



Speaking up for better care

Healthwatch North Northamptonshire annual
report 2025/26

Contents

Meet our Chairs	3
About us	4
Our year in numbers	5
A year of making a difference	6
Working together for change	7
Making a difference in the community	8
Listening to your experiences	9
Hearing from all communities	11
Information and signposting	13
Showcasing volunteer impact	15
Finance and future priorities	17
Statutory statements	19

Meet our Chairs

The Chairs of our Advisory Group bring together academic expertise, system leadership experience, and lived experience of health and social care to ensure services are shaped by evidence, collaboration, and community voice. Working across mental health, public health, local government, and lived experience networks, they share a commitment to improving outcomes through co-production, reducing inequalities, and strengthening how people's voices inform decision-making.

Jacqueline Parkes is Professor of Applied Mental Health at the University of Northampton and an experienced mental health nurse with a strong focus on dementia, mental health, and person-centred care, alongside extensive work in research, education, and community-based service evaluation. **Gill Mercer** brings senior experience from local government and integrated care leadership, having worked across health and wellbeing strategy, system partnerships, and public service governance to strengthen collaboration and use public insight to improve services. **Rashmi Shah** is a lived experience advocate and expert by experience in health and social care, with a focus on disability inclusion and racial health inequality; he has held multiple NHS and voluntary sector governance roles and uses his experience as a former carer and community representative to champion co-production and ensure marginalised voices influence service design and delivery.



Co-Chair
Professor Jacqueline
Parkes



Co-Chair
Gill Mercer



Co-Chair
Rashmi Shah

About us

Healthwatch **North Northamptonshire** 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 reduce health inequalities by ensuring every community voice is heard, valued and influences better health and social care.



Our mission

To listen to local people, amplify their voices, and use their experiences to influence better, more equitable health and social care across North Northamptonshire.



Our values are:

Independence: We act independently and without bias, championing the voices of local people and holding decision-makers to account.

Consistency: We engage consistently with all communities, ensuring every voice is heard and valued, particularly those least often heard.

Relationships: We build strong, collaborative relationships that enable us to work together to improve health and social care.

Trust: We act with integrity, honesty and transparency, using evidence to build trust and drive positive change.

Impact: We are committed to creating meaningful change by influencing improvements and holding ourselves and others accountable.

Impact Focused: We focus on delivering measurable improvements that make a real difference to the health and wellbeing of people in North Northamptonshire.

Our year in numbers

In 2025/2026 we supported more than **500** people to have their say and get information about their care. We employed **2** staff and, our work was supported by **8** volunteers.



Reaching out:

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

210 people came to us to share their experience of either accessing services or difficulty booking appointments.



Championing your voice:

We published **5** reports about the improvements people would like to see in areas like **primary care and hospital care**.

Our most popular report was our **KGH Paediatrics Enter & View Report**, highlighting people's experiences of accessing children's care at a local hospital.



Statutory funding:

We're funded by **North Northamptonshire Council**. In 2025/26 we received **£109,852.55**.

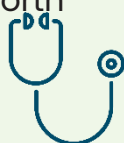
Following a promising first 12 months, we have significantly expanded our community engagement activity to ensure that in 2026/27 we hear from a broader range of community voices, strengthen relationships, and ensure our work reflects the needs and priorities of the communities we serve.

A year of making a difference

Over the past year we have been establishing our service, building the foundations for how we work, and beginning to capture people's experiences, deliver community health events, and shape the way we share progress and improvement across North Northamptonshire.

Spring

Mobilised Healthwatch service in North Northamptonshire. Opening feedback channels on our website, launching a dedicated Healthwatch North Northamptonshire phone number and email address.



Gathered 87 experiences from local people, with a focus on GP appointments and difficulty accessing services. Identified low response on demographic data and overrepresentation from people aged 65 or over.



Summer

Appointed a Service Manager and Research & Community Engagement Manager. Priorities were identified including increasing visibility, quality of feedback and establishing an advisory group.



Updated the experience form on our website to promote sharing demographic data to help us identify trends or specific difficulties that face particular communities. Improvements observed in the quality of feedback.



Autumn

Established community drop-ins at local charitable services and community spaces to improve visibility and listen to local people's experiences of health and social care services.



Established relationships with local community services. Increase contacts with local people and started to identify trends through experiences shared.



Winter

Established a Healthwatch North Northamptonshire advisory group to provide oversight and guidance. Introduced community surgeries in community spaces to be more accessible.



