

On equal terms

Then and now

Healthwatch Kent Annual Report 2020-21



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It's been a year no-one could predict

Covid continues to have a huge impact on our health & care system and has affected every aspect of our work..

Despite working from our kitchen tables and spare rooms, we're proud of what we have achieved this year. We've continued to raise your voice and ensure decision makers hear what is important to you. They've been able to use your feedback to help them plan how to offer care and support during these difficult months.

Your story is powerful, so I wanted to take a moment to thank everyone who has got in touch this year and taken the time to share their experience of using Kent's health or social care services.



"We've heard from more people than ever before, and I want you to know that each and every story is powerful and can make a difference. Keep telling those stories!"

Other highlights this year include:

- **Supporting our Care Homes** : We spoke to 204 Care Homes about how they had coped during the initial lockdown. We wanted the system to use these learnings to help inform future lockdowns. We'll be following up with Care Homes this year to see how they are doing now.
- **Giving community pharmacists a voice** : We shared the stories of 101 pharmacists across Kent & Medway. They told us what life had really been like for them. 92% of them told us that they didn't get the support, information or equipment that they needed in the first wave. Again, we'll be following up with pharmacists to understand what difference our recommendations have made.
- **Helping decision makers to hear from you** : Every month we have been taking your stories directly to the people who make decisions. Our regular insight reports have been avidly read by commissioners, policy makers and social care leaders and helped them to plan what you need.

We hope you find this report useful. Do get in touch if you would like to know more about our work.

Penny Graham,

Healthwatch Kent volunteer & Chair of the Healthwatch Kent Steering Group

About us

Here to make health and care better

We are the independent champion for people who use health and social care services in Kent. We're here to find out what matters to people and help make sure your views shape the support you need, by sharing these views with those who have the power to make change happen.

Helping you to find the information you need

We help people find the information they need about services in their area. This has been vital during the pandemic with the ever-changing environment and restrictions limiting people's access to health and social care services.

Our goals



1 Supporting you to have your say

We want more people to get the information they need to take control of their health and care, make informed decisions and shape the services that support them.



2 Providing a high quality service

We want everyone who shares can experience or seeks advice from us to get a high quality service and to understand the difference their views make.



3 Ensuring your views help improve health & care

We want more services to use your views to shape the health and care support you need today and in the future.



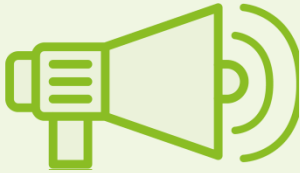
“Healthwatch Kent has done fantastic work during the COVID-19 pandemic, but there is more work ahead to ensure that everyone’s views are heard. COVID-19 has highlighted inequalities and to tackle these unfair health differences we will need those in power to listen, to hear the experiences of those facing inequality and understand the steps that could improve people’s lives.”

Sir Robert Francis QC, Chair of Healthwatch England

Highlights from our year

Find out about our resources and how we have engaged and supported people in 2020-21.

Reaching out



We heard from

2,169 people

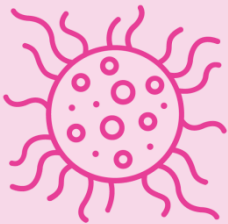
this year about their experiences of health and social care.

We provided advice and information to

5,176 people

this year.

Responding to the pandemic



We created

20 weekly newsletters

for nearly 3,000 NHS volunteers across Kent to keep them involved and up-to-date on what was happening in their hospitals during the first lockdown

Making a difference to care



We published

18 reports

about the improvements people would like to see to health and social care services. This included 12 reports which detailed how people were coping at that moment in time during the pandemic.

Across all our reports we made 7 recommendations for improvement.

Health and care that works for you



26 active volunteers

helped us to carry out our work offering hours of their time throughout the year.

