



Department of Health & Social Care

*From the Ministerial Correspondence
and Public Enquiries Unit*

*39 Victoria Street
London
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Our ref: DE-1712095

6 August 2026

Dear Councillor Fillipova-Rivers,

Thank you for your letter of 16 June to the former Secretary of State for Health and Social Care about the proposed abolition of Healthwatch arrangements as set out in the Health Bill. I have been asked to reply, and I apologise for the delay in doing so.

I appreciate your concerns.

The Government believes that placing responsibility for listening to local people with integrated care boards (ICBs) and local authorities (LAs) will ensure that the experiences of patients' and the public continue to be heard and used to improve services in line with local needs.

The legislation will not prescribe how this feedback is gathered. Instead, ICBs and LAs will have the flexibility to decide the approach that works best for their communities, whether through their own teams or by commissioning external organisations to carry out this work on their behalf. What is important is that responsibility remains clear: ICBs and LAs will be accountable for listening to feedback and responding to it.

At a national level, bringing patient and public voice closer to decision-making will strengthen its influence on policy development and service improvement. It aims to help ensure that patient

insight is considered alongside other evidence when priorities are set across the health and care system.

NHS organisations receive thousands of recommendations each year. The new Patient Experience Directorate will be in a stronger position to help the Department of Health and Social Care identify the issues that matter most to patients and support action where improvement is needed most.

The Department and NHS England have appointed Jacob Lant as National Director of Patient Experience, a new role that marks a significant shift in how patient experience, feedback, complaints and patient voice are used to shape NHS and Government decision-making.

As the national champion for patient experience and public involvement, Jacob will lead work to strengthen how the NHS listens to patients, families, carers and the public, and how it acts on what people say about their care.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Correspondence Officer
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Department of Health and Social Care