

# Championing what matters to you

Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire  
Annual Report 2021-2022



# Contents

<b>Message from our Chair</b>	<b>3 - 4</b>
<b>Message from our Manager</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Your health and social care champion</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Our year in review</b>	<b>7 - 8</b>
<b>Listening to your experiences</b>	<b>9 - 14</b>
<b>Advice and information</b>	<b>15 - 16</b>
<b>Our volunteers</b>	<b>17 - 22</b>
<b>The way we work</b>	<b>23 - 24</b>
<b>Finances and statutory statements</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Top priorities for 2022</b>	<b>26</b>

# Message from our Chair

*“2021-22 was another challenging year for everyone, including local Healthwatch across the country. The pandemic continued to limit our ways of engaging with people face to face and getting your voice heard across health and social care services and systems. However, as this Annual Report will demonstrate, despite the Covid-19 challenges staff and volunteers faced, the team continued to do excellent work on your behalf, the people of Northamptonshire.*

*The original Healthwatch Northamptonshire contract with the demise of the old Northamptonshire County Council, ended in June 2021 and was re-tendered in the summer by the new Unitaries - North and West Northamptonshire. We were fortunate that our holding company, Connected Together CIC, a partnership between the University of Northampton (UoN) and Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire (VIN) were re-awarded the contract for another two years.*

*With the new contract came a statutory requirement to rebrand Healthwatch Northamptonshire to reflect the two new unitary authorities. This has been an ongoing piece of work, which we are still working through, as it requires not only updating the website but all our documentation, social media, policies and marketing materials too. Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire decided that they would keep their name as it is to continue to reflect their countywide status.*

*We have also faced some staff challenges during this period as we said goodbye to three great staff members who had been with us for some time, as they went on to develop their careers, expand their knowledge and extend their learnings gained with us. Lauren, our Communications Assistant, started with us as an apprentice and won a place to do a degree in media studies at Leeds University. Esther, our Lead Officer for Young Healthwatch and children, young people and families services has started a law degree at UoN and Dr Jo Spenceley moved to work locally in the Public Health team. We wish them every success on their new paths and thank them for all their hard work, commitment and engagement in making us an award-winning Healthwatch over so many years.*

*We have also welcomed new members to the team during this time, Rebecca as a Healthwatch Officer and Michelle as a Policy Assistant and Katie Bayliss was also formally appointed as the Healthwatch Manager.*

*We also appointed a new Healthwatch Advisory Board from 1st November 2021 to reflect the new arrangements with the Unitary Councils. Their induction has been completed and I am now very pleased to be able to introduce you to Robin Burgess, as new Advisory Board Chair, who will start with us on 1st July 2022 to replace me in my interim position. We plan to continue to further expand the Advisory Board during 2022/23 to reflect and represent local people.*

*As always, our loyal, hardworking volunteers have played a major part in ensuring we represent everyone across Northamptonshire and we simply could not do the amount of work we do without them. So a huge 'thank you' to them, and all our staff.*

*2022/23 looks to be another challenging year with the set-up of the Integrated Care Systems (ICS), the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and the Integrated Care Partnership (ICP), new Community Diagnostic Centres (CDC) and other changes in health and social care and I look forward to handing over the reins to Robin Burgess from July to lead Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire as the new Chair.*

*Many thanks to all who have contributed to another great year for Healthwatch, and I wish you all well for the future."*



Professor Will Pope  
Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire Interim Chair



**"The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown long-standing health inequalities into stark relief. With NHS and social care facing even longer backlogs, the unequal outcomes exposed by the pandemic are at risk of becoming worse. Local Healthwatch play an important role in helping to overcome these adversities and are uniquely placed to make a positive difference in their communities."**

-Sir Robert Francis QC, Chair of Healthwatch England, 2021-2022



# Message from our Manager

*“As we began to creep out of the pandemic in 2021-2022, the year still brought its challenges. We had to work carefully with the public, service providers, and other organisations to engage safely, yet effectively, whilst still being limited by the new ways of working. Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire (HWNW) adapted to a hybrid approach which was welcomed and appreciated by our staff, volunteers, and health and social care colleagues across Northamptonshire. Despite the addition of staff departures, a local authority split, a new Advisory Board, and rebranding, we continued to work relentlessly to deliver our statutory role.*”



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'K Bayliss'.

