

The value of listening

Healthwatch Lincolnshire
Annual Report 2023–2024



healthwatch
Lincolnshire

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"Over the last year, local Healthwatch have shown what happens when people speak up about their care, and services listen. They are helping the NHS unlock the power of people's views and experiences, especially those facing the most serious health inequalities."

Louise Ansari, Chief Executive at Healthwatch England



Message from our Chair

"I am chair of the Healthwatch Steering Group. We meet quarterly and you are welcome to join our meetings and listen to our discussions. Members of the public are welcome to attend in an observational capacity and there is always an opportunity to ask questions at the end of the meeting. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you to join us at a future meeting and details can be found on our website (healthwatchlincolnshire.co.uk).

At this meeting you will see a group of committed individuals who are responsible for the oversight and delivery of the Healthwatch contract. We pride ourselves on listening to our local communities, so we can represent your views in a variety of health and social care forums.

This Annual Report for 2023 - 2024 represents the work that has been undertaken and I hope you enjoy reading it. It truly demonstrates the commitment and difference Healthwatch has made to the residents of Lincolnshire.

Health and social care delivery remains extremely challenging and waiting lists for treatment and access to services have never fully recovered post pandemic and have been further impacted by ongoing industrial action. Healthwatch continues to have an important role in representing your voices in the Integrated Care System and indeed nationally regarding dental services, which you will find further information about this in the report.

Healthwatch is a well-respected member of the Integrated Care Board and therefore ensures your voices are heard at these strategic meetings. You will see throughout this report examples of how we have used our influence to represent your voices both locally and nationally.

Healthwatch Lincolnshire remains committed to making a difference and if you would like to become more involved, we would like to hear from you, please contact us."

"Healthwatch continues to have an important role in representing your voices in the Integrated Care System and indeed nationally"

Liz Ball, Healthwatch Lincolnshire Steering Group Chair



About us

Healthwatch Lincolnshire is your local health and social care champion

We make sure NHS leaders and 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

A world where we can all get the health and care we need.



Our mission

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



Our values are:

- **Listening** to people and making sure their voices are heard.
- **Including** everyone in the conversation – especially those who don't always have their voice heard.
- **Analysing** people's experiences to learn how to improve care.
- **Acting** on feedback and driving change.
- **Partnering** with care providers, government, and the voluntary sector – serving as the public's independent advocate.



Year in review

Reaching out:

2,328 people

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

We have had **30,899** page views on our website and have

reached an incredible **305,514** people through Facebook alone.



Making a difference to care:

4,555 people

came to us for advice and information about topics such as mental health and the cost-of-living crisis

100% of experiences

were closed or resolved at the end of the year



Health and social care that works for you:

We're lucky to have

36 volunteers

who dedicated **1,668.5 hours** to make care better for our community.

We're funded by Lincolnshire County Council. In 2023-24 we received **£299,600**, which is in line with grant funding from the previous year.





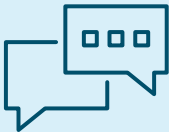

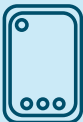

HWLincs provided

7.75 staff

to carry out our work.



How we've made a difference this year

Spring	 <p>We highlighted the impact of the soaring cost of living on healthcare.</p>	 <p>We took steps to get people the support they needed producing our helpful information and signposting articles.</p>
Summer	 <p>The NHS announced changes to their contract with dentists, after our data showed widening inequalities.</p>	 <p>This year we have conducted 14 Enter and View visits across care homes, urgent treatment centres and A&E.</p>
Autumn	 <p>Our Because We All Care campaign encouraged more people to share their experiences, helping us improve care further.</p>	 <p>We supported the national work of Healthwatch England on maternal mental health which led to updated guidance for GPs on six-week postnatal checks.</p>
Winter	 <p>We launched our campaign around menstrual health and supporting the work of the ICB's women's health strategy.</p>	 <p>We supported Healthwatch England's work on GP referrals which drew attention to the "hidden waiting list" created by delays.</p>



Listening to your experiences

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

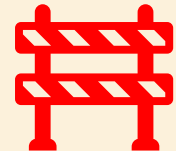
Community Mental Health Services

To gain greater insight into peoples' experiences of community mental health services in Lincolnshire, Healthwatch Lincolnshire launched two surveys.

Survey 1: Services users (both adults and children) – 91 responses received. (70 people shared their views on adult services and 19 on children's services.)

Survey 2: Professionals – 20 responses received. (10 respondents worked in mental health services and 10 worked in other sectors.)

67% of respondents found it "difficult" to access adult services.



