

# Championing what matters to you

Healthwatch Rutland  
Annual Report 2021-22



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# Message from our chair

COVID-19 undermined our attempts to meet people in person over much of the last year so the relaxation of restrictions and the opportunity to hold public events has been welcomed.



The production of this report permitted recognition of our achievements in placing Rutland people’s concerns and needs at the forefront of local health and care planning. We have highlighted difficulties such as NHS dental care, GP appointments, rural transport, problems experienced by people who go out of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland system for their healthcare and more.

I’d especially like to thank Rutland people who have provided valuable feedback to pass on to those who deliver our health and care services. Without this, we could not influence the care we all need at different times in our lives. Please do continue to tell us about your experiences – both good and bad. We acknowledge too, the importance of being heard. As a local resident said:



**People won’t follow if change happens to them unless they are involved. The population needs enthusing, then we’ll help. You have to engage with people to make them feel part of the solution. All the negative energy of complaints could be turned into a positive to transform society.**

**Rutland Resident**



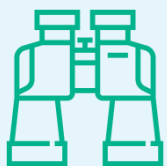
My thanks also go to the Healthwatch staff, Advisory Board members and volunteers for their support and hard work.

Dr Janet Underwood PhD  
**Healthwatch Rutland Chair**

# About us

## Your health and social care champion

Healthwatch Rutland is your local health and social care champion. From Barrowden to Whissendine and everywhere in between, we make sure NHS and social care leaders and other decision makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care. We can also help you to find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.



### Our vision

Healthwatch Rutland is your strong and independent community champion. We will give local people a voice and work in partnership to influence the design and quality of health and social care provision so that you can get the health and care you need.



### Our mission

To make sure Rutland people's experiences are utilised to improve health and social care.



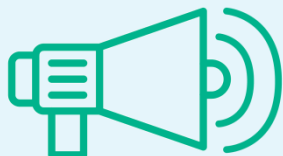
### Our values

- We will be accessible and visible
- We will be independent and objective
- We will be open, honest and transparent in all that we do
- We will be inclusive and embrace diversity and equality, reflecting the diverse needs of local people
- We will listen to and understand the experiences of people in Rutland, especially if they don't always have their voices heard
- We will speak up for local people and enable people to speak for themselves
- We will seek out and use evidence from local people and act on it to drive change and make health and care better

# Our year in review

Find out how we have engaged and supported people.

## Reaching out



**397 people**

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

**1,332 people**

came to us or viewed our online advice page for clear information about topics such as mental health and COVID-19.

## Making a difference to care



We published

**6 Reports**

about the improvements, people would like to see in health and social care services, especially due to the pandemic.

Our most popular report was:

***What Matters to You?***

This highlighted what health, social care and wellbeing provision people need locally to lead healthy lives.

## Health and care that works for you



We're lucky to have outstanding volunteers, who gave up

**1,170**

hours of their time to make care better for our community.

We're funded by our local authority. In 2021-22 we received:

**£72,600**

We also currently employ

**2 staff (1.6 full-time equivalent)**

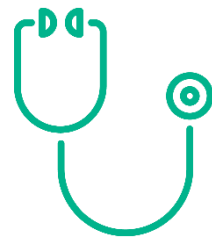
who help us carry out this work (we also receive additional administrative support from Connected Together our contract holder).

# How we've made a difference throughout the year

This is a snapshot of our work from April 2021 to March 2022.

Spring

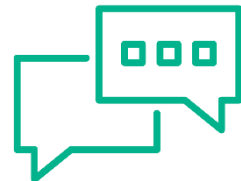
Rutland patients at Lakeside Healthcare Stamford told us about the many concerns they had with long waits to contact the practice by telephone, lack of appointments and parking fine problems. We contacted the practice to find out what actions they were taking to improve access for patients and shared the patient feedback we had received with the Care Quality Commission (CQC). The subsequent CQC inspection of June 2021 rated the practice as 'Inadequate' and it was placed in special measures. Following inspections have rated the practice as 'Requires Improvement'.



