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Campaign to save the independent patient voice

Following the government announcement in July that Healthwatch services would be abolished, local Healthwatch from across the country have been working together to urge the government to reconsider the proposals that would bring the public voice functions under the control of local authorities and NHS bodies.

131 LOCAL HEALTHWATCH HAVE SIGNED

an open letter to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. The letter warns that the proposed changes would seriously compromise the independence that makes public feedback effective and trusted.

“Bringing public voice functions in-house risks creating a system where feedback is filtered, inconvenient truths are softened, and accountability is diluted,” the letter states.

“It sends the wrong message at a time when public trust in institutions must be rebuilt, not eroded.”

Healthwatch services have long served as independent champions for patients, carers, and communities—particularly those who are vulnerable or who face barriers to accessing care. Their statutory independence allows them to challenge

poor practice, conduct impartial research, and ensure that people's voices are heard without fear or favour.

The letter draws on lessons from the Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust scandal, where failures in local scrutiny contributed to serious harm. It argues that dismantling independent advocacy would repeat past mistakes and weaken public accountability.

“People often tell us we are the first service to truly listen and the only one that follows up to make sure they receive the support needed,” the letter continues.

The signatories are calling for a meeting with the Secretary of State and are urging the government to strengthen – not dismantle – independent public voice initiatives.

More on pages 2, 3, 4 and 5 →

Comment from Siân

I'm taking a slightly different approach to my comment in this magazine.

“AS WE COME TO TERMS with the news of our abolition (*spoiler alert, we're expecting to be here until at least March 2027 – so please keep sharing your experiences...*), I have been thinking about who holds the power in our health and care system – a question I can't get out of my brain at the moment.

The power to create or abolish Healthwatch comes from the government, and we can't control national policy on health. But how do we resist the urge to try when we strongly believe that the local Healthwatch network has been one of the best vehicles for putting some power into the public's hands through sharing personal experience?

Our personal experiences within health and care are always influenced by power. Many of us have felt that weird submission to authority that seems to happen the second you step into 'that' room, whether with a GP, consultant, or social worker. Everyone I've met has at least one story of health or care happening to them, not with them.

Our recent work on listening to neurodivergent families also had strong themes around power. Many of the parents had been told they were unique in their situation, with no easy solutions, feeling powerless to change the system, but knowing what they were going through simply wasn't right. But by sharing their experiences, they saw they were not

“If our work has helped anybody feel more powerful in their own stories then that alone is reason to feel proud whatever the future holds.”

alone. The light that comes from meeting others in the same situation, sharing your stories, supporting each other through each day as it comes, speaking your truth and demanding better – the power of that collective voice cannot be underestimated.

This wasn't the first time we heard this: people who took part in our **Breaking Point** report on mental health crisis care in the city said reading those stories, hearing others in the same situation speak their truth, showed them they were not alone in their struggles to get the right help and support. If our work has helped anybody feel more powerful in their own stories, then that alone is reason to feel proud whatever the future holds.

“Everyone [...] has at least one story of health or care happening to them, not with them.”

In the **10 year plan**, there is much to like. The plans for Neighbourhood Health should see better ways of bringing together services and support in our communities. We should see fewer people having to go to hospital, teams working together so we don't have to keep sharing our story to all the different bits of our health and care system.



▲ Breaking Point... A recent history of mental health crisis care in York, from 2023.

The **Secretary of State for Health, Wes Streeting**, has said he will hold a megaphone to patient voice. He believes patient feedback mechanisms have changed, and people should be given the opportunity to directly review, comment on and engage with their experiences. He sees that much of our role can be taken on by the NHS App. Other functions will transfer into the health and care system itself, local authorities and integrated care boards. He believes in league tables, consumer choice and each of us being responsible for speaking up for ourselves.

But we want to know what happens to those who cannot or will not speak, those who are already digitally excluded and those who research shows want anonymity to empower them to speak.

We believe that we could play a big part in making sure that what matters to you and them fundamentally shapes the new Neighbourhood Health Services and more.

Throughout our existence, we've faced questions about our powers. People have asked what 'teeth' we have to make health and care services do the right thing. I've always felt our work isn't about making people do things, it's about helping them hear your voices, so they want to do better for you.

