



Speaking up for better care

Healthwatch Cheshire East Annual Report
2025/26

Contents

A message from our CEO and Board	3
About us	4
Valued, trusted, independent	5
A year of making a difference	7
Our year in numbers	8
Working together for change	9
Making a difference in the community	11
Listening to your experiences	12
Hearing from all communities	16
Information and signposting	18
Showcasing volunteer impact	20
NHS Independent Complaints Advocacy Service (ICAS)	22
Finance and future priorities	23
Statutory statements	25

A message from our CEO and Board

We are proud to present our Annual Report for 2025/2026 highlighting examples of how we continue to support and listen to a diverse range of people in our neighbourhoods to ensure your voices and experiences shape health and care services across Cheshire.

Over the past year we have supported more than 9,000 people across Cheshire to share their experiences or to access advice or information. Our work has addressed key issues such as GP access, emergency care, diagnostics, discharge, Care Homes, dentistry and pharmacy services—areas that deeply matter for our residents, and that are all under considerable pressure to deliver quality services.

This year is set against a backdrop of significant national change in Health services with the introduction of the Health Bill that includes proposals that risk the loss of an independent, trusted voice for patients and communities. As [highlighted by senior leaders across Cheshire](#), the independence of Healthwatch is fundamental to ensuring people feel confident sharing their experiences and that those voices genuinely influence decision-making.



CEO Louise Barry and members of the Board



*Our focus during this period remains clear: it is **business as usual for Healthwatch Cheshire**. We continue to listen, to advocate, and to ensure that the voices of local people—especially those who are seldom heard—are represented at every level of health and care delivery.”*

We take this opportunity to thank our staff, volunteers and Board members for their dedication and commitment. Particular thanks go to Erica Morriss who stood down as a Board Member this year after 10 years of strong support for our team and commitment to our independent voice and values. We also extend our sincere thanks to the thousands of local people who have shared their experiences with us this year—your voices are at the heart of everything we do.

About us

Healthwatch **Cheshire East** is your local health and social care champion.

We ensure that NHS leaders and decision-makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care. We can also help you find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.



Our purpose

To be an independent voice with the people of Cheshire, helping to shape and improve local health and care services.



Our principles

- Work in partnership to act as a strong, local consumer voice, making a difference to health and care provision for the people of Cheshire
- Gather the views of the people of Cheshire
- Provide a platform from which diverse and seldom heard voices from across Cheshire can be heard
- Set the standard for excellent public engagement
- Ensure that all people have timely and good quality information and advice
- Establish and use networks and public engagement to gather meaningful and robust local insight and intelligence
- Provide constructive checks, balances and challenge to service planners and providers
- Provide Independent Complaints Advocacy Service (ICAS) using feedback for insight and intelligence regarding patient choices and concerns.

Valued, trusted, independent

Our work is only possible because of the relationships we build — with the NHS, local councils, care providers and the communities they serve. Here is what some of those partners said about us this year.



**Executive Director –
Adults, Health and
Integration, Cheshire
East Council**

Helen Charlesworth-
May



Healthwatch in Cheshire East is a great champion of the people who draw on care and support and a respected partner organisation. I hugely value the insights we receive for the work that Healthwatch carries out, it is important information that we reflect on and helps us to think about how we do things differently and better for the residents of the borough.

I know that nationally the future of Healthwatch is being questioned, and so it is a difficult time for the staff of the organisation. That has not stopped them doing great work, and I am clear that if Healthwatch didn't exist we would have to invent them!"



Having arrived as Director in Public Health in March this year, it has been a pleasure to meet the Healthwatch team and learn of their continued collaborative work with Public Health and the wider system over the last year, in spite of numerous changes across national and local landscapes. We have been incredibly grateful to the Healthwatch team for their support in sharing their insights from a wide range of local residents regarding health and wellbeing issues. This information has been invaluable in steering and prioritising our collaborative public health approaches and has directly influenced our Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. Healthwatch have also had an important role in advocating for our residents as we start to further develop our local neighbourhood support teams in line with the NHS Long Term Plan. They remain key in ensuring the voice of our residents are at the heart of everything we do."



