

On equal terms

Hearing your voice through COVID-19

Healthwatch Rutland Annual Report 2020-21



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Message from our Chair

When I was writing this report last year, we were emerging from the first lockdown and I had a sense that the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic was behind us. How wrong I was! Instead we had to endure perhaps one of the most difficult winters in our lives as a new variant swept through the country.

Then the vaccine roll out began! I have heard from so many people in Rutland about how well our own vaccine centre in Oakham has been run and what relief people feel when that second injection goes in. I would like to thank the staff and volunteers for their professionalism, dedication and kindness.

The pandemic has introduced new ways of working for us all as we have tried to become accustomed to technology for carrying on with the social contact that means so much. A challenge to Healthwatch Rutland has been how to reach out to those who are unable to use digital communications. It was therefore a relief to meet up with people again in their gardens - sometimes wrapped in coats and socially distanced in the cold spring weather.

I was gratified a few weeks ago when I heard a senior commissioner say, "Healthwatch Rutland is punching above its weight". I'm not sure whether this was meant as praise or reproach but I do know it means that your voices are being heard where it matters - and that is what we are here for!

I would like to thank the Healthwatch Rutland Team – Tracey, the Healthwatch Rutland Manager; Amy who recently joined; Jacqui, our vice chair; and Kay and Caroline our two board members for their consistent support and always with a smile. Thank you, too, to our volunteers who have stood by ready to support us when they can.

Finally, I would like to thank you for entrusting us with your stories, frustrations and joys and I hope we will soon move beyond this pandemic which has so disrupted our lives.



Janet Underwood
Chair, Healthwatch Rutland

About us

Here to make health and care better

Healthwatch Rutland is the independent people's champion of health and social care in Rutland. We work to help people get the best out of their local health and social care services, whether it's improving them today or helping to shape them for tomorrow.

How we work

Every voice counts when it comes to shaping the future of health and social care, and when it comes to improving it for today. Everything that local Healthwatch does brings the voice and influence of local people to the development and delivery of local services.

Our vision, values and strategy



1 Our vision

Healthwatch Rutland will be a strong, resolute and independent community champion. We will give local people a voice and work in partnership to influence the design and quality of health and social care provision so that all local people have an opportunity for an improved quality of life.



2 Our values

We will be accessible and visible; independent and objective. We will be open, honest and transparent in all that we do while being inclusive and embrace diversity and equality, reflecting the diverse needs of local people



3 Our strategy

To deliver our statutory functions and to champion the views of all people who live in or use health, social care or wellbeing services in Rutland



“Local Healthwatch have done fantastic work throughout the country during the COVID-19 pandemic, but there is more work ahead to ensure that everyone’s views are heard. COVID-19 has highlighted inequalities and to tackle these unfair health differences we will need those in power to listen, to hear the experiences of those facing inequality and understand the steps that could improve people’s lives.”

Sir Robert Francis QC, Chair of Healthwatch England

Highlights from our year

Find out about our resources and how we have engaged and supported people in 2020-21.

Reaching out



We heard from

460 people

this year about their experiences of health and social care through phone calls, emails, surveys and focus groups

We provided advice and information to

37 people

Our social media following (Twitter) increased by **4%**

We increased newsletter distribution by **17%**

7,050 people visited our website this year

Health and care that works for you



12 volunteers

helped us to carry out our work. In total, they contributed over 1,100 hours of their time

We employ 2 staff

with a full time equivalent of 1.6 people (we also receive additional administration and communications support from our contract holder, CTCIC)

We received

£67,600 in funding

from our local authority in 2020-21, the same as the previous year

Making a difference



We published

4 reports about the improvements people would like to see to health and social care services.

From this, we made 22 recommendations for improvement

We attended

129 meetings

with commissioners and providers

How we've made a difference



Experiences of General Practice care

In February and March 2020 we explored experiences of General Practice (GP) care with people who live with long term conditions. At that time primary care, particularly General Practice was starting to undergo many changes as outlined in the NHS Long Term Plan of 2019. We were keen also to hear people's understanding of and sentiments about social prescribing and how they felt about helping themselves to stay well or drawing on community support to maintain their wellbeing.

