

# A snapshot of Carers' views on the impact of Northamptonshire County Council cuts

April  
2019





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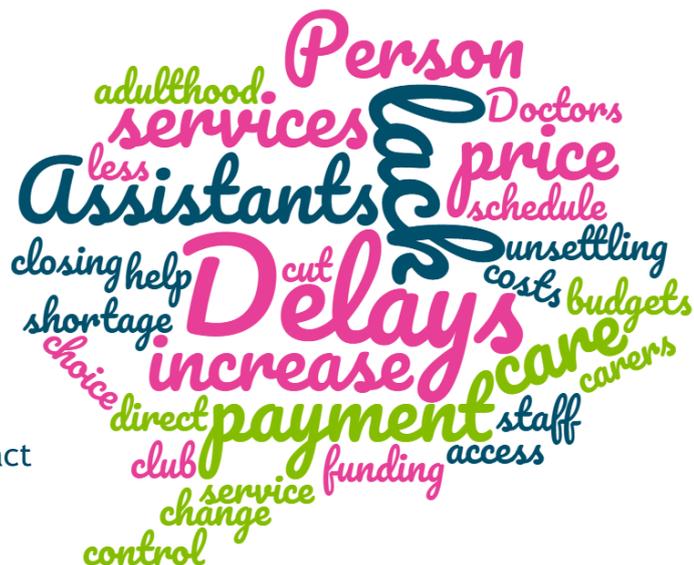
# Introduction

Due to financial difficulties, Northamptonshire County Council have recently had to make cuts to Adult Social Care. In light of this, Carers' Voice, with the support of Healthwatch Northamptonshire, gathered the views of carers' on services they use and the impact of these cuts on carers or those they care for.

This report aims to identify the impact the recent cuts has had on the health and social care services that carers access and to ensure the voice of carers are heard in these challenging times. It is hoped that the results of the survey will be used to understand the implications and help identify shortfalls in the services that carers receive.

## Key findings

- 33 people responded to the survey between September to December 2018
- 55% of those who answered identified themselves as an adult carer for someone under 25; 35% described themselves as an adult carer for someone over 25 and 10% described themselves as someone who is cared for
- People named Health and Direct Payment as services they use most frequently
- In view of the cuts, changes/reduction of services were reported most frequently for Health and Care in the Community
- People spoke of the following issues as an impact of the cuts: delays, staff shortages, lack of support, poor communication, transport issues, costs and needs not being met



Wordcloud of main impact themes identified



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# Recommendations

1. Carers highlighted a number of areas where changes or reduction in services has had an impact on them and the people they care for. Service providers and commissioners should consider how changes to services can disproportionately affect some groups, such as carers and vulnerable people. Service design and provision should be shaped by the needs of groups, such as carers and vulnerable people.
2. Carers reported that they use non-specified 'health' services most frequently and they also highlighted the biggest perceived changes to services in this area - further work may be required to investigate which service changes have affected them the most.
3. Northamptonshire County Council should consider how they can better communicate with carers, particularly around funding, direct payments and delays.
4. Further work could be undertaken to assess the views of health and care providers about how cuts to the system are having an impact on their services provided for carers.





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# Method

## Survey design

Carers' Voice designed a user-friendly survey; this was discussed in their regular meetings. The survey was piloted by Carers' Voice with their acquaintances who are carers themselves. The survey was refined accordingly.

The survey asked carers, and those who are cared for, about the services they use, if or how these services have changed recently, and what the impact of the changes on them was.

## Survey distribution

The survey went to all members on the Northamptonshire Carers and Carers' Voice mailing lists. Paper copies of the survey were taken to Carers' Cafés and distributed to people at these meetings. Hard copies of the survey went into leaflets at Towcester Library and were also given to the Beehive in Kingsthorpe for distribution. Regular members signposted their family, friends and other groups to the online survey.

