



Information & Signposting and Feedback Centre

What we heard in 2022-2023

What we heard in 2022-23

Overview

We capture what we hear from the public and patients about local health and care services, so that we can champion your voice with decision-makers.

In 2022-23, our [Information and Signposting service](#) responded to **467 enquiries** and supported the public, patients and others to access, navigate and feedback on services.

Our [Feedback Centre](#) received **145 reviews** from people sharing their experiences of health and care.



This report includes:

- A summary of key health and care themes we have heard
- Feedback you have shared with us
- Examples of how we have used this information to influence change
- Our plans for engagement and service development in 2023-24

6 Our year in summary

We heard more than 600 experiences of health and care from the public and patients during 2022-23 via enquiries and our Feedback Centre.

This included good, bad and indifferent feedback, with many stories highlighting things that worked well and where improvement is needed.

We have worked to assist individuals and families in getting support that meets their needs, by providing information in various forms, signposting to other organisations and liaising with services directly.

We have also engaged NHS, care and decision-makers to embed best practice and to support change to meet the needs of service users.

We heard people experiencing challenges with basic issues such as booking appointments, communication within and between services, and challenges in understanding how services worked.

We also heard from an increasing number of people with complex stories and situations, often those with multiple needs and where more than one service was involved.

Over the next 12 months we have plan to develop our service so we can hear more experiences, and use these to support improvements in health and care across East Sussex.

Highlights from our year: 2022-23

We developed an [Easy Read](#) guide for our Information & Signposting service.

A [video](#) and [walkthrough guide](#) were created to support people in leaving health and care reviews on our Feedback Centre.

Our Information & Signposting Advisors finalised plans to deliver information clinics at Lewes Prison during 2023-24.

We regularly communicated advice and information on key health and care issues via our newsletter, bulletins and website.

As part of the Healthwatch 2022 Listening Tour in Eastbourne we provided information sessions across the Borough

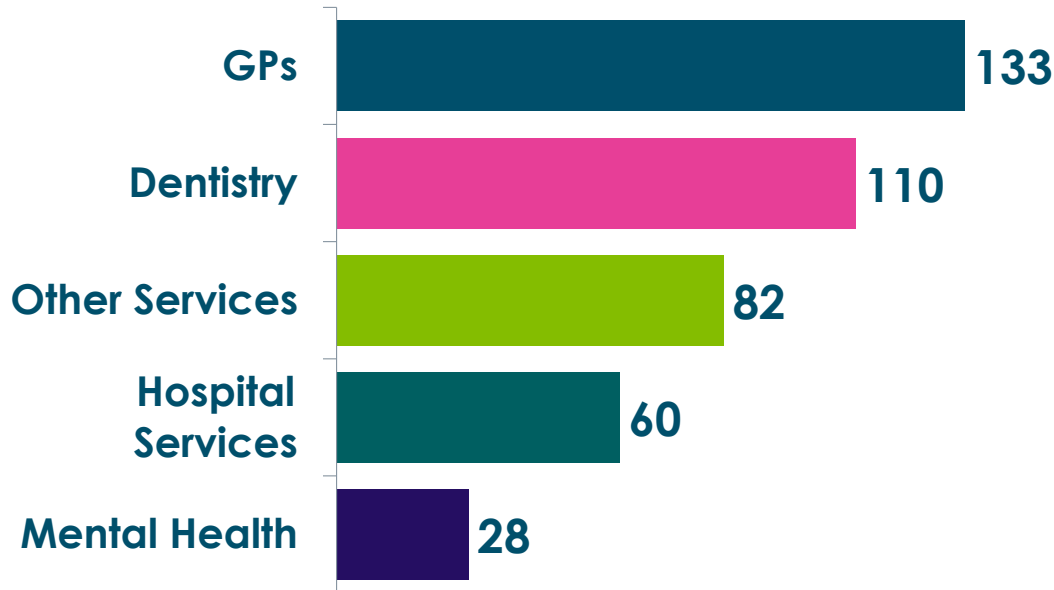
We worked in partnership with [The Advocacy People](#) to support people in leaving feedback and making complaints to services.

We regularly engaged with NHS Sussex and ESCC Adult Social Care services to share experiences, issues and contribute to solutions.

Information & Signposting enquiries in 2022-23

What you told us

5 most frequent enquiry themes



Enquiry themes

We received **467** enquiries to our Information Signposting service in 2022-23.

More than half (52.0%) related to GP services and dentistry.

Some enquiries were complex and involved a range of health, care and other services [other services].

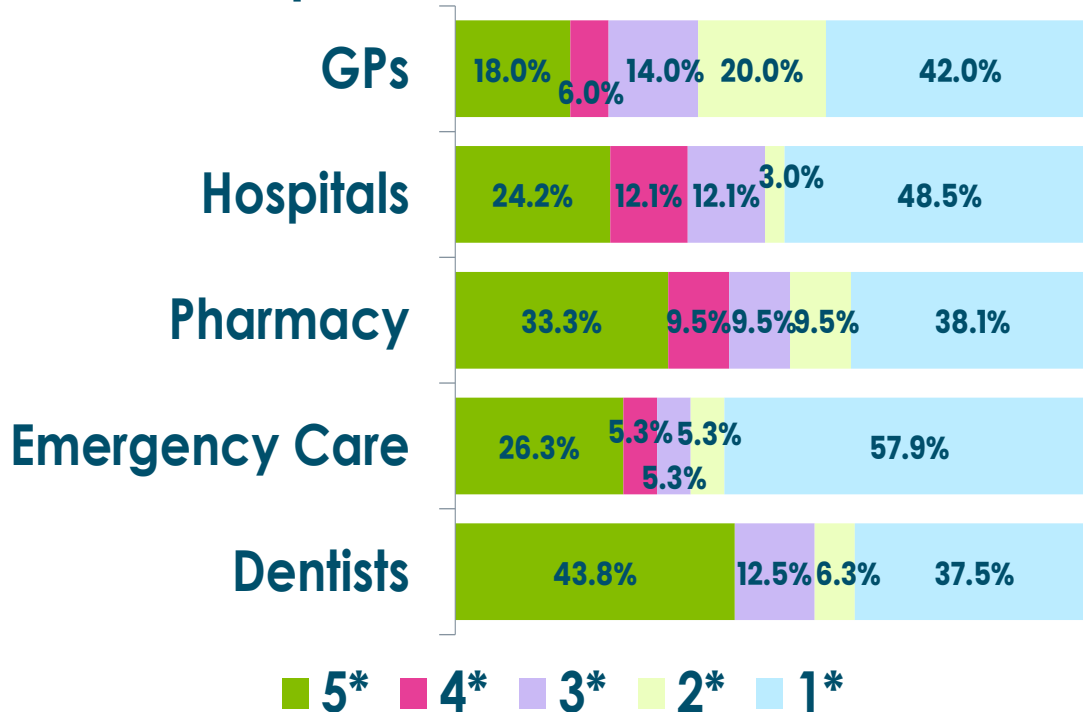
We heard about hospital services, both in East Sussex, and further afield.

Enquiries about mental health services were relatively low in number, but mental health often arose in enquiries we received about other services.

Feedback Centre reviews in 2022-23

What you told us

Top 5 reviewed service areas



Review numbers

We received 145 reviews on our [Feedback Centre](#) during 2022-23.

These rated services from 5 (Excellent) to 1* (Poor).*

We received reviews highlighting positive, negative and mixed experiences of health and care.

Positives reviews highlighted professionalism, courtesy, good communications and outcomes.

Negative reviews focused on long wait times, concerns over quality and safety of care and services not being patient-centric.

Positive feedback on services

"The staff always welcome me with a smile and remember my name. Even if the prescription is not there they will go above and beyond to help get it sorted out. I get a text to say it's ready. The staff are kind and respectful at all times."

"Initially offered an appointment in advance, but due to cancellation was able to be seen sooner. The reception staff and Dentist were all very efficient and the filling was restored."

"Attended for an xray. Arrived 15 mins early. Friendly and helpful receptionist. Was called after being in the waiting area for about a minute. Left the hospital 8 mins before my appointment was scheduled to start. Very fast and easy."

"I have always had a really great experience with the Diabetes department and team. The staff are always thorough and show real care with the information and advice they provide."

"My husband was admitted by ambulance with shortness of breath, and a high temperature. He was treated extremely well had bloods done, given oxygen, swabbed for flu/covid, given a nebulizer, and IV antibiotics. He was found a bed within a few hours of arriving at A&E."

"Online consultation submitted late Tuesday evening. Surgery rang early the following morning. Prescription rung through to my nominated pharmacy, collected and treatment started the same day."

Negative feedback on services

"For the second time in just two months receive a text message saying that "due to unforeseen circumstances " there would be no GP appointments available! What on Earth is going on? No wonder people are being forced to go to A and E. Surely it's part of GP contracts that they have to actually provide a service?"

"Waiting around with no feedback or indication of when we would be seen. Unbelievably poor."

"Phoned for an ambulance on Friday 1.00pm told it would be with me asap but certainly within two hours. After five hours called again told it could be another five hour wait. A relative drove 4 and a half hours to finally take me to A and E with a severe bowel blockage needing iv fluids, iv morphine and anti sickness medication. I thought I was going to die."

"I had a complaint after two complaints already and the receptionist just said well what do you want me to do about it !!! This surgery is shocking if you have long term health conditions and despite a care plan being put in place it's always questioned!!! The practice manager doesn't actually do anything about your complaints and the service always let's you down . Very slow to do anything here."

"Waited months for an appointment, told it was cancelled and when I arrived for the re-scheduled date, the dental practice was completely shut."

Key health and care themes in 2022-23

Service/Theme	Themes and issues identified
GP Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Most contacts expressed frustration with the limited accessibility of appointments and long waiting times to contact GP surgeries.• Issues included: appointments all being allocated by the time they phone; lengthy phone queues; being expected to discuss medical issues with receptionists; dissatisfaction with the lack of timely communications from practices in relation to follow-up appointments, results and referrals.• Some contacts expressed frustration that certain services they had previously accessed were no longer available at their GP surgery e.g. ear wax removal• Positive experiences of prompt and efficient treatment were also received, as was feedback on professional and caring staff.
Dentists and dental services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Many people were unable to find an NHS dentist in East Sussex accepting new patients, despite extensive searching. <i>This continues to be our most common form of dental enquiry.</i>• Many people were struggling to obtain timely NHS dental appointments, including those with urgent/emergency needs, asylum seekers and the homeless community, as well as people seeking preventative care.• Positive experiences were received, but primarily related to patients already registered with dentists, especially private dental practices.

Key health and care themes in 2022-23

Service/Theme	Themes and issues identified
Hospital services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We heard dissatisfaction with long wait times at Accident & Emergency departments, with limited communication on likely waits.• People contacted us for support with complaints about their experiences of using local Hospital Services. These focused on delays and cancellations, a lack of communication (between staff and with patients) as well as concerns over the quality of care and treatment.• Other concerns included poor inpatient care and a lack of follow-up care and communication after discharge (including with GPs).• We also heard praise for positive care experiences, especially for timely and patient-centric care.
Mental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Most contacts expressed frustration with the long wait times experienced for mental health services particularly adult community mental health and child and adolescent mental health (CAMHS) services.• People also contacted us for complaints advice relating to poor treatment and care, and a lack of joined-up working between NHS and Adult Social Care services.• Issues such as stress, anxiety, worry and depression were raised by people we heard from in relation to their circumstances and their access to support services.

Key health and care themes in 2022-23

Service/Theme	Themes and issues identified
Adult Social Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of confusion about how to access social care support, the assessment and funding processes. • Concerns about the limitations of Advocacy support for carers and loved ones seeking to engage with services on behalf of others. • Concerns over the appropriateness of the care received in care homes, including challenges in making contact with and monitoring the wellbeing of residents.
Other themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lack of understanding of the role of advocacy and advocates amongst some services and health professionals, and gaps in eligibility criteria. • Mixed experiences of NHS 111 services, with some experiencing long waits, no call backs and limited appropriate help and support. • Confusion around access to Non-Emergency Patient Transport, the Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme (HTCS) and other patient travel mechanisms • Limited support for migrants, asylum seekers and refugees to access NHS, healthcare and other services with a lack of clarity on entitlements and eligibility, including amongst NHS and commissioned services.



Case Study - NHS Dentistry

This year, we received 110 dental enquiries, the vast majority were from people wanting advice on how to access NHS dentistry.

We heard how the lack of NHS dental services meant people have resorted to 'DIY dentistry', having to live in considerable pain, or have to use other, less appropriate, NHS services – such as A&E.

"I have called numerous dentists, none of which will take new NHS patients and I can't afford to go private."

Becky, East Sussex resident

Healthwatch East Sussex's information and signposting has meant people who need treatment know their options and have clear information.

"Thank you so much for your assistance today. I finally managed to get my daughter an appointment."

Beverley, East Sussex resident

We have shared feedback on dentistry with Healthwatch England, NHS England South East Dental Commissioning Team and Sussex ICB . We published a [report](#) on people's experiences of Dentistry which we presented to the East Sussex Scrutiny Committee and we worked with other Sussex Healthwatch's to produce [guidance](#) to help people to access dental services.





Case Study - Healthcare access for asylum seekers

There are currently 375 asylum seekers living in Eastbourne, primarily placed in hotels. This year we provided support to enable asylum seekers to have better access to the services they need.

After hearing of multiple barriers asylum seekers face when accessing healthcare during our Listening Tour in October 2022, Healthwatch East Sussex supported a local charity offering migrant support, by providing monthly Information and Signposting sessions at their drop-in café, focused on enabling access to healthcare.

'Without your help we would have been all at sea, in trying to help our clients with healthcare access.'

Your support has been invaluable in giving us the confidence to continue to offer assistance - only possible knowing we have you behind us to refer to.'

Sanctuary Café volunteer

We provided information on the healthcare system in multiple languages, clarified what rights asylum seekers and refugees have to healthcare services and how to access them, and liaised with Primary Care Commissioners to both determine what local provision had been organised and feedback the issues uncovered.



Complaints about health and care services

Our Information and Signposting service engages with people who may be unhappy with the health or care services they have used.

We advise people on how they can raise their concerns with providers and, where appropriate, refer them for support from a complaint advocate.

71 enquiries received this year related to complaints about health or care services. Of these, 68 were referred or signposted to The Advocacy People for support with the NHS Independent Health Complaints process.

Common topics of complaints included:

- Poor experiences of triage and diagnosis
- Poor quality of care during treatment and follow-up
- Long wait times and delays
- Poor communication between staff and patients (including carers and families), and between different services

Support with complaints about NHS services

If you need help to make a complaint about an NHS service, please contact The Advocacy People: **Tel:** 0300 440 9000 or **email:** info@theadvocacypeople.org.uk or visit their website: <https://www.theadvocacypeople.org.uk/>



To see copies of our published reports please visit our website [here](#).

‘You Said – We Did’

Healthwatch champions people’s views and experiences of health and social care services in the county to make sure they are heard by the people in charge.

We:

- Gather and publish robust evidence on key health and care themes.
- Provide insight to the East Sussex [Health & Wellbeing Board](#), Scrutiny Committee and other decision-making groups.
- Share patient and public views with NHS and Care commissioners and providers.
- Produce and disseminate information to help people access local services.
- Promote public engagement in decision-making.

‘You Said – We Did’

The table below shows how we have used your experiences this year:

You Said...	We...
GP Services in East Sussex were challenging to access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shared experiences at our monthly meeting with Sussex Health and Care commissioners, requesting updates on action being taken by practices. Highlighted patient experiences to the East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board, Healthwatch Advisory Group, and NHS Sussex staff. Shared patient concerns with practice managers and other staff.
NHS Dentists were challenging to access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publicised our previous reports on dentistry to service commissioners, councillors, MPs and shared findings with the Local Dental Committee. Submitted evidence to the Parliamentary enquiry on dentistry. Fed our evidence into the Healthwatch England campaign calling for improvements in NHS dentistry provision. Engaged with Integrated Care System(ICS) staff about this body taking responsibility for NHS dental commissioning in Sussex. Worked to distribute our Healthwatch developed: a guide to accessing dentistry.
You experienced delays in Hospital, especially A&E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shared patient feedback (including Feedback Centre reviews) at our regular meeting with East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust (ESHT) who operate our local hospitals in East Sussex. Undertook an independent review of complaints made to ESHT.
You experienced delays at Pharmacies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produced guidance on how to order repeat prescriptions to minimise the risk of being without medication.
You were not always clear how and when to contact Adult Social Care services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaged with Adult Social Care services and others to explore how public/partner understanding of Adult Social Care's role could be enhanced and improved.



Other activity during 2022-23

During 2022-23, we:


- Developed [advice](#) articles, bulletins and newsletter items to keep people up-to-date with health and care issues and service changes.
- Changed our data recording and reporting processes so we are better placed to organise and interpret our insight.
- Captured the experiences of residents of Emergency and Temporary Accommodation to understand their needs and how they could be supported.
- Commented on and contributed to the development of the Sussex Integrated Care Board's [NHS Sussex] [Complaints Policy](#).
- Distributed leaflets, posters and promotional materials on Healthwatch and Advocacy services to all GP practices across East Sussex to raise public awareness of these services.





Our plans for 2023-24

During 2023-24, we aim to:

- Deliver our Information & Signposting outreach sessions at events and across a range of locations in East Sussex.
 - Provide advice and information on health and care to residents of Lewes Prison through regular visits.
 - Continue to evolve the online advice section of the Healthwatch East Sussex website so people can access proactive advice and guidance, and support self-care.
 - Share the feedback we receive with key decision-makers and local services so they can use people's experiences in developing local services.
 - Increase awareness of the role of advocacy support for patients and the public, including amongst service commissioners and providers.
- 

Our Information & Signposting Service

Healthwatch East Sussex's Information and Signposting service is a confidential service that is independent of the NHS and East Sussex County Council.

We can help the public and patients to:

- Navigate health and social care services and support groups near you
- Get information about what you can do when you have concerns or a complaint
- Find out about support and signposting to advocacy services, safeguarding and patient rights
- Share feedback about services

Contact Us

Email: enquiries@healthwatcheastsussex.co.uk

Telephone: 0333 101 4007 Monday - Friday (10am-2pm)

Our Feedback Centre

Our [Feedback Centre](#) allows people who have used local health and care services to leave a review of each experience, including an overall 'star' rating.

Reviews for each service are published on the website, so that the public and other users can see them.

They can also be viewed by service commissioners and providers to help them understand people's experiences, both positive and where changes are needed. Providers can also respond to reviews.

How to leave a review:

- Go to our [Feedback Centre](#), find the service you wish to review (or add it), and click on 'Leave your feedback'
- Follow our [step-by-step guide](#) to leaving a review

Please note that all reviews are validated before publication.

For more information

Healthwatch East Sussex
Freepost RTTT-BYBX-KCEY
Healthwatch East Sussex
Greencoat House
32 St Leonards Road
Eastbourne
East Sussex
BN21 3UT

www.healthwatcheastsussex.co.uk

 @HealthwatchES

 Facebook.com/HealthwatchESussex

t: 0333 101 4007

e: enquiries@healthwatcheastsussex.co.uk

healthwatch