



On equal terms

Then and now

Healthwatch Northamptonshire Annual Report 2020-21

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Message from our Chair

The year 1st April 2020 - 31st March 2021 has been a difficult year for everyone, members of the public and key workers of course, but also particularly for our staff having to get used to working from home and supporting each other. It has also been a challenge for our volunteers, getting used to virtual meetings and being unable to physically visit health and social care premises across the county.

However, everyone rose to the COVID-19 challenge and our survey asking people about their experiences of accessing health and care services in April to June 2020 gave valuable information to our partners about some of the immediate effects of the pandemic. We are grateful to the 310 people across the county who responded to this survey and the feedback was shared quickly with the county's health and care commissioners and providers so they could address issues as they arose (read more about this later in the report).

We were one of the first local Healthwatch in the country to carry out a 'virtual visit' to our local hospitals – with online visits to the maternity departments at both Kettering General Hospital and Northampton General Hospital in June 2020. We saw that both hospitals appeared to be coping well with the new ways of working, and they reported that they also found the visits helpful and implemented the recommendations made by the visit team.

In October 2020, two of our amazing and dedicated volunteers, who had made a fantastic 43 trips to inspect 36 wards and departments in a year (pre-pandemic) at Kettering General Hospital, won a Healthwatch England national award, in the 'Celebrating our volunteer team' category. Well done Sheila and Wendy from everyone at Healthwatch Northamptonshire!

This year we also supported research by Support Northamptonshire looking at the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Black Communities, both locally and nationally. We were able to join the organisation up with those guiding the community coronavirus response and vaccine communication in the county to ensure their community links and feedback could be acted on.

These are just some of the highlights from a busy year! Please read on to find out more about how we have sought the views of people, including young people and carers, and raised important issues with local and regional health and care commissioners, such as the difficulty accessing NHS dental care.

The current contract for Healthwatch Northamptonshire is held, and has been held since 2013, by Connected Together CIC, a Community Interest Company that is a partnership between the University of Northampton and Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire. This current contract ends on 30th June 2021 and at the time of writing we do not know how a new contract or contracts will be shaped or indeed awarded going forward, in the light of the establishment of the new Unitary Authorities for North and West Northamptonshire on the 1st April 2021. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to thank all at the former Northamptonshire County Council for their support and confidence, and all the Healthwatch Northamptonshire Board members, volunteers and staff for all their hard work, generosity of spirit and time, over the past 8 years. You have together enabled us to be an award winning local Healthwatch and given a voice to local people in health and social care across the county.

Thank you.

Professor William Pope

**Interim Chair, Healthwatch Northamptonshire
Chair, Connected Together CIC**



Message from our Manager

As we have all experienced, this year has presented numerous challenges but has also shown how well we can work together. The Healthwatch Northamptonshire team and volunteers have responded positively under pressure, highlighting how quickly we can respond to change, adapting our priorities to meet the impact of COVID-19 based on the information we knew about the pandemic and feedback received from the public.

Since March 2020 we have worked hard to share messages and information relating to the pandemic, including joint communications campaigns with the local health and care sector, councils and voluntary organisations to support the Coronavirus response and keep people informed. We also worked with them to better understand the impact this has had on the public of Northamptonshire and in particular Black, Asian and ethnic minority groups. And we even helped a local sewing group find help to make laundry wash bags for the NHS!

We gained initial insight into people's experiences through a survey asking about experiences accessing health and care services and information. We collected this feedback in April and May and were able to give regular reports to relevant providers to help support them respond to the challenges of the pandemic.

Aside from the survey, we did not hear much from the public of Northamptonshire at the beginning of the pandemic, although the enquiries feedback calls and emails soon picked up, with a particular surge in people struggling to find an NHS dentist. We raised this concern with NHS England Midlands Dentistry Commissioning Team as well as neighbouring Healthwatch, and we have been updated on the progress that has been made in response, and will be keeping a watching brief on this issue over the coming months.

At the beginning of the year mental health services were a planned priority, and during the year this was still an area of importance because of the impact of COVID-19 on many. This priority was adapted into projects regarding young peoples and carers pandemic and lockdown experiences, which helped us to gain a better understanding of their health and wellbeing during this time.

This was similar for our original planned priority of primary care. We discovered during this time that access to GP services was difficult for many, and have also been looking at people's experiences of using NHS 111, which may have been an option used by some unable to see a GP. This primary care priority will be carried forward to next year as we seek to understand the issues which have arisen around access to primary care services following the response to the current situation.



“We recognise the challenges the year has brought, but also some of the positive changes made by health, care and governance organisations working together more closely across the county. We look forward to continued partnership working to improve services and wellbeing for all.”



Katie Bayliss

Acting Manager, Healthwatch Northamptonshire

Our staff



Kate Holt
CEO



Jo Spenceley PhD CMRS
Research and
Communications
Manager



Esther Stimpson
Project Manager and
Lead Officer for
Young Healthwatch
Northamptonshire



Katie Bayliss
Acting Healthwatch
Northamptonshire
Manager



Natasha Mansukhani MSc
Research, Reporting and
Intelligence Assistant



Julie Curtis
Personal Assistant



Lauren Gibbons
Communications
Assistant



Mandy Sampson
Administration
Assistant

About us

Here to make health and care better

We are the independent champion for people who use health and social care in Northamptonshire. We work to help people get the best out of their local health and social care services, whether it's improving them today or helping to shape them for tomorrow.

