



Speaking up for better care

Healthwatch West Northamptonshire Annual
Report 2025/2026

Contents

A message from our Chair	3-4
About us	5
Our year in numbers	6
A year of making a difference	7
Working together for change	8
Listening to your experiences	9
Health and Research For All- Strengthening Eastern European Voices	10-16
Northampton General Hospital Paediatrics Enter and View	17-20
Northampton General Hospital Accident and Emergency Enter and View	21-24
Emotional Wellbeing	25-26
Hearing from all communities	27-28
Information and signposting	29-30
Awards and Recognition	31-32
Connecting with community leaders	33
Showcasing volunteer impact	34-35
Finance and future priorities	36-37
Statutory statements	38-42



Kate Holt
CEO Healthwatch
West
Northamptonshire

"The NHS plays a vital role in our lives, and we know it faces real challenges. Listening to people's thoughts about their care is one of the best ways to improve services. Every comment, concern, and compliment helps health and care professionals see what works and what needs to change, so care can be safer and better for everyone.

"We want to say a heartfelt thanks to all the local people who have taken the time to share their experiences, and to the health and social care professionals who have listened and acted on that feedback. Your commitment has helped make a real difference for our community."

A message from our chair

Welcome to our first Annual Report as solely Healthwatch West Northamptonshire

Previously, we were both Healthwatch West Northamptonshire and Healthwatch North Northamptonshire and prior to that, since 2013, previously known as Healthwatch Northamptonshire, serving the whole of the county.

During 2024, a decision was made between the North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council to split Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire into two separate services for each side of the county, and this came into effect on 1st April 2025 for the year on which we are now reporting, 2025/26.

The aim of this split was to bring a more focused and 'local' approach to the organisations, allowing for more detailed work within each local authority area. During this transition and the previous contracting decisions, the changes and impacts on both staff and volunteers have been felt across the service. Particularly having to bid for the contracts, duplicate overheads and update and rebrand everything from websites, marketing materials, logos, leaflets and social media on a regular basis.

We continue to work closely with the commissioners, aligning the needs of our local communities within our work plan whilst continuing to strive to maintain our independence and champion the voice of the public in health and social care services.

A message from our chair

Sadly, going forward from 1st April 2027, the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) is now planning that there will no longer be an independent Healthwatch for anyone in Northamptonshire – or indeed country wide. In order to deliver the NHS 10 Year Plan, the government is bringing an “NHS Reform and Modernisation” Bill to Parliament, and the Secretary of State is seeking to dissolve all 152 local Healthwatch teams that currently monitor local health and social care services, along with Healthwatch England.

At the time of writing this for publication (30/06/2026), we do not know what the plans are to ensure the voice of the public is heard, but we will continue to publicise any information we get to health and care service commissioners, providers and the public.



I'd like to take this opportunity to once again thank all our staff and volunteers for the fantastic work they do representing the public at high-level meetings, for example, the West Northamptonshire Health and Wellbeing Board and the Northamptonshire Integrated Care Board, and for all their visits to care homes and hospitals to highlight areas for improvement, as this report will highlight.

Morcea Walker MBE, DL
Chair Healthwatch West
Northamptonshire

About us

Healthwatch **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



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.

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

In 2025/2026 we supported more than **551** people to have their say and get information about their care. We employed **3** staff and our work was supported by **17** volunteers.



Reaching out:

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

36 came to us to share their experiences and views on their GP practices, sharing feedback around access and communication and challenges with the new online Anima system.



Championing your voice:

We published **2** reports about the improvements people would like to see within our Northampton General Hospital's Paediatric and A&E departments.

Our most popular report was our Health and Care Research for All: Strengthening Eastern European Voices project, where we heard from individuals within Albanian, Polish, Romanian, Latvian, Lithuanian and Ukrainian communities about health and care access and research.



Statutory funding:

We're funded by **West Northamptonshire Council** and received a grant of **£137,920.00**, for 2025/2026. This is less than in 2024/25, as funding previously was for the whole of Northamptonshire.

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 **West Northamptonshire**. Here are a few highlights.

Spring

The Health and Care Research for All: Strengthening Eastern European Voices report shared its findings with the system, highlighting the importance of genuine engagement and providing accessible materials to ethnic minority communities.



The Healthwatch team attend the Northampton Carnival to share information about our service and the importance of sharing experiences within Health and Social Care!



Summer

Our Operations Manager spoke to the Masters of Public Health students at the University of Northampton about local health inequalities and how Healthwatch has worked to champion the voices and experiences of lesser heard communities.



We worked with West Northants Council to train our staff and volunteers in Dementia Awareness, giving our team the opportunity to better understand the support and needs of those with dementia.



Autumn

Our staff and volunteers visited the Northampton General A&E and Paediatric departments, conducting Enter and Views to better understand the services through the eyes of patients.



Our chair and staff met with a local councillor and heads of the WNC Public Health department to discuss the needs of our communities and ways we can bring impact to health and social care workstreams.



Winter

We visited a local care home which specialises in supporting residents with various stages of dementia, putting our training into action as we observed the facility and spoke to residents and carers.



Our team identified findings from the NGH Paediatrics service, including many areas of good practice, and highlighted recommendations for the children's areas.



Working together for change

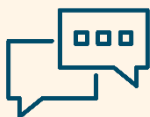
We've worked with neighboring Healthwatch to ensure people's experiences of care in **West Northamptonshire** are heard at the Integrated Care System (ICS) level, and they influence decisions made about services at Leicester, Leicestershire, Rutland and Northamptonshire (LLNR) Integrated Care.

