

On equal terms

Healthwatch Thurrock Annual Report 2020-21



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Message from our CEO

Healthwatch Thurrock is a project of Thurrock CVS with the strategic lead being Kim James.

I am pleased that once again Healthwatch Thurrock has reached out to Thurrock residents during what has been unprecedented times.

Navigating uncharted waters through the Covid-19 pandemic, Healthwatch Thurrock has overcome obstacles manifesting from social distancing, we have engaged with residents differently but continue to collect and represent their views and experiences.

We are thrilled to have been highly commended in the Healthwatch Network awards 2020 in 'The impact we make with partners' category.

As we start to open up services we will continue to work agilely to ensure we engage with residents ensuring services are delivered which are right for Thurrock.



Kristina Jackson
Chief Executive Officer,
Thurrock CVS

Continuing with the close relationships, and reaching out to Thurrock residents, Healthwatch Thurrock has worked creatively to seek views, influence decisions as well as challenge them, to improve services. We were pleased to be highly commended in the Healthwatch networks awards 2020.

We have updated our website this year, making it easier to use.

Thank you to everyone that has contributed to Healthwatch Thurrock this year. Our Staff, Advisory group, volunteers, and all of the residents who spoke to us.



Kim James,
Chief Operating Officer
Healthwatch Thurrock

Message from The Chair of Our Advisory Group



This past year has proven to be challenging for residents of Thurrock as it has been for many both nationally and across the globe.

I would like to thank Kim, Barbara, Julie and Val, for a year of creative professionalism and determination to hear, report and make a difference in what has been unprecedented circumstances.

We were thrilled to be awarded a highly commended award from the Healthwatch National Network Awards 2020. This reflects the hard work and determination from the Healthwatch Thurrock team.

This year has seen a very different way of working, with Covid-19 restrictions and we are looking forwards to a re-invigorated year where we may be able to meet up in person with our Advisory Group colleagues and continue to contribute to make change happen for the benefit of Thurrock residents.



Kevin Brice
Chair
Healthwatch Thurrock Advisory 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 Thurrock. 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

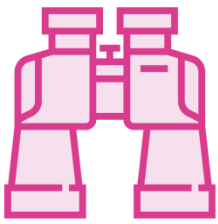
We want everyone who shares an experience or seeks advice from us to get a high quality service and to understand the difference their views make.

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.



Our vision is simple

Health and care that works for you.
People want health and social care support that works – helping them to stay well, get the best out of services and manage any conditions they face.



Our purpose

To find out what matters to you and to help make sure your views shape the support you need.



Our approach

People's views come first – especially those who find it hardest to be heard.
We champion what matters to you and work with others to find solutions. We are independent and committed to making the biggest difference to you.



How we find out what matters to you

People are at the heart of everything we do. Our staff and volunteers identify what matters most to people by:

- Visiting services to see how they work
- Running surveys and focus groups
- Going out in the community and working with other organisations



Find out more about us and the work we do

Website: www.healthwatchthurrock.org

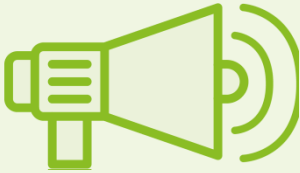
Twitter: @healthwatchthr

Facebook: @healthwatchthr

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

1,844 people

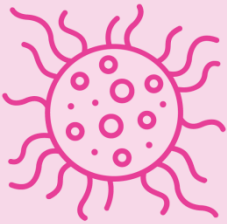
this year about their experiences of health and social care.

We provided advice and information to

726 people

this year.

Responding to the pandemic



We engaged with and supported

1025

people during the COVID-19 pandemic this year.

Making a difference to care



We published

4 reports

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

Health and care that works for you



10 volunteers

helped us to carry out our work.

We employ 3 staff

We received

£130,186 in funding

from our local authority in 2020-21.

Our Published Work 2020/21



Healthwatch Thurrock Cancer Conversations Report

In Spring 2020 Healthwatch Thurrock were commissioned to conduct conversations with individuals to identify the quantity, source and consistency of information received by patients following diagnosis of cancer. The findings have since been published in our report Thurrock Cancer Conversations.

Cancer Research UK reports that an estimated 2.3 million fewer tests that help diagnose cancer have taken place since lockdown compared to the same time last year.

The dip is attributed for many reasons, including people putting off seeking help at the start of the pandemic and measures needed to prevent the spread of COVID - 19 such as social distancing, deep-cleaning of equipment and use of PPE – reducing capacity and slowing down normal service.

Staff shortages were already a concern before the pandemic with 1 in 10 diagnostic posts unfilled, and the demand now is even greater. Cancer research UK's Chief executive said "we are over the peak of the Pandemic now, so it's worrying there is an increasing

number of patients whose lives are on pause while they wait for tests that could impact their chances of survival".

