experience. I'm proud to have contributed to such an important initiative and am truly grateful for the opportunity to be part of a fantastic team. I met wonderful people, built meaningful connections, and felt supported every step of the way."

Teodora



Showcasing volunteer impact

Although I have clinical and managerial experience from my career in both the NHS and Higher Education, my role as a volunteer has continued to be both satisfying and enjoyable. The commitment and enthusiasm of the staff has helped me think and reflect about my role in supporting them, particularly in the months leading up to the recent contract discussions : fortunately, there was a positive and reassuring outcome.

I have attended the various meetings learning about how the organisation interfaces with a wide range of organisations in the County and beyond, and I was fortunate to be part of a group visiting a clinical department in June last year. This was an 'Enter and View' visit to ophthalmology in Kettering , spending time with patients and staff. We were able to give direct feedback to the managers ahead of the written report. What has continued to impress me about Healthwatch has been the support, expertise and communication from staff enabling me to take on the role of a volunteer, including regular newsletters and updates. I can always call into the office to have a chat and catch up, I feel welcomed and valued in this role and I'm looking forward to more visits and other activities in the future. I'm able to directly contact the Chair and CEO about literally anything and this has proved really beneficial in recognising the efforts and contributions from the whole team.



Mark

Be part of the change.

If you've felt inspired by these stories, contact us today and find out how you can be part of the change.



www.healthwatchwestnorthants.com



0300 002 0010



enquiries@healthwatchwestnorthants.com

Finance and future priorities

We received funding from North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to help us do our work.

Our income and expenditure:

Income		Expenditure	
Local authority core funding	£195,000	Expenditure on pay	£150,919.97
		Non-pay expenditure	£46,573.72
Total income	£195,000.00	Total Expenditure	£197,493.69

The Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire combined contracts made a small loss of £2,493.69 this year, against their core funding from North and West Northamptonshire Councils. This was a smaller loss than in previous years and was less than we had anticipated based on historical performance. The forecast deficit was largely reduced as the result of 3 staff leaving between January and March 2025 because of the uncertainty surrounding the new contracts from 1st April 2025. We were unable to recruit to replace those leavers under the terms of the contract with Commissioners.

In 2024/25 the Connected Together CIC subsidised the Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire combined contract by £2,493.69.

Integrated Care System (ICS) funding:

Healthwatch across Northamptonshire also receive funding from our Integrated Care System (ICS) to support new areas of collaborative work at this level, including:

Purpose of ICS funding	Amount
Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire	£17,850

Finance and future priorities

Next steps:

Over the next year, we will keep reaching out to every part of society, especially people in the most deprived areas, so that those in power hear their views and experiences.

We will also work together with partners and our local Integrated Care System to help develop an NHS culture where, at every level, staff strive to listen and learn from patients to make care better.

Our top three priorities for the next year are:

1. Older people, ageing services and dementia awareness
2. Prioritising Healthwatch awareness and community engagement
3. Ethnic Minority Maternity care experiences, GP services and primary care



Statutory statements

Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire, Connected Together, Moulton Park Business Centre, Redhouse Road, Northampton, NN3 6AQ.

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

Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire uses the Healthwatch Trademark when undertaking our statutory activities as covered by the licence agreement.

The way we work

Involvement of volunteers and lay people in our governance and decision-making.

Our Healthwatch Board consists of 10 members who work voluntarily to provide direction, oversight, and scrutiny of our activities.

Our Board ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community.

Throughout 2024/25, the Board met 4 times and made decisions on matters such as setting priorities and ratifying the Annual Work Plan. We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities.

Methods and systems used across the year to obtain people's experiences

We use a wide range of approaches to ensure that as many people as possible can provide us with insight into their experience of using services.

During 2024/25, we have been available by phone and email, provided a web form on our website and through social media, and attended meetings of community groups and forums.

We ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible.

Statutory statements

Responses to recommendations

We had 1 provider who did not respond to requests for information or recommendations. There were no issues or recommendations escalated by us to the Healthwatch England Committee, so there were no resulting reviews or investigations.

Taking people's experiences to decision-makers

We ensure that people who can make decisions about services hear about the insights and experiences shared with us.