This year, we've worked with Healthwatch across **Leicester, Leicestershire, Rutland and Northamptonshire** to achieve the following:



A collaborative network of local Healthwatch:

When we learned about the changes to the Integrated Care Boards across the country, we knew that collaboration with other Healthwatch services would be key! Our Northamptonshire ICB merged with a larger patch across Leicester, Leicestershire, and Rutland, bringing a transition to the system working at a larger scale. This launched conversations with the respective Healthwatch organisations to discuss how we could work together for better care.



A big conversation:

Along with the three other Healthwatch organisations (Healthwatch Leicester and Leicestershire, Healthwatch Rutland and Healthwatch North Northamptonshire) we formed a cluster group. This LLNR Healthwatch group began to meet monthly to discuss the changes to our local NHS Integrated Care Service to see how we could ensure the voices of our local communities were still heard and represented at a senior level.



Building strong relationships to achieve more:

In September, our LLNR Cluster was formed, and through winter and spring, we met with the leaders of the LLNR ICB Board to ensure that our Healthwatch services still had a seat on the ICB Board and ICB sub-committees. We were successful in securing these seats in the system and agreed to meet regularly to review minutes and agenda topics for the monthly system meetings to ensure each Healthwatch could share information and raise questions at the various meetings. Our Healthwatch West Northamptonshire organisation now holds the Deputy ICB Healthwatch seat.

Listening to your experiences

Services can't improve if they don't know what's wrong. 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.



Health and Care Research for All: Strengthening Eastern European Voices

A Research Engagement Network Collaborative Project

How it started

In 2024, our Healthwatch team successfully bid and secured funding for a second year of collaboration with Integrated Care Northamptonshire (ICN), following the previous year's work within the Research Engagement Network (REN) Workstream, funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) and NHS England.

HWNW previously collaborated on a funded project focused on barriers to research engagement, during which we gained insights into effective methods for successful engagement and ways to encourage individuals to participate in research [Integrated Care Northamptonshire Engaging in Research Collaborative Project | Healthwatch West Northamptonshire](#)

The 2024–2025 project was developed to address local challenges, to align with wider system goals and ICS priorities, and to engage a diverse and underserved group of communities. Its central aim was to broaden access and strengthen inclusivity in research participation, including research awareness. The ICN reviewed local data and the demographics of Northamptonshire and identified the Eastern European population as one which experienced health inequalities and would benefit from improved access and increased engagement in research.

Through initial ICN research and conversations with members of the Eastern European communities locally, we found that many Eastern Europeans report feeling "forgotten" due to shared skin colour but have different life experiences that shape the way that they access the health and social care system, largely being affected due to language barriers and cultural differences. The ICN's Population Health team found that Eastern Europeans prefer to receive engagement and information in their native languages.

Whom did we support?

According to ICN and NHS data, we identified the most prevalent Eastern European countries individuals are from: Romania, Poland, Moldova, Latvia, Lithuania, Ukraine, and Albania. From this, we knew we needed to ensure our community engagement covered the languages spoken in all countries, with Romanian and Polish being the top languages spoken locally.

Health and Care Research for All: Strengthening Eastern European Voices

Our project's aim

The goal of this project was to increase inclusivity and to provide opportunities for diverse communities to take part in research, and for our Eastern European communities locally, this meant that our approach would have to be careful and genuine. We worked to make lasting connections with the communities locally and ensured that our engagement with the communities was conducted in a way that we built trust and provided individuals with information that was accessible and fair. We would engage with all community members with Eastern European backgrounds, regardless of their protected characteristics or how long they've lived in the UK

The project:

We designed and branded the project with its name, "Health and Care Research for All: Strengthening Eastern European Voices", and a logo. We took the developed logo and created marketing materials which would be handed out for free at events, to accompany the information on research, as this would improve engagement and accessibility.

We hired a Community Connector from the Romanian community, the largest group within our Eastern European community. This ensured that we could approach communities in a culturally appropriate and sensitive manner. This individual was a key link during events and engagements as they spoke the most common Eastern European language in Northamptonshire.

We sought out existing events, mainly in the different EE communities, to attend and bring information and brought a "mobile research hub" to these events for community members to interact with and to receive relevant information about research and local services in their native languages. We gathered this learning by attending existing events and through hosting a large-scale communities celebration event on the 1st of March 2025.



HCRFA Project Logo



Health and Care Research for All: Strengthening Eastern European Voices

Our project (continued):

We created informational leaflets, flyers, posters, social media graphics and videos. The videos were developed in an AI-assisted media generator, which enabled us to produce the videos in the predominantly spoken languages, Romanian and Polish. Social media was a valuable tool, and the REN Project media and information we shared reached individuals across Twitter/X, Facebook, TikTok and Instagram.

Translated leaflets and flyers were distributed during community engagement and at the events we attended and hosted (examples of these can be found within the Report Appendix). The relationships we established during our in-person community engagement and Community Mapping Exercises (CME's) enabled us to leave relevant leaflets in commonly spoken languages in Eastern European shops and other local services.

