



Healthwatch Kent - January 2019

What do people want from Extra Care Housing?



Foreword

This piece of work was voted for as one of the Healthwatch Kent priorities for 2019/20. The aim was to gain insight from potential tenants on their expectations for future purpose-built self-contained accommodation.

There is a demand to have more “extra-care” units within Kent; housing that promotes independent living for over 55’s and those who need support from carers (who are based on-site).

These homes will be built throughout Kent, catering to the needs and requirements of tenants, in the next few decades.



How did we go about it?

Our initial approach was to create a survey, to be taken to events, groups and put online for a wide audience response. Through a small pilot it became clear that the subject was more complex than anticipated and it was difficult for people to grasp the concept, confusing the housing scheme with sheltered housing, residential homes and nursing homes. We therefore concluded that our most effective way of gaining feedback would be to engage people in detailed conversations, explaining what extra care housing is, and discussing what people would like to have for their own housing requirements in the future.

Our strategy focused on reaching people aged 35-60, from across the County, engaging them in locations such as libraries, workplaces, and weight loss groups. This ensured that we were able to engage with a variety of people of a working age, genders, and those who have long term health conditions or disabilities.

We developed five questions which helped inform our semi structured conversations (see appendix 1)

Owing to the confusion regarding the name, we referred to the housing complex as “retirement village with care facilities” during our conversations.

We also explained to people that carers would be based on site and that there would be a communal area.





Who did we talk to?

Due to the short timescale of the project, and the complex nature of the conversations, we conducted 26 interviews from 9 districts across Kent (not Dartford, Sevenoaks or Tonbridge & Malling districts). We had one participant from Medway.

6 men 19 women (1 declined not to say), all between ages 35 and 64. For a full breakdown of demographic profiles see Appendix 2.

It was important that none of our candidates were currently using Extra Care Housing or had ever visited one and so had no preconceived ideas about what Extra Care Housing currently looks and feels like.

What did we hear?

The majority of people we spoke to were not familiar with the term “extra care”. When we explained what the basis for the interview was, we found that people assumed that we were discussing nursing care. It took time to explain the concept of having your own self-contained home within a complex that also had a base for carers. It was then assumed that everyone living in the complex could access the carers, not just those who have a care package already in place.

We heard a range of feedback which we have themed according to the frequency of the mentions, starting with the most common issue.



Location & type of accommodation

The most frequently mentioned theme was a desire for people to stay in their own homes with a few people raising issues about buying somewhere designed for extra care.

- “I live in a quiet part of a small town, so I would still want to live there”
- “I would want to purchase my house outright. I already own my own home and I don’t want to part-own”
- “I wouldn’t want to sell my current house and move into a flat. I would be happy with a semi-detached bungalow”
- “I want to stay in the same area that I currently live in. I wouldn’t move to a new town. I like that I know the staff in the post office, and I go to local events. The familiarity is important”
- “I don’t want to leave my current house, but if I really had to move into a new place then I would want my own house, not a flat. I’ve always been in a house and I won’t start changing”
- “I would be happy to buy into a part-ownership scheme because I want to own my property, even if it’s just a small part”
- “It wouldn’t be so bad if we had to move out (of our existing home) but I would want a house of our own, not to stay in a block of flats. This must be for our ease of living, not the carers”
- “I would consider “extra care” if I could choose my own home; I don’t want to be told where I’m living, and I don’t want to get pushed to a different part of the county.
- “I would be happy to purchase but I would worry about reselling”



Second theme was around easy access to GP and other infrastructure

- “It would be good to be near the GP, it’s always a bit tricky getting parked close to the GP so a close location is best”
- “It should be accessible to nearby facilities, local shops and good transport. There should be a nearby supermarket”
- “I would like to be in a smallish town that isn’t densely populated but still has enough local shops”
- “My requirement would be that I am close to a hospital, it’s a big preference for us. A lot would depend on the stroke consultation decision. I don’t want to be too remote and an ambulance couldn’t get us there on time”
- “I heard that the harbour area (in Folkestone) will be redeveloped so this would be a nice area, but all the shops are further up the hill in Folkestone so it might be hard to walk up and down”
- “We are watching the new Otterpool development discussions with interest; we would be happy to move to a new town if our home was very close to amenities”
- “It needs to have good transport but not a train station because that would be too noisy. A regular bus would be ideal but must also have regular times on a Sunday”
- “I like the city life, with access to shops, bars, restaurants etc. Everything is in walking distance”
- “I think we would stay in the town centre so that I can still go to work and pop home to make sure that my husband is ok”

Another theme focused around people liking the idea of living in a ‘quiet’ area with ‘outdoor interest’

