

Policy Digest May 2026

This policy digest provides links to items of interest produced by Healthwatch Northumberland partners and stakeholders and other organisations in the wider health and social care field.

Social Care

Casey Review – latest speech from [Baroness Casey](#)

Health

Health Bill

The Health Bill is now in parliament.

Parliamentary progress – through this [link](#) you can track the Health Bill's progress through parliament and the documents and questions raised. Note the second reading on 1 June.

Impact assessment – attached is the government's impact assessment of abolishing HWE and local HW.

Patient Voice – the future of patient voice in the future is outlined in this [fact sheet](#). It is still light on detail but starts to give some shape – also note the mention of statutory and non-statutory means to bring about the change. As said previously the Act is only part of the process.

King's Fund briefing – this [briefing](#) is a useful aid to track progress on key issues and has been shared with our MPs.

Communication and Engagement

NHS Online consultation – the attached letter from Minister Ahmed is the government's response to the targeted consultation with local Healthwatch organisations on the establishment of the Online NHS Trust, to help deliver the NHS Online programme for virtual elective care. We coordinated the response from HW in NENC.

Northumberland

Public Mental Health Strategy – we have been part of the council's Public Health engagement on the Public Mental Health Strategy needs assessment. See [Helen Brown's](#) presentation to the Health & Wellbeing Board.