How we work

Every voice counts when it comes to shaping the future of health and social care, and when it comes to improving it for today. Everything that local Healthwatch does brings the voice and influence of local people to the development and delivery of local services.

Our vision, values and strategy



1 Our vision

Healthwatch 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.



2 Our values

We will be accessible and visible; independent and objective. We will be open, honest and transparent in all that we do while being inclusive and embrace diversity and equality, reflecting the diverse needs of local people



3 Our strategy

To deliver our statutory functions and to champion the views of all people who live in or use health, social care or wellbeing services in Northamptonshire



“Local Healthwatch have done fantastic work throughout the country during the COVID-19 pandemic, but there is more work ahead to ensure that everyone’s views are heard. COVID-19 has highlighted inequalities and to tackle these unfair health differences we will need those in power to listen, to hear the experiences of those facing inequality and understand the steps that could improve people’s lives.”

Sir Robert Francis QC, Chair of Healthwatch England

Highlights from our year

Find out about our resources and how we have engaged and supported people in 2020-21.

Reaching out



We heard from

2,674 people

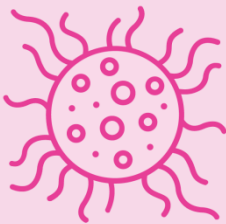
this year about their experiences of health and social care, through phone calls, emails, surveys and focus groups.

We provided advice and information to

239 people directly

and another 179 visited our online complaints guide since our new website went live in August.

Responding to the pandemic



We joined in the local **#NorthantsTogether** communication campaign to share important information about the COVID-19 pandemic.

We shared around

2,000 social media posts

to support this campaign during the year.

We also answered 11 people's questions directly relating to coronavirus restrictions and are still helping make sure people can be vaccinated.

Making a difference to care



We published

8 reports

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

From this, we made 41 recommendations for improvement.

Health and care that works for you



45 volunteers

helped us to carry out our work. In total, they contributed nearly 500 hours of their time.

We employ 8 staff

with a full time equivalent of 5.7 people.

We received

£195,000 in funding

from our local authority in 2020-21, the same as the previous year.



Young people's wellbeing: Then and now



Then: Young people's experiences of emotional wellbeing support

Thanks to young people sharing their experiences of emotional health and wellbeing services with us in 2018 we were able to influence NHS Northamptonshire Clinical Commissioning Group's work to improve emotional and mental health services for young people locally through the 'Future in Mind' transformation plan¹.

Our survey in 2018 heard from 749 young people between 11 and 19 years old. They told us that they valued knowing where to go to get support for their emotional wellbeing and over one-third had needed to access support. Young people had differing experiences of services, with many finding Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) difficult to access or finding long waiting times for services an issue. Support at school and self-help services were things that young people said they would find useful to support their emotional wellbeing.

This work enabled NHS Northamptonshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to identify some of the gaps in provision for young people locally and gave a base line for commissioning young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing services.

¹ www.asknormen.co.uk/news/2019/northamptonshire-future-in-mind-plan-2019-2021/



Now: A closer look at young people's emotional wellbeing and what would support them



Our previous research meant young people had a say in the planning of services across the county but there was still a need to find out more about their needs and their opinions about how services that work for them should look. The success of our 2018 survey led to us being commissioned to carry out further work looking at young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing across Northamptonshire and in specific towns/districts, including Daventry town.

Data had shown that wards within Daventry District had significantly higher levels of self-harm than other areas of Northamptonshire and professionals were working to identify the root causes. It was recognised that it was important to give young people a clear and direct voice into the project and to increase understanding amongst professionals in Daventry about their views.

Together with Healthy Young Daventry², Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire designed a survey that was shared with young people across Daventry town through two schools - DSLV E-ACT Academy and The Parker E-ACT Academy. The survey looked at young people's physical and emotional wellbeing, the activities and services they used to maintain wellbeing and which services they felt would help them in the future.

473 young people aged between 11 and 19 answered the survey and 10 young people from The Parker E-ACT Academy took part in focus groups. Seven semi-structured interviews were conducted by Time2Talk with young people who were already accessing their service to find out more about why young people self-harm and what helps them.

- Nearly one-third said they knew or suspected that one of their friends had self-harmed but only around half had spoken to someone about it. Young people who had experience of self-harm (at a non-critical level) said that talking about their feelings and emotions with people who understood and did not judge them had really helped them cope with their self-harming. They felt that more people developing a better understanding of the issues around self-harm and listening to their experiences, as well as more access to services to support them would make things better for young people who self-harm.
- The findings also showed that whilst only 20% of young people said they had used a support service for their emotional health, talking to friends, parents/carers or another trusted adult was something that 61% said they did to help them deal with difficult emotions.
- Informal sport and exercise were also activities that helped some young people cope when things were difficult and more expressed an interest in using these activities in Daventry to help manage their emotional wellbeing. The focus group discussion suggested that fun and informal sport would help the most and that there is a need to remove barriers to participation, such as cost and caring responsibilities.