Our Impact

Through our project, we:

- Translated materials and online information in **6** languages
- Reached **20,799 impressions** across our social media platforms
- Attending **18** community events
- Engaged with over **400** Eastern Europeans locally
- Conducted **9** Community Mapping Exercises
- Connected with **64** local businesses and organisations, the majority of which were Eastern European
- Held a large-scale community celebration event with over **200** in attendance, the majority of whom were from Eastern European communities

Health and Care Research for All: Strengthening Eastern European Voices

What we found

Developing connections with diverse communities:

Building trust with culturally diverse and historically excluded communities takes time, sensitivity, and sustained investment. While the project made strong progress in four months, a deeper impact requires longer-term commitment. Engaging trusted community members with shared heritage proved highly effective, increasing openness and enabling more authentic, culturally informed engagement.

Effective strategies:

Meeting communities in familiar, safe spaces (supported by mobile research hubs) helped reduce barriers to participation. Providing materials in native languages improved access, understanding, and engagement. Creating opportunities to celebrate culture strengthened relationships and fostered inclusion, while culturally aware approaches supported shared understanding. Innovative tools, such as AI-generated videos, also helped extend reach and improve accessibility of information.

What we recommended the system to do

- Engage with communities where they are, in their own culturally relevant formats
- To continue to invest in sustainable community engagement, moving away from one-off funding pots
- To encourage local authorities and NHS services to increase the provision of information in commonly spoken foreign languages
- The majority of people who were asked if they were aware of research occurring at their local GP, stated that they were not aware of this
- To encourage health and care services and research organisations to share more messages and information on social media
- Further Eastern European engagement with Primary Care services
- There is a need for further engagement, especially with Latvian, Lithuanian, Albanian and Ukrainian communities locally
- Increase community events that bring together all members of the public to experience and learn more about a different cultural community
- To look to innovative technologies to expand the reach when sharing information with culturally diverse communities whose first language is not English

Health and Care Research for All: Strengthening Eastern European Voices

Reflections on HCRFA

“The ‘Health and Care Research for All – Strengthening Eastern European Voices’ Research Engagement Network project has been a powerful demonstration of what can be achieved when communities, system leaders, and voluntary sector partners come together with a shared purpose. Working alongside Healthwatch, VCSE organisations, and dedicated individuals from across our health and care system, we’ve strengthened the voice of Eastern European communities in research – ensuring they are not just included but empowered.

The project was a partnership built on trust, cultural understanding, and mutual respect. We created space for genuine engagement and discussion about people’s experiences and barriers around health and care research. It has laid the foundations for sustainable partnerships and opened doors to ongoing dialogue.

We are immensely proud of the relationships built, the energy and commitment from all involved. We are also deeply grateful to all who contributed to transforming this from a potential idea to real success. The contributions from the community members, partners, and system leaders have been invaluable, and their voices have changed the way we think about engagement and equity in health and care research in Northamptonshire and beyond. Together, we’ve taken a significant step towards a more inclusive research landscape.”



Northamptonshire ICB Research Manager

“It has been a very rewarding and worthwhile project to lead with the ICB. Our approach allowed us to connect with the local Eastern European community and build meaningful connections. From this project, we highlighted better ways of working as a system, and it showed us the importance of understanding different cultures, the need for inclusivity and better access by adapting information to suit the needs of the people within our communities.”



**Gabriella Van Beek, Healthwatch West Northamptonshire
Operations Manager**

Health and Care Research for All: Strengthening Eastern European Voices Community Celebration

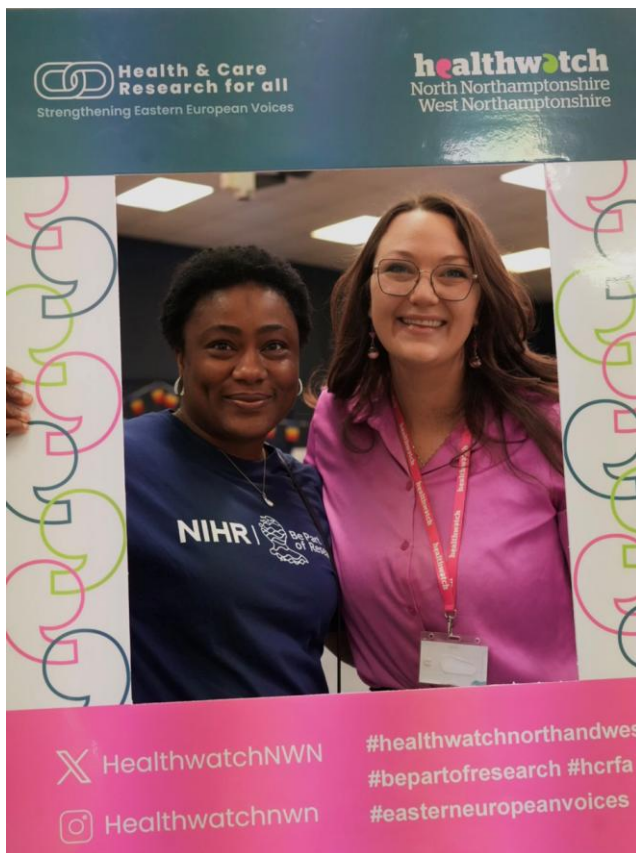
HCFRA Community Celebration

We successfully hosted the Health and Care Research for All Celebration Event at New Life Church, bringing together over 200 attendees from diverse backgrounds to celebrate community, culture, and research. Of the attendees who chose to sign in to the event, 68% were of Eastern European descent. We had 20 different local organisations and Eastern European local businesses who attended, including those from Latvia, Poland and Romania.

The atmosphere was vibrant and welcoming, with traditional dancers, live music, and a range of Eastern European activities and entertainment. We offered both Polish and Romanian food and refreshments, creating a rich sensory experience that reflected the cultural tapestry of our local population. The inclusion of children's entertainment, such as a bouncy castle, games, balloon modelling, and a mini bubble show, made it a true family-friendly event, encouraging community cohesion across generations. Children took part in Martisor, an Eastern European craft that is made to mark the start of Spring.



Health and Care Research for All: Strengthening Eastern European Voices Community Celebration



Outcome and impact

- Over 200 community members engaged with the event and the Research Corner
- The event strengthened community trust and awareness of ongoing health and care research
- The event facilitated conversations around health equity, access, and representation in research
- From the event, we collected valuable input through interactive surveys, case studies and discussions
- The event highlighted the importance of celebrating culture as a gateway to deeper engagement

To read the full report, please visit [REN HCRFA Report](#)

Northampton General Hospital Paediatrics Departments Enter and View

Background

On the 13th of October 2025, our staff and volunteers visited Northampton General Hospital's Paediatrics Departments to carry out an "Enter and View". This visit aimed to view the services provided by the various departments from the perspective of the service users, both young people and their families or carers.

The Healthwatch Representatives were joined by NGH's Deputy Head of Patient Experience and Engagement and the Matrons of the various Children's Departments. NGH's Patient Engagement and Experience team requested that our team visit the service to share our views and the voice of patients and staff across the different children's areas, in order to shape services for the better.

In November 2023, our Young Healthwatch organisation (a diverse group of young people between the ages of 11 and 24 who live in Northamptonshire) visited the same services within NGH to share their views from the perspective of children and young people who might access the services. They shared their opinions and created their own report, which was shared with the services. We reviewed their findings and kept these in mind when visiting the services, to see if their recommendations had been listened to and if there were any similar themes that we noticed.

On the day of the visit, Healthwatch West Northamptonshire representatives went to various units within the Paediatrics Departments, which included: Children's Accident and Emergency (A&E) Unit, Paddington Ward, Disney Ward, Play Activity Centre, Paediatric Assessment Unit (PAU) and Children's Outpatient Department. The information gained from the visit was used to make relevant recommendations, and areas in which the service was providing quality care and evidencing best practices were acknowledged.

Northampton General Hospital Paediatrics Departments Enter and View

Our key findings

Positives

Welcoming and Child-Friendly Environments

Paediatric areas were generally bright, engaging, and designed with children in mind. Notable highlights included the Children's Outpatients Department, Paddington and Disney Wards, and the Play Activity Centre, all of which offered colourful décor, interactive activities, and age-appropriate spaces to support comfort and engagement.

Safety and Accessibility

Strong safety and accessibility measures were in place across most areas. Secure entry systems supported safeguarding, while clear signage, disabled facilities, and accessible amenities (e.g. large-print signs and refreshment stations) improved usability for patients and families.

Engagement and Communication

Effective approaches were used to involve children and families in care. Examples included clear patient journey displays in A&E, informative resources for young people (e.g. the Outpatients' Teen Board), and inclusive feedback tools such as token boards. PAU's "Child First" approach was particularly positive in empowering children to participate in decisions about their care.

Thoughtful Service Provision

Several initiatives enhanced patient and family experience, including sensory and quiet spaces in A&E, role-play medical areas in the Activity Centre, and parent-friendly facilities on inpatient wards (e.g. overnight accommodation and inclusive food options).

Quality of Care and Environment

Staff were consistently described as dedicated and compassionate, demonstrating strong ownership of their environments. All areas visited were clean, hygienic, and well-maintained, reflecting high standards of care.

Northampton General Hospital Paediatrics Departments Enter and View

Our key findings

Challenges

Décor and Patient Experience in Some Areas

While some spaces were engaging, others—particularly A&E waiting areas, PAU, and Disney Ward patient rooms—felt less stimulating and could benefit from improved décor and more age-appropriate activities.

Communication and Information Accessibility

Some notice boards were cluttered and difficult to navigate. There was also limited visible information for patients and families whose first language is not English.

Support for Neurodivergent and Additional Needs

Although resources such as hospital passports exist, their visibility was limited. Sensory facilities were not consistently available across all wards.

Accessibility and Navigation

Improvements are needed to support navigation and physical access. This includes clearer, more child-friendly signage and addressing issues in the Activity Centre's outdoor space, where accessibility barriers and maintenance concerns were identified.

Estate Maintenance

Some areas, particularly Disney Ward, showed signs of wear and would benefit from minor refurbishment, such as repainting.

Staffing and Coordination

Feedback indicated that some areas, including A&E and inpatient wards, experience staffing pressures. There is also an opportunity to strengthen communication and collaboration between Paediatric departments.

Northampton General Hospital Paediatrics Departments Enter and View

Our five recommendations

1. Increase child-friendly décor, sensory features, ceiling tiles, and/or wall art across A&E waiting areas, PAU treatment rooms, and Disney inpatient rooms.
2. Increase the communications and awareness of the hospital passport system by creating additional informational communications for patients and adding information about this to hospital letters.
3. Increase visible signage promoting interpreters, language needs and communication preferences (“Your Information Your Way”).
4. Introduce sensory lighting, sensory corners and/or portable sensory units on all wards, especially on the Disney and Paddington.
5. Fundraise and redevelop the outdoor space into an inclusive, accessible play environment with greenery, sensory paths and wheelchair-friendly equipment.

