

healthwatch
Cambridgeshire

healthwatch
Peterborough



Speaking up for better care



Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and
Peterborough **Annual Impact Report 2025/26**

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**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.”

A short introduction

Over the past year, Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough has continued to ensure local people's voices are heard across health and social care services.

Through community engagement, surveys, project and partnership outreach work, our Forums, our Panels, our Information and Signposting service and partnership boards we have listened to thousands of experiences from people living across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

People have shared both the challenges they face and examples of care that has made a positive difference to their lives. We have heard concerns about access to NHS dentistry, long waits for ADHD and autism support, difficulties getting GP appointments, and communication issues across services. Alongside this, we have also heard examples of compassionate care, dedicated staff, and services making a real difference for local families and communities.

Throughout the year, we have used this feedback to identify trends, raise concerns with decision-makers and help influence improvements across health and social care. Our work has included projects looking at areas such as mental health, social care, patient transport, community diagnostic centres, refugee health inequalities, and support for autistic young people through our Youthwatch programme.

We have continued working closely with NHS organisations, local authorities, voluntary sector partners, and neighbouring Healthwatch organisations to ensure local experiences are represented in discussions taking place across the wider Integrated Care System. We have also remained committed to hearing from a wide range of communities, helping ensure that people whose voices are often less heard still have opportunities to influence local services.

This report reflects the experiences, stories, and feedback shared with us throughout the year. Every conversation helps build a clearer understanding of what matters most to local people and supports positive change across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

In memory of Stewart Francis



Stewart Francis
Former Chair

We remember with great gratitude our former Chair, Stewart Francis.

His thoughtful leadership, unwavering commitment to ensuring people's voices were heard, and steadfast support for our staff, volunteers, and communities left a lasting mark on Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. He is remembered with great respect, appreciation, and affection by all who had the privilege of working alongside him.

A message from our Chairman and CEO



Chairman
Jonathan Jelley, MBE JP
Healthwatch
Cambridgeshire and
Peterborough

“

Across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, communities continue to face growing challenges in accessing and navigating health and social care services. What stands out throughout this report is the determination of local people to share their experiences and the dedication of Healthwatch staff and volunteers in ensuring those voices lead to constructive conversations and meaningful action. Whether through community engagement, research, forums, or direct feedback, this work continues to provide an important bridge between services and the people who rely on them every day.”



CEO
Jess Slater
Healthwatch
Cambridgeshire and
Peterborough

“

As I reflect on the past year, I am incredibly proud of the difference our team, volunteers, and communities have made together. This report shares the stories, experiences, and achievements that demonstrate the power of listening to people and ensuring their voices help shape better health and care services for everyone.”

About us

Healthwatch **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough** 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

Our vision is that health and social care services work well for local people. Where we hear that services are not working for people, especially vulnerable groups, we will speak out.



Our mission

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



Our values are:

Independence: from the local authorities and all health and social care services, providers and commissioners, whether public or private.

User-focus: we champion the voice of local people, patients and service users in the health and social care system.

Inclusivity: we will work with many different patient and service user groups across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

Respect: we respect the opinion and experience of all people and work collaboratively with all groups, networks and organisations to pursue common goals.

Credibility: local people, commissioners and partners can trust the reliability of our information.

Transparency: open and accountable in all we do.

Our year in numbers

During the year, we engaged with **7,671** people through our information and signposting service, community engagement activities, forums, participation groups, Youthwatch, Patient Experience Week, and Enter and View visits. These interactions helped us understand local people's experiences, identify emerging issues, provide advice and information, and work with partners to improve health and social care services.



Reaching out:

During the year, we engaged with **7,260 people** through our community engagement activities, forums, participation groups, Youthwatch, Patient Experience Week, and Enter and View visits.

More than **3,000 people** shared their feedback and experiences of health and social care services through our formal and informal engagement activities. Of these, **1,799 experiences** were formally recorded on our database and shared anonymously with service providers to help drive improvements. The remaining feedback was captured and shared through scrutiny committees, partnership boards, and with local authorities, ensuring local people's views informed decision-making and service development.

We provided advice, information, and casework support to **411 individuals**, delivering an average of **35 hours** of support each week.



Championing your voice:

We published **8** reports about the improvements people would like to see in areas like **Neurodiversity**, **Patient Transport** and **Mental Health**.

Our most popular report was **Mental Health - Closing the Gaps**, highlighting many people, especially young people, are facing long waits and gaps in mental health support, with services often not joined up or easy to access when they need them most, but it also highlights people's lived experiences, good examples of care, and a shared commitment across partners to improve mental health support locally.



Statutory funding:

We're funded by **Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council**. In 2025/26 we received **£527,917**, which is **3.6% 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 **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough**. Here are a few highlights.

Summer 2025

We focused on listening to local people and improving young people's services. Our team ran autism workshops for students, reviewed county condom schemes, and launched a major survey about patient data.

Our team also tackled unfair barriers to care. We pushed for British Sign Language options in the NHS complaints system and successfully stepped in when a GP surgery refused to give a patient vital steroid injections.

Autumn 2025

This season was about teamwork and using online tools to support vulnerable patients. Our Youthwatch helped design better, easier self-referral web pages for school nursing services and launched an educational video animation about vaping.

Our Information and Signposting team also achieved critical breakthroughs for individuals facing long delays. Most notably, we empowered a member of the community with cancer to secure lost hospital test results just in time for a specialist medical trial.

