



Speaking up for better care

Healthwatch North East Lincolnshire annual
report 2025/26

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Acting Chief Executive
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.”

A message from our CEO

This year Healthwatch North East Lincolnshire have worked hard to hear from people whose voices are too often overlooked, including speaking to veterans at the Armed Forces coffee mornings and engaging with communities through The CARE Hub and The Rock Foundation.

By analysing patient feedback, we identified non-emergency patient transport as a significant issue across Northern Lincolnshire. This insight prompted us to investigate further and strengthen our understanding of the challenges people face.

We also spoke with people with learning disabilities about their experiences of Focus Adult Social Care. As a result of our recommendations, Focus is now developing a communications charter to improve how it engages and communicates.

Through this work, we have helped make sure local people's experiences are heard and reflected in discussions at Integrated Care System level, including through the Joint Place Quality Board and the ICS Quality Committee. We have also worked collaboratively with other local Healthwatch organisations to strengthen our collective influence and help shape decisions made by Integrated Care Boards and Partnerships.



Helen Grimwood
Chief Executive
Officer,
Hull CVS
Meeting New
Horizons



I am proud that our Healthwatch North East Lincolnshire team continue to go above and beyond to ensure that the voices of harder to reach communities are heard .

About us

Healthwatch **North East Lincolnshire** 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 vision

Equitable Health and Care services that meet the needs of every person within our communities.



Our mission

To give every person in North East Lincolnshire the opportunity to have their voices heard and empower them to play an active role in shaping services in their community.

Our values are:

- We are proud to be independent, and not afraid to speak up and challenge decisions that do not meet the needs of our communities.
- We operate a culture of transparency and openness, ensuring we are accountable to the communities in which we serve.
- Our work is evidence based- led by public voice and need.
- We are collaborative, working with organisations that share our vision or equitable health and care services that meet the need of every person within our communities.

Our year in numbers

In 2025/2026 we supported more than **2000** people to have their say and get information about their care. We employed **3** staff and, our work was supported by **4** volunteers.



Reaching out:

1075 people shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.

1047 people came to us for clear advice and information on topics such as **how to make a complaint** and **how to find an NHS dentist**.



Championing your voice:

We published **20** reports about the improvements people would like to see in areas like **Focus adult social care**, **G.P practice website audits** and **What have we heard locally**.

Our most popular report was **Focus Adult Social care**,



Statutory funding:

We're funded by **North East Lincolnshire Council**. In 2025/26 we received **£120,742**, which is **£8442 more** than last year.

A year of making a difference

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

Spring

We published the Cancer Awareness Measures North East Lincolnshire report, developed in partnership with the Cancer Alliance.

We spoke to young people at Franklin College about their experience of Health and Social care services.

Summer

We visited Headway Grimsby and presented Healthwatch. Whilst there we listened to people with brain injuries share their experiences of health and social care services.

We received training with NHS England transformation and improvement team and audited all 19 GP websites in North East Lincolnshire using the benchmark and improvement tool.

Autumn

Focus Adult social care asked Healthwatch to gather independent feedback from people with learning disabilities about their service. We produced a report with recommendations.

We carried out Enter and View visits at three care homes—The Kensington, The Grove and Kirklees. Based on the feedback we received, we produced reports with recommendations.

Winter

Our engagement helped NLAG physiotherapy department understand why 40% of their patients DNA for appointments.

We worked on a project to understand the impact of the eligibility criteria changes to Non-emergency patient transport and how this is impacting our local patients.

Working together for change

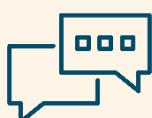
We've worked with neighbouring Healthwatch to ensure people's experiences of care in **North East Lincolnshire** are heard at the Integrated Care System (ICS) level, and they influence decisions made about services at **Humber and North Yorkshire Integrated Care Board**.

This year, we've worked with neighbouring Healthwatch across **The Humber and Yorkshire Integrated Care Board** to achieve the following:



Capturing patient voices on non-emergency patient transport:

Since the eligibility criteria changed in April 2025 some residents have had difficulty accessing non-emergency patient transport. Four local Healthwatch conducted a survey looking at accessibility. This, combined with other feedback provided by Humber and Wolds Rural Action and the North Lincolnshire Experts by Experience group, has informed our work. Overall, the feedback provided was negative. Information will be shared with ICB staff to help inform future service planning.



A Collaborative approach to making service improvements:

A significant increase in negative feedback about the PALS service has been identified across all four Humber Healthwatch areas. Monthly meetings with the PALS team have been established to address concerns and manage emerging issues. Joint surveys are being developed to understand key challenges and inform an action plan for improvement. Findings and recommendations will be shared with the ICB upon completion of the project.



