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Healthwatch

Healthwatch is the independent consumer champion that gathers and represents the public's views on health and social care services in England.

Healthwatch England operates on both a national and local level and ensures that the views of the public and people who use the services are taken into account. It is not a regulatory body such as the Care Quality Commission and does not have direct responsibility to change practices. It does, however, have a statutory remit to collate evidence of service shortfalls nationally, and to ensure the regulators, other arms length bodies, and government departments, respond accordingly.

How Healthwatch works

The Healthwatch network is made up of two connected levels:

- | Healthwatch England works at the national level and is helping set up local Healthwatch organisations. The aim is to take local experiences of care and use them to influence national policy.
- | There is a local Healthwatch organisation in every local authority area in England. They will take the experiences people have of local care and use them to help shape local services.

Through the Healthwatch network, Healthwatch England will ensure the voices of people who use health and social care services are heard by the Secretary of State, the Care Quality Commission, Monitor, and every Local Authority in England. Healthwatch England provides leadership, support and advice to local Healthwatch organisations so they can become strong ambassadors for local people. They will gather and analyse information provided by local Healthwatch organisations and others to identify key issues and trends.

You can find more details in the [Healthwatch England FAQ](#).

Local Healthwatch

Local Healthwatch organisations will:

- | have the power to enter and view services
- | influence how services are set up and commissioned by having a seat on the local health and wellbeing board
- | produce reports which influence the way services are designed and delivered
- | provide information, advice and support about local services
- | pass information and recommendations to Healthwatch England and the Care Quality Commission

[Find your local Healthwatch organisation](#)

How does local Healthwatch differ from LINKs?

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Local Healthwatch organisations have taken over the work previously done by the Local Involvement Networks (LINKs), but will have additional functions. Until then, LINKs will continue to operate as usual. Many of the strengths of LINKs will apply just as much to local Healthwatch organisations, however, there are a number of key differences between the two organisations:

- | LINKs only had a remit for adult health and social care services. Local Healthwatch is responsible for capturing the health and social care users' voices of adults and children; a crucial difference reflecting the ongoing need for the views of all users to be taken into account.
- | Local Healthwatch has a statutory place on their local health and wellbeing boards for the first time.
- | A national network will be put in place to support the development of local Healthwatch organisations, from their start-up to being fully functional.
- | The local Healthwatch can reach an opinion on the local service and how they can be improved.
- | Local Healthwatch will signpost patients to services where there is good practice and a strong reputation.
- | Local Healthwatch can feed those views and any recommendations to Healthwatch England to action at a national level.

For more information visit the [Healthwatch England website](#).

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