This report follows on from the Healthwatch Thurrock Cancer conversations report to establish how Thurrock residents have fared during the Covid-19 Lockdowns.

The majority, 85% of cancer sufferers that were contacted had been able to access services during lockdown, which leaves 15% who were not able to access services adequately. This cohort of patients may experience challenges due to lack of treatment. Healthwatch Thurrock will follow up these conversations later in the year.

[Cancer Conversations Follow Up Report](#)

Healthwatch Thurrock Internet Usage with Older People Report

Internet use nationally among older age groups has increased substantially over the last five years, but many are still non-users.

With more and more services provided digitally, Healthwatch Thurrock set out to establish the internet use and access amongst sheltered housing tenants within the borough.

Healthwatch Thurrock conducted a survey in October 2020 around support through the Coronavirus lockdown. Results revealed that many older people could not access online shopping, information and other services due to a lack of knowledge and/or access to the internet.

This led to increased vulnerability and isolation along with additional reliance on statutory or voluntary services for some people. It also culminated in reduced choice and independence for this community.

The indicators of the Coronavirus Survey led Healthwatch Thurrock to explore further the impact and disadvantages of not having online access.

The majority of respondents who undertook the survey were aged over 65 (87%) which is to be expected as the work was targeted at an older population.

A survey was designed to reflect the access/knowledge/usage of the Internet for older residents living in Sheltered housing complexes across Thurrock.

Survey packs were delivered by hand to all addresses within the complexes. The packs contained the survey, an introductory/explanation letter, Freepost return envelope and for ease of survey completion a complimentary pen.

Internet and Older People Report

Healthwatch Thurrock Mental Health & Covid Report

2020/21 has been a learning curve for millions across the globe. In just over a year since Covid-19 emerged it has changed how we work, learn and interact as social distancing guidelines have led to a more virtual existence, both personally and professionally.

Fear, worry, and stress are normal responses to perceived or real threats, and at times when we are faced with uncertainty or the unknown. So it is normal and understandable that people are experiencing fear in the context of the COVID – 19 pandemic.

Added to the fear of contracting the virus in a pandemic such as COVID – 19, are the significant changes to our daily lives as our movements are restricted in support of efforts to contain and slow down the spread of the virus. Faced with new realities of working from home, temporary unemployment, home-schooling of children and lack of physical contact with other family members, friends and colleagues, it is important that we look after our mental, as well as our physical health.

Healthwatch Thurrock believe it is important for policy makers and service providers to hear the voice of lived experience. Most importantly it helps others to know they are not alone.

Now more than ever the mental health needs of the residents of Thurrock are paramount in prioritising and influencing service provision.

Thurrock Picture:

Thurrock consists of 20 wards. There is a great variance in the proportion of each wards population in terms of deprivation.

Only 6 of the 20 wards represented are green in the indices of deprivation. At least 20% of Thurrock households live in poverty.

Source: [Department for Communities and Local Government: Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2015.](#)

This in turn puts this cohort at greater risk of poor outcomes in Mental Health.

[Mental Health Covid Report Final.pdf](#)
 [\(healthwatchthurrock.org\)](http://healthwatchthurrock.org)

Healthwatch Thurrock Coronavirus Survey

Healthwatch Thurrock conducted a survey around services and quality of information received during the Covid-19 pandemic 2020.

A total of 103 responses were collected over several months and it asked residents to describe their experience through open and closed questions.

The report looks at the information and support Thurrock residents described they have received through the Coronavirus lockdown period.

"Hearing clinic cancelled"

"All now by phone"

"Education has been withdrawn for child with disability"

"The person in my care had their hip replacement postponed but it is now rebooked in a private hospital (under NHS) for June"

"I haven't been able to have blood tests or attend routine follow up appointments"

Coronavirus Report

40% have not been able to access support for mental health and wellbeing

75% felt they had all the information they needed during the pandemic

64% found keeping physically fit easy during the pandemic

47% considered themselves to be at high risk of Coronavirus

45% were currently caring for or supporting someone at high risk of Coronavirus

70% found the biggest challenge during the lockdown was lack of contact with friends and family

Then & Now: Thurrock Targeted Lung Checks

Then:



Healthwatch Thurrock's Operations Manager Barbara Rice was invited onto a national stage to talk about the Targeted Lung Checks at the NHS 2019 Expo Conference.

Along with BBC journalist Jeremy Bowen, delegates heard about the experiences of people with cancer and the importance for early diagnosis. Speaking about his own Bowel Cancer, Jeremy explained that 9 in 10 people survive when diagnosis is early.

