

The value of listening

Healthwatch Kent
Annual Report 2023–2024



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"Over the last year, local Healthwatch have shown what happens when people speak up about their care, and services listen. They are helping the NHS unlock the power of people's views and experiences, especially those facing the most serious health inequalities."

Louise Ansari, Chief Executive at Healthwatch England



Message from our Chair

In a year which has seen continued pressures on the NHS and Social Care our focus has been:

- Achieving outcomes and change driven to bring best value to our partners, stakeholders and community.
- Continuing to recruit volunteers from across the community and this year have welcomed them into new office-based roles to support and enrich the work of our staff.
- Recognising how partners across Kent have overcome challenge and delivered positive change to the community through our annual impact awards. This year we also celebrated individuals who had made noteworthy contributions to Health and Social Care in Kent.
- Improving the way we understand and evidence health inequalities to drive project work within the community and with our stakeholders.
- Maintaining relationships with the ICB and ICP working in partnership with them to enhance health and care outcomes of the people of Kent.
- Developing how we work with Public Health to help ensure the voice of Kent residents compliments the data they hold.
- Reaching into communities which this year has included Nepalese, LGBTQ+ young people, care homes, university students, Asian women, people with mental health experiences and parents with SEND children.

This report gives insight to some of our achievements over the past twelve months. I trust you find this interesting and please get in touch if you would like to join us on our journey.



I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the volunteers and staff who support us in our mission and wish those who have left good luck in their new positions and to extend a welcome to those who have joined us.

Libby Lines, Kent Steering Group Chair



About us

Healthwatch Kent is your local health and social care champion.

We make sure NHS leaders and decision-makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care. We can also help you to find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.

Our vision

A world where we can all get the health and care we need.



Our mission

To make sure people's experiences help make health and care better.



Our values are:

- **Listening** to people and making sure their voices are heard.
- **Including** everyone in the conversation – especially those who don't always have their voice heard.
- **Analysing** different people's experiences to learn how to improve care.
- **Acting** on feedback and driving change.
- **Partnering** with care providers, Government, and the voluntary sector – serving as the public's independent advocate.



Year in review

Reaching out:

2,370 people

shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.

7,010 people

came to us for clear advice and information about topics such as mental health and the cost-of-living crisis.



Making a difference to care:

We published

9 reports

about the improvements people would like to see in health and social care services.

Our most popular report was

Enhanced Health in Care Homes

which highlighted how services are working together.



Health and social care that works for you:

We're lucky to have

23

outstanding volunteers who gave up their time to make care better for our community.

We're funded by our local authority.
In 2023 - 24 we received

£507,131

which is the same as the previous year.







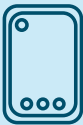
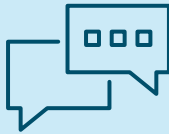
We currently employ

10.8 staff

who help us carry out our work.



How we've made a difference this year

Spring	 <p>We published our Enhanced Health in Care Homes report which was included in Winter Planning</p>	 <p>We listened to women about their experiences of health and wellbeing</p>
Summer	 <p>We visited a Nepalese community group to talk about their equipment needs and the barriers they face to access.</p>	 <p>We heard where LGBTQ+ young people felt least and most respected.</p>
Autumn	 <p>We talked with parents about what they found most helpful in supporting their own wellbeing</p>	 <p>We were supported by Mental Health Voice to share the themes of mental health experiences with Public Health and NHS Kent and Medway</p>
Winter	 <p>We talked to people about their referral experiences to get a baseline to test a new electronic referral system.</p>	 <p>We highlighted the ongoing necessity to ensure people with additional communication needs are supported.</p>

Your voice heard at a wider level

We collaborate with Healthwatch Medway to ensure the experiences of people in Kent influence decisions made about services at Kent and Medway Integrated Care System (ICS) level.



This year, working with Healthwatch Medway, we published a report looking at the effectiveness of our **information and signposting** service. 243 out of the 1167 people who contacted us shared how they had been impacted by the information we had given.

