healthwatch Rutland

Paper 2: Report from Healthwatch Rutland Manager

I am pleased to submit this report to the Board of Healthwatch Rutland (HWR), outlining activity since my last report in January 2026.

HWR work planning

With limited time left to influence health and care in Rutland, the HWR Board spent time after the board meeting in January exploring which focused engagement projects, with clear impact and a quick turnaround, could realistically be delivered over the next 12 months.

The shortlisted projects were discussed at the Ops and Planning meeting in February and the following three were selected:

- Experiences of Pharmacy First (both positives and barriers), with engagement taking place in pharmacies (using a light Enter and View approach)
- Defibrillators in Rutland – looking at public accessibility, information, maintenance, and identifying any risks or gaps in provision
- An Enter and View visit to Rutland Memorial Hospital to hear about people's experiences of discharge from acute hospitals into community hospital care.

The workplan will now be updated and work will begin.

Outreach and Engagement

In January HWR again joined the Rutland Dementia Participation Group 'on the road,' this time at Barrowden Community Centre. The aim of the session was two-fold, first to understand more about how people are experiencing current dementia support in Rutland and to provide input to future Council support planning; and second, by taking the meet-ups out to the villages, to give local families living with dementia the opportunity to drop in for advice, signposting, peer support - or just a chat over a cup of tea. Again, it proved a great success, with some new people joining in.

Women's Health survey

The survey seeks to understand how women and girls use and experience healthcare, whether in universal services such as general practice, hospitals etc or those designed specifically for women's health issues such as reproductive health, contraception, women's cancers etc.

HWR has continued to share the survey widely in Rutland through the HWR website, events and community groups. Chat groups have been held with Root and Branch Out and Age UK to talk to all ages of women in person.

During our visit in January, attendees at the Souper Space community lunch in Uppingham were keen to give feedback on both women's healthcare specifically, and on mental health support more generally.

Those present at the vibrant and friendly Thursday morning community café in Greetham were also happy to share their experiences of accessing universal

healthcare services as a woman, as well as more specialised women's healthcare services.

Similarly, the feedback from ladies at the February coffee and chat group at St Johns and St Anne's in Oakham was lively and offered valuable insight.

February's engagement activity concluded with a visit to the Community Fridge, Conversations with those waiting to collect food provided an opportunity to encourage women to complete the survey.

Latham House Medical Practice Survey

Latham House serves thousands of local patients both in Melton Mowbray and in Rutland. Throughout February HWR joined with Healthwatch Leicester/shire to encourage patients registered with the Practice to share their feedback by completing a short patient survey. The survey asks patients to comment on their experiences of accessing and using GP services at the practice.

The feedback will be used by the Integrated Care Board and practice leaders to plan improvements and ensure the patient voice helps to shape future care.

Investing in Volunteers

I am pleased to report that in January we achieved the Investing in Volunteers accreditation, having been awarded the quality mark/standard for a further three years.

Investing in Volunteers is the UK quality standard for good practice in volunteer management. The standard aims to improve the quality of the volunteering experience for all volunteers and demonstrates that organisations value the enormous contribution made by their volunteers.

A huge thanks to all our volunteers, especially those who were interviewed by the assessors – we could not do it without you!

Dismantling of Healthwatch

At a meeting in February with the Department of Health and Security Deputy Director for Quality, Safety and Investigations, local Healthwatch organisations were informed that the Health Reform Bill required to dismantle Healthwatch is expected to receive its first reading in Parliament in April 2026. Royal Assent for the bill is expected in April 2027. This will be followed by a short period of transition to new arrangements when the Healthwatch brand will cease to exist and its trademark will be withdrawn. This marks the first occasion on which an outline timeline has been shared with Healthwatch, and it remains subject to change depending on the will of Parliament. The timeline aligns with the planning assumptions that we have been working with since the original announcement to close Healthwatch was made last summer.

Government proposals in the NHS 10-year Health Plan and Dash Review suggest that the functions of local Healthwatch will be absorbed into Integrated Care Boards

and local authorities. However, there is currently no clear model for how independence, transparency or external scrutiny will be preserved.

In December, the Government published its Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA) on the NHS 10-Year Health Plan. While the EQIA makes extensive reference to "patient voice" and "patient feedback", it places significant emphasis on digital tools such as the NHS App as the primary route for gathering views. Our concerns remain about digital exclusion and the absence of a trusted, independent mechanism for patients to share their experiences and feedback. HWR, in common with other Healthwatch around the country, responded in a statement warning that the EQIA fails to fully consider the impact of losing independent patient voice and scrutiny which are required under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).

Engagement with the Rutland and Stamford MP Alicia Kearns resulted in her writing to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on behalf of Healthwatch Rutland and Healthwatch Lincolnshire. Her letter urges the Secretary of State to protect the independence of Healthwatch. It highlights concerns about proposals to abolish Healthwatch England and merge local Healthwatch bodies into NHS and local authority organisations, arguing that independence is essential for safeguarding an unbiased collection of public experience, accountability and trust in health and social care.