Working together to do more:

In spring, we shared the findings from our Cancer Awareness Measure project, which we ran with the Cancer Alliance, with decision-makers at the Integrated Care Board. We now have a direct contact with the cancer lead at the ICB and local people will have fresh representation at ICB level, with the four Healthwatch across the Humber taking on this important role. We look forward to continuing to work together to improve care.

We've also summarised some of our other outcomes achieved this year in the Statutory Statements section at the end of this report.

Making a difference in the community

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



Creating empathy by bringing experiences to life

Personal stories help services understand the real impact of the issues people face and where support needs to improve.

Wheelchair users visiting Diana, Princess of Wales Hospital can now access wheelchairs more easily. We shared feedback from people who could not find or use a wheelchair when attending appointments, taking their experiences to the Patient Experience Team and the Quality Place meeting to raise this issue and support practical improvements.



Getting services to involve the public

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

Following a Healthwatch presentation at The Rock Foundation service users asked for information about Advocacy. Healthwatch North East Lincolnshire liaised with Voiceability Advocacy service and arranged for them to visit and share information about their service.



Improving care over time

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

York St John University and Healthwatch undertook a survey of people across Humber and North Yorkshire, via phone interviews, online panels and an online survey of communities who are harder to engage with. Healthwatch spoke to people who would not usually complete a survey including people who were homeless and people with learning disabilities.

The findings will help identify the key areas of activity for the Cancer Alliance's future work plans to improve the awareness of cancer screening and cancer signs and symptoms in our population.

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 feedback from all areas of our community. People's experiences of care help us know what's working and what isn't, so we can give feedback on services and help them improve.



Focus Learning Disability Project

Last year, Focus Adult Social Care approached Healthwatch North East Lincolnshire to reach out to learning disability Service Users, their families, carers and support providers that have experience of using their service. The aim of the project was to gather the views of people that use the service to see what is working well and what areas could be improved.

What did we do

Healthwatch produced a survey that was available online via the Healthwatch North East Lincolnshire Website, via a scannable QR code and a printed paper version. We also adapted the standard survey to be available in easy read. In person engagement took place with many organisations across North East Lincolnshire. This gave us opportunity to have face to face conversation with people about their experiences and to help people have their say if they are unable to complete a digital or paper version.

Key things we heard:



Emails are often not responded to; I have emailed several times before getting a response

**Best move ever I like my house, and I like the people I live with
Focus fund my support and hold my review every year**

Communication is key to getting right results to any issues. If you don't communicate properly then the right care or help for the right issue cannot be resolved

For further information please read [Focus Learning Disability Report](#)

What difference did this make?

Focus are taking proactive steps to address the communication difficulties by developing a Communications Charter to help the people they support better understand the standards of service they can expect .

G.P Practice website audits

Online journeys via GP websites and apps are a key 'front door' to healthcare for patients alongside telephone and face-to-face contact.

NHS England have developed a benchmark and improvement tool [NHS England » GP website benchmarking and improvement tool](#) within the National General Practice Improvement Programme

The tool breaks down key website tasks into 50 elements – 36 patient priorities and 14 practice priorities. The practice website is assessed whether it achieves the criteria well, adequately or inadequately. Ideally, all criteria should be met 'well,' which would indicate a user-friendly website.

Healthwatch North East Lincolnshire undertook training in the use of the tool with the Primary and Community Transformation and Improvement team at NHS England.

North East Lincolnshire has 19 GP websites in total that were audited by Healthwatch North East Lincolnshire using the tool.

Read the full report below

[GP-website-audit-report.pdf](#)

Key things we heard:



9

Of the audited websites scored inadequate in reading age.

11

Websites had the 'Appointments' immediately visible in the top third of the homepage.' 3 websites did not have an appointments page at all.

7

Websites scored well in ease of finding the prescriptions page.

What difference did this make?

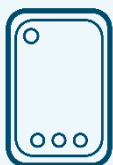
Our report prompted several G.P practices to review and update their websites, making changes inline with the benchmarking and improving tool

Working with physiotherapy services in Northern Lincolnshire

The Msk Physiotherapy department at Scunthopre General Hospital are completing a project to understand why the 'did not attend' (DNA) rates increased from approximately 5% to almost 30% in 2025.

Over 120 people have been surveyed to gain a better understanding of possible reasons for non-attendance or barriers to attending their Msk Physiotherapy appointment in both North and North East Lincolnshire. Healthwatch North East Lincolnshire were able to survey over a third of these patients and the results have provided valuable information on how they can improve access to their service. Healthwatch North East Lincolnshire were able to visit hospital and clinic settings across a large geographical area to collate this information. These results have significantly improved understanding of reasons people may not attend their appointments.