Most people spoke of their frustration with being unable to get an appointment with their doctor of choice either immediately or within a few days. In some cases, patients would see another professional at the practice in order to be seen sooner. Nevertheless, they were satisfied when they felt they had been 'listened to', reassured and cared for effectively by someone with appropriate expertise.

Our main recommendations included:

- Offering continuity of care to people with long term conditions with the same professional as often as possible.
- Training all surgery staff to interact positively and with empathy with patients at all times and organising reception areas so that patients could talk confidentially with receptionists and pharmacists without being overheard.
- Ensuring that communications between GP practices and secondary care are accurate and timely.
- Social prescribing teams should be aware that there may be initial reluctance to engage with them and lack of transport may mean many could not access activities and groups.

Read the report at: www.healthwatchrutland.co.uk/news/2020-08-10/how-people-long-term-or-multiple-conditions-experience-care-rutland-gp-surgeries



"Thank you to all those who gave their time to produce this insightful report, which will help Rutland Primary Care Network to develop its practices....Whilst maintaining the relationship and continuity based clinical care that improves clinical outcomes is one of Rutland Health PCN's key values, patients could regard their care as being delivered by a multidisciplinary team led by a GP, rather than by an individual. We are working much more closely with our partners in social and community care, and this means that patients' needs can be addressed in a personalised, holistic way, recognising that many of the factors that result in poor health and well-being are not medical."

- Dr Hilary Fox FRGP, Clinical Director, Rutland Health Primary Care Network

Living in lockdown

In our joint Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLR) Healthwatch and Commissioners COVID-19 lockdown survey of spring 2020 people in Rutland found it easier to access and understand information about health and care services than people in Leicester City and Leicestershire. More patients in Rutland felt they were kept up-to-date about changes in accessing health and advice at their GP surgeries.

The survey ran from April to June, receiving 1,383 responses across LLR, 10% of which were from respondents in Rutland. It was designed to capture a snapshot of how people had found sourcing information, experienced access to primary care including GP practices and pharmacies, social care and mental health services; it sought good and bad experiences in order to learn lessons for future provision as lockdown restrictions came to an end.

At that time three quarters of Rutland respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with telephone triage arrangements for accessing GP care and many expressed a desire for this to continue, although some preferred face-to-face contact.

Responses enhanced our understanding that the 'Stay at home, protect the NHS, save lives' message had caused people to delay seeking help for health problems either through fear of contracting COVID-19 or the desire not to overburden the NHS. 55% of Rutland respondents said the pandemic had affected their wellbeing and care of non-Covid related illnesses, higher than Leicester (45%) and Leicestershire (39%).

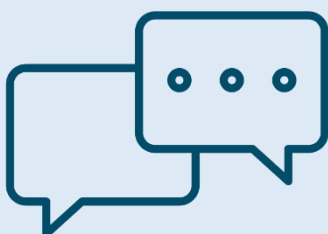
Our main recommendations were:

- Telephone access should be improved in Rutland GP practices as quickly as possible as this had been a problem to many respondents when walk-in access was unavailable.
- Equitable access to services must be maintained for people who do not use computers and smartphones for many reasons such as affordability, knowhow, confidence or cognitive impairment.
- Cancelled appointments and procedures should be reinstated as soon as possible after lockdown easing.

We have continued to promote these messages in all subsequent recovery planning.

Read the LLR report: www.healthwatchrutland.co.uk/report/2020-07-23/your-experiences-health-and-care-services-during-covid-19-pandemic

Read the Rutland report: www.healthwatchrutland.co.uk/report/2020-09-16/HWRCovid19experiences



Share your views with us

If you have a query about a health and social care service, or need help with where you can go to access further support, get in touch. Don't struggle alone. Healthwatch is here for you.



www.healthwatchrutland.co.uk



01572 720381



info@healthwatchrutland.co.uk

Involving people in change

During our public engagement on the plans to reconfigure acute and maternity services in autumn 2020 you told us clearly that travelling to access secondary health care out-of-county is consistently a problem. You were worried this would get worse once Leicester General is no longer an acute hospital.

