

Championing what matters to you

Healthwatch Southend
Annual Report 2021-22



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Message from our Chair

One year ago I was given the opportunity to serve as Chair of the Advisory Group for Healthwatch Southend (HWS). This was still a time of great uncertainty for the nation as our NHS continued to battle to bring Covid-19 under control. Now, because of the immense effort of our NHS colleagues and local volunteers we are in a far better position 12 months on. I wish to pay tribute to the huge amount of additional work this has entailed for our local hospital, community and social care services over another challenging year.

The pandemic also severely limited the day-to-day work of HWS with face-to-face engagement with residents curtailed and meetings with colleagues moved online. The latter has allowed us to continue to engage with organisations involved with making improvements to care, in particular the Mid and South Essex Integrated Care Services briefings shaping the way forward for local healthcare services under the new Integrated Care Boards coming into effect from July 2022.

We have also continued to listen to our local community and act upon areas of concern. In particular, in conjunction with Leigh-on-Sea Town Council we have arranged to provide a sign posting and advice service for those Ukrainian refugees and their host families resident in the area. We continue to be as inclusive of our local residents as possible and to seek out those communities from whom we hear least.

In addition, we continue to collect overwhelming data from patient experience relating to the lack of access to NHS dentistry locally. This is also a national issue that our Chief Officer has recently been able to highlight on local radio. In an attempt to improve access to dental care we have also been able to enlist the support of our local MP. This is an important issue that illustrates the widening health inequality between those able to afford private care and those reliant on the NHS with its increasingly long waiting lists.

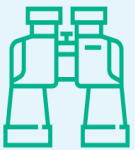
Last, but by no means least, I would like to thank our fantastic and hard working staff and volunteers without whose dedication and expertise we could not continue to strive to improve our local health and social care services.

David Bowry
Healthwatch Southend Chair

About us

Your health and social care champion

Healthwatch Southend is your local health and social care champion. We make sure NHS leaders and other 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

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.

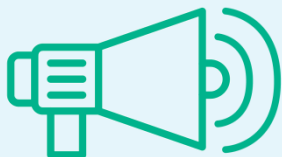
Acting on feedback and driving change.

Partnering with care providers, Government, and the voluntary sector – serving as the public's independent advocate.

Our year in review

Find out how we have engaged and supported people.

Reaching out



700 people

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

600 people

came to us for clear advice and information about topics such as mental health and COVID-19.

Making a difference to care



We published

1 Report

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

Our most popular report was

Access to GP's locally

which highlighted the gaps and improvements to be made..

Health and care that works for you



We're lucky to have

5 Volunteers

outstanding volunteers, who gave up **40 days** to make care better for our community.

We're funded by our local authority. In 2021-22 we received:

£105,927

We also currently employ

3 staff* (*1.95 whole time equivalent)

who help us carry out this work. previous year.

How we've made a difference throughout the year

These are the biggest projects we worked on from April 2021 to March 2022.

Spring



With the Councils for Voluntary Services in Southend and Castle Point, we began to facilitate theory of change workshops for the South East Essex Alliance. The Alliance brings together partners across the statutory and community sectors to plan health and care services for the people of Castle Point, Rochford and Southend. Our theory of change approach encouraged colleagues to think about the outcomes they wanted to see delivered for local people.

Summer



We gave presentations to both the Youth Council and the Health & Wellbeing Board about our work. The Youth Council told us of their concerns about young people's mental health during the pandemic. We thought they would like virtual consultations with their GPs, but they were also concerned about confidentiality and the timing of calls. We fed this back to commissioners. Healthwatch Southend joined a national working group to look at how we hold the NHS and local authorities to account for providing high quality services

Autumn



We analysed the most up-to-date activity data from GPs in Southend. We found that more and more face-to-face appointments were being made, despite comments in the media that this was not the case. We felt it important to let local residents know that general practice was able to offer more face-to-face consultation. We included an analysis of the annual GP patient survey, which showed that certain groups within the community – patients with mental health issues, for example – were less happy with their experience.