The survey was added to Survey Monkey and promoted on the Carers' Voice, Healthwatch Northamptonshire and Northamptonshire Carers Facebook pages. It was also promoted on Healthwatch Northamptonshire's website. The survey was included in Healthwatch Northamptonshire's regular newsletter.

## Data analysis

Overall 33 people took part in the survey. Due to this relatively small number this only provided us with a snapshot of Carers' views.

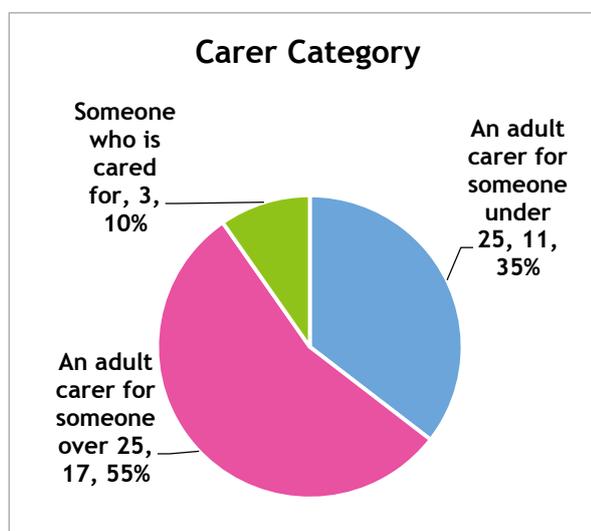
To maintain confidentiality, no-one is referred to by name or is identifiable by others throughout this report.



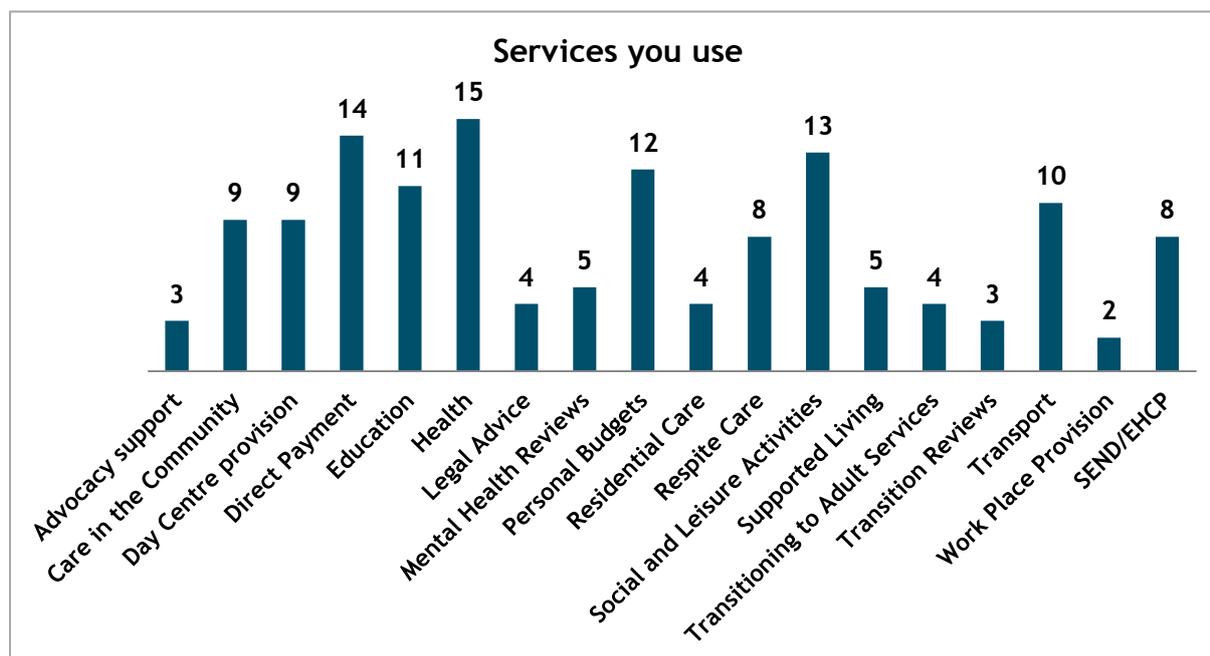
# What people told us

## Carer category

- 31 people told us whether they were a carer or cared for.
- 55% (17 people) who answered, identified themselves as an *adult carer for someone under 25*; 35% (11 people) described themselves as an *adult carer for someone over 25* and 10% (3 people) described themselves as *someone who is cared for*.



## Services used

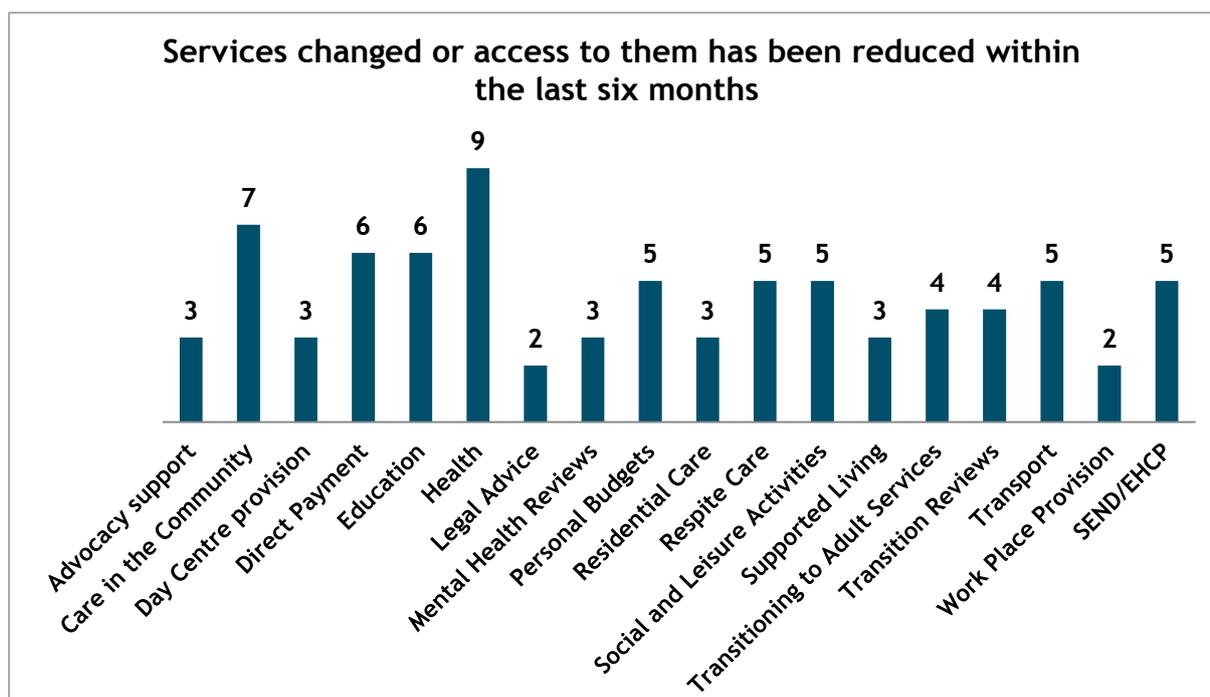


- When asked which services people use, *'Health'* and *'Direct Payment'* were reported most frequently. This was closely followed by *'Social and Leisure Activities'* and *'Personal Budgets'*.
- People also responded to say they use the following other services: Carers Café; Northampton Carers Groups; Shared Lives Carer; Carers Support Line; Northamptonshire County Council and the Transition Team.



- One respondent also claimed: *“not to use any of these service, as they are no longer in contact after their psychiatrist retired, despite their partner being bi-polar and having sight problems”*.