Launched early 2020, Healthwatch Thurrock played a key role in promoting the programme to ensure residents in Thurrock looked out for their invitation or queried with their GP if they didn't receive one.

Now: Ongoing

People aged 55 to under 75 who have ever smoked are invited from their GP's list to receive a free lung health check. The initial health check is done over the phone, with specific questions around breathing, overall health and lifestyle. A risk score is developed using a nationally agreed algorithm, if the risk is high, a person is sent an appointment for a low dose CT scan.

Following attendance at the CT unit – which takes just 15 minutes – a person will find out within 2 weeks if they need further follow up.

Everyone who is still smoking is offered support to quit.



Kim James. COO attending the mobile unit

Then & Now: Thurrock Targeted Lung Checks Cont.

When did the programme start?

A trial was offered to a small cohort of 100 patients from Orsett who were initially invited for a lung health check in February 2020. Of those, 43 took up their offer and of the 43 lung checks 10 required a CT scan which was carried out at Basildon Hospital. This enabled the trial to iron out any issues with the process to ensure a smooth start.

The official start of the programme was due to begin in June 2020, but due to the ongoing pandemic the programme did not officially start until November 2020. Thurrock were only one of three areas who had managed to begin the programme in England.

There was a 3 month pause from 18th December due to system pressures during the second wave of Coronavirus.

Data up to 22 March 2021, 4269 people have been contacted to come forward for a lung health check in Thurrock. They are from Orsett Surgery, Stifford Clays Medical Centre, Rigg Milner and Corringham Health Centre, Medic House and Tilbury Chadwell Group.

955 people have come forward for an initial lung health check

316 people have received a low dose CT Scan

People are invited according to where the units are closest, to enable easy access should they be eligible for a low dose CT Scan. Invitations are done in a phased way as the CT unit moves around the localities.



Responding to COVID-19

Healthwatch Thurrock 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 1025 people by:

- Providing up to date advice on the COVID-19 response locally
- Linking people to reliable up-to-date information
- Supporting the vaccine roll-out
- Supporting the community volunteer response
- Helping people to access the services they need

Top four areas that people have contacted us about:



GP services



Information



Hospital Care



Vaccines

Case Study



Early in the pandemic, we were contacted by an elderly gentleman, who, despite living in the area for many years, had not registered with a GP. He reported that he had an infected leg ulcer which was not being treated and he was worried he would not get the Covid vaccine.

He did not have access to any online services, so Healthwatch Thurrock sent out the NHS pack for GP registration. When it was received, he telephoned HWT and we talked through the forms.

The resident completed the paperwork and registered with his local surgery.

He reported that he had had an appointment with the GP and obtained the necessary treatment.

Resident was also invited for his first Covid vaccination.



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.healthwatchthurrock.org



01375 389883



Admin@healthwatchthurrock.org



At Healthwatch Thurrock we are supported by 10 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 from BAME groups have their say
- Participated in a befriending initiative
- Hand delivered surveys
- Helped with the local volunteering efforts of shopping and collecting prescriptions for those self-isolating or shielding.



Fola

“The development of the Coronavirus vaccines within a short period is one of the biggest collaborative efforts and feats of technological ingenuity in recent time.

However, for the vaccines to be effective they need to be taken.

Being ‘hesitant’ on taking the coronavirus vaccines does not have to be a bad thing as long as it leads to an open and honest conversation that results in bridging gaps between communities.”



Bisola

“During the recent lockdown, I conducted a survey of my community to establish whether there was any concerns around having the Coronavirus vaccine.

The response was varied with the majority saying they would take the vaccine.

For those who were hesitant, I suggested they speak to their GP. They were grateful”



Volunteer with us

Are you feeling inspired? We are always on the lookout for new volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering, please get in touch.



