

Report to the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

April 2026

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1. Healthwatch Oxfordshire reports to external bodies

For all external bodies we attend our reports can be found online at:

www.healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk/reports-to-committees

We attend and report to Health and Wellbeing Board (Mar 2026) and Health Improvement Board (Feb 2026).

We also attend Children's Trust Board, Oxfordshire Place Based Partnership, Oxfordshire Adult Safeguarding Board and Oxfordshire Neighbourhood Health and Marmot Oxfordshire, Military Civilian Partnership meetings. We bring insight into committees at Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB) level (now Thames Valley Integrated Care Board). We collaborate with the Healthwatch at Place across the ICB to share what we are hearing.

We published two letters: <https://healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk/correspondence>

- Healthwatch Oxfordshire response to Local Government Reorganisation in Oxfordshire (Government consultation)
- Thames Valley Healthwatch joint response to Thames Valley Integrated Care Board Operating Model 2026-7.

2. Update since the last Health Overview Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) Meeting Jan 2026

Healthwatch Oxfordshire reports

All this years' reports, along with summaries, and responses from providers and commissioners, to date can be seen here:

www.healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk/reports-hub

- **“Your feedback about Cora Health – January 2025 to January 2026”**
Summarises what we have heard about Cora Health from 90 people via our Feedback Centre, information and advice service, and through face-to-face outreach around the county. We heard some positive feedback about timely and effective care. However, unfortunately most people told us about challenges experienced in getting support from Cora Health, including poor communication, unclear information, trouble making convenient appointments, long waits, cancelled appointments and problems with referrals. We have made a series of recommendations for improvements

based on what we have heard and people's suggestions, and received responses from BOB ICB and Cora Health

- **Community research:**

“What we heard about cancer and access to healthcare” – community research with Sunrise Multicultural Centre, who wanted to understand the experiences of some of the communities they support in Banbury Neithrop and Ruscote, especially South Asian women. Including what barriers people face to getting a timely diagnosis and what would support people to find and get help.

Snapshot reports on:

- **Men in Faringdon** – as part of the 30 Chats in 30 Days initiative.
- **What you told us about mental health services** – summary of themes from feedback from over 100 people (see below).

All reports are available in **easy read**, and word format. We follow up responses to recommendations again after six months.

To read more about the **impact** of all our work and reports, and how we make a difference along with commissioner and provider responses and agreed actions, see here: www.healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk/our-impact

See a snapshot of our work in March <https://healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk/latest-news/2026/04/a-snapshot-of-our-work-in-march>

We have also continued to support **community research** with grassroots communities, including:

- **Black Women in Maternity** group in Oxford to carry out research and feed into the national Amos Review
- **Chinese Community** views of elders.
- Contributing to Oxfordshire Community Research Network (OCRN)
- Final design of Community Research ‘how to guide’ developed with community members from grassroots groups (Publication shortly).

Enter and View Visits

We have statutory powers under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to make **Enter and View** visits to publicly funded local health and social care services. The aim of these visits is to identify what works well and what could be improved to make

people's experiences better. Since the last meeting we made Enter and View visits to the following services:

- Katharine House Hospice
- Ashurst Ward – Psychiatric Intensive Care Unit – Littlemore Hospital.

We published **Enter and View reports** based on our observations from visits to the following services:

- St Leonard's Ward – Wallingford Community Hospital.

All published Enter and View reports with recommendations to, and responses and actions from providers are available here:

www.healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk/enter-and-view-reports

Healthwatch Oxfordshire Webinars

Since the last meeting we held one public webinar: To see our webinar programme, zoom links and **recordings of all past webinars:**

www.healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk/our-webinars

- **Tuesday 17th March 2026**, on Oxfordshire's work on addressing health inequalities, as a 'Marmot Place' with speakers representing some of the work with communities taking place attended by 58 people
- **Our next webinar is on Tuesday April 14th 1-2 p.m. giving people a chance to feed into Oxford Health strategy 2026-31.** All welcome. Joining details on our website.

Forthcoming reports include:

- A focus on hearing from people about views on **end of life care**, www.healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk/have-your-say/complete-a-survey with an online survey supplemented by focused outreach. Working alongside Oxfordshire Palliative Care network and others
- Rural insights from 14 **rural areas** (Deddington, Cropredy, Heyford, Yarnton, Chipping Norton, Charlbury, Long Hanborough, Freeland, Chalgrove, Sonning Common, Faringdon, Stanford in the Vale, Shrivenham and Watchfield) for Oxfordshire County Council as part of the Marmot focus on health inequalities. We worked in partnership with Community First Oxfordshire and ran a survey outreach and focus groups. A final draft report will be presented to public health in June

- Summary of what we have heard about **GP services** – for HOSC working group.

Note: Publication of some reports will be after May 7th due to **Purdah guidance** from Healthwatch England on local elections.

3. What we are hearing from the public

Along with our themed research above, we hear from members of the public via phone, email, our advice and signposting, and online feedback on services (for reviews and to leave a review. see www.healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk/services).