Summer

Making Caring 'Visible and Valued' for Carer's week, we engaged with local unpaid carers to hear about their mental wellbeing.

Their experiences, along with other feedback from wider Healthwatch engagement has contributed to the provision of new "Getting Help in Neighbourhoods" funding for local support services.



Autumn

People told us in our research that travel and transport in Rutland is the biggest barrier to accessing health and care services, many of which are out of the county.

In response, we urged the need for a cross-system focus on integrated plans to improve it. We highlighted this inequality of access through representations to the Joint Scrutiny Committee, Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Planning, and formal consultation responses. This resulted in firm plans to bring more diagnostics and treatment into the community and enhance cross-boundary working and improve community transport.



Winter

With increasing reports of problems accessing NHS dental services, we conducted a quick poll to hear about the public's experiences. 133 people shared their feedback.

In response, we convened a meeting of local Healthwatch in the Midlands and NHS England/Improvement to understand what actions for improvement are being taken. We continue to push for improved NHS dental services in the county.





# Listening to your experiences

Services can't make improvements without hearing your views. That's why over the last year we have made listening to feedback from all areas of the community a priority. This allows us to understand the full picture and feed back to services to help them improve.

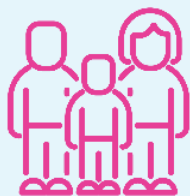


## In Spring 2021 we asked, “What Matters to You?”

**People were encouraged to tell us what local services are needed to make it easier to access health and care support and to take more control of their own health and wellbeing.**

You told us clearly that:

- More diagnostics and treatments are needed closer to home
- Providers and commissioners must fully understand and tackle the barriers to healthcare services and wellbeing activities created by poor transport services
- Better information and access to healthcare over county boundaries are needed
- A hybrid approach to the increasing use of technology in health and care settings is required, as it is embraced by many, but feared by many others



**139 took part including older people, people with dementia, disabled people, families with children, military veterans, carers, young people, Patient Participation Groups, people living on county borders, people with mental ill-health as well as the wider general public.**

**Read the *What Matters to You?* report: [What Matters to You? Our report on what people in the county want from Place-based Health and Care | Healthwatch Rutland](#)**

Your feedback led to the recommendations we put forward to help shape the Rutland Health and Wellbeing Strategy:

- Bring diagnostics and treatments closer to home for adults and children
- Balance digital consultations and treatment with face-to-face care options and provide training to improve people's skills and confidence
- Improve information and continuous public engagement in the design and implementation of local health and care services
- Work to balance demand and supply of appointments at GP practices
- Publish information about social groups and activities more widely
- Expand local mental health services and support in Rutland
- Address inequalities to ensure that people living on county boundaries are not disadvantaged
- Improve the wellbeing of disabled young adults by expanding work opportunities and peer groups for connecting and socialising



# 'What Matters to You' continued....

## What difference did it make

We are delighted that all of our recommendations have been taken up by the Rutland Health and Wellbeing Board and will be enacted through its Strategy over the next 5 years. The accompanying place-led delivery plan identifies specific actions that will be taken, with associated ownership and outcome measures that will enable us all to track progress.



In **“What Matters to You?”** Healthwatch Rutland captured, organised, and amplified the voices of Rutlanders whose lived experiences, both good and bad, help us all to better understand the health and care needs and aspirations of local people. The report acted as a touchstone in the development of Rutland’s new Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and will continue to be a key reference point as we move into implementation, reminding us of the realities of life in our rural communities. **“What Matters to You?”** placed Rutland voices front and centre, and I would like to thank Healthwatch Rutland and those who participated for the vital role they have played. Your feedback set us a high bar and we’ve listened and I hope, included more of the right things as a result.



