

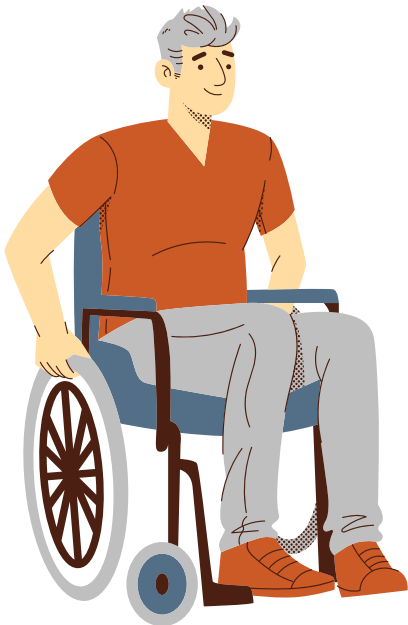
Improving experiences for wheelchair users at Kent's Hospitals

A Healthwatch Kent Impact report



July 2023

By working together with our local hospitals, we have changed facilities for wheelchair users to make them more accessible.



“I’m in a wheelchair and can’t use the foot pedal bin in the hospitals disabled toilet” –
service user

“The new bins have arrived and have been placed in all of our communal disabled toilets” –
service provider



This outcome will make positive changes to experiences of 3100 people* in Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley.

On the 3rd of May, Healthwatch Kent visited Kent and Canterbury hospital. We spoke to Eppie, a wheelchair user in the hospital, who told us her visit there had mostly been fine apart from her experience in the accessibility toilet. She told us how the bin in the toilet is pedal activated and that she can't open it. She explained the lid had no lip to be opened by hand and so she'd had to pry it open, this involved putting her hands in the bin and exposing them to the waste inside.

After hearing this, we immediately raised the issue with the patient experience team at East Kent Hospitals. The team acknowledged that this did not meet their accessibility standards and was bad practice for hygiene and infection control. An update from the team quickly followed to confirm a plan was being put together to address the issue.

After discovering this issue at Kent and Canterbury Hospital, we attended a patient support group in Tonbridge and used the accessibility toilet issue as an example of how Healthwatch can make a difference and share people's concerns with decision makers.

Mark, one of the attendees was upset to learn of the issue with the bins. When passing by Pembury Hospital in Tunbridge Wells on his way home, he checked whether accessibility toilets there had the same bin. Mark emailed us with photos of the same foot pedal bins being used in Pembury hospital.

We started to wonder whether this issue was persistent across the whole of Kent. We raised the issue with the patient experience teams at Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells Trust and Dartford and Gravesham Trust, asking them to investigate the issue across their hospitals. Patient experience teams across Kent informed us that this was a consistent issue across all hospitals, and each trust agreed to formulate a plan to address this issue and introduce more suitable bins to the accessibility toilets.

Dartford and Gravesham NHS Trust have since been in touch to confirm a suitable bin replacement has been found and is now being used in all of their communal disabled toilets.

East Kent Hospitals and Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trusts continue to hold internal discussions around the bins issue, and we are awaiting an update regarding implementation across their hospital sites.

If you would like to chat with us about the report, you can reach us through the following routes:



Online:

www.healthwatchkent.co.uk



By Telephone:

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0808 801 01 02



By Email:

Info@healthwatchkent.co.uk



By Text:

Text us on 07525 861 639. By texting 'NEED BSL', Healthwatch's British Sign Language interpreter will make contact and arrange a time to meet face to face



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