

# Introduction to Healthwatch

A guide to Healthwatch and what we do

# Who is part of the Healthwatch network?

Our Healthwatch network is made up of two parts, both of which play an important role in ensuring we understand the needs, experiences and concerns of people who use health and social care services and speak out on their behalf.

## Local Healthwatch

- 153 local Healthwatch across England.
- Collect and analyse people's experiences and views of health and care.
- Make sure the data they collect helps shape the health and care support people need.
- Provide advice about local health and social care services.

There is a local Healthwatch in every area of England.

Each local Healthwatch receives funding from their local authority and are social enterprises or organisations that work for the good of their community.

Healthwatch is your health and social care champion. We make sure 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.

Local Healthwatch share local views and the difference they have made in their area, with Healthwatch England who make sure that the Government, and those in charge of services, keep people at the heart of their decision making.

Our sole purpose is to help make care better for people.

## Healthwatch England

- Provide leadership to the network of 153 local Healthwatch.
- Support local Healthwatch to do the best job possible in providing a voice for their community to speak up about health and social care issues.
- Use the evidence local Healthwatch collect to help improve health and social care policy and practice at a national level.

Healthwatch is your health and social care champion. If you use GPs and hospitals, dentists, pharmacies, care homes or other support services, we want to hear about your experiences. As an independent statutory body, we have the power to make sure NHS leaders and other decision makers listen to your feedback and improve standards of care. We can also help you to find reliable and trustworthy information and advice. Last year, we helped nearly a million people like you to have your say and get the support you need.

We're here to listen to the issues that really matter to local communities and to hear about your experiences of using health and social care services. We're entirely independent and impartial, and any information you share with us is confidential.

Healthwatch uses your feedback to better understand the challenges facing the NHS and other care providers nationally, to make sure your experiences improve health and care services for everyone. We can also help you to get the information and advice you need to make the right decisions for you and to get the support you deserve.

## Healthwatch volunteers

The Healthwatch network is supported by thousands of volunteers who help make a difference to health and care across the country.

Each local Healthwatch will be supported by volunteers in a range of different roles such as:

- Listen to people's experiences of health and social care services at Healthwatch events or when out and about in the community.
- Visit health and social care services on Enter and View visits.
- Provide information about local services.
- Raising awareness of the role of Healthwatch.
- Using their own expertise to help with the day to day running of a busy Healthwatch office.
- Represent Healthwatch at meetings with external organisations.
- Help to analyse and report what people say about their health and social care services.

## Who runs Healthwatch England?

Healthwatch England is Chaired by Professor David Croisdale-Appleby OBE and governed by a Committee, who set our strategy, provide scrutiny and oversight, and approve policies and procedures that are needed for us to work effectively.

You'll learn more about how Healthwatch England can help you in your role at Healthwatch later in this induction.

## What matters most to people using health and social care services

Watch this short video to find out how sharing feedback with Healthwatch makes a difference.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IrlZho3rAdo>

# Understanding more about Healthwatch legislation

Healthwatch continues the ambition to provide an effective voice for patients and the public in the NHS and social care. Healthwatch follows in the footsteps of:

**Community Health Councils (CHCs)** - established in 1974 in Regional Health Authority footprints.

**Commission for Patient and Public Involvement in Health (CPPIH)** and **Patient and Public Involvement Forums (PPIFs)** - replaced CHCs in 2003 with a PPIF attached to each NHS Trust.

**Local Involvement Networks (LINKs)** - replaced CPPIH and PPIFs in 2008 with one LINK in each local authority area and a remit extended to include social care.

**Healthwatch England** - established as a committee of the independent regulator the Care Quality Commission (CQC) in October 2012. **Local Healthwatch** - replaced LINKs in April 2013.

## Local Healthwatch legislation

Healthwatch were set up following introduction of legislation which requires all areas of England to have an effective Healthwatch.

The main legislation is the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 along with the Health and Social Care Act 2012 which require local Healthwatch to carry out particular activities, including:

- Promoting and supporting the involvement of local people in the commissioning, the provision and scrutiny of local care services.
- Enabling local people to monitor the standard of provision of local care services and whether and how local care services could and ought to be improved.
- Obtaining the views of local people regarding their needs for, and experiences of, local care services and importantly to make these views known.
- Making reports and recommendations about how local care services could or ought to be improved. These should be directed to commissioners and providers of care services, and people responsible for managing or scrutinising local care services and shared with Healthwatch England.
- Providing advice and information about access to local care services so choices can be made about local care services.

