

Pass it on...

Please forward this ebulletin to your friends, family and colleagues.

Healthwatch Harrow is the health and social care champion for local residents.

Join now and get involved!



Picture: The view from Northwick Park

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... plus more!

➔ New Survey on Access to GP Services

The way we access local primary care services, such as GPs is evolving all the time. In recent years there has been a large shift towards remote services, with patients now booking online, and typically receiving their initial consultation (triage) through phone or video call.



Tell us about your experiences

Traditional methods, such as booking through the phone or in-person are on the decline, and this will affect certain groups with a support need – such as older people or those with a sensory disability.

Being able to see a GP of choice, or a GP at all, is also a recent challenge for some patients. Those with long-term, quite often complex needs value the continuity of seeing the same person, and often prefer a face-to-face relationship.

With all this change we have launched a brand new survey on access.

As well as acquiring recent views and experiences, we will compare findings with two previous surveys, to see what has changed over the years locally in Harrow.

The survey closes on 31st March, and is available now on the website (paper copies on request). ➔ [More](#)

➔ Volunteer with Healthwatch Harrow!

New volunteer Milan Korea writes “I joined as a Healthwatch volunteer towards the end of last year. So far, I have enjoyed my time, I have attended a few events and meetings and have gained more skills and experiences. I look forward to continuing to improve those skills.”

A broad range of volunteering opportunities is available. Find out more today. ➔ [More](#)

➔ Community Healthcare, Forum Findings

On 9th October 2025, Healthwatch Harrow hosted a forum event, bringing together 80 residents & local health experts to discuss how to make eye, ear and dental care more accessible within the community.

On ophthalmology (eye health), we heard that maintaining healthy vision involves eating sufficient fruits and vegetables. It is recommended to follow the ‘20 : 20 : 20’ rule for screen breaks, and wearing of UV-protective sunglasses.

Opticians can provide annual eye test reminders. The eye tests can help detect broader health issues such as diabetes and dementia.



We hold regular community (forum) events

On audiology (hearing care), screening from the age of 50 (or sooner) is recommended. Free NHS ear wax removal is now limited due to funding changes, with self-care or pharmacy options advised first, though referrals may be possible for medical issues.

And on dentistry (oral health), we heard that avoiding regular dental visits can lead to irreversible damage and serious health implications, such as mouth cancer and gum disease which may lead to heart problems and conditions like diabetes.

While a basic scale and polish is included in an NHS check-up, a hygienist is needed for more advanced cleaning.

Our full report (available soon) contains more useful information, plus feedback from local residents.

“I want to be involved in decisions about me.”

Join us today and have your say!

➤ New Interim CEO for Integrated Care Board

The local NHS writes "Following an appointments process, Katie Fisher has been appointed as the new interim Chief Executive Officer for North Central, and North West London Integrated Care Board (ICB).

This will follow Frances O'Callaghan's departure.

Katie will join the organisations on a nine-month secondment from her current role.

She will oversee the launch of West and North London ICB, which will come into effect from 1st April. It will be the largest ICB in England, commissioning services for 4.5 million Londoners across 13 boroughs.



Interim CEO, Katie Fisher

Katie brings with her a wealth of experience which will help support and guide the organisations during this important period.

A nurse by background, Katie has more than two decades of senior leadership experience. Her previous roles include being Chief Executive Officer at Ashford and St Peter's Hospitals, and at West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust.

Mike Bell, Chair of North Central and North West London Integrated Care Boards, said 'I am delighted that we will have the benefit of Katie's experience and leadership to take us through this important phase for North Central and North West London, and the launch of the West and North London Integrated Care Board from April.'" ➤ [More](#)

“Popping to the chemist did the trick!”

Join us today and have your say!

➤ Autism and Learning Disability - Strategy Event

Harrow Council writes "The Harrow Strategic Commissioning Team is refreshing and updating the Learning Disability and Autism Strategy, and in partnership with Public Health, is compiling an updated Needs Assessment to better understand and respond to the needs of Harrow residents, which may have developed and changed over the last few years.



Hearing from residents, families and services

To hear directly from residents, their families and professionals across health, social care and the independent sector, we are hosting an event:

When? Wednesday 25th February, 12.30pm - 3.30pm.
Where: St Peter's Church, Sumner Road, HA1 4BX.

We would like you and the residents you work with to attend, to contribute to the refreshed strategy, by telling us about what's working well and what's missing". Book your place now, online. ➤ [More](#)

“Lots of activities here for residents.”

Join us today and have your say!

➤ Emergency Dental Care Through NHS 111

It's important to access emergency dental care when you need it. NHS 111 can advise you where you can get seen and, in appropriate cases, organise an appointment, which might be at a different practice from your regular NHS dentist but usually nearby.