Katie Bayliss  
HWNW Manager

*Our year’s work saw us help to improve the NHS 111 First slot booking system in Accident and Emergency (A&E), particularly for those who are hard of hearing, visually impaired, or have accessibility challenges. We continued to share local up to date information about COVID-19, including additional project work that asked informal carers about the issues they faced during and post pandemic.*

*Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire asked young people about their health and wellbeing, which encouraged and informed additional work in Northamptonshire. They also took a closer look into children and young people’s mental health and with this information produced short training films for Northamptonshire Clinical Commissioning Group (NCCG) staff, to better understand how the transition to adult mental health services could be better for them. Young Healthwatch have also acted as the Young Advisory Board (YAB) to represent young people of Northamptonshire and their views, as fast paced work was completed as a part of the Children and Young People’s Transformation Programme. The programme works to ensure that children and young people get the right help, in the right place, at the right time.*

*This year our volunteers could not be thanked enough, as always, it was with their support and guidance that we were able to achieve everything. Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire volunteers continued to represent us at meetings, reporting, and informing each change and development in the area they champion.*

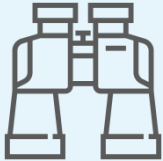
*We continued to hear from the Northamptonshire public who reported issues and compliments about health and social care services. This information continues to inform our work and intervention. Issues with access to dentistry and GP (General Practitioner) appointments topped our enquiries and we look forward to supporting improvements in 2022-2023.”*



# Your health and social care champion

Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire is your local health and social care champion. We ensure NHS leaders and other decision makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care. We can also help you to find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.

## Our vision



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 values



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

## Our strategy

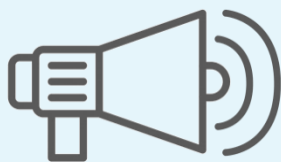


- To deliver our statutory functions
- To champion the views of all people who live in or use health, social care or wellbeing services in Northamptonshire
- To recruit and develop staff and volunteers in Northamptonshire
- To continue to build the capacity of Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire as an independent consumer champion of health, social care and well being
- To work in co-production for improved health, social care and mental health outcomes for adults, including vulnerable adults and carers

# Our year in review

## Our overview of how we have engaged and supported people in Northamptonshire during 2021-2022.

### Reaching out: **707 people**



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

### **12,941 visits**

To our social media pages (including Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire) that include information and advice about topics such as mental health and COVID-19.

### Making a difference to care:



#### We published:

### **4 reports**

about the improvements people would like to see to health and social care services.

#### Our most popular report was:

### **Our carers project**

which highlighted the struggles people have caring for others during and since the pandemic.

### Health and care that works for you:



#### We're lucky to have:

### **39 volunteers**

outstanding volunteers, who gave up their time to improve care for Northamptonshire residents.

#### They volunteered:

### **1,345 Hours**

#### We're funded by our local authority. In 2021-22 we received:

### **£195,000**

#### We employed:

### **7 staff**

who helped us carry out this work.

## How we've made a difference throughout the year

These are the biggest projects we have worked on from April 2021 to March 2022.

Spring



After hearing about the struggles faced by carers and the increased numbers of new carers since the pandemic, we teamed up with Northamptonshire Carers and Carers' Voice to find out more to help service providers better understand where resources were most needed.



From representation at meetings, sharing information, and listening to our community, our volunteers helped us make our way out of COVID-19.

Summer



Young Healthwatch looked into young people's health and wellbeing, including their mental health and their experiences of transitioning from youth to adult services. This work formulated staff training programmes.



Young Healthwatch was the Youth Advisory Board for the Children's Transformation Programme in Northamptonshire, to ensure children and young people have the right care, in the right place, at the right time.

Autumn



Teaming up with Northamptonshire Clinical Commissioning group (NCCG) we asked people what they thought of NHS 111 First slot booking system. The feedback we gathered informed improvements in this service..



After hearing of a reported 452% increase in people struggling to see an NHS dentist, we sought to find what we could do to support change. This included representation at local dental meetings that saw updates from NHS England that we could share with the public.

Winter



When people told us that they struggled to see their GP, we raised this with Northamptonshire CCG. We have since been planning our GP access project with the support from commissioners and look forward to completing this in 2022-2023.



To support the COVID-19 vaccination programme we shared information with different communities to help people better understand COVID-19 and make informed choices.



# Listening to your experiences

Services cannot make improvements without hearing your views. That's why over the last year we have made listening to feedback, from all areas of the community, a priority. This allows us to understand the full picture and feed back to services to help them improve.



## Making NHS 111 more accessible in Northamptonshire

### Together with Northamptonshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire found out what people thought of the new NHS 111 First service.

The [Northamptonshire CCG](#) asked us to find out what people thought of the [NHS 111 First](#) service and to gather the experiences of those who had used it since it began in December 2020. Particularly those who have hearing loss, impaired vision, or other accessibility challenges.

The survey responses provided us with valuable positive feedback, as well as highlighting some issues that needed to be addressed.

One-quarter of the **131 survey respondents** (25%, 33 people) felt they had needed to attend A&E (Accident and Emergency) since 23 October 2020, when the NHS 111 First system was introduced in Northamptonshire.

22 of the 33 survey respondents (**63%**) who felt they had needed to attend A&E had called NHS 111 before attending. Reasons for not calling 111 First were either that it was a crisis situation and/or they felt going directly to A&E would be quicker.

Going to A&E by ambulance, being called back by a health professional (some more promptly than others), making their own way to A&E, or being sent to another service were the main outcomes of calling 111 for those who did not have a time slot booked at A&E.

Four of the people interviewed highlighted **communications issues** that made it difficult for them to use 111 on the phone and online, including finding the automated options menu and questions confusing (particularly those with dementia, a learning disability and those for whom English is a second language). One person had been hung up on in the past because their condition caused slurred speech and one struggled to hear the questions.

**“It would help if the 111 phone menu had an option saying “if you are unsure about what you are being asked please press...” to help those who are confused by the questions.”**

Five survey respondents also highlighted the issues people with a hearing impairment or hearing loss experience when using 111, especially that accessing the service was difficult for them, that they needed to rely on others to phone for them and how they felt worried about falling ill or excluded from using services.

**“NHS 111 is not accessible for the deaf and hard of hearing. What alternative methods have been put in place? We shouldn't have to worry about finding people to telephone on our behalf especially for families that all have some level of hearing loss.”**

## What difference did this make?

### The recommendations we made and what is going to change as a result.

1. 111 operators should make it clear to people what to expect when they arrive at A&E and publicity of this service should also set realistic expectations.

#### **NCCG Response:**

***“The DoS (Directory of Services) instructions do stress that the slots are arrival times. The information given to the caller is that they will not necessarily be seen at that time; emergency departments work on a clinical priority basis so they may still have to wait but the department will be aware they are coming. We will review our communications messaging to further support this.”***

2. Some people find it difficult to understand the automated menu options/information and triage questions asked when they phone 111, especially those with difficulty hearing and other problems communicating or understanding. Adding a menu option to be able to speak to an operator for assistance earlier in the process could help. People should also be made aware that they can ask for reasonable adjustments.

#### **NCCG Response:**

***“The suggestion regarding earlier help and access to interpreters has been passed to NHS England and Improvement’s national team to look at how we can respond to this. The implementation of Natural Language Process will also help. Staff at 111 will be reminded about reasonable adjustments for communication difficulties.”***

3. The online version of 111 is also difficult for some people to use. The link to interpreters for other languages, British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation and Easy Read guidance could be made more prominent from the 111 homepage.

#### **NCCG Response:**

***“We will share this feedback with the national NHS digital team and see what can be done to improve access/usability.”***

4. Continue to educate people about the services 111 can provide, including how they can access 111 via text relay and BSL. Promote 111 as a triage service that can book A&E slots and GP care, arrange a call back from a health professional or send an ambulance as necessary.

#### **NCCG Response:**

***“The local 111 First streaming group are re looking at the communications to consider; promotion of 111 as a positive triage service for A&E, the benefit of getting an appointment through 111 means you do not have to go through the new streaming questions, and a review of signage and information in A&E for further visits about the benefits of using 111. We will also look at taking on board some of the comments made about more information being on the screens in A&E and making people aware about the positive benefits of calling 111.”***

## Making experiences better for carers since the pandemic

**Together with Northamptonshire Carers and Carers' Voice Northamptonshire, we asked carers more about their experiences and needs through a survey, interviews, and a consultation event.**

We heard how huge the impact of the pandemic was on carers, with many working tirelessly and at breaking point, having to do more to meet the physical and emotional needs of those they care for without much support or respite. Whilst some had been able to access online support others felt alone or isolated.

Carers told us that their physical, mental and emotional wellbeing had suffered from the extra strain on them, and many were concerned about the worsening condition of those they cared for, exasperated by the reduction in health and care services and the need to stay away from others, or the anxiety caused by the pandemic.

We found that the findings were very similar to those reported by Carers UK, showing that the impacts of the pandemic on carers in Northamptonshire are the same as those felt around the UK.

Our report highlighted the support carers need, both during the pandemic and longer term and suggests ways that carers could be supported to recover from this time.

Many carers took the time to tell us in detail about the difficulties they have faced during the pandemic, and we are very grateful to them. Whilst we have tried to summarise all that they told us, we included many of their insightful quotes so that the voices of carers are heard.

A carer commented:

***"I would like to thank you for doing this research. No-one has really asked me how I've coped this year caring for my parents. I have muddled along and it is only when I answer your questions that I realise how tough it has been."***

Carer - Northamptonshire



## What difference did this make?

The report has already been shared with the main providers of health and care in the county and those that plan and make decisions. This feedback will help to inform future improvements.

Within the report you can read the responses to the findings and recommendations from the following organisations:

- **Northamptonshire Carers**
- **Public Health Northamptonshire (PHN)**
- **West Northamptonshire Council**
- **Northamptonshire Clinical Commissioning Group (NCCG) (also on behalf of Primary Care and Northamptonshire Health and Care Partnership)**
- **Northamptonshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (NHFT)**
- **Kettering General Hospital and Northampton General Hospital (KGH, NGH)**

### Northamptonshire Carers said:

Coronavirus has impacted everyone in Northamptonshire and beyond. For unpaid carers and young carers though, this impact is twofold: not only are they concerned about their own health, wellbeing and in many instances finance, but they are also having to consider the person they care for. Our Carers Support Line received many calls from carers who had very complex, risky or worrying challenges. For example, carers who had to juggle working with caring for a loved-one who was clinically vulnerable – if they themselves were vulnerable then their employer would have let them shield from home, but this was not possible to protect the cared-for person. Carers of people with dementia called us in crisis after respite and day care was cancelled or they felt nervous about care workers visiting their home when there were concerns about PPE supplies. Parent carers and young carers were disproportionately affected when schools were closed and even when reopened, we spoke to many who were anxious due to health conditions within the family.

Our report demonstrates this impact and also highlights what support is needed. Some of this is already in place with a popular menu of online activities to provide a break from caring. We are planning on keeping much of this support whilst reopening face-to-face support in line with guidance. As the report finds, flexibility suits many carers whether it be in the workplace, or in terms of delivery of services. This allows an individual approach which best suits a caring role – there are 70,000 carers in Northamptonshire, each with their own circumstances who would benefit from this approach.

**“Supporting carers is a team effort involving health services, social care, employers, voluntary sector, education and the wider community. In doing so each of these partners also benefits such as reduced reliance on statutory services or absenteeism at school or work. Northamptonshire Carers support the outcomes of this report and will work with partners to deliver upon it.”**

— Gwyn Roberts, Chief Operating Officer, Northamptonshire Carers



## How we have made a difference?

**Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire always work hard to gather the experiences from people who are not always heard. As we strive for change in health and social care, it is really important that we reflect the needs of our entire community.**

### It is important to involve the public

**Services need to understand the benefits of involving local people to help improve care for everyone.**



We found how well Northamptonshire Carers does this and joined their AGM (Annual Governing Meeting) to hold a consultation event to support our joint project work. We were able to directly hear from carers and their families about their experiences and how carers could be supported better in the future. This information was shared with local service providers and presented jointly to the Northamptonshire Safeguarding Adults Board.

### Improving care over time

**Change takes time. We often work behind the scenes with health and care services to consistently raise issues and push for changes.**



We have known about dental problems for a while and continue to hear this from the public. We have assured that we are present in the right places to guarantee that the public voice continues to be heard. Our Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire representative continues to advocate this voice and the need for improvement. Last year we supported Healthwatch England who called for reform of NHS dentistry, by co-signing a letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer calling for NHS dentistry to be accessible and affordable for everyone. We followed up with Healthwatch England for updates and continue to pass all information from NHS England to the public so they are aware of why they are struggling to get an appointment.

### Creating empathy by bringing experiences to life

**It's important for the NHS and social care services to listen to personal experiences. This provides a deeper understanding than using data alone and can motivate people to think and work more creatively and empathetically.**



Throughout 2021-22 we have continued to share feedback directly with patient experience teams and in some cases this was through individual pieces of information due to the severity and need for immediate intervention.



# Advice and information

Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire is here for you in times of worry or stress, we can provide confidential support and free information to help you understand your options and get the help you need. Whether it's understanding how to make a complaint, information about advocacy and advice, or knowing who to turn to for mental health support – you can count on us!

This year we helped people by:

- Providing up to date information on COVID-19
- Linking people to reliable information they can trust
- Helping people to access the services they need
- Helping people to understand the complaints and compliments process
- Helping people to understand why they can't get a dental appointment
- Providing information about where they can go for urgent dental care



## What to expect when waiting for care

With the continuous increase in people telling us that they are struggling to get a dentist appointment, we have continued to inform the public about why this is happening.

We have shared information about urgent care hubs across Northamptonshire, as well as an infographic explaining why people may experience this problem.

This has helped with the public's frustrations when calling us for help. With one person saying:

**"...well if anything I am glad for this information. Although I am angry, at least I know why."** – Public enquirer

**healthwatch**  
North Northamptonshire  
West Northamptonshire

### Finding it hard to get a dentist appointment?

Dental practices are recovering from backlogs due to strict hygiene measures to minimise the risk of spreading COVID-19 to patients and staff. The situation is improving but we are hearing that Northamptonshire residents without a regular dentist are still finding it difficult to get an appointment. Read our steps below on accessing NHS dentistry.

- 1** If you have a dentist you usually visit phone them to make an appointment. Appointments will be available according to your individual situation and dental need. Be prepared to wait longer than usual for a routine, non-urgent appointment. You can also take personal steps to maintain healthy teeth.
- 2** Unlike registering at a GP practice, NHS dental practices are available to everyone to attend a course of treatment regardless of where they live. Visit the [NHS Find a Dentist website](#) to search for a dentist in your area. You should also consider widening your search area to where you can travel to.
- 3** Is your dental need urgent? Phone or go online to NHS 111 to check your symptoms and see if you need urgent help. You will be advised if you need to visit your hospital emergency department (A&E) or advise of your nearest NHS dentists providing urgent appointments. The number of urgent appointments available each day is limited. When phoning a dental practice, clearly describe your symptoms, any pain or swelling and the impact it is having on your daily living.
- 4** If you can't find a dentist for urgent treatment, call [NHS England's Customer Contact Centre](#) on 0800 311 2233 stating your situation. Keep sharing your experiences with us, positive and negative, the more information we have the more we can help.

**111**

**What is Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire doing about this issue?** We regularly monitor the access to NHS dentistry in Northamptonshire sharing our findings with dental commissioners to influence positive change.

## Helping people understand their rights

Despite seeing an increase in online communication about health services in Northamptonshire since the pandemic, we were still contacted by people who were confused about their right to access to services.

In 2021-2022 we were able to post and deliver [access to healthcare cards](#) to people who did not have a home address or identification. In doing so people were able to get the care they needed and share this information with others.

**Everyone** is welcome in **NHS** general practice

**OPEN**

**NHS**

I have the right to register and receive treatment from a GP practice

I do not need a fixed address.

I do not need identification.

Anyone in England can see a GP.

Find out more [www.nhs.uk/register](http://www.nhs.uk/register)



# Our volunteers

We are supported by a team of amazing volunteers who are the heart of Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire. Thanks to their efforts in the community, we are able to understand what is working and what needs improving in NHS and social care in Northamptonshire.

## This year our volunteers:

- Represented us at stakeholder and service provider meetings
- Kept us up to date with local information
- Supported us with the development of our Quality Assurance Framework
- Continued to help with the local volunteering efforts supporting those who were self-isolating
- Helped people have their say from home, carrying out interviews over the telephone for project work



# Volunteer achievements

This year, our volunteers helped us to achieve the [Investing in Volunteers \(IiV\)](#) accreditation. IiV is the UK quality standard for good practice in volunteer management. This work helped us to engage with our volunteers, over 12 months, to see what we were doing well and where we could improve.

Thirteen volunteers, including those from [Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire](#), were selected at random by an assessor for interview. Volunteers were from all roles within Healthwatch and who had been with us for different lengths of time, from those who have been with us since 2013, to those recruited within the last few months.

Due to our small organisation it quickly became clear how central volunteers are to our role at Healthwatch.

The Investing in Volunteers' assessor said:

***“Volunteers expressed that their involvement is rewarding because they see they make a difference and have lots of opportunities to work with other volunteers. One volunteer said the reward was, “Knowing I’m making the world a better place”.***

***Volunteers feel that they are able to make a difference and understand how their involvement matters and contributes to overall organisational aims. One volunteer said, “We go to a lot of meetings with the commissioners and providers locally and we have a voice, so we tell them what the public are telling us”. Although sometimes change is slow to external healthcare systems, it is reported back to them what has happened as a result of their reports and input.***

***This recognises that change can be a longer-term process and monitors the impact that volunteers have had months or even years down the line.”***

## What difference did this make?

This achievement highlighted and created changes to our volunteer policies and procedures, induction and handbook information, and our Quality Assurance Framework.

Not only does this also make us more appealing to other organisations and stakeholders, but it will also allow for enhancement of our volunteers experiences and makes us a more attractive prospect to other members of our community who long for their voices to be heard.



**Connected Together**  
First for Community Engagement

**healthwatch**  
North Northamptonshire  
West Northamptonshire

**Young healthwatch**  
Northamptonshire

### Chris, HWNW Representative:

“As a retired NHS staff nurse, volunteering with Healthwatch has enabled me to meet lots of wonderful people. These range from being part of the Healthwatch volunteer team, meeting professionals, volunteers, patients and the general public. This has given me the chance to listen to many points of view, raise concerns and help make improvements to services.

One of the main public concerns reported to Healthwatch is access to NHS Dentistry. This has been a particular issue to me personally over the last few years. Attending the Local Dentist Forum and additional meetings, has enlightened me to the elements of the service. More importantly I have been able to share the public’s concerns and discuss ways to better access all areas of the service.”



### Sheila, Advisory Board Member:

“I have been a member of Healthwatch since April 2013 and over the years have met many members of the public and heard about their concerns around their health and social care which have been escalated by Healthwatch appropriately on their behalf. I have also had the privilege to meet and work with other members of Healthwatch and formed valued friendships.