The report made seven recommendations reflecting the findings, and Healthy Young Daventry responded to the following themes: **1. Developing activities with young people; 2. Responding to young people at the point of disclosure of self-harm; 3. Raising awareness of the services and access points that are available to young people and parents; 4. Advocate for young people to have choice.**

This project will benefit the young people of Daventry town in the future through changes to local service delivery and design with commissioners and service providers committing to hear the voice of children and young people through co-production.

Read the report and response from Healthy Young Daventry at:

www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk/report/2020-12-21/being-myself-report-look-emotional-wellbeing-young-people-daventry-town

² Healthy Young Daventry is a partnership of organisations in Daventry town working together to improve the way they work with children and young people - <https://lovedaventry.com/healthy-young-daventry/>

Community Healthcare Focus Groups

We were able to give young people more of a say in service design in autumn 2020 as Public Health Northamptonshire and NHS Northamptonshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) commissioned us to carry out focus groups looking at young people's views, experiences and preferences about community health and wellbeing services.

The focus groups were designed to supplement the results of a survey for children, young people and their families carried out by Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) and Northamptonshire CCG in August 2020, and to allow for more in-depth and dynamic discussion. Three focus groups were held in educational settings. All were with secondary aged children and two of the groups took place in Pupil Referral Units.

- Young people gave us useful insight into how they would like to see services for them delivered in the future – they expressed a strong preference for face-to-face healthcare rather than online support, and had concerns about online safety, security, confidentiality and not knowing who could be trusted, as well as about the level of care they would receive.
- Young people did not always feel involved in the care that they received, but when they did, it was a positive experience. Being treated by friendly staff in clean environments was important to them, and that the person treating them showed confidence, knew what they were doing and respected their privacy.
- Those we spoke to would like to see more opportunities for outdoor exercise, such as skate parks, and there were some suggestions for improvements to current services, such as shorter waiting times.

Read the report at: www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk/report/2020-12-10/community-healthcare-young-people-focus-groups-report

These findings, along with the Healthy Young Daventry work and our 2019 project looking at the needs of young carers, contributed to a system-wide report of engagement activities to help Northamptonshire CCG and Public Health Northamptonshire understand where, as a system, services are right and where the gaps are that need a solution to improve and modernise services for the future.

They were also shared with NHS England to inform their work looking at digital delivery and both the barriers and enablers to digital mental health services for young people.

You can read the Northamptonshire Health and Care Partnerships Engagement Report: Children and Young People Community Health and Wellbeing Services at:

www.northamptonshirehpc.co.uk/2021/06/engagement-guides-priorities-for-children-and-young-people

 **“NHS Northamptonshire Clinical Commissioning Group and Public Health Northamptonshire are incredibly appreciative of the work that the team at Healthwatch Northamptonshire have undertaken to meet with local children and young people to explore their views on children and young people's community health and wellbeing services... Thank you to all the young people and schools who took part and for sharing your views and experiences with us, we are grateful for your insight and will use the information collected to improve services and service access across Northamptonshire.”**

- Response to report from NHS Northamptonshire Clinical Commissioning Group and Public Health Northamptonshire



Working in partnership: Then and now



Then: 'Big Ideas' for health and care

Partnership working was a big theme of for us in 2019-20. Together with the Northamptonshire Health and Care Partnership we heard your 'Big Ideas' to help shape the Northamptonshire Health, Care and Wellbeing Plan and the development of local health and care services in 2019.

The top five things people wanted to see improved were:

- Information and communication
- Access to services (including community support and services closer to home)
- Personalised care
- Support for carers and people with long-term conditions.

Since then, the health and care system has continued to work on these areas as it has developed into an Integrated Care System, across the priority areas of Integrated Care Across Northamptonshire, Mental Health, Children and Young People, and Elective Care. Find out more at www.northamptonshirehcp.co.uk/our-work/our-priorities

Working with the system as they develop integrated care remains one of our priorities and we have continued to work with others organisations to ensure the voices of people across Northamptonshire are heard.



Now: Working in partnership during the coronavirus pandemic

Whilst some of our planned work was able to continue, albeit in an adapted way, much of our focus shifted to finding out the needs and experiences of people during the pandemic and lockdown and sharing these views with health and care partners so they could best adapt services to meet people's needs. Listening now to what matters the most to people will continue to have impact as services adapt to changing needs. Many of these needs were emphasised by the pandemic and inequalities highlighted.

Championing people's experiences and needs and supporting carers

From April 2020, our first two priorities were to **1. Support the public by sharing useful information about coronavirus, changes to local services and support available**, and **2. Seek the views of Northamptonshire residents** to safeguard their rights and health at a time when so much about how health and care was delivered changed. We developed a survey and publicised it as widely as we could while not being able to engage with people face-to-face.

310 people responded to this survey. People told us about how easily or not they could access information, what they thought of access to GPs and remote appointment systems, their experiences of hospital care and how delays were communicated, and any issues accessing social care, as well as other impacts on their health and wellbeing, whether they had delayed getting help for health issues and if there were any changes they valued and thought should stay. The feedback was analysed and shared quickly with the county's health and care commissioners and providers so they could address issues as they arose.



"Thanks for this report - it is extremely helpful ... I have passed the report to the Reset Group for their consideration and follow up."