For example, in our local authority area, we take information to patient experience groups at Northampton General Hospital (NGH), Kettering General Hospital (KGH) and Northamptonshire Healthcare Foundation Trust (NHFT).

We also take insights and experiences to decision-makers in Integrated Care Northamptonshire (ICN), and all our feedback reports go to the CQC, commissioners and providers, as well as sharing our data and information with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.



Statutory statements

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire is represented on several different boards and meetings across Northamptonshire.

For example:

- The Community Diagnostic Centre Programme Board
- Integrated Care Across Northamptonshire
- KGH, NGH and NHFT Patient Experience Groups
- Place development, community wellbeing forums and Local Area Partnerships
- Mental Health, Learning Disabilities and Autism Executive Board
- ICP Strategy Development Board
- North and West Northamptonshire Health and Wellbeing Boards

During 2024/25, our representatives have effectively carried out these role by:

- Representing community voices by sharing key themes and experiences from our feedback with service providers at local meetings
- Sharing lived experiences to provide insight into current challenges within the health and social care system
- Documenting discussions and outcomes from system-level meetings to keep Healthwatch informed and up to date on changes and improvements in health and social care

Statutory statements

Enter and View

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
St Andrews Healthcare Secure Inpatient Services	Healthwatch aims to conduct regular evaluations of selected healthcare services within the community	<p>Report with 7 recommendations</p> <p>Since the report, St Andrews Healthcare have put staff recruitment and retention on their high priority list and has recruited 60 new Healthcare Assistants and 4 new Nurses joined their Learning Disability and Autism Division, and 34 new Healthcare Assistants joined their Medium Secure Division.</p>
Kettering General Hospital Ophthalmology	As part of our regular evaluations of selected healthcare services	<p>Report with 8 recommendations</p> <p>KGH have said that the report from our observations and feedback will help them to understand how they can further improve the experience that service users have whilst using their services</p>

Statutory statements

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Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
Corby Willowbrook Health Centre Community Diagnosis Services	As part of a national study with Healthwatch England	<p>Report with 4 recommendations which were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance parking facilities, including dedicated drop-off areas and increase the availability of spaces for patients and their families and carers • Improve the signage and notice boards, increase the available patient information, and ensure better visibility • Repurpose the televisions that are currently not in use to show relevant information and/or entertainment for patients • Consider expanding the waiting room space to accommodate more patients
Kettering General Hospital Maternity revisit	This was another revisit to see if our initial report and recommendations had been acted upon	<p>We noted from our previous report that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking is still an issue, and no significant changes had been made • The environment was still clean • Of concern was the transfer of patients between departments due to building works, patients were wheeled through ongoing construction • When the Sir Thomas Moore ward is temporarily used to house patients, some patients would have to be wheeled outside and over a busy road • The ward is still welcoming and well decorated but the Rowan ward was not up to the rest of the hospital's standard • The toilet and shower cubicles are small, except one which was more adequate • The midwives' base is now available for staff to access • Informational material is still being offered in multiple languages • Staffing levels have improved

Statutory statements

Enter and View

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
Northampton General Hospital Maternity revisit	This was a revisit to see if our initial report and recommendations had been acted upon	<p>From our initial report, many of our recommendations had been acted upon.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They have had an international recruitment drive, which resulted in 25 new starters since our last 15-step visit • The birth centre was not fully staffed, but Staff did highlight that 50% of births at NGH are caesarean sections (either elected or medically necessary), meaning that half of the patients would not have any use for the birth centre • Shift length was mentioned by staff during the last visit as an issue; some flexibility has been introduced where possible, e.g. shorter twilight shifts when this does not compromise patient safety

Statutory statements


Enter and View

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
Young Healthwatch 15 steps Kettering General Hospital	To review and give feedback about the Children's areas from the view and perspective of children and young people	Report with 8 recommendations Since the report, KGH are pleased to announce that the feedback and the summary report have meant they have been able to make some immediate changes, as well as ideas for longer-term decisions related to future estates work. KGH would like to invite YHW back in 6 months' time to review the sensory room and any other changes that they would have made based on the feedback from the enter and view visit



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