**Councillor Samantha Harvey**  
**Portfolio Holder for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Care**  
**Rutland County Council**



Contact us to get the information you need  
If you have a query about health and social care, please get in touch:



Website: [www.healthwatchrutland.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchrutland.co.uk)



Telephone: 01572 720381



Email: [info@healthwatchrutland.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchrutland.co.uk)

# Let's Talk....

Our *Let's Talk..* project explored how changes that had been made to Health and Care services during the COVID-19 pandemic had affected the people using them, through a series of four themed community engagements and individual interviews.



**We heard from 66 people during the *Let's Talk...* themed focus groups and interviews. You can see all the findings on our website: [News and reports | Healthwatch Rutland](#).**

You told us clearly during our *Let's Talk... GP Practice Appointments* engagement that urgent improvement in telephone access to practice appointments was required, that more face-to-face appointments were needed, especially if you were unable to use digital methods and that many of you did not understand or like the 'total triage' approach directing patients to the most appropriate professional for their needs.



**The doctor knows the patients and so does the receptionist. Seeing somebody face-to-face says so much more, as on the phone there are things they cannot see.**  
**Rutland Resident**



Commissioners used our recommendations to inform a series of high-impact actions that led to improved telephony services at some GP practices, including Oakham, and the expansion of appointment availability both face-to-face and online.

Better communication and involving you in the care of your loved ones in hospital was a key theme of *Let's Talk...Hospital Visiting*. You told us movingly about feeling isolated and receiving little communication from the hospital about your family member. Whilst the use of iPads for patients on wards, and 'letters to loved ones' were appreciated, clear and regular communication from clinicians was needed too.

Northwest Anglia Foundation Trust acknowledged that patient communication was one of the main challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic and said:



**The feedback...will certainly help us to review our processes and will also be fed back to the appropriate sources within the Trust.**  
**Northwest Anglia Foundation Trust**



# The ways we made a difference

Throughout our work, we seek out voices that are not always heard and encourage services to really listen to patient experiences as we push for change.

## Bringing experiences to life



**It is important for the NHS and social care services to step back and see the bigger picture through the eyes of the patient and understand the impact on people’s lives.**

As part of our *Let’s Talk...Hospital Visiting* engagement we used a case study from a family that spoke movingly about the highs and lows of having a loved one in intensive care at a time when visiting was not allowed and communication from the hospital about the patient’s health was scant. The story helped to convey the emotional toll on the wider family of not being able to see their father and the struggles they faced on a daily basis. It helped decision-makers at the hospital to see the bigger picture of the impact of communication issues.

## Encouraging services to involve the public



The health and care system increasingly expects people to share responsibility and decision-making, acknowledging that people themselves are experts in their own wellbeing. People should also, therefore, have a strong voice in development and design to help improve care for everyone.

Throughout the year we worked with the Rutland Health Primary Care Network (PCN) to shape the scope and function of a new Patient Participation Group that could act as a critical friend to the PCN as it matures. The group will bring patient experience and feedback to the PCN as well as acting as a conduit to share information with patients through individual practice patient groups.

# Advice and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch Rutland is here for you. In times of worry or stress, we can provide confidential support and free information to help you understand your options and get the help you need. Whether it's finding a service, how to make a complaint or choosing a good care home for a loved one – you can count on us.

This year we helped people by:

- Providing people with up-to-date information on accessing COVID-19 vaccinations
- Listening and linking people to reliable sources of information in order to make a complaint (for example accessing GP practices or mental health services)
- Signposting people who required dental services to get the help they need
- Helping people access services such as breast screening, physiotherapy and social prescribing



## Supporting communication between patients and GP practices

We heard a lot this year about patients’ problems (locally and nationally) accessing GP practice appointments. We have been contacted by many members of the public who have been concerned about the lack of response from their GP surgery and being unable to secure an appointment. We have been able to signpost the patient to the surgery to share their concerns directly and when the patient has not received a response within two weeks, we have followed this up with the GP practice directly and updated the caller with our actions.

