

Championing what matters to you

Annual Report 2021–22

Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Healthwatch Peterborough



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Cover picture shows Healthwatch volunteer Eunice Alhassan with her daughter.

Eunice is a Community Listener and Maternity Voices volunteer. She enjoys going to events, meeting people and listening to their stories. She told us, "I have always held the opinion that you should give back to the community where you live locally. And when I came to England I wanted to contribute."

Welcome

A message from our Chair

Welcome to our Annual Report. I do hope you enjoy reading about what we've done over the last year to make a difference to local services.

This has been a year where local health and care services and the people who use them have been equally challenged. The issues of access to services, hospital waiting times and the scourge of health inequalities have all been made worse by the Covid-19 pandemic. I am sorry to say that these challenges are likely to remain for some time to come.



How health and care services manage these enormous pressures is crucial. They also need to do more to prevent illness by helping people take control of their lives so they can stay healthy for longer.

It is against this challenging background that I suggest there has never been a more important time for Healthwatch. An organisation that listens to local feedback and makes sure NHS leaders and other decision makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care.

Services should work around the needs of those who use them. And those people should be given the opportunity to help design them – everyone will benefit from this approach.

From July, the different organisations that help you with your health and care will be brought together as Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Integrated Care System.

So local councils, NHS hospitals, community health services, family doctors, NHS 111, ambulance and voluntary services are joining up. And they will work together to plan, pay for and deliver care in communities across our area.

I am pleased that your Healthwatch has been fully involved in this process and now has a seat at the table where decisions are made. This is important to ensure that your voice can be heard loud and clear when decisions are taken that affect you.

I have been in the Chair for nine months now – since October 2021— and have been listening and have learned a lot. I am grateful for the many senior figures in the NHS and local government who have given their time and have listened to the issues we have raised.

I would like to thank our CEO Sandie Smith and her team for their outstanding work during such a difficult period. My grateful thanks also to my colleagues on the Board, many of whom have joined over the last two years. Finally, my thanks to all those who give their time freely to volunteer for Healthwatch in so many different ways. Your contribution is greatly valued and helps to make Healthwatch what it is – your health and care champion.

Stewart Francis
Chair

Our year

It has been another extraordinary year as Covid-19 has continued to affect everyone's lives. This report tells some of our stories of the last year, and the difference you've made by sharing your experiences of care.

Sadly, our NHS and care services are still under huge pressure and waiting lists for hospital and community care treatments are growing. We are also continuing to hear about the difficulties people are having booking a GP appointment or finding an NHS dentist.



We know that the poorest members of our community have generally been affected the most, so we work extra hard to listen to and amplify their voices.

A record number of people contacted us this year to share their experiences of care, with almost half (48%) asking for advice from our information service.

As the Covid-19 vaccination programme continued, we took your concerns and questions to the local NHS. We were worried about the people who are too sick to leave their homes and made sure they were covered in vaccination plans.

We have continued to champion the NHS Accessible Information Standard and joined with the national Your Care, Your Way campaign to make sure people get information in a format they can understand.

Thank you to everyone who has supported our work over the last year. Together we can help services provide the best possible care for local people.

Sandie Smith
Chief Executive

“The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown long-standing health inequalities into stark relief. With NHS and social care facing even longer backlogs, the unequal outcomes exposed by the pandemic are at risk of becoming worse. Local Healthwatch play an important role in helping to overcome these adversities and are uniquely placed to make a positive difference in their communities.”

- Sir Robert Francis QC, Chair of Healthwatch England

About us

Your health and social care champion

We are your local health and social care champion. From Werrington to Hampton Vale and from Wisbech to Linton, we make sure NHS leaders and other decision makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care. We can also help you to find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.

Our vision

Our vision is that health and social care services should work well for local people. Where we hear services are not meeting people's needs, especially for vulnerable groups, we speak out.

We encourage services to listen to and learn from patient and public feedback, including complaints, so they can make improvements where it is needed.

Our priorities

2021-22 has been the second year of our five-year strategy, which sets out our ambitions and the difference we want to make by 2025, working together with local people and organisations.

- We are planning a mid-term review of the strategy during 2022-23 to ensure that we are still working on the things that are most important to you.
- Promotion of independence and self-care – so that people can have more information and support to get the services they need and remain independent for as long as possible.
- Easier access to GP, dentist, pharmacy and other primary care services – so that people make the best possible use of services that work well for them.
- More joined up social care and integrated support services – so that people find it easier to move from one part of the system, such as hospital, to another, such as care at home.