- Both service users, parents/carers, and professionals highlighted consistent concerns, with difficulties accessing support, in particular long waiting times, being the most significant issue. The type of support/services available, lack of capacity and the "rigidity" of referral pathways were also highlighted.
- The majority of respondents felt communication while waiting and information on "how to wait well" was poor.
- Over the past six months professionals working in mental health services had noticed an increase in more complex cases and a rise in the number of young people needing support for their mental health.

A positive experience

It is important to recognise that many, once they had accessed a service including, Steps2Change [now known as Lincolnshire Talking Therapies], Crisis, Community Mental Health Teams and the Eating Disorder Service, had a positive experience.

"I cannot fault the Lincolnshire eating disorder team. They gave me my life back and I can never thank them enough." In relation to what worked well: "The time and commitment from staff with the eating disorder service. I highly recommend the service when other people are being referred."



Is maternal mental health working?

In October 2022, Healthwatch England launched a national online survey to gain insight into maternal mental health care. In 2023 we received the Lincolnshire data whereby 21 women shared their experiences.

- 18 out of the 21 experienced mental health difficulties during or after birth.
- 5 out of 8 disagreed that the support offered allowed them to make informed choices about managing their mental health during pregnancy.

In this very small sample, the longer it took to be seen correlated with symptoms worsening.

While waiting for support, respondents experienced a range of symptoms, including:

- Anxiety
- Anger and rage
- Being unable to leave the house
- Suicidal thoughts
- Unwanted and intrusive thoughts
- Relationships breaking down
- Struggling to care for others

Back to basics

The data suggests that in some areas there is a need to go back to the basics which includes ensuring patients are listened to and involved in making decisions about their care.

Full report and recommendations can be read here:

<https://www.healthwatchlincolnshire.co.uk/report/2023-07-04/maternal-mental-health-may-2023>

GP Referrals Summary

Healthwatch England surveyed 2,144 individuals who had GP appointments in the past year, including 80 from Lincolnshire.

Looking at the Lincolnshire data we found among those who did not receive a referral, 67% had multiple GP visits for the same issue, and 29% had previous referrals with no follow-up. Reasons for not being referred included perceived severity of the condition and only having phone appointments. Consequences included ongoing pain (58%), worsening symptoms (50%), and further complications (33%).

For those who received referrals, 52% got them at the first appointment, while others faced delays, with some waiting months or even years. 60% received confirmation of their referral within a month. Delays led 38% to seek alternative help, and 89% faced adverse effects, such as worsened conditions (20%) and declines in wellbeing (13%).

The survey highlighted the significant challenges in the GP referral process for Lincolnshire residents. Many patients who expected referrals faced repeated visits and inadequate follow-up, often leading to ongoing pain, worsening conditions, and further complications. Those who received referrals frequently encountered delays, sometimes waiting months or even years, which negatively impacted their health and wellbeing. These findings highlight the need for improved communication and efficiency in the referral system to ensure timely and appropriate patient care.

For more details, download the full report on our website:

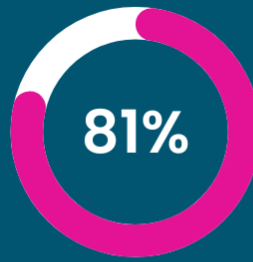
<https://www.healthwatchlincolnshire.co.uk/report/2023-07-04/gp-referrals-2023>
or contact Healthwatch Lincolnshire.

Cost of Living Survey Findings

We wanted to understand what impact the rising cost of living is having on people's overall health, wellbeing and ability to access essential health and care services in Lincolnshire.



327
people shared their
views via our online
survey



81%
agreed that the
rising cost of living
was causing them to
worry/feel anxious



As a result of the rising cost of living.....

69% reported a decline in their mental health

50% reported a decline in their physical health

People have made the following changes
to their health and social care:



Avoided going to the dentist
because of the cost



Avoided buying over the
counter medications



Stopped a special diet needed
for a medical condition



Stopped or cut down support
from private services such as
physiotherapy and counselling



As a result of the rising cost of living people are:



Reducing how much food they eat and buy + buying less healthy food



Not turning on their heating when they usually would



Putting on more clothes to stay warm



Turning off or avoiding using essential appliances



Having to tell your child that they can't put the heating on and need to hurry up in the shower or letting them see an empty fridge. Or complain about taking them to friends or family due to the cost is impacting on all our mental health.