Winter



Work started on capturing the experiences of people who identify as LGBTQIA+. We began to recruit "community voices" – local people who want to support our work by giving feedback; Michael, our first volunteer is a retired policeman who first approached us for advice. We also recruited a new volunteer from a local sixth form. Her role will be to monitor local media for stories about health and wellbeing, as well as offering a young person's perspective on these areas. Healthwatch Southend also took part in the process to choose new providers of online and video consultations to be used in general practice. We wanted to make sure that these providers would offer a good service to the practices and their patients

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



Access to General Practice

Healthwatch Southend heard from many local residents as well as through national stories about how hard it was to get an appointment with a general practitioner. We wanted to see what the position was in Southend so that we could ask what the NHS was doing to improve access. On the other hand, if appointments were available we should try and reassure residents that they could see a GP more easily than during lockdown. We also looked at the national GP Patient Survey for 2021 to see what patients in Southend felt about their GP services during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Who were we concerned about?

We looked at all ages of patients in the activity data. When we looked at the GP Patient Survey, we wanted to see how certain groups of patients felt.

How did we do the research

The number of patient appointments, and what sort of consultation took place, are all available to the public on the NHS Digital website¹. The same is true for the GP Patient Survey². We looked at both of these to draw out some conclusions. On this occasion, we did not speak to local residents as we had feedback through the Survey. We also compared some of the Survey results with Bury CCG, which has a very similar population to Southend.

What did we find?

Although so many comments were being made about how hard it was to see a GP, we found that

- The number of face-to-face appointments booked with a GP increased from 9125 in May 2021 to 21570 in October 2021 – an increase of 236% – whilst the number of phone consultations fell by 9%
- GP appointments on the same day of booking increased in the same period by 6%
- Despite the calls for face-to-face appointments, 506 patients did not attend their appointment with a GP in October 2021

At the same time, we looked at the latest GP Patient Survey results which showed high levels of satisfaction with general practice in Southend (80% rated their experience as good or very good).

- Positive experience of making an appointment and getting through on the phone stood at only 60%, leaving 40% of patients who were not satisfied
- 79% of patients said that they were satisfied with the appointment offered
- When patients did not get an appointment, only 7% of respondents went to A&E



Access to General Practice

Of more concern were the lower levels of satisfaction described by patients with certain health problems eg mental health or those diagnosed/treated for cancer. We compared NHS Southend with NHS Bury CCG for this aspect of the Survey; patients in Bury reported higher levels of satisfaction despite having similar populations.

- 1.Practices need to use shared decision-making principles with a patient when agreeing the best way of conducting a consultation, taking a whole-person view of the patient
- 2.Recognising that digital solutions do not work for everyone, more publicity should be given to the restoration of online booking and online consultation platforms
- 3.Linked to this should be ways of making it easier to cancel appointments
- 4.Support must be given to practices to improve the degree of satisfaction with telephone access, and reduce the disparity between practices
- 5.Work needs to be undertaken to understand why certain groups report poorer satisfaction with access; learning from similar CCGs in other parts of England is encouraged
- 6.Solutions to improve access must be co-designed with patients



Making it easier to access health care

Thanks to people sharing their stories we were able to help those who have just moved into the Southend area access health services.

When you arrive in a new town it is always difficult to navigate how to access health, especially if you have small children and English is not your first language.

Working with, Welcome to the UK, we were able to meet with a group of 15 women and discuss what support they may need in order to make it easier to see a health professional.

Healthwatch Southend devised a bespoke resource that was specifically aimed at those who have limited English language skills, which detailed how to access a GP and a Dentist; when to visit A&E, how to use Pharmacies, NHS111 and how to navigate children's health services. It provided a valuable resource of contact details for various services, including how to access on-line support, social prescribing and translation services.