You suggested that more local outpatient appointments, diagnostics and procedures in Rutland are hugely desirable. The majority of you liked the plans to split emergency and planned care to prevent cancellations but you wanted to know more about the 'care closer to home' offer so you could make fully informed comment on the plans. Some of you were concerned that plans may have under-calculated the number of beds needed in the future as we recover from the pandemic. Those of you that commented on the closure of St Mary's birth unit mostly expressed disapproval.

We heard from 162 people during our engagement, which was designed to hear from as many different parts of the population as possible, including people with disabilities, physical, learning and sensory, young people, families with children, older people, people with dementia and carers.

Your feedback formed the basis of our response to the consultation through:

- Our analysis and [questions on the pre-consultation business case](#)
- Our encouragement for the Clinical Commissioning Group to hold a local public consultation meeting. This happened after we showed clear public support for it
- Our board response to the consultation
- Our [consolidated report of consultation feedback](#)

Our aim throughout has been to ensure that commissioners are aware that whilst investment in the modernisation of health services is highly desirable, there are deep-held public concerns. Many Rutland residents fear that inequality of access of secondary care services, due to geography and a limited transport infrastructure, may be exacerbated by the planned consolidation of services.

We are reflecting this feedback as we encourage commissioners and providers to listen to the Rutland public's requirements of 'care closer to home' in local Place-based health and care plans as they are formulated throughout 2021.



Volunteer with us

Are you feeling inspired? We are always on the lookout for new volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering, please get in touch.



www.healthwatchrutland.co.uk/volunteer



01572 720381



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Working in partnership



Working in partnership on COVID-19 vaccination

Thanks to your quick feedback we were able to help Rutland Health Primary Care Network to respond swiftly to early teething problems in the COVID-19 vaccination booking process.

In late December 2020, Healthwatch Rutland was receiving feedback from some over 80's who were confused by the text message alerts sent to their mobile phones inviting them to book appointments during the early weeks of the COVID-19 vaccination programme. People with older-style non-smartphones could not follow booking links, creating anxiety and, in some cases, anger when they thought that they had missed their chance to book.

We quickly spotted the trend and shared it with Primary Care Network (PCN) which was able to create clear guidance to help people and their families to use a computer or tablet to follow links to the automated online booking system. An ongoing communications campaign was then created to reassure people that they would be contacted another way if the SMS invitations were not successful.

Close partnership working with the PCN also enabled Healthwatch to alert colleagues that many unpaid carers, eligible for vaccination as part of priority group 6 in late February 2021, were confused about whether they qualified or not. Initial Government communications stated that to qualify, carers had to be in receipt of Carers Allowance. However, not all unpaid carers are eligible for this benefit. Again, specific local communications were put in place to clarify the booking criteria and to reassure carers that everyone known to their GP or Rutland County Council as an unpaid carer could book their vaccination, whether they received Carers Allowance or not. Carers who had not previously identified themselves to their GP or the local authority were further encouraged to contact their Practice to do so, so that they would then be invited for vaccination.

Working in partnership on breast screening

Women in Rutland have been able to access breast screening services close to home in Oakham since January when the mobile screening van restarted regular visits to Rutland Memorial Hospital.

The Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Breast Screening service was paused in March 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and was able to recommence in July 2020 after the first lockdown. At that time, although mobile screening was in operation in Melton Mowbray, the mobile unit at Oakham's Rutland Memorial Hospital had been reallocated elsewhere. We heard from Rutland women that they were being directed to Leicester General Hospital and the Glenfield Hospital for their screening, and not being offered Melton which may have been closer to home for many. We were concerned that this was an unfair risk to Rutland women's health, due to the inaccessibility, both in distance and time, of screening sites on offer.

Healthwatch Rutland requested that University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust should offer Melton as an interim option for screening appointments for Rutland women and restart the mobile service from Oakham; the service at Rutland Memorial Hospital was reinstated in January 2021.

Helping you find the answers



Finding the right service can be worrying and stressful. Healthwatch plays an important role in pointing people in the right direction for support and information helping them to take control of their health and care and find services that will provide the correct support.