People felt less lonely, less anxious, more independent and better connected to services. We have used WELLBYs, a social value tool, to estimate that these outcomes have generated between £525,000 and £800,000 worth of social value.

We submitted 902 experiences to help inform the draft **Integrated Care Strategy**. These experiences came from a range of engagement and reports which included feedback from fishermen, LGBTQ+ young people, refugees and people with mental health conditions.

These helped influence and shape the priorities included in the strategy. You can read what Kent and Medway partners will be trying to achieve [here](#).



Working with Healthwatch Medway we produced a thematic report on the experiences we heard about **dentistry**. As well as sharing this locally with the Integrated Care Board and feeding into Healthwatch England national findings we also submitted it to the Parliamentary Health and Social Care Select Committee on Dentistry. The evidence we submitted was referenced four times.

Alongside Healthwatch Medway we hosted the annual **Healthwatch Recognition Awards**. This celebrated the work of organisations and individuals contributing to positive change in Health and Care. This year nominations came from colleagues and the people using these services rather than ourselves. We were able to give them the platform to get the recognition they deserved and share best practice across the system.





Listening to your experiences

Services can't make improvements without hearing your views. That's why, over the last year, we have made listening to feedback from all areas of the community a priority. This allows us to understand the full picture, and feed this back to services and help them improve.

Enhanced Health in Care Homes

In 2023, we published our findings about care and support in care homes after talking to residents, family members, care home managers and primary care professionals across 15 care homes. Thanks to this insight, the NHS, Kent County Council, and local Health and Care Partnerships have made positive changes.



102 people participated

- 48 people living in care homes
- 28 relatives of people living in care homes
- 15 care home managers
- 11 PCN professionals

What did people tell us about their experiences in care homes?

- People shared their views on care and support provision, personalised care, wellbeing, activity offers, and integrated and joined-up care.
- Half of people's feedback was positive, around a third mixed or neutral, and approximately 14% was negative or suggestions for improvement.
- People also gave insights into the care provided by hospitals and GPs.

What difference did this make?

- East Kent Health and Care Partnership have implemented daily, or twice daily if needed, health professional calls to homes.
- Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley Health and Care Partnership have created a direct liaison between the South East Coast Ambulance Service and Winter Care Homes Support Service team.
- Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley Health and Care Partnership are also rolling out a preventative and reactive falls service. This will include individual fall plans for residents who are assessed as at risk.
- West Kent Health and Care Partnership have reduced calls to the ambulance service by 29% and emergency department attendances by 26%.
- Kent County Council will be increasing opportunities for care home staff to be upskilled, with priority given to training in prevention and health improvements.



East Kent Diabetes

In 2021, as part of a wider stakeholder group we supported East Kent Health and Care Partnership (HaCP) in their efforts to understand what was important for people who needed diabetes care.

Healthwatch Kent were part of a working group, setting the direction of the engagement taking place. In total, 708 survey responses were completed in addition to focus groups which sought to gain deeper insights into the areas people felt needed to be improved. Along with NHS Elect we presented a summary of the findings to the East Kent HaCP board which highlighted that people wanted:

- Better advice and support pre-diagnosis
- More regular GP reviews, face-to-face consultations and check-ups
- Improved experience of hospital care
- Better signposting to support and guidance, particularly from community healthcare staff
- More joined-up working across healthcare staff
- Inclusion of carers and family in discussions about care
- Better access to foot care
- Access to better information about nutrition and diet

What difference did it make? (As of September 2023)

- 100% of the 8 care processes for patients being seen in the clinics are being completed.
- At 3 month follow up 142 out of 171 patients have decreased their HbA1c score.
- There are improvements in all therapy outcome measure scores with particular increase in people reporting their impairment had got better (77.45%).
- Feedback from people about their experience of the service has been positive. People have reported increased confidence in managing their condition and appreciated the ability to discuss the information being provided to them.

