

# Norfolk County County Council

## Health Overview Select Committee

Meeting Précis – 19 March 2026

### Purpose of the Meeting

The Committee considered progress and challenges across key areas of health system delivery. The meeting focused on:

- the strategic review of outreach health services,
- digital transformation across the Integrated Care System (ICS), and
- an update report for the Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust (NSFT).

The Committee also agreed additions to its forward work programme.

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## 1. Strategic Review of Outreach Services

### Context and aims

The ICB presented early findings from a strategic review of outreach health services. The review is intended to inform future commissioning decisions ahead of current contracts expiring, ensuring services align with national guidance, reduce health inequalities, and improve outcomes for vulnerable and underserved populations.

### Key themes discussed

- **Scope and focus:** The review concentrates on inclusion health groups, ethnic minority communities, and people living in rural and coastal areas. It draws on national best practice and evidence reviews, although no decisions have yet been taken.
- **Stage of work:** It was emphasised that the review is at an early stage. Current services will continue unchanged until April 2027. Public and stakeholder engagement is planned for summer 2026, working with Healthwatch and voluntary sector organisations.
- **Assurance and evidence:** Committee Members sought stronger assurance on how inclusion health funding in GP practices is monitored, particularly around outcomes and audit evidence. Officers acknowledged that reporting has focused more on activity than impact and confirmed a shift toward outcomes-based commissioning.
- **Rural access and engagement:** Members stressed the need to address rural isolation, transport barriers, and digital exclusion, questioning whether new outreach models alone would be sufficient. The ICB confirmed it was open to a range of models, considering transport and access.

- **Engagement quality:** Members queried how widely “community voices” extended beyond established partners and asked for greater involvement of local councillors, reflecting their community knowledge. This suggestion was welcomed.
- **Use of data and innovation:** Members raised interest in the use of linked datasets and artificial intelligence to support long-term planning. Officers confirmed this would form part of future development.
- **Wellness on Wheels bus:** Concerns were raised about inconsistent evidence of impact and lack of clarity around purpose. Officers acknowledged data limitations and the need for a clearer role for the service going forward.

## Outcomes

The Committee noted the report and agreed that:

- the national evidence review informing the ICB’s work would be shared; and
  - a further report evaluating all outreach service strands, including patient outcomes and referral pathways, would return to the Committee later in 2026.
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## 2. Integrated Care System Digital Update

### Progress reported

The Committee received an update on delivery of the Norfolk and Waveney Digital Strategy, noting:

- widespread use of the Shared Care Record by health and care staff;
- increased digital access in primary care, including strong uptake of the NHS App; and
- the launch of a new data hub to support prevention, planning and population health management.

### Key issues discussed

- **Future-proofing systems:** Members asked whether digital developments were resilient to local government reorganisation and system boundary changes. Officers confirmed consolidation work was underway but acknowledged challenges remain.
- **Impact on patients:** While data showed improved access and reduced medication errors, Members pressed for clearer evidence of clinical and patient-outcome benefits from digital investment.
- **Digital exclusion:** Strong concern was expressed about residents lacking digital skills, connectivity, or devices. Officers outlined a county-wide digital inclusion programme, including outreach support and distribution of refurbished devices.
- **Major system programmes:** Members questioned delays to the Acute Hospitals Group Electronic Patient Record (EPR) programme and its interaction with primary care systems.

It was confirmed that EPR implementation is now expected in May 2027 to avoid winter pressures.

- **Connectivity and data security:** Rural broadband and mobile coverage were discussed, alongside reassurance that NHS and council data are hosted in compliance with UK legal requirements.

## Outcomes

The Committee noted the report and requested:

- a briefing note setting out available evidence on the impact of digital transformation, including acute sector data.

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## 3. Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust (NSFT) Update

### Overview

NSFT presented a comprehensive update following the Committee's 2025 review, covering performance across outcomes and inequalities, access and crisis care, quality and safety, and organisational readiness. Progress was reported in areas such as workforce recruitment, service redesign, and reduced out-of-area placements.

### Public and member concerns

Speakers and Members raised concerns, including:

- persistent difficulties accessing community mental health support;
- variation in care planning quality and follow-through;
- pressures on crisis services and delays in response;
- transparency and learning from deaths; and
- workforce issues within NHS Talking Therapies, including pay and role clarity.

### Trust response and discussion

- Trust leaders acknowledged that many issues were longstanding but stressed that improvement work was underway, including new mortality reporting systems and strengthened governance.
- Members questioned progress in services still rated "Requires Improvement" by the CQC and challenged whether national standards, such as 18-week waits, were acceptable for mental health care.
- The need for consistent national oversight of **Prevention of Future Deaths** notices was discussed in depth, with Members expressing concern about regional variation.

- Collaboration between NSFT, Adult Social Care, Children's Services and wider partners was highlighted as essential to sustained improvement.

## **Outcomes**

The Committee agreed a series of actions, including to:

- write to Ministers about the lack of national oversight of Prevention of Future Deaths notices and the impact of national cost-cutting on mental health services;
  - request more comprehensive patient-safety data covering inpatient and community settings;
  - receive detailed briefing notes on CQC "Requires Improvement" areas and the Trust's workforce response to concerns raised by UNISON.
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## **4. Forward Work Programme**

The Committee updated its work programme to include:

- continued scrutiny of the Vulnerable Adult Service Health Inclusion Hub procurement;
  - briefings on the Queen Elizabeth Hospital's participation in national improvement programmes;
  - consideration of the Right Care, Right Person model; and
  - updates on the closure and replacement of the Steam House Café in King's Lynn.
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