## Services that have changed or been reduced within the last six months



- Changes and reduction of services were reported most frequently for ‘Health’ and ‘Care in The Community’.
- Two people also mentioned *“the carer support line seems short-staffed”* and also named the *“Transition Team”*.
- Three people mentioned “no” and “nothing for at least 5 years”
- One person mentioned a lack of communication from their social worker: *“No longer have a named social worker. Not heard a thing since March”*

## Comments on the impact of changes to services

Eight people described a need for **more support**, including the impact of a lack of workers on the level of support they receive:

*“I had to leave Supported Living because my mental health got worse and I thought I needed to go back to hospital, but no one helped so I went home to my mum. I’ve been asking for help with housing for eight months. I am*



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entitled to s117 funding<sup>1</sup> but no one wants to reassess me or tell me if I can ask for a CTR<sup>2</sup>.” *Person who is cared for*

“We would like a lot more **Personal Assistants** and PA Workers back in Northamptonshire, with a lot more hours for me and disabled people, as it would be a lot better. More carers/support staff/support worker for us today now.” *Person who is cared for*

“We have no **respite service** due to scare factor caused by Northamptonshire County Council’s financial crisis. No provision to recruit or carry this on.”  
*Carer for a person over 25*

“We don’t have any help.” *Carer for a person over 25*

“They have **cut number of carers** down so can’t look after all the residents.”  
*Carer for a person over 25*

“My **regular calls have not taken place** due to staff shortages. Once, this call would have been very beneficial to me as I was not in a good place and needed the support.” *Carer for a person under 25*

“**Lack of support with the transition** into adulthood; lack of transition workers and having to deal with a long wait with brokerage.” *Carer for a person under 25*

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Four people mentioned issues relating to **delays to funding reviews or in receiving care**:

“**Care review** for change to circumstances has taken **five months** and we have had **three social worker changes**, so lack of continuity and not much further forward with the new change in circumstances being met via a change to the direct payment/budget so our young person may be out of pocket. Also, negotiation on their contribution/fair charge has not been changed or updated despite a face-to-face review a few months back. Our young person moved into Supported Living in April 2017 and no follow up review was done. When we asked for a review due to a change in circumstances, we have

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<sup>1</sup> You are entitled to section 117 aftercare if you have been in hospital under section 3, 37, 45A, 47 or 48 of the Mental Health Act 1983. Section 117 means that you will get free aftercare when you leave hospital.

<sup>2</sup> Care and Treatment Reviews



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waited five months and have now been handed to a third Social Worker for the review which we think is a delaying tactic”. *Carer for a person under 25*

“We have been on the **waiting list** to see a Psychologist for **17 months.**”  
*Carer for a person under 25*

“Urgent Budget **review** triggered by changing day services has been **delayed.** New day centre provision costs are uncertain if to be paid retrospectively due to delay. Error in amount of funding since April since changes came into effect, now being investigated. Outcome uncertain.” *Carer for a person over 25*

“I have been **waiting for seven months** for my son’s care assessment and care plan to be updated and the direct payments to be changed to reflect his needs. I **don’t know what is happening** and even when I told the care manager my son said he didn’t want to be in this world anymore nothing changed; in fact the **mental health worker from NCC said they would be closing.**” *Carer for a person over 25*

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Two people highlighted the **impact of increased care agency costs:**

“Our carers increased the cost to NCC; they refused to pay the increase so the **carers come in for 15 minutes less per day** so we don’t have to change the care company.” *Carer for a person over 25*

“Amount of money allocated has stayed the same but **agency has put costs up.**” *Carer for a person over 25*

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One person felt at one point they had to go down the **privately funded route:**

“We **had to privately fund care** for my elderly Uncle, even though he couldn’t make himself anything to eat or drink, he was discharged from the ICT and another team. His wish was to be at home and **without us privately funding he would have returned to hospital** within a short period of time.”  
*Carer for a person over 25*

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Two people described issues with **communication:**

“Even **less clear support; random communication** from the Local Authority and odd schedule for payment of Direct Payments with no reasons given. Very unsettling!” *Person who is cared for*

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“I’m a carer for my wife who has M.S., Dementia and is doubly incontinent. I feel as sole carer I have a very difficult job to do. When care budgets are cut it gets **more difficult to contact the Adult Care Team**. Then for an email to be sent, why can’t we contact care manager direct?” *Carer for a person over 25*

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Two people were concerned about **transport and uncertainty**:

“Although none of these services have changed, I **never feel secure that they will continue**. There is always the fear that they will be reduced. **Transport is a real issue**; the taxi firm commissioned by social services are inconsistent and unreliable. I have complained several times. Service improves for two to three weeks, then slides again.” *Carer for a person over 25*

“Cuts in public transport affect ability to get to support meetings.” *Carer for a person over 25*

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**Further negative implications of changes**, such as securing a GP appointment, changes to youth clubs; the impact on a young person and general negative feelings can be illustrated below:

“Our local doctor’s surgery has no flag system and appointments can be attained only by sitting outside from 7.15am on the morning of appointment.” *Carer for a person under 25*

“The hub youth club. Prices increased. Provider changed.” *Carer for a person under 25*

“Having to fight for services you are entitled to, makes the mental health of the young person worse.” *Carer for a person under 25*

“More isolation, less safe, harder to be independent, less choice and control.” *Carer for a person under 25*

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Only one person provided **positive feedback**:

“Our experiences have been positive.” *Carer for a person over 25*

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# Conclusions

The responses to this snapshot survey show that Carers feel the services they use have been affected by changes that may be a result of county council cuts. Carers have also described various impacts they feel a reduction in services has had on them and where their needs are not being met. The results of this survey are useful in highlighting the negative impact cuts can have on health and social care services, which carers and those being cared for rely on to meet their needs.

If you wish to make any further comments about the impact of cuts or a reduction in services, please email: [carersvoice@connectedtogether.co.uk](mailto:carersvoice@connectedtogether.co.uk) or write to:

Carers' Voice  
c/o Healthwatch Northamptonshire  
Moulton Park Business Centre  
Redhouse Road  
Northampton  
NN3 6AQ

# Acknowledgements

Carers' Voice and Healthwatch Northamptonshire would like to thank all who completed our survey and those who shared it, including Northamptonshire Carers, who distributed the survey via their mailing list and at their Carer Cafes.



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# About Carers' Voice

Carers' Voice Northamptonshire is a county-wide organisation, working with Healthwatch Northamptonshire, aiming to improve the services available to Carers' by seeking Carers' views and opinions and making sure they get heard.

Carers' Voice Aims to:

- Bring together the voices, views and experiences of Carers including past Carers from across Northamptonshire and present those consolidated views to those that decide what Health and Social Care Services should be provided in Northamptonshire
- Improve the range and quality of services available to Carers and those they care for across Northamptonshire, by influencing the planning and development of relevant Support Services
- Promote greater Carer involvement in planning, review and development processes, in order to ensure the services provided meet local needs
- Offers individual Carers the opportunity to share their own experiences with other Carers and raise any concerns or issues they have as a Carer

## Vision

To ensure Carers' Voices are heard by enabling the involvement of Carers from all walks of life to be involved in improving the range and quality of services available to them by the planning, development and monitoring of all support services for Carers across the county.

This could be through attending Carers' Voice meetings, representing Carers' Voice at external planning/development meetings and forums and also, for those Carers not able to attend, their input will be collected via email, questionnaires, consultation documents, etc.



# About Healthwatch Northamptonshire

Healthwatch Northamptonshire is the local independent consumer champion for health and social care. We are part of a national network of local Healthwatch organisations. Our central role is to be a voice for local people to influence better health and wellbeing and improve the quality of services to meet people's needs. This involves us visiting local services and talking to people about their views and experiences. We share our reports with the NHS and social care, and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) (the inspector and regulator for health and social care), with recommendations for improvement, where required.

