

Healthwatch East Sussex

Quarter 4 Report 2024 – 2025

1st January 2025 – 31st March 2025



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About Healthwatch East Sussex

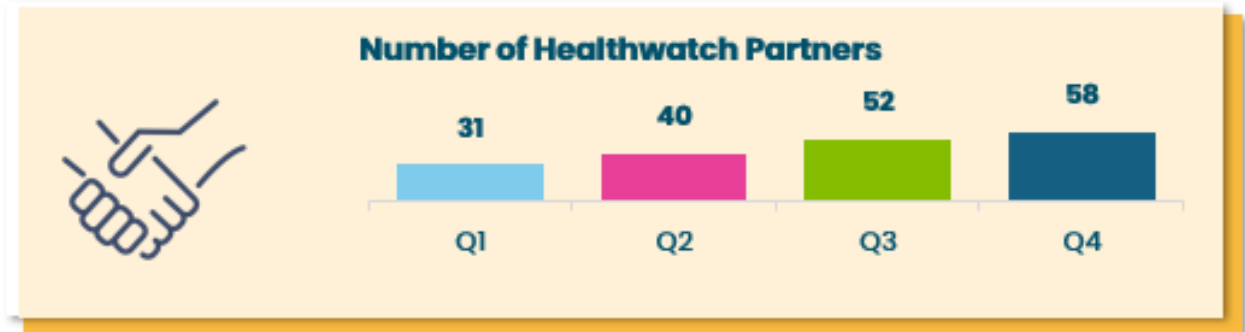
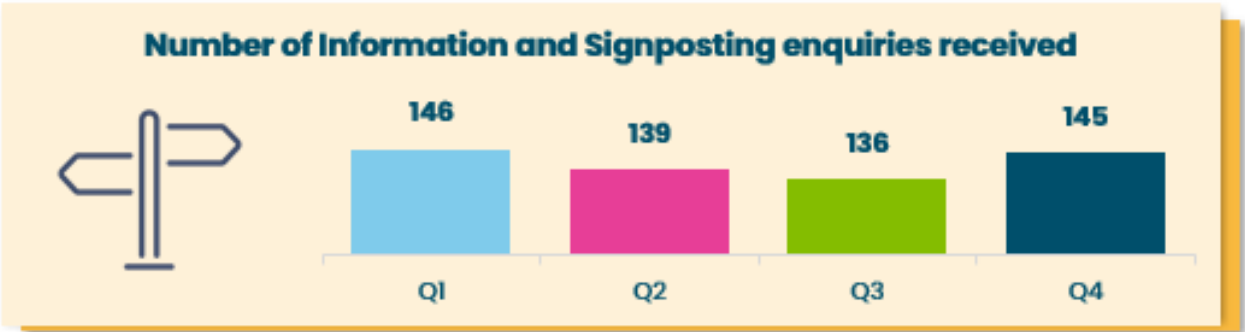
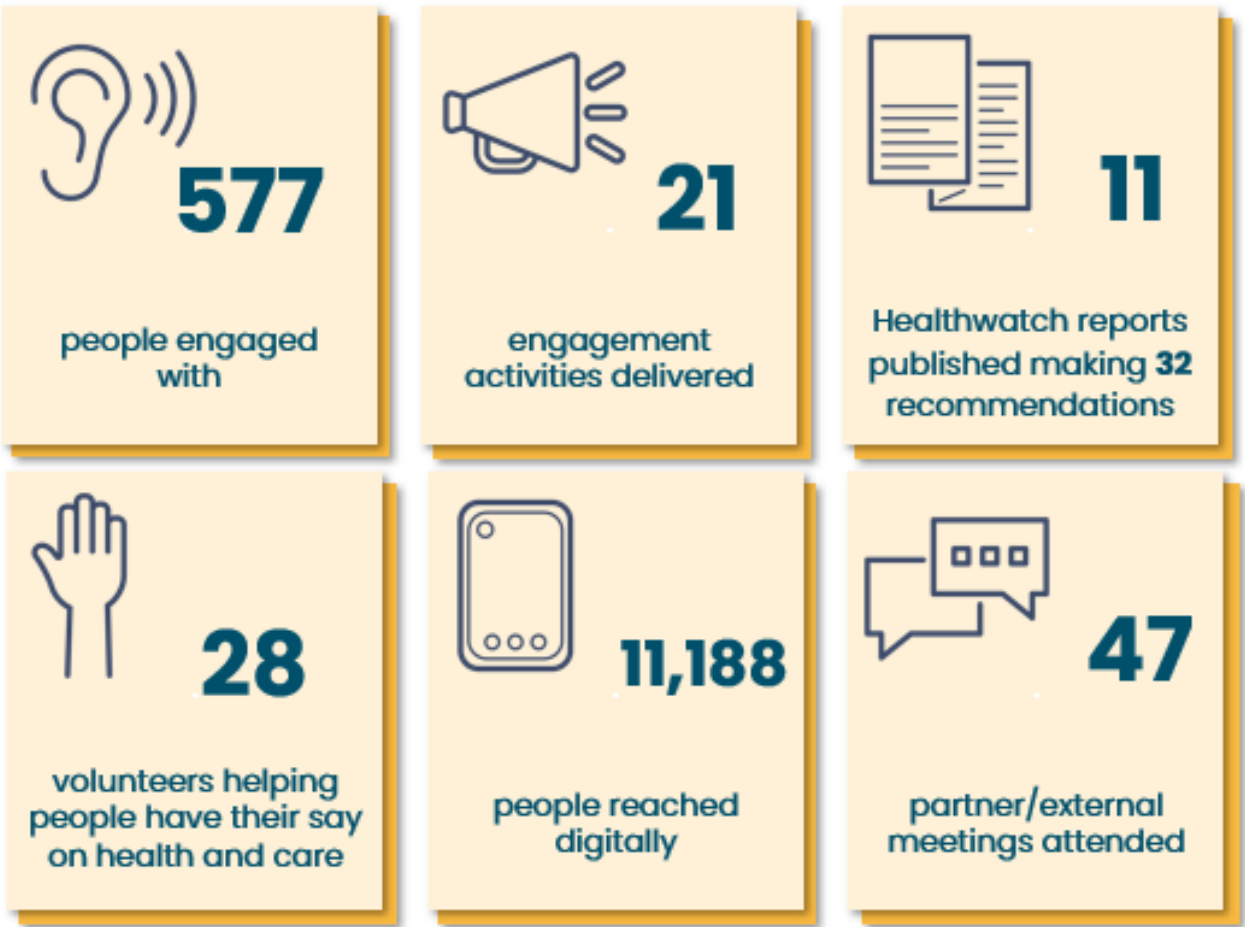
Healthwatch East Sussex is your local health and social care champion. We make sure NHS leaders and local council decision-makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care. We can also help you to find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.



