



# Speaking up for better care

Healthwatch Nottingham & Nottinghamshire  
**Annual Report 2025/26**

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**Chief Executive Officer  
Sabrina Taylor**



Behind every figure in this report is a person across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire who trusted us with their story. For the people of our city and county, our health and care system can be complex and hard to navigate, and this year our team of staff and volunteers helped them find their way through it – and turned what they heard into action. They followed up where others move on, sat with people whose voices are too often missed, and carried those experiences to the rooms where decisions get made. I am proud of them, grateful to you, and as committed as ever to the people we serve.

# A message from our chair

**This has been a year of real achievement for Healthwatch Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, and one that has asked serious questions about the future of independent patient voice.**

When people tell us something isn't working, our job is to turn that into change where decisions are made. Our GP Access study reviewed 59 practices across the city and county, and all seven of our recommendations were accepted by the Integrated Care Board, driving real improvements to telephone access and online booking. Through our seat on the City and County Health and Wellbeing Boards, lived experience and the needs of communities facing the greatest inequalities were written into Nottingham's Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy for 2025–2028.

We've reached into every part of our community: an Enter and View visit to West Lodge Care Home celebrated the spiritual and cultural life of residents from diverse backgrounds, while our work with seldom-heard groups ensured no voice went unheard. None of this happens without our volunteers, and a dedicated Board whose scrutiny keeps us grounded in what matters to local people. My thanks go to them all.

This year we have faced proposed health reforms in the form of the NHS Modernisation Bill, which recommends the abolition of Healthwatch in its current form. While this may reshape how independent patient voice is organised, we are making the case – locally and nationally – for why it must endure. We do so with determination rather than anxiety, in collaboration with our communities and system partners. Whatever the structures ahead, the need for someone who listens without an agenda and speaks honestly for local people will not disappear, and we intend to keep being that organisation.



**Chair**  
Sarah Collis



"Whatever the structures ahead, the need for someone who listens without an agenda and speaks honestly for local people will not disappear – and we intend to keep being that organisation."

# About us

Healthwatch Nottingham & Nottinghamshire 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:** Communities have a strong, influential voice in shaping fairer, more accessible, and higher-quality care for all.



**Our mission:** To amplify people's voices, especially those less often heard, and drive improvements in services based on feedback and lived experience.

**Our values are:**

**Integrity:** We are transparent and dependable.

**Compassion:** We value people's experiences and are committed to making a meaningful difference based on what we hear.



**Inclusion:** We respect and embrace diversity, ensuring everyone has the opportunity to be heard.



# Our year in numbers

In 2025/2026 we supported more than **574** people to have their say and get information about their care. We employed **10** staff and, our work was supported by **36** volunteers.



## Reaching out:

**2974** people shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.

**162** people came to us for clear advice and information on topics such as **booking GP appointments** and **finding an NHS dentist**.



## Championing your voice:

We published **5** reports about the improvements people would like to see in areas like **GP access** and **patient and carer involvement in improving services**.

Our most popular report was **GP Access Desktop Study**, highlighting people's struggles in **accessing GP services**.



## Statutory funding:

We're jointly commissioned by **Nottingham City & Nottinghamshire County Councils** using funding allocated by the Department of Health and Social Care for local Healthwatch services. In 2025/26 we received **£306,000**, with funding remaining unchanged from the previous 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 **Nottingham & Nottinghamshire**. Here are a few highlights.

## Spring

Patient feedback directly influenced improvements to a local GP practice's communication, oversight and appointment planning.



A concern raised with us led to new regional resources helping families of people with additional needs access dental care more easily.



## Summer

We helped reinforce patients' rights to register with a GP, supporting fair access to primary care for everyone, regardless of proof of address.



Our intervention supported an investigation into pharmacy practices, promoting patient choice, accountability and awareness of NHS App pharmacy preferences.