**Director of Public
Health, Cheshire East
Council**

Claire McIver

Valued, trusted, independent

Our work is only possible because of the relationships we build — with the NHS, local councils, care providers and the communities they serve. Here is what some of those partners said about us this year.

69 *We welcome the opportunity to contribute to Healthwatch Cheshire's Annual Report and recognise the vital role Healthwatch plays in championing the voices of our communities. Over the last year Healthwatch has positively supported reviewing our Quality Account focussing on quality improvements in patient safety, clinical effectiveness and patient experience. Whilst we, like other providers, continue to experience challenges they have supported our approach to person-centred and evidence driven care.*

Partnership working remains central to our approach at Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust. We are committed to working collaboratively with Healthwatch alongside local authorities, NHS partners and community organisations to design services together and make them more accessible, responsive and joined-up for the people we serve. We are particularly proud of our collaborative partnership via the Health and Wellbeing Boards and most recently in producing our CWP VCFSE Partnership Framework – which sets out a shared approach for collaboration. As an anchor institution our commitment is to working in genuine partnership – bringing people together, sharing responsibility, and creating meaningful, lasting impact for the communities we serve.

We have received positive support from Healthwatch for the work CWP and Mersey Care are doing to strengthen our longstanding partnership. These aim to ensure that everyone in Cheshire and Merseyside can access the same high standard of mental health, learning disability and autism support. Recent joint work demonstrates what can be achieved when we act together – from improving support for new mothers and families, to strengthening urgent and emergency mental health provision, and aligning pathways for children and young people so they receive timely and consistent care."

Andy Styring on behalf of the Cheshire and Wirral Partnerships Board

69 *NHS Cheshire and Merseyside have continued to progress the harmonisation and review of its clinical policies across the region. This work forms part of the wider programme to reduce variation in access to services and ensure that all policies are aligned with the latest clinical evidence, national guidance, and best practice.*

Clear and accessible communication has remained a key focus to support engagement and understanding among patients and stakeholders. Healthwatch have continued to play an important role in supporting this work. They have reviewed policy summary documents to ensure they are clear, accessible, and easy for patients and the public to understand. Their involvement has helped strengthen the quality of the materials and supports our aim of making policy information more transparent and inclusive, enabling meaningful engagement across Cheshire and Merseyside.

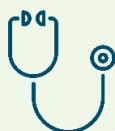
Healthwatch representatives have attended meetings of the Clinical Effectiveness Group, where their input and advice have been valuable in shaping discussions and ensuring that the patient voice is reflected within various aspects of our work."

Olivia Billington – Digital Transformation and Clinical Improvement Manager

A year of making a difference

Over the year we've been out and about in the community listening to your experiences and views, engaging with partners and working to improve care in **Cheshire East**. Here are a few highlights.

We shared views from 1,189 Cheshire East residents about [GP access](#) with leaders of health services, working with eight Healthwatch partners to push for change for residents across Cheshire and Merseyside.



We reported on patients' experiences of corridor care at Leighton and Macclesfield A&E departments during our Enter and View visits, using the co-produced Red Lines Toolkit.



We gave over 1,000 residents a voice on [the NHS App](#), sharing their feedback directly with the national design team to improve access and reduce exclusion for those using alternative routes to care.



Gathering local views of residents informed our input into the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment. This supports planning for pharmacy services across Cheshire East.



We made 10 [Enter & View visits](#) to care homes in Cheshire East and gathered feedback from over 100 residents and families. Our recommendations give providers clear, evidence-based guidance for improvement.



[Our Discharge to Assess report](#) for Cheshire East captured the experiences of residents being discharged from Macclesfield Hospital. Their experiences directly informed Cheshire East NHS Trust and local authority.



We spoke to 20 Cheshire East residents at Leighton Hospital about their discharge experience who highlighted what works and where change is needed. This information is shaping services at Mid Cheshire Trust.



We shone a light on [NHS dentistry and pharmacy services](#) — from a shortage of NHS dentists to barriers around Pharmacy First — and made the case for targeted local action to commissioners.



Our year in numbers

In 2025/2026 we supported more than **4000** people to have their say and get information about their care. We were supported by a small team of staff working across Cheshire East, and our work was supported by volunteers across a range of roles.



Reaching out:

3,361 people shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.

1,178 people came to us for clear advice and information on topics such as **GP access** and **access to NHS Dentistry**.