- “It would be nice to live close to some interesting beach walks or woodland walks, accessible for people with mobility problems”
- “I live in Whitfield town and it’s getting packed with houses, so I want to be somewhere with a bit of open space, maybe in terraced houses”
- “I want to live somewhere like Hawkinge, it’s away from the main town but it isn’t completely isolated in the countryside, the suburbs”
- “It would be nice to be somewhere spacious, not a built-up area”
- “I don’t want to move away from Romney Marsh, I like going out for walks so somewhere on a flat area would not cause a problem”
- “We heard that the development (Otterpool) will be near the castle so we are keen to be close to that too and have outdoor space to go walking”
- “Ideally, I would like to be in an open space so that I can see the stars at night, and I like to be able to be near water (like the riverside)”
- “I don’t mind where it is located but I certainly wouldn’t want to be in a city centre”



Fourth theme that emerged from people that liked the idea of creating a 'hub' of accommodation

- "I want my own chalet, like a "Centre Parcs" layout, I like the idea of chalets/homes all around a central hub, a community hub"
- "Our ideal situation is to still live in a house but be within close distance of other houses: we live in a village at the moment, but we are far away from our neighbours"
- "I like the idea of lots of small houses forming their own community"
- "Good to have a mixture of apartments and terraced houses, like a small village, and with a central hub, where the carers would be based"
- "We would love to move somewhere fresh and new, and would be happy in a complex with a 1 bedroom flat"
- "I like the idea of 4 houses in a block, 2 people on the ground floor and 2 upstairs. I can have neighbours but not feel surrounded"

Final theme was that people would like accommodation to 'look and feel like home' on the inside and not an obvious 'old people home' from the outside

- "I would need to live in a detached house, or a semi-detached bungalow, I still like to have my own land so flats or apartments wouldn't work for me"
- "I would be happy in a flat but not a very modern looking one, something more in keeping with the surrounding houses"
- "I would want the flats to look like any other modern block of flats in Maidstone centre"
- "I don't want a flat"
- "I live in a bungalow because we struggle getting up and down stairs now, but if my husband was no longer here and I was alone then I would probably want to be in a flat"
- "Just because I am old doesn't mean that I want to give up modern living! It must be aesthetically pleasing"



Accommodation Features

The most frequently mentioned feature that would be important to people was access to outdoor space.

- “I need my private space ideally with a bit of garden”
- “I need easy access to my garden, no steps”
- “We like growing our own vegetables so having our own garden is a deal breaker”
- “I like to hang my clothes outside to dry so I would need a private space at my house to do this. Not necessarily a garden, but a patio area”
- “I would be happy to have a balcony”
- “I would like a small garden with simple landscaping that is easy to maintain”
- “I would also want to have some communal garden or outdoor space where it isn't too overlooked as I like to do my Pilates outside”
- “A ground floor flat with a patio door that opens up to a communal area. I also would like to have a bird table near my patio area”
- “If we had a flat then it would be nice to have a large balcony area but still remain private from our neighbours”
- “Balconies that are staggered so that you have an open balcony and your neighbour above you isn't right on top of you. The balcony area is very large; enough for chairs and a table and then a few pots and plants. This is ideal for me”
- “I like to keep busy so I would want to have a small property with a garden and my tool shed”
- “I like to sit outside with coffee and watch the birds and squirrels”
- “I like to stand at my kitchen sink and look out the window at my garden, I would love to have this feature if I moved again”





Second theme was for spacious accommodation with natural light and an extra bedroom

- “The flat interior should be modern, with a large living and dining area”
 - “I would definitely pay more for extra rooms; it’s no different than buying a house elsewhere, you pay for the size of the house”
 - “I have always wanted floor to ceiling windows, especially if my flat was on an upper floor. I love to have natural light come into my home”
 - “I would like a spacious bedroom, bathroom and kitchen, just in case I need assistance with moving around”
 - “A separate living room and a kitchen/dining area”
 - “I would be willing to pay more to have a 3-bedroom place for my dogs to move around in”
-

Third feature was the ability of people to style their own decoration and furniture, summed up by one participant ‘If we would be at home all of the time then it has to be a comfortable environment with our own home furnishings’.

- “I want my own furniture and my own bed, no grab rails or things to stop me rolling out of bed”
- “I want to wallpaper my house; I quite like changing the look of my house every few years”
- “It would be nice if the flats had a modern and fresh look to them, not tired and drab looking”
- “I would want to decorate it in my own way too, no rules on what I can or can’t do with my house”



People mentioned internal storage space, security and efficiency of heating / lighting bills with the same level of frequency

Storage space

- “Built in wardrobes would help to reduce the amount of furniture taking up floor space”
- “I like my fridge up high, eye level. I can’t bend down very well to get to lower cupboards”
- “I can’t stretch up so I wouldn’t have any use for high kitchen cupboards”
- I would need lots of kitchen storage as I do a lot of baking so have a huge amount of kitchen equipment. A larder would be my dream”
- “Integrated wardrobes and white goods are great. I like my kitchen to have long worktops so washing machines that are integrated and hidden are ideal”
- “The kitchen should have decent storage, but not too high up. There should also be storage in the hallway for coats and cleaning supplies”