Survey Respondent



The changes people have made to cope with the rising cost of living have negatively impacted their...



mental health



ability to manage a long-term health condition



physical pain



isolation from friends and family

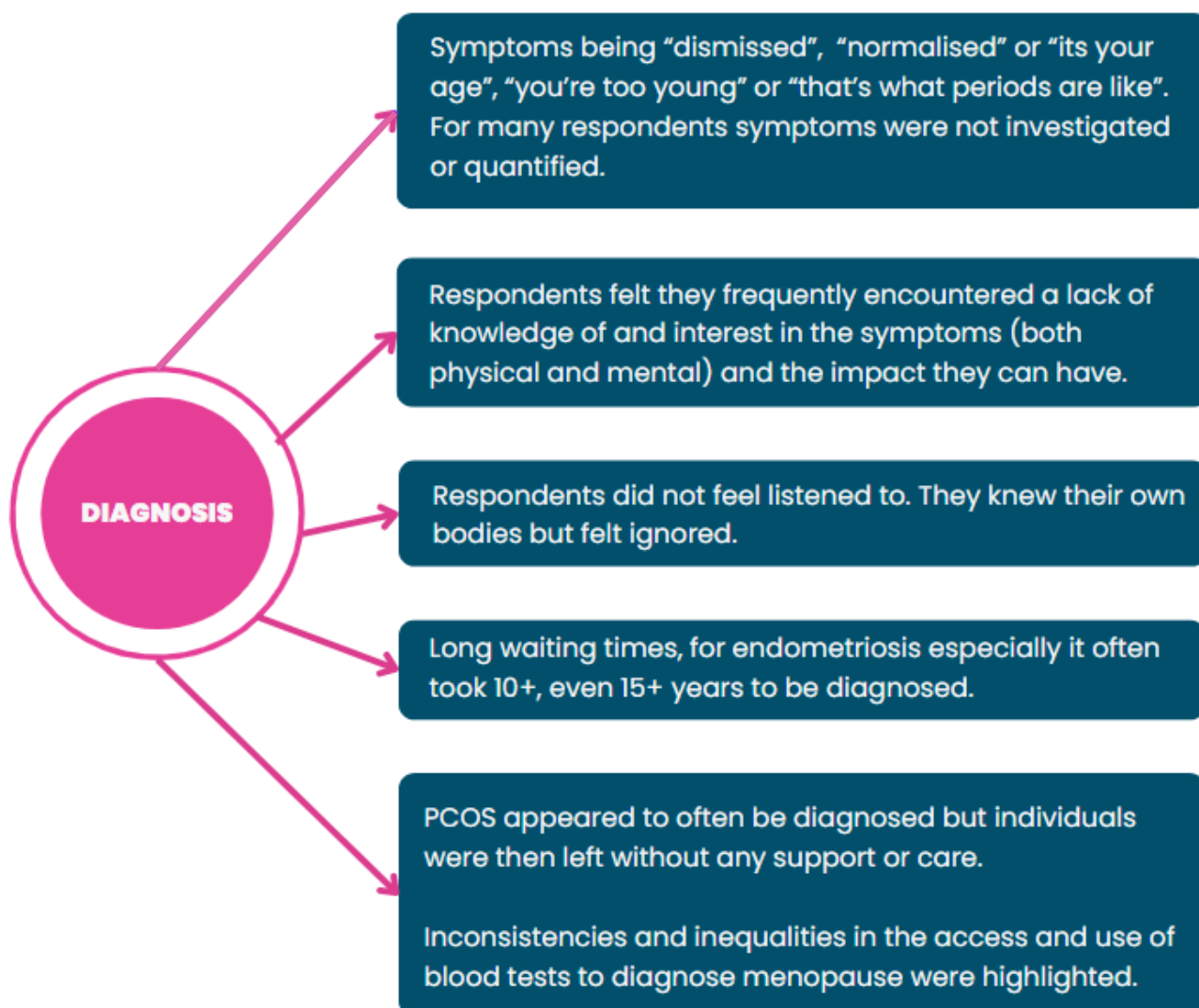
Menstrual and Menopausal Health

For the first quarter of 2024, we focused on menstrual health. This is the first part of [our campaigns for 2024](#) which seek to involve more people in conversations about their health. This decision is part of our ongoing efforts to address health inequalities in Lincolnshire and ensure that everyone's needs are heard and considered.

450
service users shared
their views

18
professionals
shared their
views

Common themes persisted throughout the report, spanning areas such as endometriosis, polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), menopause, perimenopause and other menstrual health conditions. Both service users and professionals raised many of the same issues.



