



healthwatch
Leicester and
Leicestershire



Annual Report 2024–2025

**Unlocking the power of
people-driven care**

Healthwatch Leicester
and Leicestershire

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"The feedback local Healthwatch hear in their communities and share with us at Healthwatch England is invaluable, building a picture of what it's like to use health and care services nationwide. Local people's experiences help us understand where we – and decision makers – must focus and highlight issues that might otherwise go unnoticed. We can then make recommendations that will change care for the better, both locally and across the nation."

Louise Ansari, Chief Executive, Healthwatch England

A message from our Chair

I am pleased to present this year's report, which highlights the work Healthwatch Leicester and Leicestershire has undertaken to champion the voices of local people and influence improvements across health and social care services.

Over the past year, we have heard from across our region from Leicester's inner-city neighbourhoods to rural communities. The Healthwatch team including the Healthwatch Advisory Board has shared these insights at meetings we attend with commissioners and service providers to help improve outcomes and provision for the population.

Among the most common issues raised were access to GP services, patients reporting difficulty in accessing same day appointments, concerns with the digital triage systems and the growing frustration with continuity of care for long term conditions.

Access to NHS dental care also continues to be a concern. We received numerous reports of people struggling to register with an NHS dentist. Long wait times for treatment which

means residents are having to manage dental pain at home.

Our visit to the Children's Emergency Department (ED) highlighted the challenges with navigating the department, unclear waiting processes and difficulties for children with additional needs. Our input contributed to ongoing plans to make the Children's ED more welcoming, responsive and supportive for young patients and their families.

In March, we held our conference where we were able to share our insights and involve the public in shaping our priorities for the coming year. We heard loud and clear from local people and stakeholders about the issues that matter most to them. Many pointed to GP access, social care and mental health as areas where we need to focus our efforts.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has engaged with us over the past year, shared their experiences and those who have acted on our feedback to make a difference. A special thank you to our volunteers, our board members and our staff.



“Looking ahead, the NHS landscape is undergoing significant changes. Healthwatch will continue to play a vital role in this transformation, working closely with all partners to ensure that these changes lead to real improvements for the people of Leicester and Leicestershire.”

Harsha Kotecha, Chair, Healthwatch Leicester and Leicestershire

About us

Healthwatch Leicester and Leicestershire 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

To bring closer the day when everyone gets the care they need.



Our mission

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



Our values are:

Equity: We're compassionate and inclusive. We build strong connections and empower the communities we serve.

Collaboration: We build internal and external relationships. We communicate clearly and work with partners to amplify our influence.

Impact: We're ambitious about creating change for people and communities. We're accountable to those we serve and hold others to account.

Independence: Our agenda is driven by the public. We're a purposeful, critical friend to decision-makers.

Truth: We work with integrity and honesty, and we speak truth to power.

Our year in numbers

We've supported more than **19693** people to have their say and get information about their care. We currently employ **7** staff and, our work is supported by **29** volunteers.

Reaching out:



10434 people shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.

9259 people came to us for clear advice and information on topics such as **making a complaint about the care they received at the hospital** and **accessing dental care**.

Championing your voice:



We published **24** reports about the improvements people would like to see in health and social care services.

Our most popular report was **Leicester Royal Infirmary - Children's Emergency Department** highlighting people's experiences in **accessing urgent care**.

Statutory funding:



We're funded by Leicester City Council and Leicestershire County Council. In 2024/25 we received **£299,428** which is the same as 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 Leicester and Leicestershire. Here are a few highlights.

Spring

We helped with research about NHS eye care waits, making sure South Asian and Black people's experiences were heard to help improve services and reduce unfair gaps.



Our "Living with Dementia" report informed the LLR Dementia Strategy 2024–29, ensuring lived experience is reflected in future dementia support and planning.



Summer

Our insight report shared voices from ethnic communities, informing culturally sensitive health planning and widening representation in service feedback.



We responded to feedback on the lengthy waits for children and young people mental health referrals by visiting CAMHS – The Beacon Unit.



Autumn

We engaged workers at three major employers on World Mental Health Day; their experiences are shaping workplace wellbeing conversations.



We delivered a workshop to the VCSE sector on GP services and patient feedback to discuss ways to improve access for communities.



Winter

Engaged with families in temporary housing sharing insights for the council to shape the future strategy in temporary accommodation.