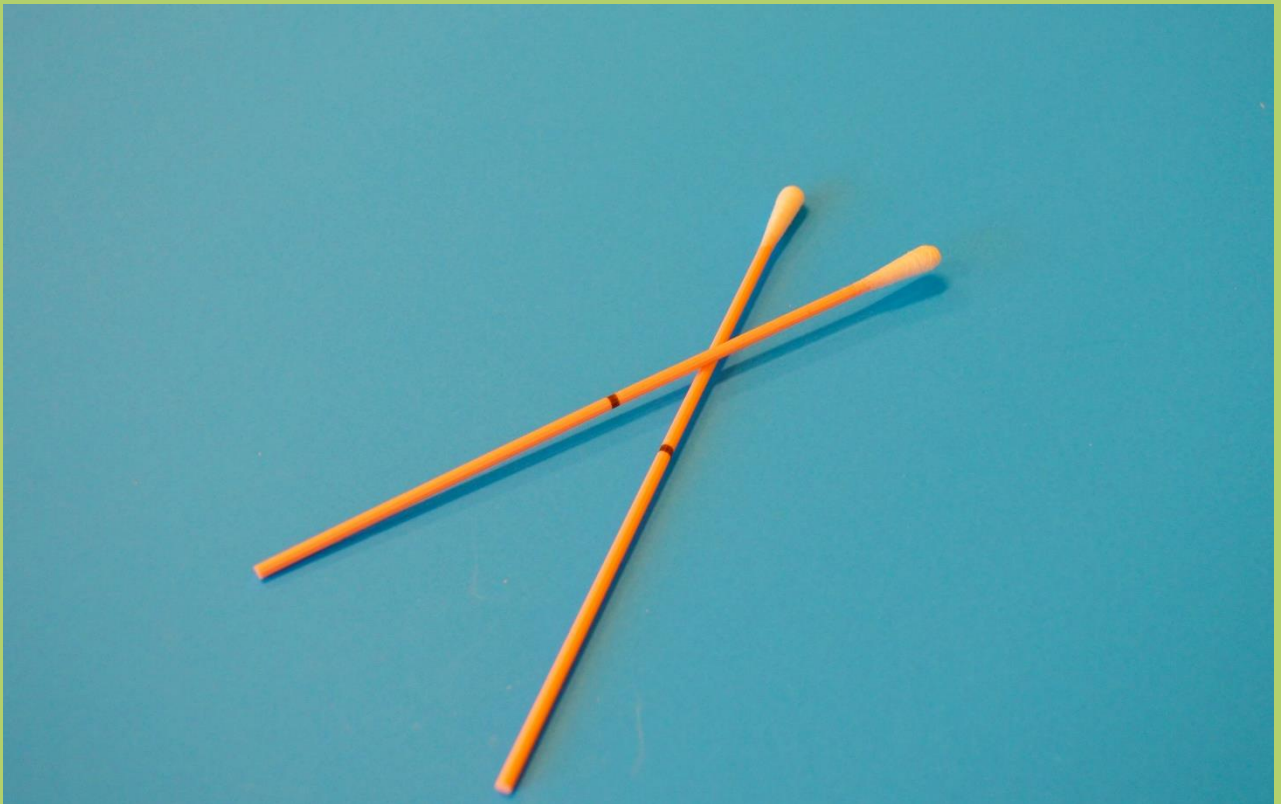
We employ 11.1 staff

which is an 0.2% increase from the previous year.

We received

£511,000 in funding

from our local authority in 2020-21, same as last previous year.



Covid Testing : Then & Now



Then: support at Covid testing centres

Thanks to people sharing their experiences of visiting Covid testing sites across Kent, we were able to escalate concerns that some people were finding it hard to understand the information given to them at testing centres. Now as a direct result of that feedback, everyone arriving at a testing centre in Kent & Medway is asked if they need help.

People who are D/deaf or blind told us that they found it difficult to understand the instructions at Covid testing centres across Kent. Information was often in written format and they found themselves trying to communicate with testing centre staff through a mask and a car window.

Every week we gathered feedback from voluntary groups about the issues they were hearing from their clients and members. Kent Association for the Blind shared numerous stories with us detailing how people struggled to read the written information at the testing sites.



Now: better support for people

Thanks to people sharing their story both with us and Kent Association for the Blind, we were able to escalate their stories to the Kent & Medway Clinical Commissioning Group.

They listened to the feedback and have changed their procedures to ensure that everyone is proactively asked if they need extra help when arriving at the test centre.

Training has also been given to all staff to ensure they know how best to support people who may need extra help.

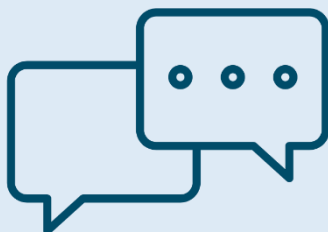


“At a crucial time for Covid-19 testing, Kent Association for the Blind is delighted to have worked with Healthwatch to bring about this positive change to make testing centres easier to use and support easier to access. This will benefit not only people with sight impairments, but also those with other support needs.” Katherine

Barr, Kent Association for the Blind



Share your views with us



If you have a query about a health and social care service, or need help with where you can go to access further support, get in touch. Don't struggle alone. Healthwatch is here for you.

 www.healthwatchkent.co.uk

 **0808 801 0102**

 info@healthwatchkent.co.uk



Then & now : getting medication for your child



Then: changing prescriptions during Covid

We heard from parents who were trying, and failing, to get through to the Children & Adolescent Mental Health service to change their child's medication.

Parents told us that when they rang the Children & Adolescent Mental Health service, they could only leave a message. The automated phone system didn't allow them to get through to a real person to talk about their concerns or change their medication.

They told us they weren't getting a return phone call and they were concerned and frustrated.



Now: simple changes = big impact

We took the feedback directly to the people who provide the Children & Adolescent Mental Health service. As a result, the telephone system has been changed and offers callers four clear options:

1. To speak directly to a member of staff
2. A line for people wanting information about Autism & ADHD waiting times
3. Prescription information
4. All other enquiries



Then : getting a BSL interpreter

For years, people have been telling us how difficult it is to get a British Sign Language Interpreter when they are attending an appointment in hospital (or any other NHS service). We've been working with East Kent Hospitals to implement a new online video interpreter service.

We also helped to develop and distribute a card which D/deaf people can easily use to indicate that they need an interpreter when they visit hospital.



Now : free BSL card for all

We are helping to distribute the new free credit card sized cards to anyone who needs one.

So far, we have sent cards to people across East Kent to ensure they get the support that they need the next time they visit hospital.

"We heard first hand how difficult it is for Deaf people to attend a regular hospital appointment let alone if they need emergency care or if they are in hospital for a length stay. We've been working with East Kent Hospitals for several years to make it easier for Deaf patients, so we're delighted that the technology has been implemented and the cards enable people to get the support that they need." Robbie Gotham, Healthwatch Kent Manager



To find out more about this and so much more check out our website

www.healthwatchkent.co.uk



Responding to COVID-19

Healthwatch plays an important role in helping people to get the information they need, especially through the pandemic. The insight we collect is shared with both Healthwatch England and local partners to ensure services are operating as best as possible during the pandemic.

This year we helped 5,176 people by:

- Providing up-to-date, accurate, trustworthy information
- Creating a weekly newsletter for all NHS volunteers across Kent to ensure they could keep connected with their NHS Trust and free up NHS staff to focus on front line delivery
- Helping people to know what services were open, and how to access them
- Proactively collected feedback and insights from the voluntary sector to give them a voice and ensure they were heard by the right people
- Shared weekly insights about how people were coping to inform decision makers and help them plan emergency and then recovery services. Took your feedback directly to emergency planning meetings where your feedback was able to inform and influence decisions
- Helped Carers, particularly Hidden Carers, to know that there was support available to them
- Supporting the vaccine roll-out

Top four areas that people have contacted us about:



30% on GP services



31% on Dentistry



11% on Hospital Care



6% on Vaccines

Getting your vaccine questions answered



Unsurprisingly we've heard from lots of people about the vaccine programme. Our role has been to provide people with clear, consistent and concise advice and information articles on our website to help address people's concerns.

We also put people's vaccine questions directly to the lead for the Vaccine role out in Kent and published the answers on our website.

The key questions people were asking included:

- How will people who are housebound be vaccinated?
- What should I do if I am allergic to the vaccine ingredients?



Contact us to get the information you need

If you have a query about a health and social care service, or need help with where you can go to access further support, get in touch. Don't struggle alone. Healthwatch is here for you.



www.healthwatchkent.co.uk



Freephone 0808 801 0102



info@healthwatchkent.co.uk



Our Volunteers

At Healthwatch Kent we are supported by 26 active volunteers to help us find out what people think is working, and what improvements people would like to make to services.

This year our volunteers:

- Helped people have their say from home, carrying out surveys over the telephone and online
- Researched and wrote articles for our website offering advice and support to over 1,000 people
- Benefited from our training to help them gain digital skills which they could use at home as well as for their volunteering. For every £1 we invested in that training, we can evidence £52.46 worth of social value in return.
- Continued to attend meetings on our behalf and ensure peoples' voices are being heard
- Scrutinised public engagement and consultations ; acting as a critical friend
- Have built relationships with charities and voluntary groups to ensure they, and their clients, had a voice and were heard by decision makers
- Helped us to theme and analyse the feedback that we are hearing
- Made decisions about our immediate and long term priorities



Feeling proud- Mary

"I'd worked most of my life in 'people' focussed work and still wanted to make meaningful 'social' contributions in my 'retirement'. Healthwatch hit the spot. I love being part of something that really matters. Most recently I have been representing Healthwatch in meetings about Diabetes. My views have been listened to and I've been able to influence the way the service is being developed. I've also been helping local voluntary groups to get their voice heard. Every fortnight I ring them and listen to the issues and challenges that they, and their clients, are facing. Everything they tell me, alongside feedback from lots of other individuals and charities, is then shared directly with the right decision makers to ensure action can be taken. I can't ignore the feeling of pride that I have and I have so enjoyed volunteering within this excellent team this year."



Finding new ways to hear from people - Pat & Jill

"Usually we would visit our local hospital to hear from patients about their stories. Now that we can't visit, we've had to think of new ways to hear their views. We've both been chatting with stroke patients over WhatsApp and on the phone. We wanted to understand what their experience has been like. Their feedback will be used to inform a new stroke pathway which is currently being developed for both Kent & Medway patients. Although we are looking forward to getting back to chatting with patients face to face, it was great to still be able to capture peoples' views."



Volunteer with us

Are you feeling inspired? We are always on the lookout for new volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering, we'd love to chat to you.