- Formulating views on the standard of provision and whether the local care services could be improved; and sharing these views with Healthwatch England.
- Making recommendations to Healthwatch England to advise the Care Quality Commission to conduct special reviews or investigations (or, where the circumstances justify doing so, making such recommendations direct to the Care Quality Commission); and to make recommendations to Healthwatch England to publish reports about particular issues.
- Providing Healthwatch England with the intelligence and insight it needs to enable it to perform effectively.

In addition to statutory activities, Healthwatch can also use their legal powers to carry out what are known as Enter and View visits to health and care services by trained staff and volunteers.

These Enter and View visits allow Healthwatch to speak to people using services, their relatives and carers to find out more about their experiences and views as well as observe the nature and quality of services. Healthwatch report these findings to providers and sometimes other bodies such as regulators, the local authority and the local NHS on what was found during their visit.

Enter and View visits are required to follow procedures set out in regulations, including acting in a reasonable and proportionate manner.

You can find out more about Enter and View visits by visiting the resources section of our network site.

# Who do local Healthwatch work with?

## Local health and social care services

How health and social care is organised and delivered is complex so Healthwatch must work with a wide variety of different organisations. The NHS provides health services such as hospitals and GPs. The council is responsible for social care services like care homes and home care.

People often don't know who to ask when it comes to questions about what services they should be using, or what to do if they are not happy with them. A role of local Healthwatch is to help people navigate this complex system and help find the right support for them.

# Organisations that you might work with

## Providers

Organisations that run health and social care services are known as providers, such as NHS Trusts, NHS Foundation Trusts, companies that run care homes and some voluntary sector organisations. Local Healthwatch work with providers by giving them feedback on what people have told them they like about their service, and what could be improved.

A provider will own sites that services are delivered in, e.g. an NHS Trust may provide services at a hospital. Local Healthwatch might also carry out Enter and View visits to providers.

## Voluntary and community groups

Healthwatch work with a wide variety of voluntary organisations such as Age UK and Mind and community groups such as luncheon clubs or carers groups who provide support and can help Healthwatch reach people in the local community.

Some of these groups may be user led e.g. People First. Getting to know your local voluntary sector is a good idea when you start local at a Healthwatch, so you know who does what and can signpost people to these services.

## The Safeguarding Adults and Safeguarding Children's team

They are based in the local council. They may have slightly different names in different areas. They have a responsibility to keep adults at risk and children safe from harm.

Local Healthwatch might signpost or refer a person who is at risk of harm or is concerned about someone close to them being at risk of harm, to their Safeguarding Adults or Children team.

## Commissioners

Commissioners plan and pay for health and social care services. For example, the Clinical Commissioning Group plan and pay for local NHS services and the local authority plan and pay for social care services.

Some specialist services are commissioned nationally by bodies such as NHS England, whose role also includes setting national priorities for the NHS. Local Healthwatch might work with commissioners by giving them feedback on what people have told them about their experience of using a type of service, e.g. mental health services.

## Care Quality Commission (CQC)

CQC monitor, inspect and regulate health and social care services. They publish what they find, including ratings to help people choose care. Locally CQC will carry out inspections to services that provide health and social care.

Their teams are organised into Primary Medical Services (including GPs and NHS 111), Adult Social Care (including home care services) and Hospitals (including NHS trusts and Mental Health services). Local Healthwatch often work closely with

their local CQC team, by sharing feedback and concerns about services that may need to be investigated.

## **Health and Wellbeing Board**

Hosted by the local authority, Health and Wellbeing Boards bring together the NHS, public health, adult social care and children's services, including elected representatives and local Healthwatch, to plan how best to meet the needs of their local population and tackle local inequalities in health.

Local Healthwatch may work with the Health and Wellbeing Board by using their statutory seat to feedback issues that people have told them about, e.g. the experience of being discharged from hospital.

## **Local public health**

Local authorities are responsible for improving the health of their local population and for public health services including most sexual health services and services aimed at reducing drug and alcohol misuse. Local Healthwatch may feedback people's experience of accessing these services and may help to promote information about keeping healthy.

