

Report to the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview Scrutiny Committee

March 2025

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1. Healthwatch Oxfordshire reports to external bodies

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

<https://healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk/our-reports/reports-to-other-bodies/>

We attend the Oxfordshire's Health and Wellbeing Board, Health Improvement Board and Children's Trust. We attend **Oxfordshire Place Based Partnership** meetings under Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB). We work together with the five Healthwatch groups at place across BOB ICB to give insight into committees at BOB ICB wide level.

2. Update since the last Health Overview Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) Meeting on 30 January 2025:

Healthwatch Oxfordshire reports published to date:

Enter and View Visits

Since the last meeting we made Enter and View visits to:

- Phoenix Ward, Littlemore Hospital (Feb 2025).

We published the following reports: on Enter and View visits to the following services:

- Boots Pharmacy Oxford (Feb 2025)

All published Enter and View reports are available here:

<https://healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk/our-work/enter-and-view>

and information about why and how we make visits here:

<https://healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Enter-and-View-easy-read-information.pdf>

All our reports published since the last HOSC meeting can be seen here:

<https://healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk/reports>

All reports are available in **easy read**, and word format.

Webinars: We held one public webinar:

NHS Change and Ten-Year Plan – enabling people to feed into government consultation. Our webinar focused on hearing about the theme 'analogue to digital' and we had a good discussion supported by Chief Digital Officer from

Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB). The outcome of the webinar has been fed into the Change NHS portal.

Upcoming webinars:

- Tuesday 18 March 1-2 pm '**Mental wellbeing support for our children and young people**' – details and speakers to be confirmed

To see our programme of webinars, Zoom links and recordings of all webinars:

<https://healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk/news-and-events/patient-webinars/>

All are welcome.

Our ongoing work:

- Our **Quarter 3 (Oct-Dec)** activities summary can be seen here: <https://healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk/impact/activities-and-achievements/>
- We closed our survey on **navigating urgent and emergency care** services <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/UECservices/> but continue to do on the ground outreach, speaking to people across same day urgent care settings in the county.
- We continue ongoing face to face **outreach** to groups and events across the county, including hospital stands (Churchill and Horton), Rose Hill Larder, OX16 Banbury Shops.
- Forthcoming reports include:
 - findings on women's health
 - listening to men
 - summary of what we have heard about GPs
 - Wood Farm Community Insight Profile.
- Our priorities and work plan for 2025-6 will be published in March.
- Healthwatch Oxfordshire **Board Open Forum** was held on 19 February (see here <https://healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk/about-us/board-papers-and-minutes/>)

3. Key issues we are hearing from the public:

We hear from members of the public via phone, email, online feedback on services (see here: <https://healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk/services/>), and when out and about.

This enables us to pick up issues and raise with health and care providers and commissioners. Below are some of the themes we are hearing public giving some

patient insight into specific agenda items for this HOSC meeting (Audiology, MSK services, and cancer waiting times)

Audiology:

Some feedback including experiences of local audiology providers – difficulty making appointments; lack of clarity about private/NHS care pathways and qualifying criteria, quality of care, and access to earwax removal.

“The audiologist did nearly 2hrs of tests and explained everything very well. They also kindly helped me find sparse transport back to Oxford!” (Jan 2025)

“In the past I had excellent service but since the surgery went over to triaging appointment requests, I have found the process difficult and have ended up not having medical issues attended to. One of these concerns a referral to my GP from an audiologist concerning [ear condition] which meant that I couldn't have hearing aids fitted. This wasn't followed up and when I visited the surgery to speak to a receptionist, I was given a speech about how they no longer do ear wax removal. I do not have a problem with ear wax. I tried phoning a couple of months later but found the whole process complicated and frustrating with an unhelpful receptionist. Nearly a year down the line one of my ears is in a bad state my hearing loss is worse to the extent that I avoid social contact.” (Jan 2025)