“Thank you Healthwatch Southend for providing a very useful session, which all the participants really enjoyed. It was pitched at just the right level and we will be able to reproduce the pack for other users too “

Ida Staffa, Welcome to the UK Chief Officer.



What difference did this make

- People new to the town are better able to understand how the NHS works.
- Those with language skills have an accessible printed resource to refer to.
- People understand they do not need proof of identity or an address to register with a GP
- People are provided with simplified contact information for a wide range of support services.
- Healthwatch Southend has been asked to add specific follow up sessions; exploring Women's Health Screening and Childhood Immunisations.

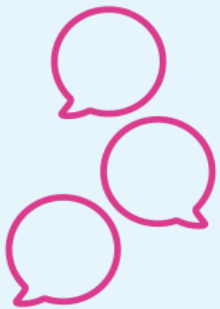
Three ways we are making a difference for the community

Working with the Mid & South Essex Health & Care Partnership on your behalf



With more changes being made to the NHS, Healthwatch Southend has made sure it has spoken up at meetings and workshops about how important it is to listen to local people and how to involve them in what is happening across the NHS and local authority services. Examples of this included the primary care strategy and the quality strategy. With the quality strategy, we pointed out that the word “patient” only occurred a couple of times in the document. As a result, the Health & Care Partnership did more work on it, to make sure there was more emphasis on patients and their views. A lot of work is being done to let patients use their smartphones or computers to find information or book appointments. We know that many people cannot or will not be able to do this, so we regularly challenge partners to make sure these groups are not forgotten.

Challenge to NHS Foundation Trusts



All NHS organisations are expected to hold meetings in public. We look at the papers for each meeting and ask questions about things like how patients are being involved in drawing up various plans, how Trusts are learning from complaints or how they are meeting the needs of patients from different backgrounds. It is important that we ask questions on your behalf. Although these meetings are held in public, local people often do not know that they can attend and ask questions. Trusts are expected to record all questions from members of the public and include them in the minutes of their meetings.

Improving care over time



Population health management is a way of looking at which groups of patients have lots of contact with the NHS and whether there are ways of preventing their illness or caring for them away from hospital, when this is appropriate. Commissioners – the people who “buy” care for residents – have been learning how to interpret the activity and cost data in a number of workshops. Healthwatch Southend has been an active player in these workshops. Our aim has been to make sure that commissioners do not just look at the numbers of times people with a particular condition go to the A&E department, or see their GP. They also need to talk to these patients to understand why they do this, or why they find it hard to increase their levels of physical activity, for example. We’ve used stories from young mums about problems in finding fresh fruit and vegetables in their local convenience stores. Or how subsidised gym membership may not work if the vouchers are only valid during the school-run, when gyms are quieter. If they want to make changes, these need to happen with real patient involvement. As a result of our use of stories and challenge, more and more plans are showing how patients are using their voices

Advice and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch Southend is here for you. 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.

This year we helped people by:

- Providing up to date information on COVID-19 and where to find support.
- Helping people navigate the NHS Complaint Advocacy Service.
- Supporting the COVID-19 vaccination and booster programme
- Helping people to access the services they need



Signposting people who needed additional support

In addition to ensuring that the voices of services users, patients and the public are heard by decision makers within the health and social care services in Southend, our information and signposting service to the public about accessing health and social care services can be utilised by all local residents in the borough. We receive a variety of enquires, here are two case studies of work we've undertaken during the past year.

CASE STUDY 1

Miss X contacted HWS with concerns about delayed community palliative care for their relative. Unsure of how to contact the service and whether to contact their relative's GP, and the emotional distress of the situation, Miss X asked HWS to provide advice and support.

HWS contacted the Palliative Care Team, provided client details and requested an urgent call to Miss X to discuss their concerns, provide reassurance regarding a treatment plan or options, with details of future appointments and type i.e. telephone, video, or face to face.