Key things we heard:



22%

Most respondents felt people might not attend because they had forgotten their appointment

55%

Of people had a desire to return to normal activities, work or sport

What difference did this make?

The MSK physiotherapy team are working towards improvements with communication, IT systems and people's understanding of Physiotherapy and the benefits it can provide.

This project has run alongside a waiting list improvement project which has seen waiting lists (as well as DNA rates) reduce significantly since February 2026.

Hearing from all communities

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

Everyone in the community should have the opportunity to share their story and help shape services that meet their needs.

This year, we reached different communities by:

- attending Fortitude, a support group for blind and partially sighted adults, to ask about their experiences of health and social care services.
- attending The Warrior Women support group on the East Marsh in Grimsby and speaking to women experiencing socio-economic deprivation.
- sent out our newsletter to everyone on our mailing list.
- sharing our monthly intelligence reports, which captures the voices of our local community, with local NHS leaders and Integrated Care System leaders to ensure local people are heard.



Improving understanding of Cancer signs and symptoms within learning disability communities

We worked with Cancer Alliance to reach out to people who wouldn't usually complete a survey to understand their awareness of cancer signs and symptoms.

76% of all those eligible in North East Lincolnshire attended their last cervical cancer screening and 86% said they intended to attend their next screening.

What difference did this make?

Our findings will feed the cancer alliance priorities to help identify the key areas of activity for their future work plans. This will support the improvement of the awareness of cancer screening and cancer signs and symptoms in our population.

Helping Ukrainian refugees understand and access NHS dental care

Ukrainians adapting to life in Grimsby told us they couldn't understand or access the dentist due to a lack of interpreter services.

A support worker of the patient called to inform Healthwatch that the patient had been denied treatment as the dentist would not use google translate. The patient had also been handed documents written in English, that he couldn't understand.

To help, we raised this issue with the dental lead at the ICB and confirmed the provision of interpreter services in North East Lincolnshire and the process for accessing this service.

What difference did this make?

The patient was able to access the dental service and receive the treatment required with a full understanding of the treatment plan.

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're your first port of call.

This year 163 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.

This year, we've helped people by:

- Providing up-to-date information people can trust
- Sharing health related information during health promotion weeks
- Supporting people to navigate the NHS complaints process
- Signposting people to additional support services



Patient Advice and Liaison Service

Thanks to this feedback, Healthwatch can now directly contact the PALs team on behalf of patients to help them raise their concerns.

The daughter of a patient rang to ask if she could speak to the Patient Advice and Liaison Service as she had tried many times without any response. The lady was in tears and explained that she wanted to speak to them about one of her parents' cancer diagnosis. She did not want to speak to a machine; she wanted to speak to a person.

We contacted PALs directly to raise this concern on behalf of the caller. Our manager now sits on the Patient Experience Group to ensure patient voices are heard and addressed.



“Thank you for returning my call, you’re the first person to actually listen.

Improving Dental care for older adults

Gail felt that she was being denied dental care after her Dentist advised her to go elsewhere for a second opinion.

Gail raised concerns that her Dentist wasn’t listening to her when she kept telling them her dentures didn’t fit correctly. Gail was experiencing sores in her mouth from the ill-fitting dentures.

The dentist told her she should get a second opinion despite there being no local NHS dentists with availability. Healthwatch liaised with the ICB dental lead and the dental practice on behalf of Gail to raise these concerns.

Following these discussions Gail received a referral to the hospital for treatment for her sore mouth and re fitting of her dentures



“You must think I'm a complete pain ringing all the time, but I just wanted to say thank you I'm finally getting somewhere with your help.”

Showcasing volunteer impact

Our fantastic volunteers have given **56.5hrs** 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:

- Supported us in the office with admin tasks.
- Attended events and collected experiences, supporting their communities to share their views.
- Carried out enter and view visits to local services to find out what was working well and what should be improved.



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.



Judy

I have volunteered for Healthwatch for a number of years. I really enjoy feeling like part of a team as the staff are so supportive. Volunteering gives you the chance to talk to members of the public, to get to hear their views on different matters. To be able to get out and have the chance to help others is so good for one's mental health. For me being part of a team helping others and the chance to make friends makes volunteering for Healthwatch very rewarding.

I enjoy volunteering and using my skills. I enjoy meeting and being around people. I have been planning a project to look at accessing healthcare facilities for wheelchair users.



Lindsay

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.



