



healthwatch
Norfolk



Annual Report 2024–2025

Our impact

Healthwatch Norfolk

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"The impact that local Healthwatch have is vitally important. Healthwatch are empowering their communities to share their experiences. They're changing the health and care landscape and making sure that people's views are central to making care better and tackling health inequalities."

Louise Ansari, Chief Executive, Healthwatch England

A message from us

Healthwatch Norfolk is only as good as the feedback it receives.

Your experiences help shape our work and make sure we tell health and care leaders exactly what you want and need when it comes to shaping services.

It is crucial to us that people have the chance to share their views. We worked hard to ensure patients could do this face-to-face during consultation on the future of the Norwich Walk-In Centre and the Vulnerable Adults Service, especially those who may not have digital access or have no fixed abode. Our team went into hostels, homeless centres and the Vulnerable Adults Service itself to make sure people could share their views. It means health bosses will be under no illusion about the value of both services, with some calling them 'life-saving.'

We also partnered with carers of people with Serious Mental Illness (SMI) to ensure their needs were heard by mental health leaders. It is still early days, but their experiences have shaped a new Carers Charter which sets out how they should be supported in Norfolk. This will help ensure they are more of a priority in care.

Amplifying views is also key, and we ensured people's concerns about the future of the Benjamin Court facility in Cromer were heard by health leaders, as well as forging closer links with young people, the Polish community and Norfolk's care home network to help them share their feedback.

We also worked with people with learning difficulties who wanted us to help them understand access to safeguarding, what it meant and what they had to do. We have created a report as a result and are writing to the authorities to see what can be done to help with this.

And the ongoing concerns about dentistry continued. We collaborated with the NHS and Ili to make sure people were given accurate information about access to emergency appointments following patient concerns this was not happening.



**Patrick Peal
(Chair) and
Alex Stewart
(Chief
Executive)**



About us

Healthwatch Norfolk is your local health and social care champion.

We ensure that NHS leaders and decision-makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care. We can also help you find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.



Our vision

To help shape a health and social care system where people's health and social care needs are heard, understood and met.



Our mission

Listen and engage with people, especially the most vulnerable, and influence those with the power to change services so they can best meet people's needs now and in the future.



Our values are:

Inclusive: Ensure everyone feels they can share their experiences with us, and we strive to talk to those who are harder to reach.

Influential: Use your experiences to influence change and work within our networks to ensure your views reach the right people

Independent: We share your views and experiences to help drive change and improvement based on what you tell us.

Credible: We ensure the intelligence and feedback we receive is accurate and meaningful.

Collaborative: Work with patients, communities and those working in health and care to deliver the best services and care.

Our year in numbers

We've supported 3000 people to have their say and get information about their care. We currently employ 14 staff and our work is supported by 17 volunteers.

Reaching out:



5299 people shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.

197 people came to us for clear advice and information on topics such as getting an emergency dental appointment and how to find a new GP practice.

Championing your voice:



We published **40** reports about the improvements people would like to see in areas like dentistry, social care support for the over-65s and the Community Diagnostic Centre at the James Paget University Hospital in Great Yarmouth.

We also carried out **260** engagement events where our team gathered your experiences of health and social care.

Statutory funding:



We're funded by Norfolk County Council. In 2024/25 we received £369,500, compared to £355,300 in 2023/24.

A year of making a difference

Over the year we've been out and about in the community listening to your stories, engaging with partners and working to improve care in Norfolk. Here are a few highlights:

Spring

Talked to 4000 Year Six students through Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service's Crucial Crew programme. They want shorter waits, brighter waiting areas and to be spoken to in a way they understand, which will be shared with health and care leaders.

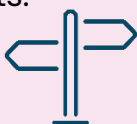


We set up a Youth Council at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in King's Lynn which is already giving feedback around the new hospital and exploring a buddying system for young staff.



Summer

New signage and volunteer guides were put in place at the James Paget University Hospital in Gorleston after we carried out engagement with patients.



NHS Norfolk and Waveney will carry out more targeted engagement with under-25s and over-65s about the NHS App following feedback we gathered which will shape their communications.