If you have a regular dentist, contact your practice first. If you don't, or you need advice out of hours, 111.nhs.uk is here for you. ➤ [More](#)

➔ Become an NHS App Ambassador

The local NHS writes “The NHS App is making it easier than ever for patients to manage their health, from booking GP appointments and ordering prescriptions to viewing test results and records.

The NHS App Ambassador programme is inviting NHS staff and community members in North West London to spread the word.

Ambassadors play a simple but important role - helping people discover the app, showing them how to use it and supporting those who may find digital tools challenging. Whether you're a GP receptionist, pharmacist, volunteer or community leader, you can make a difference.



Could you be an app ambassador?

As an ambassador, you'll get access to training, resources, and a supportive network across the country - plus the chance to develop your skills while supporting better patient care.

“The phone is engaged constantly!”

Join us today and have your say!

The NHS App is helping patients take control of their health and saving practices valuable time. By becoming an ambassador, you can be part of that change in your own community.” ➔ [More](#)

About the NHS App...

The NHS App gives you a simple and secure way to access a range of NHS services. Download the NHS App on your smartphone or tablet via the Google play or App store. ➔ [More](#)

➔ Expansion of Local Child Health Hubs

The local NHS writes “Children and families across North West London will benefit from an expansion of Child Health Hubs, supporting earlier access to care, reducing avoidable hospital visits and helping more children receive the care they need close to home.

The number of regional Child Health Hubs will grow from 24 to 45, providing a hub in every local GP network (Primary Care Network) by 2027 ensuring equitable coverage across our eight boroughs.



Access to 'regular clinics and sessions'

Working with GP practices and hospital partners, the hubs create multidisciplinary teams for children to provide timely access to specialist advice and coordinated support in community settings.

They bring together GPs, paediatricians, & specialist teams through regular clinics and sessions, ensuring children receive the right care at the right time and reducing the need for outpatient appointments, A&E visits, and hospital admissions.

Building on the success of the existing Child Health Hubs, the expansion will create a more consistent and equitable model of care across North West London. Each local area will have its own hub, helping ensure all children and families can access high-quality community-based services. The model will continue to adapt to local needs, with additional support available in areas with larger populations or higher demand.”

Read more now in the full article. ➔ [More](#)

“Good communication on the ward is vital.”

Join us today and have your say!

➔ The Crisis Facing A&E Departments

Healthwatch England writes "There were more than 2.3 million A&E visits during December 2025, with more than 400,000 people admitted to hospital. Resident doctors were also on strike for five days in December, putting hospitals under even greater pressure than usual.

Of those admitted to hospital as emergencies, one in four people waited over four hours between admission and staff finding them a bed. One in ten waited over 12 hours.



'Corridor care' is widely reported

To understand people's winter A&E experiences, we reviewed our feedback on urgent and emergency care from December 2025, focusing on older people.

Older and/or frail patients are at greater risk of harm under corridor care, such as falls, dehydration and delirium, according to a Health Services Safety Investigation Body report published recently.

What did we learn about A&E care? Many people who shared their experiences had to wait and/or receive care in corridors or other temporary areas because beds were unavailable. Some were left there for over 24 hours.

For some, waiting in A&E corridors proved too much to bear, and they self-discharged without treatment or admission. One person who waited with their elderly mother in a corridor overnight, and eventually self-discharged, said the experience left her traumatised.

“We can't praise our key worker enough.”

Join us today and have your say!

People described a mix of emotions, including fear, anxiety and embarrassment at being left in corridors alone in suboptimal conditions.

A patient says 'Staff were very good but I spent 24 hours in a corridor with no privacy, limited access to a toilet, leaving me to feel embarrassed, anxious and absolutely horrified to be left like this at nearly 82 years of age. Nobody should be so degraded whilst being so vulnerable and feeling so ill.'

Waiting alongside very vulnerable patients, some of whom were suffering from mental health crises and/or drug and alcohol dependence, was especially difficult for older people. One person told us that the person next to them in the corridor had died while they were waiting.



A tenth of patients waited over 12 hours

We heard reports from people who were left unattended and without proper pain management.

“I have to wait 2 weeks to see my GP.”

Join us today and have your say!

One 96-year-old man was left on a trolley in the ambulance receiving area for 22 hours, resulting in bedsores. Another person said they were left sitting in a chair in a corridor for 15 hours, and left when they started feeling breathless, as they felt they would be better cared for at home.

One of the most frequent complaints we heard was how uncomfortable people's waits were - from long waits in uncomfortable seats to more serious cases of waiting in severe pain without pain relief." [➔ More](#)

➔ Adult Out-of-Hours Mental Health Crisis Service

Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust (CNWL) writes “We’ve started a new overnight Mental Health Crisis Response Team for adults in Kensington, Chelsea, Westminster, Brent, Harrow and Hillingdon.