Three ways we have made a difference in the community

Throughout our work we gather information about health inequalities by speaking to people whose experiences aren't often heard.

Creating empathy by bringing experiences to life – Kent Uni

It's important for services to see the bigger picture. Hearing personal experiences and the impact on people's lives provides them with a better understanding of the problems.

At a workshop we facilitated for Kent University students we were able to gather experiences about mental health support. One of the key things they raised was a preference for digital communication from services. We shared this feedback with the adult mental health provider, which added weight to a conversation they were already having about how they were sending out appointment information.



Getting services to involve the public

Services need to understand the benefits of involving local people to help improve care for everyone.

We've been working with the Kent and Medway Adult Safeguarding Board to help ensure that people's experiences inform their reviews and gives factual context to support the work being done by the board members. We initially shared a report about hospital discharge, details of which were included in their annual report. We meet with the Independent Chair of the Board and the Board manager to provide feedback in relation to emerging issues and specific themes identified in the Safeguarding Adult Reviews.



Improving care over time

Change takes time. We often work behind the scenes with services to consistently raise issues and bring about change.

Over the last six years we've been testing how the Accessible Information Standard (AIS) is being implemented. Due to our work, the way communication needs are met for people has improved. This has focused on changes made at East Kent and Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells hospitals, including cards to access the video interpreting service and new hearing loops. This work was recognised at the Healthwatch England awards. We'll continue to push for better execution of the Accessible Information Standard across Kent.



There's a summary of other outcomes we've achieved this year in the Statutory Statements section at the end of this report.



Hearing from all communities

Over the past year, we have worked hard to make sure we hear from everyone within our local area. We consider it important to reach out to the communities we hear from less frequently to gather their feedback and make sure their voice is heard, and services meet their needs.

This year we have reached different communities by:

- Using translators, working with youth groups and universities and developing partnerships with community organisations.
- This has allowed us to hear from a Nepalese cohort, LGBTQ+ young people, university students, the Nigerian community, parents with SEND children and more.

Getting people the equipment they need

The NHS and Kent County Council were concerned that they weren't hearing diverse views on the current Integrated Community Equipment Service. They had conducted an initial survey but response were from a narrow ethnicity range..

We were able to help support them by accessing 25 people from a Nepalese cohort thanks to a community centre in Folkestone. With aid of a translator we were able to capture their experiences and views on access and their current equipment needs.

As a result of what people shared:

- We were able to facilitate an occupational therapist attending the Nepalese community centre and providing information and assessment to those that previously hadn't been able to access the service..
- The NHS and Kent County Council commissioners shaped the new contract specification to ensure the provider would be responsible for improving outreach and access to the Nepalese and other groups.
- We've continued engagement with the Nigerian community and will be producing a report comparing against a white British cohort to identify potential inequalities.

Influencing the future workforce

We worked with Canterbury Christ Church University to support the revalidation of their allied health professional course. We spoke to 122 people who had used physiotherapists, radiologists, paramedics and speech and language practitioners.

- Physiotherapy discharge leaflets have begun distribution again, having originally been ceased as a Covid-19 response.
- Pre-appointment communications are being reviewed with the intent to provide clearer department directions.
- We heard from people in both physiotherapy and radiology departments at one hospital, who told us that, as they were hard of hearing, they were worried that they would not be able to hear their name being called and would miss their appointment. The hospital advised the increased volume in the area was due to the room doubling as an escalations department and the area was seeing much heavier footfall than usual. Since then, the escalations department has been relocated elsewhere. Plans are being established in case it returns to deal with the raised volumes. This includes a screen displaying appointment announcements and potentially a speaker system.
- Canterbury Christ Church University have been successful in their revalidation of their allied health professionals courses.
- The feedback about allied health professionals has been uploaded to the Futures NHS collaboration platform: NHS England South East professional standards.



