The value of listening

Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire **Annual Report 2023-2024**





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"Over the last year, local Healthwatch have shown what happens when people speak up about their care, and services listen. They are helping the NHS unlock the power of people's views and experiences, especially those facing the most serious health inequalities."

Louise Ansari, Chief Executive at Healthwatch England



Message from our Chair

I am very pleased to present the Annual Report for Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire (HWLL) for the year 2023-2024.

In January we were sad to see Mark Farmer leave the board to take a position as a Non-Executive Director at Leicester Hospitals. We appointed Fiona Barber who has over 40 years of experience within the public and voluntary sector.

The past 12 months have been very busy for us and we have now settled in with our new contract holders Voluntary Action LeicesterShire (VAL), which enables HWLL to build deeper connections with the voluntary and community sector.

Our work around the experiences of Asylum Seekers highlighted some issues in accessing services. We worked alongside our colleagues in Public Health and Leicestershire Partnership Trust (LPT) to address these.

We revisited the Emergency Department at Leicester Royal Infirmary to follow up from our recommendations in September 2022. We were pleased to see some progress and continue to work with Leicester Hospitals to improve the experiences of people using the Emergency Department.

Our priorities for the next 12 months are:

GP Access

Difficulty in accessing a GP continues to be the area that we hear most about from our engagement and feedback. We are exploring the current experience and working with the local system to improve the patient experience.

Young people's mental health and Autism

Last year we reported on the experiences of young people who access mental health services. This year we intend to follow up from our recommendations and our focus will be the current experiences in referrals and wait times.

Access to Dentistry

Access to NHS dental services continues to be an area of concern with many struggling to get appointments. This area of work is a follow up to our project in 2022.

Members of the Healthwatch Advisory Board (HAB) continue to attend board meetings held by providers and commissioners across Leicester and Leicestershire to ensure that issues affecting patients and the public are a priority. We continue to build relationships with system leaders which allows us to raise concerns and highlight good practice outside formal structures. HWLL is one of a handful of Healthwatch organisations that have a seat on the Integrated Care Board (ICB).



"May I take this opportunity to thank all who have engaged with us at HWLL in the last twelve months, shared their experiences and those that have made changes as a result of our feedback."

Harsha Kotecha, Chair Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire



About us

Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire is your local health and social care champion.

We make sure NHS leaders and 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

A world where we can all get the health and care we need.



Our mission

To make sure people's experiences help make health and care better.



Our values are:

- **Listening** to people and making sure their voices are heard.
- **Including** everyone in the conversation especially those who don't always have their voice heard.
- Analysing different people's experiences to learn how to improve care.
- Acting on feedback and driving change.
- **Partnering** with care providers, Government, and the voluntary sector serving as the public's independent advocate.



Year in review

Reaching out:

8040 people

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



8821 people

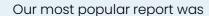
came to us for clear advice and information about topics such as mental health and the cost-of-living crisis.

Making a difference to care:

We published

12 reports

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





Accessing Health and Social Care Services: Asylum Seekers which highlighted the

barriers people are experiencing when accessing care.

Health and social care that works for you:

We're lucky to have

19

outstanding volunteers who gave up **165 days** to make care better for our community.

We're funded by our local authority. In 2023 - 24 we received

£299,428

which is 0.08% less than the previous year.



We currently employ

7 staff

who help us carry out our work.

How we've made a difference this year



The 'make a difference and feel the difference' volunteer campaign launched with local NHS leaders to call on people to volunteer to support local health services.



The Dementia programme board responded positively to our 'Living with Dementia' report and will use our findings and recommendations in the Dementia Strategy refresh.



We made a significant impact by actively listening to the voices of asylum seekers residing in hotels across the city and county.



We invited 20 Bangladeshi women to a partnership event on 'Empowering NHS patients and resolving complaints' to hear their views and discuss their concerns with service providers.



On World Mental Health Day, we revitalised the 'RU Ok' campaign and provided information to the public at three local train stations.