Gathered 234 experiences, predominantly from community engagement. Facilitated collaborative community health events focusing on promoting wellbeing and making health checks accessible.



Working together for change

Healthwatch North Northamptonshire works in partnership with health, public health, voluntary and community organisations to improve health and social care services. By bringing together community voices, lived experience and strategic partnerships, we help ensure local people shape the services they use.

This year, we have worked collaboratively with partners across North Northamptonshire to improve health and social care services. Highlights include:



Working with Voluntary Sector Partners:

Healthwatch North Northamptonshire works with voluntary sector partners to deliver Community Surgeries and drop-ins, making our service accessible to communities across North Northamptonshire. These sessions enable people to share their experiences of health and social care, receive advice, guidance and information, and have their voices heard. The insight gathered helps influence improvements to local health and social care services.



Collaborating with Public Health:

Healthwatch North Northamptonshire has worked with Public Health to deliver NHS Health Checks across North Northamptonshire, helping identify early signs of conditions such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes and kidney disease. By working with trusted community partners, we have successfully reached vulnerable and seldom-heard communities, improving access to preventative healthcare and reducing health inequalities.



Community Voices Shaping our Work:

Healthwatch North Northamptonshire has established an 18-member Advisory Group comprising people with lived experience and representatives from health, social care and the VCSE sector. The group helps shape strategic priorities, informs research, promotes co-production, reviews recommendations and ensures community voices remain central to improving local health and social care services.

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

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 **North Northamptonshire** this year:



Creating empathy by bringing experiences to life

Hearing people's experiences helps services understand the real impact of decisions on individuals and families.

When a local hospital suspended its home birthing service, we worked with the Integrated Care Board, maternity services and affected families to identify solutions and ensure their experiences were heard. By bringing together those involved, we helped create constructive conversations, improve understanding of the barriers faced and ensure families felt listened to throughout the process.



Getting services to involve the public

By involving local people, services can better understand their experiences and make improvements that enhance patient care.

We carried out an Enter and View visit to the paediatric departments at a local hospital, where families highlighted uncertainty around waiting times. We recommended displaying departmental waiting times, including delays for patients awaiting transfer to other departments, to improve communication, manage expectations and enhance the patient experience.



Improving care over time

Through our Enter and View programme, we work collaboratively with providers to understand people's experiences, identify opportunities for improvement and support better quality care.

This year, we will carry out Enter and View visits at a primary and urgent care service and a social care setting. These visits allow us to observe services, speak with patients, families and staff, and provide independent recommendations that help services continuously improve the quality of care and the experiences of those who use them.

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.



Making it easy to share your experience

Last year, we found that many local people were not aware that Healthwatch North Northamptonshire exists or that we are here to support them. As a result, people were often unsure where to go to share their experiences or how their voices could influence health and care services.

We also recognised that many people did not realise their feedback could make a real difference to services. This highlighted the need for us to raise awareness and make it clearer how people's experiences can help shape improvements locally.

What did we do

We established community surgeries in local community spaces, facilitating drop-in sessions within existing services, and carrying out promotional outreach in high-footfall public areas such as shopping centres and supermarkets to raise awareness of Healthwatch North Northamptonshire and make it easier for people to share their experiences and access support.

Key things we heard:

38%

of users shared experiences relating to GP surgeries.

20%

of users reported difficulties with booking appointments with their GP.

7%

Of users reported difficulties using anima.

What does this mean?

These results will be shared with local primary care providers and relevant Integrated Care Board partners to support a clearer understanding of where barriers may be occurring across both traditional and digital access routes. Further work will focus on exploring the underlying causes of these difficulties, including reviewing appointment systems, user experience of online platforms such as Anima, and potential communication gaps for patients. This information will also be used to inform ongoing discussions with GP practices about how access can be improved, ensuring that future service development reflects the needs and experiences of local residents.

Hearing from all communities

We're here for all residents of **North Northamptonshire**. 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:

- Facilitating drop-ins in community spaces that support those who experience homelessness, drug & alcohol dependencies, and mental health difficulties.
- Facilitated 5 community health events offering free health checks to local people.
- Attended meetings/forums with Local Authority, Integrated Care Board, VCSE, Oral Health Alliance, Health & Wellbeing Board, and Local Area Partnerships to share trends and to discuss solutions to barriers experienced by local people when **accessing** health and social care services.



Supporting Black communities to share their experiences

We reached communities in their community spaces by collaborating with partners.

