

Government proposals to disband Healthwatch

Healthwatch Sutton & Sutton Patient Reference Group Statement

Healthwatch Sutton has supported residents to give feedback about health and social care services in Sutton since 2013. It has worked to ensure their voices are heard by staff who commission, manage and deliver these services. It has also helped staff to recognise good practice and identify improvements from a service user's perspective.

Part of Healthwatch Sutton's role has been to support the Sutton Patient Reference Group (PRG). It has also supported local GP Practices' Patient Participation Groups, helping them with structure, obligations, administration and recruitment. PPGs enable Practices to have an independent patient voice.

The PRG has existed for over 10 years. It gives patients from GP practices in Sutton the opportunity to meet and share their feedback with local NHS services. It also gives NHS colleagues the chance to share updates with them.

Recent colleagues who have attended have represented services including dentistry, palliative care, dementia, musculoskeletal, GPs, learning disabilities and community pharmacy. Colleagues from outside the NHS have also attended, including from Sutton Council and the local Voluntary and Community sector.

In June 2025, the UK Government announced plans to disband Healthwatch and allocate its functions to NHS Integrated Care Boards and Local Authorities. Local Healthwatch organisations have constructively challenged these proposals, advocating for continued independent representation of patient voice in England.

Following the PRG meeting on 29th September, as requested by Members, the PRG Officers discussed with Healthwatch Sutton and NHS Sutton Place whether it would be appropriate for the PRG Chair to write to either the Secretary of State, the local Carshalton & Wallington and Sutton & Cheam MPs, NHS South West London Integrated Care Board, or raise the issue with the Director of NHS Sutton Place Board.

Healthwatch Sutton has also spoken to both of the borough's MPs about the Government's proposals. Luke Taylor MP has signed a Parliamentary Early Day Motion asking the Government to halt its plans to abolish Healthwatch.

There is a national Healthwatch petition calling on the UK Government to maintain independent representation of patient feedback. This has received over 10 000 signatures and the Government has responded. You can view their response on the petition's webpage: <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/732993>

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Wes Streeting, has also written to local Healthwatch organisations explaining these proposals, which you can view on Healthwatch Sutton's website: <https://www.healthwatchsutton.org.uk/news/2025-07-29/proposed-government-closure-healthwatch>

If the Government's proposals go ahead, Healthwatch Sutton will continue to support the PRG until Healthwatch's disbandment, and ensure the PRG can continue effectively in the future.

If you'd like to discuss this in more detail, please contact Healthwatch Sutton directly:

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