About this report

The purpose of this report is to summarise the activity, publications and impact delivered by the Healthwatch programme in East Sussex this quarter.

Quarterly Dashboard



Highlights of the quarter

Healthwatch in Sussex wins national impact award

In March, [Healthwatch in Sussex](#) received a [Healthwatch Impact Award](#) for our work on Non-Emergency Patient Transport Services (NEPTS). We had gathered people's feedback over several years and used this to make sure that the new contract for NEPTS services across Sussex focused on patient needs.

Residents' experiences of health and care in Lewes Prison

This quarter, we published [our report](#) on HMP Lewes residents' experiences of health and care services which outlined what we heard through our engagement with residents from July to November 2024. We made 17 recommendations in the report, and received positive responses from the prison and healthcare provider to our suggestions.

Impacts of cost-of-living on health, care and wellbeing

We shared [the findings](#) from our 2024 survey about the cost of living with the East Sussex Financial Inclusion Steering Group this quarter. The survey of 413 local residents found people were interacting less, changing their diet and doing less physical activity because of higher living costs. We explored our findings with East Sussex County Council, NHS Sussex and VCSE organisations in the meeting to discuss how services are responding to them.

Rye 'one year on' event

In February, we held an event bringing stakeholders from the Rye area together to hear what has been done since our 2023 Rye Listening Tour. The event gave local stakeholders the chance to discuss what more needs to be done to

support local people in this part of the county. The event was attended by the Chair of Healthwatch England.

