



Spotlight Series
Spotlight on Folkestone & Hythe



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In November 2018 we visited Folkestone & Hythe District Council to talk to staff about their experiences of local health and social care services.

We spoke to 230 people. 32 people gave us in-depth feedback. This is what they told us.



The majority of people talked to us about GP services

13

people talked about struggling to get an appointment with their GP



“The receptionist vets you before you can get an appointment. I don’t know if she is clinically trained...”

“Getting an appointment is very stressful and I can’t get regular appointments”

“If I need an appointment, I can’t get one and I can’t book one in advance. What am I supposed to do?””

“They don’t answer the phone. You have to queue from 7:30am to get an urgent appointment. You can’t book online or book ahead, so I have stopped going”

8 people shared positive stories about their GP

"I can always get an appointment. They arrange my blood tests for me too."

"The treatment is good once you've got through the battle to get an appointment."

"I have no problem getting an appointment."

"Very efficient, even though they are rushed off their feet."

"The Ask My GP service is really good. It means I can communicate with the surgery and get repeat prescriptions without having to go to the GP."

5 people talked to us about their frustrations with hospital appointment letters

"They are so confusing. I get multiple letters and I don't know which appointment I should be attending."

"My husband got an appointment letter, but it didn't say what it was for. Turns out it was a waste of time."

"My husband just got an appointment letter for surgery that he had last week"

"My father is dying from cancer and we've had a letter through but it doesn't say what it is for. Does he really need it? Is it worth the physical effort for him to attend the appointment?"

4 people talked about mental health services

“My wife has ADHD and she is really struggling at the moment. The GP can't see her until Jan and there is no support offered. Is she just meant to stay at home crying all day rather than someone help her?”

“I have been waiting 6 months for a mental health assessment for my child who is self harming. I don't have a date. The school has been no help either.”

“My brother is a paranoid schizophrenic. He stopped taking his medication and visiting his counsellor, but no-one noticed. It was only his neighbour that spotted something was wrong and did something about it. He was let down.”

4 people talked about Royal Victoria Hospital, 3 of them were positive

“I used the GP service and it was a good experience.”

“I couldn't get a GP appointment so I went to the Walk In at Royal Victoria which was good.”

13 people talked about hospital services

“The care for my baby on Padua Ward at William Harvey has been fantastic.”

“I recently had a lump removed at William Harvey. The surgery was dealt with very promptly.”

“Maternity unit at William Harvey was fantastic. I had 2 babies there and I couldn't fault it.”

“I took my Dad for a blood transfusion but they said they didn't have him booked so he couldn't have one. He was so weak but they just sent him home.”

“The care is fantastic, but the administration is terrible. Little issues become a big deal when you are dying. I have to chase around all the time to speak to the right person.”

“My 82 year old Dad had a CT scan and needed to see the Dr. We've waited months and chased it. Saw the consultant and the CT scan was out of date because we waited so long so now we have to start the whole process again.”

“My 18 month old child went to hospital with a suspected broken arm. We saw 2 nurses and they both told us he'd broken his arm. We waited 4 hours to see the GP who told us it wasn't broken and sent us home. 3 days later we went back to A&E and they confirmed it was broken.”

“I wouldn't recommend anyone to give birth at QEQM. I feel let down.”



We heard a range of other stories including:



“The equipment people turned up with no warning and took my Dad’s cushion that he uses to prevent bed sores. They made him stand up and took it out from under him. He was left with nothing.” **Equipment**

“My toddler has a viral wheeze. The GP won’t give us the medication that we need to manage it at home so each time he gets admitted to hospital. I want the NHS to help me to manage his condition rather than wait for a crisis to happen.” **Managing a condition**

“My Mum has Dementia. The Vulnerable Adult Officer was called but because I live on the same street he wouldn’t offer any help. I have tried Kent County Council but they told me to use BUPA. She recently climbed out of her bedroom window and rang down the street. How bad does it need to get before I can get some help?”

Social services

“My husband was given medication at hospital. The GP couldn’t arrange a repeat prescription because he had no record of what it was.”

Records

“111 told us to go to hospital as our child was struggling to breath. I said I would take him myself and be there in 20 minutes but they said no wait for an ambulance. 3 hours later an ambulance arrived.” **Ambulance**



How did we go about it?

We visited Folkestone & Hythe District Council and spoke to 230 people. We visited every desk and gave people the chance to share their experience of local health and social care services. We spoke to people from every department including the Grounds Maintenance, Finance, the Call Centre and Housing.

We also popped into media company, Sleeping Giants Media who are based on the two top floors of the building.

People were offered the chance to give us feedback on the day or to send their stories by freepost, online or by calling our Helpline.

32 people gave us detailed feedback about recent experiences of local services.

Thanks to everyone who took the time to talk to us. We hope that you can encourage other Folkestone & Hythe residents to get in touch and share their stories too.



What next?

- We have gathered all the comments that we heard during our visit.
- We are sharing with Folkestone & Hythe District Council everything we heard that is affecting their workforce. We've also shared the stories with the relevant organisation and the people who commission that service..
- We'll ensure these organisations have read and understood the feedback and where necessary take action.
- We would encourage anyone to share their experience with us [#ItStartsWithYou](#)



Healthwatch Kent is the independent voice for local people in Kent.

We have a freephone helpline on 0808 801 0102 or email us anytime on info@healthwatchkent.co.uk

We can arrange home visits too