We conducted two Enter & View visits to Community Diagnostic Centres, providing valuable insights and contributing to the enhancement of community health services.



We hosted ten 'Chai. Coffee and Chat' events. These events provided us with opportunities for open discussions, networking opportunities and gathering feedback from diverse communities.



During Pride History Month, we actively engaged with LGBTQ+ communities.

Your voice heard at a wider level

We collaborate with other Healthwatch to ensure the experiences of people in Leicester and Leicestershire influence decisions made about services at the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLR) Integrated Care System (ICS) level.

We work closely with Healthwatch Rutland where we feel that the patient voice from across LLR can help drive change. We have a memorandum of understanding that sets out how we work together, we collaborate on work plans, conduct Enter & View visits to services and meet regularly with the health and care service providers and trusts. This year we've worked with Healthwatch Rutland to achieve:



Achievement one: Dementia

Our report on 'Living with Dementia in Leicester, Leicestershire, and Rutland' identified inconsistencies in diagnostic pathways and services for dementia patients. Our findings and recommendations have fed directly into the LLR Dementia Programme Board's revised Dementia Strategy 2024-2029, ensuring that the needs and gaps identified will be addressed to improve care for dementia patients.

Achievement two: Hospital services

Our joint visits to the Leicester Royal Infirmary Adult Emergency Department (ED) has led to improvements for patients. Acting on patient feedback, University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust (UHL) has removed the confusing electronic displays, improved wheelchair access and implemented better patient calling methods.





Achievement three: NHS Dentistry

Access to NHS Dentistry remains a high concern across LLR. We have engaged with the LLR Integrated Care Board (ICB) and regional commissioners to ensure the National Recovery Plan's ambitions lead to local improvements. We actively listened to local communities and have called for better access, participating in various activities to address this critical issue.



Listening to your experiences

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 feed this back to services and help them improve.

Enhancing Healthcare Access for Asylum Seekers

In response to the growing concerns regarding the accessibility of healthcare services for asylum seekers, Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire decided to visit all the hotels in Leicester and Leicestershire housing asylum seekers. We published two reports highlighting the experiences of asylum seekers with local health and care services.

The reports uncovered various barriers hindering asylum seekers' access to essential health and care services. These barriers include language barriers, lack of cultural competency among healthcare providers and inadequate awareness of available services. Asylum seekers told us that they struggle to navigate the complicated healthcare system, which worsens their health problems.

Asylum seekers commonly faced heightened mental health stress attributable to the uncertainties surrounding their legal status. Improving the mental health of asylum seekers is crucial for their overall well-being. The reports highlight the importance of tailored mental health support within our local healthcare systems.

Recommendations for improvements

- Language Support: The reports advocate for the implementation of language support services to bridge the communication gap between asylum seekers and healthcare providers.
- Collaboration and Community Engagement: Increased collaboration between service providers and
 community organisations was deemed essential for improving healthcare accessibility for asylum
 seekers. By forging partnerships with community-based organisations, healthcare services could
 better understand the unique needs and challenges faced by asylum seekers, thereby facilitating
 more tailored and effective support.

What difference did this make?

- The service provider (Serco) took our recommendations seriously, addressed the issues highlighted and made improvements to the services being provided.
- The LPT Neighbourhood Mental Health Teams meet regularly with Asylum seekers and provide mental health support to people at the hotels.
- Following this engagement, we supported the Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland (LLR) Integrated Care Board (ICB) to gather patient views as part of their consultation on a new specialised GP service for asylum seekers. We were invited to support this because of our growing links with Asylum Seekers and our team has the skills to listen to people's experiences. We worked in partnership with ICB and LPT colleagues to deliver the focus group sessions.



"Without Healthwatch raising awareness about the challenges faced by people in the contingency hotels and mobilising a partnership team to start engagement work, asylum seekers living in Loughborough would not have the support they do now. Through the report produced by Healthwatch and issues highlighted, organisations have now come together. The Charnwood Asylum Seeker & Refugee Network has been developed leading to increased partnership working and new initiatives being developed."

