



Summer Roadshow

May to July 2023

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healthwatch
East Sussex

East Sussex Summer Roadshow

Following successful engagement activity last year, Healthwatch East Sussex again undertook a Summer Road Show in 2023. We engaged with people at public and community events across East Sussex so we could hear their health and care experiences.

We wanted to gather feedback and insight on local health and care services by meeting people where they were, whilst also raising awareness of Healthwatch activity and insight across the county.

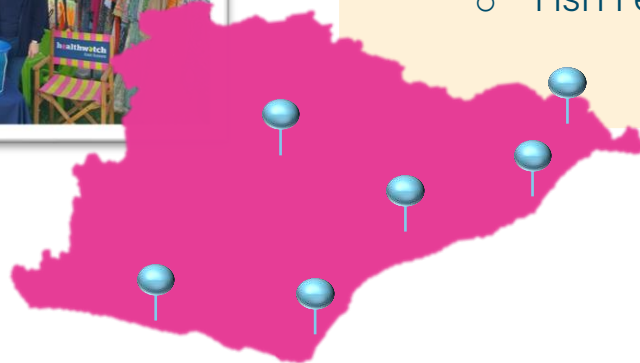
Our aims were to:

- Raise awareness of Healthwatch across the county.
- Promote our Information & Signposting service.
- Gather feedback on health and care services in various areas to identify recurring themes.
- Understand how residents found travelling to their health and care appointments.



During the roadshow we visited:

- **Heathfield**
 - Agriculture Show
- **Eastbourne**
 - 999 Display event
- **Bexhill**
 - Bexhill Health and Wellbeing Road Show
- **Rye**
 - Classic Car Show and Craft Fayre
 - Little Gate Farm
- **Newhaven**
 - Fish Festival



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During the roadshows we used a simple feedback form that captured:

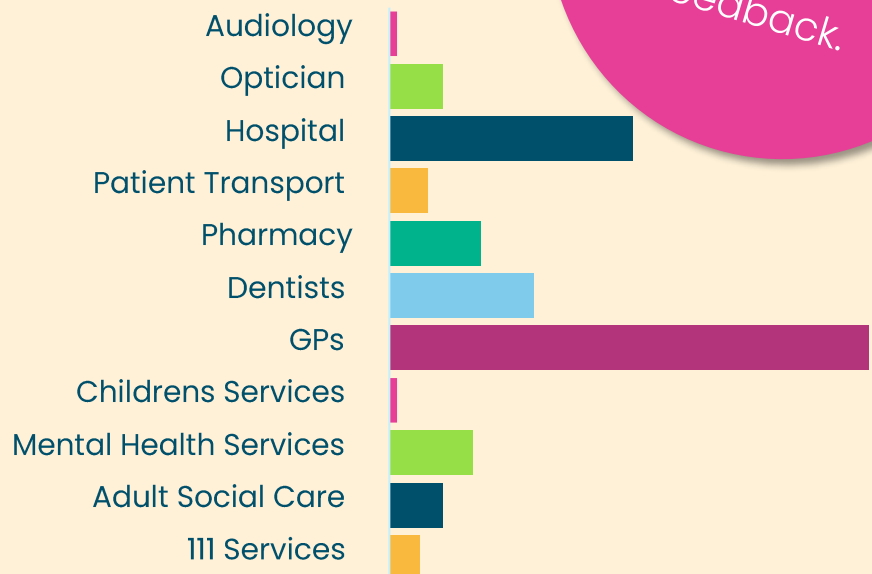
- Service area
- Location
- Positive experiences
- Areas for Improvement
- Additional Comments

The feedback we captured covered a range of health and care services and themes.

We heard most about GP's, hospitals and dentists.

We also heard from people who lived and used services across East Sussex and adjacent locations including:

Feedback themes



We engaged with over **300** people, of which **125** left feedback.



The headlines from this feedback is presented in the following pages of this report.

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Key findings

Issues raised about Health and Care

- The challenges of accessing NHS Dentistry across the county was raised by many, with people saying they had given up or felt forced to pay for private dental services.
- We heard from people who had concerns about not being able to access GP appointments. Phone queues and delays were raised as an issue for many.
- Social Care complaints procedures were felt by some people to be confusing and difficult to understand.
- We heard concerns about the digitisation of services, and how this was isolating for some people.
- In some areas of East Sussex, issues were also raised about the distance to get to health and care services, particularly for those in rural communities.

Suggestions For Improvement Within Health and Care

- More extended opening times across GP services so people who can't easily get to appointments during the day can still access services.
- GP appointment booking system needs to be looked at county wide, one suggestion was separating phone lines for types of appointments as not everyone needs an emergency appointment.
- Better transport systems are needed across the county so people can access services via public and community transport when needed.
- More information needs to be shared about social prescribing so people know what is available to them and how to access it.

Positive Experiences of Health and Care Services

- We heard from people who were really happy with the care they received from GP's practices once they had been able to get appointments.
- People appreciated when their care was supported by clear explanations about process and after care.
- We also heard about positive experiences with children's services in GPs and Hospitals.
- People told us about positive experiences of NHS Dentistry and a high quality for care received for their children, once they could get appointments.