- Simon Weldon, Chief Executive, Kettering General NHS Foundation Trust

(and Group Chief Executive for both Northampton and Kettering General Hospitals from July 2020)

The feedback we received, along with what Northamptonshire Carers and Carers' Voice Northamptonshire heard suggested that changes to services during the pandemic had affected those who provide informal (unpaid) care to family and friends and that there has been an increase in the number of unpaid carers.

To find out more about the experiences and needs of carers we worked with Northamptonshire Carers and Carers' Voice on a survey, interviews and a consultation event. The findings showed that the impact on carers had been huge, with many working tirelessly and at breaking point, having to meet the physical and emotional needs of those they care for without much support from others or respite. The report also highlights the support carers need, both during the pandemic and longer term.

Supporting carers is a team effort involving health services, social care, employers, voluntary sector, education and the wider community. The findings from this work will be shared widely and Northamptonshire Carers support will work with partners to deliver upon it.

Read the report at: www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk/report/2021-06-29/caring-during-coronavirus



"It has been a pleasure to work with Healthwatch Northamptonshire and Carers' Voice on this insightful report, which has been thoroughly planned and compiled. It was great to hear the voices of carers at our engagement event in February and the survey compliments this well. As well as highlighting how carers and young carers have been disproportionately affected by coronavirus, it provides useful recommendations which we will seek to deliver ourselves and alongside partners."

- Gwyn Roberts, Chief Operating Officer, Northamptonshire Carers



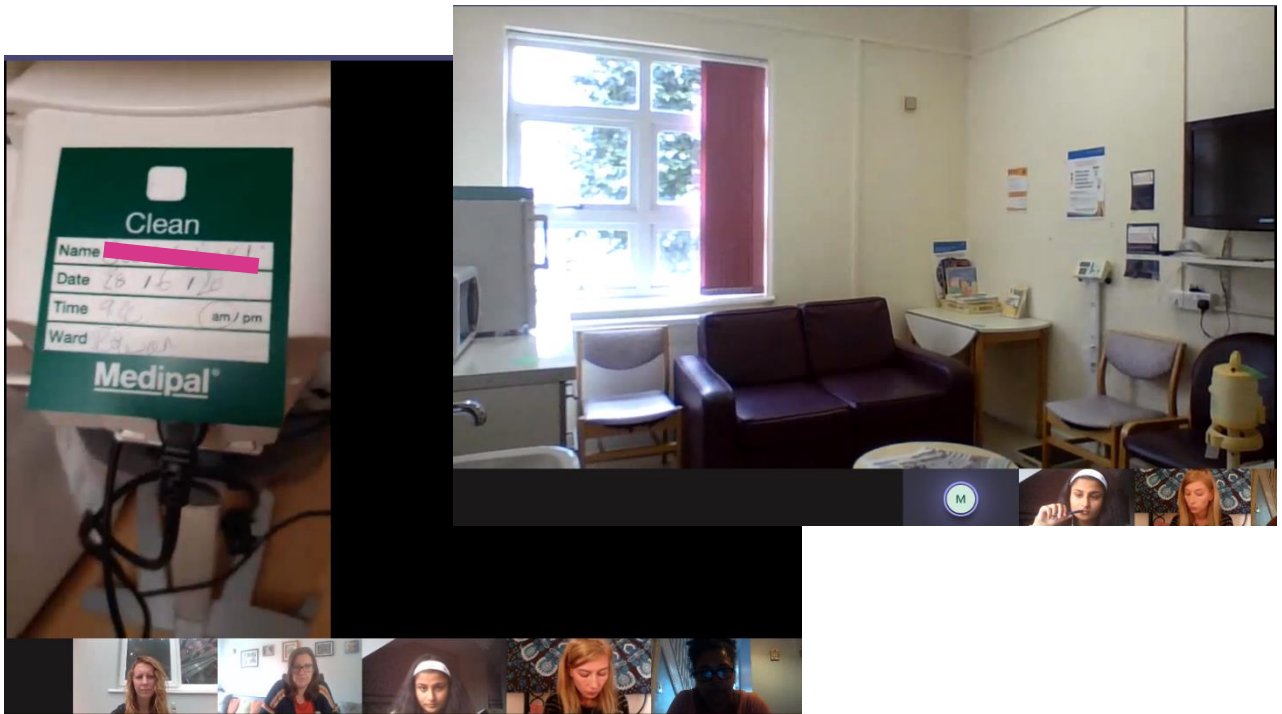
Now: Working in partnership during the coronavirus pandemic

Working for quality services

With volunteers from Northamptonshire's Maternity Voice Partnership we conducted a virtual '15 Steps' visit of the labour and postnatal wards at Northampton General Hospital and Kettering General Hospital in June 2020. The 15 Steps Challenge tool focuses on seeing care through a patient or carer's eyes. The visits were requested by the Local Maternity and Neonates System Board to help answer some of the questions expecting parents had and show them what to expect. The visits were also to follow up on the in-person visits to both hospitals in 2019.

The visits took place in the midst of the COVID pandemic so it was decided that the safest way to conduct the visits was using cameras over a virtual meeting platform, to both ensure the safety of volunteers and staff and to not put any extra pressure on the hospitals. This was the first time that Healthwatch Northamptonshire or either hospital had conducted a visit in this way and we thank the hospitals for working with us to do this. We saw that both hospitals appeared to be coping with the new way of working and made some suggestions that both hospitals found helpful and implemented.