Sarah Jones, Mental Health Neighbourhood Lead – Charnwood, Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust

Access to Emergency Care Adults Emergency Department at Leicester Royal Infirmary – One year on

In September 2022, Healthwatch Leicester, Healthwatch Leicestershire and Healthwatch Rutland visited the Leicester Royal Infirmary (LRI) Adults Emergency Department (ED) to observe the department and listen to patient experiences. These findings were presented to the University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust (UHL) to assist them with improving the patient experience at ED.

In September 2023, Healthwatch revisited this project and further engaged with people in the ED. Healthwatch conducted on-site observations and engaged with ED patients to gather first-hand experiences and insights. The findings from the 2022 visit were compiled into a report, which included 16 recommendations aimed at enhancing various aspects of patient care within the ED.

These recommendations served as a framework for evaluating the progress made during the revisit in 2023. The recommendations encompassed a wide range of areas including improving waiting area facilities, communication strategies, patient assistance protocols and accessibility measures.

What difference did this make?

- Our research led to a proactive response from UHL and significant efforts were made to improve patient flows and address identified issues. The 2023 revisit highlighted areas of progress while also identifying areas requiring continued attention and improvement.
- By actively engaging with patients and implementing targeted recommendations, significant steps have been made to improve the overall patient experience within the ED.

The UHL action plan showing progress updates on the Healthwatch recommendations is detailed in the full report.



"We appreciate recommendations for how we can improve the way we deliver care, and as a result have undertaken work to improve patients' experience of our Emergency Department... we would like to thank all patients and visitors to the Emergency Department for their patience and understanding, and apologise to anyone who has experienced a long wait over the busy winter months."

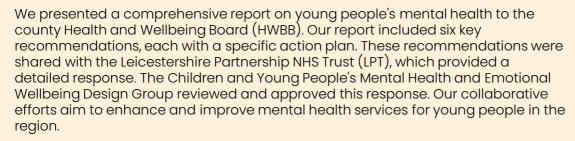
Richard Mitchell, Chief Executive, University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust (UHL)

Three ways we have made a difference in the community

Throughout our work we gather information about health inequalities by speaking to people whose experiences aren't often heard.

Young People's Mental Health

It's important for services to see the bigger picture. Hearing personal experiences and the impact on people's lives provides them with a better understanding of the problems.





Period Equity: Availability of sanitary products

We often work behind the scenes with services to consistently raise issues and bring about change.

During our visits to hotels to engage with asylum seekers, women expressed concerns about the suitability of the provided sanitary products. We found that the hotel only supplied regular-size products, which do not meet the diverse needs of all individuals, such as varying flow levels, night-time use and menopause. We raised this issue with the management teams, and as a result, a variety of sanitary products were immediately ordered to better accommodate residents' needs.



Diversity & Inclusion Health Network

Services need to understand the benefits of involving local people to help improve care for everyone.

Exclusion continues to impact some communities leading to access issues, negative experiences and more importantly, a higher prevalence of health inequalities. We aimed to develop a platform for marginalised voices to be heard and empower people through regular and ongoing engagement and involvement. We have held 10 Chai, Coffee and Chat sessions with ethnic communities in the city and county and an 'Empowering NHS patients and resolving complaints' event with 20 Bangladeshi women to ensure that their voices are being heard.





Hearing from all communities

Over the past year, we have worked hard to make sure we hear from everyone within our local area. We consider it important to reach out to the communities we hear from less frequently to gather their feedback and make sure their voice is heard, and services meet their needs.