Autumn

After hearing about a lack of NHS dental access, we held a summit to put people's concerns direct to those responsible for the service together with results of research based on patient feedback.



We reassured the public the new Right Care Right Person approach to mental health crisis care is happening after organizing meetings with police and mental health care leaders. We will continue to review feedback on this.



Winter

Users of the Norwich Walk-In Centre and Vulnerable Adults Service told us how vital both services were. While a decision was made to save both, we will share evidence of their value with health leaders.



We began regular visits to care homes and secured improvements at some including individual buzzers instead of bells for residents and allowing those who were able to get their own breakfast to do so.



Working together for change

We've worked with organisations, charities and community groups in Norfolk to ensure people's experiences of care are heard and shared with decision-makers in Norfolk to help influence decisions about services.

This year, we've worked to achieve the following:

Help LGBTQIA+ community confidently access care:



Some practices have put in extra training and awareness of the needs of LGBTQIA+ patients. We worked with Norwich Pride and King's Lynn and West Norfolk Pride to find out whether community members were confident at accessing care. Some felt they were misgendered or that staff were not aware of their needs. We will carry out further surveys to gather more detailed feedback to monitor progress.

Formalizing the rights and needs of carers:



Carers will now understand their rights and the support they need in Norfolk. We worked with Norfolk Carers Voice and other carers to help gather patient voice for the All Age Carers Strategy for Norfolk, which will set out these needs and rights.

Shaping social services support for everyone:



It is now easier for members of Norfolk's Polish population to share their feedback on health and social care. We forged links with Norfolk's Polish communities through Norfolk Polonia and the Hanseatic Project to gather their feedback about social services support. Their experiences will feed directly into shaping future social services support for over-65s in Norfolk.

We've also summarised some of our other outcomes achieved this year in the Statutory Statements section at the end of this report.

Working together for change

Some further examples of working with organisations in our community are below:

Improving end-of-life care:



The views of those who lost a loved one in Norfolk are going to shape future end-of-life care. We supported Marie Curie Cancer Care by working with organisations which support the bereaved across Norfolk to gather their experiences. This work helped us gather 84 detailed responses (the largest number in the region) and recommendations based on them are being fed back directly to NHS England regional leaders.

Making sure young people have a voice:



We strengthened our partnership with the College of West Anglia in King's Lynn. As well as gathering health and social care feedback from them, we also recruited some students to be part of the new Youth Council at the nearby Queen Elizabeth Hospital we are helping to run, and also used students' experiences to help NHS leaders in Norfolk and Cambridgeshire ensure the use of health data is transparent based on their feedback.

Bridging the digital gap:



The insights of people in Norfolk will be used to create advertising and awareness campaigns for the NHS App and other digital ways to access care in Norfolk. Healthwatch Norfolk ran a survey and series of focus groups to help NHS leaders understand the low take-up of the app among under-25s and over-65s. The feedback will shape future awareness work.

Making a difference in the community

We bring people's experiences to healthcare professionals and decision-makers, using their feedback to shape services and improve care over time.

Here are some examples of our work in Norfolk this year:

Getting services to involve the public



By involving local people, services help improve care for everyone.

The rights and support needs of carers of those with Serious Mental Illness (SMI) in Norfolk are now set out in a new document for health leaders. We work with a group of SMI carers who helped shape a new Carers Charter which will set out what support and rights carers have, which will be in place later this year.

Helping GP practices boost community links



Change takes time. We work behind the scenes with services to bring about change.

We support Patient Participation Groups to bring about change for their communities. In the last 12 months, we have helped them improve communications by setting up email and newsletters, advised them on how to find out more information about service and policy changes such as the future of the Norwich Walk-In Centre, and through our communications, helped some attract more members.

Making health bosses aware of dental concerns



Hearing personal experiences and their impact on people's lives helps services better understand the issues people face.