Menstrual and Menopausal Health

What works well about how health and social care services in Lincolnshire are supporting those navigating menstrual health conditions and menopause?

Whilst a minority, examples of good practice were shared. Good practice tended to relate to individuals rather than systems and included the following:

- Quick and easy access to appointments (both primary and secondary care)
- Interested, knowledgeable and supportive professionals
- Being listened to
- Being referred when needed
- Follow-ups and reviews
- Responsive and proactive care.

What could be improved?

- Review menstrual and menopausal health training for healthcare professionals. Especially for those in primary care who are the first port of call for many on menstrual and menopausal health issues
- Listen to service users and take them seriously
- Quicker access to diagnostic tests e.g. blood tests and scans
- More emotional and well-being support for service users
- Greater awareness and acknowledgement of the impact these conditions can have on mental health, wellbeing, work and relationships (in the healthcare system and beyond)
- Person-centred, individualised care
- A dedicated hub or “one-stop shop” for information about signs/symptoms and management strategies. A place to direct queries that don’t warrant a GP appointment
- Stronger public health messaging around menstrual and menopausal health e.g. signs, symptoms, what is “normal” and how to stay well. This should be for everyone not just a specific age or gender.

The findings of this work have already contributed to the development of the Women’s Health Strategy and Health Hub for Lincolnshire.

Is maternal mental health working?

In 2019, our research on maternal mental health contributed to the introduction of six-week wellbeing checks for new mothers. In 2022, we came back to the subject of maternal mental health to see if this had led to better access to vital mental health support.

But the experiences of more than 2,600 people showed that despite the introduction of wellbeing checks, not everyone is getting the mental health support they're entitled to. In addition, action might be needed to better protect women's mental health while in hospital.

- 42% of people said their hospital care negatively impacted their mental health.
- 16% of people hadn't had their wellbeing check.
- Only 22% were satisfied with the amount of time their GP spent talking to them about their mental health.

We also heard about long waits for mental health referrals, and the devastating effect this had on new parents.

What difference did this make?

- Our research led to NHS England updating guidance for GPs on six-week postnatal checks, and contributed to guidance for Integrated Care Boards on monitoring checks.
- After we published our research, NHS England released its three-year delivery plan for maternity and neonatal services. The plan addresses several issues that our research highlighted, and outlines how the NHS plans to tackle the issues new mothers and birthing parents experience.

Mental health services were also a priority in the NHS Long Term Plan, which committed to transforming specialist perinatal mental health services.

Maternal mental illness affects 27% of new and expectant mothers. Left untreated, it can have a huge and long-lasting impact on a person and their family's mental health. It's essential to keep listening to those affected, and bring about the changes they need to the maternal mental health journey.



"It wasn't someone sitting down and going, 'How are you sleeping? Is there anything we can help with? Any concerns with your own –' It was just, read a list off a piece of paper. And then 'tick, tick, tick. Okay. See you later.'"

Mother interviewed by Healthwatch Wirral

Three ways we have made a difference in the community

Throughout our work we gather information about health inequalities by speaking to people whose experiences aren't often heard.

Creating empathy by bringing experiences to life

It's important for services to see the bigger picture. Hearing personal experiences and the impact on people's lives provides them with a better understanding of the problems.

We conducted a comprehensive survey to gather feedback around menstrual health work. By sharing these findings with healthcare providers and policymakers, Healthwatch Lincolnshire highlighted the systemic issues and prompted significant changes in women's health delivery, through the ICB's work around Women's Hubs and the Lincolnshire Women's Health strategy.



Getting services to involve the public

Services need to understand the benefits of involving local people to help improve care for everyone.

We undertook an "Enter and View" activity focused on Community Diagnostic Centres (CDCs) and Urgent Treatment Centres (UTCs) to support a Healthwatch England national project. By engaging directly with patients and the public, we gathered valuable insights into the experiences and needs of the community. This feedback was then shared with healthcare providers, leading to improved services and care pathways. For instance, suggestions from the public helped streamline appointment processes and enhance communication between patients and healthcare staff, ensuring a more patient-centric approach.



Improving care over time

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

We have been actively involved in improving NHS dentistry services. Through persistent advocacy and detailed reporting of patient experiences, we highlighted issues in difficulties in finding NHS dentists. We presented at the national Health Select Committee and over time, our efforts have led to increased funding for dental services, through the NHS Dental Recovery Plan.





Hearing from all communities

Over the past year, we have worked hard to make sure we hear from everyone within our local area. We consider it important to reach out to the communities we hear from less frequently to gather their feedback and make sure their voice is heard, and services meet their needs.

