

Together

healthwatch
Kent

**we're making health
and social care better**

Annual Report 2022–23



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"In the last ten years, the health and social care landscape has changed dramatically, but the dedication of local Healthwatch hasn't. Your local Healthwatch has worked tirelessly to make sure the views of local people are heard, and NHS and social care leaders use your feedback to make care better."

Louise Ansari, Healthwatch National Director

Message from our Chair

We have faced changes and challenges this year with starting our new contract and understanding new health and social care structures.

Our focuses have been:

- Achieving outcomes and being change-driven, to bring best value to our partners, stakeholders and the community
- Strengthening our Social Return on Investment, social value reporting and evaluation skills
- Recruiting volunteers which reflect the people in our local community
- Recognising how partners across Kent have overcome challenge and delivered positive change to the community through our annual impact awards event
- Improving our understanding of and data evidencing health inequalities
- Helping service providers to reach groups across the community who have unheard voices
- Establishing relationships with the newly formed ICB and ICP.



Libby Lines
Healthwatch Kent
Steering Group Chair



On behalf of the volunteers and staff team I would also like to thank Penny Graham who stepped down as chair of the Steering Group recently after more than three years. She gave of her time unflinchingly and helped Healthwatch Kent navigate the ever-changing landscape of Health and Social Care. Penny was particularly skilled at bringing people together and harvesting different perspectives to drive forward change and improvements in the sector. Thank you from all of us Penny.

About us

Healthwatch Kent is your local health and social care champion.

Across Kent 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.

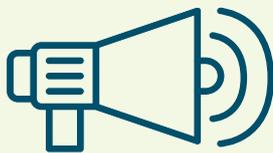


Our values are:

- **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



1,208 people

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

35,316 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

20 reports

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

Our most popular report was

Helping people get dental care

Which highlighted the difference dental care can make to people's lives.



Health and care that works for you



We're lucky to have

33 volunteers

outstanding volunteers who gave up [x days] to make care better for our community.

We're funded by our local authority. In 2022-23 we received

£507,131

which is **less than** the previous year.

We currently employ

11.8 FTE staff

who help us carry out our work.

How we've made a difference this year

Spring



We shared stories from 19 families of children with disabilities to improve their experiences when accessing health and social care.



We alerted regulators about GPs renewing Do Not attempt Resuscitation plans without consent for people in care homes.

Summer



When people couldn't get a GP appointment, we worked with our ICB to inform the community about staff other than the GP who can offer support with health concerns.



We supported homeless people to access GPs by asking that registration policies for homeless people were made clearer on GP websites.

Autumn



We championed people's need for support with mental health whilst waiting a long time for assessments or treatment at a community mental health transformation meeting



We supported someone with a broken tooth at risk of infection to get an emergency dentist appointment.

Winter



We reviewed infection control policies at a local hospital to ensure they prevented staff from wearing uniforms on public transport.



We improved people's discharge experiences by re-introducing the distribution of information and support leaflets at discharge appointments across local hospitals.

10 years of improving care

This year marks a special milestone for Healthwatch. Over the last ten years, people have shared their experiences, good and bad, to help improve health and social care. A big thank you to all our Healthwatch Heroes that have stepped up and inspired change. Here are a few of our highlights:

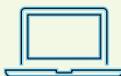
How have we made care better, together?

Wheelchair services



Through amplifying the voices of wheelchair users, we reduced the average wait time it takes for people to get a wheelchair.

Digital inclusion



We worked with Kent Coast Volunteering who provided the local Nepalese community with digital skills to help evidence the impact on this community. They are now less lonely and are accessing more health and social care services..

NHS dentistry



Over the years, when people have needed emergency dental care, we worked with Kent Dental Helpline and other networks to link people to appointments..

Improving AIS



After visiting a local hospital with a partially sighted patient, hearing loops are now working, and staff are better trained to use them. Signs and patient leaflets are also easier to read for partially sighted patients.

Medication access



We worked with NELFT to introduce a new phone system to the CAMHS service, making it easier for patients to access medication for their children.



Healthwatch Hero



Celebrating a hero in our local community.

This year we held our second Impact Awards evening where we recognised good work across Kent and Medway's health and social care sector, particularly from those who faced challenges.