www.healthwatchkent.co.uk/getinvolved



0808 801 0102



info@healthwatchkent.co.uk

Finances

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

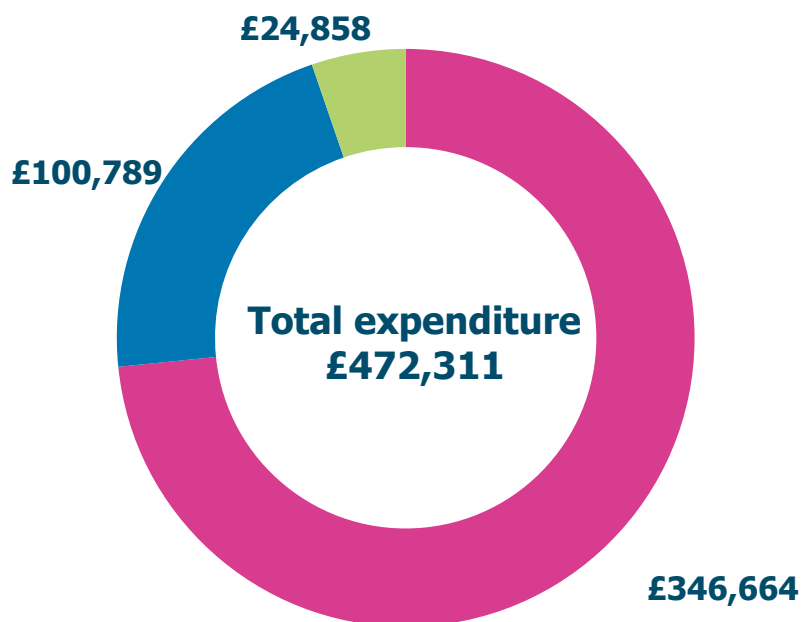
Income

- Funding received from local authority



Expenditure

- Staff costs
- Operational costs
- Office costs



Next steps & thank you

Top three priorities for 2021-22

We're already working on our key priorities for the year ahead. We've deliberately left some space so that we can react and respond as the pandemic, and its impact, continues to unfold. Right now we are focusing on:

- GP service for Care Home residents
- Community pharmacies : exploring what has changed since our 2020 report
- Improving community mental health
- Building relationships with GPs

Next steps

As well as our focus on improving services, we continue to try and make ourselves better. A big priority for us this year is to secure accreditation for our Helpline which offers free information & signposting to people. Similarly we want to retain our Investors in Volunteers award when we are re-assessed later this year. We will keep you updated on our progress through our website and monthly newsletters.

“As we look to the year ahead, it is clear that our health & social care system will face yet another challenging year. However we are confident that we are well placed to get your voice heard by the right people in a way that generates positive change, particularly for those communities that experience inequalities. Do please continue to share your stories with us, so that we can help more people like you. Thank you.”

Robbie Goatham, Healthwatch Kent Manager



Statutory statements

About us

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

The Healthwatch Kent contract is held and is managed by EK360. You can find out more information about us and the difference we make at www.ek360.co.uk

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 five volunteers who work on a voluntary basis to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny to our activities. They ensure that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community. Through 2020/21 the Steering Group met every month and made decisions on matters such as what our priorities will be for the year ahead and what projects to stop to enable us to respond to the Covid pandemic.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities. Every month, our Information Gathering Group which is made up of staff and volunteers meets to review the feedback we have heard from the public. This feedback along with data from our volunteers who attend meetings on our behalf, are used as key pieces of evidence when we are setting our priorities for the year.

Methods and systems used across the year's work to obtain people's views and experience.

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 health and care services. During 2020/21 we have been available by phone, by email, text, provided a webform on our website, attended virtual meetings of community groups and forums, provided our own virtual activities, engaged with the public through social media and proactively contacted voluntary groups to gather feedback each month.

We are committed to taking additional steps to ensure we obtain the views of people from diverse backgrounds who are often not heard by health and care decision makers. This year we have done this by, working closely with forums and voluntary groups who represent harder to reach communities such as older people, people with hearing or sight difficulties and those affected by mental health and their carers.

We ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. We publish it on our website and send it directly to organisations and stakeholders as well as sharing copies via our newsletters and social media.

Responses to recommendations and requests

All providers who we contacted for information or recommendations responded to us.

We have noticed an increase in safeguarding concerns during the pandemic. We've reported six safeguarding concerns this year. All have been dealt with quickly.

This year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we did not make use of our Enter and View powers. Consequently, no recommendations or other actions resulted from this area of activity.

There were no issues or recommendations escalated by our Healthwatch to Healthwatch England Committee and so no resulting special reviews or investigations.

Health and Wellbeing Board

Healthwatch Kent is represented on the Kent Health and Wellbeing Board by Penny Graham who is a volunteer on our Steering Group. During 2020/21, Penny was actively involved in discussions and break out groups. Penny shares information on our behalf and shares the meeting details with us and our fellow volunteers. As with all the meetings that we and our volunteers attend, Penny uses the feedback from the public to inform and influence the discussions.



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