www.healthwatchthurrock.org

01375 389883

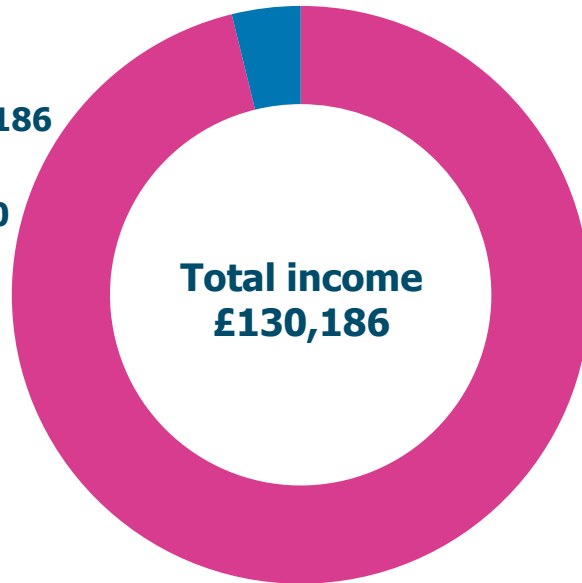
admin@healthwatchthurrock.org

Finances

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

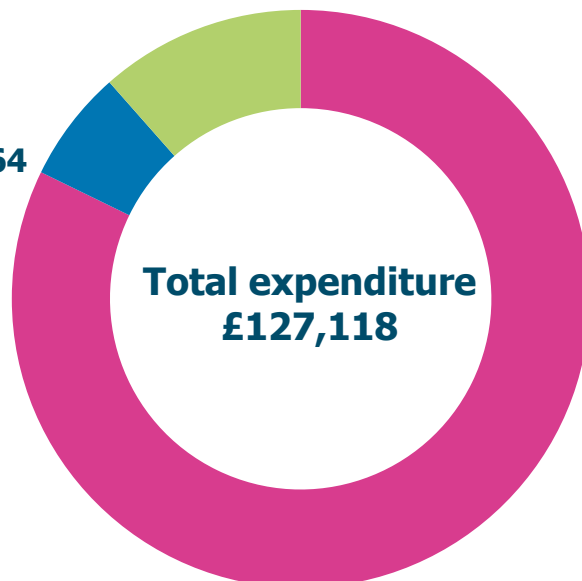
Income

- Funding received from local authority £125,186
- Additional funding £5,000



Expenditure

- Staff costs £104,516
- Operational costs £7,964
- Support and administration £14,638



Thank you & Next Steps

Thank you to everyone that is helping us put people at the heart of health and social care, including:

- Members of the public who shared their views and experience with us.
- All of our amazing staff and volunteers.
- The voluntary organisations that have contributed to our work.
- The Advisory Group for Healthwatch Thurrock.

Our COO, Kim James, alongside our Advisory Group Chair attended the Thurrock Community and Voluntary Service Board meetings to feedback the work undertaken and to ensure we are meeting the monitoring outcomes for the contract.

Our Advisory Group chair has a voting seat on the Thurrock Community and Voluntary Service Board and therefore is able to be part of the decision making process for Healthwatch Thurrock.

Top 3 Priorities for 2021-22

1. To continue with our Mental Health work. The introduction of an Integrated Care Partnership and our local Mental Health Transformation programme will require the voices and lived experiences of people using those services. It is imperative that Healthwatch Thurrock ensures those voices are included and heard.
2. To monitor and listen to voices as the world returns to the new 'normal' after the pandemic. We will prioritise work around the return of services, changes to services and people's experiences of the changes that affect them.
3. Children and Young People, Mental Health and Young Carers. To ascertain the affect the pandemic has had on young people and children, especially those young carers that have had little respite. We will carry out work around the impact and ensure services are meeting the increased needs.



Statutory statements

About us

Healthwatch Thurrock.

Healthwatch Thurrock 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 board consists of 6 members who work on a voluntary basis to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny to our activities. Our board ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community. Through 2020/21 the board met 4 times and made decisions on matters such as the priority work plan and staffing.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities. Without this and those who experience good and bad services talking to us, we would not be the 'voice' we have become over the years in Thurrock. We have been able to raise some important issues via the local Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee resulting in some real changes to the services people receive.

Healthwatch Thurrock is the independent Health and Social Care Champion, we can only carry out our work in people talk to us and share their experiences. Please get involved, however small that contribution is it will help us to continue being your voice and helping you to make the changes needed.

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, provided a web form on our website, attended virtual meetings of community groups and forums, provided our own virtual activities and engaged with the public through social media.

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 made a difference in four areas

2020-21 priorities

Project / activity area	Changes made to services
Cancer Conversations	Better awareness of Access to services
Mental Health	Sharing of knowledge with partner organisations highlighting gaps in services.
Coronavirus	Pop up Vaccination Centre for hard to reach communities
Internet & Older People	Introduction of free Wifi in communal areas of Care Homes

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 www.healthwatchthurrock.org

Responses to recommendations and requests

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

Our COO, Kim James, has a seat on the Health and Wellbeing Strategic Committee, Thurrock Health and Wellbeing Board and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

We are able to give a case study or experience for whichever topic is on the agenda, so as to represent the voice of the public

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Facebook.com/Healthwatchthr

Thurrock CVS, The Beehive Resource Centre, West Street, Grays, RM17 6XP

We confirm that we are using the Healthwatch Trademark (which covers the logo and Healthwatch brand) when undertaking work on our statutory activities as covered by the licence agreement.

If you need this in an alternative format please contact us.

Healthwatch Thurrock is a Project of Thurrock CVS – Charity Number 1090253
Company Number 4300967

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