We want to recognise East Kent Mind and barbers who they have worked with in Canterbury as our hero, for improving access to mental health support for men in their local community.

East Kent Mind set up the barbershop project, where barbers have been trained to spot signs of anxiety and depression in their customers and offer mental health support and signposting. Men are statistically more likely to discuss mental health issues with their barber than with their GP. Barbers also see their customers every four weeks, so they are well placed to spot any changes in people, or to follow up with people on how they are doing.

We say thank you to those involved in the project, because of you, more men are accessing support for their mental health.



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.

Gluten-free flour mixes on prescription for coeliacs

One of the biggest themes in our data this year has been difficulty accessing a GP. This caused issues for Erica, 82, who suffers from coeliac disease.

Erica couldn't get her regular prescription for gluten-free flour mixes from her GP. She was told they were not available to order.

Erica suffers from coeliac disease, and the delay in receiving her prescription severely limited her diet as she prepares all her own food to avoid cross-contamination with other ingredients, as well as to cook recipes which meet her dietary needs as a diabetic. Buying gluten-free flour mixes from the supermarket can be expensive.

Erica reached out to Healthwatch Kent for help, and we raised the issue with primary care colleagues at NHS Kent and Medway right away.

What change did we see?



NHS Kent and Medway investigated the feedback and discovered a technical issue within the prescription ordering system.

They got back in touch and confirmed the prescription system was now working correctly.

Awareness and instructions were shared to GPs across Kent to ensure all gluten-free prescriptions could be dispensed correctly.

What difference will this make?

1 in every 100 people in the UK are coeliac, which means there are around 18,500 coeliac people in Kent. This means that even if only 1% of coeliac people in Kent receive gluten-free food mixes on prescription, £277,500 worth of social has been generated for the community from this outcome. We have used Social Value measures to estimate this figure.



Without NHS support, some of the most vulnerable patients like me are at risk of not maintaining their gluten-free diet, which is the only treatment for our condition. Gram for gram, gluten-free staples like pasta are already 3-4 x more expensive than standard products!"

Erica, from East Kent



Supporting access to dentists for homeless people

Over the past few years, we have heard from a constant stream of people in distress as they cannot access essential dental care.

For those who can't afford private dental treatment this has meant living with excruciating pain and has caused complications with other health problems too.

Laura, who was homeless and pregnant when contacting us, was worried as her nurse had advised that a lack of dental treatment would affect her pregnancy. Studies have shown that poor dental health during pregnancy can be harmful to the Mum and their baby's overall health. Laura couldn't register with a dentist as she was told she needed to provide a home address, in order to even be on a waiting list for available NHS dentists in her local area.

What did we do to help?

1. We signposted Laura and her nurse to Kent Dental Helpline.
2. We supported them through the process of requesting an emergency dental appointment.
3. We shared Laura's issues alongside our other feedback on dentistry with local dental committees, the Kent and Medway overview and scrutiny committee, NHS England and Healthwatch England to influence changes at a local and national level.

What impact did this have for Laura?

Thanks to our signposting, Laura was able to get an emergency dental appointment.

Laura now has improved physical health through her dental treatment, Laura is relieved from stress and anxiety, and Laura's overall wellbeing has improved.

We have used Social Value tools to estimate that through these outcomes, Laura has experienced £2,500 worth of social value.



"I am currently 18 weeks pregnant and have been unable to find a local dentist taking on new patients. My mum experienced gum disease whilst pregnant so I am worried and feel I need to see a dentist soon."



Three ways we have made a difference for 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



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.

We spoke to local gypsy and traveller communities across 2017 and 2019. We triangulated this data with recent feedback we have heard from this community and presented at the health overview and scrutiny committee. This is where decision makers from across Kent come together to discuss the future of health and social care services. The committee is now better informed about how gypsy and traveller people can be better supported.

Getting services to involve the public



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

We attended the Kent Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee and encouraged Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust colleagues to use learning from their cardiology review, which involved patient experience feedback, when making improvements to services. We also suggested they include service user experiences as part of their evaluation when testing how well changes had been embedded to services.