This year we have reached different communities:

Veterans and military families

Throughout the year, we have actively participated in numerous events and meetings to support and engage with veterans and military families.

We attended the Lincolnshire Veteran and Families Network Group, which comprises more than 150 organisations across the East Midlands, focusing on collaborative efforts to support veterans and their families. Additionally, we supported the Veteran Support Service CIC by participating in their quarterly open days held in Lincoln, Grantham, Skegness, and Boston in April, July, October 2023, and March 2024. These events were crucial in assisting veterans and their families living with mental health issues and conditions.

We also delivered informal presentations to blind veterans using alternative communication systems, ensuring that visually impaired veterans receive valuable information and support. In December 2023, we joined the wellbeing event at ATC Grantham, engaging with serving military personnel and promoting wellbeing initiatives.

Our involvement in these events underscores our commitment to enhancing the support network for veterans and military families, ensuring they receive the necessary resources and care.

Children and Adults with Learning Difficulties and Physical Disabilities

Throughout the year, we have been actively involved in supporting children and adults with learning difficulties and physical disabilities through various events and meetings.

In Skegness, we collaborated with a local day care service provider to facilitate Speak Out sessions for adults with learning difficulties and their carers. In Boston, we engaged with the Downright Ausome Support Group, which provides mutual support for parents of children with disabilities, including autism, ADHD, and Down's Syndrome.

Our involvement in the Healthy Lifestyle Working Group, facilitated by VoiceAbility, and the Adults and Carers with Learning Difficulties Forums in Skegness, further demonstrates our commitment to these communities.

Additionally, we supported the parent and parent carer group at Tulip Academy in Spalding and the Speak Out Forum at Thistles Market and Garden Centre, which aids adults with learning difficulties. We also held sessions throughout the year with Lincolnshire Sensory Loss groups, providing presentations, talks, and listening clinics.

Our participation in these diverse activities underscores our dedication to improving the lives of individuals with learning difficulties and physical disabilities, ensuring they have access to necessary support and resources.

YourVoice@Healthwatch

In 2023, Healthwatch Lincolnshire continued to host vital information events in Lincolnshire through YourVoice@Healthwatch, providing free opportunities for the public to engage with and learn about specific health and care services. These quarterly events aim to foster dialogue and understanding within the community.

The "What is Social Care?" event on August 7, 2023, was inaugurated by Afsaneh Sabouri, Assistant Director for Adult Frailty and Long-Term Conditions, Adult Care and Community Wellbeing at Lincolnshire County Council. She was accompanied by Chris Eskine, Principal Social Worker and Improvement and Development Lead; Julie Green, Information and Systems Officer; and Lisa Loy, Public Health Programme Manager, all from the Adult Care and Community Wellbeing team at Lincolnshire County Council.

The event featured a marketplace with representation from a variety of organizations, including ACIS Housing Group, Age UK and Connect to Support, BRIC, British Red Cross – Mobility Aids Service, Butterfly Hospice, Carers First, and many others. These organisations provided valuable information and support to attendees, covering a wide range of health and social care topics.

Forward Vision Event

In October 2023, YourVoice@Healthwatch hosted the Forward Vision event with notable guest speakers such as John Turner, Executive of the NHS Lincolnshire Integrated Care Board; Andrew Morgan, Chief Executive of United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust and Lincolnshire Community Health Services NHS Trust; and Sarah Connery, Chief Executive of Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust.

This event was held at Bishop Grosseteste University in Lincoln and included a lecture theatre session with a panel of experts as well as an additional room for stallholders. Attendees had the chance to network, obtain helpful information, and engage with key service providers.

Reflecting on the past, Healthwatch Lincolnshire's 2020 Vision event in 2018 highlighted the healthcare challenges anticipated by 2020. By 2023, the landscape had evolved significantly, notably with the establishment of the Integrated Care System in 2022. Despite ongoing challenges, these events continue to provide crucial platforms for community engagement, information dissemination, and collaborative problem-solving in the ever-changing realm of health and social care.



Healthwatch England Community Diagnostic Centres (CDC) Project

Healthwatch Lincolnshire conducted Enter and View visits to Community Diagnostic Centres (CDCs) and Urgent Treatment Centres (UTCs) as part of a Healthwatch England national project aimed at assessing and improving service quality across the board. During these visits, we gathered direct feedback from patients and staff, which allowed us to identify key issues such as long waiting times, accessibility challenges for disabled and rural patients, and significant communication gaps between healthcare providers and patients.