Read the report at: www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk/report/2020-08-24/15-steps-maternity-virtual-visit-report



NHS 111 First is a new national programme, which encourages people with an urgent, but not life-threatening health problem, to contact NHS 111 before attending an Emergency Department (A&E). By doing this they can be directed straight to the right service for their needs. The new system went live in Northamptonshire at the end of 2020. **We have been seeking people's views experiences of the new service and will be sharing them with NHS Northamptonshire CCG** so they can monitor how successfully it is working and whether it is meeting the needs of all, especially those with accessibility needs.

Find out more: www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk/news/2021-01-21/nhs-111-first-we-would-hear-your-views-and-feedback



Now: Working in partnership during the coronavirus pandemic

Working for quality services (cont.)

Working in partnership with Healthwatch England, The King's Fund and National Voices, we sought to understand people's experiences of NHS admin. We shared what we have heard about people's experiences before and carried out phone interviews to gain a more in-depth view. Across the NHS, many administrative systems carry out tasks such as holding patient data, making referrals, booking appointments, keeping test results, and prescriptions. We know that when people have a bad experience of these processes, it can change how they feel about their care. More importantly, ineffective processes can lead to delays in receiving care and serious implications on people's health outcomes. Together we found that poor admin can cost people time and money, leave them stressed and anxious, and can impact their health by delaying diagnosis, treatment or causing medication errors. Poor admin can also undermine people's confidence in the health service, leaving them feeling disempowered in managing their care.

Find out more: www.healthwatch.co.uk/news/2021-06-24/focus-nhs-admin-needed-improve-peoples-experiences-care

Working with others on COVID-19 oversight

We are here to represent you. As well as seeking your views, we were able to ensure they were heard by sitting on the county's COVID-19 Oversight and Engagement Board and temporary Ethics Advisory Group. These sought to ensure people and communities were not unduly affected by changes to services during the pandemic. We also worked closely with the communications teams, to keep the public well informed.

This year we also supported research by Support Northamptonshire looking at the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, both locally and nationally. We were able to join the organisation up with those guiding the community coronavirus response and vaccine communication in the county to ensure their community links and feedback could be acted on.



"During the first wave of the pandemic we were all in react and respond mode, there was no time to really drill down and identify where there maybe additional or hidden needs, or where situations may be worsening for some.

It was during the early onset of the second wave where we were able to take a breath and identify sections of our communities that needed more support and where we needed to understand the additional needs they may had.

Working collaboratively and in partnership with other organisations like Northamptonshire Carers and Healthwatch Northamptonshire was invaluable from an engagement perspective as it enabled us to inform our forward planning for the COVID-19 response, whilst taking account of the specific needs of different groups of people"

- Nicki Eames-Barton - Communities Officer, Social Impacts Cell, Engagement Lead, for North and West Unitary councils



Responding to COVID-19: Helping you find the answers

Healthwatch plays an important role in helping people to get the information they need, especially through the pandemic. The insight we collect is shared with both Healthwatch England and local partners to ensure services are operating as well as possible during the pandemic.

This year we helped people by:

- Providing up to date advice on the COVID-19 response locally and changes to services
- Linking people to reliable up-to-date information
- Supporting the vaccine roll-out by sharing information and helping those struggling to book an appointment
- Helping people to access the services they need, including through sharing NHS GP Access Cards with those who struggle to register with a GP because they have no fixed address or ID
- Letting people know what to do if they needed to complain

“Thanks for all your work on getting this resolved – hopefully vaccination bookings will be much easier for unregistered [with a GP] people now!”

- Communications and Engagement Team, Northamptonshire Health and Care Partnership

The top areas that people have contacted us about:



31% on Dentistry



23% on Hospital care



18% on GP services



7% on Mental Health, 7% on Social care, and 6% about COVID-19 issues

Access to NHS Dentistry

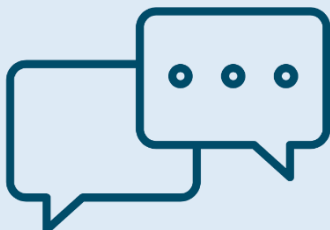
In January to March 2021, we saw an increase of 50% in both negative feedback and requests for help finding a dentist compared to the three months before. When compared to the same time period the year before (January to March 2020), this was a nine times increase!

We continue to hear from people struggling to find an NHS dentist that will treat them and their children, with waiting lists also full - despite some practices still offering private appointments. Some people have told us that the condition of their teeth has deteriorated, and others are in pain, anxious or depressed.

We have been discussing these issues with the NHS England Midlands Dentistry Commissioning Team and will keep sharing feedback with them and passing on updates to the public. The team listened to these valid concerns and reassured us that they are doing what they can to encourage dentists to prioritise providing the most essential treatment, including treating the most vulnerable and at risk people as well as the most urgent cases.

The coronavirus pandemic has reduced the capacity of all dentists and NHS England is working with dentists to restore capacity, but this is still below pre-pandemic levels due to the additional cleaning and infection prevention processes needed. Routine NHS dental care is still unavailable for many and even though the NHS England regional team is looking to fill the gaps, the way that NHS dentistry is commissioned can put some dentists off working with the NHS. Reforms to dental contract commissioning are clearly needed and we will keep sharing feedback with Healthwatch England, who are campaigning for this at a national level.