We shared people's views on suicide prevention and mental health, helping shape a report for the local council and influence priorities to improve local mental health support.



Working together for change

We've worked with neighbouring Healthwatch to ensure people's experiences of care in Leicester and Leicestershire are heard at the Integrated Care System (ICS) level, and they influence decisions made about services at Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLR) Integrated Care Board.

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

Children's Mental Health Services



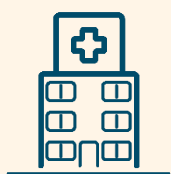
Following our visit to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) - The Beacon Unit, key concerns around food quality, staffing consistency and underused spaces were highlighted. As a result, Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust acknowledged the report, committed to its accuracy and began implementing improvements. These include reviewing food provision, increasing staff recruitment and exploring better use of classrooms during holidays.

Spotlight on NHS dental access



In April, we presented to the federation of Leicestershire and Rutland Women's Institutes on the National Dental Recovery Plan, clarifying its anticipated impact on residents. Attendees highlighted confusion around key elements, reinforcing the need for clearer communication. This session strengthened our ongoing work to represent patients' voices and continued the spotlight on challenges LLR residents face accessing NHS dentistry.

Improving access to care



Our joint Enter and View work has highlighted that people often use emergency departments because they can't access urgent care in the community. Our ongoing work has helped shape the new pre-hospital model of care, aiming to improve access and reduce pressure on hospitals. Our insights ensure patient experiences shape better, more responsive local health services.

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 Leicester and Leicestershire this year:

Listening to families to drive change



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

We spoke with families living in temporary accommodation in Leicester. By visiting nine hotels and running surveys, we heard about poor living conditions, daily struggles and difficulties accessing local services. We shared what we found with Leicester City Council, helping to shape future plans at their Families in Temporary Accommodation Summit. Their voices have led to real improvements in care and support.

Getting services to involve the public



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

We engaged with 30 Bangladeshi men and women to hear their experiences of local services. Recognising the need for further conversation, we arranged a follow-up session focused on men's mental health, supported by the Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust Neighbourhood Team. This enabled Bangladeshi men to learn about local support and build direct links with professionals. As a result, the community feels more informed and confident that their voices are being heard.

Improving care over time



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

Our volunteers shared local people's views at ICS strategy groups and workshops. We worked with councils, the NHS and voluntary groups and carried out Enter & View visits to make sure services reflect people's needs. This year, we gave feedback on children and young people's mental health, eye care, gynaecology and LGBTQ+ experiences. Our input has helped shape more inclusive and responsive 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 spoken to people across the city and county in many different ways – by visiting community groups, places of worship, local events, community centres, shops, support groups, and by talking to people on the street. We also gathered feedback through in-person and online surveys. Our diverse communities have shared a rich set of experiences and stories with us. We used what they told us to inform health and care leaders and help improve local services.



Listening to your experiences

From feedback to action: Listening to communities to improve care

Last year, we spoke to hundreds of local people to hear what really matters to them about health and care. Here's what they told us and what changed.

What did we do?

Between October 2024 and March 2025, we hosted 18 'Speak Up' events across Leicester and the seven boroughs and districts of Leicestershire. These events were designed to meet people where they are whether in community centres, local halls or high streets and to create safe, welcoming spaces for honest conversations.

Key things we heard:



83%

of the feedback we collected on GP services were negative about access and same day appointments.

71%

of people that spoke about dentists, shared the difficulty in accessing one, including waiting times and high costs.

22%

of people stated that the changes they want most to mental health services is an improvement in the quality of treatment and care.

Our Speak Up events didn't just gather feedback, they led to action.

NHS teams began attending to hear concerns directly, with the Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust offering support at our men's mental health event in Highfields. In Stoney Stanton, a resident was signposted to services on the spot. MPs, including Luke Evans and Shockat Adam, heard issues first-hand, raising awareness and strengthening local partnerships. We also built stronger ties with groups like Jamila's Legacy and Euro-Bangla and the Greater Sylhet Development and Welfare Council to better reach underrepresented communities and overcome language barriers.

What difference did this make?

The feedback we gathered is now shaping our priorities and influencing decisions across the health and care system – particularly around improving communication, access and support that reflects the diverse needs of our communities.