Most people work in health and care because they want to improve people's lives. Your voices hold the power to unlock change. Even if we're toothless, our words have real bite.

Our independence gives us a platform to share your voice where it needs to be heard. That independence is vital, because:

- **We can listen to everyone with no agenda**, just a desire to understand your experiences
- **We can't be silenced** by internal pressure or external political whim
- **We sit across the health and care system**, and can highlight the cracks between services

“Our personal experiences within health and care are always influenced by power. Many of us have felt that weird submission to authority that seems to happen the second you step into ‘that’ room... 🙏🙏

So even though it would be easy to feel helpless, hopeless, powerless even, in the situation we find ourselves in, I am determined not to. Because we have allies, partners, people who feel as passionately as we do that we all deserve to be heard in health and care.

The one positive in this is the support we have received from people in York. People we've heard from and supported and people we have worked with. The outpouring of consternation and distress at what could be lost has shown the central part Healthwatch York plays in the health and care sector in York and in the lives of some local people. We have been overwhelmed by the support and the desire of local organisations to work with us to find a new way to do what we have been doing.

People and organisations in York know that we are stronger together. We believe in our NHS, in our care services, and that when we listen to everyone's voices we make lasting and meaningful change happen.

Thank you to everyone who has found the time to support us, and to everyone who will! Sign the petition, write to your MP, and please continue to share your experiences with us.



Siân Balsom
Healthwatch York
Manager

Why an independent Healthwatch matters

Healthwatch Suffolk has published the following statement about the importance of maintaining an independent, locally connected and informed body to protect the patient voice.

“ THE GOVERNMENT HAS SAID IT BELIEVES simplifying the landscape will make things clearer for patients and users. But this voice cannot come effectively from ‘within’ systems and services. This is ostensibly the end of all independent health and social care lived experience influencing the quality and equality of care in England.

Why is this important?

One central reason is that this will impact on every single person in the country. Without exception, we all use our health and care system from the time we are born, through to the time we pass away.

We believe the loss of independent voice will only serve to widen health inequalities in communities and leave significant gaps in the understanding of people’s lived experiences, ultimately affecting the safety of patients and the public using services.

Our independence is vital to influence meaningful changes.

At times when we know people’s experiences have been deeply impacted by challenges in our local NHS and care systems, it is our staff who carry those experiences into spaces that may not be motivated to hear them. We bring them anyway, and leaders listen and respond.

Independence matters because it’s hard to be honest when someone holds your care or funding in their hands. The freedom to listen to what people want to say requires independence of the system. People need distance to give feedback about services with honesty, and without fear, consequence, or judgment. So many experiences will go untold if people cannot trust in how their experiences are being gathered and used.

Independence matters because we need to hear from everyone if we are to create meaningful change. We are not there to champion politically led health and social care services or systems, and we cannot be silenced by ‘in-house’ pressure or external political direction. We deliver our role robustly and powerfully, balancing challenge and collaboration, and always with impact for the public as our aim.

Independence matters because services are siloed, lives are not. The NHS and social care system is intimidatingly huge and too-often works against the most vulnerable people. Without an independent organisation that works across systems, we cannot understand the gaps in provision that lead people to fall into crisis. You cannot see outside the box if you are the box.

Ultimately, this ‘clarity’ for the public will not equate to impact for the public. Impact for the public requires a strong, informed, locally connected, and independent voice that is currently being silenced.

healthwatch
Suffolk

“ This articulates Healthwatch York’s own concerns that the loss of independence will impact everyone. It is vital to influence meaningful change.

Petition seeking a review of the decision to abolish independent local Healthwatch

Local Healthwatch working together have launched a parliamentary petition. This calls on the government to review the decision to abolish the independent way for people to feedback about health and care services.

The current proposals to abolish Healthwatch mean people will need to share their experiences of care services with local authorities and health services with NHS bodies or via the NHS app. This could significantly compromise the impartiality and effectiveness of feedback mechanisms.

Having an opportunity to go to an independent service for advice, help, support or to raise concerns and give feedback anonymously is paramount. Independence is essential for transparency, accountability, and meaningful change.

As part of the Healthwatch Network, Healthwatch York hopes people in York will add their support and sign the petition. At 10,000 signatures, government will respond to the petition, and it will be considered for a debate in Parliament.