Strategy sessions

In this quarter, we contributed to strategy sessions informing the shared delivery plan, which steers health and care services in East Sussex. We emphasised the importance of public and patient involvement in designing, delivering and monitoring local healthcare services.



Listening Tour

Who we have engaged

This quarter, our ongoing Listening Tour of the county arrived in Hastings. We heard from 25 people in Hastings, and our work in the area continues into next quarter. As part of the tour we attended groups including the HVA age-friendly coffee morning, and the East Sussex Recovery Alliance drop in.

The Listening Tour visits different areas of the county across the year. In late 2023 we visited Rye – and in February 2025 we revisited Rye to mark one year on from the Rye Listening Tour. We engaged with 13 people at this event, which was also attended by Professor David Croisdale-Appleby, Chair of Healthwatch England.

What we've heard

In Hastings, we heard that although there are a variety of different support services, they can be difficult to access for those who don't know what they're looking for. We heard that experiences of GP services were generally positive when used, but they can be difficult to access, with face-to-face appointments being limited and often challenging to obtain.

In Rye, we heard about difficulties in accessing services for those who cannot use digital methods. We also heard that older people are often not accessing mental health services due to the perceived stigma, although face-to-face events with older people are helping to combat this.

What we've done with your views

This quarter we wrote and published [our report](#) from the Lewes and the Havens portion of the Listening Tour. Since this part of the Listening Tour, we have been working to raise awareness of reduced parking charges for carers at Conquest

and the EDGH. Transport was highlighted as an issue throughout our previous listening tours, and we have been working with the East Sussex County Council transport team to improve transport provision to healthcare services by raising awareness amongst decision-makers.

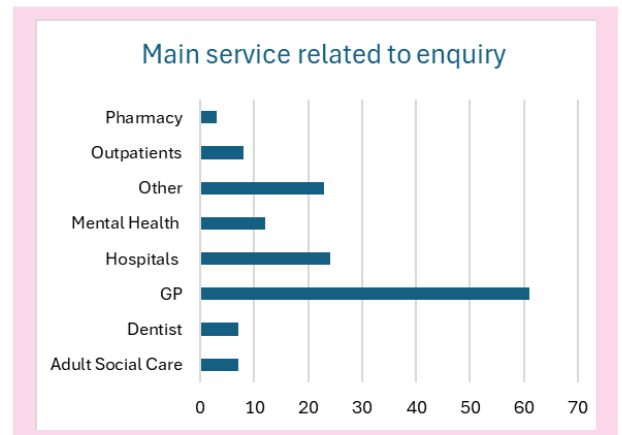


Information and Signposting

Who we have engaged

We received 145 enquiries to our I&S service this quarter, via our telephone line, emails and web-based contacts, as well as by providing drop-in sessions at community venues.

We also received 24 reviews from the public regarding their experiences of using health and care services through our Feedback Centre.



What we've heard

We heard most about services provided by GP practices, including long waiting times for appointments, limited face-to-face appointments and mixed standards of care. Hospital services were the second most common theme. People told us about varied experiences regarding treatments and staffing; some reported unprofessional and unkind behaviour of staff; while others praised staff that went 'above and beyond'.

What we've done with your views

We shared issues that we heard via enquiries at our liaison meetings with providers and commissioners of services, which has helped to resolve some individuals' concerns and bring trends to the attention of those that run or manage services.

Case study

We heard from a relative of a patient in hospital who wanted to be transferred to an alternative specialist unit. They asked if we could help outline their Patient Rights for an onward referral.

We provided relevant information and suggested they speak to the clinicians involved in their relative's care to request a transfer. We also signposted them to a national charity with a helpline for support, as well as information on the hospital's Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS).

Projects

Discharge Lounge Visits

We engaged face-to-face with six patients waiting to be discharged in the Conquest Discharge Lounge after an unexpected stay in hospital.

Patients told us there was a lack of communication around the discharge process with many feeling they were not able to be actively involved in their discharge plan. Patients praised the discharge lounge and its staff but the majority were less happy with the care they received whilst on wards.

We used the feedback we gathered during this activity to feed into our project looking at the current 'discharge to assess' system in East Sussex.