This year, 61 people got in touch with us to provide feedback and we helped 37 people of those get the advice and information they needed by:

- Providing advice and information articles on our website.
- Answering people's queries about services over the phone, by email, online and through social media channels.
- Promoting services and information that can help people on social media.

We signposted them to organisations that would support them to access the advice and information they need. Many people contacted us to seek guidance and ask for information about how to make a complaint about a health or care service they have used (such as their GP surgery or hospital). People also benefit from being able to discuss their issues or complaints with us to confirm they are contacting the correct organisations or find out who else could help them. Others are helped by our online complaints guide, which can support them to make a complaint, inform them of advocacy support and provide them with details of other relevant organisations that could guide them - www.healthwatchrutland.co.uk/help-making-complaint

In 2019-20, 37 people contacted us and 2020-21 this figure increased to 61 (65% increase). In 2019-20, we provided signposting information (or took some action) for 14 people, and this increased in 37 in 2020-21 (nearly three times as many).

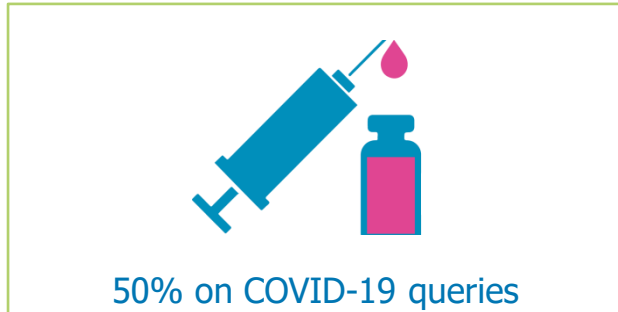
Feedback

During Carers' Week in June 2020 we heard from a carer whose husband had been showing symptoms of dementia and was due to be assessed at the Leicester Memory Clinic in late March. The appointment had been cancelled due to the pandemic and her husband discharged from the service. This carer talked of feeling very anxious and 'out on a limb'. We drew this family's situation to the attention of the Community Manager for the Leicester Memory Service who was able to expedite an assessment and reinstatement to the pathway.

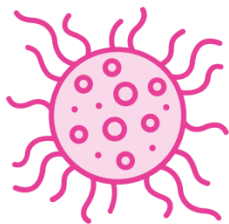


"Thank you once again! If it had not been for your input, we probably would have been waiting much longer for a consultation... [my husband] has got early signs of Dementia, but I am now able to deal with the situation, knowing that there is help when things go 'pear shaped'."

Top four areas that people have contacted us about:



COVID-19 queries



Since December 2020 queries about the vaccination process were the most common question to Healthwatch Rutland. In response we;




- Provided detailed information about the booking and vaccination process.
- Shared guidance and priority group criteria with enquirers who were unsure when they would qualify for the vaccination.
- Regularly reported public feedback to commissioners and the Primary Care Network to allow rapid refining of public communications for maximum impact.
- Worked closely with the Primary Care Network to amplify and extend regular vaccination programme messaging.

Have a look at our advice and information articles (www.healthwatchrutland.co.uk/advice-and-information) to find out how we can help you access the support you need to live well.