Good communication has always been paramount to me in whatever I do and I think the thing I value most, through the work I do, is to have the feeling that I am putting something back into the community and hopefully improving the Health and Care Services in Northamptonshire.”



### Do you feel inspired?

We are always on the lookout for new volunteers, so please get in touch today.



[www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk)



0300 002 0010



[Enquiries@healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk](mailto:Enquiries@healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk)

## Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire (YHWN)

**Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire ensures that the voice of children and young people is heard in health and social care services. They engage with and represent young people to help improve services in Northamptonshire.**

### Improving young people's transition from youth to adult mental health services

Northamptonshire Clinical Commissioning Group (NCCG) had already found that children and young people (CYP) who require transition to adult services have experienced persistent difficulties in receiving care that is continuous, efficient, clear and supportive. Instead, many young people and staff have highlighted that transitional care becomes disjointed, confusing, or disappears altogether during this period. Addressing these gaps and challenges is now a priority for the Northamptonshire system.

In this project Young Healthwatch sought to hear from a group of children and young people to discover their thoughts, views and experiences of the transition between CYP mental health services (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services – [CAMHS](#)), to adult mental health services – how it felt, how it worked or didn't work, and how it could be improved. They also sought the thoughts, views and experiences of those leaving care about the preparation, the process, the aftercare, and how their experiences continue to affect them today.

### What they found out and the difference it made

All the young people they spoke to struggled with the transition from CAMHS to adult mental health service, with some experiencing a decline in their mental health and physical health, exaggerated by the stress of the process. They reported that they felt abandoned, unsettled and confused and found the process stressful.

**"I felt like I was thrown to the side as I was 18." – Young person**

Most found that the written information they were given was overwhelming and too much for them to take in while they were experiencing a crisis.

The young people did not feel listened too and would have preferred to have more discussions about their care and more options.

**"I didn't feel like I had a choice in my care when I moved from child services to adult services." – Young person**



All would have preferred more face-to-face meetings to explain the process and services available to them. Being able to have more time to discuss what was happening would have helped them process the changes and develop important relationships with the new services.

**“I thought it would be a gradual move and that I would get to know people well before the actual move but that didn’t happen.” – Young person**

This information was fed back to Northamptonshire CCG via a hard-hitting series of short films, where the feedback came directly from the young people themselves. These videos will be used internally to train staff and inform how the current mental health pathway for children and young people could be improved in the near future.





***“I’ve been given so many opportunities that wouldn’t have happened otherwise, it’s a good way to get a bit of experience.” – Layla***

***“I’ve stood up and done meetings and presentations, and because I have a voice it’s built-up confidence”. One volunteer said that she’d been on BBC Breakfast and worked with the Royal Society of Public Health.” – Anya***



***“I volunteer with Healthwatch to be educated on people who are in different positions to me. I also like to be able to help with issues concerning young people.” – Darrell***



### **Do you feel inspired?**

We are always on the lookout for new volunteers, so please get in touch today.

[www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk)

0300 002 0010

[Enquiries@healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk](mailto:Enquiries@healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk)

# The way we work

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

Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire Advisory Board consists of 6 members who work on a voluntary basis to provide direction, oversight, and scrutiny to all of our activities. Our Planning Group welcomes all volunteers to ensure that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of the people of Northamptonshire.

Throughout 2021/22 the board met 6 times and the Planning Group 8 times. Both groups made decisions on our involvement and project work, from young people's health and wellbeing, to gathering the experiences of carers, and people's opinions of the NHS 111 First service.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities by utilising the feedback we receive from the public. We collate quarterly reports to share with our volunteers to ensure that their decisions are well informed. These reports are also shared with service providers directly for immediate impact that comes straight from the public. We also regularly invite service providers and patient experience leads, to update us about the work they are undergoing and where our support would be best utilised to ensure that the public's voice is considered at every level of decision making in health and social care services in Northamptonshire.