Lack of access to dental care remains a concern in our feedback. We carried out a survey of dentists and patients to find out the issues and presented that to NHS Norfolk and Waveney bosses. We also gave them, dentists and public health experts the chance to explain the challenges and issues at a summit in public and online so the public knew why there were care challenges.

Listening to your experiences

Services can't improve if they don't know what's wrong. Your experiences shine a light on issues that may otherwise go unnoticed.

This year, we've listened to feedback from all areas of our community. People's experiences of care help us know what's working and what isn't, so we can give feedback on services and help them improve.

As well as tracking and acting on key trends, we helped to make a number of changes including improved signage at a surgery, helping patients be even more fully informed about their GP practice plans, ensure a quieter night for residents at a care home, and allow those who wanted to serve themselves their own breakfast at another care home to do so.



Listening to your experiences

Putting carers at the core of care

We are working on a long-term project with Norfolk carers of people with Serious Mental Illness (SMI) to understand what support they need.

They are sharing their experiences and concerns so that we can feed back their views to the Norfolk and Suffolk Foundation Trust to help build and improve care.

What did we do?

We launched a survey, carried out interviews with 12 people and also worked closely with a group of six to better understand how they felt support could be improved and what would help them to care for their partners, relatives or friends.

Key things we heard:



More

Staff training so the needs of carers are better supported and understood

Better

Communication and information for carers of adults with SMI

More

Involvement and voice from carers

Our work showed carers felt they were not listened to. They felt greater support and more involvement in the care process would help them and their partner, relative or friend with SMI.

What difference did this make?

The Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust set up a Carers Champions Network to provide extra support, created a trust-wide booklet with more information, and introduced Carer Awareness Training for staff.

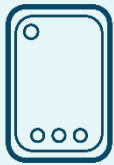
Listening to your experiences

Giving young people a voice at the QEH

A previous Healthwatch Norfolk study showed the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in King's Lynn needed to improve the way it communicated with young people.

We partnered with the hospital to set up a Youth Council of 16 to 25-year-olds to have a voice in shaping care and feeding into the design and build of the new hospital in King's Lynn.

How we communicated with the community:



14

Recruitment events were held to encourage new members to join

25

Groups, employers or organizations were engaged with about the Youth Council

The Youth Council has 10 members so far, with another five joining from Autumn 2025. Members have already held monthly meetings since December 2024 and looked at a range of different areas within the hospital.

"Our Youth Council has demonstrated insight, maturity and a genuine passion for improving patient care and staff experiences across the QEH." **Rebecca Martin, Medical Director, Queen Elizabeth Hospital**

What difference did this make?

The Youth Council has shared its views about initial design ideas for the new hospital, is working on a 'buddying' system to support new staff under 25, and wants to find ways of explaining apprenticeship opportunities to their peers. In addition, they have investigated the support given to patients who may be victims of domestic abuse and are also exploring how there could be public information for under-25s about vaping.

Hearing from all communities

We're here for all residents of Norfolk. That's why, over the past year, we've worked hard to reach out to those communities whose voices may go unheard.

Every member of the community should have the chance to share their story and play a part in shaping services to meet their needs.

This year, we have reached different communities by:

- Launching a campaign of engaging with care home residents and their families across Norfolk.
- Talking to those using hostels and homeless support centres in Norwich.
- Increasing our engagement with young people by talking to 4000 Year Six pupils through the Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service Crucial Crew programme.



Hearing from all communities

Making sure the vulnerable have their voice

We carried out face-to-face engagement with people in homeless hostels and using support services for those with No Fixed Abode (NFA).

NHS consultation on a specialist GP service for those with NFA was not carrying out engagement with those who may use it. We set up a week-long programme of engagement at various sites to make sure this happened.

What difference did this make?

During our fortnightly updates with NHS officials, we strongly highlighted the universal opposition to the possible closure, which resulted in the consultation ending early and the services being saved. We continued with engagement to get valuable feedback around what worked and what did not, as well as help people with details of other support services and advice.

Ensuring people can share their experiences whatever their language

Norfolk has a large Polish community and we wanted to make sure they can share their experiences about being a carer.

