

Board meeting – 15 September 2025

Summary minutes

Date: The Healthwatch Dorset local Board met on Monday 15th September at 10am, at The Dorford Centre, Dorchester

Board members present: Viv Aird (Chair) and Margaret Guy (Vice Chair), Judy Crabb, Amanda Shirlin-Brown and Sue Warr

In attendance: Helen Webb (Evolving Communities), Louise Bate and Adele Snell (Healthwatch Dorset)

Apologies: None.

1. Declaration of interests: There were no declarations of interest

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting: These were agreed

3. Matters arising:

- **Personalised Care Week:** Encompasses 4 days of expert-led webinars exploring how technology is transforming personalized health.
- **Integrated Neighbourhood Teams:** NHS Dorset have been successful in their bid to be a pilot area for Neighbourhood Health funding. The bid included a commitment to working with Healthwatch Dorset. The wave 1 programme is backed by £10 million and will begin on 9 September 2025, with the ambition to scale up more services over the course of the next year. This first wave covers 43 sites across England, including Dorset. The GP Alliance are meeting next week about Neighbourhood Health.
- **Appointments and Resignations:** Patricia Miller, CEO at NHS Dorset, will be stepping down at the end of the month. At her last ICB meeting, she stated "Healthwatch provide a necessary independent voice for patients and their families". Rob Whiteman, current Chair of NHS Dorset, has been appointed Chair of the new ICB cluster for Somerset, Dorset, Bath, Swindon and Wiltshire. Louise Ansari, CEO of Healthwatch England, has been appointed as a non-executive director on the board of NHS England as of 1 September 2025.

- **Embedded Research Student:** Sue reported that she has been allocated an Embedded Research Student with a background in NHS OT who will be looking at the subject of Dementia.
- **Healthwatch Closure Awareness:** Viv and Louise have met with the MP for Poole, who is very concerned about the closure plans and will raise issues and questions on our behalf. Margaret has written to her MP, Lloyd Hatton and is waiting for a response. MPs from all political parties have raised questions in Parliament.

4. Progress Report:

- a) **Homelessness Project Update:** An interview has taken place with the Drug and Alcohol lead at UHD Hospitals, and this will hopefully be published as a blog next month. Also had an interview at Portland Prison and that will also be written up as another blog about Prison Healthcare during Prisons Week in October and hopefully published in the Prison Newspaper.
- b) **Hospital at Home:** The report will be published at the end of this month.
- c) **Experience of 1st and 2nd Generation Immigrants:** This work with Bournemouth schools will be published in October and we are currently working with the students to present their findings to local GPs and the PCN.
- d) **NHS Admin:** Louise has spoken to a couple of PPGs and the GP Assembly about duplicating the survey and has received positive responses.
- e) **Smoking Cessation:** We were successful in our bid to Public Health to run 4 focus groups and gather insights to better understand how men and manual workers view the current smoking cessation offers.
- f) **Weymouth College:** Attended Freshers Fairs at both Weymouth and Kingston Maurward College, making contacts to build a student volunteer team to work with us on the project with DCH.

5. Future of Healthwatch:

Healthwatch Dorset volunteers Gary Alessio, Pamela Grant, Robert Grant-Kensley and Alex Lejeune joined the meeting at this point, along with David Croisdale-Appleby, Chair of Healthwatch England, who led a discussion about the upcoming changes to the Healthwatch Network.

No new legislation until 2026: The government has confirmed that there will be no King's Speech until 2026. No specific date or month has been given. This means no new primary legislation can be tabled, of the kind that would, for example, be needed to abolish Healthwatch and NHS England. The Department of Health and Social Care has given us no details on what that means for the timing of our future.

Funding is secure for the forthcoming year, and Local Authorities are extending contracts as the commissioning process is costly and time-consuming. Keeping up the quality of research that Healthwatch do and accessing the voice of those who are not heard and addressing health inequalities all continue to be important in making the case about the value of the work of local Healthwatch.

An Early Day Motion calling on the government to ditch plans to abolish local Healthwatch has been tabled by Green Party MP Sian Berry. EDMs can be signed by backbench MPs to show their support for a cause, but there is no guarantee they will be debated in the Commons. The same MP also received a written ministerial answer this week, which states that an impact assessment of the decision to end Healthwatch would be published when legislation was introduced in Parliament.

David advised that we should establish a greater involvement with Integrated Care Boards and other local Healthwatch in our cluster.

Viv Aird, Chair of the Board, thanked David and the volunteers for their time today, and the group agreed the date for the next board meeting, Monday 17 November 2025, to be held online.

For further information:

Phone: 0300 111 0102 (freephone)

Email: enquiries@healthwatchdorset.co.uk

Write to: Healthwatch Dorset, The Bridge, Chaseside, BOURNEMOUTH BH7 7BX.

Web: www.healthwatchdorset.co.uk