This year we have reached different communities by:

- Reaching Sikh and Punjabi communities at local Gurdwara and Apnapan CIC group events.
- Collecting feedback from young people and parents at SEND Local Offer Roadshows.
- Attending Leicester Somali Cultural festival and Leicester Diwali festivals.
- Listening to parents at the local school events.
- Running a listening session with disabled allotment team employees.
- Actively interacting with LGBTQ+ communities during Pride History Month.
- Listening to older people and individuals with dementia and their carers.
- · Listening to Refugees, Asylum seekers and homeless communities during Refugee Week, at the Leicester City of Sanctuary, Loughborough Town of Sanctuary, outside Home Office Reporting Centre in Loughborough and hotel visits.
- Conducting Coffee, chai and chat events to capture the voices of Bangladeshi men and individuals from ethnic communities.

Bangladeshi Men share their experiences

We collaborated with the Greater Sylhet Welfare Council UK (GSC) and the Diabetes Self-Help Group to deliver two focus group sessions to Bangladeshi men to raise awareness of Health and Social Care Services and gather feedback on what matters to them regarding these services, both positive and negative.

The participants in these sessions were primarily Bangladeshi men who had relocated from Italy to the UK. We identified several concerns and areas for improvement as most were unaware of the local NHS services available to them. This group faces multiple challenges, including low income and unemployment, poor housing conditions, social isolation and loneliness, mental health issues and language barriers.

As a result of what people shared, the focus group sessions have resulted in:

- Raising awareness among the men about the health and social care services available to them.
- The concerns and feedback collected are being shared with the local healthcare system to advocate for more inclusive and responsive services.
- The collaboration with GSC and the Self-Help Diabetic Group helped build trust within the community, encouraging more open and honest communication.



"The Chai, coffee and chat session gave our members a chance to voice their opinions and concerns about Health and Social Care Services. They were able to communicate confidently in their mother tongue and express their feelings. They felt that they were listened to while taking feedback. Diabetes Self-Help Group members found the session very useful and would like to stay in contact."

Dr Sonal Bhavsar, Diabetes Self-Help Group

Listening to the views of the LGBTQ+ community

By working in partnership with Trade Sexual Health we have been able to gain an understanding of the issues currently being discussed with the community and find out people's experiences of the local health and care services.

Progress to date

- We have highlighted the positive and negative interactions of local LGBTQ+ people with health and care services.
- We have been involved in the Leicester and Leicestershire Citizens Access to Healthcare campaign. Focusing on the issues that impact trans people in accessing healthcare locally.
- The partnership with Trade has enabled us to gather valuable insights to support the ongoing engagement to improve local services.





Advice and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch is here for you. In times of worry or stress, we can provide confidential support and free information to help you understand your options and get the help you need. Whether it's finding an NHS dentist, making a complaint or choosing a good care home for a loved one – you can count on us.

This year we've helped people by:

- Providing up-to-date information people can trust
- · Helping people access the services they need
- · Helping people access NHS dentistry
- Supporting people to look after their health during the cost-of-living crisis
- Holding information pop-up stands in libraries, leisure centres, work and public places.

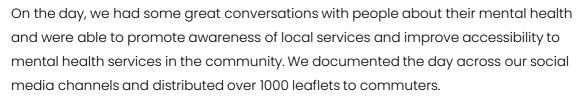
Sharing mental health information

People must have clear, accurate communication about local services.

For World Mental Health Day, a collaborative approach was taken with the Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust (LPT) and Voluntary Action LeicesterShire (VAL) to ensure a unified effort across the city and county. The plans included a series of activities organised by both statutory and voluntary sector organisations, widely promoted through partner channels. The goal was to support mental health and well-being, particularly during winter and amidst the cost of living crisis.

Key activities included:

- Train Station Events: Successful events were organised at Leicester, Loughborough and Market Harborough train stations in partnership with LPT. These aimed to raise awareness, reduce stigma and promote open discussions about mental health.
- 'RU OK' Campaign: The focus was on promoting early help, urgent support options, and ensuring people received the right care at the right place and time. This initiative aimed to engage the public directly, providing crucial information on accessing mental health services.