Improving care over time



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

In our last annual report, we spoke about what access to healthcare looks like for the trans and non-binary community in Kent and Medway. This year, we continue to work with colleagues at NHS Kent and Medway to set up support networks across GPs, so that transgender and non-binary people feel more included by the health system, and better supported whilst waiting for treatment.



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:

- We have heard from Fishermen who do not usually engage in health services
- We have heard from homeless people and refugees
- We have adapted our engagement methods
- We improved our data analysis skills to better identify health inequalities

Better care for fishermen

There are 11,000 fishermen in the UK spending long unsociable hours at sea, which makes it hard for them to use public services. We visited Ramsgate harbour on the Kent coast to hear the experiences of local fishermen. Many said getting a GP appointment was difficult because they were at sea during practice opening times. They also avoided making appointments because they wouldn't get paid for missing work.

We recommended that GP eConsult hours should be extended to cover evening slots, and more health check sessions should be held at the local docks to allow fishermen to get the medical checks they need.



“I could do with going to the GP about my elbow. But nowadays the GP wants you to call at 8:30... I just can't call at that time. By the time I'm back on shore, all the appointments have been taken.”

Fisherman from Ramsgate, Kent

Supporting local refugees

In April 2022, just under 100 Ukrainian refugees arrived in Kent. Without an NHS number, or a permanent address, many of these refugees told us they found it difficult to register with a GP and needed healthcare.

To support refugees in our community with improved access to healthcare, we had registration policies and instructions translated into Ukrainian and circulated these via county council representatives who were supporting refugees across Kent.

Refugees are now better informed about how to register with a GP and are aware of their rights, making them feel more empowered to take control of their health and ask for support with their health when they need it.



“Hello. My name is Adriyan. I am from Ukraine. No doctor accepts me to get an NHS number. I can't see GP without NHS number. Tell me what to do?”

Local resident



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, how to make 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 to register with a GP
- Helping people access NHS dentistry
- Supporting people to look after their health during the cost of living crisis

Reducing loneliness

Sometimes people just need someone to talk to, and our information and signposting team are there to listen.

We heard from Rita, who requested assistance in organising a housing review. She felt her health conditions were getting progressively worse and needed support in place at home.

Rita explained that she had tried to access support already but kept being redirected, and she felt she could not resolve the situation alone. We raised Rita's concerns with her local council.

Following Healthwatch's discussions with the council, a full housing review was completed for Rita, which assessed her housing needs and allowed for her to receive the support she needed within her home.

“When we visited Rita, she said she was lonely. We connected her to a local befriending service.”

Housing review officer, Swale borough council

Reaching out to the befriending service has meant Rita is able to enjoy socialising again and doesn't feel alone anymore.

Re-building confidence in local hospital care

Jada got in touch as she felt anxious about attending her local hospital. She had avoided accessing emergency care when she needed to and was concerned for her ongoing health.

Jada told us her anxiety was caused by previous traumatic experiences at her local hospital. She wanted to see if we could help and told us that speaking to some of the staff at the hospital could make her feel better supported and more familiar with the hospital setting.

We spoke to the Director of nursing at Jada's local hospital and arranged for a meeting to take place, where Jada could discuss her worries. The hospital team also provided Jada with a 'carers card', allowing a nominated person to attend appointments or emergency care as support for Jada and always remain with her.

Jada now feels more confident and comfortable about attending hospital if she needs to. She feels listened to and welcomed by her local hospital and will no longer avoid accessing care and support that she needs.

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
- Raised your feedback with service providers and commissioners
- Visited patients in hospitals to hear their concerns about the discharge process
- Made sure your feedback was influencing positive change
- Helped inform our prioritisation process.

Nic

"I help the Signposting, Information and research team with their data entry by logging feedback people share with us on the database. I have volunteered in many places, but this is the first time I have ever felt so welcome and at home. This is really a great place to volunteer, I really enjoy my time working here."



Romeo

"What better way of being a part of the legacy of making our world a better place than helping champion people's health needs and social care concerns. Privileged to have been trained to engage with the public, I couldn't be prouder being a Healthwatch volunteer particularly knowing that my contributions may have changed someone's life for the better."