Share your views with us



If you have a query about a health and social care service, or need help with where you can go to access further support, get in touch. Don't struggle alone. Healthwatch is here for you.

 www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk

 **0300 002 0010**

 enquiries@healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk

Information and signposting

During the year we helped 239 people who contacted us by phone, email or online to get the advice and information they needed – an increase of 85% on the number we signposted in 2019-20. Another 179 visited our online complaints guide since our new website went live in August.

We signposted people to organisations that would support them to access the advice and information they need. Many people contacted us to seek guidance and ask for information about how to make a complaint about a health or care service they have used (such as their GP surgery or hospital). Others are helped by our online complaints guide, which gives guidance about making a complaint, information about advocacy support and details of other relevant organisations that can help - www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk/help-making-complaint. This year we also made one safeguarding referral to the county's safeguarding team with the enquirer's permission.

With other local Healthwatch and voluntary organisations across the country we are distributing **GP Access Cards** from the NHS to vulnerable communities who are less likely to be registered with a GP. The card, provides details of how to register and gives the NHS England Customer Contact Centre number, for people to use if they have been refused registration. We have so far given out 160 cards to homeless centres and projects, councils and councillors, the United African Association and a Traveller family.

We are always grateful when we receive positive feedback:

"I am very grateful for what you are doing and I feel like they went the extra step and really made sure to help me out. Thank you very much for your work."

"Thank you so much for coming back to me so quickly, I really appreciate it. I will pass this information on to my friend for them to carry forward. I know they will be very grateful for guidance of who to contact; having spoken to them following our conversation. I am so grateful I did [contact HWN]. Thank you so much for listening yesterday and for finding the best route forward for my friend. You have absolutely made a difficult task that much easier and more achievable."

"The information you sent me was both informative and sensible thank you."

"I told my partner about the wonderfully prompt, professional and helpful email that was waiting for me. ... Coming to your website was a bit like finding an old friend. Its structure, layout and content were professional but unimposing, caring and helpful at the same time. Our thanks to you for such a kind and thoughtful response in such a timely way."



Contact us to get the information you need

If you have a query about a health and social care service, or need help with where you can go to access further support, get in touch. Don't struggle alone. Healthwatch is here for you.



www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk



0300 002 0010



enquiries@healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk



Volunteers

At Healthwatch Northamptonshire we are supported by 45 volunteers to help us find out what people think is working, and what improvements people would like to make to services.

This year we were especially pleased to see Sheila White and Wendy Patel rewarded by winning the Healthwatch England national award, in the 'Celebrating our volunteer team' category! Their dedication to improving the patient experience at Kettering General Hospital was recognised, after they made 43 trips to inspect 36 wards and departments in the previous year. Find out more at: www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk/news/2020-11-17/sheila-and-wendy-win-prestigious-national-award-healthwatch-northamptonshire

“Wendy and Sheila provided me with invaluable insights into the experiences of patients and staff at KGH. They possess a continuous drive and a passion for quality improvement and both have been very active members of a number of our working groups. From their insights and contributions I have remained grounded and open to hearing about and acting on the right things. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks and congratulations to them both.”

- Leanne Hackshall, Kettering General Hospital's Director of Nursing and Quality



Morcea - Planning Group Chair and Board Vice Chair

"Volunteer: a person who voluntary undertakes a service and in the case of Healthwatch Northamptonshire this service is one that serves the community in many ways. While volunteering with this organisation I have learnt so much about the health needs and successes of the county through a range of tasks. I have felt valued whilst working with other colleagues to help make a difference - colleagues who believe in teamwork, using individual skills and interests."



Dora - Board Member

"I am very interested in Health and Social Care provision provided for us all by both government services and the private providers, plus I enjoy working with other likeminded people. Whether carrying out a street survey or having a closer look inside a care home and writing a report on our findings, I get to meet such a broad range of people from the young, up to those in their 90's. I believe donating one's time, life experience and commitment to Healthwatch just gives back a little to the communities that care for us."



Darcie - Young Healthwatch Chair

"Being Chair this year has been a lot different to the other years. I have not been able to get involved in as many events as I had wanted to, however I have still enjoyed my time as Chair. I have had the chance to get involved in an interviewing process and was still able to support the other members of Young Healthwatch via communicating online. I chose to stay with Healthwatch throughout this pandemic as the work I have done in the past 6 and a half years has been amazing. We managed to get an amazing response to our survey and I am proud of the people I work with for sticking with us this year and pushing through. I cannot wait for the next years to come where I am sure we will continue to do some amazing work."



Volunteer with us

Are you feeling inspired? We are always on the lookout for new volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering, please get in touch.



www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk/volunteer



0300 002 0010



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Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire

Like everyone else across the country, Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire were impacted by COVID-19. We started last year in a full national lockdown but that has not stopped some amazing work from happening.

