

Board meeting – 18 May 2026

Summary minutes

Date: The Healthwatch Dorset local Board met on Monday 18 May at 10am, online

Board members present: Viv Aird (Chair), Margaret Guy, Gary Alessio, Judy Crabb and Helen Webb

In attendance: Louise Bate and Adele Snell (Healthwatch Dorset)

Apologies: Amanda Shirlin-Brown and Sue Warr

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

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting: These were agreed

3. Matters arising:

- **Work with MPs and Councillors:**

- Simon Hoare (MP for North Dorset) was promoting an online health survey for his constituents and from that, Louise has made contact and had a very positive meeting.
- Louise is also planning to rearrange a cancelled meeting with Vicky Slade (MP for Mid Dorset and North Poole).
- Gary to contact Edward Morello (MP for West Dorset).
- Lloyd Hatton (MP for South Dorset) is holding a round table discussion about services in Swanage on Friday, which Margaret will be attending.

- **NHS change: ICB Cluster** Local Healthwatch have met and have drafted a letter suitable to send to MP's, which asks for their support and suggests questions that can be raised when the discussion comes up in Parliament in June. *Action: Louise to share to board and get communication out to our MPs later on this week. This response also needs to pick up the crucial role of volunteers. Louise to circulate the Kings Fund report and the response from HWD.*

The ICB Cluster will have one board member representative from local Healthwatch in the area. Kim Sadler (Healthwatch Somerset Manager) will be the representative to the ICB Cluster and there will be pre and post ICB Board meetings to keep all HW in the cluster area informed.

- **NHS Change: Hospital Governance:** The Lead Hospital Governors Group have also been talking to local MPs about the planned changes ahead. Many of the hospital governors are very proactive and going out into the community to get good feedback but it is not always clear how it has been used. Where is the quality feedback going to come from in the future? The ICB is not an independent advocate for patients. How will the Hospital Trusts be held to account?

4. Neighbourhood Healthcare Model: Margaret sent out slides from Sarah Howard, Deputy Director for Place (Dorset) about the “NHS 10 Year Plan and Neighbourhood Health: VCSE Collaboration and Influence”.

What do we mean by neighbourhood health?



- Services designed around people and place, not organisations
- Community-led approaches to care
- Partners working together
- Integration of teams
- More services in community settings
- Preventing illness, not just treating it
- Coordinated & Personalised care
- Measuring success by population health
- **VCSE equal partners in delivery**



Together across NHS Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire, NHS Dorset and NHS Somerset

The voluntary sector are involved in developing how neighbourhood health will work. The Health and Wellbeing Board will be the lead in developing this Neighbourhood Health Plan. Macmillan funding is available that Integrated Neighbourhood teams can use to run projects which demonstrate how this will work. There is a focus on Frailty at a national level but also talking about Women's health and Children's health at a local level.

Key goals for neighbourhood health



- People experience improved health and wellbeing through support and connection where they live.
- People can confidently co-manage their long-term conditions.
- Teams are empowered to work together to tailor health and care with people and communities.
- Strengthen community resilience.
- Value is maximised by shifting funding and resources from hospital to community, and towards proactive, preventative support.

All these goals contribute to reducing the gap in healthy life expectancy between the poorest and richest. Equity is a golden thread that runs through all of these.

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There is concern that it will fall to family and neighbours to actually deliver the care when people are discharged from hospital. The voluntary sector might get involved at this point, but who will fund the voluntary sector and for how long will they be involved? This is a vital role for Healthwatch to deliver in raising awareness for health inequalities and the seldom heard (amplifying the patient voice).

The ICB Cluster will be much more strategic and direct funding, but the Dorset Place Director will be implementing the services and functions at a local level. ICB leadership is getting further away (and more diluted) from where the service is delivered and the patient experience.

Travelling costs around Dorset, where there is no public transport option, relies on very expensive taxis. It might be better if you live in the conurbation but not the vast rural areas that we have in our area.

The system is changing but we need to find our place to amplify the patient voice. *Action: The board meeting on 21 September will be a face-to-face meeting in Dorchester and plan to invite the Place director and find more of a forward focus and reset.*

The Volunteer Centre Dorset are making 2 videos for Healthwatch Dorset, one about young volunteers and one about the breadth of volunteering for us and how we can support and help volunteers. These should be very good legacy documents that we can share with the system. *Action: Louise to follow up the Virtual wards report and see which recommendations have been actioned.*

5. Progress Report:

a) NHS Communication: One of our volunteers, Jackie, has experience in writing up Healthwatch reports and is helping write up our work around NHS communication and the 3 main questions that we gathered last year from a GP surgery in Swanage, feedback from specific communities gathered by Lucy and events in the community and speaking with members of the public.

b) Youth Volunteers: Our youth projects are continuing to cover a range of areas including:

- SEND project at Boys School and have had the opportunity to input the initial findings to the national public consultation. Neil Duncan-Jordan (MP for Poole) and Vicky Slade (MP for Mid Dorset and North Poole) are both interested in SEND and might be keen to see this work.
- Where do young people get their information from, and who do they trust? The group are currently reviewing the data compiled and writing up the first draft of the report.
- Young people's experience of Hospital Services, women's health and breast cancer awareness projects on track.

6. Priorities for 2026/27:

- **Access to Primary Care:** Looking at the GP contract and questions that our volunteers can do from home, looking at GP websites and mapping online info. Feedback noted that GPs are concerned that they may have to send more people down the advice and guidance route, rather than referral. There is also concern about the Single Point of Access Referral Routes and that referrals they make could get bounced back. The Two Week Cancer Wait Pathways are not being effected, so there is concern of these being used more.
- **Women's Health Work for Mid Dorset PCB:** Our bid was successful and will be working on behalf of the Mid Dorset Primary Care Network. There has been quite a lot of work on women's health over the past year, so making sure we are not duplicating existing work and have the key people involved.

6. Any Other Business:

- The Annual Report is underway, and when we have a first draft towards the end of this month, we will send it out to the Board for comment before publishing at the end of June.
- Helen wanted to minute that the Healthwatch Dorset team and volunteers have been amazing in Louise's absence.
- Helen noted that the Dash report is being referred to all the time and the importance of safety, but Healthwatch is about caring and responding – this might also be worth mentioning to the MPs in our discussions. The Social Care element is also not worth forgetting about, and we may need to send the same messages to the local authorities and councillors who will need to pick up the social care element.
- All are invited to the Volunteer's Week Celebration Event on Tuesday 2nd June to Brownsea Island. Please contact Lindsey for more information and to RSVP.
- Healthwatch England Board member training available about organisational change for board members and managers. *Action: Viv to circulate*

Viv Aird, Chair of the Board, thanked everyone for their time today, and the group agreed the date for the next board meeting, Monday 20 July 2026, to be held online.

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