Winter 2025/26

During winter we helped improve hospital communication by creating leaflets/signage for the rollout of Martha's Rule, helping patients with additional needs request a second opinion. We also challenged poor patient transport services in Fenland, addressing delays and unsuitable vehicles.

Through advocacy, we prevented a patient facing severe hardship from having to travel miles for treatment. In addition to this we published our coproduced Adult Social Care Survey with Peterborough City Council and Cambridgeshire County Council.

Spring 2026

Spring delivered lasting improvements in patient care. We published a report on regional eye clinics and brought autistic young people together with local GPs, who committed to longer appointments and improved staff training.

We also secured next steps on health and transport. After two years of work, we established a permanent steering group with councils and providers to address local transport issues and hosted a fact-finding event with MPs and commissioners to review local care needs.

Working together for change

We have worked directly with our local community to ensure that your experiences of care are heard clearly at the Integrated Care System (ICS) level, giving local people a direct voice in influencing the decisions made about services across the region.



Improving Urgent and Emergency Care

Following our earlier work on urgent and emergency care at Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, we revisited Addenbrooke's Hospital to assess how patient feedback had influenced change. We found improvements to accessibility, communication and patient environments, including redesigned waiting areas and the introduction of a dedicated children's emergency department, creating a calmer and more appropriate space for young patients and their families.



Driving Real Improvements in Local Care and Transport

A major focus for us has been tackling long-standing, systemic barriers to care across our community. Over the last year we have brought together local councils, senior leaders and service providers to highlight serious non-emergency patient transport issues in Fenland and East Cambridgeshire, establishing a permanent steering group to resolve these gaps. Through our Enter and View visits and targeted surveys, ranging from hospice access to regional eye clinics, we have targeted a rise in care standards. Furthermore, our Information and Signposting team has stepped in directly to support vulnerable residents, securing medical support and supporting community members through a variety of barriers to accessing health and/or social care.



Empowering Communities and Building a Lasting Legacy

We have spent time ensuring that the diverse voices of our community, especially young people, directly change how care is delivered. Our Youthwatch team has co-produced web portals for school nursing services, launched health awareness animations, and brought neurodivergent youth face-to-face with local GPs to secure formal clinical pledges for longer appointments and better staff training. We have also organised major fact-finding events with commissioners and local authorities creating a permanent framework that ensures the feedback we receive continues to influence practical, positive changes in our community.

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 **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough** 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.

With this in mind, we brought neurodivergent young people face-to-face with local GPs to share their primary care anxieties, moving clinicians to formally pledge longer appointments and staff training on "masking." Through our Partnership Boards, carers exposed the emotional stress of transitioning adult children into supported living, visually impaired members highlighted how digital "Am I a Robot?" checks cut them off from hospital websites, and disabled residents used live taxi test-purchases to challenge licensing leaders on transport gaps. By turning these personal frustrations into real-world evidence, we have encouraged service providers to take a more community focused approach and handle any changes with empathy.



Getting services to involve the public

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

Between November 2025 and April 2026, we recruited 30 new independent members to our Partnership Boards, meaning patients, older people, and carers now make up nearly 56% of our membership and contribute many volunteering hours to influence local care decisions. This involvement has encouraged transformative changes across the region. Our members worked directly with the Integrated Care System (ICS) to strip confusing medical jargon out of regional hospital discharge leaflets, while our Youthwatch teams co-designed school nursing web portals and helped make the county's contraceptive C-card scheme more accessible through secure post lockers.



Improving support for neurodivergent people

Working with services behind the scenes to ensure the voices of neurodivergent people leading to lasting improvements in communication, accessibility and support.

We worked with local residents, Cambridgeshire Constabulary and VoiceAbility to improve experiences for autistic and neurodivergent people. Through a unique scrutiny event, participants reviewed police body-worn camera footage and shared feedback that is now helping shape future police training and communication approaches.

This work also fed into our Youthwatch neurodiversity report on barriers autistic young people face when accessing GP services. Youthwatch volunteers led interviews, workshops and data analysis, helping develop recommendations to improve communication, accessibility and support during the transition from child to adult health services.

Listening to your experiences

Health and care services can only improve when professionals understand what's working well and where people are facing challenges. This year, we've listened to feedback from people across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough; from our cities to rural communities. Your experiences of health and adult social care help us understand what is and isn't working, giving us the evidence to challenge providers and influence improvements for everyone. During the year, we attended **199 community events/engagement sessions** and hosted **16 Health and Care Forums** across the area to hear directly from local people. This included Patient Experience Week 2026, when we visited hospitals, GP surgeries, and community settings across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

During Patient Experience Week, we spoke to **415 people** and collected **202 pieces of feedback** about local health and care services. The insight gathered through this work has helped us identify emerging issues, highlight good practice, and ensure local voices are heard by health and care decision-makers.



Listening to young people to improve mental health services

Last year, we championed the experiences of young people aged 17–25 across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to address major systemic gaps in mental health care.

Local young people, their parents, and voluntary sector partners made it clear that accessing support was overly complicated, waiting times were severely long, and transitioning into adult care felt stressful and disjointed.

What did we do?

We launched a survey between April and September 2025 to capture what it feels like for young people to navigate our local mental health system. The findings, which combined statistical data with first-hand stories, were immediately spotlighted at the Healthwatch Mental Health Summit in October 2025 to put these experiences directly in front of 200 people including many system leaders.

Key things we heard:



71%

of young people had to wait longer than four weeks to see a professional, 46% waited three months or longer and 10% waited over a year.

26%

of respondents said they did not get the help they needed.