The petition is asking the government to:

- **Revisit its decision to abolish local independent services that speak up for the public.**
- **Consult with the public to co-design a service which meets their needs and supports the NHS to realise its ambitions.**
- **Invest in and strengthen independent services.**

Local independent services are rooted in their communities. We think they are well placed to support the 10 Year Health Plan by offering constructive challenge and helping to co-produce solutions by working with those with the greatest health and care needs.

We think trusted independent services that listen to local communities are essential to improving health and social care.

Healthwatch York Manager, Siân Balsom:
“For over 12 years, Healthwatch York has worked to bring more voices to decision making in the city. From demanding better support for people experiencing mental health crisis, to highlighting the challenges for Deaf people in accessing health and care support, we have advocated for people in York.

“Every day we’ve listened to people’s stories; we’ve connected them to people and support that makes a difference to their lives; and we’ve raised the voices of those too often overlooked in our health and care system. We’ve constructively challenged partners as needed, with the power of real-life stories. The stories we share are rich in the sorts of details that a service review simply can’t provide.

“We have already heard from people across York who are worried about what might happen if Healthwatch York is abolished. We hope they, and others, will sign the petition and urge the government to make sure there is an independent place for everyone to share their experiences.”

Please sign the petition!

www.hwyork.link/sign

Making a Difference Award Winners 2025

Each year, Healthwatch York celebrates the excellence in health and social care services in York by presenting our Making a Difference Awards.

The awards are presented to those individuals and services who have been nominated by the people of York for providing exceptional care.

Big congratulations to all our award winners!



“ I was absolutely overjoyed to receive a Making a Difference Award from you. It really made my day; it still makes me smile when I think of it now. **”**

Patricia McCreedy, Optical Services Manager, Ophthalmology, York and Scarborough Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

This year our winners are:

- **Mydentist • Special Award**
- **Boots Heworth Village**
- **Ebor Court Care Home**
- **Fulford Nursing Home**
- **Gale Farm Pharmacy**
- **Dr Smith at Gale Farm Surgery (Haxby Group)**
- **All the staff at the Magnolia Centre at York Hospital**, with particular mentions for **Hannah, Sue and Adda**
- **Susannah Williamson, Fulford Surgery (Priory Medical Group)**
- **The York Dental Suite** and particularly **Dr Mafalda Queiroz**
- **The Urgent Care Centre at York Hospital** and particularly **Jo Sanderson**
- **Rachel Johnson at W S Inness & Associates**
- **White Cross Court Rehabilitation Centre**
- **Woodthorpe Dental Centre**
- **York Frailty Hub** – many of the staff were praised so congratulations to them all
- **Marianne Fox, Consultant breast surgeon, York Hospital**
- **Sarah Anderson, Ophthalmology, York Hospital**
- **Dr Dmitris, Audiology, York Hospital**
- **Yorkshire Ambulance Service**
- **Yorkshire Fatigue ME/CFS Service**, particularly **Debbie** and **Nina**
- **Patricia McCreedy, Orthoptist, York Hospital**
- **Dan Piper, Orca house, Tees Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Trust**

Making a Difference Special Award 2025

Our first ever Special Award goes to... Mydentist

“Mydentist York is thrilled to have accepted the honour of Healthwatch York’s first ever special award, recognising the practice’s outstanding contribution to healthcare in York.”

The award highlights the vital support the practice provides to vulnerable people in York including urgent care referrals, helping those who struggle to find NHS treatment, collaborating on group drop-in sessions with vulnerable women and supporting people facing urgent dental needs to help improve their overall mental and physical wellbeing.

After a project lasting just over six months, mydentist York officially opened the doors to its new practice in Stonebow House in June 2024, following a substantial investment of £1.5 million.

The practice offers its 15,000+ patients a modern, state-of-the-art environment, a greater range of dental treatments and technology, improved travel links and disabled access.

Charlotte Hyde, Practice Manager of mydentist York, commented: “Winning this special award is a tremendous honour and a proud moment for our practice team. It recognises our commitment to providing compassionate patient-centred care and the positive impact we strive to make in our community. This award not only validates the hard work and dedication of every member of my team but also acknowledges the fact we put the patients at the heart of everything we do.”

