

What is Healthwatch?

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Introduction

Healthwatch was established under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to understand the needs, experiences and concerns of people who use health and social care services and to speak out on their behalf.

Healthwatch exists on a national and local level, working towards the same goal of enabling people to have a voice about their health and social care systems. Healthwatch England and local Healthwatch work together to share information, expertise and learning to improve health and social care services in England.

Healthwatch England

Healthwatch England are a statutory committee of the independent regulator, the Care Quality Commission (CQC). Their main statutory functions are to:

- Provide support, leadership and guidance to local Healthwatch organisations
- Escalate concerns from local Healthwatch about health and social care services to the CQC
- Provide advice to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, NHS England and English local authorities, especially where the quality of service is not adequate

Local Healthwatch

There are 152 local Healthwatch organisations across England, they listen to the issues that really matter to local communities. They are entirely independent and are funded by and accountable to local authorities. The main statutory functions of local Healthwatch include:

- Gather local people's views and experiences of health and social care services and share them with commissioners and decision-makers
- Make recommendations about how services could or should be improved
- Provide information and advice to the public about health and social care services
- Promote and support the involvement of people in the monitoring, commissioning and provision of local health and social care services

- Pass on relevant information to Healthwatch England and when there are areas of concern, the CQC

Local Healthwatch in North and West Northamptonshire

Healthwatch North and West Northamptonshire serves a vibrant and diverse population across a county governed by two councils—North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire. With both rural and urban areas, the county is home to a broad demographic, including growing towns and ageing populations.

Our team is the equivalent of 4.2 members of staff and operates along with a committed group of enthusiastic volunteers, who work diligently to represent the voices of this varied community. Our volunteer-led Advisory Board, which meets four times a year, provides strategic direction, oversight, and scrutiny of our activities, ensuring that the work we do reflects the real concerns and interests of residents across Northamptonshire. Together, we strive to make sure local health and social care services meet the needs of everyone in the county.

Our contract holders are [Connected Together Community Interest Company\(CTCIC\)](#). It is a social enterprise and aims to be first for community engagement across the county of Northamptonshire and beyond.

What we do

We use a wide range of approaches to ensure that as many people as possible can share their experiences of using health and social care services with us. We listen to the public's views by:

- Telephone, email and website
- In person at local groups and events
- Taking stands to spaces like community centres and the University
- Undertaking projects and campaigns determined by local feedback
- We listen to patients, their families and their carers within healthcare settings—we have a statutory right to enter their premises to do so. This is called an Enter and View.

We work to help people get the best out of health and social care services in Northamptonshire. By listening to the public's experiences, good or bad, we can help shape the services received. We have powerful, statutory rights to represent the public's views. They are used to influence the people who provide services and make decisions about them.

We take additional steps to ensure we obtain the views of people from diverse backgrounds, including those who are often not heard by health and care decision-makers.

We operate in a transparent and effective way, ensuring that we keep the public up to date with our work and informed of local health and social care information. We do this by:

- A Monthly newsletter
- Sharing updates from ourselves, local organisations and general information through social media
- Publishing reports and news on our website
- Holding an annual meeting in public
- Attending local organisations' meetings
- Holding Advisory Board meetings in public

What we do not do

We do not:

- Provide an advocacy service
- Get involved in national or local party politics
- Reveal the identities of those who give us feedback or contribute to research, unless we have received consent to do so

Want to know more?

Email gabriella@healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk or see the next page for other ways to contact us.



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