Modern General Practice mystery shopping

Seven Healthwatch staff and 11 volunteers undertook a 'mystery shop' of 55 GP practice websites and in-hours phone messages to review whether the channels (telephone, online, in person) identified for implementation by the [Modern General Practice guidelines](#) were in place, accessible and effective.

Although there were some excellent examples of clear phone messages and well designed and easy to navigate websites, we did find that there is a disparity in the way that Modern General Practice is being implemented and that practice websites and phone messages across East Sussex vary in quality, clarity and the information they provide.

Since [our report](#) has been published, we have shared it with GP commissioners and colleagues throughout the NHS to highlight where changes are needed and how improvements can be made.

We are sharing our findings with local GP practices to raise awareness of what we found and to support them in delivering effective information and communication channels with patients and the public.



Projects

Discharge to Assess Beds: Enter and View

Who we have engaged

Two Healthwatch staff and seven Healthwatch volunteers visited 10 residential homes in East Sussex providing 'discharge to assess' (D2A) beds to facilitate hospital discharge. We spoke to 25 people about their experience of hospital discharge, and to 10 care home managers or senior staff about how the D2A scheme works, and what could work better.

What we've heard

All the people we spoke to said that their admission to hospital was unplanned, with many experiencing a fall at home. It was unclear what rehabilitation services people received whilst in hospital. Many had been in hospital for lengthy periods of time, reducing their motivation and ability to self-care.

The information provided by hospitals to care homes as part of the admission process was often inadequate. The majority of people referred through the D2A scheme remained in long-term residential care. The chances of a person being able to return home were increased where there was an allocated social worker, able to access rehabilitation services quickly.

What we've done with your views

Healthwatch published [our report](#) recommending that NHS Sussex consider focusing some resources for the D2A scheme on those people where it is possible they will be able to return home following a period of reablement and rehabilitation in residential care.

We shared our report with NHS and council partners for comment and consideration, and we presented it to the East Sussex Care Homes Group. Following our recommendations, Adult Social Care and Health has already used some funding from NHS Sussex to recruit an additional Occupational Therapist, who will assess people to maximise their chances of a return home.

Volunteer Updates

It's been another busy quarter for Young Healthwatch and Healthwatch volunteers. This quarter our volunteers got involved in:

- the launch of a new online [youth panel](#) for young people aged 13-24
- contributing their views to the NHS 10 Year Plan consultation
- attending an NHS Sussex Children and Young People's event to meet other young people and discuss healthcare topics that affect them
- visiting local care homes as part of our Discharge to Assess project
- supporting the development of our new Healthwatch website
- taking part in our Rye Listening Tour 'one year on' event.

Do you want to make a difference to health and social care in your area? We are always on the lookout for new volunteers, so please [get in touch](#) today.

How can Healthwatch help you

Healthwatch can help you find reliable and trustworthy information and advice. If you need information or support to access health and care services, please contact our information and signposting service.

We can help you:

- 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, advocacy services, safeguarding and patient rights
- Share feedback about services

How to contact us



www.healthwatcheastsussex.co.uk



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The East Sussex Picture

Between January and March 2025, central government, the NHS and East Sussex County Council all told us about changes which may affect the way health, care and other services are delivered and experienced in East Sussex. We heard:

East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust will now receive funding through the [New Hospital Programme](#) (£1.5–2 billion) between 2037 and 2039, rather than 2030, as had been anticipated. This may impact the renewal and upgrading of buildings, potentially affect the costs of maintenance, and mean plans to improve how some services are delivered may happen later or possibly not go ahead.

East Sussex County Council reviewed public feedback and [approved proposals](#) to reduce or close 11 services, to assist the council in balancing its budget. Two decisions have been ‘called in’ for further review by the [People’s Scrutiny Panel](#): closure of Lindon Court Day Service for people with a learning disability; and funding reductions for the housing-related Floating Support Service.

Devolution and local government re-organisation in Sussex are being [explored](#). This may include establishing a new ‘Sussex’ combined authority, overseen by a mayor, with powers for transport, housing, economy, and health, with a single local council in East Sussex, and no district or borough councils. County Council elections scheduled for May 2025 were postponed, allowing preparations to take place for a Sussex mayor election in May 2026.