Contact us to get the information you need

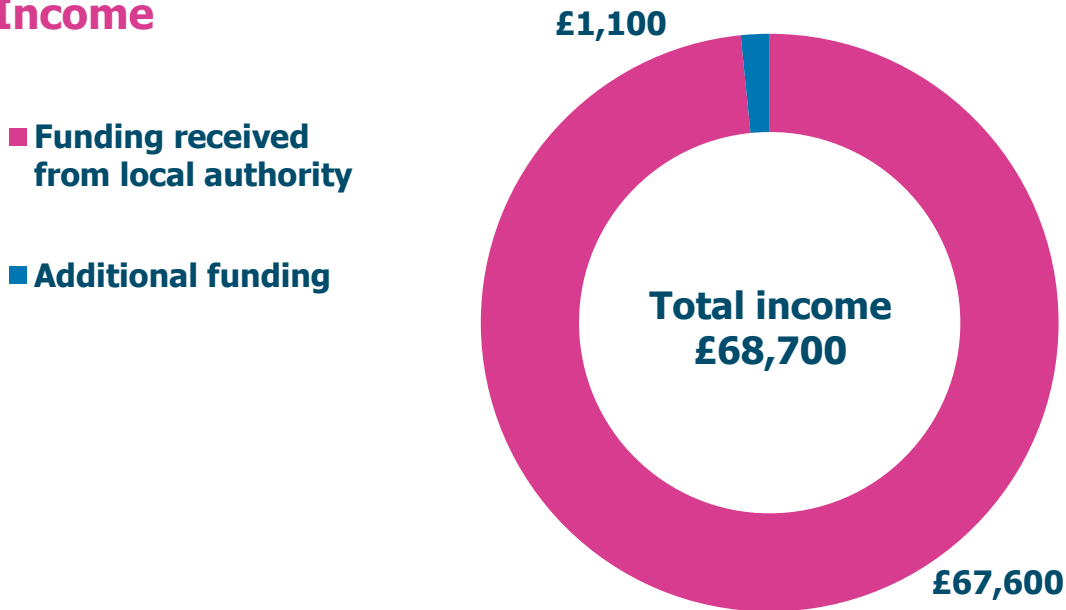
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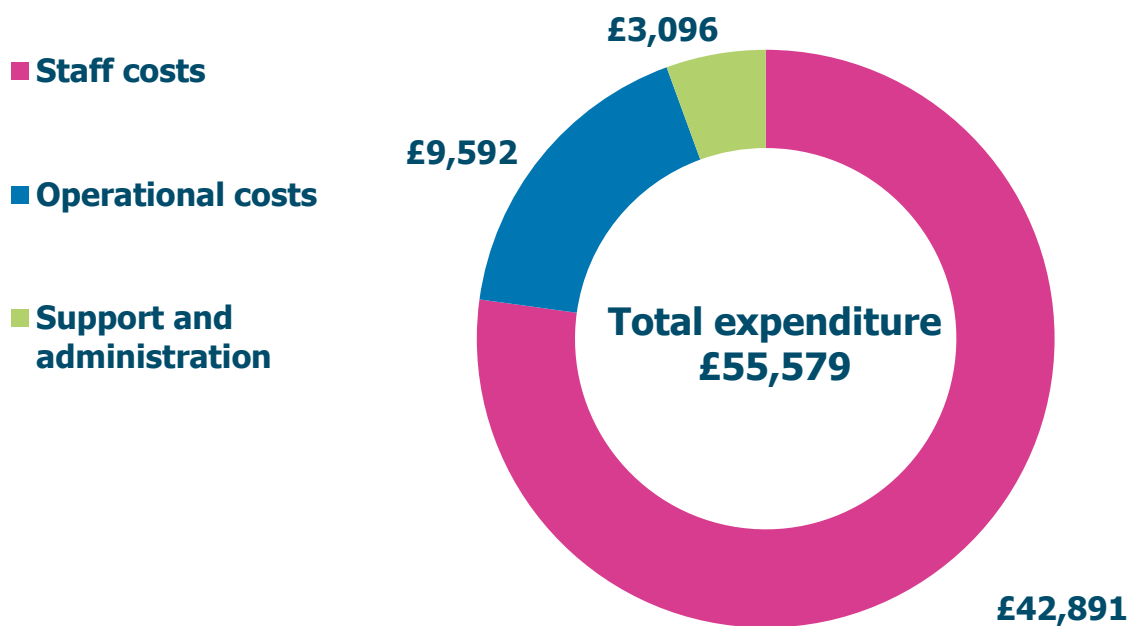
Finances

To help us carry out our work we receive funding from our local authority under the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

Income



Expenditure



Next steps and thank you

For an organisation that is here to engage with the public and listen to your experiences, lockdown restrictions have provided a challenge and we look forward to meeting and talking with you more in person in the months ahead. I want to thank you for continuing to give us your feedback throughout and for picking up the phone to talk to us when online access has not been your first choice. To our board members and volunteers, my thanks for your help and support – we could not do it without you.