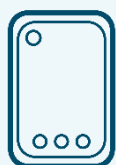
Listening to your experiences

How patient voices are shaping better care at Leicester Royal Infirmary's Children's Emergency Department

Families shared their experiences of emergency care – helping to drive real improvements for children and carers.

In August 2024, we visited the Children's Emergency Department (ED) at Leicester Royal Infirmary to understand patient experiences as part of a wider review of urgent care. Our trained team observed the environment, spoke with families and staff, and gathered feedback in person and online.

Key things we heard:



87%

of people rated communication as good or very good, praising staff for being caring and helpful..

89%

of families said they were not informed about waiting times, highlighting a key area for improvement.

100%

of people in the ED were satisfied with the care their child received.



"The overall process was good, [my child] was seen very quickly as they had a breathing issue. All staff were friendly and listened really well."

Thanks to the voices of children and families, real changes are under way to make the Children's ED a more supportive and responsive place for every child and carer who walks through its doors.

What difference did this make?

The feedback led to a detailed action plan by University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust (UHL). Improvements include clearer communication on waiting times via updated screens, better signage, restocking of PPE and water stations and plans for a dedicated private space for sensitive conversations. Broken toys are being repaired and staff are being supported to enhance the patient experience during busy periods.

Hearing from all communities

We're here for all residents of Leicester and Leicestershire. 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:

- Reaching people across Loughborough, Oadby, Hinckley, Coalville and Shepshed to hear concerns about GP, dentist and mental health service access.
- Engaging with underrepresented groups at cultural and faith-based events, including Eid celebrations, Refugee Week and the East Park Gurdwara.
- Collecting feedback from families, carers and older adults at SEND roadshows, dementia groups and local cafés about delays and lack of support.
- Listening to over 200 people at festivals and fairs in Ashby, Syston and Hinckley about long GP wait times and poor communication.
- Capturing workplace views during World Mental Health Week, highlighting shift work challenges, women's health concerns and service accessibility.
- Sharing community feedback with NHS leaders and the Integrated Care System to influence priorities around mental health, GP access and health inequalities.



Hearing from all communities

Improving access and communication at The Heron GP – St Matthews Branch

Listening to patient frustrations to shape practical solutions

People told us they were struggling to get through to the practice by phone and found the online booking system difficult to navigate. 76% of patients said it was “difficult” or “very difficult” to get through on the phone, with over half waiting more than an hour.

We shared patient feedback directly with the practice and recommended improvements such as clearer instructions for online booking, better communication about appointment types and introducing a telephone call-back system.

What difference did this make?

The practice welcomed our findings and committed to several improvements. They are now exploring a telephone call-back system and looking at how to simplify online booking with patient-friendly guides. They also agreed to display their opening hours more clearly and improve staff training around communication.

Improving hospital experiences for people with learning disabilities

Listening to patients and carers at Leicester Royal Infirmary (LRI)

To understand people's experiences, we visited several wards at LRI and people with learning disabilities and their carers told us that while some aspects of their hospital experience were positive, such as accessible signage and supportive staff, there were still significant challenges. These included poor communication, lack of awareness about care bags, limited overnight stay options for carers, and a need for more meaningful activities during hospital stays.

What difference did this make?

The Trust welcomed our recommendations and committed to including them in their Learning Disability Action Plan. The Trust acknowledged the need to better support carers and ensure staff are not relying on them for essential care. They agreed to review how care bags are used and to improve staff training and awareness.

Information and signposting

Whether it's finding an NHS dentist, making a complaint, or choosing a good care home for a loved one – you can count on us. This year **464** people have reached out to us for advice, support or help finding services.

This year, 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



Patient transport from villages to hospital

We were contacted by a resident in a remote village in the district of Harborough. They had to attend regular appointments with their partner at the Leicester Royal Infirmary hospital and had been finding it difficult and expensive to travel into the city for these appointments. They contacted us to ask if we knew of any services that could help them.

We signposted the person to various different transport options, including Non-Emergency Patient Transport Services (NEPTS), Voluntary Action South Leicestershire (VASL) and Age UK. We also suggested using the Joy App to find any other services.



“Many thanks for this useful information. I have joined VASL and they have arranged transport for me. Thank you so much it has made my life easier.”

Improving GP care for people with autism

This person felt he had been denied the care he needed whilst in prison and wrote to us in desperate need of help and reassurance.