## Autumn

Patient feedback helped improve understanding of urgent dental access and informed work to strengthen NHS 111 signposting across Nottinghamshire.



By intervening directly, we helped a patient who felt ignored reconnect with the NHS complaints process and ensured their concerns were heard.



## Winter

We provided a safe, inclusive space for a person with complex mental health needs, helping them feel heard, respected and understood.



A local Trust shared its investigation findings, improving transparency around communication of sickle cell carrier status.



# Working together for change

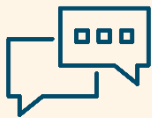
We've worked with NHS Trusts, local community groups and the Care Quality Commission to ensure people's experiences of care in **Nottingham & Nottinghamshire** are heard at the Integrated Care System (ICS) level, and they influence decisions made about services at Nottingham and Nottinghamshire ICS.

This year, we've worked in partnership to achieve the following:



## Embedding lived experience in service improvement:

Through independent facilitation and support, we helped establish a structured forum, helping to strengthen the role of lived experience in shaping healthcare services. The group brings together patients, carers and family members to provide advice, challenge and insight on improvement plans across Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust. This work has helped create a stronger and more visible patient voice within organisational decision-making.



## Shaping the future of digital healthcare:

As the NHS continues to expand digital services, residents shared mixed experiences of the NHS App, including concerns about accessibility, privacy, fragmented systems and maintaining non-digital options. We gathered local feedback through a dedicated survey and contributed to a collaborative project involving 19 local Healthwatch organisations. Together, this evidence is helping to inform discussions about how digital services can be improved while remaining accessible, inclusive and responsive to people's needs.



## Building strong relationships to achieve more:

Our relationship with the Care Quality Commission has gone from strength to strength. This year we supported two GP practice inspections, Daybrook and Sandy Lane, attending alongside inspectors to make sure patient voices shaped what they found. The CQC's confidence in HWNN's ability to reach communities continues to grow, reflected in a steady increase in requests for our involvement.

# 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 **Nottingham and Nottinghamshire** this year:



## Listening to people with Learning Disabilities.

**We identified a lack of evidence from people with Learning Disabilities and made this an underlying focus for all our work.** We strengthened our engagement with organisations supporting people with learning disabilities, including Reach LD and SEND Pact CIC. Through visits, discussions, leaflet consultations and co-production planning meetings, we gained insight into the barriers people can face when accessing information. This has led to a commitment to work with Reach LD to develop Easy Read summaries of future reports and templates, helping to make our work more accessible.



## Supporting NHS services to communicate.

**NHS Urgent Dental Care Team requested our input as the voice of the people, to make sure their communications were suitable.** We highlighted feedback showing that many people were unaware of how to access urgent NHS dental appointments, particularly those with sight loss. To help address this, we reviewed the communications campaign plan, providing advice on accessibility and clarity, and supported the promotion of the campaign when it launched.



## A new way to Connect with Communities.

**Meeting people where they are comfortable lets them share experiences in a supportive and safe environment.** By building stronger relationships with groups such as Breathe Easy, Carers in Hucknall and Nottingham Arthritis UK, we created new opportunities for people with shared health conditions and caring responsibilities to have their voices heard. The launch of our Community Connector volunteer role enables community leaders to share issues and experiences directly with Healthwatch, helping us identify emerging concerns, provide support and signposting, and ensure local voices influence decision-makers.

# Listening to your experiences

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

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



# Championing fair and consistent access to GP services

## Access to GP services remains one of the issues people raise most frequently with us.

We reviewed 59 GP practices across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, covering around two-thirds of registered patients, to assess how easy it is for people to contact their practice, book appointments and access information. Our review of telephone systems, websites and booking arrangements highlighted both examples of good practice and areas where patients may be disadvantaged.

### Key things we learned:



**21%**

of practices had telephone waiting times exceeding 30 minutes.

**62%**

did not offer a call-back option, meaning patients may lose their place in the queue if they hang-up.