Comments from NGH

“We were delighted to facilitate the Paediatrics Departments Enter and View visit from members of West Northamptonshire Healthwatch. Their observations and feedback will help us to understand how we can improve our services from the perspective of the patient. The visit covered our Children’s Emergency Department (A&E), Paddington Ward, Disney Ward, Play Activity Centre, Paediatric Assessment Unit (PAU) and Children’s Outpatient Department, which gave Healthwatch a fantastic insight into the paediatric services that our patients encounter when visiting Northampton General Hospital.

This report provides some very positive statements about the service while also highlighting some issues that we are aware of and are working on to resolve with the Matron for NGH Paediatric inpatient areas, pulling together an action plan to address areas requiring improvement.

By working in a collaborative approach with West Northamptonshire Healthwatch, we are able to drive forward improvements with the focus on the experiences of patients and their carers being at the heart of our service. This report encapsulates very valid recommendations provided during the Enter and View visit, as well as helping us celebrate aspects that the team felt were positive. ”

To read the full report, please visit [HWW Paediatrics Enter and View NGH](#)

Northampton General Hospital Accident and Emergency Enter and View

Background

On the 14th October 2025, Healthwatch West Northamptonshire representatives conducted an Enter and View of the Adult Emergency Departments at Northampton General Hospital (NGH).

Healthwatch West Northamptonshire's aim with this visit to the Adult Emergency Department was to evaluate the services being provided within Northampton General Hospital's Accident and Emergency (A&E) Unit, which included A&E Streaming Hub and Minor Injuries, Springfield Minor Treatment Centre, FIT Stop, Ambulance Pathways, Same Day Emergency Care (SDEC), Main Emergency Department, and the Clinical Observation Area (COA).

Northampton General Hospital was visited and rated by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) in February 2025 and was rated as requiring improvement, which was kept in mind during our visit.

From this recent CQC visit, NGH's Patient Engagement and Experience team asked our team to visit the service to share our views and the voice of the patients and staff. Our review works to help highlight areas of best practice and also ways the service can be improved from the patients' perspective



Northampton General Hospital Accident and Emergency Enter and View

Our key findings: Positives

Staff Attitudes and Patient Interactions

Throughout our visit, it was clear that staff are passionate about their jobs and are dedicated to the patients they serve within the service.

- Staff appeared to perform well despite the pressures they may be under due to limited staffing capacity and overcrowded services
- Patients consistently praised staff for being kind, polite, caring, and hardworking
- Staff described strong teamwork, supportive colleagues, and good morale within small, close-knit teams such as SDEC.

Safety and Clinical Practice

- Dementia-friendly blue seating was utilised across several waiting areas, supporting accessibility
- Quinton Ward's bay-tagging system ensured continuous supervision for vulnerable or high-dependency patients
- Despite the busy nature and limited space, all areas we visited were clean and well-kept.

Upcoming Renovations and Positive Changes

- The Accident and Emergency department is under construction and in the next year, will be allocated new buildings (some temporary), allowing for extra space to hold and treat incoming patients, which we were told will help the flow of patients
- The new Streaming Hub and Triage pathway has allowed for prompt initial assessments and has improved patient experience by quickly identifying the necessary pathways and next steps in care

Northampton General Hospital Accident and Emergency Enter and View

Our key findings: Challenges

Long waiting times and flow inefficiencies

Patients reported waits from several hours to over 24 hours, with frustration worsened by poor communication and limited updates. Patient flow—particularly in SDEC—was described as disjointed.

Environment and comfort

Some areas felt dull, outdated, and poorly maintained, with limited seating, privacy, and entertainment for long waits. Temporary spaces reduced comfort, and minor safety issues (e.g. trip hazards) were noted.

Space constraints and overcrowding

High patient volumes and limited space led to overcrowded waiting areas, patients standing, and reduced privacy. Clinical observations were sometimes conducted in open areas, raising dignity and data privacy concerns. Corridor care was also in use.

Parking and site access

Limited parking significantly impacted patient experience, with difficulties finding spaces—including for blue badge holders—leading some patients to rely on taxis.

Food, drink, and basic comforts

Patients reported long waits without access to food or drink, particularly overnight, alongside limited options for those with dietary needs.

Signage, wayfinding, and accessibility

Signage was unclear, especially during construction, making navigation difficult. There was limited multilingual support and underused or outdated information boards.

Northampton General Hospital Accident and Emergency Enter and View

Our eight recommendations

1. To improve the environment where patients are waiting, with additional notices, display boards and décor, supporting better communication and experiences
2. To improve communication with patients about what to expect during their time at A&E and wait times
3. To improve the décor within the Clinical Observation Area, where patients who enter the service are treated for mental health conditions and add additional information about local services
4. To provide more privacy to patients
5. To improve signage for patients who are navigating to the different services within A&E, consider bigger text and more visual guidance
6. To improve language options and offer information accessibility to our diverse community
7. To ensure patients who have been waiting for a long time or overnight have been offered food and refreshments
8. To improve options for patient parking

Comments from NGH

“Northampton General Hospital was grateful to West Northamptonshire Healthwatch for the recent Enter and View visit, building on previous visits to the Emergency Departments. Building on some of the recommendations from West Northamptonshire Healthwatch and other sources of patient and relatives feedback, Northampton General Hospital have recently opened some new services to improve the patient experience and their clinical pathway.