We worked closely with trusted community organisations, including Northamptonshire Black Communities Together, Age Well, Asha Deep, and WACA to make it easier for people from Black communities to share their experiences of health and social care. By attending community events, hosting dedicated Healthwatch information stands, and speaking directly with local people, we created more accessible opportunities for engagement. We also provided advice, information, and translated leaflets where appropriate, helping people better understand available services and feel more confident in sharing their experiences.

What difference did this make?

By working with trusted community partners and engaging with people in familiar community settings, we reached individuals who may not otherwise have shared their experiences. This approach helped build trust, improve understanding of health and social care services, and ensure that more diverse voices were heard, enabling us to gather feedback that better reflects the needs and experiences of Black communities.

Helping refugees & those seeking asylum understand and access NHS care

Refugees and people seeking asylum told us they needed help to understand how to access health and social care services.

We supported refugees and people seeking asylum to better understand and access health and social care services by helping them register with GPs, explaining how to access the right care when needed, using interpreter services, and signposting them to appropriate support.

What difference did this make?

By providing clear information, practical support, and interpreter services, we helped refugees and people seeking asylum better understand how to access health and social care. This increased their confidence in navigating the healthcare system and helped ensure they could access the right services at the right time.

Information and signposting

When you're struggling to find an NHS dentist, looking for help about how to make a complaint, or need advice about a good care home for a loved one – we're your first port of call.

This year over **200** people have reached out to us for advice, support or help finding services. These conversations also help us to understand where, and how, your care can be made better.

This year, we've helped people by:

- Informing people of the urgent dental care service when they were unable to register with an NHS dentist but require urgent dental care.
- Raising awareness of the different health services (GP, Urgent Treatment Centre, Ili, A&E), how they differ and when to use them.
- Supporting people understand the complaints process for health care services.
- Raising awareness of support available through Adult Social Care, and community services when the threshold for Adult Social Care is not met.



Case Study 1

Supporting Timely Access to Healthcare

A person experiencing significant ongoing pain due to a long-term health condition approached our service while also facing insecure living circumstances. Delays to planned treatment had affected both their physical wellbeing and emotional health, and they were finding it increasingly difficult to access the support they needed. Our team worked with their GP practice to arrange an urgent pain management appointment, enabling them to receive appropriate treatment within days. We have continued to provide practical support with follow-up healthcare appointments and signposting for wider wellbeing needs. Prompt intervention improved their comfort, reduced distress, and helped ensure they remained engaged with the healthcare services they needed.

Case Study 2

Advocating for Person-Centred Maternity Care

An expectant parent contacted our service after learning that their preferred birth option was no longer available due to local service changes. Feeling anxious and unsupported, they were unsure what choices remained. We explored all available commissioning options, escalated concerns to senior clinical leaders, and worked collaboratively with maternity services to ensure the individual's preferences and circumstances were fully considered. This advocacy led to renewed discussions around care planning, improved communication with senior clinicians, and a personalised review of available birth options. The individual remained fully informed throughout the process and felt listened to and involved in decisions about their care.

Showcasing volunteer impact

Our fantastic volunteers have generously given their time to support our work. Thanks to their dedication to improving care, we can better understand what is working and what needs improving in our community.

This year, our volunteers:

- Have attended local area partnership and system meetings to be a voice for local people.
- Supported our Enter & Views by listening to people, making observations and identifying areas of improvement.
- Were instrumental in the delivery of our community health and wellbeing events across the county where local people were able to access information on health and social care services, as well as access on the day health checks.



At the heart of what we do

Enter & Views

Our volunteers have been at the heart of our work throughout the year, giving their time, energy and compassion to ensure the voices of local people are heard and acted upon. Their contribution to our Enter and View programme has been invaluable, enabling us to visit health and social care services across the county and gather honest, independent feedback from people using those services. Volunteers have spent countless hours listening with empathy, documenting experiences sensitively and anonymously, observing care environments, engaging with staff, and developing a thorough understanding of how services operate. Their thoughtful observations and carefully considered recommendations have helped identify opportunities for improvement, ensuring that the experiences of local people continue to influence the quality and delivery of health and social care. Their professionalism, dedication and commitment to improving services for others has been exceptional, and their willingness to give their time so generously has strengthened our ability to champion positive, lasting change.