There are 12 surgeries within the new mydentist York practice, and the team hope will grow to 15 in the future, with key services offered to its patients including NHS dental care, affordable private treatment options, hygiene, and cosmetic services such as whitening, teeth straightening and mydentist smile makeover.

Sharon Letters, Clinical Director at mydentist, added: “This is a fantastic achievement and some well-deserved recognition for mydentist York and the team for all the hard work they do within the community and delivering top quality dentistry to patients.”



Ebor Court Care Home

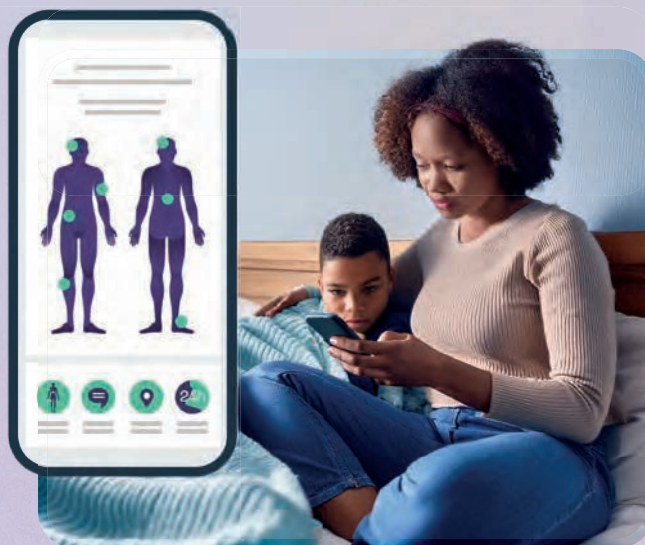
We were delighted to welcome Yvonne Penrose and the team from Ebor Court Care Home who attended our annual meeting to collect their award.

What happens when you request a GP appointment using an online form?

York Medical Group tell us about the process at their GP practices.

To request an appointment, you'll need to fill out an online form that is on **Klinik**, the software that helps us manage appointments.

This form helps us to know how best to help you. You can fill it out online, you can come to any of our reception desks and use the screen there or ask one of our patient care coordinators for help. If you prefer, you can call us, and our team will ask the questions on the form and fill it out for you.



Why do we need this information?

In the past, you just saw a GP for an appointment. Now, we have many different healthcare workers, in recognition of our patients' complex needs. We use a process called "triage" to make sure you see the right person, for example, sometimes, you might need to talk to a pharmacist or a nurse instead of a doctor.

How are appointment requests handled?

When you request a routine or non-urgent GP appointment, an experienced GP will look at it within a few days. They will decide the best way to help you.

- About one in 10 requests can be answered easily by the GP, who may send you a message or give you advice.
- About one in 5 people will need to provide more information before they can see a GP. This might mean, e.g., getting a blood test first.
- About one in 4 requests don't need a GP but can be handled by a nurse or pharmacist.
- About one in 75 requests are urgent and will get a quick appointment.
- Right now, you may wait just over two weeks for a routine appointment.

Urgent GP appointments

- Urgent requests are looked at within a few hours by a GP. They know what appointments are available.
- They will decide who you need to see based on the information you gave. Sometimes they might text you to ask for more details, like a photo of a rash.
- Some issues can be handled by local pharmacies, and we will refer you there if it's appropriate.
- Some patients may need to see a specific team member, like a mental health worker or a pharmacist.

What if there are lots of requests?

Some days, we have to help our most vulnerable patients first, like children and older people. This can happen when there are many requests or if some team members are sick. On those days, we will post updates on our website and social media, and you might be asked to contact 111 for help.

We keep track of how many appointments are needed and how many we have. When we are short on appointments, we can make changes like cancelling meetings and learning sessions for our clinicians so they can see patients.

Care Confidence

Care Confidence is a new website developed to help you feel better prepared to make decisions about paying for social care, whether for yourself or someone else.

The website has been designed and developed by researchers at the universities of York, Birmingham and Manchester. It is free to use and is not connected with any commercial organisations. It does not seek to sell financial products or advice.

Care Confidence is designed to help older people who pay for care to think about the choices they have. This includes choices about types of care as well as the different ways to pay for it.