Championing your voice:

We published **18** reports about the improvements people would like to see in areas like **GP access, corridor care, care home quality, dental services, pharmacy, and diagnostics** which were shared with local decision makers.

Our most accessed report was **Diagnostics non attendees in Cheshire and Merseyside hospitals**, highlighting people's struggles in **accessing their diagnostic appointments**.



Statutory funding:

We are funded by **Cheshire East Local Authority**. In 2025/26 we received £151, 127, which is the **same as** last year.

Working together for change

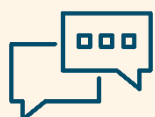
We've worked with neighbouring local Healthwatch organisations to ensure people's experiences of health and care in **Cheshire East** are heard at the Integrated Care System (ICS) level, and they influence decisions made about services covering **Cheshire and Merseyside**.

This year we've continued to work with our Healthwatch colleagues across Cheshire and Merseyside, collaborating to widen our impact across the region.



A collaborative network of local Healthwatch:

Cheshire & Merseyside (C&M) is the third largest Integrated Care Board in England, serving 2.5 million residents. The nine C&M Healthwatch Organisations (HWO) collaborate to ensure local voices are heard. We have established agreements for better cooperation and hold weekly meetings to update each other and share information with the Integrated Care Board, Care Quality Commission, and partners.



A big conversation:

In 2024, NHS C&M Merseyside ICB developed an Urgent & Emergency Care Red Lines Toolkit to support patient experience in A&E Departments, with C&M Healthwatches co-producing the Care and Comfort section based on patient feedback. During 2025–26, we visited local acute hospitals to assess how they were meeting Red Line standards on comfort and care when ED overcrowding led to corridor care. The findings are helping to inform improvement work across trusts and the ICB, and Healthwatch has contributed the patient perspective through membership of the ICB's Urgent and Emergency Care System Board.

We also asked local residents about their experiences of the NHS App. The findings showed that while many find the app useful, confidence drops sharply among older users — and that digital exclusion is about behaviour, not just access. Healthwatch also provided a list of recommendations for the national NHS App design team, local stakeholders and service providers.

Working together for change

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Building strong relationships to achieve more:

In 2025, the nine organisations formally established the Cheshire and Merseyside Healthwatch Collaborative, strengthening our collective voice at regional level. The C&M Healthwatch network contributed to work on GP access, women's services, dentistry, the NHS App, ADHD assessment waiting lists and the *Red Lines Toolkit* for A&E corridor care — producing reports and recommendations on behalf of residents across the region. We continue to attend the ICB Board and its sub-groups, holding seats at 'Place' level and sharing attendances at C&M ICB meetings.



**Executive Clinical
Director, NHS
Cheshire and
Merseyside**

Fiona Lemmens



The work of the 9 Healthwatch organisations across C&M has been instrumental in helping us ensure that patient experience is understood and acted upon across our commissioned services. I have found the work done on Emergency department waits and corridor care particularly insightful. This is a priority area for the ICB to improve for our population, and the Healthwatch work has strengthened the ICB's UEC improvement plan.

The contribution that Healthwatch colleagues make to our committee and board meetings is invaluable in bringing the voice of the public and patients into the room and undoubtedly improves the decision-making processes in the ICB."

Making a difference in the community

We bring people's experiences to healthcare professionals and decision-makers, using your feedback to shape services and improve care over time. Here are some examples of our work in **Cheshire East** this year:



Creating empathy by bringing experiences to life

Hearing personal experiences and their impact on people's lives helps services better understand the issues people face.

Our A&E Watch visits at Macclesfield and Leighton Hospitals, gave patients the opportunity to share their experiences of corridor care. We used the Care and Comfort section of the Red Lines Toolkit which sets minimum standards for patients covering safety, dignity, nutrition, communication and rest. This year's revisit found improvements from last year, where recommendations had been acted upon to improve patient care.



Getting services to involve the public

By involving local people, services help improve care for everyone.

When Cheshire East Council wanted to hear from unpaid carers through its Adult Carers Survey, we made sure it reached people who are too often missed. We promoted and distributed the survey across more than 25 community organisations and groups – from foodbanks and care communities to stroke survivors, parent carers across Crewe, Macclesfield, Nantwich and Congleton – helping carers across the borough have their say in the future of Cheshire East Adult Carers Service.