**68%**

offer appointment bookings via all three modes (in-person, telephone, online).



*“Every time I call my GP Surgery in the morning, I’m informed that there are no appointments left and to call back the following day. [Keep] trying and trying and fed up now, I need to see a Dr but can’t get an appointment.”*

**– Feedback shared via our website**

### What difference did this make?

All seven of our recommendations were accepted by the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) and have contributed to improvements in GP access across the city and county. Since the study, new monitoring arrangements have been introduced for telephone access, website improvements are underway and national access standards have been strengthened. The study provided a clear evidence base for change, helping to turn patients’ experiences into practical action across primary care.

# Residents speak out on culture, dignity and connection

Our Enter and View visit to West Lodge Care Home in November 2025 gave residents, relatives and staff an independent space to share their experiences. We spoke with 20 people from a range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds about how well their spiritual, cultural and social needs were being met.



*"This place is a microcosm of how the world should be. All different languages, ethnicities and religions just getting along with each other."*

**–Care home resident**

## Key things we heard:



**Staff who truly care.** Residents described staff as kind, sympathetic and always making them feel good.



**Culture Respected.** Faith, food and personal traditions were actively supported and celebrated.



**A Gap for Some.** More independent residents sometimes felt understimulated and less connected.

We made four recommendations covering activities, menus and resident engagement.

## What difference did this make?

West Lodge acted promptly, refreshing their activities offer and arranging regular community church visits. Our report also raised questions with commissioners about whether funding rates are sufficient for providers supporting diverse communities.

# Hearing from all communities

We're here for all residents of **Nottingham and Nottinghamshire**. 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 out to organisations supporting the digitally excluded, including tech-support drop-ins in local libraries and MySight coffee mornings, to help people fill out our NHS App survey.
- Visiting homeless shelters (Emmanuel House), food banks (the Bread and Butter Thing), charities for people experiencing Severe Multiple Disadvantage (Changing Futures), and soup kitchens (Belong Nottingham), to raise awareness of our role.
- Alongside the usual meetings and conferences, we hosted our first online Stakeholder Event for the GP Access Report, to allow local people to get their questions and concerns heard directly by local NHS leads.



## Understanding the challenges around Dementia Care for African Caribbean communities.

**We connected with The Mango Tree, a peer support group for family members and carers from the African Caribbean Community who are impacted by Dementia. We listened to their experiences and were able to offer them support.**

They shared with us their experiences of communication barriers and culturally inappropriate care. In response, we helped strengthen the group's sustainability by supporting a funding application and donating equipment to support its activities, enabling the group to continue offering peer support within the community.

### What difference did this make?

The group can continue bringing together family members and carers affected by dementia, helping to reduce isolation and providing opportunities for people with shared experiences to support one another. The group's leader also became a Community Connector, strengthening links between Healthwatch and the African Caribbean community and helping to ensure that their experiences and perspectives continue to shape our work and influence local services.

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## Breaking Down Language Barriers, Building Health Confidence and Independence.

**Through our Small Grants Scheme, we funded Nottingham Turkish Community to deliver a health-focused ESOL course for women from minority communities, including refugees, asylum seekers, carers and mothers.**

Working in partnership with Nottingham Muslim Women's Network and Nottingham Women's Centre, the programme supported 38 women from nine language backgrounds to build confidence in engaging with healthcare professionals and navigating NHS services, enabling them to access care more independently.

### What difference did this make?

Participants reported increased confidence in communicating with healthcare professionals and a greater ability to navigate NHS services independently, helping to reduce barriers linked to language and health inequalities. Every participant said they felt more confident after completing the course, and 100% would recommend it to others. Demand for the programme was further demonstrated by 11 women joining the waiting list before it had even finished. One participant shared: *"I always had to rely on my husband or son for my doctor visit, but now I can go on my own and explain how I feel."*

# Information and signposting

When health and social care feels confusing or overwhelming, we help people find the right information, understand their options and navigate the support available to them.