HWS provided website information and links to the Palliative Care Team site, including further links to patient information literature. Miss X contacted HWS via email the following day providing an update.



"Just wanted to thank you and your team for your interventions on behalf of my relative. So pleased we made contact with you. A Palliative Care nurse paid us a visit first thing this morning, we also had a video call from GP as they are not yet undertaking home visits. My relative was too poorly today to speak to GP, but the GP could see him. They have decided that my relative can have pain relief patches as well as Oramorph and they are also going to change the dressing for their pressure sore, so such progress in one day! Our thanks again, such a shame these things have to be chased to happen."



Supporting you when you need help

CASE STUDY 2

Mr A contacted HWS on behalf of their partner regarding barriers accessing a COVID 19 vaccination. Mr A explained their partner has a severe food allergy and carries an EPI Pen (adrenaline autoinjector). Mr A's partner received differing advice from their registered GP and a locum GP regarding the COVID vaccination eligibility for people with food allergies. One GP said it should be ok, the other said no. Mr A's partner was confused and distressed. Mr A's partner confirmed they had read COVID patient guidance from accredited sources (local Public Health guidance, the Anaphylaxis national support organisation and the Government Green Book of Guidance) and stated there was no reason why a vaccination could not be given, providing there were trained staff on hand at the vaccination locality to provide treatment if the patient were to go into anaphylactic shock.

HWS signposted Mr A's partner to contact their registered GP again for an explanation of the differing advice, and exactly what grounds the refusal was made i.e. staff ratio issues, contra-indications specific to the patient concerned etc. We provided the client with signposting information for our Complaints Advocate should they require additional support.

The following day HWS received an email update from Mr A:



"How good are you?"

I took your advice and contacted the doctors again and asked why they had not replied to me. They came back with; you can now have the vaccination and should attend the X centre. I contacted them again and said they will not give it there. They then arranged for a doctor to be present to give the vaccination, and my partner had it yesterday afternoon, no anaphylaxis everything was fine.

I would like to thank you for all your support, you were the only one who listened to our problem and gave us the advice we needed. Many thanks for everything"



Volunteers

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

This year our volunteers:

- Carried out website and telephone reviews for local services on the information they provide and assessing their accessibility during the pandemic.
- Assisted as part of 'Readers' Panels' – checking local services' publications to make them more people focussed and easier to read.





Maria

“Hi, I’m Maria and when I first came across Healthwatch I was unaware of the nature of the work the organisation was involved in. However, once I was properly introduced, I was really taken with the way all the staff and volunteers worked together as a team, to carry out a meaningful and positive change to the community.

.”

Christa

“My name is Christa and I have had the pleasure to volunteer with Healthwatch Southend during the last Covid-19 lockdown. I assisted with a research project, which aimed to establish what impact Covid-19 had on dental services ability to provide for their patients. I found the project to be very interesting and engaging and I hope to continue volunteering with Healthwatch Southend.



Jan

“I have volunteered for many years with Healthwatch Southend. I have taken part in training. I enjoy helping out at public events and talking to people about what is good and/or bad about our local services. It is an opportunity to feed back how people feel about their services.”



Do you feel inspired?

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



 www.healthwatchesouthend.co.uk

 **01702 416320**

 info@healthwatchesouthend.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.

Income		Expenditure	
Combined income for Healthwatch Southend and Independent Health Complaints Advocacy Service	£119,095	Staff costs	£94,908
Return of income for Independent Health Complaints Advocacy Service from 22 November 2021 (*see notes)	(£13,168)	Operational Costs	£3,525
		Support and administration	12,639
Adjusted income	£105,927	Total expenditure	£111,072

***Notes**

1. The Council re-let this element of the contract to South Essex Advocacy Service as Family Action was unable to recruit a new advocate to deliver this element of the contract.
2. This presentation of our income has been agreed with Healthwatch England and Southend City Council.