Community Health & Wellbeing Events

Our volunteers have also played a vital role in the success of our community health and wellbeing events, helping us reach hundreds of local people with trusted information, advice and support. By welcoming attendees, facilitating conversations, signposting people to relevant services and working collaboratively alongside NHS colleagues, local authorities and voluntary sector partners, they have helped create welcoming, inclusive events that encourage people to engage with their health and wellbeing. Through their support, local people have been able to access information on a wide range of topics including diabetes, dementia, cancer awareness, veterans' services, mental health, wellbeing, smoking cessation and free NHS Health Checks. Their enthusiasm, kindness and ability to connect with people from all walks of life have made these events both accessible and impactful. Quite simply, the scale and reach of our community engagement work this year would not have been possible without the commitment of our volunteers. They are an integral part of our organisation, and their generosity, passion and belief in making a difference continue to strengthen our work and improve outcomes for communities across the county.

Be part of the change.

If you've felt inspired, contact us today and find out how you can be part of the change.



www.healthwatchnn.org.uk/volunteer



03300 436453



info@healthwatchnn.org.uk

Finance and future priorities

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

Our income and expenditure:

		Expenditure	
Contract from NNC for core Healthwatch activities	£109,852.55	Expenditure on pay	£79,602.30
Additional income	£14,160	Non-pay expenditure	£14,625.70
		Mobilisation Costs	£18,952.55
Total income	£124,012.55	Total Expenditure	£113,180.55

Finance and future priorities

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 top three priorities for the next year are:

- 1. Public Health** – targeted engagement with Black Communities (South Asian, African-Caribbean) across North Northamptonshire to increase the number of Community NHS Health Checks – evaluation report now completed showing trusted partners in communities increase engagement with preventative interventions.
- 2. Primary Care** – directly supporting the New Models of Care East Northamptonshire Innovator to engage with local communities and ensure that access points for primary care services are scoped with communities.
- 3. Strategic Volunteering** – creating a sustainable network of Healthwatch Volunteers to gain the voices of all communities, particularly those that are seldom-heard across North Northamptonshire.

Statutory statements

Support Northamptonshire hold the contract to deliver the Healthwatch North Northamptonshire service.

Support Northamptonshire, Victoria Centre, 46–50 Palk Road, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, NN8 1HR

Healthwatch North 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.

Our Healthwatch Advisory Group consists of **18** 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 2025/26, the Board met **4** times and made decisions on matters such as **agreeing on annual priorities**. 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 2025/26, 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 <https://www.healthwatchnn.org.uk/Service-Reports-2025>

Statutory statements

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 & Wellbeing Board, Place Committee, and Primary Care Forums.

We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in **Northamptonshire Integrated Care System**. We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch **North Northamptonshire** is working alongside the Leicester, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Rutland (LLNR) cluster of Local Healthwatch Teams to ensure there is Healthwatch representation on the ICB Board.

During 2025/26, our representative has effectively carried out this role by regular engagement with partners across health, social care, and the voluntary sector, they provide insight into emerging themes, trends, and issues identified through our service, ensuring that the experiences of local people inform strategic planning and decision-making. By sharing intelligence on access to health and social care, highlighting areas of unmet need, and identifying developing challenges, they contribute to system-wide oversight and collaborative problem-solving. This ongoing involvement strengthens partnership working, supports early identification of emerging issues, and helps influence improvements that enhance outcomes for people across the county.

Statutory statements

Enter and view

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
Kettering General Hospital – Paediatrics	Proactive action.	Wrote a report with recommendations – the service followed up on these, and report was published to Healthwatch North Northamptonshire Website

2025 – 2026 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
Community Health & Wellbeing Events	Completed 5 events across North Northamptonshire reaching hundreds of local people.
Community Health Checks	Helped facilitate 35 free health checks to some of the most vulnerable people in society
Community Surgeries	Completed 8 community surgeries helping local people receive support, guidance and information on health and social care.
Community Drop-ins	Completed over 30 community drop-ins collaborating with VCFSE services to reach some of the most vulnerable people.
Enter & Views	Completed an Enter & View at Kettering General Hospitals Paediatrics Department providing recommendations and publishing full report. Scheduled 2 additional E&Vs.

Healthwatch North Northamptonshire
Victoria Centre
46-50 Palk Road
Wellingborough
NN8 1HR



www.healthwatchnn.org.uk



03300 436 453



info@healthwatchnn.org.uk



[/HealthwatchNN](https://www.facebook.com/HealthwatchNN)



[@healthwatchNN](https://www.instagram.com/healthwatchNN)