## **Advocacy**

Advocacy services support people to express their views and wishes who may otherwise find it difficult, e.g. due to a mental health condition. Complaints Advocacy can support someone to make a complaint about their health or social care.

In some situations, people might be entitled to legal advocacy, e.g. someone detained under the Mental Health 1983 in most cases is entitled to the support of an Independent Mental Health Advocate (IMHA).

## **Integrated Care Systems**

Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) are partnership arrangements that bring together the NHS, local authorities, and other stakeholders to plan and deliver joined-up health and care services. They include:

- Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) – statutory organisations responsible for developing the joint forward plan, managing the budget and commissioning services.
- Integrated Care Partnerships – statutory committees that produce the integrated care strategy that sets out how health and care needs should be met.
- Place-based partnerships – partnerships which lead on the planning and delivery of health and care services on a local level.
- Provider collaboratives – health and care services working together across a wider area to improve access to services, quality and safety.

ICSs are designed to:

- Improve outcomes in population health and healthcare.

- Tackle inequalities in outcomes, experience and access.
- Enhance productivity and value for money.
- Help the NHS support broader social and economic development.

For more information on ICSs – please check out this [explanation by The King's Fund](#).

## Do you find how health and care is organised confusing?

You are not alone. There's no doubt it is complex. There's a lot of jargon in the world of health and social care. We provide support and information to help people understand their options and get the help they need. Take some time to talk to your colleagues and learn more about the health and social care organisations in your area, and the relationships already established.

We also run webinars for Healthwatch staff and volunteers on how the NHS and social care services work at a local and national level.

You can sign yourself up to these webinars via our [website](#).

You can watch this video that explores [How does the NHS in England work and how is it changing? \(youtube.com\)](#)

# How does Healthwatch make a difference?

## Example of working with people to make a difference

Local Healthwatch make a huge difference to their local communities – from helping people find the care they need, bringing attention to how the local community access services and helping people have their say on how services need to improve.

Here are some examples of how Healthwatch make a difference.

### Tony makes it easier to find a care home

When Tony was searching for a care home on behalf of his mother, he found there wasn't enough information available to make an informed decision. Working with Healthwatch Durham, he helped improve the situation.

Thanks to his dedication, the council will ensure all care homes provide up-to-date information online, so it's easier to find a care home.



# Healthwatch championing diversity and inclusion

## Healthcare in prisons

People living in prisons are entitled to the same level and quality of health services as other NHS patients, but access isn't always as good as it should be.

Thanks to Healthwatch Staffordshire, working in partnership with NHS England, new licenses have been put in place enabling people living in six local prisons to access community dentistry services.

## Healthwatch helping people to have their say

### New parents have their say on maternity services in Northamptonshire

With the local Clinical Commissioning Group looking to improve maternity services, Healthwatch Northamptonshire reached out to over 500 local parents to find out what they wanted to see improved.

Their inclusive approach, using a mix of social media and community events, meant they were able to gather a diverse range of experiences, from young parents to mums who experienced mental health challenges.

## Healthwatch provides advice and information on local services

### 12,000 people helped thanks to Healthwatch Wirral

Healthwatch Wirral's Infobank service, developed in partnership with Arrowe Park Hospital, helped more than 12,000 local people access information and advice about a whole range of services – from help quitting smoking to finding a care home for a loved one.

## Healthwatch network awards

### Healthwatch network awards

Our Healthwatch network awards showcase the excellent work of local Healthwatch and the work they do to improve health and social care services in their community.

From volunteering, to championing diversity in the community, to helping people have their say, we are proud of the work you do.

Make sure you take a moment to read about the [awards in 2023](#).

## How does Healthwatch England make a difference?

Healthwatch England use the evidence gathered by local Healthwatch to make a difference at national level. Here are some examples:

## Oral health in care homes

Local Healthwatch found out that CQC inspections of care homes were not looking at the quality of older people's oral health – poor oral health can have a considerable impact on people's quality of life and wellbeing.

Healthwatch England raised this matter at national level with CQC and as a result they have committed to doing more to support oral healthcare in social care services as part of their usual inspection process.

## Quality Matters

Drawing on the expertise of local Healthwatch, we developed a new toolkit to explain how to complain about social care services. Nothing like this existed before, and people told us that the process of raising a concern about social care was difficult and confusing. This tool explains the process fully and in simple terms.