Our rights and responsibilities include:

- We have the power to monitor (known as “Enter and View”) health and social care services (with one or two exceptions). Our primary purpose is to find out what patients, service users, carers and the wider public think of health and social care
- We report our findings of local views and experiences to health and social care decision makers and make the case for improved services where we find there is a need for improvement
- We strive to be a strong and powerful voice for local people, to influence how services are planned, organised and delivered
- We aim to be an effective voice rooted in the community. To be that voice, we find out what local people think about health and social care. We research patient, user and carer opinions using lots of different ways of finding out views and experiences. We do this to give local people a voice. We provide information and advice about health and social care services
- Where we do not feel the views and voices of Healthwatch Northamptonshire and the people who we strive to speak on behalf of, are being heard, we have the option to escalate our concerns and report our evidence to national organisations including Healthwatch England, NHS England and the Care Quality Commission





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# About Connected Together CIC

Connected Together Community Interest Company (CIC) is the legal entity and governing body for Healthwatch Northamptonshire.

The remit of the Connected Together CIC includes:

- Contract compliance
- Legal requirements
- Financial and risk management
- Sustainability and growth
- Agreeing strategy and operations
- Agreeing policies and procedures

Connected Together CIC is a social enterprise and a partnership between the University of Northampton and Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire. It aims to be first for community engagement across the county of Northamptonshire and beyond.

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



**Connected Together**  
First for Community Engagement





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# Appendix - Impact for Carers Survey

It has been publicly stated that Northamptonshire County Council have financial difficulties. The aim of this survey is to find out if any of the services you receive have changed and what impact this may have had on you or those you care for.

This is a survey by Carers' Voice to help inform the county's health and care partners. The results of this survey will be summarised and be used to identify shortfalls in services Carers receive. These findings will be shared with our respective partners such as Healthwatch Northamptonshire, Northamptonshire Carers and a variety of groups and organisations within our county who are directly involved with Carers at a professional, voluntary and independent level.

By participating in this survey you are agreeing to the results being collated and shared. Any accidental identifiable information given such as a name, address or a telephone number will be deleted from the results, however, comments will be included.

1. Are you:

- An adult carer for someone over 25
- An adult carer for someone under 25
- A young carer
- Someone who is cared for

2. Which of these services do you use? (tick as many as you use)

- Advocacy support
- Care in the Community
- Day Centre provision
- Direct Payment
- Education
- Health
- Legal Advice
- Mental Health Reviews
- Personal Budgets
- Residential Care
- Respite Care
- Social and Leisure Activities



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- Supported Living
  - Transitioning to Adult Services
  - Transition Reviews
  - Transport
  - Work Place Provision
  - SEND/EHCP
  - Any other services (please name them)

3. Have any of these services changed or has access to them been reduced within the last 6 months?

- Advocacy support
- Care in the community
- Day Centre provision
- Direct Payment
- Education
- Health
- Legal Advice
- Mental Health Reviews
- Personal Budgets
- Residential Care
- Respite Care
- Social and Leisure Activities
- Supported Living
- Transitioning to Adult Services
- Transition Reviews
- Transport
- Work Place Provision
- SEND/EHCP
- Any other services (please name them)

4. Please tell us more about the impact of any changes to services?

If you would like to join Carers' Voice or find out more, please leave your name, email address or telephone number. Alternatively please contact us on 07856 875132 or [carersvoice@connectedtogether.co.uk](mailto:carersvoice@connectedtogether.co.uk)



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# Contact us

Address: Carers' Voice  
c/o Healthwatch Northamptonshire  
Moulton Park Business Centre  
Redhouse Road  
Northampton  
NN3 6AQ



Phone number: 0300 002 0010

Text message: 07951 419331

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Website: [www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchnorthamptonshire.co.uk)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/Healthwatchnorthamptonshire](http://www.facebook.com/Healthwatchnorthamptonshire)

Twitter: [twitter.com/HWatchNorthants](https://twitter.com/HWatchNorthants)

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