In November 2025, the Acute Assessment Unit (AAU) on Nye Bevan and the Rapid Assessment Unit (RAU) opened as part of improvements to patient flow for Urgent and Emergency Care services. These units also enable us to improve ambulance handovers, thereby releasing ambulances in a shorter timescale. Northampton General Hospital is also excited to be building a new Urgent Treatment Centre on the grounds where the streaming hub was situated.

Building work commenced at the end of November 2025, and this facility is expected to open in late summer 2026. It will be a major development consolidating the Urgent Treatment Centre (UTC) and Emergency Department entrance, aiming to improve urgent and emergency care access.”

To read the full report, please visit [HWW NGH A&E Enter and View](#)

Emotional Wellbeing Project

Hearing local young people's experiences of emotional wellbeing and support

In Autumn 2024, Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire was commissioned by Northamptonshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) to explore young people's experiences of emotional wellbeing and emotional wellbeing support services across Northamptonshire. Through a co-produced survey and focus group, young people aged 10–16 shared their views on their wellbeing, their awareness of available support, and their experiences of accessing services. The project aimed to ensure that young people's voices could help shape future service development and commissioning decisions.

A total of 154 young people took part in the project. While the original ambition was to hear from around 1,000 young people, every response provided valuable insight into the lived experiences of children and young people across Northamptonshire. The findings offer an important snapshot of the challenges, barriers, and opportunities identified by those who took part. Most importantly, the project created a meaningful opportunity for young people to influence conversations about services designed to support them.

The findings showed that many young people were experiencing ongoing emotional challenges, with more than half of respondents rating their emotional wellbeing as average, bad, or terrible. Young females and young carers were more likely to report lower levels of wellbeing, highlighting groups who may benefit from additional support and targeted engagement. The experiences shared reinforced the importance of ensuring services are accessible, responsive, and tailored to the needs of different young people



Emotional Wellbeing Project

Hearing local young voices

A key theme was the limited awareness of emotional wellbeing support services. Many young people said they would seek support if they needed it, but were unsure where to go, how to access services, or what support was available. In contrast, school-based support, such as school counsellors and school nurses, was widely recognised, trusted and valued. This highlighted the important role schools play in supporting young people's wellbeing and connecting them with additional services.

Young people also expressed a clear preference for face-to-face support, particularly in trusted environments such as schools, colleges and at home. While digital support was viewed as important, websites were preferred over apps and social media, with young people emphasising the need for clear, reliable, and easy-to-access information from trusted organisations.

The experiences of young carers emerged as a particular area of concern. Many reported lower emotional wellbeing and ongoing pressures linked to their caring responsibilities, with some continuing to feel the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. Their responses highlighted the need for flexible, accessible support that recognises the unique challenges they face.

Based on the findings, a series of recommendations were developed focusing on increasing awareness of services, strengthening support within schools and trusted community settings, improving digital information, and providing targeted support for groups reporting lower wellbeing. The findings also highlighted the need to explore differences in service availability and awareness across Northamptonshire to ensure equitable access to support.

The recommendations were shared with the Integrated Care Board's Children and Young People's team to help inform ongoing service development and commissioning decisions. By listening directly to young people and acting on what they told us, this project has helped ensure that their experiences and perspectives contribute to shaping emotional wellbeing services that are more visible, accessible, and responsive to the needs of children and young people across Northamptonshire.

Hearing from all communities

We're here for all residents of **West 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 the Romanian, Polish, Albanian, Latvian, Lithuanian and Ukrainian communities across Northamptonshire through our research engagement work.
- Listening to the voices of those within care homes, including speaking to individuals with dementia about their care and experiences.
- Sharing feedback and lived experiences through our enquiries service, sharing voices with NHS leaders and service commissioners within West Northamptonshire, helping to ensure people's journeys help drive system change.



Reaching out to different communities

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

Examples of reaching a community that may go unheard.

We reached those who live with varying levels of dementia through our visits to care homes, where residents in care facilities, especially those with dementia, may go unheard. Living in a care home can at times feel isolating, and many experience a loss of independence. Being able to hear from residents and encouraging those individuals to share their experiences and opinions helped to raise their voices. One resident said, "We are still people." This is a great reminder to ensure that individuals feel valued and heard at every stage of life.

Examples of reaching people struggling with socio-economic deprivation.

In our feedback form online, where individuals go to share experiences about health and social care, we ask individuals about their financial status, whether they have enough for basic necessities, disposable income and if they may sometimes run out of money. This helps us to better understand the people who share their voice with us, and whether financial burdens may affect individuals.

Example of how we have made sure that the voices from our local community have been heard by local NHS leaders and Integrated Care Systems.

We regularly share our feedback with NHS leaders and our local Integrated Care Board. Every quarter, we send the experiences and voices we have gathered with system leaders, programme managers and service providers. We always provide the feedback as we hear it from our local community, ensuring individuals' voices and concerns are shared as they intended. This past year, we worked with Northampton General Hospital's Patient Experience team to agree on a review and response protocol to our feedback from their service. For this process, the Head of Patient Experience agreed to share feedback directly with its specific departments, to raise awareness of any issues reported and to identify areas where changes needed to be made. They then provide us with responses addressing the individual feedback enquiries, to ensure that these voices were acknowledged and any issues were addressed directly.

Information and signposting

When you're struggling to find an NHS dentist, looking for help about how to make a complaint, or need advice about a good care home for a loved one – we're your first port of call.