We worked with Polonia and the Hanseatic League to find out what support they needed when looking after someone aged 65-plus.

What difference did this make?

It ensured those who may not have English as a main language could share face-to-face experiences and feedback. While their views are still being analyzed as part of the project, we have forged a long-term relationship with both groups to ensure members of Norfolk's Polish community feel they can share their feedback to help shape and improve services.

Information and signposting

Whether it's finding an NHS dentist, making a complaint, or choosing a good care home for a loved one – you can count on us. This year 206 people have reached out to us for advice, support or help finding services.

This year, we've helped people by:

- Providing up-to-date information people can trust
- Helping people access the services they need
- Supporting people to look after their health
- Signposting people to additional support services



Helping people get emergency dental care

Thanks to feedback from several patients, we helped improve access to emergency NHS dental appointments.

Our team were getting calls from people seeking emergency appointments via 111 who were given details of dental practices who could not offer support which increased anxiety for patients who were in pain.

We made contact with 111 and NHS Norfolk and Waveney to highlight the issue. While there is still demand for appointments, patients were given more accurate information about which practices were offering emergency care.

Our team keep a close eye on this and know how to raise this. Our Chief Executive Officer also sits on the Local Dental Network to ensure this, and any other issues highlighted by patients, can be heard.

Information making a real difference

People often call or email us desperate for help and not sure where to get it. Here are a few examples of where we helped. *We have used assumed names below to hide their identity*

Sheila and Frank had moved to Norfolk and did not know how to find a GP. We helped them find one so they could have appointments and ensure their health was monitored.

The families of Gerald and Patrick were worried their health was deteriorating due to a stroke (Gerald) and sight loss (Patrick). We put them in touch with organisations to help and support them, so they did not feel isolated and anxious.

Recently bereaved Alfred feared being alone over the festive season. We found him a place to have Christmas Day lunch with others.

Finance and future priorities

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

Our income and expenditure:

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from Government	£369,500	Expenditure on pay	£552,776
Additional income	£463,118	Non-pay expenditure	£28,781
		Office and management fee	£154,142
Total income	£832,618	Total Expenditure	£735,699

Additional income is broken down into:

- £108,618 from the local NHS for joint work on various projects.
- £99,420 from Norfolk County Council for work discovering people's experiences of social services support if they are 65+.
- £65,000 from the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in King's Lynn for joint work on various projects including setting up and running its Youth Council.

Integrated Care System (ICS) funding:

Healthwatch Norfolk also receives funding from our Integrated Care System (ICS) to support new areas of collaborative work at this level, including:

Purpose of ICS funding	Amount
Patient and public engagement	£45,000
Working on greater awareness of digital access to care	£28,770
Patient feedback on transforming community mental health	£27,350

Finance and future priorities

You can find details of some of our other funding and what it was used for below:

Other funding includes	Amount
Public engagement on the Community Diagnostic Centre at the James Paget Hospital in Gorleston	£23,892
Working with Marie Curie Cancer Care on finding out people's experiences of end-of-life care in Norfolk	£3,000
Finding out people's experiences of adult social services for Norfolk County Council	£99,420
Work with carers of those with a Serious Mental Illness (SMI) to improve support for them	£40,000
Partner with NHS England to talk to patients about how their medical data is held	£10,000
Work with Norfolk Community Health and Care (NCH&C) on a range of patient engagement projects	£98,445
Working with maternity and neonatology professionals for NHS Norfolk and Waveney	£14,996
Running grant-writing workshops for the NICHE team at the School of Health Sciences at the University of East Anglia	£4,000



Finance and future priorities

Next steps:

Over the next year, we will keep reaching out to every part of society, especially people in the most deprived areas, so that those in power hear their views and experiences.

We will also work together with partners and our local Integrated Care System to help develop an NHS culture where, at every level, staff strive to listen and learn from patients to make care better.

Our priorities for the next year are:

1. Roll out Youth Councils to other hospitals in Norfolk.
2. Carry out more engagement with adults who have no fixed abode.
3. Create a Trauma Awareness Card which can be used in Norfolk.
4. Continue working on increasing digital access to healthcare in partnership with NHS Norfolk and Waveney.
5. Ensure safeguarding is more accessible to those with learning difficulties.



