

## **Partnership Boards Report – October 2025**

### **Purpose**

1. This report provides an update on Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Partnership Board activities during the past year.

### **Key items**

1. The report highlights progress achieved, positive changes made, and challenges encountered.
2. It sets out how issues raised by Independent Members have been addressed and how this has influenced services.
3. The report also outlines future priorities to strengthen the impact of the Partnership Boards.

### **Action required by the Board**

The Board is asked to:

- Note the report

### **Author**

Carole Rose – Head of Administration and Finance

01 October 2025

---

### **What Has Gone Well and Changes Made This Year**

- **Public Transport:** Concerns were raised about accessible buses and disabled parking. Independent Members took part in a consultation in September 2024, influencing the franchising process.
- **Raising Awareness:** Our Project Manager represented Independent Members in a Disability Hate Crime awareness video for National Hate Crime Awareness Week (January 2025).
- **Accessible Information:** Concerns about the lack of Easy Read annual health check letters for people with learning disabilities were escalated to both the MHLDA Board and ICB level.
- **Loneliness and Social Prescribing:** The Older People's Board highlighted that GP appointments often relate to loneliness. A Social Prescriber attended the Board to discuss alternatives to clinical appointments.
- **Carers' Voices:** Following feedback about confusing and intimidating wording in a financial payments letter, CCC made a commitment to pass on

the concerns to those in charge of writing these letters to improve communication in the future.

- **Sensory Impairment Issues:**
    - Reports of taxi and Uber drivers refusing lifts to people with guide dogs led to disciplinary action. RNIB's Inclusive Journeys policy lead has since engaged directly with the Board.
    - Concerns about the absence of BSL interpreters at eye-care appointments were raised to ICB level.
  - **Learning Disability Partnership Board:** Terms of Reference are being updated to reflect the inclusion of autistic people, introduce plain text, to use photo symbols more within Easy Read texts, and ensure presenters share questions in advance for preparation.
- 

## **Challenges and How They Have Been Addressed**

### **Recruitment**

- Recruiting Independent Members has been difficult but has improved with targeted outreach and direct engagement.
- Prospective members now attend meetings as guests before committing, reducing drop-out rates.
- Recent progress includes:
  1. Three new members on the Physical Disability Board
  2. Two new members on the Sensory Impairment Board
  3. One new member on the Older People's Board (with another joining soon)
  4. A new male member joining the Carers Board – addressing a long-standing gender imbalance
  5. One new participant supported by Voiceability for the Learning Disability Board
- Recruitment now focuses on under-represented areas such as Peterborough and Fenland, with representation improved across all Boards.

### **Onboarding and Support**

- Processes have been streamlined through closer collaboration between the Project Manager and Volunteer Manager.
- New members receive timely information, training, and support.

### **Accessible Meetings**

- Hybrid meetings are now standard, supported by a portable OWL system. This improves access for carers, lip readers, and members who struggle with travel.
- Venues can now be more local and less intimidating (e.g. village halls), while still enabling hybrid access.
- Meetings for people with learning disabilities are now co-designed with Voiceability to ensure preparation and accessibility.

### **Attendance**

- Attendance continues to fluctuate due to members' personal and health circumstances.
- Increased membership, hybrid technology, and more focused agendas have helped improve overall engagement.
- Professionals remain keen to present to Boards, ensuring members' lived experience shapes service design and delivery.

---

### **Wheelchair Users Group**

Although not formally part of the Partnership Boards, the Wheelchair Users Group is now supported in the same way.

- A recent "walkabout" event in Wisbech showcased access challenges, attracting a councillor and highways department engagement.
- The event generated wider interest, with councillors committing to attend future sessions.
- Issues raised include: overgrown hedges, uneven paving, lack of ramps, and criteria for NHS wheelchair provision.
- AJM Healthcare now attends meetings and is working with the Wheelchair Skills College to develop training and support locally.
- Members contributed to a wheelchair services survey linked to the upcoming tendering process.

A proposed **Dementia Panel** is expected to follow a similar model.

---

## The Way Forward

- **Focused Meetings:** Each meeting now has a specific theme. For example, the August 2025 meeting focused on transport accessibility, resulting in a strong collaboration with Cambridge City Council's taxi licensing team. Independent Members are now helping shape driver training and policy.
  - **Member-Led Insight:** Meetings now begin with a 5-minute personal story from an Independent Member, which has had a powerful impact on professionals.
  - **Clearer Accountability:** A new traffic-light Action Report will be circulated and monitored at each meeting to track progress.
  - **Improved Feedback:** Our new Admin Assistant will capture and log individual feedback directly onto the IMP system, ensuring experiences are systematically reported and acted on.
- 

## Summary

The Partnership Boards have navigated a year of both challenge and opportunity:

- A change in leadership brought new energy to recruitment, meeting design, and accessibility.
- Membership has grown, particularly in under-represented areas, and hybrid technology has improved access.
- Stronger engagement from professionals has reinforced the Boards' role as a vital platform for people with lived experience.
- The closure of Healthwatch has understandably caused concern, but Independent Members have been reassured that their voices remain valued and influential.

The Partnership Boards continue to provide a meaningful space for people to shape services and advocate for change. Both staff and members remain committed to ensuring feedback leads to real improvements in people's lives.