This year **115** people have reached out to us for advice, support or help finding services. These conversations also help us to understand where, and how, your care can be made better.

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



Collaborating with the University of Northampton's Masters of Public Health Programme

Our Healthwatch has connected with our local university, the University of Northampton, to support Master's of Public Health students to learn more about local health and social care services and the communities we serve.

By attending and guest-speaking at the school's Health and Social Care Conferences on Healthwatch and local health inequalities, and by lecturing alongside students in their courses, we have worked to connect with students who will shape the future of UK Public Health.

Our work with the University aimed to bring real-life examples of how collecting feedback from individuals about health and social care, especially through specific projects which focus on addressing health inequalities and areas of deprivation in our local communities, can help shape and change the public health system for the better.

Our Operations Manager has collaborated with the Masters of Public Health course leaders to deliver lectures to students on:

Building Community Capacity and Cohesion

Lifestyle Choices and Non-Communicable Diseases in a Local Context

Case Studies of Healthwatch Projects and the impacts on the community

Public Health Project Management

Through our sessions at the University, we encouraged students from the MPH course to volunteer with us to gain community engagement experience and to attain deeper knowledge of the local public health and NHS systems, which many students chose to pursue.

In 2024-2025, we ran an internship programme with the University, where students applied, and one chosen student joined us to support our project work. In 2025-2026, we had multiple students join us to gain experience for their volunteering placement course with the University.

Thanks to the students who have joined our volunteer programme, we have had additional support with Enter and Views, report writing, research and additional presence in our communities at events and for engagement activities.

Awards and Recognition

Showcasing areas where we received awards, accreditation and recognition

Investing in Volunteers

Connected Together CIC, the governing body for Healthwatch West Northamptonshire and Healthwatch Rutland, was delighted to retain the prestigious Investing in Volunteers (IiV) accreditation during the year.

As the UK quality standard for volunteer management, Investing in Volunteers recognises organisations that demonstrate excellence in supporting, valuing and developing volunteers. Achieving the accreditation again reflects our continued commitment to creating a positive and rewarding volunteering experience and acknowledges the vital contribution volunteers make to improving local health and care services.

As part of the assessment process, Connected Together CIC was evaluated across six key quality areas, including volunteer inclusion, recruitment, support, development and strategic planning. The organisation successfully demonstrated high standards in all areas, with assessors recognising our strong commitment to volunteering and confirming that our volunteer management practices meet nationally recognised standards.

Our volunteers remain at the heart of everything we do. Through their dedication, insight and commitment, they help ensure that the voices and experiences of local people are heard and used to influence improvements in health and social care services across West Northamptonshire. Retaining this accreditation is a testament not only to the systems and support in place for volunteers, but also to the invaluable role they play in delivering our mission.

The achievement was also recognised by local MP Mike Reader, who wrote to congratulate the organisation on its success. He described the award as "a significant recognition of the high standards you continue to demonstrate in supporting, valuing and investing in your volunteers" and noted that it reflects the organisation's commitment to creating "positive, inclusive and meaningful volunteering experiences."

He also extended his thanks to Healthwatch volunteers, recognising their crucial role in improving local health and care services and ensuring that the voices of local people are heard. Concluding his letter, he stated that the award was "thoroughly deserved."



Awards and Recognition

Showcasing areas where we received awards, accreditation and recognition

BAME Awards

In September 2025, our Operations Manager, Gabriella, was nominated for the Excellence in Community Partnership Award at the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Awards for her work with the Healthcare Research for All: Strengthening Eastern European Voices project. Gabriella and the project were shortlisted as finalists in the category.

Our Healthwatch team attended the BAME summit and the awards. While we did not win the category for Excellence in Community Partnership, Oana Ciurdarean, our partner who helped lead the project from Northamptonshire Integrated Care Board, won the category of Digital Innovator of the Year- a win for both of our organisations.

A quote from the nomination:

“As a result, the project has informed broader population health strategies in Northamptonshire and beyond. Gabriella’s vision, commitment, and collaborative leadership have not only improved local engagement but set a precedent for inclusive research practice—empowering communities and reshaping how health systems connect with the people they serve. The initiative has also strengthened ICS-wide awareness of how to better engage Eastern European communities—ensuring their voices are increasingly represented in local health planning and outcomes.”



Connecting with Community Leaders

Meeting with our local MP

During the year, we were pleased to meet with our local MP, Stewart Andrew, to introduce Healthwatch and share more about the important role we play in gathering the views and experiences of local people to help improve health and care services. The meeting provided an opportunity to build a stronger relationship, raise awareness of our work, and explore how we can work together to support the communities we serve.

We also used the meeting to discuss some of the challenges facing the Healthwatch network nationally, including concerns about the potential closure of local Healthwatch services. We highlighted the value that independent patient and public voice organisations bring to the health and social care system and the importance of ensuring that local people continue to have a platform through which their experiences can be heard.

The meeting was a positive step in strengthening connections with our local elected representative and creating an open dialogue about the issues that matter most to local residents. By building these relationships, we can help bridge the gap between communities, decision-makers, and health and care services, ensuring that the voices of local people remain at the heart of future developments.



Showcasing volunteer impact

Our fantastic volunteers have given **62 days/436** 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



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.



Ornela Bogdani

"Honestly, I did not fully know what to expect when I first joined Healthwatch West Northamptonshire as a volunteer through my MSc in Public Health. What I found was something that has genuinely changed how I think about my career.

My placement with this organisation has been genuinely transformative. I came in as a postgraduate student wanting practical public health experience, and I got far more than I expected. I contributed to Enter and View inspections, community outreach for the Eastern European project, attended board meetings, and wrote reports that were used operationally by the team. It helped me build so many skills, but more than the skills, what has shifted is my understanding of what public health really means in practice. It is not just about evidence and policy. It is about listening to people, building trust, and having the patience and persistence to work within systems that are slow to change, whilst never losing sight of the communities those systems are supposed to serve. The support from Gabby and the staff made every step feel meaningful. What started as a student placement has become something I am committed to long-term. I am now a board member, and I could not be more prouder of that."

"I have had the pleasure of volunteering with Healthwatch West Northamptonshire, and the experience has been truly rewarding. The team has consistently provided support and guidance throughout the various activities I have taken part in.

At the initial stage, I received training on the Do's and Don'ts of visiting healthcare premises and on my role as the "eyes and ears" of the public. This foundation helped me feel confident and prepared as I began engaging with different services.

I have attended several planning group meetings, which have given me a clearer understanding of the stages involved in the organisation's work. I was also fortunate to participate in two Enter and View visits: Holly House Residential Home in December 2025 and Templemore Care Home in February 2026. These visits enabled me to gather feedback from management, staff, and residents, observe the quality of care, and contribute to the development of impact reports.

Volunteering with Healthwatch has also opened doors to additional learning and community engagement opportunities. In March 2026, I completed Suicide First Aid training, a valuable community-level professional course. I also supported the Eastern European research project, contributing to wider community insight. Throughout my time as a volunteer, I have felt included and informed through regular meetings and weekly updates.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Healthwatch West Northamptonshire team for their dedication, their welcoming environment, and their recognition of volunteers' contributions. I am grateful for the opportunities I have received and look forward to continuing to be part of this meaningful and impactful work."



Joan Nduati

Finance and future priorities

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

Our income and expenditure:

Income		Expenditure	
West Northamptonshire Council Grant	£137,962.00	Salaries	£122,150.79
		Other e.g. volunteers, phones, insurance, website etc.	£40,824.61
Total income	£137,962.00	Total Expenditure	£162,975.40



Finance and future priorities

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 priorities for the next year are:

1. Older People, Ageing Services and Dementia Care
2. New Models of Care and Neighbourhood Approaches to Care
3. GP Services and Primary Care
4. Northampton General Hospital
5. Health Inequalities
6. Dentistry
7. ADHD/ASD/Learning Disabilities
8. Mental Health



Statutory statements

Healthwatch England, 2 Redman Place, Stratford, E20 1JQ.

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

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

The way we work

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

Our Healthwatch Board consists of **7** 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 2025/26, 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 2025/26, 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. We will publish it on our website [Healthwatch West Northamptonshire](#).

Statutory statements

Responses to recommendations

We had 0 providers 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.

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch 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

Statutory statements

Enter and View

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
Northampton General Hospital-Accident and Emergency	Northampton General Hospital's Patient Engagement and Experience team asked our team to visit the service to share our views and the voice of the patients and staff	<p>A report with 8 recommendations, which were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To improve the environment where patients are waiting, with additional notices, display boards and décor, supporting better communication and experiences 2. To improve communication with patients about what to expect during their time at A&E and wait times 3. To improve the décor within the Clinical Observation Area, where patients who enter the service are treated for mental health conditions and add additional information about local services 4. To provide more privacy to patients 5. To improve signage for patients who are navigating to the different services within A&E, consider bigger text and more visual guidance 6. To improve language options and offer information accessibility to our diverse community 7. To ensure patients who have been waiting for a long time or overnight have been offered food and refreshments 8. To improve options for patient parking

Statutory statements

Enter and View

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
<p>Northampton General Hospital–Paediatric Department</p>	<p>Healthwatch West Northamptonshire’s aim with this visit to the Paediatrics Emergency Department was to evaluate the services being provided within Northampton General Hospital’s Children’s Services.</p>	<p>A report with 5 recommendations which were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase child-friendly décor, sensory features, ceiling tiles, and/or wall art across A&E waiting areas, PAU treatment rooms, and Disney inpatient rooms. 2. Increase the communications and awareness of the hospital passport system by creating additional informational communications for patients and adding information about this to hospital letters. 3. Increase visible signage promoting interpreters, language needs and communication preferences (“Your Information Your Way”). 4. Introduce sensory lighting, sensory corners and/or portable sensory on all wards, especially Disney and Paddington. 5. Fundraise and redevelop the outdoor space into an inclusive, accessible play environment with greenery, sensory paths and wheelchair-friendly equipment.

Statutory statements

2025 – 2026 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
NGH A&E	Highlighted ways that NGH's A&E department could improve the patient experience and make waiting areas more interactive and informative.
NGH Paediatrics	We suggested ways that the hospital could make the journey through the paediatrics departments more accessible, especially for those with learning disabilities, through the use of sensory features and patient communications.




healthwatch

West Northamptonshire

Healthwatch West Northamptonshire
Moulton Park Business Centre
Redhouse Road Moulton Park Industrial
Estate Northampton NN3 6AQ

 www.healthwatchwestnorthants.com

 07951419331

 enquiries@healthwatchwestnorthants.com

 /Healthwatchwestnorthamptonshire

 @healthwatchwn

 @healthwatch.west