Improving care over time

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

In November 2024, Leighton Hospital launched a live A&E waiting times webpage which was in direct response to recommendations from our Enter and View work. By November 2025, it had been viewed more than 100,000 times. On the [press release issued by Mid Cheshire Foundation Trust](#), Healthwatch Cheshire noted that 'access to clear, real-time information is vital for helping people make informed decisions about their care.'

Listening to your experiences

Services can't improve if they don't know what's wrong. Your experiences shine a light on issues that may otherwise go unnoticed.

This year, we've listened to voices from across our community. Our independence from the NHS, council and service providers means people can speak openly—often sharing what they wouldn't say elsewhere. This independence strengthens the evidence, gives a clearer picture of care, and makes meaningful change more achievable. People's experiences show what's working and what isn't, so we can hold services to account and support improvement.

To share your experiences, visit: Feedback Centre — Healthwatch Cheshire East at www.healthwatchcheshireeast.org.uk.

You can reach us via other routes too:
www.healthwatchcheshireeast.org.uk/contact/



Improving patient access to diagnostic services

Our research drove a measurable change. Missed appointments (known as 'DNAs' – Did Not Attend) fell by approximately 50 per month across the region – bringing capacity back to a system under real pressure.

What did we do

We visited both hospitals to speak to patients waiting for and just completing diagnostic procedures. We called patients who had not attended their appointments. We also worked with the Cheshire and Merseyside Endoscopy Network to understand the journey of a patient, from referral to booking and delivery of appointment.

Key things we heard:



30%

experienced delays at the referral stage, often without clear communication

+

professionalism and kindness of staff, and the smooth experience once patients arrived

–

anxiety and fear, communication gaps, transport difficulties, and not wanting to "bother" anyone by cancelling or asking questions

What difference did this make?

We turned listening into action. Our findings helped the network understand why appointments were missed, identifying both system issues and personal barriers because of our research. Following our work, reported DNAs across the region fell by **approximately 50 per month** – reducing pressure on services. We shared recommendations with the Cheshire and Merseyside Endoscopy Network and both Trusts on anxiety support, clearer communication, and improved cancellation processes.

"The Diagnostics Non-Attendees report is a truly impressive piece of work, and reflects a thorough, thoughtful analysis. It is seldom that we get to speak to patients who don't attend for their appointments and so obtaining their feedback on how we can do better is gold dust. We simply would not have been able to do this without your support and ability to connect with patients."

– **Tracey Cole-Wetherill, Diagnostics Programme Director, C&M Endoscopy Network**

– **Dr Ash Bassi, Cheshire & Merseyside Endoscopy Network, Clinical Lead**

Keeping GP access grounded in patient experience

We set out to understand what accessing a GP in Cheshire East really means in practice — and 1,433 residents told us. The picture was consistent: difficulty booking, long waits, and phone systems that shuts people out. Nearly two thirds had a long-term health condition. The key message was the care itself is good. Getting to it is the problem.

Key things we heard:



68%

waited in a phone queue to reach their GP practice

64%

of those who gave up said difficulty getting an appointment was the reason

“Once I got to see the doctor everything was fine. It's just getting to that stage which is a problem. I don't like to be triaged by the reception — it can be an embarrassing conversation.”

What difference did this make?

We took those 1,433 voices straight to the top. Our findings were shared with primary care commissioners and at the NHS Cheshire and Merseyside ICB Board, and they are now informing the [Primary Care Access Recovery Plan](#) — with particular focus on the 8 am phone barrier, digital exclusion and the needs of carers and disabled patients.

“The nine local Healthwatch continue to be critical friends and champions of the patient voice for NHS Cheshire and Merseyside. They have delivered an important piece of work – gathering thousands of views from residents on how they access and experience GP services across our region. This survey offers an essential temperature check on how well recent investment and changes to primary care are landing with the public. The findings provide us with rich insight into what’s working and where further improvements are needed to ensure timely, fair, and effective access to GP services. As always, we are grateful to the Healthwatch network for their support, constructive challenge, and for ensuring we stay grounded in real patient experiences as we plan for the future.”