Advice and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch is here for you. In times of worry or stress, we can provide confidential support and free information to help you understand your options and get the help you need. Whether it's finding an NHS dentist, making a complaint or choosing a good care home for a loved one – you can count on us.

This year we've helped people by:

- Providing up-to-date information people can trust
- Helping people access the services they need
- Helping people access NHS dentistry
- Supporting people to look after their health during the cost-of-living crisis

Helping the effective management of Long Term Conditions

Thanks to the effort of our Information and Signposting team we were able to help an individual get the medication they needed.

We spoke to a gentleman (90+), they explained about their thyroid condition and how the medication they were taking had been reduced over time, causing their levels to drop and making them ill.

The individual had contacted their surgery and had been referred for tests with the plan to discuss the matter once the results were known, however this did not happen. Following our conversation, it was suggested the individual contact the practice manager which they did. The individual said that the practice manager was very helpful, they organised a meeting with the doctor where the individual was able to discuss the issues they had. The individual reported that the GP apologised and listened to them before agreeing to make changes to their medication and follow up care.

Ensuring people have access to Advocacy support

We had feedback that people couldn't access the advocacy support that they were being signposted to by one of our hospital trusts.

We checked with the trust and found that they had the incorrect details on the information they were providing to people.

We were able to share the correct contact details, which the Trust then changed so that people were then able to access advocacy support if they wanted to .

Helping people get the support they are entitled to

We heard from an individual who, after using patient transport for many years, had been told that they were no longer eligible. This was causing great distress because the individual needed to attend for tests to be able continue their cancer treatment. We spoke to G4S and it was discovered that following a change in criteria by the ICB the call handlers had not been applying the new criteria properly and had been missing some questions. Call handlers were informed and the individual along with many others were then able to access transport going forward and receive the treatment they needed.



Volunteering

We're supported by a team of amazing volunteers who are at the heart of what we do. Thanks to their efforts in the community, we're able to understand what is working and what needs improving.

This year our volunteers:

- Visited communities to promote their local Healthwatch and what we have to offer
- Collected experiences and supported their communities to share their views
- Carried out visits to local services to help them improve

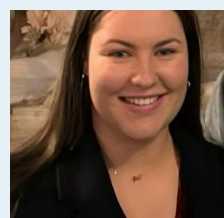
For the first time this year we've worked with the University of Kent to provide a placement opportunity to one of their students which has been a great success.

They were able to put the theoretical skills they were learning into real life application. They helped us understand who we are hearing from and how that compares to the Kent population so we could start targeting our engagement strategy to some of the gaps.

This year we've been proud of how we have given some of our volunteers the skills and a pathway to paid employment with Healthwatch and our host organisation EK360.



"I learnt so much from volunteering with Healthwatch, particularly around data analysis and building my confidence using spreadsheet software like excel. I learnt to be more confident when talking to the public, and gained a deeper insight into how peoples experiences can drive drastic change in their communities" **Jade**



"Volunteering with Healthwatch Kent enhanced my communication and engagement skills. It provided me with critical thinking skills which was then useful during my full time role and helped me empathise with people to make them feel safe when we talk to them" **Emmanuel**



Do you feel inspired?



We are always on the lookout for new volunteers, so please get in touch today.

 www.healthwatchkent.co.uk/volunteer

 **0808 801 0102**

 volunteer@healthwatchkent.co.uk



Finance and future priorities

To help us carry out our work we receive funding from our local authority under the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

Our income and expenditure

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from Government	£507,131	Expenditure on pay	£482,504
Additional income	£46,933	Non-pay expenditure	£14,220.
		Office and management fees	£124,336
Total income	£554,064	Total expenditure	£621,060.00

Additional income is broken down by:

- £20,000 received from Kent and Medway ICB for Care Home Manger interviews
 - £26, 933 top up from the wider People's Voice contract
-

Next steps

Over the next year, we will keep reaching out to every part of society, especially people in the most deprived areas, so that those in power hear their views and experiences.