**This year, 162 people contacted us for information, signposting and support. Many people tell us that they contacted several organisations before reaching us. Sometimes, what they need most is someone who will take the time to listen, understand their situation and help them find the right next step.**

## **This year, we've helped people by:**

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



## Guidance needed to overcome 'dental desert'

**We helped a patient to navigate the confusing pathways to access necessary dental care in an area which seemed to offer no accessible general dental care.**

A patient struggling to find a dentist got in touch with us after hitting dead ends trying to contact local practices. We listened, then pointed them towards routes they had not yet tried. With that support and a clearer sense of where to look, they kept going – and found a local dentist within easy reach who can now look after their dental health. Good signposting can overcome serious challenges.



*"Thank you for the encouragement your response gave... Now I am elated."*

**- Shared by email**

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## Prisoners have the same rights to complain about healthcare

**Contacted by the parent of a person in prison, we helped them understand how to complain to support their loved one in receiving the right treatment.**

Understanding how healthcare works inside a prison, and knowing how to raise concerns, can feel overwhelming. A parent came to us worried about their son's care, unsure where to turn. We took the time to listen, helped them understand the system, identified who was responsible for providing care, and gave them the tools and confidence to speak up on their son's behalf.



*"they seem hell bent on taking away what stabilises [my son]"*

**- Mother of prisoner**

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# Showcasing volunteer impact

Our fantastic volunteers have given **509 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:

- Have used their knowledge, skills and attributes to promote the patient voice
- Attended system meetings to ensure the communities' voice is heard
- Been involved in research and project development
- Carried out enter and view visits to local services to help them improve



# 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.



**Edie - Volunteer**

"I started volunteering at Healthwatch four years ago when I was in secondary school. I am now in my first year of university studying psychology and am still enjoying volunteering alongside my studies.

Throughout this time, I have been able to develop a greater understanding of the health inequalities within the healthcare system and am passionate about ensuring accessible communication for individuals from diverse backgrounds."

"I started off this new year by volunteering with HWNN. I am a proud Authorised Representative for Enter and View visits which means I get to hold conversations with the residents, their family and staff of care homes and health facilities. I get to know their lived experiences and be a part of change by becoming their voice.

I volunteer because it gives a sense of purpose. I want to give back to my beautiful community and HWNN facilitates me in achieving my purpose."



**Anila - Volunteer**

"I have been volunteering with HWNN since 2024, starting during my second year studying Law at Nottingham Trent University, and I have continued after graduating. My role involves proofreading documents before they are published. I volunteer in order to contribute to my local community and help improve the quality of healthcare services. I chose HWNN after discovering it at a volunteering fair at Nottingham Trent University. HWNN offers meaningful opportunities to support members in improving healthcare services, and I hope to take on further roles within the organisation to continue contributing."

**Karina - 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.hwnn.co.uk](http://www.hwnn.co.uk)



0115 956 5313



[Info@hwnn.co.uk](mailto:Info@hwnn.co.uk)

# Finance and future priorities

We receive funding from Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County Councils under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to help us do our work.

## Our income and expenditure:

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from Government	£333,000*	Expenditure on pay	£348,169
Additional income	£78,346	Non-pay expenditure	£75,360
		Office and management fee	£42,390
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£411,346</b>	<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>£423,529</b>

## Additional income is broken down into:

- \*Annual grant from government was higher than expected by £27,000 due to delayed payment dates.
- £64,817 project funding (phase 1 and 2) received from Nottinghamshire Healthcare Trust
- £1,900 project funding received from Nottinghamshire County Council
- £450 for delivery of two pieces of training to Healthwatch England staff on AI
- £8129.76 project funding received from Nottinghamshire County Council
- £2,250 project funding from our local CVS
- £800.00 from Nottinghamshire County Council for grant-funded project

## Integrated Care System (ICS) funding:

Healthwatch Nottingham and Nottinghamshire did not receive funding from our Integrated Care System (ICS) this year.