Jill

"During my volunteering I have visited a wide range of Care Homes, General Hospitals, Mental Hospitals, Hospices, Community Events, Coffee Caravans (for isolated communities) and I have learnt a great deal about the issues faced by service users both positive and negative. It is very rewarding to know that by listening to people you can play a part in highlighting and improving their experience of Health and Social care to the benefit of all of us."



Do you feel inspired?

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



[Healthwatch Kent website](#)



0808 801 0102



info@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	£507,131.00	Expenditure on pay	£430,542.00
Additional income	£49,643.00	Non-pay expenditure	£126,232.00
Total income	£556,774.00	Total expenditure	£556,774.00

Additional income::

- **£49,643.00 subsidy from EK360 which includes commissioned joint work:**
- **£30,000 funding** received from Ageing Well (ICB) to support our Enhanced Health in Care Homes project.
- **£2000 funding** received from Canterbury Christchurch to support communications activities for the Allied Health Professional project.

Next steps

In the ten years since Healthwatch was launched, we've demonstrated the power of public feedback in helping the health and care system understand what is working, spot issues and think about how things can be better in the future.

Services are currently facing unprecedented challenges and tackling the backlog needs to be a key priority for the NHS to ensure everyone gets the care they need. Over the next year we will continue our role in collecting feedback from everyone in our local community and giving them a voice to help shape improvements to services.

We will also continue our work to tackling inequalities that exist and work to reduce the barriers you face when accessing care, regardless whether that is because of where you live, income or race.

Top three priorities for 2023–24

1. Help ensure people are at the heart of understanding and addressing health inequalities.
2. People who are having difficulty accessing services that are most in need.
3. Women's Health

Statutory statements



Healthwatch Kent, Seabrooke House, Church Rd, Ashford
TN23 1RD

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 currently consists of **3** members who work on a voluntary basis to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny to our activities. The Steering Group ensures that decisions about priority areas of work provide a balanced workplan concerns and interests of our diverse local community. Throughout 2022/23 the Steering Group met **9** times and made decisions on matters such as **volunteer role descriptions** and **projects to take forward**. We ensure wider public involvement through existing intelligence and by talking to stakeholders too in our project development.

There are also **2** volunteers on our Intelligence Gathering Group who help review individual cases, themes and trends to decide what action we should take.

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 have the opportunity to provide us with insight about their experience of using services. During 2022/23 we have been available by phone, email, provided a webform on our website and through social media, as well as attending meetings of community groups and forums and visiting local community sights to engage with people face-to-face.

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, through our social media channels and our newsletters.

Responses to recommendations

We had **0** providers who did not respond to requests for information or recommendations. There were no issues or recommendations escalated by us to 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 insight and experiences that have been shared with us.

In our local authority area for example we take information to board meetings in each health and care partnership area, the Integrated Care Board system quality group, and the health overview and scrutiny committee.

We also take insight and experiences to decision makers at our local hospital trusts. 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 did not utilise our enter and view powers as providers and organisations were welcoming of our visits to help them learn and improve.

2022–2023 Outcomes

Project/ activity	Changes made to services
Hospital complaints policy review	Local Hospitals made changes to their websites which communicate their complaints policies
Non-emergency patient transport	Local feedback has influenced changes to national eligibility criteria for this service
Homeless and registering with a GP	A local GP surgery updated their registration policy to accommodate homeless people
GP phone line errors	A GP changed their phonenumber to make it easier for people to book appointments
Prescription issues for gluten-free flour mixes	Prescription ordering system error corrected
Infection control at local hospitals	Infection control communication was updated to include guidance on where nurses can wear their uniforms
Visiting allied health services	Emergency escalation area removed from an appointment waiting room, reducing noise levels and ensuring people could hear their name being called for appointments.
	Information leaflets being distributed to support discharge experience

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Kent is represented on the Kent Health and Wellbeing Board by Penny Graham (steering group volunteer) and Robbie Goatham (Healthwatch Kent Manager). The Kent Health and Wellbeing Board only meets twice a year, avoiding duplication of activity with the Integrated Care Partnership.

Healthwatch Kent is represented on Kent and Medway's Integrated Care Partnerships by **Robbie Goatham, Healthwatch Kent Manager**. We have contributed extensive feedback about people's experiences to help shape the Draft Integrated Care Strategy Priorities.



Healthwatch Kent

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