Our comprehensive findings and detailed recommendations were taken onboard by group providers United Lincolnshire Hospital Trust and Lincolnshire Community Health Service, who responded with a collaborative joint action plan. This dedicated effort has led to significant improvements, including more efficient appointment scheduling systems, enhanced interactions and communication between patients and staff, and better accessibility of facilities for all patients.

As a result, these changes have markedly enhanced the overall patient experience and the quality of care provided at these centres, ensuring that community needs are met more effectively and compassionately.

Enter and View Activities

In 2023, we conducted a comprehensive range of Enter and View activities, with volunteers trained to assess and report on health and social care services.

We delivered Enter and View training to a new cohort of volunteers, including Alison Cadman, Wendy Cottam, Annette Atkinson, Ann Morgan, Maria Bright, Louise Southgate, Steve Gardner, Julie Emmott, Ruth O'Melia, Nash-Smith and Jacqui Sclanders.

Our activities included several key visits and assessments:

- March 2023: We undertook a joint visit with Healthwatch Rutland to the Stamford Urgent Treatment Centre.
- April 2023: We visited Glebe House, a supported unit for adults with mental health issues and learning difficulties in Caistor, with a focus on food and nutrition.
- May 2023: We conducted an informal visit with the Lincolnshire Partnership Foundation Trust to the mental health inpatient rehabilitation unit at Maple Lodge.
- June and July 2023: We carried out mystery shop activities across six Urgent Treatment Centres (UTCs) in Lincolnshire, including those in Boston, Gainsborough, Lincoln, Louth, Skegness, and Spalding, to evaluate service delivery by the Lincolnshire Community Hospital Trust.
- October 2023: We visited Ashridge House Care Home, Belvoir House Care Home, and Newton Care Home to assess the quality of care provided.
- December 2023: We engaged with the Patient Participation Group at Hawthorne Medical Practice in Skegness and planned a listening event for March 2024.
- March 2024: We scheduled a visit to Stonehaven Care Home to further our evaluations of care standards.

These activities reflect our ongoing commitment to monitoring and improving health and social care services across Lincolnshire, ensuring that service users receive the highest standard of care.

Enter and View Activities

This year, we made 14 of Enter and View visits.

Date	Location	Reason for Visit	What Happened Next
April 2023	Glebe House Residential Home, Caistor, Lincolnshire	Supported living unit for adults with mental health and learning difficulties. Focus of visit: food and nutrition. Concerns had been raised around the quality and choice of food on the menu for the residents.	Report published and shared with Adult Social Care Team Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) Positive outcomes were recorded since the Contract Manager for Adult Social Care had visited where concerns had been raised in the previous six months.
May 2023	Maple Lodge Mental Health Rehabilitation Unit, Boston, Lincolnshire (Unit Managed by Lincolnshire Partnership Foundation Trust LPFT)	Joint visit with Patient Experience Manager (LPFT). Unannounced / informal visit to have conversations with service users.	Generated conversations with service users and gained their feedback. Information gathered collated by Patient Experience Manager and reported to LPFT. Healthwatch Lincolnshire recommended: a daily activity programme for service users and an appointment of a dedicated member of staff to coordinate the activities programme to stimulate services users on their road to recovery. To include outside visitors from the community such as therapy dogs, entertainers etc.
June – July 2023	6 x Urgent Treatment Centres (UTC) in Lincolnshire (Boston, Gainsborough, Grantham, Lincoln, Spalding, Skegness)	Mystery Shop visits across all six UTC sites in the county. Healthwatch Lincolnshire has received feedback that Lincolnshire residents are experiencing difficulties in accessing face to face appointments at primary care centres (surgeries) and do not always know what can be treated at an Urgent Treatment Centre (UTC). Patients when contacting NHS 111 are not always given information to present with non-life-threatening illnesses or conditions at the nearest UTC. Many of these patients are being signposted to the nearest Accident and Emergency Department (A+E) inappropriately and with longer waiting times.	Report published and shared with Lincolnshire Community Hospital NHS Trust (LCHS).