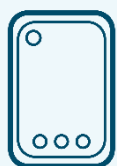
—Clare Watson, Assistant Chief Executive, NHS Cheshire and Merseyside

What discharge really feels like: listening at Leighton Hospital

Residents told us that leaving hospital should feel like a step forward — but for many, it's a moment full of uncertainty.

Between November 2025 and February 2026, we spoke to 20 Cheshire East residents at Leighton Hospital, at the point their discharge was being planned. Most had been admitted as an emergency, with stays ranging from a few days to nine weeks. We wanted to understand how informed, supported and ready to leave they really felt. **The care itself was praised warmly** — it was the planning around leaving that was less consistent.

Key things we heard:



95%

were not given written information about their discharge

80%

relied on family or carers to help coordinate their discharge or chase information



"The information was there if you asked — but you had to know to ask."

We spoke to patients on the wards and in the discharge lounge, while plans were still being made. Most had been told about the discharge process and felt prepared to leave, and praised ward staff as kind and dedicated under real pressure. But written information was rarely given or explained, getting answers wasn't always easy, and arrangements were sometimes confirmed late or changed at short notice. Many relied on hospital transport with no idea when it would arrive, and some spent long periods — including overnight — waiting in the discharge lounge.

What difference did this make?

This is the first phase of our wider Discharge from Hospital project. Our published findings give Mid Cheshire NHS Trust, Cheshire East Council and the Cheshire and Merseyside ICB a clear, patient-led picture of where pre-discharge planning works and where it breaks down. The next phase will follow the same patients after they leave hospital. We will have the opportunity to look at how seamlessly care moves between hospital teams, GPs and social care, and how this feels for residents in practice. This work is especially timely given the NHS 10 Year Plan's focus on neighbourhood health and care closer to home.

Hearing from all communities

We're here for all residents of **Cheshire East**. That's why, over the past year, we've worked hard to reach out to those communities whose voices may go unheard.

Every member of the community should have the chance to share their story and play a part in shaping services to meet their needs.

This year, we have reached different communities including :

- Attending community events in areas of deprivation across Crewe, including social supermarkets, community hubs and warm welcome spaces
- Engaging with asylum seekers, refugees and people experiencing homelessness in Crewe and Macclesfield



Helping asylum seekers access their GP — one form at a time

We removed barriers so people could access the care they needed.

At a stall at Chance Changing Lives in Crewe, we met two asylum seekers who needed to contact their GP about health concerns — but had no idea how to navigate the online booking system or phone the surgery due to language barriers. By connecting people to support early, we help improve wellbeing, reduce inequalities and ease pressure on overstretched services.

What difference did this make?

We supported both individuals to use the online form for their GP surgery in Crewe whilst at the stall. One gentleman had persistent severe headaches; the other had unusual and growing skin lesions. Both submitted their forms successfully and received a follow-up from their surgery. They were very grateful for the support.

Listening to LGBTQ+ voices on health and care

We made sure LGBTQ+ voices shaped how local services think about inclusion.

At Crewe Pride, we spoke with lesbian couples, care leavers', support workers and others from the LGBTQ+ community about their experiences of health services. People told us there was little information on lesbian sexual health, that services often assumed partners were male, and that unconscious bias could make care feel less inclusive.

What difference did this make?

We made sure these experiences were heard and used to inform wider conversations about inclusion, access and communication in local services. The event also helped us build links with organisations supporting LGBTQ+ residents, so more people know how to share their views. One person told us:

"There is a lot of information on gay men's sexual health, but nothing for lesbians."

Information and signposting

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

This year **1,244** people have reached out to us for advice, support or help finding services. These conversations also help us to understand where, and how, your care can be made better.

Healthwatch hear a wide range of issues across all ages, relating to health, social care and prevention. People find navigating services difficult and we are often the people who help them get the support they need, when they need it.

We've helped people by:

- Providing up-to-date information people can trust
- Helping people access the services they need
- Supporting people to look after their health
- Signposting people to additional support services



When trying to navigate Health and Care, Healthwatch was the answer

Marie* spoke to us at an engagement event, sharing her positive experiences of connecting with Healthwatch in the past.

Having had direct experiences with NHS community services and trying to navigate the care system she felt lost at times.