We also hold conversations when out and about on the street, in community settings, at hospital stands, with patient and VCS groups and services, and events like Oxford Eid Extravaganza. This enables us to raise what we are hearing, including emerging themes, with health and care providers and commissioners.

Ongoing themes

We continue to pick up on more general themes including dentistry access, GP access and waiting times, communication and admin challenges. We continue to support people in understanding the changing landscape of the Integrated Care Board and health service planning

<https://healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk/understanding-health-and-care>

We hear from people who are navigating complaints and feedback to ICB and providers – often facing delayed responses, and with all the changes taking place, remain concerned that issues are being managed in a timely way, and lessons learned.

Mental Health Services

We visited a range of services to hear about mental health services, including Keystone Hubs in Banbury, Chipping Norton, Abingdon, spoke to men in Faringdon, and outreach at community settings. We also visited Memory Clinics to speak to people about dementia services and support. We also heard about mental health in our rural engagement, and end of life insight gathering.

Feedback on support for Dementia:

- Importance of community groups and support such as choirs, coffee mornings

- Support for carers. Difficulty accessing and affording respite care
- Confusion around different dementia services and support pathways
- Sense that services are helpful but there's only so much they can do

"A volunteer comes once a month and takes her to the market which is wonderful because it gives her other company, she doesn't have to just be with me all the time. A paid carer has a different energy. It would be great to have more volunteers, even just to have coffee."

"One of the problems with dementia care is that you're entirely on your own. There's a need for a single point of contact. Because I'm a nerd, I'd be the one saying to the group, "If you need help with this thing, you need to speak to this person, this is the phone number..." The argument is always, "we will support you", but what they actually mean is, "We'll give you a list of websites and phone numbers". You can google 'memory café' – but it doesn't get you away from the care – it's support, but not relief"

"In terms of actual support, there were craft groups in the village who would look after her for an hour or two while I did the shopping. And Shared Lives could take her for a weekend – before x got that bad, I could book a weekend once a month with them. Support means being relieved of responsibility. But respite care was difficult to find, and expensive."

"I get confused by all the agencies. We recently had a carers assessment which was very useful – we don't qualify for government money but they had good advice."

"She was discharged from the memory clinic – they were very helpful but for now there's not much they can continue. Then they referred her to Occupational Therapist and physio – it feels like help would be there if we needed it but there's not been any major need."

What you told us about using mental health services

In 2025 we heard from more than 100 people about their experiences of seeking support for their mental health. People contacted us by phone, email, our online Feedback Centre, and spoke to us when we were out and about.

We also visited the Keystone Hubs across the county, and carried out two Enter and View visits to Littlemore and Warneford Hospitals. People we spoke to had experience of a range of services, including Talking Therapies, CAMHS, Adult Mental Health Teams, Keystone Hubs and voluntary sector support like MIND, Restore and the Samaritans.

We will publish a longer report about what people told us, but here is a summary of some of the themes we heard, which include:

Helpful and compassionate help when people found the right support for them...

There should be more understanding about mental health services - to really understand what the patient is going through. I was passed around in adult mental services which made me very ill as they could not understand my mental health needs. Keystone Hub in Banbury were fantastic and offered the support and care I needed to make my mental health better.

Used a bereavement service in Talking Therapies, a six-week course which was online and was really helpful.

People who listened and validated my experiences... Making friends who understand mental health issues.

I really enjoy coming to the art class at the Keystone Hub. It gives me something to look forward to. It's just nice to know that I have someone to air my problems with and to receive good advice.

Challenges and long waiting times in finding support...

Very difficult to get mental health support for one of my cared for family.

Mental health services are overwhelmed and unable to respond affectively to anything but the most severe cases.

Waiting lists for treatment after mental health diagnosis is far too long.

CAMHS support while waiting - it's hard to get the right provision at the right time.

Some told us about the things that support mental wellbeing, including exercise, being with friends and family, hobbies and connecting with nature...

We also heard about things that cause stress and affect people's mental wellbeing, including accessing a GP as first point, impact of poor health, loneliness and isolation, rural access challenges, money and work worries, and wider national and global uncertainty...

Walking the dog gives me a purpose to get out which does my mental health good as I suffer from anxiety.

Faith, friends and family

Activities, hobbies, connecting with others, nature walks, and star gazing.

Decreasing physical health reduces ability to exercise - knock-on effect on mental health.

Work, cost of living, rising crime... I feel scared walking around Oxford.

Some people told us about the need for more culturally appropriate, accessible and tailored support:

More Asian agencies to help people who struggle with mental health.

Better access to mental health services for teenagers and young people.

Nothing for men... especially around mental health, trying to find things for my generation, especially when retired, is difficult, especially mental health.

For information and support

- See the **Live Well Oxfordshire** website <https://livewell.oxfordshire.gov.uk> for details of organisations and activities to help you stay healthy and well
- See the Oxford Health website <https://oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/support-advice/what-to-do-in-an-emergency> for details of mental health support in an emergency, including contacting **NHS 111** to access the 24/7 Mental Health Helpline
- The **Oxfordshire Mind** website www.oxfordshiremind.org.uk also gives details of local support and services, including the Oxfordshire Mind Guide

Please get in touch with us if you have a question about local health services or would like to tell us about your experience of using a service.