Engaging with local businesses

Recognising the need to connect with working people who often have limited opportunities to participate in community feedback initiatives, we targeted key commercial hubs.

We set up information stands in the canteens of Samworth Brothers, a major employer in the area, to reach employees during their breaks. We chose Samworth Brothers locations at Beaumont Leys and Cobden Street due to their large workforce.

Information stands were set up in the canteens from 7am, ensuring accessibility for workers on various shifts. We spoke with 77 people at Beaumont Leys and 139 people at Cobden Street. Our team engaged with employees directly, discussing their experiences with local services. This allowed us to gather realtime feedback from people who might not otherwise participate in such discussions.

We wanted to make sure working people were aware of local services and opportunities to get involved

- We distributed informative leaflets and resources to staff members.
- We placed an advertisement on the canteen TV screens. We have raised awareness of local services and initiatives among working people and will continue with the initiative.



Volunteering

We're supported by a team of amazing volunteers who are at the heart of what we do. Thanks to their efforts in the community, we're able to understand what is working and what needs improving.

This year our volunteers:

- Attended community events, promoting their Local Healthwatch, listened to and gained the experiences shared by the people of the communities.
- Carried out enter and view visits to GP practices and care homes to help them improve.
- Conducted a follow-up visit to the LRI Emergency Department.
- Collected experiences and supported their communities to share their views.
- Participated in World Mental Health Day across three train stations in Leicester and Leicestershire.



"Healthwatch has broadened my horizons in a myriad of ways. Working in this organisation as a volunteer has not only made me gain confidence in the professional world but has also expanded my knowledge around healthcare.

I would like to express that, Healthwatch has been a rewarding experience for myself. For instance; getting the opportunity to build networks, interviewing people and discovering their views on healthcare is absolutely a priceless experience. Last but not least, I have enjoyed working for Healthwatch since I am deeply passionate in championing people's interests, becoming a voice to their concerns and making them feel valuable and heard."



Dervis – Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire



"I have always enjoyed volunteering my time for Enter and view. I have met some really interesting people and our team has become my very dear friends, both young and old."



Kim – Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire

Do you feel inspired?



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



www.healthwatchll.com



0116 257 4999



enquiries@healthwatchll.com



Dulna Shahid, Enter and View (Volunteer) Officer

dulna.s@healthwatchll.com

Finance and future priorities

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

Our income and expenditure

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from Government	£299,428	Staff costs	£214,567
Additional income	£1,458	Operational costs	£24,090
		Support and administration	£62,229
Total income	£300,886	Total expenditure	£300,886

Additional income is broken down by:

• £1,458 received from Healthwatch England for work on a project.

Next steps

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:

- GP Access Our data for 2023/24 indicates that GP access is the number one concern for individuals across Leicester and Leicestershire.
- 2. NHS Dentistry People continue to report struggles in accessing NHS dental care. Our feedback highlights availability and affordability as key issues.
- 3. Young people's mental health and Autism Long waiting times for referrals and diagnosis are key issues shared with us alongside accessing support services.



Statutory statements

Voluntary Action LeicesterShire (VAL) is the contract holder for Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire.

The VAL corporate office is based at: 9 Newarke Street, Leicester LE1 5SN - www.val.co.uk

The local office is based at: 9 Newarke Street, Leicester, LEI 5SN

Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire 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 Board consists of five members who work on a voluntary basis 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 2023/24, the board met six times and made decisions on where to carry out our enter and view visits, what our priorities should be and escalated issues about access to primary care services, waiting times, hospital services to the relevant service providers.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities. Through our priority survey and listening event, we invited public input. This, along with the public feedback received throughout the year, allowed us to focus on the health and care issues that matter most to local people and has informed our work plan moving forward.

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 2023/24, we have been available by phone, and email, provided a web form on our website and through social media, as well as attending 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 publish it on our website at www.healthwatchll.com and share it with relevant committees.