- Better mental health services for everyone – so that people get the support they need.
- People are involved in designing the services they use – so that health and care services meet the needs of the local community, particularly those who are most likely to be excluded.

Highlights from our year

Find out how we have engaged and supported people.

Reaching out

- 2,185 people shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care (including 1,203 from Cambridgeshire, 742 from Peterborough and 53 from out of the region.)
- 1,050 people came to us for clear advice and information about topics such as finding an NHS dentist or getting help to raise a concern about care. That's an increase of 47% on the previous year.
- More than 460 people attended one of our public meetings to find out about changes to local services and share their views.

Making a difference to care

- We published 6 reports about the improvements people would like to see to health and social care services, including in urgent and emergency care, autism services and care homes.
- We spoke to 88 people and made 34 recommendations to improve services as part of these reports. Our people
- We're lucky to have 114 volunteers who have given us hundreds of hours of their time this year to make care better for our community.
- We also employ 18 staff who help us carry out this work.

How we've made a difference throughout the year

These are some of the projects we worked on from April 2021 to March 2022

Spring

- Helped get Covid-19 vaccination, testing and self-isolation information out to communities in Peterborough and Fenland.
- Launched a new British Sign Language survey to help people from the Deaf community share their experiences.

Summer

- Involved in an innovative project developing Health and Care profiles to help the NHS understand the needs of people who face more barriers to care.
- Our On Equal Terms conference highlighted health inequalities and some of the work being done to tackle them.

Autumn

- Launched a project to find out about local people's experiences of living in residential or nursing care during the pandemic.
- Supported a national call for urgent action to improve access to NHS dentistry.

Winter

- Supported a campaign to raise awareness of disabled people's rights to have information at health and care appointments provided in a format they can understand.
- Helped Cambridgeshire County Council find out what older and disabled people would want from a proposed new Independent Living Service.

Listening to you

We use what you tell us to help influence improvements in health and care services.

Services can't make improvements without hearing your views. That's why over the last year we have made listening to feedback from all areas of the community a priority. This allows us to understand the full picture, and feedback to services to help them improve.

Improving care at the end of life

During the early days of the Covid-19 pandemic, some people told us that their decisions about care and treatment at the end of life were not always being respected. And people were not getting the support they needed.

Good work in making sure people were involved in decisions about dying, dropped off during the first wave of the pandemic. This is because the use of ReSPECT was not properly embedded. ReSPECT is a plan for a person's emergency care and treatment. It looks at a person's personal preferences in terms of balancing decisions about saving their life against being comfortable.

"The only time the GP has got in touch with my friend is to make her sign a DNR (Do Not Resuscitate)."

- Covid-19 survey feedback

We raised the issue with the local NHS who promised to tackle it. They set up a task group which we had a seat on. And they developed a ReSPECT training programme to improve health and care staff's knowledge of end-of-life care.

In addition, they developed a new palliative care hub that coordinates care for people via the NHS 111 option 3.

What difference did this make?

The palliative care hub means that local people have a place to go to get support near the end of life. The service is now available 24 hours a day and is helping to stop people go into hospital if they don't need or want to.

When we spoke to the service in February, they told us that over half the people contacting them were not previously known to palliative care services.

In addition, training around end-of-life care for staff will help make sure that people's choices are respected.

Autistic voices shape new strategy

Autistic people told us about long waits for diagnosis and a lack of support to manage their health and wellbeing as part of Autistic Voices.

This was a project we ran to help the NHS and local authority redevelop their strategy for supporting autistic people.

"I have been in and out of therapy for more than half of my life and I am still trying to find somebody who not only has an understanding of autism, but also knows how autism can affect your mental health (and) your daily life."

- Autistic person's experience

One person said it had taken a decade to get their diagnosis because of the many barriers to getting help. The report also underlined the difficulties autistic people experienced in getting reasonable adjustments to help them stay in work and access health care.

What difference did this make?

The local authority and the NHS used the feedback from the report to help shape their new all-age autism strategy.

The new strategy spells out how local authorities and health commissioners want to provide services and give support for autistic people of all ages – children, young people and adults.

It also makes it clear that autistic people and their families and carers will be included in developing services and making decisions.

Action to improve GP websites

Thanks to our review of GP websites across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough in 2020, our local NHS has invested in supporting GP surgeries to improve their websites.

Our Giving GP websites a check-up report in 2020 found a number of issues with local practice sites, including out of date information, broken website links and hard to use designs.

In the last year, the local NHS has started rolling out a package of support to local practices.

What difference did this make?

More local GP websites contain up to date information to help people manage their health and wellbeing.

Reducing loneliness for care home residents

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on care home residents and on their friends and families and staff.

Our care home project looked at how this affected people locally. We heard from 43 people who shared their experience of care. Whilst most were happy with the care and visiting situation, there were worrying concerns raised by some.

We found that a combination of isolation caused by Covid-19 safety measures, staff shortages and sometimes overly restrictive visiting policies, had a significant impact on the quality of life for some care home residents.

My mother now has trouble remembering who I am as she has had no face-to-face contact with me since December 2020.

- Family member

What difference did this make?

As a result of our report, local care home commissioners wrote to all care homes to remind them of the importance of making sure that residents could receive visitors in line with the government's guidance.

We'll be following up on our recommendations during 2022 to find out what difference they have made.

Helping non-English speakers access NHS 111

People whose first language isn't English told us that it was hard to use NHS 111 as you had to listen to a long message in English before you could choose your language.

We spoke to HUC, an NHS service provider who runs our 111 service, and helped them work out how different interpreting services could work best. These ideas are now being tested across the country.

What difference did this make?

HUC are now trialing new ways of offering NHS 111 to people whose first language is not English. These ideas are still being tested but should help improve access to this vital service nationally.

Involving people in change

We support people to speak directly to those who make decisions about local health and care services. Their ideas and experiences help commissioners and providers improve future services.

Health and Care Forums and Wheelchair Forum

Our regular Health and Care forums – covering Fenland, Peterborough, Huntingdonshire and Greater Cambridge – have continued to meet online this year.

These popular public meetings bring local people together with health and care decision makers to ask questions and share experiences and ideas.

In the last year we welcomed more than 450 people to 28 meetings, an increase of 20% over the year before. In addition, our quarterly Wheelchair Users' Forum has continued to meet online, feeding back people's views on wheelchair services.

What difference did this make?

Local people were able to get answers to their questions and talk directly to the decision makers in local health and care services.

For example, one person shared an experience around problems getting their dietary needs met in a local NHS hospital. As a result, the hospital improved the process they used to make sure that wards know the options available for people with special dietary needs.

Partnership Boards

Our Healthwatch supports people who use adult social care to get involved in Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council's five Adult Social Care Partnership Boards.

The role of each Partnership Board is to support and improve care for people who use health and adult social care services – giving them a say on current and future care. This includes older people, carers, people with a physical disability, people with a learning disability and those with sensory impairments.

We support 50 volunteers – called Independent Members – to raise their concerns and have their say.

What difference did this make?

At each meeting, Independent Members can raise issues with the people planning and paying for health and care services. And can work with them to help plan better ways of providing services.

Two things the Partnership Boards have done this year to help improve services for local people:

Improving letters

The Carers' Partnership Board raised issues about letters from the councils in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough as they could be very formal and hard to understand.

As a result, the councils are now working with Partnership Board members to improve the tone and content of the letters they send out. This will make letters easier to understand, reduce worry in carers and stop them needing to contact the council to check things they don't understand.

Getting annual health checks

People with a learning disability can have poorer health than other people – but this can often be avoided by having an annual health check with a GP.

The Learning Disability Partnership Board found that health checks for people with learning disabilities were not always of a high enough standard – and sometimes did not happen at all. They raised this issue with local NHS leaders.

The NHS wrote to all the local GP services letting them know how many people with learning disabilities are registered with them and reminded them of the importance of annual health checks.

Advice and information

Healthwatch plays an important role in providing advice and pointing people in the right direction for the support they need.

We help you find health or social care services near to you – and let you know where to go for help if you need it. In the last year our service has been busier than ever, giving free, one to one information and advice to more than a thousand people.

This year we've been advising people on issues such as:

- Finding an NHS dentist
- What to do if you're unhappy with the care you've received
- Patient transport
- Changing GPs
- Social care funding

Giving people the information they need

We aim to give people the information they need to make their own choices or raise their own concerns about their health and care.

This can be anything from sending a link to an advice article or contact details for an organisation that could help them, to more complex queries from people who need more help.

An initial call and chat with our Information Service about a problem can often bring other issues to light. And whilst we can't wave a magic wand, sometimes just knowing the right people to contact can help to progress things.