Throughout the year we had been receiving letters from a service user in prison. He had been struggling with the healthcare system; accessing the care he needs for his long-term condition had become difficult and he worried about what continuity of care he could receive following his release back into the community.

Over the year we have provided him with information on NHS services, like the Reconnect Programme, which is intended to help individuals with health conditions reintegrate into society. We also signposted him to organisations and services that he can access following his release. In November he wrote to us with gratitude, stating that he wouldn't have known about these services without our assistance.



“Thank you for all the support given, which has all proved particularly helpful.”

Showcasing volunteer impact

Our fantastic volunteers have given **1443 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:

- Visited communities to promote our work
- Collected experiences and supported their communities to share their views
- Carried out enter and view visits to local services to help them improve
- Participated in training sessions and workshops to enhance their knowledge of health and care services
- Youthwatch members volunteered at events, raising issues young people often find hard to talk about.



Showcasing volunteer impact

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.

"The best part is that I get to hear from the people themselves what they are facing, giving them a chance to express their personal experiences and be the person who listens. I feel like we are a group that gives back to the community and helps make a change. I enjoy meeting other community-based organisations at the health events that I attend which helps me direct people to them if needed.

Through my role with the Events and Engagement team, I have gained experience with building rapport; knowledge of the facilities that are available to the public; enhanced my interpersonal skills and much more."



Muneera

"I have been a volunteer on the Advisory Board for almost a year. I joined Healthwatch as in my working life until retirement I supported quality improvement in the NHS and was passionate about the desired outcomes being based on what patients say they need as well as professional assessment of need.

I knew that Healthwatch was trusted by Health, Social care and commissioning organisations as a fair and independent voice that could state what people actually think about services being delivered.

I believe that my input, via Healthwatch can really make a difference to people's experience and to reducing health inequalities."



Mandie

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.healthwatchll.com



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Finance and future priorities

We receive funding from Leicester City Council and Leicestershire County 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	£299,428	Expenditure on pay	£223,387.71
Additional income	£2,400	Non-pay expenditure	£19,982.69
		Office and management fee	£56,057.60
Total income	£301,828	Total Expenditure	£299,428

Additional income is broken down into:

- £1,150 received from Healthwatch England for work on a project.
- £1,000 received from Healthwatch England for work on a project.
- £250 funding received from a local community enterprise.

Finance and future priorities

Next steps:

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

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

Our top three priorities for the next year are:

1. GP Access

Getting a GP appointment remains the number one issue for local people. We'll keep listening to communities to understand their experiences of booking, getting advice and accessing care. We'll share this feedback with the Integrated Care Board (ICB) to help improve communication, signposting and access to services.

2. Mental Health

Mental health remains a key concern for both adults and young people. We'll listen to people's stories about what's working and what isn't—especially in underrepresented communities. These insights will be shared with providers and commissioners to help shape better support across the system.

3. Adult Social Care

We'll engage with people who use care services and their families to understand what's working and what needs to change. Their feedback will help shape better care and support from local councils and providers.

Statutory statements

Voluntary Action LeicesterShire (VAL) is the contract holder for Healthwatch Leicester and Leicestershire. Our offices are based at: 9 Newarke Street, Leicester, LE1 5SN

Healthwatch Leicester and Leicestershire uses the Healthwatch Trademark when undertaking our statutory activities as covered by the licence agreement.

The way we work

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

Our Healthwatch Board consists of five dedicated volunteer members who provide strategic direction, oversight, and scrutiny of our work. The Board ensures our priorities reflect the concerns and experiences of our diverse communities.

Throughout 2024/25, the Board met six times and made key decisions on matters including severe mental health and social isolation, children and young people's services and setting organisational priorities. They also approved the delivery of our annual conference, signed off Enter and View reports to improve service quality and supported commissioned work to explore access to GP care for transgender, non-binary and gender-diverse people.

Wider public involvement is central to how we set our priorities. Through Speak Up events across the city and county, our annual conference and a dedicated priority-setting survey, we invited people to share what matters most to them. This feedback, alongside ongoing public input throughout the year, shaped our focus and informed the development of our future work plan.

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 2024/25, we have been available by phone and email, provided a web form on our website and through social media, attended meetings of community groups and forums and ran our own public events.