Get emergency help, out of hours

The team operates every night from 8pm to 8.30am, offering community support to help individuals return home safely from emergency departments if they require ongoing mental health crisis care.

Referrals will be taken from our Single Point of Access (SPA) as well as local Home Treatment and Psychiatric Liaison teams.

For London boroughs, phone us on 0800 0234 650, or email cnw-tr.spa@nhs.net.

If you or the person you are calling about is already receiving care from one of our mental health teams (between the hours of 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday) we encourage you to call the team that looks after you”. Learn more about the service now on the official website. [➔ More](#)

➔ Cervical Cancer Prevention Week

This year, Cervical Cancer Prevention Week was 19th - 25th January. It raised awareness of how cervical cancer can be prevented and the importance of attending cervical screening when invited.

Cervical cancer is almost wholly preventable, and the government and NHS England have launched their plan to eliminate it by 2040, with targets of 9 in 10 girls vaccinated and 7 in 10 women screened.

People aged 25 - 64 are encouraged to book, attend, or catch up on missed tests. [➔ More](#)

➔ Consultation on Mount Vernon Cancer Centre

NHS England writes “Cancer services must evolve to provide the best care. Mount Vernon Cancer Centre (MVCC) faces challenges that threaten its future. Without changes, it may not be able to continue offering specialist cancer treatment.

Cancer care should be accessible to all, regardless of where they live or their personal circumstances. Access to treatment and the outcome for patients in our area varies considerably. We want to change that.

This consultation relates to specialised non-surgical cancer services provided for adults in Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, North London, East Berkshire and parts of Buckinghamshire.



Hospital sites offer more services

It seeks your views on proposed changes to ensure sustainable, high-quality care and improve access for our patients.

These changes would see the cancer centre moved to a new building on a main hospital site where it would have access to medical support that isn't currently available. There would also be more services in local hospitals. Staying as it is, is not an option. Your feedback will shape the future of cancer treatment in your area.

To get involved, complete the survey or register to attend one of our events. The consultation ends on Sunday 29th March 2026.” [➔ More](#)

“Booking online is much more convenient.”

Join us today and have your say!

➔ First Procedure Wearing Exoskeleton Performed!

London North West University Healthcare NHS Trust (LNWH) writes "A surgeon at St Mark's National Bowel Hospital has been fitted with an exoskeleton designed to help reduce strain and combat muscular fatigue during long hours in the operating theatre.

Kapil Sahnan, a colorectal surgeon, was the first to wear the device during a seven-hour procedure. The exoskeleton suit is worn over scrubs & designed to support the arms and shoulders when surgeons are operating for prolonged periods of time.



Innovation leads to better outcomes

Kapil said 'Surgery can be physically demanding, especially during longer procedures, which can last many hours and being hunched over an operating table is not great for your posture. This is a welcome piece of kit for surgeons'.

The lightweight exoskeleton, which comprises of adjustable back, shoulder and arm straps, supports the wearer's musculoskeletal structure & maintains freedom of movement without restriction." [➔ More](#)

Your Feedback on Outpatient Services?

The Patient Experience Team writes "We have launched a survey, to understand the challenges patients experience within outpatients at LNWH and gather information on what an excellent outpatient service would look like. Please take a moment to give your feedback." [➔ More](#)

“Weekend opening helps as I work long hours.”

Join us today and have your say!

➔ Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

London North West University Healthcare NHS Trust (LNWH) writes "PALS help patients, relatives and visitors to the Trust who may need information, advice or wish to make a comment about any aspect of the services we provide.



Write, phone or visit on-site!

PALS listen to concerns about any issue to do with services provided in our hospitals, and escalate these to the appropriate staff and teams as either feedback or for resolution.

They signpost enquirers to the correct service if they are unsure who to speak to, and help with appointment queries, particularly where patients or relatives are having difficulty contacting the appropriate staff.

“I need to be recognised as a carer.”

Join us today and have your say!

They also give advice on how to submit a formal complaint, and supply information on advocacy services that are available to patients and their relatives.

Our PALS team are available between 9.30am and 4.30pm Monday to Friday.

We have an office where you can speak to someone in person at our Northwick Park and Ealing Hospital sites". Drop in or get in touch. [➔ More](#)

☎ 020 8967 5653 (Ealing) 020 8869 5118 (NPH)

✉ LNWH-tr.PALS@nhs.net

➤ Introducing 'WorkWell'

The NHS writes "We welcome the announcement that WorkWell, a scheme piloted locally, providing support to help people get into, and stay in, work, will be launched nationally, along with confirmed local funding for it to continue.