Enter and View Activities

Date	Location	Reason for Visit	What Happened Next
October 2023	Ashridge Care Home, Boston Belvoir Residential Care Home, Grantham Newton House, Grantham	3 Care Homes in Lincolnshire: all rated as GOOD by CQC. General engagement with residents. Ashridge Care Home, Boston - Supported living for adults with learning difficulties. Belvoir Residential Care Home, Grantham - Older people, respite care, palliative and end of life care. Newton House, Grantham - Older people, including specialised support for people living with dementia.	Individual reports published for each home.
January 2024	Urgent Treatment Centre (UTC), Skegness Community Diagnostic Centre (CDC), Grantham	Part of the Healthwatch England national project on CDCs.	Healthwatch England Report. Localised Lincolnshire data extracted and report published.
March 2024	Stonehaven Care Home, Spalding CQC Rating: GOOD	General engagement with service users.	Report published and shared with Adult Social Care Team.
March 2024	Hawthorne Medical Centre, Skegness	Listening Clinic Request by Patient Participation Group (PPG) to support the practice to get feedback from patients on the online services on offer at the practice. Healthwatch Lincolnshire Authorised Representatives were supported by a member of the PPG.	Informal report shared with the Practice Manager and PPG. Improve working relationship with practice and PPG.



Advice and information

When you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch Lincolnshire 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 GP practice, how to make a complaint or choosing a good care home for a loved one, you can count on us.

This year we've helped people by:

- Providing up to date information
- Helping people access the services they need
- Helping people with up-to-date information relating to NHS dentistry in Lincolnshire
- Supporting people with concerns raised in hospitals.

Help to find dental care in Lincolnshire

Addressing the urgent need for accessible dental services

In Lincolnshire, access to dental care has become a pressing issue. Healthwatch Lincolnshire received 412 contacts from residents seeking advice and information on dental services last year.

Many of these reports highlighted that dental practices were not accepting new NHS patients, with some having waiting lists extending three years or more. The consequences of these delays are severe, leading to individuals enduring significant pain and worsening dental conditions. Linda, a resident of Lincolnshire, experienced firsthand the impact of this crisis. After having several teeth extracted in November 2022, her follow-up appointments were repeatedly cancelled. This left her with few teeth and an urgent need for new dentures. Linda, who suffers from anxiety and is registered disabled, found her situation increasingly distressing and embarrassing, as her current dentures no longer fit, making it difficult to eat.

"Healthwatch Lincolnshire's advice and information officer spoke with Practice Manager at the request of the patient, who has arranged for impressions to be taken at the end of this week. Patient informed and very grateful to Healthwatch Lincolnshire for getting this arranged."

Linda, Lincolnshire resident

Healthwatch Lincolnshire continues to advocate for improved access to NHS dental services, regularly sharing these concerns with NHS England, the Dental Strategy Board, and the Integrated Care Board. Our commitment to addressing these issues underscores our dedication to the well-being of Lincolnshire residents.

Helping residents access the support they need

Addressing critical vaccination gaps for vulnerable individuals

Barbara, an 86-year-old housebound resident of Lincolnshire, found herself in a challenging situation. Despite being eligible for the spring COVID booster vaccine, she was not offered the vaccine by her GP surgery and was unsure where to turn for assistance. Upon her request, our dedicated Healthwatch Lincolnshire advice and information officer intervened. Our team promptly contacted the appropriate service to ensure Barbara would receive her vaccination. Despite an initial delay caused by the hot weather, which impacted the vaccine's transport conditions, we assured Barbara that she would be vaccinated by July 31st. This commitment was crucial to ensure she could receive her autumn booster on schedule. Our intervention not only provided Barbara with the necessary health protection but also offered her much-needed peace of mind.

"Thank you, Julie. This news is most helpful; it stops me worrying."

Barbara, Lincolnshire resident

We are pleased to report that Barbara has now received her booster vaccine, exemplifying our ongoing commitment to supporting our community's health needs.

Information signposting articles

During 2023–24 year we have shared **30** new information and advice articles on our website, to help people find and access the support they need to live well. Here are the top 10:



1. What is adult social care?

<https://www.healthwatchlincolnshire.co.uk/advice-and-information/2023-03-21/what-adult-social-care>

2. What to expect after a dementia diagnosis

<https://www.healthwatchlincolnshire.co.uk/advice-and-information/2023-05-23/what-should-you-expect-after-dementia-diagnosis>

3. Essential First Aid Kit Supplies for Every Home

<https://www.healthwatchlincolnshire.co.uk/advice-and-information/2023-07-11/essential-first-aid-kit-supplies-every-home>

4. What support can I get as a carer?

<https://www.healthwatchlincolnshire.co.uk/advice-and-information/2023-07-20/what-support-can-i-get-carer>

5. How to get the most out of your GP appointment

<https://www.healthwatchlincolnshire.co.uk/advice-and-information/2023-10-12/how-get-most-out-your-gp-appointment>

6. What is menopause and what are the signs?

<https://www.healthwatchlincolnshire.co.uk/advice-and-information/2022-09-15/what-gp-referral-and-how-can-you-get-one>