We will also work together with partners and our local Integrated Care System to help develop an NHS culture where, at every level, staff strive to listen and learn from patients to make care better.

Our priorities for the next year are:

1. Map the journey of people being discharged from hospital
2. Hear from veterans about their barriers to care
3. Help review changes to SEND support information
4. Extend the work on the Integrated Community Equipment Service
5. Better understand how new digital systems impact access to services
6. Explore how we can communicate what people are experiencing in different ways



Statutory statements

**Healthwatch Kent, The Old Court House, 8 Tufton Street, Ashford
TN23 1QN**

**Contract held by EK360 (Engaging Kent), The Stables, Little
Coldharbour Farm, Tong Lane, Lamberhurst, Tunbridge Wells,
Kent, TN3 8AD**

**Healthwatch Kent uses the Healthwatch Trademark when
undertaking our statutory activities as covered by
the licence agreement.**

The way we work

Involvement of volunteers and lay people in our governance and decision-making

Our Healthwatch Steering Group consists of four members who work on a voluntary basis to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny of our activities. Our Steering Group ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community.

Throughout 2023/24, the Board met **eight** times and made decisions on matters such as approving additional promotional materials and putting projects such as people's experiences of referrals onto the workplan.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities by analysing the themes and trends of what people have told us and where we notice gaps in what we are hearing from the public.

Methods and systems used across the year to obtain people's experiences

We use a wide range of approaches to ensure that as many people as possible can provide us with insight into their experience of using services. During 2023/24, we have been available by phone, email and post and provided a web form on our website and through social media, as well as attending meetings of community groups and forums.

We ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. We will publish it on our website, attach copies to our newsletter and present it at public meetings which the public can watch. We are happy to provide a paper copy upon request.

Responses to recommendations

We had **no** providers who did not respond to requests for information or recommendations. There were no issues or recommendations escalated by us to the Healthwatch England Committee, so no resulting reviews or investigations.

Taking people's experiences to decision-makers

We ensure that people who can make decisions about services hear about the insights and experiences that have been shared with us.

In our local authority area, for example, we take information to the Kent Health and Wellbeing Board, patient experience committees and The integrated care partnership, The Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, plus our regular catch ups and meetings with key stakeholders in the system .

We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in Kent and Medway. For example, we work with Healthwatch Medway to share the experiences we've heard at the Kent and Medway Quality Group as well as the Integrated Care Partnership. We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

Enter and view

This year, we made 0 Enter and View visits.

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Kent is represented on the Kent Health and Wellbeing Board by Robbie Goatham, manager and Libby Lines, Steering Group chair.

Healthwatch Kent is represented on the Kent and Medway Integrated Care Partnership by Bisi Dada and Robbie Goatham. Healthwatch Kent also attends the Primary Care Oversight Group, System Quality Group and Health Inequality Sub Committees

Other 2023 – 2024 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
Response time by the ICB complaints team.	ICB Quality Team have used feedback to monitor Complaints Contract to ensure that response times are adhered to.
Concerns about disabled toilets being pedal activated so not accessible to all patients	Trust wide initiative to replace disability toilet bins with disability friendly options.
Prescribing Hormone Replacement treatment for transgender patients.	HWK feedback will be used by the ICB to scope what can be put in place to support this cohort of patients better. The example has been shared with our Chief Medical Officer.
Incorrect Covid Vaccine guidelines provided to patients.	ICB Quality Team worked with the Vaccine team to ensure that clear and concise guidelines for qualifying for the Covid Vaccine were produced.
From individuals who we've spoken to	'Difficult to know where to turn for help but reassuring to know Healthwatch is there to help'
	'I am really glad that I have spoken to you, it has given me the confidence to speak to the care home and the GP surgery'
	'Thank you, you've been very kind listening to me and agreeing to call in a couple of days'.

healthwatch

Healthwatch Kent


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