WorkWell is a voluntary service, jointly sponsored by the Department for Work and Pensions and the Department of Health and Social Care.



Get tailored, local support

It is designed to offer optional support to disabled people, or people with health conditions, who would like to stay at work, are planning to return to work after an absence, or who are looking for a new job.

The service offers support to people aged 16 or older who live in (or are registered with a GP within) 13 boroughs in North West and North Central London. It's delivered through a partnership including local NHS trusts, GPs, local authorities, Jobcentre Plus, and a delivery partner - charity, The Shaw Trust.

Since its launch in October 2024, WorkWell has supported over 6,400 disabled people and/or people with health conditions across North West and North Central London to find, remain in, or return to work after a period of absence.

Referrals are possible from a number of routes, including self-referral, via their GP, or Jobcentre Plus (the three most frequently used). The coach supports the participant to develop a personalised work and health plan." [➤ More](#)

“Medication delay at Discharge.”

Join us today and have your say!

➤ Adult Social Care Waiting Times to be Published

Department of Health and Social Care statistics will track how long it takes councils on average to respond to a request for support, and to provide a service, and will be published in early 2026-27.

The statistics will track how long people wait, on average, in each area for their council to respond to a request for support, as well as the average duration between a request and the provision of a service.

Figures will be drawn from client level data, the system through which all 153 English councils submit quarterly data, and will be classed as "experimental statistics", meaning they are being tested.



All 153 councils will be included

The department announced the move as part of a policy paper setting out adult social care priorities for councils in 2026-27.

“Physiotherapy helps me stay independent.”

Join us today and have your say!

Integrating health and social care...

Regarding health and social care integration, the department called on councils to co-develop neighbourhood health plans with the NHS and other relevant partners, including agreeing use of the Better Care Fund (BCF) for this purpose.

Authorities should develop multidisciplinary teams for people with more complex health and care needs, with personalised care planning, integrated care records and safe and appropriate delegation of healthcare activities to care professionals. [➤ More](#)

➔ Think Pharmacy First!

Pharmacists can offer advice on a range of illnesses, such as coughs, colds, sore throats, ear infections and aches and pains.

They can also give advice about medicines.

This includes how to use your medicine, worries about side effects or any other questions you have.

Most pharmacies can offer prescription medicine for some conditions, without you needing to see a GP, this is known as 'Pharmacy First'.



What can your pharmacist do for you?

Ask a pharmacist to find out what they can offer. You can also read more online. ➔ [More](#)

Latest Newsletters

- ➔ Harrow Council - Harrow People Newsletters ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ Harrow Carers - Newsletters and Bulletins ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital - Articulate Newsletters ➔ [More](#)

News Summary

- ➔ The latest news from London North West University Healthcare NHS Trust ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ The latest news from Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ The latest from NHS North West London ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ Adult Community Specialist Palliative Care in North West London update ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ NHS to offer thousands of men life-extending prostate cancer drug ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ Quarter of councils not confident of meeting legal duties next year due to financial strain ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ NHS staff to train teachers, school nurses, and GPs to spot eating disorders ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ Occupational Therapists report increasing demand and struggle to meet needs ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ Hospitals still under pressure with another cold snap and norovirus rise ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ Feature - The Mental Health Act 2025 summarised ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ Age UK says we must do more as a country to tackle poverty in later life ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ Age UK response to the introduction of mandatory eye tests for drivers over 70 ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ NHS to detect and prevent thousands more bowel cancers with more sensitive screening ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ Council adult social care waiting times to be published ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ NHS launches trailblazing AI and robot pilot to spot lung cancer sooner ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ The Mental Health Act 2025: what it means for you ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ NHS services tackling winter head on ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ Adult social care 'fair pay' agreements to go ahead as Employment Rights Act becomes law ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ Early NHS preparation 'paying off' amid shorter ambulance handover times ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ Councils face adult social care assessments every 3 to 4 years under CQC plan ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ NHS waiting list lowest in almost 3 years as NHS battled busiest winter on record ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ Menopause and prostate conditions prioritised for NHS's new online hospital ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ Thousands recruited for "new era" severe mental illness study ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ NHS backs AI notetaking to free up more face-to-face care ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ Social care practitioners to form part of neighbourhood health teams ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ Hundreds of thousands of young children now to be protected against chickenpox ➔ [More](#)
- ➔ Diabetes prevention scheme helps one million people ➔ [More](#)

HOW ARE YOU?

In our adult years, the lifestyle choices we make can dramatically increase our chances of becoming ill later in life.

Making small changes now can improve your health right away and double your chances of staying healthy as you get older. It's never too late to start.

Talk to your doctor or nurse about your health today.

BECAUSE THERE'S ONLY
ONE YOU