Healthwatch gives lots of support – far quicker to respond than PALS and far more person-centred. It's also really good that Healthwatch considers both health and social care issues, as these are often interconnected and individuals often need support with both at the same time."

Confused about changing records, he learned his rights

John* called us and wanted to know if he could ask for his medical records to be changed – and needed clear advice on what to do next.

We explained that he had the right to request a copy of his records and ask for amendments. If the practice refused, he could ask for an addendum to be added and contact the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) for support. He was reassured to understand his options and felt more confident about taking the next step.



Thank you – you have been most helpful."

Seeking urgent support, she found a clearer path

At an event, Clare* asked for help finding support for her husband, who was struggling with his mental health and alcohol use.

We signposted her to Cheshire East Veteran Services, introduced her to a local support service, and shared details of the Weston Crisis Café and NHS 111 Mental Health Line. She also learned why registering her husband as a veteran with his GP could help unlock further support. She left with practical options and a clearer path forward.



Thank you to Healthwatch for signposting."

**Names changed for anonymity*

Showcasing volunteer impact

Our fantastic volunteers have given **152 hours** to support our work. Thanks to their dedication to improving care, we can better understand what is working and what needs improving in our community.

This year, our volunteers:

- Carried out Enter and View visits to care homes and A&E corridor care Watch visits across Cheshire East
- Attended community engagement events, helping residents share their experiences and raising awareness of Healthwatch
- Reviewed health and care documentation, proofread reports, completed DBS and safeguarding training, and supported the dementia steering group and Citizens Focus Panel surveys



At the heart of what we do

From finding out what residents think to helping raise awareness, our volunteers have championed community concerns to improve care.



Romina

"Thank you for inviting me to volunteer at the Storyhouse. I had an amazing time. Trica and Elizabeth were amazing.

I would love to be more involved and active with Healthwatch in the future—the experience I had was genuinely amazing.

I am very grateful and thankful."

"I have thoroughly enjoyed working and learning alongside the Healthwatch team. The work on the ground is crucial and fascinating.

Healthwatch listens with empathy, bringing experiences to life. Members of the public are genuinely more willing to express their opinions with their local representatives or volunteers..

Healthwatch Cheshire is relentlessly getting services to involve the public. Every member of the public is entitled to be heard and Healthwatch Cheshire is giving them the opportunity."



Corinne

Be part of the change.

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



healthwatchcheshireeast.org.uk



0300 323 0006



info@healthwatchcheshire.org.uk

NHS Independent Complaints Advocacy Service (ICAS)

ICAS offers telephone, online, and face-to-face support to help the people of Cheshire to progress complaints in relation to any NHS services provided at hospitals, GP Practices, dentists, pharmacies, opticians and nursing homes.

This year, we've helped people by:

- Giving in-depth practical support to help them access the NHS Complaints Procedure.
- Providing information to help them find out what stage their complaint is at within the process.
- Signposting to other organisations that can help.

Part of our Independent NHS Complaint Advocate's role is to support clients at resolution meetings, which aim to analyse where things went wrong and to change processes to ensure that these mistakes do not happen again. Our Advocate fed back about a particular hospital resolution meeting she attended with a client.

Andrew was referred to us by his local MP after being told by one hospital that he had leukaemia and only a short time to live. He was one of the first patients to go onto a new drug trial, and three months later he was in remission and had a stem cell transplant. Before he was admitted to The Christie, Andrew felt that the previous hospital had not communicated well and did not fully understand the drug trial he was taking part in. We supported him to move his care to The Christie and to raise complaints about the alleged poor communication and lack of understanding at the previous hospital. This helped reassure him that other people would be less likely to go through the same experience. As of June 2026, Andrew is taking part in another drug trial and is still with us, feeling positive about continuing his health battle with the full support of The Christie Hospital.*



Looking for support with a complaint?

If you need help through the complaints process, or would like to explore your options, you can find out more about ICAS on our website: www.healthwatchcheshireeast.org.uk

**Names anonymised*

Finance and future priorities

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

Our income and expenditure:

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from Government	£151,127	Expenditure on pay	£150,479
Additional income	£0	Non-pay expenditure	£19,556
		Office and management fee	£9,328
Total income	£151,127	Total Expenditure	£179,363



Acting Chief Executive
Healthwatch England
Chris McCann

“

The NHS plays a vital role in our lives, and we know it faces real challenges. Listening to people’s thoughts about their care is one of the best ways to improve services. Every comment, concern, and compliment helps health and care professionals see what works and what needs to change, so care can be safer and better for everyone.

