



£1,500 funding opportunity for 20 LHW to promote a national survey on delayed or inappropriate hospital discharge experiences

Apply by 9:00am on Monday 27 July 2026

Background

Healthwatch England is looking to better understand patients' and carers' experiences of hospital discharge from NHS inpatient care in England.

This project will explore both delayed discharge and cases where people felt their discharge was poorly planned, poorly communicated, unsafe, or too early; for example, because the right support, equipment, information, care or follow-up arrangements were not in place.

National guidance emphasises that people should be discharged safely, with the right support and clear communication, and that patients, families and carers should be involved in discharge planning. This project will help us understand how this is working in practice from the perspective of patients and carers.

Healthwatch England will run a national survey on SmartSurvey (via our digital communications channels), alongside wider social media promotion. We are also exploring paid media activity.

The opportunity

We are looking for 20 local Healthwatch teams to help promote the survey and boost responses from key groups whose experiences we particularly want to hear from.

We will provide **£1,500** to each successful local Healthwatch to promote the survey locally and secure eligible responses.

The findings will help update our evidence base on hospital discharge and inform Healthwatch England's engagement with DHSC, NHS England and other national stakeholders on future discharge policy.

What successful local Healthwatch will be expected to deliver

Successful applicants will be expected to:

- secure a minimum of 20 completed eligible survey responses, defined as completed surveys that meet the screening criteria, (i.e. respondents who confirm they or the person they care for have had a delayed or inappropriate discharge from an NHS inpatient stay in England within the last 12 months).
- ensure at least 10 responses are from patients or carers in your chosen target group
- share the survey as widely as possible through local networks, community partners and communications channels
- use the communications materials and survey link provided by Healthwatch England
- provide a short update on how the survey was promoted and which routes were most effective
- meet the project timetable and attend the project kick-off meeting

Healthwatch England will provide the survey link, communications toolkit, suggested copy and key messages.

Eligibility: Who we want to hear from

The survey will be open to:

- adults who have stayed overnight in an NHS hospital in England and been discharged in the last year
- carers, relatives or family who supported someone discharged from an NHS inpatient stay in England in the last year

The survey will gather information about discharge experiences, **specifically where discharge involved one or more of the following:**

- a delay after the patient was told they were medically fit or ready to leave hospital
- the patient leaving hospital before they felt ready
- discharge where support, equipment, communication, follow-up, care, transport or family arrangements were not in place

The main focus is on the patient's discharge experience, but we also want to understand the impact on carers and relatives, including stress, travel, financial impacts, disruption to work, family life, and chasing follow-up care or support.

Target groups

We are particularly looking to boost responses from:

- men
- people from ethnic minority groups (see the SmartSurvey Question 1a for the ethnic groups we are looking to reach).

These are groups which we often struggle to reach through our national self-selecting surveys.

You may apply for funding to reach **one** target group. You may also specify a **second choice** group if you wish, and we will consider your second choice if you are not selected for your first choice. Successful LHW will only be funded to reach one target group.

We would also encourage all participating local Healthwatch to promote the survey widely to other groups likely to have relevant discharge experiences, including older people, disabled people, people with long-term conditions, and carers.

Key dates

- **Monday 6 July 2026** – EOI opens
- **Monday 27 July 2026** – EOI window closes
- **By Friday 31 July 2026** – successful applicants notified
- **Monday 3 August 2026 or Tuesday 11 August** – project kick off meeting dates (only need to attend one per team, please hold in diary)

- **17 August – 9 October 2026** – survey live

Successful applicants will need to be available to attend one of the project kick-off meetings on Monday 3 August 2026, or Tuesday 11 August, and promote the survey during the fieldwork period from 17 August to 9 October 2026.

Please note that dates are subject to final confirmation.

How to Apply

Please complete the expression of interest form on SmartSurvey by **9:00am Monday 27 July 2026**

Application link: <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/JYE5H0/>

All questions in the SmartSurvey form are mandatory. Please note that expressions of interest must be submitted through the SmartSurvey form. We will not be accepting applications by email. Please note the four LHW that are working on the focus groups for the GP project are not eligible for this opportunity.

Application questions

The SmartSurvey form will ask you to answer the following questions:

1. Target group and reach

1a. Which target group are you applying to reach

- Men

- People from ethnic minority groups (please specify from our list which groups your team can reach from the list on the Smart survey)

1b. Why is your local Healthwatch well placed to reach this group ? (200 words max)

Please tell us:

- the main organisations, networks or communities you will work with
- any relevant partnerships, relationships or previous work with this group, or on the topic of hospital discharge.

2. Recruitment and promotion plan

How will you secure at least 20 eligible completed survey responses during the fieldwork period, including at least 10 from your chosen target group? (250 words max)

Please note that responses can come from patients or carers, relatives or family members.

Please describe:

- The main routes, partners or communication channels you will use (for example community organisations, hospital networks, carers' groups, social media, newsletters, or outreach activity)
- how these will help you reach people discharged from hospital in the last year, or their carers/relatives.
- how you will ensure at least 10 responses come from your chosen target group
- any practical steps you will take to support people who may need help to complete the survey

3. Delivery and capacity

How will you deliver this work within the project timeframe? (200 words max)

Please tell us:

- the name, role and contact details of the lead person responsible for delivering this project
- what staff or volunteer capacity you have during the survey period
- any relevant experience of delivering similar work, such as survey promotion or community engagement
- how you will manage delivery if plans change or key staff become unavailable

Next steps

- A cross-team panel of Healthwatch England staff will review expressions of interest during the week commencing **27 July 2026**
- We aim to notify successful applicants by **Friday 31 July 2026**
- Successful applicants will need to attend one of the project kick-off meetings on **Monday 3 August 2026 or Tuesday 11 August – If applying, please hold in your diary**
- Healthwatch England will provide the survey link, communications toolkit and further guidance after the kick-off meeting

About the funding opportunity

- Payment of **£1,500** will be made following successful delivery of the agreed activity and receipt of invoice.
- The £1,500 should cover all costs associated with promoting the survey and supporting recruitment of responses.
- The standard terms and conditions of Healthwatch England will apply.
- All costs are inclusive of VAT.
- Successful local Healthwatch will receive a dataset containing responses from their area for their own local work and analysis.

If you have any questions, please contact **nina.marsh@healthwatch.co.uk** or **research@healthwatch.co.uk**.