Patients have been satisfied with the GP response and have been able to access a suitable GP appointment. They have come back to us with positive feedback, sharing with us that they are extremely appreciative of our support:



**‘ The Dr ... called me this evening and I am now being helped! ...I really appreciate what you did for me.’**  
**Rutland Resident**



## Providing information and guidance to people about COVID-19 vaccinations

A number of people contacted us to ask for advice about COVID-19 vaccinations and related queries. Individuals were experiencing difficulties booking their second COVID-19 vaccination. Where there were issues with booking on the NHS system we were able to make contact with the Primary Care Network to clarify and resolve the issue on the individual’s behalf. People were then satisfied to receive a text message, with an opportunity to book their vaccination locally on the same day.



We also provided support to people who had not yet been invited for their booster vaccination, by recommending the closest walk-in centres, signposting to the NHS walk-in vaccination centre locator and advising on what information to take to their appointments. We also helped people to access NHS COVID-19 travel passes, when they did not own a smartphone.



# Volunteers

We're supported by a team of amazing volunteers who are the heart of Healthwatch Rutland. Thanks to their efforts in the community, we're able to understand what is working and what needs improving in NHS health and social care.

This year we worked hard to achieve 'Investing in Volunteers' accreditation. The award sets a high standard for our volunteering program and its achievement shows how integral volunteering is to our work and how much we value our volunteers.

Here are some of the things our volunteers have done this year:

- Helped to share information about Healthwatch Rutland with the public, empowering individuals and communities to have their say
- Represented the Rutland people's voice at various meetings, to help plan and shape health and social care provision in Rutland
- Throughout COVID-19 restrictions they helped people have their say from home, carrying out surveys over the telephone and online
- Carried out research regarding local services to make sure the public has up-to-date, clear information
- Shaped Healthwatch Rutland's work plans for the forthcoming year





After retiring and living in France for 15 years, we returned to the UK last year. I was particularly keen to get involved in at least one organisation I cared about. I had done some voluntary work in England, Scotland and France. Having worked in the health service and been a member of a health authority, I feel strongly committed to health and social care provision and felt I might have something to offer Healthwatch. I have become an Advisory Board member; helping with decision-making, direction and making sure the patient voice in Rutland is heard. As a volunteer, I look for a sense of fulfilment and challenge, so I look forward to what the year ahead at Healthwatch may bring.



**Listening to the experiences of others – the good as well as the bad – has taught me so much.**  
**Una, HWR Volunteer**



I am the Vice Chair of Healthwatch Rutland (HWR). I began volunteering in 2015. Volunteering at HWR helps you to explore new areas or focus on parts of health and social care that you are already involved in. I have an interest in unpaid carers and am passionate about ensuring that they receive the help and support they need when they need it and that they are well aware of their rights to make informed choices and decisions. This work was especially important during this past year in terms of COVID-19, as many carers were isolated and lonely. I represent Healthwatch and carers by attending meetings and creating newsletters that support carers.



**Because of the voluntary work, I have done I have gained paid employment in a similar area, which is fantastic!**  
**Jacqui, Vice-Chair Of HWR Advisory Board**



### Do you feel inspired?

We are always on the lookout for new volunteers, so please get in touch today.



[www.healthwatchrutland.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchrutland.co.uk)



01572 720381



[info@healthwatchrutland.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchrutland.co.uk)

# Finance and future priorities

To help us carry out our work we receive funding from our local authority under the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

Income		Expenditure	
Funding received from local authority	£72,600	Staff costs	£51,105.42
Additional funding	£4,171	Operational costs	£15,878.79
		Support and administration	£10,274.35
Total income	£76,771	Total expenditure	£77,258.56

Total expenditure exceeded core funding from Rutland County Council by £4,658.56, a shortfall that was subsidised with income from additional work and funding from Connected Together CIC.