85%

of people whose youth mental health support stopped received absolutely no explanation as to why they were not moved to adult services. Additionally, 73% of those whose support stopped did not want it to end.

Our survey highlighted how a lack of service integration, poor communication, and rigid boundaries between youth and adult care leave vulnerable young people in crisis without proper support.

What difference did this make?

By presenting this evidence directly to regional commissioners, hospital trusts, and the Integrated Care System (ICS), we have mobilised local decision-makers to act. These findings are now being used to redesign local transition pathways, ensure faster access to early interventions, and co-produce clearer information directories alongside young people to ensure no one falls through the gaps.



Putting lived experience at the centre to shape more empathetic policing

In March 2026, we worked alongside local residents, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Cambridgeshire Constabulary, and charity VoiceAbility to improve policing for people with autism, neurodiverse conditions, and their carers.

What did we do?

We co-hosted a first-of-its-kind scrutiny session where residents with lived experience watched real police body-worn camera footage. Participants directly reviewed the use of police powers, analysed how officers handled tense situations, and provided direct feedback on how policing could become more sensory-aware, inclusive, and effective.

How we helped



It is essential to the Police and Crime Commissioner to listen to the voices of the public in order to help him hold the Constabulary to account for ethical policing. Working with VoiceAbility and Healthwatch brought new perspectives and raised thought-provoking questions.

Matilda Pearson, Senior Policy Officer



The insights shared by attendees help us refine our practices, reduce misunderstandings, and promote calm, sensory-aware communication when interacting with people with disabilities.

Caitlin Bones, Cambridgeshire Constabulary

What difference did this make?

The practical insights from this event have been taken back to the Constabulary to directly influence future police training and communication strategies. The feedback is helping reshape how officers interact with vulnerable residents by highlighting the need to reduce sudden sensory triggers (like flashing blue lights), use clearer communication, and implement the 'Right Care, Right Person' approach. Additionally, this work has successfully strengthened long-term public scrutiny, with an attendee inspired by the event stepping up to volunteer regularly on the local Community Scrutiny Panel.



Understanding communication barriers to keep neurodivergent people in care

This year, we carried out a range of research, engagement, and exploration activities focused on the experiences of neurodivergent people, following a significant increase in residents sharing their challenges and experiences with us.

What did we do?

This year, Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough carried out a range of work to better understand and improve the experiences of neurodivergent people using health and care services. We published a report on the barriers autistic young people face when accessing GP services and worked directly with young people and healthcare professionals through workshops and engagement sessions. We also shared case studies and lived experiences.

Key things we heard:



68%

of young people waited over four weeks to see a professional, with 10% waiting more than a year.

35%

of the feedback we receive relates specifically to barriers accessing services, referral rejections, and finding initial help.

Members of our Physical Disability Partnership Board told us about their mental health challenges and explained they often struggled to access joined-up support, highlighting the need for a more holistic approach across services.



Due to my autism, I don't regularly check emails, but I was discharged from a mental health pathway after missing an appointment I was only told about it at very short notice. Although I now have a consistent GP supporting me, I'm still on a waiting list and facing delays and uncertainty about treatment.

Emily, Service User

What difference does this make?

This work helped ensure that the experiences of neurodivergent people were directly heard by local healthcare professionals and translated into practical commitments for improvement. Clinicians identified several improvements, including longer appointments for people with multiple conditions, better communication, easier booking and test results processes, and more staff training on listening skills and masking. There was also agreement on the need to address wider system barriers and explore the introduction of health passports within GP settings.

Our Mental Health Summit: What we heard and learned

Our Mental Health Summit and accompanying report provided a space for people with lived experience, carers, and professionals to come together and share what is and isn't working across local mental health services.

What did we do

The summit brought together people with lived experience, voluntary sector organisations, NHS partners, and commissioners to explore key issues including access to support, crisis care pathways, waiting times, communication between services, and continuity of care. A Question Time-style panel enabled open discussion between attendees and decision-makers, helping to surface lived experience in real time and ensure it was heard directly by those able to act on it. Retired Olympian, Louis Smith MBE, also gave a talk on his own mental health challenges.

What we heard

Through our Mental Health Summit, we heard that people continue to face barriers to accessing mental health support, including long waiting times, poor transitions into adult services, challenges accessing crisis care, and unclear information. People also highlighted the need for better support for carers, earlier intervention, greater recognition of neurodivergence, and services that listen, communicate clearly, and put people at the centre of care.



"In all this time, I've seen somebody face-to-face once."

Matt, Service User



"Our experiences have led my daughter to feel like no one cares."

Parent of Service User



"Communication about services needs improving, so that people find it easier to access them. Improve, simplify and clarify."

Mental Health Summit Attendee

What did it achieve?

- The summit brought together NHS leaders, local authority representatives, national mental health experts, voluntary sector organisations, carers and people with lived experience to discuss local mental health priorities.
- It also secured commitments from system leaders to review areas including crisis care pathways, neighbourhood-based care models, dementia support pathways and service integration.

Seeing change in action: How our feedback has improved Addenbrooke's Hospital

In March 2026, Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough visited Cambridge University Hospitals (Addenbrooke's) to see the changes made to urgent and emergency care since our 2022 Health Champions report. We were given a tour of the Emergency Department and Urgent Care Centre to see how patient feedback has been used to improve services.

From feedback to action

Our 2022 report shared people's experiences of urgent and emergency care. It highlighted clear areas for improvement, including waiting areas, communication, accessibility, privacy, and patient flow.