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Key themes

GPs

- We heard from people that due to struggles with accessing GP appointments have now sought private healthcare.
- Although we heard from people happy with the provision of telephone appointments and the way these enabled them to more easily access their GP, some people did raise concerns about the challenges this causes if you have hearing or other impairments or struggle with using technology.
- We heard from people who had positive experiences with social prescribing and felt there could be more done to promote the service and what they are able to help with.

Mental Health Services

- Concerns were raised about negative experiences when accessing A&E during mental health crises. People reported that there was not a good level of understanding by staff and people were being left without necessary support in an emergency.
- People shared the positive experiences of the care received from Health in Mind. In particular we heard from people that had found the talking therapy service “really supportive” and that it had a positive impact “changed my life”.

Dentists

- We heard multiple accounts from people now having to pay for private dental treatment after being removed from the lists of dentists delivering NHS services as they were unable to visit in a certain time, for many this happened during COVID 19 lockdowns
- We heard about different understandings on the time intervals for children check ups.



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What we heard

Adult Social Care

- Speed of response from East Sussex County Council Adult Social Care were raised, with some people reporting they were waiting months for an initial response with no communication in between.
- We heard from people that were struggling with the complaints process within Adult Social Care, particularly with challenges accessing advocacy and how people can get help to make a complaint.
- There was a lack of understanding amongst some of the people we talked to about the Adult Social Care remit and what this entailed.
- A difference in the allocations from local council was raised as an issue as people accessing care across the Kent border seemed to be entitled to different things in terms of care home supplies, causing confusion for people trying to understand the system for people they cared for.

Travelling to appointments

- We heard mixed feedback on local patient transport services. Some people who relied on patient transport to get them to services who had positive experiences. Others had faced challenges, for example, one person told us that they were unable to bring someone with them on patient transport to offer support at appointments which cause distress and difficulty in accessing services.
- We heard from residents in rural areas of East Sussex about difficulties getting to appointments, with some people having to access private transport to get them places as public transport systems were not in place.
- We heard from people that had difficulties travelling to appointments as there was a lack of parking and public transport making getting there without someone else dropping you off an issue.

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What we heard

Hospitals

- People raised concerns about the hospital discharge feeling rushed and they left without the right aftercare in place.
- We heard from people who valued the level of care they received from hard working staff.



Pharmacy

- We heard a range of concerns with pharmacy provision within rural communities, with some people having to travel out of town to access pharmacy services, and other being unsure of how and where they could access out of hour pharmacies.
- Limitations on the amount of prescription items patients can have through one prescription request was also raised as a challenge as people were having to travel a greater distance more regularly to get the medication they need.
- Recent pharmacy closures across the county (Boots Eastbourne and Lloyds in Newhaven and Hampden Park) was a cause for concern for some people who were unsure where they would now have to go to access pharmacy services.

Communication

- We heard about concerns with the communication between services. With people feeling like services did not talk to each other and people were having to repeatedly explain themselves and their story.
- Concerns were raised about the way follow ups were managed across services, with people feeling like they were being left to chase for further information.

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What we heard

"Patient transport guys are brilliant"

"Follow up services haven't recovered from the pandemic"

"The doctors are good when you get through but you don't even know their name"

"Good in an emergency"

"Referred to Health in Mind. It changed my life, I am so thankful"

"I've given up phoning"

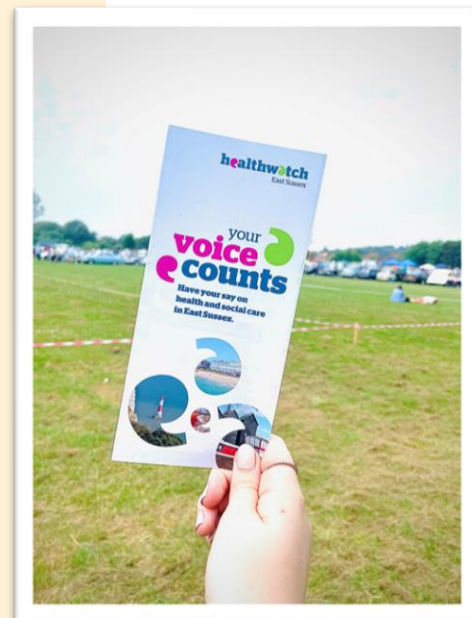
"They [their children] seem to get much better care" [in children's services compared to adult services]

"They changed my life, im so grateful"

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Next Steps

1. Healthwatch East Sussex will attend further events and local venues across the county to hear from as many local people as possible.
2. We will share what we have heard with key partners and decision makers to make recommendations for improvements to health and care.
3. We will use the learning from these roadshows to inform future engagement activity.
4. We will use what we have heard to shape our priority setting and project planning in the future.
5. Healthwatch will continue to raise awareness of our role across the county, to make more communities aware of what we offer and our impact.





healthwatch

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