Changes to NHS Integrated Care Systems

In October last year the five Healthwatch organisations in Leicester, Leicestershire, Rutland (LLR) and Northamptonshire formally requested that provision be made on the new Joint Integrated Care Board for two Healthwatch seats – one for LLR and one for Northamptonshire. An offer was received back for a single sector-wide representative to attend the Board.

In response, HWR facilitated the creation of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the five Healthwatch organisations, setting out how we will work together to coordinate, support and represent the public and patient voice through the single, shared, non-voting seat on the Joint Integrated Care Board (ICB). The MOU includes the agreed criteria and a transparent process for selection of the representative and a deputy. The same process will apply to any sub-group seats that Healthwatch are offered.

Harsha Kotecha, Chair of Healthwatch Leicester/shire was duly elected to the position with Gabriella Van Beek, Manager of Healthwatch West Northamptonshire as deputy.

The MOU is included in the board meeting papers as paper 3 for noting.

Same Day Access to healthcare in Rutland

The local NHS has announced the outcomes of the public consultation held at the start of 2025 and its next steps. The new combined minor illness and minor injury

service will be opening on 1 April 2026. Signage will be updated and a public communications plan will be launching in March.

GP practices and NHS 111 will be able to book appointments at the new service between 1pm and 9pm, seven days a week. This will largely be an appointment-based service but there will be a small number of slots that people can walk-in to book a later same-day appointment.

X-rays have continued to be available on Tuesdays and Wednesday as before and since January have been available on Mondays too from 8.30am-4.30pm. Discussions are continuing about further extending the X-ray provision and refurbishing the premises at the hospital. These will depend on separate capital bids.

Meetings

The following is a record of the partner meetings attended during the period since the last report:

Rutland Health and Wellbeing Board	20/1/26	JU
Rutland Neighbourhood Strategy Commissioning Group (was IDG)	Monthly	TA-J
Rutland Mental Health Neighbourhood group	Monthly	TA-J
Rutland CYP Partnership	3/2/26	TA-J
Rutland Dementia Participation Group	Every 2 months	TA-J
Rutland safeguarding adults meeting	25/2/26	TA-J
LLR Mental Health Collaborative	26/1/26	TA-J
LLR Community Care Partnership	14/2/26	TA-J
LLR Transferring Care Safely	Monthly	JU
LLR Pre Hospital Model of Care Steering Group	15/1/26	TA-J
LLR System Engagement	14/2/26	TA-J
St Marys Birth Unit update	5/1/26	JU
LLR Joint Health Scrutiny	23/2/26	JU
LPT/HW quarterly	26/2/26	JU, TA-J
LPT Peoples Council	22/1/26	TA-J
Phlebotomy meeting	12/2/26	JU
CQC/HW quarterly	9/2/26	TA-J
HWR/HWLL catch-up	Monthly	JU, TA-J

HW LNR Cluster meeting	Monthly	JU, TA-J
HW LNR cluster meeting to decide ICB rep	6/2/26	JU, TA-J
LNR HW / ICB CEO	Every 6 weeks	JU
Local HW Response group	Monthly	TA-J
DHSC/Local Healthwatch meeting	4/2/26	JU, TA-J

Acronyms:

ASC	Adult Social Care
CAR	Citizens Advice Rutland
COPD	Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease
CYP (P)	Children and Young People (Partnership)
DHSC	Department of Health and Social Care
DHU	Derbyshire Healthcare
ED	Emergency Department
EDI	Equality, Diversity, Inclusion
EMAS	East Midlands Ambulance Service
E&V	Enter and View
HOSC	Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee
HWB	Health and Wellbeing Board
HWE	Healthwatch England
HWLL	Healthwatch Leicester & Leicestershire
HWP	Health and Wellbeing Partnership
HWS	Health and Wellbeing Strategy
ICB	Integrated Care Board
ICS	Integrated Care System
IDG	Integrated Delivery Group
IMP	**I**nformation **M**anagement system of **P**atient experiences – HWR feedback collection system
LDN	Local Dental Network

LHW	Local Healthwatch
LPT	Leicestershire Partnership Trust
LLR	Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland
LLNR	Leicester, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Rutland cluster
LRI	Leicester Royal Infirmary
NEPTS	Non-Emergency Patient Transport Services – currently EMED Patient Care
NHSE	National Health Service England
NWAFT	North West Anglia Foundation Trust
OMP	Oakham Medical Practice
PCH	Peterborough City Hospital
PCN	Primary Care Network
PMS	Primary Medical Services
PPG	Patient Participation Group
RCC	Rutland County Council
RISE	Rutland Integrated Social Empowerment team
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
UEC	Urgent and Emergency Care
UHL	University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust
VAR	Voluntary Action Rutland
VCS	Voluntary and Community Sector
VCSE	Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise