

Local Healthwatch Quarterly Influence & Impact Report

July – September 2022





Helping shape
health and social care
services in Surrey

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Hearing local voices



Over the past few months, we have been meeting with residents across Surrey to hear their experiences of health and care services. We are also on hand to answer questions people might have about services in their area and provide signposting to relevant services and organisations that could support them further.

July took us to various locations across Guildford and Waverley, including a visit to the Farncombe Foodbank hearing how people's concerns about their finances are impacting their health and wellbeing. We spoke with families being supported by Guildford Family Centre, hearing about the challenges in caring for children with additional needs. We also visited the Royal Surrey Hospital and the Vine Medical Centre to hear from people using those services and learn how their experiences could have been improved.

We visited East Surrey in August, including East Surrey Hospital and Wayside Surgery listening to patients, their families and carers hearing about their experiences of their care and support. We also spent a morning at Caterham Dene Hospital, speaking to people being supported by the Minor Injuries Unit. Visiting Merstham Hub, we chatted to local residents using the community café as well as people being supported by the food bank.

In September, we spoke with residents across Surrey Downs including visits to Cobham Community Centre and Dorking Family Centre to hear about the vital role these organisations play in supporting the community. We also visited outpatients at Epsom Hospital to hear local peoples' experiences of health services and we also spent a morning in Epsom Square to better understand health and care challenges faced by people in the community.

Next quarter, we will be running engagement events across North West Surrey, Guildford and Waverley and Surrey Heath.

If you would like Healthwatch Surrey to engage with your service, please contact:

- ✉ enquiries@healthwatchsurrey.co.uk
- ☎ 0303 303 0023
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What we've been hearing



Every story matters. We endeavour to find the right forum to share the experiences we receive to ensure that patient and service user voices are heard. On some occasions, there are patterns in what we are hearing so we escalate these together as a matter of urgency. We offer an agenda-free ear for the public to tell us about their health and care experiences.

This quarter 291 people shared their story with us.

Primary Care

We continue to hear that there are challenges for many residents in getting an appointment at their local GP Practice. One particular concern in terms of health inequalities is the ongoing theme in our insight that some residents are being encouraged to book their appointments online but they are unable to do so as they may not have access to the internet or a computer. In particular, we have heard this from people who do not speak English as a first language.



We have joined a new NHS board which has been established to address the challenges with accessing primary care appointments, and to try to ensure equitable access for all citizens, and we've raised issues here around access barrier in the form of transport costs; digital exclusion; and language barriers. We also continue to feed back through a communications group.

We continue to work alongside our partners in health and care organisations to ensure that residents across Surrey are provided with opportunities to play an active role in shaping their primary care services. One such example of this was supporting Surrey Heartlands with the drafting of their guidance for Patient Participation Groups (PPGs). Our volunteers who are members of PPGs provided feedback on the guidance which will now support GP practices in developing better relationships with their PPGs to hear and learn from the populations they support.

Pharmacy

We have increasingly heard more experiences regarding pharmacies with the key challenges being a lack of qualified pharmacists to give out prescriptions and a limited supply of some medicines in some areas, such as HRT.

We have raised these challenges at the Health and Wellbeing Board, as well as escalating some experiences directly with the providers involved. We are also monitoring local activity, particularly in the case of pharmacy closures. In our role as a member of the Health and Wellbeing board, we are consulted over proposed pharmacy mergers and closures. We recently challenged for clarification on whether a merger of two branches would impact upon local residents.

Dentistry

Accessing an NHS dentist remains a challenge for many Surrey residents, so we continue to share your experiences with key decision-makers. In the last quarter, we once again shared your concerns with Surrey's MPs, and this quarter, representatives from the Adults Health and Select Committee will follow our lead in escalating this issue further. The committee have forwarded a letter to the Health Secretary Therese Coffey outlining their concerns and championing for greater focus on dentistry.

We were also invited by Surrey County Council to contribute to the dentistry section in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, a document used by local authorities to determine how they design and commission services. We highlighted the differences in the availability of dentists across the county and particularly a need from greater access to community dentists to support people with additional needs.





Enter and View

Healthwatch Surrey are committed to ensuring that all Surrey residents have a voice in their health and care. Enter and View visits enable us to visit places not readily accessible, such as inpatient wards and care homes.

We were unable to visit care homes in the past two years due to restriction caused by the pandemic, so we have planned a series of Enter and View visits throughout the year to make sure care home residents have a voice in their care.



Greathed Manor

In July, we visited Greathed Manor in Lingfield. The home has capacity for 32 residents (at the time of our visit there were 30) providing care for adults over 65, people with dementia and people with physical disabilities. There are also eight Discharge to Assess beds, two of which were empty at the time of our visit.

Overall residents and their families seem happy with the care they receive, the environment and feedback mechanisms. The staff who we spoke to were also happy.



We were told by the manager that two residents had learning disabilities. On checking the CQC website after our visit, we realised that caring for people with learning disabilities was not part of the home's registration. We escalated this to CQC and Surrey County Council.

We made five recommendations following our visit to help improve the experience for residents:

- Ensure there are sufficient wheelchairs to enable all residents to go up and downstairs when required.
- Review the menu, in terms of quality and variety and consider involving residents and their families in this process.
- Ensure that CQC registration is fully compliant and kept up to date.
- Consider whether enough suitable activities are provided for people with learning disabilities.
- The primary care lead should consider if improvements can be made to access GP support.

Our full report is available on our website and has been forwarded to the home for comment.



Research Projects



Waiting well

In June, we published the results of our survey on Waiting for Hospital Care. We found that people were concerned with the length of their waits and would benefit from more consistent communication and more information on ways of managing their condition while they wait.

We shared our findings with health and care organisations across Surrey who each offered responses to how they will support people on waiting lists:

- All hospitals stated they are keen to work closely with Healthwatch Surrey to find ways to improve experiences for people on waiting lists.
- East Surrey Hospital additionally stated they would look into ways of providing additional signposting to non-NHS support as well as improving links with GPs to ensure people have the information they need while they are waiting.

Continuing the story

Carers' Experiences of Hospital Discharge

Our report continues to ensure voices of unpaid carers are being heard in improving the discharge process. We were invited to contribute to a series of focus groups involving various health and care organisations, as well as voluntary sector, patient and carer representation groups in continuing to develop and improve the discharge process for all.

In particular, the two videos we had produced, illustrating examples of good and poor practices were cited as important reminders how better co-ordination between services results in more rounded person-centred care.

Local Impact and Influence

Healthwatch Surrey are involved in a wide range of networks, boards and system meetings representing all the residents of Surrey. Surrey is a large and diverse county and we are also engaged in smaller scale groups, to ensure that local services remain responsive to the specific needs of their community. Here are some examples of how we have supported change at a local level:

North West Surrey

We share insight regularly with the North West Surrey Alliance which brings together a wide range of people working across health and social care in the area.

We shared experiences from people who have been financially impacted by both the pandemic and rising energy costs, which impact people's ability to access help and support. These experiences led to us being invited to connect with Spelthorne Borough Council, to explore how we can further support local people in their health and care needs.

Guildford and Waverley

We met with a group of leaders working in Guildford and Waverley to share the experiences of local people and discuss how these experiences can support future service improvements.

We discussed the confusion experienced by residents who requested an appointment to see their GP and were then offered appointments with other clinicians such as nurses, pharmacists, or paramedics. Information provided to people will be reviewed to ensure that people are fully informed why appointments are being offered the way they are and with more information about how this is better suited to the person's needs.

We also discussed people's confusion over the opening hours and services provided by Haslemere Minor Injuries Unit, so they will review their communications about this service.

Overall, they welcomed the feedback and are keen on meeting more regularly to hear and learn from residents' experiences.



Wider Influences

Supporting the Care Quality Commission

Healthwatch Surrey are always looking for opportunities to share people's experiences to help health and care services improve. With this aim in mind, we have been working with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) who are the independent regulator for health and care in England, to support nationally focused projects. We were invited to present our insight to their national medicines group, following on from a similar presentation that we conducted on adult social care earlier this year. The representatives from the CQC took what they learned from these presentations to inform their internal training for their national inspection teams.