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 www.healthwatchll.com and share it with relevant committees.

Statutory statements

Responses to recommendations

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

Taking people's experiences to decision-makers

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

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

We collaborate with colleagues at Healthwatch Rutland to ensure that between us, Healthwatch is present at all major system decision making forums. We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Leicester and Leicestershire is represented on the Leicester Health and Wellbeing Board by Harsha Kotecha, Chair and Leicestershire Health and Wellbeing Board by Fiona Barber, Vice Chair.

During 2024/25, our representatives regularly attended Health and Wellbeing Board meetings, actively contributing to discussions and presenting public feedback. This helped ensure that community voices were reflected in key strategies, including the LLR Joint Living with Dementia Strategy and the Suicide Prevention Strategy.

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

Statutory statements

Enter and view

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
GP Practice – The Heron GP St Matthews Branch	Patients raised concerns about online appointments, communications and language barriers between staff and patients.	Wrote a report with recommendations – the service implementing to improve patient experience.
GP Practice – Central Surgery	Patients shared experiences about being unable to access appointments.	Wrote a report with recommendations.
GP Practice – Maples Family Medical Practice	Patients shared experiences about Mental Health support.	Wrote a report with recommendations – the service to establish a more proactive follow-up process to enhance continuity of care.
GP Practice – Saffron Health Practice	Patient shared the difficulty in accessing appointments.	Wrote a report with recommendations – the service to review their appointment system to ensure it meets patient needs.
GP Practice – The Charnwood Practice	Patients spoke positively about the practice, some patients voiced concerns with the prescription service.	Wrote a report with recommendations
GP Practice – Humberstone Medical Centre	Patients shared the difficulty in accessing appointments.	Wrote a report with recommendations
GP Practice – Hockley Farm Medical Practice	Patients shared issues about miscommunication between doctors and patients.	Wrote a report with recommendations

Statutory statements

Enter and view

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
GP Practice – Jubilee Medical Practice	Difficulty getting appointments and the new online booking system difficult to navigate to make appointments.	Wrote a report with recommendations – the service has implemented in-person sessions to help patients understand and navigate the new online booking system with additional plans to have these sessions throughout the year, this has had a positive impact.
GP Practice – Northfield Medical Centre	Patients shared concerns about getting same day appointments.	Wrote a report with recommendations – the service implemented several measures to improve the process for same day appointments.
Care Home – The Meadows Care Home	Experiences shared about the care home	Wrote a report highlighting the good practice observed during the visit.
Care Home – Clarendon Mews Care Home	Experiences shared about the care home	Wrote a report with recommendations – the service has taken action to ensure resident safety.

Statutory statements

Enter and view

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
Care Home – Orchard Manor View	Feedback from colleagues in the Adult Social Care team.	Wrote a report highlighting the good practice observed during the visit.
Care Home – Silver Birches	Feedback from colleagues in the Adult Social Care team.	Wrote a report with recommendations.
Service – CAMHS – The Beacon	Experiences shared about long wait times.	Wrote a report with recommendations.
Service – Leicester Royal Infirmary Children’s Emergency Department	As part of a rolling programme of urgent and emergency care visits.	Wrote a report with recommendations – the service provider has implemented an action plan to address the recommendations.
Gynaecology services – gynaecology emergency ward (ward 8) at Leicester Royal Infirmary	Requested by hospital services to gain an independent report to focus and concentrate on the themes that emerge during the visit.	Wrote a report with recommendations – the service looking at ways to refresh the environment.
Gynaecology services – Maternity Entrance at Leicester General Hospital	Requested by hospital services to gain an independent report to focus and concentrate on the themes that emerge during the visit.	Wrote a report with recommendations – the service looking at ways to refresh the environment.

Statutory statements

Enter and view

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
Services – Learning Disability (LD) – Inpatient ward at Leicester Royal Infirmary	Requested by hospital services to gain an independent report on the experiences of patients with learning disabilities using hospital services.	Wrote a report with recommendations – the service provider will be implementing the recommendations as part of the overall LD action plan.
Services – Ophthalmology – Eye Clinic at Leicester Royal Infirmary	Feedback shared about long wait times at the clinic which differ from the appointment time given on the letter. Information on what would happen on the day is not well informed on letters.	Wrote a report with recommendations.

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