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## Letter to Leicester Mercury Mailbox

We are writing in response to the letter "NHS and care bodies must unite to fix A&E" in the Mercury Mailbox on Wednesday 2 April. On the following day, the City's Health & Wellbeing Board resumed its discussions about Urgent Care, following its Extraordinary meeting last month.

The Board received a report of the latest delivery plans that together with an Action Plan are to go before the Urgent Care Working Group. All three local Healthwatch have been actively involved in the development of the Action Plan and other initiatives over the past six months and are well aware of the commitment by all health and social care organisations to resolve the challenges faced by Urgent Care within the Emergency Department at University Hospitals of Leicester (UHL). Everyone recognises that this is a shared responsibility.

The Action Plan is both robust and substantive, put together collaboratively by all partners in Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland.

No one should underestimate how complex the issues are around the Emergency Department; it would be dishonest to patients and the public to let them believe that there are quick fixes to all of the issues. For example, it will take time to deliver a fit for purpose Emergency Department that has the capacity to deal with the numbers of patients coming through the doors.

Similarly, there is a national shortage of both nursing and medical staff prepared to work in Emergency Departments but UHL has done exceptionally well in its recruitment. Strides are being made towards a consistent pattern of 7-day working. All of this is against a background of serious financial pressures faced by health and social care.

The Action Plan suggests that aside from two weeks in February the steady and incremental improvements over recent weeks in meeting the national standards for 4-hour waits at Accident and Emergency Department can be sustained.

Local Healthwatch has witnessed the motivation and dedication of front line staff as they grapple with the unremitting pressures and there is considerable evidence that many patients understand and support their endeavours. In fact, the recent Care Quality Commission's inspection of UHL, whilst recognising the historical challenges its Emergency Department faces, confirmed that UHL is well led and fully aware of what needs to be done to sustain improvement.

Local Healthwatch will continue to fulfil its role as consumer champion for local people by voicing their needs, explaining in an honest and open way what measures are being taken, what can be achieved immediately and what will take longer. We will do what we can to support the enormous efforts of so many health and social care practitioners to achieve an Urgent Care service of which we can all be proud.

<b>Karen Chouhan</b>	<b>Rick Moore</b>	<b>Jennifer Fenelon</b>
Chair Healthwatch Leicester	Chair Healthwatch Leicestershire	Chair Healthwatch Rutland

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**About Local Healthwatch**

Local Healthwatch consists of Healthwatch Leicester, Healthwatch Leicestershire and Healthwatch Rutland. These organisations are the independent consumer champions for health and social care, representing the patient and public's voice within their locality of Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. They help to shape and improve local health and social care for local people and their communities. Healthwatch Leicester, Healthwatch Leicestershire and Healthwatch Rutland are part of the Healthwatch national network, established by the Government to ensure local patients and users have a greater input to shaping and designing local services.

**About Healthwatch England**

Healthwatch England is the new, independent consumer champion for health and social care in England. The organisation has independent statutory powers, as stated in the Health and Social Care Act 2012, to ensure the consumers' voice is heard and best practice is delivered in health and social care nationally. Healthwatch is also focused on providing leadership, guidance and support to the development of the Healthwatch network. To find out more please go to

[www.healthwatch.co.uk](http://www.healthwatch.co.uk)