Support for people waiting for hospital care

Thousands of local people had their treatment delayed by the pandemic – with some experiencing delays of a year or more for care.

Many told us that it was not so much the long wait that was an issue, although this could be, but the uncertainty of knowing when a procedure would go ahead.

I was diagnosed in Mar 2020 and offered a hip replacement. Now been waiting 18 months. I asked the hospital if I could be considered for re assessment of my condition. They just said they were only seeing patients who have been on their list for 98 weeks or more.'

- Cambridgeshire resident

We produced advice articles telling you what to expect from services whilst you wait and where to go if you need additional support. And called on the local NHS to make sure that people had support to stay well whilst they waited and knew who to contact if their condition changed.

We also worked with the local NHS to develop a successful patient helpline which ran from January to March 2022.

Help to get to a hospital appointment

We regularly put people in touch with organisations to help them with practical things like getting to a hospital appointment.

"I needed to get my husband to a very important hospital appointment without involving the under-pressure NHS services. I tried several local agencies who I thought could help without success.

So, with my stress levels rising I resorted to the Internet and read about Healthwatch. They gave me details of another local charity... within a week that charity had arranged transport and an escort to sit in on the consultation.

Thanks to Healthwatch my stress was reduced, and I was able to concentrate on other issues".

- Information service user

Volunteers

We're supported by a team of amazing volunteers who are the heart of Healthwatch.

Thanks to their efforts in the community, we're able to understand what is working and what needs improving in NHS and social care.

Our volunteers come from all different backgrounds and help us in a variety of different ways, from listening to people out in the community and presenting people's experiences in meetings to making sure we are properly run.

This year our volunteers have helped with a range of projects, including:

- Listening to people's experiences of health and care at local community engagement events.
- Helping us to develop a young people's survey and identify issues that are important to them.
- Reviewing local GP websites to see how accessible they are and what improvements have been made.
- Helping with a project to find out about people's experience of urgent and emergency care services at Addenbrooke's.

Meet Johnny, a Non-Executive Director



"I started volunteering with Healthwatch because I wanted to make a positive impact in the community. I had done some volunteering at a person-to-person level before and I wanted something different, which this definitely is.

I like how the role has pushed me personally and opened up a whole realm of things that I didn't know about before, which I find really interesting and exciting.

As the youngest person on the Board, having your ideas taken seriously and brought on with equal worth to everyone else's is very satisfying. It is about the diversity of thought to help the Board make sure that it's considering the views of different people."

Meet Pam, a Community Listener and Independent Member



Pam helps at community engagement events in Peterborough and is passionate about care for older people and improving dementia awareness.

"I like to be involved and I think the feedback that we get and give to the powers that be, that things do happen.

The people that we speak to, it's either GPs or dentists. You can't find a dentist and your GP will only talk to you on the phone. So, I think Healthwatch is really important to be that patient champion.

The main reason I do volunteering is because I like to think that things get done. And I like to be busy!

Meet Bob, Independent Member and Health Champion



I'm a carer for my wife, who has progressive Multiple Sclerosis (MS). For many years, I've been involved in improving support for people with MS, including as Chair of a local NHS Participation and Partnership Forum.

Here I was involved in a project working with the rehab team to co-produce exercise sessions for people with MS. It was through this that I met Graham and then joined the Partnership Board in 2020. Since then, I have also become a Health Champion.

When my wife was diagnosed, there was not really any help out there, so the reason I do what I do is to provide that help for people.

Meet Sallyann, Health Champion



Sallyann, who is also a waterways Chaplin, has recently supported a project to find out about people's experiences of urgent and emergency care at Addenbrooke's Hospital.

"I didn't know there were so many stories to be told. I did a shout out at church, and I had about four people saying, 'can I tell you, my story?' And then I did something within the boating community and the stories were different. Talking to people is what I really enjoy doing."

Do you feel inspired?

We are always on the lookout for new volunteers, so please get in touch today.

- www.healthwatchcambridgeshire.co.uk/volunteer
- www.healthwatchpeterborough.co.uk/volunteer
- 0330 355 1285 or text 0752 0635 176
- enquiries@healthwatchcambspboro.co.uk

Finance and future priorities

We receive funding from our local authority under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to allow us to carry out our work.

These figures are from our draft audited accounts for 2021 – 2022.