At the time the country went into a national lockdown, Young Healthwatch were meeting monthly at various venues across Northamptonshire. It was vital that the wellbeing of our young volunteers was paramount. We moved to online meetings, and these were used to check in with our young volunteers and to signpost them to any relevant resources. We tried to make the meetings fun and we joined up with other local Healthwatch across the country who had young volunteers and took it in turns to host online quizzes. Sometimes the purposes of our meetings were to keep connected with each other and to reduce isolation. Sometimes we set small tasks that we could do that week too.

Two volunteers from Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire wrote letters that reflected on the coronavirus pandemic and the impact that it has had. One wrote to their 10-year-old self and one to themselves in 10 years time.

These letters were written to help them process what has been going on during the year and to help adults understand some of the issues young people have faced. The letters detail worries around GCSE and A level results and what the future holds for them as well as how the world for young people has changed so dramatically.

You can read the letters on our website: www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk/news/2020-08-10/young-healthwatch-letter-past-and-future-me

Young People's Experiences of COVID-19 and Lockdowns

Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire wanted to find out the experiences of young people during lockdown and the COVID-19 pandemic. This included how it had impacted their access to health services and how they felt their emotional wellbeing was.

This was the first time the group had to work on a project virtually without being able to meet in person, nor being able to go out and meet young people face-to-face. Despite those challenges, the group wrote a good survey and 1,173 young people between the ages of 11 and 19 responded to it between January and March 2021!

"We wanted to conduct this survey as we wanted to highlight the views of young people relating to the pandemic. Young people aged 11-19 are all at different points of their childhood, we wanted to see how each age group and education setting were affected. Emotional wellbeing is a huge part of YHWN's core values, and these survey questions were what we felt would summarise young people's experiences and would give us an indication of goals and recommendations for local providers to work towards locally."

- Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire

The survey findings give an insight into how young people felt during the pandemic and the things that affected them the most, as well what they thought of the information and support available to them. Unsurprisingly, lockdown had a negative impact on emotional wellbeing of more than half the young people we spoke to, and many struggled with not being able to see their friends and usual support networks. There were, however, examples of ways in which lockdown had benefited some young people.

The report can be read at: www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk/report/2021-06-22/young-healthwatch-northamptonshire-covid-report

Working in partnership with Kettering and Northampton Hospitals

Young Healthwatch have worked with both Northampton General Hospital and Kettering General Hospital to ensure the voices of children and young people continued to be heard during COVID-19.

A member of Young Healthwatch filmed a patient story of their experience of transitioning from Children's services to Adult's services during the pandemic, and this was shared with senior leaders in the Trust and the transitions team, to enable them to make changes.

Both hospitals have continued to feedback the progress made with the friends and family test to Young Healthwatch as well as continuously asking for input for the new Paediatric Emergency Department designs at Northampton General Hospital.



Want to find out more about Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire?

If you want to find out more about Young Healthwatch Northamptonshire's previous work, visit our website or contact us.



www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk/young-healthwatch-northamptonshire



07376 130329



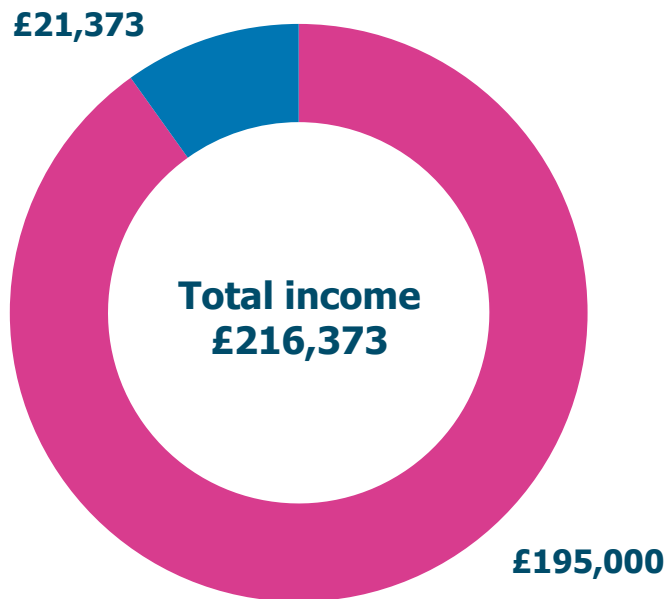
younghealthwatch@healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk

Finances

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

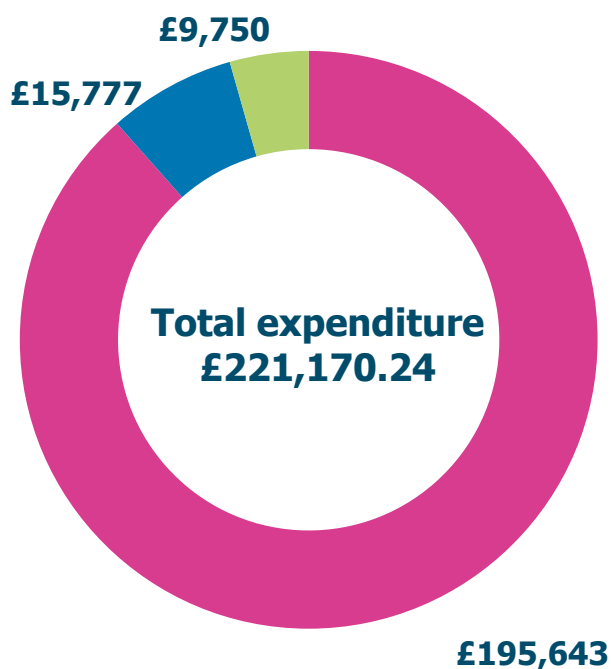
Income

- Funding received from local authority
- Additional funding



Expenditure

- Staff costs
- Operational costs
- Support and administration



Next steps and thank you

Top three priorities for 2021-22

Our volunteers set our work plan priorities for the year by looking at the previous year's work and any outstanding items, partner priorities e.g., the Northamptonshire Health and Care Partnership, Public Health Northamptonshire, local hospital Trusts, and most importantly feedback from the public.