Responses to recommendations

We had no providers who did not respond to requests for information or recommendations. There were no issues or recommendations escalated by us to Healthwatch England Committee, so no resulting reviews or investigations.

Taking people's experiences to decision-makers

We ensure that people who can make decisions about services hear about the insights and experiences that have been shared with us.

In our local authority area, for example, we take information to Leicester Health and Wellbeing Board and the Leicestershire Health and Wellbeing Board.

We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Integrated Care System. We do this by regular attendance at the Integrated Care Board, the Health and Care Partnership, System Engagement group, the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committees, quarterly meetings with local Trusts and design groups.

We collaborate with colleagues at Healthwatch Rutland to ensure that between us, Healthwatch is present at all major system decision making forums.

We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

Enter and view

This year, we made 17 Enter and View visits. We made 54 recommendations or actions as a result of this activity.

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
GP practice - Downing Drive Surgery	Intelligence gained by feedback	Wrote a report with recommendations – Some of the recommendations have been actioned by the service provider.
GP practice - Manor Park Medical Practice - Manor Medical	Intelligence gained by feedback	Wrote a report with recommendations.
GP practice - Hazelmere Medical Practice	Intelligence gained by feedback	Wrote a report with recommendations – Practice have taken into consideration the recommendations.
GP Practice - Glenfield Surgery	Revisit to practice	Wrote a report highlighting improvements and recommendations.
GP Practice - Asquith Surgery	Revisit to practice	Wrote a report highlighting improvements and recommendations.
GP Practice - Beaumont Leys Health Centre	Revisit to practice	Wrote a report highlighting improvements and recommendations.
GP practice - Springfield Road Surgery	Revisit to practice	Wrote a report highlighting improvements and recommendations.
Care Home - Brockshill Woodlands	Intelligence and feedback.	Wrote a report with recommendations.
Care Home - Waring Close	Intelligence and feedback.	Wrote a report which reflected the good practice at the home.
Care Home - The Willows Nursing and Residential Home	Intelligence and feedback.	Wrote a report which reflected the good practice at the home.
Care Home - Hallaton Manor Limited	Intelligence and feedback.	Wrote a report which reflected the good practice at the home.
Care home - Aaron Court	Revisit to care home	Wrote a report which reflected the good practice at the home. Previous recommendations have been met.

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
Care home - Rushey Mead Care Home	Revisit to care home	Wrote a report which reflected the good practice at the home. Previous recommendations have been met.
Care home - Hunters Lodge	Revisit to care home	Wrote a report which reflected the good practice at the home. Previous recommendations have been met.
Emergency Department – Leicester Royal Infirmary		Wrote a report with recommendations. Service provider responded with an action plan and have taken on board the recommendations.
Community diagnostic Centres – Leicester and Hinckley	Healthwatch England funded two enter & view visits	Findings collated into national report.

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire is represented on the Leicester Health and Wellbeing Board and Leicestershire Health and Wellbeing Board by Harsha Kotecha, Chair and Gemma Barrow, Healthwatch Manager.

During 2023/24 our representatives have effectively carried out this role by regularly attending Health and Wellbeing Board meetings and taking an active part in all discussions, representing public feedback about their experiences. We have representation at the Mental Health Collaborative and Partnership Boards, Learning Disabilities Partnership Board, LLR Adult Safeguarding Board, Local Maternity and Neonatal system meetings and the Oral Health Promotion Board.

We have represented the city and county voice in the Oral Health Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and at Health and Wellbeing Board workshops focusing on Mental Health and End of Life Care.

Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire is represented on the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Integrated Care Board by Harsha Kotecha, Chair.

healthwatch Leicester

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Healthwatch Leicester and Healthwatch Leicestershire 9 Newarke Street Leicester LEI 5SN





enquiries@healthwatchll.com

f Facebook.com/HealthwatchLL

X @HealthwatchLeic

O Instagram.com/HealthwatchLL

in linkedin.com/company/healthwatch-leicester-and-leicestershire

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