## Emergency readmissions

By analysing the views gathered by local Healthwatch across England, Healthwatch England saw that the number of people being readmitted to hospital was increasing rapidly, and no one could identify the reason why. Our work led to NHS England committing to gathering data to properly understand and address the issue.

# Getting started at Healthwatch and how Healthwatch England can help

## Healthwatch England strategy

We updated our strategic direction for 2021-2026. Our new strategy has three main aims that guide everything we do.

- 1. Supporting people to have their say**  
Support more people to have their say and provide clear information and advice to help them take control of their health and care.
- 2. Providing a high-quality service**  
Provide an effective, high-quality local service, building our networks skills to achieve change together.

### 3. Ensuring people's views help inform health and care

Work together with professionals, providing useful insight to improve the planning, delivery and support of health and social care.

You can read our strategy in full on [our website](#).

## Our vision

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

## Our mission

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

## Our approach – what is important to us?

- Listening to people and making sure their voices are heard.
- Including everyone in the conversation – especially those who don't always have their voice heard.
- Analysing different people's experiences to learn how to improve care.
- Acting on feedback and driving change.
- Partnering with the Government, health and care services and the voluntary and community sector to make care better whilst retaining our independence.

## Our objectives

1. To build a sustainable and high-performing network of local Healthwatch services.
2. To find out the experiences of people needing or using health, public health and social care services.
3. To seek the views of those who are seldom heard and reduce the barriers they face.
4. To act on what we hear to improve health and care policy and practice.
5. To build on and share our expertise in engagement.
6. To be strong, well-governed and use our resources for the greatest impact.

## How Healthwatch England support the network

As part of our strategic aim to provide a high-quality service, we provide advice and support to the network.

We do this by providing:

- Resources and briefings on local and national health and social care issues and policy
- Training and events, including webinars and our national conference
- Advice and support from our staff

- A network site and Facebook Workplace

## People

### If you have a question...

Contact your Network Development Lead. They are your first point of contact with Healthwatch England.

The team can provide guidance and advice on a range of issues and signpost you to other members of the organisation that can help.

Network Development Leads can also help connect you with other Healthwatch across the network.

To find your Regional Network Development Lead see the staff section of our [website](#).

If you are unsure what region your Healthwatch is in, just email one of the Network Development Leads and they will be happy to help.

## Network news

### Sign up to the Healthwatch newsletter

The Healthwatch newsletter is sent out regularly and tells you more about what's happening across the network. The newsletter includes:

- What Healthwatch England is doing
- Latest news in health and social care
- Upcoming learning and development opportunities
- Links to resources

[Complete this form to sign up to our mailing list.](#)

## Online community

### Visit the network site

Healthwatch England provides a range of guidance and information to help you do your job well. You can find this on the [network site](#).

The guidance covers a range of areas including:

- Local and national health and social care policy
- Legislation that applies to local Healthwatch
- Enter and View
- Communications and social media

## Join our Facebook Workplace

Workplace is our private online community for those across the Healthwatch network to ask questions, share resources and collaborate on projects together.

If you need setting up with an account, contact [networkcomms@healthwatch.co.uk](mailto:networkcomms@healthwatch.co.uk)

## Training and Events

### Sign up to our training and events

We offer a range of different training and events for Healthwatch staff and volunteers throughout out the year including:

- Webinars on a range of health and social care topics
- Training on specific activities such as Enter and View
- Larger events and conferences for the network to come together and discuss local and national issues

All our training and events are listed on the [network site](#).

## Healthwatch reports library

### Keep up to date with other local Healthwatch reports

Do you want to be able to search and find what people are telling local Healthwatch?

We've built a tool that aims to help you.

Just head over to the [network site](#) and find the reports library under 'resources'.

This is also open to the public so anyone can search for a report. This is being updated so if you can't find what you are looking for - get in touch with one of the Healthwatch England intelligence team by emailing [research@healthwatch.co.uk](mailto:research@healthwatch.co.uk)

# Thank you for completing this induction

## Welcome to the team!

If you have any questions, contact your Network Development Lead.

## Useful links:

Healthwatch England staff and volunteer site: <https://network.healthwatch.co.uk/>

Healthwatch National Reports Library: <https://nds.healthwatch.co.uk/reports-library>

Healthwatch Workplace: <https://network.healthwatch.co.uk/chat> (don't try to set yourself up with an account – contact the network comms inbox first).