[Healthwatch North East Lincolnshire](https://www.healthwatchnortheastlincolnshire.co.uk)



01472 361450



enquiries@healthwatchnortheastlincolnshire.co.uk

[Inshire.co.uk](https://www.healthwatchnortheastlincolnshire.co.uk)

Finance and future priorities

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

Our income and expenditure:

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from Government	£120,742	Expenditure on pay	£79,447.62
Additional income	£0	Non-pay expenditure	£1795.24
Brought forward	£10,000	Office and management fee	£46,292.19
Total income	£130,742	Total Expenditure	£127,535.05

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 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:

1. To be influential in the development of the Neighbourhood Health Centres
2. To work with the local refugee communities
3. To finalise The Patient Transport project and submit the report and recommendations to the Humber and North Yorkshire ICB for their consideration

Statutory statements

Healthwatch North East Lincolnshire, Suite 4 Alexandra Dock Business Centre
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Contract holder: Meeting New Horizons CIC, The Strand, 75 Beverley Road,
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**Healthwatch North East Lincolnshire uses the Healthwatch Trademark
when undertaking our statutory activities as covered by the license
agreement.**

The way we work

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

Our Board of Trustees provide direction, oversight, scrutiny and governance
to the work of Healthwatch North East Lincolnshire , ensuring we meet our
statutory requirements. Throughout 2024/25 the Board of Trustees met four
times. We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities
through engagement and observation of trends and themes of intelligence

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, social media platforms and email it out to our mailing list.

Statutory statements

Responses to recommendations

We had **one** provider 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 Neighbourhood Health Delivery Board and The Safeguarding Adults Board **organised by North East Lincolnshire Council**.

We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in **Humber and North Yorkshire ICB**. For example, we attend the Northern Lincolnshire Quality Place meeting, The Experience of Care Forum and the Patient Experience Group. **This is in collaboration with 4 Healthwatch across The Humber**. We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch **North East Lincolnshire** is represented on the **North East Lincolnshire** Health and Wellbeing Board by **Lucy Wilkinson Delivery Manager**.

During 2025/26, our representative has effectively carried out this role by attending all the scheduled board meetings and delivering a presentation of the work plan and the annual report.

Healthwatch **North East Lincolnshire** is represented on Integrated Care Partnerships by **Ashley Green** and **Helen Grimwood**. **Lucy Wilkinson** represents Healthwatch North East Lincolnshire at the North and North East Lincolnshire Quality Place Group.

Statutory statements

Enter and view

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
Kirklees Care Home	This visit forms part of the Healthwatch North East Lincolnshire annual work plan	Wrote a report with Recommendations.
The Grove	This visit forms part of the Healthwatch North East Lincolnshire annual work plan	Wrote a report with recommendations – the service followed up on these.
The Kensington	This visit was completed following the receipt of intelligence received via webforms.	Wrote a report with recommendations – the service followed up on these
Yarborough House	This visit was completed following the receipt of intelligence received via webforms.	Wrote a report with recommendations – the service followed up on these
Ladysmith Care Home	This visit forms part of the Healthwatch North East Lincolnshire annual work plan	Wrote a report with recommendations – the service followed up on these
The Anchorage	This visit forms part of the Healthwatch North East Lincolnshire annual work plan	Wrote a report with recommendations – the service followed up on these

Statutory Statements

Projects

Project/Activity	Outcomes achieved
What we heard locally Guidance	A joint piece of work across the six Yorkshire and Humber Healthwatch teams. The report was shared at HMYICB integrated partnership meeting to feedback themes and trends from across the whole region.
DNA –Physiotherapy appointments.- Healthwatch NEL and NL engaged with their local communities to find out why people may not attend their appointments	Our findings were fed back to the Northern Lincolnshire physiotherapy department who are currently writing a report with the outcomes.
The four Humber Healthwatch worked collaboratively to speak to patients across the region to find out the impact on them of the criteria change for non emergency patient transport.	The findings are currently being collated and will be presented to The Humber and North Yorkshire ICB for their information and consideration.
Cancer Awareness in North East Lincolnshire Public-report-on-cancer-awareness-in-NE-Lincolnshire-Final-min.pdf	Respondents in North East Lincolnshire had a slightly higher recall for a persistent cough as a warning sign/symptom of cancer. They were slightly less likely to have contacted their GP within six months of noticing any symptom (43% compared to 49% of all respondents). They were slightly more likely to have had a virtual/remote appointment (28% compared to 23%) and were slightly less likely to say they found it difficult to get an appointment (10% compared to 15%). They were less likely to have completed a bowel cancer screening kit (66% compared to 74%).



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