7. What is measles and who can get the vaccine?

<https://www.healthwatchlincolnshire.co.uk/advice-and-information/2022-05-24/support-and-treatment-long-covid>

8. What can the Pharmacy First scheme do for me?

<https://www.healthwatchlincolnshire.co.uk/advice-and-information/2024-02-13/what-can-pharmacy-first-scheme-do-me>

9. What the new dental recovery plan means for you?

<https://www.healthwatchlincolnshire.co.uk/advice-and-information/2024-02-21/what-new-dental-recovery-plan-means-you>

10. Can I access my GP records online?

<https://www.healthwatchlincolnshire.co.uk/advice-and-information/2023-12-12/can-i-access-my-gp-records-online>



Volunteering

We're supported by a team of amazing volunteers who are at the heart of what we do. Thanks to their efforts in the community, we have a better understanding of what our residents need.

This year our volunteers:

- Visited community events to promote Lincolnshire Healthwatch and what we have to offer.
- Collected experiences and supported our communities to share their views with us.
- Carried out Enter and View visits to local services to help them improve.
- Visited many Warm Hubs as a targeted area to get a better understanding of their vital role in our community.



“After retirement I wanted and opportunity to use my skills in the health sector. I am Chair of a Diabetes Support Group in Stamford and Rutland. I also assist in research projects throughout the UK with Patient Participation Involvement Groups. I have also been involved with NHS reorganisation and diabetes. I am now looking to form a cancer group in my local town. Joining Healthwatch seemed a natural thing to do. I have helped in the design and content of the Volunteers Handbook previously.”



Keith.
Healthwatch
Lincolnshire
volunteer.



“I am new to Healthwatch, having only joined very recently! It’s amazing to be part of something that aims to gather feedback from the residents of Lincolnshire and to make a difference. I want to gain experience for my future career in health and do something for my community. Learning about the NHS and Social care is interesting, and I hope in some small way that by volunteering with Healthwatch I can help in some small way improve things.”



Charley.
Healthwatch
Lincolnshire
volunteer.

Do you feel inspired?

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



 www.healthwatchlincolnshire.co.uk

 01205 820 892

 Email: enquiries@hwlincs.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.

Our income and expenditure

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from Government	£299,600	Expenditure on pay	£237,872
Additional income	94.50	Non-pay expenditure	£13,923
Donations*	100	Office and management fees	£48,000
Total income	£299,794.50	Total expenditure	£299,795

* Donation was received from A & BP Evans – a thank you for services from Healthwatch

Next steps

Over the next year, our commitment remains steadfast in reaching every corner of society, particularly focusing on those in the most underserved areas.

Central to our efforts will be our dedicated work in:

- Respiratory health
- Neurological health
- Mental health.

By actively engaging with these subjects, our goal is to highlight the specific challenges encountered in these vital areas and advocate for substantial improvements in access to and the quality of healthcare services.

Our pledge is to amplify people’s voices, ensuring that healthcare providers and policymakers prioritise the needs of all individuals, irrespective of their socio-economic circumstances. Together, we strive to bring about meaningful changes that make healthcare more inclusive and responsive to the diverse needs of our society.



Statutory statements

HWLincs is the charity that holds and delivers the Healthwatch Lincolnshire contract on behalf of Lincolnshire County Council.

HWLincs is proud to have held the Healthwatch Lincolnshire Contract since 2013. We have a positive working relationship with LCC, and our contract lead, Patryck Kosmala.

Healthwatch Lincolnshire uses the Healthwatch trademark when undertaking our statutory activities as covered by the licence agreement.

The way we work

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

Our Healthwatch Lincolnshire Steering Group consists of members who work on a voluntary basis to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny to our activities. The steering group ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community. We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities.

The steering group uses insight from information and signposting enquiries as well as other patient experience activities such as surveys and focus groups to inform priority setting.

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 have the opportunity to provide us with insight about their experience of health and care services. During 2023/24 we have been available by phone, email, provided a webform on our website, attended virtual meetings of community groups and forums, provided our own activities and engaged with the public.

We are committed to taking steps to ensure we obtain the views of people from diverse backgrounds who are often not heard by health and care decision makers.

Taking people's experiences to decision-makers


We ensure that people who can make decisions about services hear about the insights and experiences that have been shared with us.

Thank you

Finally, we would like to extend a very big thank you to our volunteers, trustees and employees. Without you all Healthwatch Lincolnshire would not be the excellent organisation that is it.

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