# 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 and Social Care culture where, at every level, staff strive to listen and learn from patients & citizens to make care better.

## **Our top three priorities for the next year are:**

- 1. Protecting and amplifying the voice of patients and communities during system reform** – We will ensure that the experiences of patients, carers and communities continue to influence decisions about health and care services, particularly as new models of accountability and engagement emerge.
- 2. Tackling barriers to access and reducing health inequalities** – We will focus our resources on understanding and addressing the barriers that prevent people from accessing the care and support they need, with particular attention to underserved communities and those whose voices are least often heard.
- 3. Demonstrating the impact and value of independent patient voice by turning insight into action and improvement** – We will use evidence from patients, carers and communities to drive measurable improvements in the quality, safety, dignity and responsiveness of health and care services to ensure that decision-makers act on what people tell us.

# Statutory statements

Healthwatch Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Ltd, Unit 1, Byron Business Centre, Duke Street, Hucknall, Nottinghamshire, NG15 7HP

**Healthwatch Nottingham and Nottinghamshire 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 **10** members who work voluntarily to provide direction, oversight, and scrutiny of our activities.

The Board's voluntary members bring a range of professional expertise, lived experience and community perspectives, helping to ensure that local voices remain central to our governance and decision-making.

Throughout 2025/26, the Board and its sub-groups met **8** times and made decisions on matters such as the organisation's response to proposed national reforms to patient and public voice arrangements, and the approval of our strategic priorities and work programme.

When setting priorities, the Board considered themes emerging from the experiences, feedback and enquiries shared with Healthwatch, alongside insights gathered through community engagement activities and discussions with local people.

## **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 we will ensure that the report is available in hard copy format for distribution at our community engagement events.

# Statutory statements

## Responses to recommendations

We had **no** providers who did not respond to requests for information or recommendations. There were no issues or recommendations escalated by us to 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.

We are members of the **Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire Health and Wellbeing Boards**, where we bring independent insight from local people to help shape strategic health and wellbeing priorities.

We provide evidence and feedback from **local communities** to support the work of the **Health Scrutiny Committee** in holding health and care services to account.

We also share insight and experiences with decision-makers across **Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care System, safeguarding partnerships, mental health partnerships, place-based partnerships, the Care Quality Commission and senior leaders across health and social care** to influence service improvement and system decision-making.

We share local insight with **Healthwatch England** to help identify and address health and care issues at a national level.

## Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch **Nottingham and Nottinghamshire** is represented on the **City & County** Health and Wellbeing Board by **Sarah Collis, HWNN Chair**.

During 2025/26, our representative has effectively carried out this role by providing a consistent voice on behalf of local people, and ensuring that insights from Healthwatch engagement activity are considered within discussions on health inequalities, service priorities and system change.

Healthwatch **Nottingham and Nottinghamshire** is represented on **City & County** Integrated Care Partnerships & Integrated Care boards by **Sabrina Taylor, CEO**


# Statutory statements

## Enter and view

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
Annesley Lodge Care Home, Hucknall	Proactive visit to understand residents' experiences across social, emotional, physical and spiritual wellbeing	Published report with 6 recommendations, all accepted and actioned with immediate effect
Daybrook Medical Practice, Nottingham	Invited by the CQC to capture patient voices during inspection, focusing on access, communication and experience of care	Published report with 3 recommendations. Provider committed to improving patient communication
West Lodge Care Home, Nottingham	Proactive visit focusing on spiritual and cultural life, social connection and emotional wellbeing	Published report with 4 recommendations. Provider actioned improvements to activities and community engagement
Sandy Lane Surgery and St Peter's Medical Practice, Mansfield	Invited by the CQC to capture patient voices during inspection	Published report with 3 recommendations. Provider recruited additional staff and engaged phone system provider to improve access

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