## Top three priorities for 2022–23

- Continue to champion fair access to NHS dental services in Rutland in partnership with NHS England/Improvement, Healthwatch England, the Rutland Health and Wellbeing Board and our local Member of Parliament
- Resume our “*Let’s Talk...*” engagement with a close look at maternity services and how women from diverse and minority groups experience pregnancy and birth care
- Conduct special interest research projects on communications between the NHS and patients, and dementia care in Rutland

## Next steps

- Huge challenges for health and care services lie ahead as they continue to deal with COVID-19 whilst rebuilding and transforming services. The evolving Integrated Care System will shift how services are planned, paid for and provided, with ever greater emphasis on joined-up care delivered at a local or ‘Place’ level.
- Healthwatch Rutland will be at the forefront of bringing public voices and patient experience to the design and delivery of these services as they move closer to home. We will concentrate our effort over the coming year on collaborating with partners to seek out and listen to people with hidden needs, who do not often push themselves forward to be heard. In this way, we will champion diversity and inclusion in everything we do and focus providers on improving equity of access to services for people, wherever they live in Rutland.



# Statutory statements

## About us

Healthwatch Rutland, The King Centre, Main Road, Barleythorpe, Oakham, Rutland, LE15 7WD.

Connected Together Community Interest Company is the legal entity and governing body for Healthwatch Rutland: Moulton Park Business Centre, Redhouse Road, Northampton, NN3 6AQ.

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

Healthwatch Rutland 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.

The Healthwatch Rutland Advisory Board comprises of four volunteer board members and the Chair, who receives a modest annual honorarium. The Advisory Board provides strategic direction, oversight and scrutiny of our activities, ensuring that decisions about our work reflect the concerns and interests of our local community. Through 2021/22 the Advisory Board met four times and made decisions on matters such as:



Maintaining Healthwatch independence by determining that our involvement in the consultation on the Rutland Health and Wellbeing Strategy would be limited to sense checking the documentation for public accessibility and encouraging under-represented groups to engage in the process.



Championing the need for better NHS dental provision in Rutland following our findings in a February dental poll that poor access and appointment availability mean that many have to pay for private care or receive no dental care at all.

Identifying annual work priorities is driven by our volunteers and for 2022/23, we invited wider public involvement through several '*Let's Talk* Priorities' sessions in February. This, along with the public feedback we received over the year, enabled us to hear which health and care themes meant the most to local people and has shaped our plan of work going forward.

### Methods used across the year's work to obtain people's views and experiences.

We use a wide range of approaches to ensure that as many people as possible have the opportunity to provide us with insight into their experience of health and care services. During 2021/22 we have been available by phone and email, provided a webform on our website, attended virtual meetings of community groups and forums, provided our own virtual activities and engaged with the public through social media.

We are committed to taking additional steps to ensure we obtain the views of people from diverse backgrounds who are often not heard by health and care decision-makers. This year we have done this by, for example, running focus groups for carers and older people and attending support groups for families with disabled children. We ensure that this annual report is made available as widely as possible by publishing it on our website, by email to newsletter membership and stakeholders, via social media and directly to the Care Quality Commission and Healthwatch England.



## Responses to recommendations and requests

Throughout the year there were no health or care organisations that did not respond to requests for information or recommendations.

This year, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we did not make use of our Enter and View powers. Consequently, no recommendations or other actions resulted from this area of activity.

There were no issues or recommendations escalated by our Healthwatch to Healthwatch England Committee and so no resulting special reviews or investigations.

## Health and Wellbeing Board

Healthwatch Rutland is represented on the Rutland Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) by our Chair, Dr Janet Underwood PhD.



During 2021/22 Rutland County Council, through the HWB, commissioned our ‘What Matters To You?’ public engagement study, where we reported in detail what people need from place-based care and what support they want to help them lead healthy lives. Through the HWB and its subgroups, Healthwatch has had a direct influence on the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Delivery Plan, ensuring that Rutland people’s voices have been listened to and their needs addressed in health and care planning (read more on page 8).

Throughout this work, we have championed principles of co-design and the value of individual people’s lived experience of health and care services as fundamental building blocks in the strategy and planning, now embedded clearly in the plans.

Healthwatch has also been able to bring the focus of people in Rutland to planning the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment that is taking place in 2022. By ensuring that survey questions were localised and recognised the rural nature of our county we maximised engagement from the Rutland public.



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