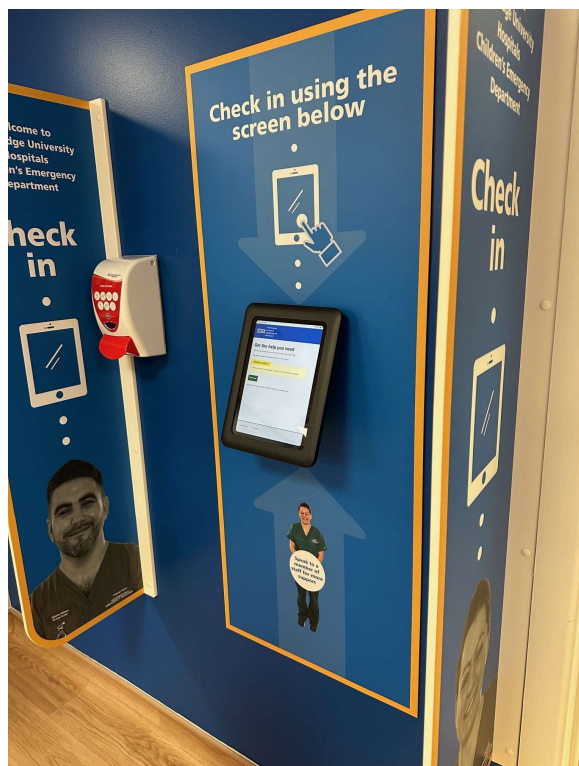
During our visit in 2026, we saw that many of these issues have been addressed through major changes across the hospital.

What has changed



Before (2022)	After (2026)
• Limited spaces for different needs • Busy, crowded and less welcoming waiting areas • Limited privacy for patients • Long waits and delays in patient flow • Difficult to know where to go on arrival • Barriers for disabled or less confident digital users • Basic waiting environments • Limited spaces for different needs	• Separate children's Emergency Department created, mental health area, and flexible treatment rooms • New Urgent Care Centre that is brighter, cleaner and more comfortable • Improved clinical rooms that give better privacy and dignity • New Co-ordination Centre to help manage patient flow in real time • Digital check-in system ("front door") to guide patients more quickly • Lower check-in desks and staffed reception for extra support • Added charging points, water stations, and better seating areas • Separate children's Emergency Department, mental health area, and flexible treatment rooms

Seeing change in action: How our feedback has improved Addenbrooke's Hospital



Commitment to Continuous Improvement

Our visit this year provided a valuable opportunity to see how patient feedback can lead to meaningful change. Four years after publishing our Health Champions report on urgent and emergency care, it was encouraging to see that many of the concerns raised by local people had been listened to and acted upon.

The improvements made by Addenbrookes (Cambridge University Hospitals) demonstrates a clear commitment to using patient experience to shape services. From redesigned waiting areas and improved privacy to better patient flow and more accessible facilities, many of the changes reflected recommendations made by Healthwatch and the people who shared their experiences with us.

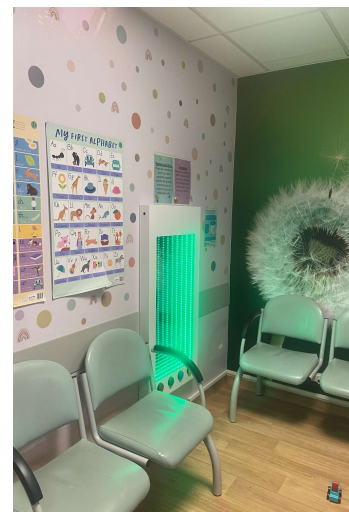
Most importantly, the visit showed the lasting value of independent patient feedback. By gathering and sharing the experiences of local people, Healthwatch helped highlight areas where change was needed and provided evidence that informed future investment and service redesign.

Commenting on the progress since our 2022 report, Nicola Ayton, CEO of Cambridge University Hospitals, said:



"I was delighted to welcome colleagues from Healthwatch to CUH and to share the progress we have made to our urgent and emergency care services since their 2022 report. We are proud of the work undertaken to improve the experience of our patients.

We know there is more to do, and feedback from patients continues to be at the heart of how we shape our services. We value our ongoing partnership with Healthwatch and look forward to continuing to work together as we build on this progress."



Driving change through partnership

The Partnership Boards bring together people with lived experience, voluntary and community organisations, and health and care partners to influence and improve adult social care services. Supported by Healthwatch and local authorities, the Boards ensure that lived experience remains at the heart of decision-making, with service users making up at least half of the membership and chairing each Board. This year, the Boards have driven a range of positive changes and improvements, highlighted below.



Carers

Carers' feedback has directly influenced improvements in hospital communication, carers' information, and support pathways, including better guidance for families supporting adult children with learning disabilities. It has also strengthened system-level recognition of carers' needs across health and care services, particularly around visibility and access to support.

The Learning Disability and Autism Board has influenced more inclusive practice across health, policing, and public services, with partners committing to improve accessibility, communication, and engagement with people who have lived experience. This work is directly shaping service redesign around safety, transitions, and access to care.



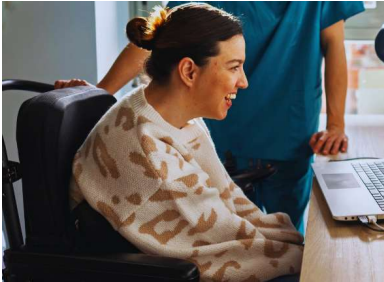
Learning Disability



Older People's

Feedback has led to improvements in hospital discharge information, dementia support, Blue Badge guidance, and service navigation for older people. The Older People's Board has also influenced work to improve accessibility of information and reduce barriers linked to digital exclusion and access to services in rural areas.

Driving change through partnership



Physical Disability

The Physical Disability Board has driven tangible improvements in accessibility across hospitals and GP services, with issues raised leading to direct reviews of estates, parking, transport support, and disability pathways. Feedback has been escalated into service-level action, influencing ongoing accessibility improvements.

The Sensory Impairment Board feedback has led to commitments to improve digital accessibility, hospital communication, and the availability of accessible information formats. This has influenced ongoing work to reduce barriers caused by poor website design, appointment communication, and digital exclusion. In addition to this, members of this Board also took part in taxi test purchases to improve driver training.



Sensory Impairment



Wheelchair Users Forum

The forum has directly influenced improvements in transport accessibility, mobility safety guidance, and awareness of barriers in public spaces and health settings. Feedback has informed practical guidance and strengthened engagement with providers to improve accessibility in service design.

"I like that I am contributing to the common goal of everyone. Healthwatch is an excellent organisation providing help and facilitating change for all."

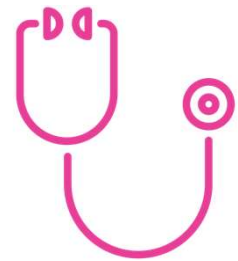
Anonymous Quote, Board Member



Supporting patient participation groups to influence Primary Care

Our Patient Participation Group (PPG) Forums bring together patient representatives from GP practices across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, providing a space to share experiences, identify common challenges, and influence improvements in primary care services.

During 2025/26, representatives from 15 GP practice PPGs took part in our North and South forums. Collectively, these groups represent tens of thousands of patients and provide an important link between local communities and healthcare services.



What we heard

PPG representatives told us that experiences of working with GP practices vary. Some groups described positive relationships and regular involvement in discussions, while others felt communication could be improved and that patient views were not always listened to.

Other common themes included:

- Limited opportunities for PPGs to engage with Primary Care Networks (PCNs).
- A lack of understanding about how local NHS structures work and how patients can get involved.
- Concerns about different digital systems being used across NHS services, making it harder for patients to access care.

Our impact

The forums helped us identify issues affecting patients across multiple GP practices and raise them with decision-makers.

As a result, we:

- Shared feedback about PPG relationships with GP practices with the NHS Primary Care Team.
- Raised concerns about patients having to use different NHS digital systems.
- Supported PPGs to review and improve GP practice website information.
- Arranged for senior NHS leaders to attend future meetings so patient representatives can raise concerns directly.

The forums also gave PPG members the chance to share ideas, learn from one another, and strengthen patient voice across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

Youthwatch: Making a difference for young people

In addition to its significant work on young people's experiences of mental health services and services for neurodivergent people, Youthwatch continued to influence local health and care services throughout the year. By ensuring young people's views and experiences were heard by decision-makers, the group helped shape service improvements and future developments.

Youthwatch members worked with health and care providers to improve information, accessibility and support for young people. Their feedback led to improvements to the Children and Young People's Portal, including clearer information, improved self-referral options, a new school nursing video, and new ways of promoting services. Feedback on the C.Card scheme also helped providers identify more accessible ways for young people to access sexual health support.

Our Vaping and Young People report (published in January 2025) continued to have an impact beyond Healthwatch, with findings referenced in countywide research and helping to inform wider discussions around smoking and vaping. Youthwatch also co-produced a vaping animation and launched its first podcast, helping raise awareness and engage more young people on the topic.

Youthwatch continued to grow as an inclusive network of volunteers, with 60% coming from ethnically diverse backgrounds. This diversity was recognised as a key strength during our Investors in Volunteering accreditation.

Praise for our collaborative working



As part of Youthwatch's work to improve understanding of the barriers autistic young people face when accessing healthcare, we worked closely with Anglia Ruskin University students, helping them connect their learning with lived experience and real-world practice.

"We are incredibly grateful to Sue (Healthwatch) for the time, care and insight she brought to the project. Her involvement helped make the experience meaningful for students, supporting them to connect theory with lived experience and practice. Students spoke very positively about the opportunity and the value of hearing from Sue."

Sarah Guscott, Anglia Ruskin University



Hearing from all communities

We're here for all residents of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. 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 by:

- Working in partnership with the ICB (Integrated Care Board) NHS Community Participation Group to support mental health consultation work with seldom-heard communities.
- Collaborated with Health and Care Forums through REN (Research Engagement Networks) Research to deliver targeted, community-led engagement sessions.
- Supported MigRef, a group working to improve health equality for refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, to develop a Healthcare Passport tailored to the needs of these communities.
- As previously mentioned, 60% of our Youthwatch volunteers and 50% of our employed staff are from minority ethnic backgrounds.



ICB NHS Community Participation Group: Strengthening Voices in Mental Health Consultation

Mental health services needed to better understand the barriers faced by seldom-heard communities, particularly those who are often underrepresented in formal consultation processes.

We worked in partnership with the ICB (Integrated Care Board) NHS Participation Group to support targeted engagement with seldom-heard communities. This included facilitating consultation activity focused on lived experience of accessing mental health support and creating safe, inclusive spaces for people to share their views. Insights were systematically gathered and structured to ensure they could be used effectively by decision-makers.

What difference did this make?

This work strengthened the evidence base available to commissioners by bringing forward voices that are often missing from traditional engagement. It improved understanding of access barriers and helped ensure that underrepresented communities directly influenced future approaches to mental health service planning and delivery.

REN Research with Health and Care Forums: Community-Led Insight for Service Improvement

Local health and care services needed more representative insight from communities facing deprivation and access barriers, as traditional engagement was not capturing full lived experience.

Through REN Research and Health and Care Forums, we delivered targeted, community-led engagement sessions to reach diverse groups and gather open, honest feedback on health and care experiences. We worked with local partners to ensure inclusive methods and accurately captured insights for system use.

What difference did this make?

The project generated richer, more representative insight into local health inequalities and access challenges. These findings were shared with health and care system leaders, helping to inform discussions around service development and improvement, and ensuring that community voice was embedded in planning conversations.

Healthcare Passport with MigRef: Improving Access for Refugees and Migrants

Refugees and migrants often face significant barriers when accessing healthcare, including language barriers, communication challenges, and difficulty explaining medical needs. There was a need for practical support to initiate better communication and improve patient experience.

What we did

- Supported work with refugees and asylum seekers across Peterborough, including those placed in local accommodation settings, working alongside health and care professionals to ensure people receive appropriate support when arriving in the UK.
- Worked in partnership with internal teams and clinical colleagues to support individuals with complex medical needs, helping to escalate concerns and ensure appropriate communication and care planning was provided.
- Contributed to regional and academic partnership work exploring how social determinants of health impact outcomes for refugee, asylum-seeking and migrant communities, including collaboration with universities and wider system partners.
- Supported discussions and development work around improving information for people newly arriving in the area, including exploring the development of welcome materials covering health, wellbeing, and safety information.
- Contributed to work exploring the implementation of the Safe Surgeries initiative and improving access to primary care for migrant and asylum-seeking communities.

What difference did this make?

This work helped ensure that individuals with complex and urgent health needs were better supported to access appropriate care, with improved communication and escalation where needed. It strengthened coordination between health services and wider partners supporting refugees and asylum seekers, helping people feel less isolated when arriving in the area.

The work also contributed to a broader understanding of the social factors affecting health outcomes for migrant communities, and highlighted gaps in early information and support for new arrivals. These insights are now helping to inform more inclusive approaches to service design and improve access to healthcare for marginalised communities.

Information and signposting

Get the information you need to make informed choices about your care. We'll help you find local services and support you to raise concerns or make a complaint when things haven't gone as they should.

This year 411 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.

Our Information and Signposting Service has supported individuals across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough by listening to their experiences, providing reassurance, and helping them access the right services. Support needs varied from brief enquiries to more complex cases requiring substantial assistance. In total, Healthwatch delivered 1,813.5 hours of information, advice and signposting support during the year, averaging around 4.5 hours per person supported.

People in our community shared positive feedback about the support they received from our team. We helped with a range of issues, including care after leaving hospital, vaccination appointments, nursing support, mental health services, and accessing dental care after long periods without treatment. Following contact with our team, these people received follow-up calls, written summaries, and signposting information to ensure they felt listened to, informed, and supported in understanding their ongoing care and next steps.

We also followed up directly to check whether any further support was needed, helping people feel heard and ensuring they knew where to go if additional help was required.

We also supported individuals to access services they had previously struggled to engage with, including NHS dental care, through the provision of advice and guidance to them and their families.

These examples demonstrate how our Information and Signposting Service not only captured feedback, but also provided direct, practical support helping people navigate services, feel heard, and access the care they needed.



Accessing Steroid Injections

A patient was repeatedly told their GP surgery could not provide the steroid injections they needed.

We escalated the issue to the Integrated Neighbourhood Manager, who liaised with the surgery and arranged for the patient to be contacted and booked in for treatment.



Community member feedback:

"Thank you for looking into this. I had previously been told by two GPs that this wasn't available at the surgery, so it was reassuring to learn that support could be provided. I will now follow this up directly with the practice. Thank you for all your help and guidance throughout the process."

Delayed Cervical Screening Appointment

A patient overdue for cervical screening after pregnancy was told they would need to wait 6–9 months for an appointment.

We contacted the Integrated Neighbourhood Manager, who worked with the practice manager to secure an appointment within weeks instead of months.



Community member feedback:

"Thank you so much for your help. I'll get back in touch with them and follow this up. Thank you for getting this resolved."

Accessing Urgent Test Results for Cancer Treatment

A patient waiting months for test results urgently needed them to access a specialist cancer treatment programme.

We supported the patient and their spouse to escalate concerns through PALS and the Patient Experience Team, helping secure the results in time for treatment.



Community member feedback:

"I have now been accepted and placed on the waiting list for treatment. Whether this would have happened without the support I received, I'll never know, but I'm very grateful for the help and guidance provided throughout the process."

Showcasing volunteer impact

Our 107 volunteers help ensure local voices are heard. Through roles including Community Listeners, Enter & View Representatives, Youthwatch members, Partnership Board members, Non-Executive Directors and Healthwatch Chairs, they help us gather feedback, influence services and improve health and social care.

This year, our volunteers:

- **Visited communities across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough** to raise awareness of Healthwatch and support people to share their experiences of local health and care services.
- **Collected and amplified lived experiences**, helping people feed back on NHS and adult social care services and ensuring these insights inform our reports and priorities.
- **Undertook Enter and View visits** to health and care settings, observing services first-hand and producing recommendations for improvement
- **Doubled within our Youthwatch provision**, strengthening its role in gathering insight from young people aged 14–25. Members of this group have also contributed to published reports, including work on mental health and vaping.
- **Launched and developed a Youthwatch Podcast series**, created and co-produced with young people, with further episodes currently being rolled out.
- **Introduced a Youthwatch Health and Care Forum pilot**, creating a new space for young people to discuss services directly, with the first forum focusing on Sexual Health Services.



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.



Priscilla Boateng
Volunteer

“Working alongside a diverse group of volunteers has been one of the most rewarding part of my Healthwatch experience. Each person brings their own background, strength, and lived experiences, and that diversity enriches everything we do. It means we see issues from different angles, challenges assumptions and understand our community more fully.

I have felt supported, inspired, and consistently learning, and it has shown me how powerful it is when people with different perspectives work towards the same goal of improving health and social care.”

“Working alongside such a diverse group of volunteers has opened my eyes to different perspectives. It’s inspiring to be part of a team where everyone’s contribution is valued, regardless of background.”



Joanna Awpratwum
Volunteer

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.



www.healthwatchcambridgeshire.co.uk



www.healthwatchpeterborough.co.uk



0330 355 1285



enquiries@healthwatchcambspboro.co.uk

Finance and future priorities

We receive funding from **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority** under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to help us do our work.

Our income and expenditure:

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from Government	£527,917	Expenditure on pay	£487,602
Local Authority Partnership Boards	£96,336	Non-pay expenditure	£124,377
Additional income	£42,319	Office and management fee	£16,569
Total income	£666,572	Total Expenditure	£628,548

Additional income is broken down into:

- Interest and other income £8,902
- Project income brought forward from last year £6367
- ICS funding (detailed below) £27,050

Integrated Care System (ICS) funding:

Healthwatch across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough also receives funding from our Integrated Care System (ICS) to support new areas of collaborative work at this level, including:

Purpose of ICS funding	Amount
Integrated Care Board – The ICB People & Communities Engagement Group brings together local people and partners to ensure that public voices shape health and care planning, decision-making and service improvement, while supporting the development of innovative approaches to co-production across the county	£20,000
Integrated Care Board (with Healthwatch Norfolk) – Patient Data Survey with Healthwatch Norfolk as the lead	£2,050
Integrated Care Board Research – ICS Research Engagement Network Development Programme, to enable engagement with local communities.	£5,000

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. Supporting People Who Use Adult Social Care Services

We will continue to engage with people who receive Adult Social Care services through surveys, community engagement and Enter and View visits. By listening to their experiences, we will provide valuable intelligence to local authorities to support service improvement and ensure people's voices influence decisions about the care they receive.

2. Planning for the Future

As we look ahead to April 2027 and beyond, we will undertake a public engagement exercise to better understand the needs, priorities and expectations of local communities. This work will help ensure our future services remain relevant, responsive and shaped by the people we serve.

3. Promoting a Joined-Up Approach to Listening

We will work with health and care providers across the system to strengthen collaboration and embed a more joined-up approach to listening to patients, service users and communities. By sharing learning and good practice, we aim to ensure feedback is used effectively to improve services and outcomes for local people.

Statutory statements

Healthwatch England, 2 Redman Place, Stratford, E20 1JQ

Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough 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 Healthwatch Board consists of nine 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 9 times and made decisions on matters such as the approval of a name change to the organisation, to ensure future sustainability and the approval of additional training budget for staff to upskill and develop for a new future of patient and public voice.

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 with both Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council as well as the Care Quality Commission, NHS England, Senior Integrated Care System leaders.

Statutory statements

Responses to recommendations

All providers responded to requests for information and recommendations made during the year. We also received updates from providers on recommendations arising from previous Enter and View reports, including some published several years ago. This demonstrates a continued commitment to improvement and accountability. While some recommendations can be implemented quickly, others require longer-term planning, investment, or service redesign, and may take several years to fully deliver.

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 Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council Adults and Health Scrutiny Committees.

We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Integrated Care System (ICS) Accountable Business Units (ABU), including both North and South Place and the Mental Health, Learning Disability and Autism (MHLDA ABU).

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

During 2025/26, Jess Slater, CEO, and Caroline Tyrrell-Jones, Head of Operations, have continued to represent local people's experiences and feedback through attendance at the Councils' Adults and Health Scrutiny Committees, ICS Accountable Business Units, the ICS Primary Care and Commissioning Scrutiny Committee, Integrated Care Board (ICB) Quality, Performance and Finance Sub-Committee, and the ICB Population Health Improvement Board, alongside many ICS operational meetings. During 2025–26, national changes and significant reductions to Integrated Care Board structures across England resulted in a number of ICS and ICB meetings being paused while new governance arrangements were developed. Throughout this period, we continued to share evidence, insight and feedback with system leaders and Healthwatch England to ensure the experiences of local people remained central to decision-making at both local and national levels.

Statutory statements

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is represented on the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Integrated Care Partnership and the Joint Health and Wellbeing Board.

During 2025/26, national changes to Integrated Care Boards led to the temporary suspension of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Integrated Care Board while new regional arrangements were established. The Healthwatch representative role within the newly configured Integrated Care Board footprint is now undertaken by Neil Tester of Healthwatch Hertfordshire. The new footprint covers Cambridgeshire, Peterborough, Hertfordshire, Bedford, Luton and Milton Keynes, representing a population of approximately 3.5 million people.

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Joint Health and Wellbeing Board has continued throughout this period, with Jonathan Jelley, MBE JP, representing Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Through this role, Jonathan has continued to champion the voices of local people in system-level discussions, promote the importance of patient experience and public feedback, and support partners to address health inequalities, improve access to services and strengthen collaboration between communities and health and care organisations.



Statutory statements

Enter and view

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
Alan Hudson Treatment Centre, Wisbech	To gather feedback on people's experiences of the service and identify areas for improvement.	We shared our findings with the service through a report. The management team responded positively to our recommendations, to address the areas identified for improvement. Key recommendations included: • Improve accessibility and inclusion by making translation services more visible and providing information in multiple languages. • Enhance patient wellbeing by adding artwork to clinic rooms and waiting areas to create a more welcoming environment. • Make the service easier to access by including a map of the unit location in appointment letters.
Community Diagnostic Centres (CDCs), Ely and Wisbech	To understand patient experiences of accessing diagnostic services and identify barriers to care. Additionally, to inform North West Anglia Foundation Trust on what works well and what could be improved prior to the new Peterborough CDC build.	We shared our findings with the service through a report. The management team responded positively to our recommendations, to address the areas identified for improvement. Recommendations for Ely included: • Improve privacy and communication by introducing visual call systems or numbered tickets in waiting areas. • Make information easier to read by slowing down information screen displays and reviewing the number of slides shown. • Enhance accessibility by updating entrance mats with more dementia-friendly colours.

Statutory statements

Enter and view

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
Community Diagnostic Centres Continued		Recommendations for Wisbech included: • Improve accessibility by introducing clearer toilet signage using pictograms. • Create a more inclusive waiting area by reconfiguring seating so wheelchair users can sit alongside companions. • Provide better accessibility information by adding links to AccessAble on CDC webpages to help patients plan their visit.
Field House Care Home, Spalding	To gather feedback on the home and residents' experiences and identify areas for improvement.	We shared our findings with the home through a report. The management team responded to our recommendations, to address the areas identified for improvement. These included but were not limited to the following: • Improve safety and accessibility by addressing trip hazards and increasing contrast on handrails and key features. • Enhance the environment by repairing worn furniture and maintaining clean, welcoming communal spaces. • Make information clearer and easier to access by reducing visual clutter and improving the readability of signage and notices.
The Orchards Care Home, Ely	To gather feedback on the home and residents' experiences and identify areas for improvement.	Shared findings and recommendations with the home via a report.

Statutory statements

Additional impact 2025–2026

This table reports additional impact generated by Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough that is not otherwise referenced in the main body of this report.

Date	Activity (what we did and who for)	Outcomes and impact achieved
Apr-25	Shared Life Change report with HWE to support CSCP-funded men's health work	Contributed evidence used in consideration of a national men's health strategy
Apr-25	Worked with Poverty Truth Commission network on digital access barriers	Helped shape plans for 12 Digital Hubs pilot in Peterborough and ongoing digital inclusion work
Jun-25	Delivered autism workshop at Youth Voice event with young people and professionals	Insights will inform final recommendations and service improvements
Jun-25	Raised concerns at ICB Quality Committee about complaints data and accessibility	Triggered follow-up work on improving complaints reporting and accessibility
Jul-25	Supported creation of Youth Lead network across Healthwatch areas	Enabled peer support and shared learning for Youthwatch leads nationally
Aug-25	Contributed vaping data to Healthy Behaviours Insight report (Cambridgeshire County Council commissioned)	Evidence used in countywide behavioural health insight publication
Aug-25	Youthwatch reviewed C-Card scheme access and barriers	Led to improvements in distribution and accessibility for young people
Aug-25	Facilitated a focus group in partnership with Peterborough City Council to hear the experiences of adults living with severe and enduring mental health difficulties	Produced recommendations for commissioners covering improved access to activities and support, stronger crisis provision, reduced barriers to services, better system integration, and more welcoming environments for people using mental health services
Aug-25	Supported patient access to steroid injections via escalation	Patient received treatment after repeated GP refusal
Oct-25	Youthwatch co-produced improvements to wellbeing portal and school nursing offer	Improved access, self-referral routes and communication for young people
Oct-25	Supported patient with cervical screening delay via ICS escalation	Patient received timely screening appointment after significant delay

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Additional impact 2025–2026 continued

Date	Activity (what we did and who for)	Outcomes and impact achieved
Nov-25	Delivered a mental health youth-to-adult transition survey, supported the annual mental health summit, and produced a related report for partners	Contributed evidence to the Integrated Care Board external review of countywide community mental health services
Nov-25	Supported the ICB NHS participation group with a focus on community mental health services	Informed the countywide community mental health services review through lived experience and patient feedback insights
Nov-25	Supported patient with cancer-related delayed test results via escalation	Patient received urgent results and accessed specialist treatment programme
Dec-25	Provided accessibility input into Martha's Rule materials at Royal Papworth Hospital	Improved accessibility for patients with sensory and communication needs
Jan-26	Raised EMED transport concerns	Provider reviewing feedback and implementing service improvements
Jan-26	Supported planning of multi-agency transport workshop in the Fenland area	Cross-system workshop planned to improve transport access
Jan-26	Supported patient with throat condition complaint escalation	Patient received appropriate local treatment after issue resolved
Apr-26	Supported planning of post-closure Healthwatch engagement event	Enabled continued system engagement discussions with partners
May-26	Contributed to transport steering group with commissioners and providers	Established ongoing cross-agency group to address transport inequalities
Jun-26	Supported autism workshop follow-up with GP practice	Practice reviewing implementation of learning including health passport use

**Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and
Peterborough
The Maple Centre
6 Oak Drive
Huntingdon
PE29 7HN**



www.healthwatchcambridgeshire.co.uk
www.healthwatchpeteborough.co.uk



0330 355 1285



enquiries@healthwatchcambspboro.co.uk



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