Top three priorities for 2022-23

1. Using the NHS England funding, work with SAVS to recruit community connectors with experience of chest diseases. They will help commissioners improve services by talking about their experiences.
2. Understand the good and less good elements of the NHS and Adult Social Care if you are a deaf person in Southend.
3. Respond to local people's concerns in our survey about waiting times and access to services (especially in primary care)

Next steps

The pandemic has shone a stark light on the impact of existing inequalities when using health and care services, highlighting the importance of championing the voices of those who all too often go unheard. Over the coming years, our goal is to help reduce these inequalities by making sure your voice is heard, and decision makers reduce the barriers you face, regardless of whether that's because of where you live, income or race.

Statutory statements

About us

Healthwatch Southend is hosted by The Advocacy People, PO Box 375, Hastings, TN34 9HU

Healthwatch Southend 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.

To work really well on behalf of the people of Southend, and those who use services in the City, we need to work closely with them. We have an Advisory Group which helps guide us in our work, listening to local voices or highlighting problems. It has been hard to recruit volunteers for our Advisory Group. Part of this may have been because people were more interested in looking after their neighbours during Covid-19. Unfortunately, two of our three volunteers, Maggie Cleary and Mark Flewitt, felt unable to continue volunteering, leaving only David Bowry as our Chair.

We have been successful in getting more help from Healthwatch England – money and advice – to help with our recruitment in 2022-23.

We try and hear from as many Southend residents as possible. Their experiences help us think about which concerns to look at, or which questions to send on to the NHS or the Council. We spoke at the Health & Wellbeing Board, because we know the councillors there will have heard about your concerns at their surgeries and meetings. We look at all the calls and emails we have received, to see which topics come up most often. Many residents contacted us about

- Their general practitioner
- Getting a dental appointment
- How to make a complaint
- The care received from the Hospital

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 webform 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 have also started to recruit local people as "Community Voices" – people who are happy to read documents and plans from the NHS or other bodies and provide feedback.

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, for example by continuing our work with Welcome to the UK. We also worked with people who see themselves as part of the LGBTQIA+ community, as already mentioned.

Every year we write an Annual Report. This was sent to the organisations we work with, as well as many members of the public. Because GP surgeries and libraries were closed last year, we did not print hard copies, but sent these out when asked. We will do this again in 2022.

Responses to recommendations and requests

We have the legal power to enter places where care is being provided, if there are concerns. We are not inspectors, but we talk to patients, carers, service users and staff about what is good and what can be improved. Because no real concerns were raised, and especially because of the pandemic, no visits were made.

We can also report really serious worries to Healthwatch England, which supports each local Healthwatch. They are part of the Care Quality Commission, which inspects and registers care providers. If we and Healthwatch England agree, the CQC can investigate our concerns. We did not need to send any concerns to Healthwatch England this year.

Our hosting arrangements

Each local council with social services duties, like Southend, has to let a contract to a charity or social enterprise to run its local Healthwatch service. This can either be an organisation set up just to run that Healthwatch service, or a larger charity/social enterprise which may also offer other services. In this case, the local Healthwatch is "hosted".

In Southend, the Healthwatch service was hosted by Family Action, who in addition had won the contract to run the Children's Centres. The contract was extended because of the pandemic, but the Council announced during 2021 that it would invite bids for the Healthwatch Southend service from April 2022. Family Action decided not to bid again as the service no longer fitted with its business priorities.

The new contract, from April 2022 to April 2025, was awarded to The Advocacy People. This registered charity provides advocacy services in a number of areas of England, but also runs Healthwatch Portsmouth and Healthwatch West Berkshire. At the time of writing, the contracts for Healthwatch Reading and Healthwatch Wokingham Borough will also be hosted by The Advocacy People. We look forward to working alongside our new host and fellow Healthwatch as we are sure we can share good practice and resources.

We would like to thank Family Action for all their support over the last seven years.

healthwatch

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