The website is designed so that you work through various themed sections, which include videos, graphics and written information, to help you think about what is important to you. There are also some calculators to help you get a feel for what care can cost, and you can choose to print your action plan.

 www.careconfidence.org.uk

Core Connectors update

We have recently said goodbye to Grace, our T Level student from York College who has been working with us since 2024 on the Core Connectors project. We want to say a big thank you for all her help and wish her all the best for the future!

We now have two new T Level students, **Karen and Sam**, who will continue with the Core Connectors project. They have published a new survey which looks at young people's experience of mental health services in York.

If you are 16–25 and have experience of mental health services in York that you would like to share use the link below.

Our Core Connectors will also be working on a project about young people and vaping. They are developing two surveys, one for those who vape and one for those who don't. They hope to find out why young people vape, and the factors that influence that decision. We plan to launch this survey soon — see our website for more information!

 www.hwYork.link/CCsurvey

York Hospital appoints new Alcohol Specialist Nurse

We want to say a big hello to Sam Oxtoby, the new Alcohol Specialist Nurse at York Hospital, who has told us about her new role.



“I’m delighted to start in post as Alcohol Specialist Nurse at York Hospital. My role will include reviewing and renewing the Trust’s policies and procedures,

offering comprehensive training and learning experiences for staff and, crucially, launching a pilot service for York Hospital inpatients, that centres around the

individual. Initially my role is for 12 months, but we hope to secure the long-term continuation of the service.

I believe there is high value in incorporating lived experience into this project to create a truly holistic, patient centred approach. This format will allow the hospital to play a key role in York gaining **Inclusive Recovery City Status**.

I’m really excited to be involved with this project and hope, with the time given, to be able to enhance the care of patients with alcohol issues and strive for better outcomes for them.”

Health Kiosks now available in Explore York Libraries



Explore York libraries offer a wide range of resources and information to support health and wellbeing.

They now have NHS Health Check Kiosks at the Explore Centre in York city centre, Clifton and Tang Hall.

The Kiosks are free to use, and can measure height, weight, BMI, blood pressure, heart rate and oxygen saturation. You can use the results as a guide to making healthy lifestyle changes, or you may be advised to speak to a pharmacist or GP.

It is hoped that the kiosks will encourage people to monitor their health and identify health concerns, such as undiagnosed cases of high blood pressure or hypertension which, if left untreated, increase the risk of serious problems such as heart attacks.

For more information, visit the website, call, or email:

01904 552 828

contact@exploreymork.org.uk

www.exploreymork.org.uk

Health & wellbeing at York Explore

Explore York libraries and reading cafes across the city provide a wide range of health and wellbeing support, including:

- **Welcoming, warm places** where people can pause and be sure of a friendly face.
- **Resources and information** to help people to manage and understand their own health and to signpost them to partner organisations.
- **Books to support healthy living** and the management of health conditions.
- **Reading Well Books** – titles covering various health conditions and topics selected and recommended by experts, people with lived experience, and their relatives and carers, please see the website for more details.
- **Thousands of books free to borrow**, for adults and children, including free eBooks, e-Audiobooks, newspapers and magazines. Reading regularly has many benefits including reducing stress and feelings of anxiety, lowering heart rate, improving memory and offering respite from everyday life.
- **A programme of high-quality creative and cultural events and activities**, enabling people to imagine, create, learn and discover – together.
- **Regular under 5 story times and rhyme times**, in every library, helping children develop early language skills.
- **Lego clubs, reading challenges and holiday events and activities** for children and families.
- **Regular events for adults** including reading groups, craft groups and digital support sessions.
- **Volunteering opportunities.**
- **A Home Library Service** delivering books to those who cannot visit a library.

Trans, non-binary & intersex people's experiences of health services

We have been researching the experiences of transgender, non-binary, and intersex people with local health services.

We are doing this work in partnership with our steering group comprising people from local organisations including **GeneraTe, York LGBT Forum, York Hospital, York Medical Group, and Humber & North Yorkshire ICB.**

Heidi-Jo Wood, our Research Assistant Intern from **York St. John University**, has created three surveys; for trans, non-binary and intersex people, for healthcare professionals, and for friends and family members; which were published at the beginning of August.