We also worked with the CQC on a project additional to our Local Healthwatch work to better understand the barriers for people for whom English is not a first language. We worked closely with community organisations to hear the challenges in accessing health and care and shared these experiences with the CQC to help them support organisations across England with their future engagement with seldom heard groups.



Our Volunteers

This quarter, our dedicated volunteers gave 429 hours of their time which equates to approximately £13,728 in social value. Our diverse volunteer family has grown further this quarter as we welcomed four new members.

Our volunteers are vital in every aspect of our work ranging from speaking local residents as part of our community engagement to representing the voices of patients at important boards and meetings with health and care leaders.

Jill's Experience

"One of the aspects of volunteering for Healthwatch that I enjoy the most is the variety of opportunities there are. This summer, I've been to engagements within my local community of Haslemere; at a food bank in Farncombe and the RSCH at Guildford. I've attended meetings as follow up to the Dementia project and joined a new group looking at Health inequalities in the west of Waverley area, particularly around transport.

Following on from the engagement at Haslemere where comments were made about access to GP's, I spoke with the Chair of the patient participation group, and we are arranging to hold an open meeting to outline the changes at the health centre and the ways the public can access GP's. The discussion at the moment is whether it's more effective to hold one meeting or several 'drop in' sessions on different days.

Finally, I've attended a meeting where the discussion has been around the position of GP practices in Guildford and the plans to move 2 sites. My role in all of these meetings and engagements is to ensure the public's voice is heard at the appropriate commissioning group."

Helpdesk and Advocacy Services



This quarter **173** people have received information and advice through our Helpdesk, and our independent health advocacy service.

Advocacy

58

Helpdesk

115

Each quarter, our Helpdesk is on hand to offer support and advice for Surrey residents who are looking for help with a wide range of health and care experiences. In circumstances where people have not been able to resolve problems themselves, we also provide free advocacy support to ensure complaints are handled appropriately.

Advocacy

Eric's Story

Eric* was diagnosed with a severe mental illness in March 2022. When his mental state deteriorated significantly, he was sectioned.

After two weeks, he was making good progress and responding to treatment, when he was asked by hospital staff if he was willing to move to a private hospital three and a half hours away out of county.

The family were only informed when Eric texted his mother telling her that he was going to be moved. When she rang the hospital to clarify, she was told that the decision had been made and there was nothing that could change it.

The move disrupted Eric immensely and his mental health deteriorated significantly. His mother asked staff repeatedly for him to be moved back and was advised to contact a specific email address within the Trust. She spent weeks following up on her email before she eventually asked for information on how to make a complaint.

Outcome:

The advocate supported Eric's family to write a letter of complaint. While the Hospital acknowledged the complaint, it took them several months to formally provide a response. The family were dissatisfied as it didn't respond to many of their questions and failed to address whether Eric could be moved home.

Our advocate supported the family to arrange a resolution meeting where the Trust apologised, sharing their new policy around patients being moved out of the county along with assurances that no other families would have a similar experience in the future.



Helpdesk

Nadia's story

Nadia* booked an appointment with her dentist for a routine check-up at the hygienist. She was 19 weeks pregnant and had a maternity exemption certificate, which she expected would cover her treatment. However, her dentist, informed her that that they did not have enough funding to be able to support this, so she was charged £48. Nadia was shocked and consulted the advocacy service for advice.

Outcome:

Nadia was provided with details of the complaints process and to confirm details of the Maternity Exemption Certificate. Nadia was provided with full details of the complaints procedure and advised about other ways she could use her exemption certificate, such as prescriptions and travel to the hospital. Nadia was grateful for the time spent on researching this area for her and she felt empowered to escalate her concerns further.

* Names have been changed to protect identities.







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If you need support to make a complaint about NHS care our free, independent advocacy service is provided by Surrey Independent Living Council (SILC)

Tel: 01483 310500

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