Statutory statements

Healthwatch Norfolk, Suite 6, The Old Dairy Farm, Elm Farm Business Park, Norwich Common, Wymondham, NR18 0SW.

Healthwatch Norfolk 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.

Our Healthwatch Board consists of eight members who work voluntarily to provide direction, oversight, and scrutiny of our activities.

Our Board ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community.

Throughout 2024/25, the Board met four times and made decisions on matters such as agreeing a programme of engagement with residents of Norfolk care homes and to strengthen relationships within the Norfolk and Suffolk Foundation Trust to lobby for better mental health care. We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities.

Methods and systems used across the year to obtain people's experiences

We use a wide range of approaches to ensure that as many people as possible can provide us with insight into their experience of using services.

During 2024/25, we have been available by phone and email, provided a web form on our website and through social media, and attended meetings of community groups and forums.

We ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. We will publish it on our website, have printed copies available, and produce a video review of the year to be released at our 2025 Annual General Meeting.

Statutory statements

Responses to recommendations

We had no providers who did not respond to requests for information or recommendations. There were no issues or recommendations escalated by us to the Healthwatch England Committee, so there were no resulting reviews or investigations.

Taking people's experiences to decision-makers

We ensure that people who can make decisions about services hear about the insights and experiences shared with us.

For example, in our local authority area, we take information to the Health Overview Scrutiny Committee (HOSC), the Health and Wellbeing Board, and the Adult Safeguarding Board. We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers at the Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board. For example, we attend the Patients and Communities Committee, the Primary Care Commissioning Committee, Norfolk Place Boards, and Health and Wellbeing Partnerships. We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Norfolk is represented on the Norfolk Health and Wellbeing Board by Patrick Peal, Healthwatch Norfolk Chair.

Healthwatch Norfolk is represented on Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Partnerships by Alex Stewart, Chief Executive, and Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Boards by Alex Stewart, Chief Executive.



Statutory statements

2024 – 2025 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
SMI Carers Year 1	Engaged with carers of people with Serious Mental Illness (SMI) to find out more about their experience (survey = 64, focus group = six, and interview = 13)
	Delivered a final report which directly influenced mental health service improvement planning at Trust level.
	Norfolk and Suffolk Foundation Trust (NSFT) introduced Carer Awareness via e-learning which was monitored by Carer Leads to ensure compliance.
	NSFT created Carer Forums from each service within NSFT which supports adults with SMI (still in progress).
Adult Social Care Year 1	Collected qualitative insights from 20 service users per topic to inform adult social care improvements. A survey questionnaire investigating people's experiences was completed by 270 people. Interviewed 30 health and social care professionals for their views on how services listen to older people, and how integrated hospital discharge is.
James Paget University Hospital Community Diagnostic Centre	We heard from 130 patients and carers through the survey, 43 people on the hospital site, and six via a focus group. We also talked to 12 staff members to gather feedback.
	New signage has been put in place with positive initial feedback from patients.

Statutory statements

2024 – 2025 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
James Paget University Hospital Community Diagnostic Centre	Following our report, hospital volunteers are now available to escort patients and carers to their appointments.
Digital Tools Year 3	Captured feedback from 782 people to assess how accessible and effective digital health and care tools are, and also to raise awareness of the NHS App.
	Previous engagement highlighted a need to communicate more with younger people, so we ran targeted engagement with students from the College of West Anglia.
	Across the three years of the project, we have increased awareness of the NHS App by sending out targeted communications to 6000 people through our newsletter about it and where to get support using it.
Community Mental Health Transformation Year 3	Gathered lived experience insights from 176 people with serious mental illness to shape future services.
Queen Elizabeth Hospital Youth Council	Engaged with hundreds of young people through schools, colleges and employers to set up the council which directly feeds into decision-making.
	It has already looked at assessing domestic violence risk and will also look at highlighting pathways to employment, vaping, and digital access to care.

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