“I got a letter from the JR Audiology Department as I had been waiting for an NHS hearing check-up for quite a while, and they offered me the choice of going to Specsavers on the NHS rather than the hospital, which I decided to do as it meant I would get seen quicker and would be easier to get to. When I got there, they had no information about me or any records other than I had booked an appointment so I had to go over my past history – I was disappointed no information had been passed on. I had to tell them twice I was an NHS patient. Despite this the first hearing aid he then showed me was one I had to pay for, which I didn't want, I just wanted NHS hearing aids. I've also found out since the ones I got are different to the ones I would have been issued at the JR which will mean I have to go back to Specsavers for the plastic replacement parts when I need them whereas the JR would send them out. They didn't check they fitted at all – luckily they did – and there was no mention of any follow-up. I didn't feel that I had got a very good service, it was not what I was expecting, and I wouldn't want to go back there. It certainly wasn't up to the standard of the JR clinic I used to go to.” (Sept 2024)

"I recently received a letter from the Audiology Department, Oxford University Hospitals. It said I was being transferred out to local providers. I therefore looked at the list of providers and decided to make an appointment with Oxon & Bucks NHS Audiology Service at the West location. I phoned them using the number in the letter to book an appointment at Witney Community Hospital. However, I was very surprised that the person dealing with my enquiry knew nothing about the transfer scheme from the OUH and did not want the transfer code that was given me. They asked for my NHS number and dealt with me like a new patient, saying I will have to have another hearing test. Initially I was put through to two different ladies in India. But the calls could not continue because the connection kept breaking up at their end. The third person I spoke to was based in the UK but did not know anything about the transfer scheme from the OUH." (Jan 2025)

"We had an audiology referral from the John Radcliffe with a list of providers on the back. We went to one of the providers listed – Specsavers and made an appointment, but they have cancelled this and said the service is only for people who live and have a GP in Oxfordshire. We rang Specsavers in Banbury who said this is not true, but they can't deal with the specific hearing aid we need fixed. I have been back to audiology, but we are stuck with a broken hearing aid and it seems like we have to travel 30 miles into Oxford or put it in the post." (Feb 2025)

MSK services: some feedback on Connect Health on getting appointments, and travels distances for appointments.

- *"The Physiotherapy service was excellent but very underfunded. My daily sessions were a delight." (Jan 2025)*
- *"I was referred by the MSK service to the hospital for hip surgery, the hospital has said I do not meet the criteria with no explanation as to why. The MSK service don't answer their phone and don't seem to know what they are doing." (Jan 2025)*
- *I have a foot injury from work, I've been waiting for an appointment for nearly a year. NHS asked [my employer] why they don't have any physio themselves. I tried Connect Health, and they threw me back to NOC – waiting and waiting." (outreach in Wood Farm, Sept 2024)*
- *I have used and am still using musculoskeletal services in Oxford. At present I attend services in Botley. Whilst the service I have received has been very good, there is no parking available, and it is therefore difficult to access especially for persons with disabilities who cannot access the bus*

or walk from the parking areas. Taxi fares are expensive especially if you have to attend for more than one appointment. Previously the musculoskeletal service was based in the East Oxford Health centre which also had parking so was easier to access including disabled spaces. I am aware that for disabled people you had to access it via a lift which is not ideal if it breaks down, but if you add that to the lack of parking and the distance from the bus stops and parking at Botley. I still feel/believe that the service at The East Oxford Health Centre was the better option (by email Feb 25)

- ... Connect Health's provision to the residents of Chipping Norton in Oxfordshire and the inappropriate expectation that patients will travel across the county for basic services... Instead of attending the local clinic, patients are expected to travel up to 90 miles (return journey) to attend a Connect Health physio appointment. Many patients cannot drive for pain - whether pre- or post-operative and many therefore need to travel by public transport on crutches/in wheelchairs - with lengthy distances to navigate on crutches. Local physio options are essential. However, I have been advised I cannot attend your Chipping Norton clinic in early February- as required for post op physio - as you do not have the staff. I need to wait until March. This is too late. Why is it always almost impossible to attend Chipping Norton for Connect Health physio - and especially now? How is it that Connect Health is the sole provider of NHS physio in our area and yet we do not have a functional facility to attend? Why, with ongoing pain after joint replacement surgery, am I expected to travel to the furthest away Connect Health hubs for my post-operative physio? Previously I was expected to attend clinics in Henley and Wallingford with joint pain so severe that I could not drive...