There is always so much that Healthwatch can and wants to get involved with but as health and social care has such a wide scope, we have to focus on a few things to be able to do them well.

This year we will be focusing our attention on:

1. The impact of COVID-19 on people and the resumption of services
2. Access to quality mental health services for adults, children and young people.
3. The development of integrated care, including social prescribing, primary care networks and iCAN (Integrated Care Across Northamptonshire)

We have already set up a task and finish group to scope a project on access to GP services following on from the pandemic and shall be shortly seeking views from the public on this. **If you would like to be included in this project please email us at: enquiries@healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk**

Our full workplan can be read at: www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk/advice-and-information/2021-05-17/our-strategy-and-work-plan-2021-2022

Next steps

This year we also want to develop our Quality Assurance Framework and ensure that we have a robust methodology for measuring impact, along with ensuring that we continue to hear the experiences of those facing inequality, help them to have a voice, and understand the steps that services need to take to improve access for all.



"Following the past year of uncertainties and disruption it is important that we continue to keep in mind the purpose of Healthwatch Northamptonshire, which is to listen to and help be the voice of the public for health and social care services in the county. We rely on our volunteers and the public to be our ears and eyes in communities and tell us what is really going on. Please don't hesitate to get in touch with us if you have an experience, good or bad, about health or social care in Northamptonshire you would like to share."



Kate Holt
CEO



Statutory statements

About us

Healthwatch Northamptonshire, c/o Connected Together CIC, Moulton Park Business Centre, Redhouse Road, Northampton, NN3 6AQ.

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

The way we work

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

The Healthwatch Northamptonshire Board consists of 14 members and the Planning Group, approximately the same number, who work on a voluntary basis to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny to our activities. Our Board and our Planning Group ensure that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of Northamptonshire's diverse local community. Our Planning Group gains the evidence for our work and informs the Board, the Board then approves the actions. Through 2020/21 the Board met bimonthly and the Planning Group monthly, making decisions on matters from deciding to ask carers about their experiences of COVID-19, to discussing new ways of working and approving new policies.

The Healthwatch Northamptonshire Planning Group ensures that we respond to patient and public feedback, for example, by supporting the escalation of NHS dentistry access issues we were hearing and working in partnership in response to the impacts of COVID-19 on Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups.

The Planning Group and Board plan Healthwatch Northamptonshire's work annually adapting and reviewing the priorities throughout the year in response to feedback, as evidenced in the volunteers' decisions to change priorities this year.

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 experience of health and care services. During 2020/21 we have been available by phone, by email, provided webforms on our website, attended virtual meetings of community groups and forums, provided our own virtual Board and Planning Group meetings, as well as task and finish group meetings where volunteers, staff, providers, and other organisations work in co-production on projects. We have engaged with the public through social media and held focus groups and one-to-one phone interviews to obtain the public's views and experiences of health and social care.

Healthwatch Northamptonshire is committed to taking additional steps to ensure we obtain the views of the people of Northamptonshire from diverse backgrounds who are often not heard by health and care decision makers. This year we have done this by working with Northamptonshire County Council, Support Northamptonshire, Northamptonshire Carers, Deafconnect and other organisations, to ensure an inclusive voice of the people of Northamptonshire is represented in all the work we do.

We ensure that Healthwatch Northamptonshire's annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. We publish it on our website and email it to all health and care commissioners and providers in the county as well as 1,400 community groups and individuals signed up to our mailing list.

Responses to recommendations and requests

All providers we asked responded to our requests for information or recommendations.

This year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we were unable to physically enter and view health and social care services, instead we innovatively utilised virtual forums and extended our capability, for example, virtual visits to local maternity and neonatal services. The feedback and recommendations were shared with the Local Maternity and Neonatal Services (LMNS) Board and the Maternity Voice Partnership. The services accepted the recommendations and informed us of the actions implemented as a result of our visit.

The issues regarding dentistry were escalated by Healthwatch Northamptonshire regionally and informed the Healthwatch England report, as this was a concern raised by other local Healthwatch and Healthwatch England nationally.

Health and Wellbeing Board

Healthwatch Northamptonshire is represented on the Northamptonshire Health and Wellbeing Board by Interim Chair, Professor William Pope. Subsequently, this board has been divided into North and West boards following Northamptonshire's move to two unitary councils. During 2020/21 Professor Pope took on the role of Interim Chair and has attended the board to ensure patient and public voices are heard. He continues to inform Healthwatch Northamptonshire and its work by understanding the health and social care issues which have risen and require responding to.

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Email: enquiries@healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk

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