We have been collecting a range of responses with emerging themes including issues with shared care, the formal arrangement between an NHS hospital specialist and a GP, which allows care to be safely shared between both services.

We've also heard about positive personal experiences and possible improvements to local health services. These have included tackling basic problems with using pronouns and chosen names, a potential informed consent approach, reducing gender identity clinic waiting times, and more.

Once the surveys are closed we will produce a report with recommendations we hope will lead to positive changes in the future.

If you would like to share your experiences, the surveys are available on our website.

Engagement update

A big thank you to everyone who talks to us and shares their experience of local health and care services at our regular or one-off stalls across York.

It is very important to hear what has happened to you and what you think about the NHS and care in York. So far in 2025 we have heard from more than 900 people about good and bad experiences of GPs, dentists, pharmacies, the hospital, mental health services, care homes and more.

Please come and find us at one of our regular stalls to help us improve services based on what you tell us:

- **Tang Hall Explore: first Monday of the month, 10am–12pm**
- **Collective Sharehouse at St Clements Hall: first Tuesday of the month, 9.15am–11am (not November)**
- **Marjorie Waite Court: first Tuesday of the month, 1pm–2pm (not November)**
- **Haxby Explore: second Monday of the month, 10am–12pm**
- **York Explore: second Tuesday of the month, 10.30am–2pm**
- **Spurriergate Centre: second Wednesday of every other month, including October, 10.30am–12.30pm**
- **St Sampson's: second Wednesday of every other month, including November, 11am–1pm**
- **Huntington Explore: third Thursday of the month, 2pm–3.30pm**
- **St Wulstan's Church: fourth Tuesday of the month, 12pm–1.30pm**
- **York Hospital Foyer: fourth Thursday of the month, 10.30am–2.30pm (not December)**
- **Foxwood Community Centre: last Friday of the month, 12pm–1.30pm (not October or December)**
- **Clifton Library: last Friday of the month, 2pm–3.30pm (not Oct or Dec)**

From our Annual Report 2025

A message from our chair



ONCE AGAIN it has been an extremely busy year for Healthwatch York. The number of calls and contacts continues to grow. This enables us to raise issues of local

concern and highlight best practice in health and social care. Without these contacts and contributions to surveys and reports, we would not be able to represent your voice.

Health and social care remain headline news nationally and many of these issues are mirrored locally. Healthwatch York continues to work to make sure, whatever the national picture, we first and foremost champion the issues that matter to you in our city.

The stories that people share with the Healthwatch Team are often difficult to hear. Many tell us that they are struggling to access the support and services they feel they need. But alongside this, we continue to hear stories about people and organisations that go above and beyond what is expected.

The team continue to impress me with their professionalism, energy, and commitment. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate them on their well-deserved commendation from Healthwatch England for their work on the adult ADHD and Autism assessment pilot pathway work.

“ It is always inspiring to see how many people in York take time to support us in our work. Together we can make sure York voices influence the planning and delivery of our city’s services and support. ”

For such a small team, capacity continues to be a major challenge. But they remain absolutely committed to finding ways to hear from more people in our city.

“ Many tell us that they are struggling to access the support and services they feel they need. ”

This year, they have expanded the number of community venues you can meet them in and have reinstated the care home visiting programme that had been suspended during the Covid pandemic and then remained paused.

They have begun a young volunteers programme, Core Connectors, and supported them to publish their first report. Alongside this they have published major reports on Access to GP services, and Listening to Neurodivergent Families. All supported by you!

It is always inspiring to see how many people in York take time to support us in our work. Together we can make sure York voices influence the planning and delivery of our city’s services and support.

Whether you were one of the over 1,300 people who completed our Access to GP services survey, someone who got in touch about your experiences, or one of our Healthwatch York volunteers including our Core Connectors listening to young people’s experiences of accessing health and care services, and our Care Home Assessors supporting our care home visits, we would not be able to continue without you.

I hope you enjoy reading about all the work Healthwatch York have undertaken in the last year.

Janet Wright, Chair

Our year in numbers

We supported more than 6,537 people to have their say and get information about their care. We currently employ four part-time staff and our work is supported by 30 volunteers.

Reaching out to hear more

1,792 people shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.