You can call us on **01865 520520** or email hello@healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk

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HEARING FROM MEN IN FARINGDON

In November 2025, we held short, meaningful conversations with men in support of the Oxfordshire Men's Health Partnership's annual 30 Chats in 30 Days Initiative.

Men's health is a growing area of focus for health and care services, recognising that men have a shorter life expectancy than women, and are more likely to die prematurely from coronary heart disease or by suicide. Men, especially those of working age, are less likely than women to seek help with their physical and mental health, and are often 'seldom heard' by services.

This year, we visited Faringdon, where we had conversations on the street with 30 men, including local residents, those who work in Faringdon or were visiting to use local services. We asked:

- What helps them to be healthy and well and what makes this hard
- What their experiences of using health and care services is like
- What would make a difference to support men to be healthy

"It's really important that men talk more about mental health and wellbeing"

What men told us

What helps you stay healthy and well?

- ✓ Keeping active and spending time outdoors – including gardening or walks in the countryside with a dog or a walking group
- ✓ Trying to eat well – with support from initiatives like Slimming World
- ✓ Spending time with family and friends and trying to reduce 'screen time'
- ✓ Helpful and kind health and care professionals, and effective services



Faringdon's a nice place to live and there are nice areas around.

I do a lot of keep fit and do this with other people - sometimes I help to signpost people who haven't got computers to activities they would like to do but don't know about. I find the information for them.

The NHS have done me a lot of favours lately - I'd had joint pain for several months, but an injection put me back on the straight. I'm glad it worked because they don't work for everyone. My lovely boss said, "You need to sort it out," and signed me off for a few weeks. Then the GP practice did all the health checks on me - they sorted me out, blood pressure and cholesterol.

What makes it hard to stay healthy and well?

- ✗ Work and family pressures
- ✗ Struggles with digital technology
- ✗ Cost of living – such as rent, exercise classes and healthy food
- ✗ Decline of local amenities and services, reducing opportunities to socialise and access to health and care services such as podiatry
- ✗ Lack of transport to bigger towns and cities, including to attend healthcare appointments
- ✗ Difficulty making a GP appointment
- ✗ Long waits at local pharmacies
- ✗ A lack of NHS dentists in the area
- ✗ Stigma and stereotypes around seeking help

A lot of people in Faringdon are struggling, you can judge by the size of the food bank (at council office), and Faringdon larder as well...

Men have a large element of stiff upper lip, and you don't want to show weakness...

It is very difficult to see the doctors at White Horse Medical Practice. They should have more appointments.

Getting to the JR is a nightmare, it's two buses and takes about two hours... not great if you are not feeling well.

I have to have a significant thing wrong with me before I go, as I think am I wasting the doctor's time?

There were 15 pubs, but now only three that work really, you don't have to drink to use them, but it's a good place to meet friends and positive for mental health.

What would support you to stay healthy and well?

- ✓ An environmental and gardening space for people of all ages
- ✓ Keep fit sessions in community spaces
- ✓ More activities for young people
- ✓ Better information about help, support and activities – including for those who are not online
- ✓ PSA tests or better screening for cancer in men

They do need to make more people aware of what is out there... the social prescriber goes to the community café every six weeks, but you often only hear about things if you are proactive...

My advice is to try and connect with others and if not try and set something up yourself...

Before COVID I used to play walking football, but when COVID came it all stopped and hasn't ever got going again. Would be good if there were more activities like that for people to do. People tell you to go to the gym but the weight I am I could hurt myself, I might go if there if there was someone there to talk me through what I could do and how to things without hurting myself.

Perhaps the council could organise some sessions in a village hall for keep fit, nothing involving heavy weights just some circuits or similar - would be an opportunity to get out and to meet people. Would have to be at a minimal cost or even free to be able to afford it.

We will share what we heard with key health service providers, commissioners and decision-makers in Oxfordshire.

Many thanks to the men in Faringdon who shared their experiences with us

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South Central Ambulance Services:

Some feedback comments received via our advice and signposting on calling NHS 111.

"After waiting for hours to be called back I called to let them know my symptoms are worsening. Had the rudest, most dismissive man on the phone who bullied me while I was feeling very vulnerable. He asked me the same question over and over again ... He made an already terrible situation much worse and left me in tears having still not accessed medical help. He literally had zero compassion or empathy and shouldn't be allowed to deal with sick and vulnerable people."

"Husband was really unwell; he was given a choice whether to go to hospital or not. Was phrased in a "we can take you, but you'll probably be okay at home". He ended up in ICU three days later!"

"Absolutely abysmal service. I was deep in crisis, crying after self-harm, in complete despair and hadn't slept for 2 nights. I speak to someone at 111 who was good telling me someone would call me back. Well, the person who called me back was absolutely useless. They went through some checklist of anodyne questions and didn't enquire as to my background or details about my condition at all. They told me to go to the job centre. They offered no help at all. And anything they did offer I had already tried about a million years ago. They assumed I was stupid, and they made me feel even worse for contacting them."