Income

Funding received from local authority	£475,102
Funding for Partnership Board contract	£86,914
National lottery funding	£29,139
Other income	
Total income	£625,105

Expenditure

Staff costs	£484,035
Operational costs	£58,769
Support and administration	£25,057
£33,950	
Total expenditure	£567,861

Next steps

The pandemic has shone a stark light on the impact of existing inequalities when using health and care services, highlighting the importance of championing the voices of those who all too often go unheard.

Over the coming years, our goal is to help reduce these inequalities by making sure your voice is heard, and decision makers reduce the barriers you face, regardless of whether that's because of where you live, how much money you have, or what you look like.

Next year, we'll be working on a number of projects to help us do this, in particular:

Our Health Champions will be looking at the barriers that some people face getting the help they need and how these can be overcome.

We'll be working with the local Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities to ensure their voices are heard by local decision makers.

Being in the right place with our emerging Integrated Care System (ICS) is vital for us to present what you tell us to the people who make the decisions. We are working with colleagues in NHS Cambridgeshire and Peterborough ICS to help them understand the best ways in which that can be done.

Statutory Statements

Our local Healthwatch services are provided by Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough CIC, The Maple Centre, 6 Oak Drive, Huntingdon, PE29 7HN.

Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Healthwatch Peterborough use the Healthwatch Trademark when undertaking statutory activities as covered by the licence agreement.

The way we work

Involvement of volunteers and lay people in our governance and decision-making.

Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Healthwatch Peterborough are jointly managed by Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Community Interest Company (CIC).

The CIC has a Board of 10 Non-Executive Directors – they decide what is most important for us to do and make sure our organisation is properly run. Our Board ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community.

Through 2021/22 the Board met six times in public and made decisions on matters such as policy direction and strategic priorities. The papers are published on our websites one week in advance of each meeting.

Members of the public are invited to observe meetings and are able to submit questions for the Board.

Our team of 18 staff, a mix of full-time and part-time workers, provide our Healthwatch services across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

We use insights from the experiences that local people share with us to help set our strategic priorities. We consulted on the priorities when setting them at the start of the five-year plan and will be reviewing them mid-2022.

How we gather people's views

We use a wide range of approaches to ensure that as many people as possible have the opportunity to provide us with insight about their experience of health and care services.

This year, we have seen a return to face-to-face engagement activities, talking to more than 2,500 people at events in the community. In addition, we are also available online via our website, social media, in online-meetings and over the phone.

We are committed to taking additional steps to ensure we obtain the views of people from diverse backgrounds who are not always heard by health and care decision makers.

For example, we work with community groups and local councils and cultural organisations to help homeless people, refugees and asylum seekers, and migrant workers to know their rights and get help with health and care.

How we make this report available

We ensure that this Annual Report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. Our Annual Report will be publicly available on our websites and from our office by 30 June 2022. And it will be presented at our Annual General Meeting on Wednesday 21 September 2022.

We will send a copy to Healthwatch England, the Care Quality Commission, NHS England, NHS Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Integrated Care Board, Cambridgeshire County Council, including their Adults and Health Committee and Peterborough City Council, including Peterborough Health Scrutiny Committee.

We will also develop an Easy Read copy and make the report available in other formats such as large print if people need us to.

Responses to recommendations and requests

All providers responded to formal requests for information or to recommendations.

This year, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we did not make use of our Enter and View powers. Consequently, no recommendations or other actions resulted from this area of activity.

We published the following six reports which included recommendations to improve care:

- Autistic Voices
- Keep on Moving
- Transforming urgent and emergency care
- Young people's mental health - health and care experience profile
- South Asian communities' health and care experience profile
- Life in a care home

There were no issues or recommendations escalated by our Healthwatch to Healthwatch England Committee and so no resulting special reviews or investigations.

Health and Wellbeing Board

Our Chair, Stewart Francis, is a member of both Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Health and Wellbeing Boards.

These Boards are places where key leaders from the health and care system work together to improve the health and wellbeing of our local populations.

Our Chair is also a member of the Local Outbreak Engagement Board for Peterborough and Cambridgeshire. It was set up to help the local health and care system respond to the pandemic with its own plan and tailored communications.

During 2021/22 our representative has effectively carried out this role by taking insights from your feedback to meetings to help NHS and other senior leaders make decisions about services.

For example, he's been ensuring that the views of local people are considered as part of the new Health and Wellbeing strategy which will be aligned to the priorities of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Integrated Care System. Our Chair will sit on the new Integrated Care System Board (ICB) as a non-voting member.

You can read and share this report free of charge.

If you need this report in a different format, please get in touch with us.

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