



Department
of Health &
Social Care

*From the Rt Hon Wes Streeting MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care*

*39 Victoria Street
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Ms Jody Clark
Chief Operating Officer
The Care Forum
By email to: jodyclark@thecareforum.org.uk

17 September 2025

Dear Ms Clark,

Thank you for your correspondence of 17 July, co-signed by the Chief Officers/Chairs of 131 Local Healthwatch services about the future of public voice and independent advocacy. I apologise for the delay in replying.

Drawing from the biggest ever public and staff engagement exercise on the future of the NHS, the 10 Year Health Plan for England outlined how we will reinvent our healthcare model: from hospital to community, analogue to digital and sickness to prevention.

Central to the Plan is shifting power out of government and to front line services and, most importantly, the patient. As part of this, we share your commitment to putting the patient's voice at the heart of service delivery.

We recognise the hard work and successes of Healthwatch England and the local Healthwatch network as a national, independent voice, and the many ways in which they have helped users and patients. However, as Dr Penny Dash found in her review of the patient safety, we believe that simplifying the landscape and reducing the number of intermediaries between service delivery and patients' views will give patients a stronger voice, make it easier for them to provide feedback and ensure clearer accountabilities for responding to those views.

In closing down local Healthwatch organisations we will place responsibility for seeking patient, user and wider community input onto integrated care boards, local authorities and providers. This will ensure it is closely aligned with the commissioning and provision of care. It will also be easier and simpler for individuals, patients and users to provide feedback and complain about services at a local level, directly to the commissioners and providers of care. Similarly, the new Directorate in the Department that takes on Healthwatch England's strategic functions will have an explicit responsibility to encourage feedback and ensure a significant improvement to complaints functions across the system.

As we deliver these changes, my officials will be ready to continue meeting with Healthwatch England and local chief officers and chairs on the design of the new national system and the patient experience directorate.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wes Streeting". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left.

WES STREETING