We want to say a heartfelt thanks to all the local people who have taken the time to share their experiences, and to the health and social care professionals who have listened and acted on that feedback. Your commitment has helped make a real difference for our community.”

Finance and future priorities

Over the next year, we will keep reaching out to every part of society, especially people in the most deprived areas, so that those in power hear their views and experiences.

We will also work together with local authority partners and our Integrated Care System to help develop a culture where, at every level, staff strive to listen and learn from people to make care better.

Our top three priorities for the next year are:

1. Hospital discharge — We will build on our published findings, through the next phases of our 'Discharge from Hospital' project to improve how Cheshire residents are supported to leave hospital and return home safely.
2. Developing our Enter and View Programme across Care Homes, Hospitals and other health care settings.
3. Focussing on the new Neighbourhood delivery model, ensuring local people help inform decision making and planning.

Statutory statements

Healthwatch Cheshire, Sension House, Denton Drive, Northwich, CW9 7LU.

Healthwatch **Cheshire East** 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 **six** members who work voluntarily to provide direction, oversight, and scrutiny of our activities.

Our Board ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community.

Throughout 2025/26, the Board met **four** times and made decisions on matters such as **governance and maintaining the independence of Healthwatch Cheshire East**. We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities.

Methods and systems used across the year to obtain people's experiences

We use a wide range of approaches to ensure that as many people as possible can provide us with insight into their experience of using services.

During 2025/26, we have been available by phone and email, provided a web form on our website and through social media, and attended meetings of community groups and forums.

We ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. We will publish it on our website **and share it on our social media channels**.

Statutory statements

Responses to recommendations

We had **two** providers who did not respond to requests for information or recommendations. There were no issues or recommendations escalated by us to the Healthwatch England Committee, so there were 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 shared with us.

For example, in our local authority area, we take information to the Health and Wellbeing Board, Cheshire East Health Care Partnership, Joint Strategic Needs Analysis Working Groups, Patient Experience Groups, Care Home Oversight Group, Joint Intelligence Group and all seven Cheshire East Community Partnerships.

We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in **Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care System**. The nine Cheshire & Merseyside Healthwatch Organisations are represented on the Integrated Care Board (ICB), the Primary Care Commissioning Committee, the Quality and Performance Committee, the Transformation Committee, the Women's Services Committee, subcommittees, Task and Finish groups and the Health Care Partnership to ensure public voice is represented and heard.

Individually, we are each active partners of ICB groups at our own 'Place' level (Cheshire East in our case).

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch **Cheshire East** is represented on the **Cheshire East** Health and Wellbeing Board by the Healthwatch Cheshire Chief Executive, **Louise Barry who is also Vice Chair**.

During 2025/26, our representative has effectively carried out this role by **using the insight and intelligence gathered by Healthwatch staff and volunteers, and submitted by the public, to help shape and inform discussions and decisions. Of particular interest this year have been reports on our A&E Watch, GP Survey, and care home Enter and View visits.**

Healthwatch **Cheshire East** is represented on **Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Partnerships** by **Healthwatch Cheshire CEO** and on Integrated Care Boards by **Cheshire and Merseyside Healthwatch CEO representatives**.

Statutory statements

Enter and View

This year, we continued to strengthen our Enter and View Programme, using the views and experiences of people accessing services to inform our reporting and support improvements in care.

This year, we conducted **12** Enter and View visits across Cheshire East. Of these, **10** were visits to care homes, where we gathered feedback from 129 residents, relatives, friends and family. These included Priestly Fields, Park Lane, Mayfield House, Barony Lodge, Hollins Park, Park Mount, Genesis, Astbury Mere Care Home, Brookfield House, Belong Crewe.

Our local hospitals also remained a focus for us, with **two** Enter and View visits made to Macclesfield and Leighton Hospitals and their Same Day Emergency Care (SDEC) units. Our reports and recommendations were welcomed and helped support future changes and improvements.

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