4,745 people received clear information and the latest advice on topics such as finding an NHS dentist and getting help after a dementia diagnosis.

Making a difference through your experience

13 We published **13 reports** about local experiences of health and care services.

Our most popular report was **Exploring access to GP services** which celebrated what people value about local services, as well as highlighting areas where people want to see change.

Our team

£115.6k

In 2024/25 our core contract was for **£115,610** which is the same as the previous year.

30/620/four

We're lucky to have **30 outstanding volunteers** who **gifted us 620 hours** of support to improve health and care services in York. **We currently employ four part-time staff** who help us carry out our work.

At the heart of what we do: Showcasing volunteer impact

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



“ I was one of a group of volunteers assessing the accessibility of GP surgeries.

This involved visiting practices

to visually assess them and ask questions to check facilities were available. We had a list to ensure all visits were assessed.

My experience was very positive. The visits were unannounced and I was easily able to assess things such as ramps, how doors opened, the width of corridors for wheelchairs and buggies, lift availability etc.

The staff were all lovely and helpful but couldn't always provide the required information.

It was a positive experience for me and a valuable one for Healthwatch as a large number of practices were assessed.

- Kitty, Research Volunteer



“ I do this voluntary work as a result of years of working in the field of adult social care, meeting people who received and

provided health and social care services. This was valuable experience for this volunteer role.

I lead Enter and View visits to care homes, having helped develop Healthwatch York's new approach. There are many benefits to this work:

- **Our visits contribute to the continuous enhancement of care standards.**
- **We voice people's experiences and concerns, fostering a sense of involvement and advocacy.**
- **The transparency of the process builds trust within the community, demonstrating a commitment to accountability and quality care.**

- Peter, Care Home Assessor



“ I met someone from Healthwatch York at my local library, picked up a copy of the newsletter and found out about their readability volunteers.

I'd been wanting to volunteer for a while. Having previously been a copywriter, I thought this might be ideal. However, I was apprehensive as I have a chronic illness - would they want someone with limited time, energy, and mobility? The answer was yes! ”

- Rachel, Readability Volunteer

Making a difference in the community

We've been out and about in the community listening to your stories, engaging with partners and working to improve care in York. Here are a few highlights.

SPRING

We closed our **GP survey** and began working through the data, having received over 1,300 responses!

We began recruiting **Core Connector volunteers** – young people, 16–25, who gather the views of other young people.

SUMMER

We celebrated our **Making a Difference Award winners** – 36 people and 15 organisations that people in York say provide excellent care.

Following a visit to the **Land in Haxby**, we began plans for a report about the experiences of neurodivergent families.

AUTUMN

We published our **report on Access to GP services**, highlighting what people value about their GP and what needs to improve.

We worked with Healthwatch North Yorkshire on relaunching our **volunteer-led care home visiting programme**.

WINTER

We published the **report of our Core Connectors**, sharing the health and care experiences of over 150 young people in York.

We met **local information and signposting needs** by publishing a guide to essential services open over the Christmas period.

We share all your feedback about your experiences with healthcare professionals and decision-makers. We use it to shape services and improve care over time. Here are a few examples of our work this year.

Finding out what life in local care homes is like

Speaking to residents and their families as well as care staff.

This year we relaunched our care home visiting programme. Our care home assessors meet residents, family members and staff, to get a flavour of life in our city's care homes. Everything they hear goes into our publicly available reports.

Working closely with our voluntary sector partners

Together, we can amplify the voices that most need to be heard.

This year we started our Voice and Representation meetings. We get together with local groups like York Carers Centre, Dementia Forward, Alzheimer's Society, Parent Carer Forum York, and Lived Insights to share what we are hearing, and plan how we might work together to address shared concerns.

Helping researchers hear more from people in York

We're working closely with the University of York and York St John University, to make sure that what matters to people in York helps shape national research.

This year, we've been involved in research projects covering a wide range of health and care issues. This includes looking at people's experiences of waiting for social care, exploring awareness of cancer symptoms and exploring how to keep GPs in the workforce.

Contact us

How to get in touch

Pop in and see us at:

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15 Priory Street
YO1 6ET**

☎ 01904 621133

✉ healthwatch@yorkcvs.org.uk

Send us a letter

**Healthwatch York
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Go online

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