We will continue our work during the next year to ensure that your voice helps to shape transformation of services within the newly formed Integrated Care System for Leicestershire and Rutland. Maintaining our focus on partnership working, we will reflect your feedback at all levels of system design, place-led planning, and at neighbourhood level with the Primary Care Network. This will be particularly important as we seek to engage with the system about inequalities of access to healthcare and social and physical activities caused by limited transport options and the rural nature of Rutland.

Our priorities for 2021-22

- Completion of our What Matters to You? project to discover what people in Rutland want from place-led health and care planning to help them to live healthier lives.
- A joint project with Healthwatch Leicester and Leicestershire called Lets Talk. This looks at how patients have experienced the new models of working that have been adopted by health and care services throughout the pandemic.
- Strengthening our volunteer network with an exciting new programme to recruit Community Healthwatch Champions.
- Working on areas of special interest identified by our volunteers. First, ensuring that travel and transport issues in accessing health, care and community services are kept at the top of the agenda. Second, improving local information and signposting resources for people and families who; live with dementia, have unpaid caring responsibilities, are socially isolated, have suffered bereavement.

The coming year will be dominated by the recovery from COVID-19 and as new ways of working are discarded or embedded, we will ensure that your views are heard to shape those decisions.



With attention moving to how health and care are delivered at place in our local communities, I look forward to hearing more about how you think that services can be designed with you at the centre, so that you and your families can lead healthy lives.

**- Tracey Allan-Jones
Healthwatch Rutland Manager**





Statutory statements

About us

Healthwatch Rutland, The King Centre, Main Road Barleythorpe, Oakham, Rutland LE15 7WD.

Connected Together Community Interest Company is the legal entity and governing body for Healthwatch: Moulton Park Business Centre, Redhouse Road, Northampton NN3 6AQ.

Healthwatch Rutland 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 Board consists of four members who work on a voluntary basis to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny to our activities. Our Board ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community. Through 2020/21 the Board met four times in public and made decisions on matters such as how the Board wished to respond to the consultation on reconfiguration plans for Leicester Hospitals and how the Board could best ensure that it has a recognised role in strategic planning for the formation and running of the Integrated Care System for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.

At Healthwatch Rutland we are also supported by 12 volunteers to help us find out what people think is working, and what improvements people would like to make to services.

This year our volunteers helped people have their say from home, carrying out interviews over the telephone. Following feedback we received during Carer's Week 2020, they also carried out a website review on the information provided for carers in Rutland.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities. Insight from our information and signposting enquiries and public engagement meetings and events is used to identify trends that are prioritised by volunteers in our Operations and Planning Group. From this a draft workplan is created, which is then ratified by the board, and published on the HWR website.

Methods and systems used across the year's work to obtain people's views and experience

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 experiences of health and care services. During 2020/21 we have:

- Been available by phone and email
- Provided webforms and quick polls on our website
- Provided a feedback centre
- Attended virtual meetings of community groups and forums
- Provided our own virtual activities
- Engaged with the public through social media

We are committed to taking additional steps to ensure we obtain the views of people from diverse backgrounds who are often not heard by health and care decision makers. This year we have done this by, for example, recruiting people with sight impairment to engage with us by telephone interview to understand their views on what they want from local health and care services.

We ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. We publish it on our website, through our monthly newsletter and social media channels, to local commissioners and providers of care by email, to Healthwatch England and to the Care Quality Commission.

Enter and View

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.

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


Rutland Health and Wellbeing Board

Healthwatch Rutland is represented on the Rutland Health and Wellbeing Board by our Chair, Dr Janet Underwood. During 2020/21 Dr Underwood has effectively carried out this role by attending both meetings held by the Board during the year. Her input ensured that Healthwatch Rutland will fully represent the public and patient voice during place-led planning to be undertaken by the Board's Integrated Delivery Group. This engagement, designed to capture the widest possible range of views from residents across the county, will include people who do not traditionally push themselves forward to be heard, people who live on county borders and Rutland patients of out-of-county GP practices.

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