Cancer waiting times and treatments

- "Having had a previous cancer diagnosis from the initial appointment with the GP I was seen at the hospital within two weeks. I had the operation within five weeks from the GP appointment." (May 2024)
- "Potential skin cancer – First visit was to a GP. Not too good to be honest as recommended antibiotic cream. But did suggest I see the nurse for subsequent dressing. It was the nurse and another GP who subsequently referred me to skin specialist. This should I think have been done sooner." (August 2024)

- *"Fast track pathway for cancer diagnosis. I was looked after so well. I was given a treatment plan and appointments were given quickly. I felt I was in safe hands. Speed of being seen and the quality of care could not be bettered. Could be improved by giving me more information on support that is available to people who are given a cancer diagnosis."* (Sept 2024)
- *"[I had a] mammogram [and] was recalled for further tests. The actual surgery went well, but there was zero aftercare. Oh, I had multiple hospital appointments, which were never on time. I had to travel a relatively short distance, 25 miles each way, but the traffic and parking meant 1.5 hours travel time, so effectively half a day each time. All I ever got told was 'it's normal' or 'everyone is different'. No constructive help with seroma, iron bra syndrome, or scar management. Every bit of help I got was paid for by me or from charities."* (April 2024)
- *"I visited my friend in hospital on the oncology ward. I asked them what cancer you have – they didn't know. I asked what their treatment was, what was the prognosis – they didn't know. They didn't have access to an interpreter, the doctors had tried to explain but they still didn't know. I asked the nurse what cancer my friend had and then I told them they were shocked as they hadn't known. I asked if we could see a doctor and waited hours and when the doctor came, I communicated with the doctor by text. The doctor said it's not his job to book an interpreter! When the social worker came to see my friend, they had to explain to my friend all about their cancer, their treatment and their medication. They were in hospital for five weeks and if I hadn't have visited how would they have found out about the illness and the treatment. I was an advocate for my friend but I shouldn't have had to have been his advocate, they were relying on me all the time they were in hospital."* (Action for Deafness coffee morning, May 2024)
- Feedback from the women's health survey included:
 - Concerns about age limits around screening preventing people older and younger with concerns (e.g. family history) from getting screening
 - Barriers to screening include issues with accessibility for people with physical impairments, pain and discomfort, embarrassment. We also heard praise for local, convenient appointments and caring staff.

We continue to hear concerns about waiting times for CAMHS, including Neuro-developmental Diagnostic Clinic (NDC) and the adult pathway for those with diagnosis with ADHD.

- *"CAMHS waiting times – daughter has been waiting 4 years with no support- has now stopped school- and no help or way forward" (June 2024)*
- *"We've been waiting for CAMHS and physio for my teenage son for 5 years. We're waiting for the NDC pathway and the school don't know anyone put forward who doesn't get a diagnosis, so why is there no support? There is no communication and just generic emails. Autism Oxford is OK but there's only so many webinars you can do in 5 years! And I've already done them for my older child. CAMHS were not interested in my child who has such severe anxiety she [self-harmed]." (August 2024)*

Adults with a new diagnosis of ADHD continue to report they are unable to access prescriptions for medication as there is no shared care arrangement in Oxfordshire. We are aware that BOB ICB has initiated a task and finish group in response to ongoing ADHD issues. However, there is no timeline for this group to report back.

- *"my GP won't prescribe my medication as there is no shared care arrangement in place, I mean what about "Live Well"! The medication I take helps me and keeps me balanced, this means I am functioning well and am not using other services because I am well. Without my meds I end up using other services –it just doesn't make sense to me." (telephone call February 2025)*
- *"I would like to raise my disappointment that the [GP] will not agree to 'Shared Care' with private providers (or the NHS if I have understood correctly) for Adults with ADHD. I feel I am now in a postcode lottery situation to find a surgery that will take on my son's care to help us with the ongoing cost of his medication. Something that I did not expect to happen"*