## **Methods and systems used across the year's work to obtain people's views and experience.**

We use a wide range of approaches to ensure that as many people as possible have the opportunity to provide us with insight about their experiences of health and care services. During 2021/22 we have been available by phone, by email, by post, via social media, provided a webform on our website, attended virtual and in person meetings of community groups, stakeholders, service providers, commissioners, and our own virtual activities and engaged with the public through focus groups, interviews, and surveys.

We are committed to taking additional steps to ensure we obtain the views of people from all backgrounds, especially those who are often not heard by health and care decision makers. This year we appointed a Board member to champion inclusivity, as well as ensuring sufficient engagement in projects and attending the relevant meetings.

We ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. We publish it on our website and share it widely with health and social care providers in Northamptonshire.

## Responses to recommendations and requests

All services providers we engaged with in 2021-2022 responded to requests for information and recommendations we suggested.

This year, due to the COVID-19 restrictions, we did not make use of our Enter and View powers. Consequently, no recommendations or other actions resulted from this area of activity. However, this year has consisted of planning these physical visits with providers and dates are due to be set to review maternity wards at both hospitals in Northamptonshire in August 2022.

There were no issues or recommendations escalated by our Healthwatch to Healthwatch England Committee, however we did follow up regarding dentistry to ensure information was as up to date as possible.

## Health and Wellbeing Boards

Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire is represented on the North Health and Wellbeing Board by Sheila White, Advisory Board Member and Professor Will Pope, Interim Chair, on the West Health and Wellbeing Board. During 2021/22 our representatives have effectively carried out this role by attending the necessary meetings and reporting back to the staff, volunteers, and board members appropriately.

Project / Activity Area	Changes made to services
Experiences of Caring During the Pandemic	Informed future changes to how services are delivered to carers
Experiences and Opinions of NHS 111 First in Northamptonshire	Improved service for people with accessibility issues
Young People's Experiences of the Transition from Youth to Adult Mental Health Services	Improved transition for children and young people. Additional internal training for staff and commissioners
Investing in Volunteers Accreditation	Improved policies and governance. Potential increase in volunteer activity.
Youth Advisory Board for the Children's and Young Peoples Transformation Programme	Improved service delivery that implements the voice and opinions of children and young people

## Finance and statutory statements

To help us carry out our work we receive funding from our local authority under the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

Income	
Funding received from local authority	£195,000.00
Additional funding	£60,028.00
Total income	£255,028.00

Income	
Staff costs	£172,995.58
Operational costs	£37,050.51
Support and administration	£16,433.21
Total expenditure	£226,479.30

Total expenditure exceeded core funding from Northamptonshire County Council by £31,479.30, a shortfall that was subsidised with income from additional work and funding from [Connected Together CIC](#).

## About us

Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire, 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 England, 2 Redman Place, Stratford, E20 1JQ.

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



Connected Together  
First for Community Engagement

**healthwatch**  
North Northamptonshire  
West Northamptonshire

**Young healthwatch**  
Northamptonshire

## Top priorities for 2022–23

1. Patient experience of and access to GPs, including increased engagement with GP Patient Participation Groups (PPG) and monitoring of potential digital exclusion.
2. The development of an [Integrated Care System](#) (ICS), including social prescribing, [Primary Care Networks](#) (PCN) and [Integrated Care Across Northamptonshire](#) (iCAN).
3. The impact of Covid 19 on people and the resumption of services.
4. Young Healthwatch Projects.

### **Themes we will ensure are integrated across all priorities and projects:**

1. Improving engagement with Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic communities.
2. Issues faced by informal carers.
3. Accessibility of health services and mitigation of health inequalities.
4. Impacts of issues on people's protected characteristics.

### **Other themes to keep a watching brief and request provider updates:**

1. Access to NHS dentistry.
2. Access to quality mental health services for adults, children, and young people.

## Next steps...

The pandemic has shone a stark light on the impact of existing inequalities when using health and care services, highlighting the importance of championing the voices of those who all too often go unheard.

Over the coming years, our goal is to help reduce these inequalities by making sure your voice is heard, and decision makers reduce the barriers you face..





# healthwatch

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West Northamptonshire

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