Reductions in Integrated Care Board running costs were announced in March 2025, with NHS Sussex (which commissions several local health services) tasked with reducing their operating costs by 50% by quarter three of 2025/26. Initial information suggests the focus will be on corporate and back-office functions, rather than front-line delivery. Further detail is awaited.

NHS England is being [abolished](#) alongside changes at the Department of Health and Social Care. The process will take place over the next two years. This aims to simplify decision-making and accountability and may affect the way services are commissioned and contracted centrally and locally. Specific details have yet to be announced, so national and local impacts are not yet clear.

Coming up next

Pharmacy project: This year we will be working to better understand the provision of pharmacy services across the county and how pharmacies are meeting local needs. We'll share our plans in the near future.

Listening Tour Hastings: We will be continuing our Listening Tour in the Hastings area throughout April, speaking to local people about their experiences of health and care. We will be attending a range of different groups throughout the month, promoting our Listening Tour [survey](#), and holding our stakeholder event.

Annual report: We will soon begin developing our annual report to reflect on the work we have undertaken in 2024/25 and how your feedback has helped improve health and care locally.

Healthwatch website: We're launching a new Healthwatch East Sussex website from mid-April with improved accessibility, navigation, and design. Our Feedback Centre will change to a form-based model, ensuring your experiences still inform services.

To find out more about the different ways you can get involved with Healthwatch East Sussex please visit our [website](#) or get in touch using the details at the end of this report

Chief Executives Comment

Our team worked hard this quarter to share what we heard from people in prison, being discharged from hospital, using GP websites and via enquiries.

We were delighted our longstanding work with the other Healthwatch in Sussex on Patient Transport was recognised through our Impact Award and we'll be working to gather feedback on the new service during 2025.

We heard lots of announcements about health and care recently and we'll be working to ensure patients are kept informed of what any changes mean for them and that their voice gets fed into decision-making.

Recent Publications

[Modern General Practice: Mystery Shop](#)

[Hospital Discharge: Discharge to Assess Beds Enter and View](#)

[2024-25 Listening Tour Area Report: Lewes](#)

[HMP Lewes: residents' experiences of health and care](#)

['You Said – We Did' February 2025](#)

[Your Experiences of NHS Dentistry](#)

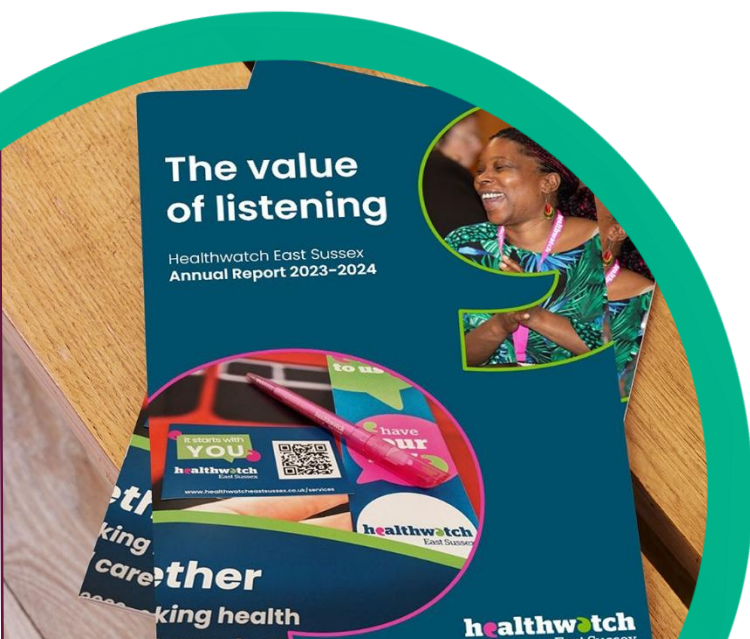
['You Said – We Did' January 2025](#)


[Impacts of changes in cost of living on health and wellbeing](#)

[Your Experiences of Cancer Screening](#)

[Urgent Community Response Survey](#)


['You Said – We Did' December 2024](#)





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