Security

- “Security is important, I don’t want a fenced property, but it must be well lit”
- “A doorbell camera is a must, that could also link into a video screen that can pop up on my TV”
- “The door should have a peep-hole at eye level but also lower down in case I am in a wheelchair”
- “If carers have access to my flat then I should have a key safe outside the door”
- “I feel anxious and vulnerable when I’m alone, so it is important to have no cold callers at my door”
- “I would like a secure entrance for residents only”

Heat and sound efficiency

- “I would like solar panels built in that directly link into my electricity supplier. I would be very conscious of my bills as a pensioner. If there are any other schemes that can reduce bills, then I would be happy to participate”
- “I change my gas and electricity provider every couple of years to get good deals so I would still want to be able to do this”
- “I think the flats should be well insulated and all have windows that reduce heat loss”
- “I want to choose which rooms get warmed; I don’t need a radiator in the kitchen, and one that I can turn on and off in the 2nd bedroom. I also want to choose my bill provider so that I get the best deal”
- “I would like to integrate some technology such as solar panels, and be energy efficient”
- “My hearing isn’t great so I usually have my TV on quite loud. The house should have good sound proofing; I would worry that I might disturb my neighbours!”



A few comments also highlighted

Parking

- “I would like my own parking space and also space for visitors too”
- “We won’t need a car if we are in the town centre, so parking doesn’t concern us”
- “I still want to be able to drive my own car, so parking is important”

Accessibility

- “A bedroom with en-suite toilet is a must, but also a separate bathroom”
- “It would be great if doors weren’t traditional doors (that open and close) but move to the side, like a concertina door. That would make it easier if I was in a wheelchair to open, but the concertina would have to be made from a durable material and not one that breaks easily”
- “We would need to have a flat with laminate or hard floors; carpets are difficult for my husband to mobilise on. Lift access and of course, a wet room”
- “I’m not keen on baths, but a wet room would be preferable over a shower enclosure”
- “It’s really important to us that my husband can maintain his independence and his dignity, so we would need appropriate modifications to our flat like grab rails, wide doorways etc”
- “A lift and rise kitchen unit would allow him to be useful in the kitchen”
- “Plenty of lighting and oversized switches, as my husband’s dexterity isn’t great”

Smart home design

- “I would like to have music/sound speakers in every room so that I can have my TV or music system playing in a room even if I go into the kitchen or a different room”
- “A central control pad that I can change the TV channel, volume, dim the lights, change the heating with. It should be easy to use and portable. It could also have a “call for help” button”
- “It would be good to have some kind of app that I control the heating of lighting with, something like Alexa or Siri would also be helpful”



Communal Facilities

The most frequently mentioned desired communal facility was a social space, one that was available to the wider community as well 'residents'.

- "I like the idea of creating a metro community, just the residents of the retirement village, but I appreciate that it could be isolating. It might be nice to have a room to lease out for Rainbows & Guides, Beavers & Scouts. Nice to have income generation but also nice to have children around the place. Tenants could volunteer to help out at groups, after having the correct DBS checks of course"
- "The central hub or community space should have a few units to lease, for the purpose of income generation, and that will be reinvested into the housing scheme for the tenants to enjoy"
- "It should have a pool table and maybe karaoke night weekly"
- "Maybe a community centre with clubs and things going on; meets ups and coffee mornings, a mobile library"
- "Social events like barn dances, tribute nights and boot fairs would create a sense of community"
- "If there is a place for the carers in a community centre then it should also have a café, serving small sandwich snacks and things"
- "Maybe it could also have a room to hire out for groups such as mobile libraries, weight loss groups, fitness groups, hearing aid clinics, police community support clinics, parent & toddler groups etc"
- "I like the idea of a "board game café" or a "talk to us Tuesday" where people can gather for a chat if they want to, but aren't pressurised"
- "A licenced bar might be a good idea, like a sports café that shows daily sports like football, Olympics, etc. It should have a varied menu, like "a nice Wetherspoons"; order at the bar and find your own seat... open to the public to create an atmosphere"
- "I like to talk to people, so access to a room where I can socialise would be nice"
- "I don't move around a lot, so once I get somewhere, I tend not to leave again for a few hours. It will have to be a welcoming place"
- "The carers should be based in a hub, with a coffee shop too. I would like the coffee shop to be only for residents' use, not the general public, although financially that doesn't make sense! I don't want them to let just anyone in!"
- "It would be nice to have a restaurant, an independent caterer. I don't want the food to be crap, just because I'm old I won't accept crap food"
- "I have a bowel condition so the food should cater to all tastes; vegetarian and vegan choices, and also consider allergies and intolerances such as gluten/dairy/peanut free"



A second theme identified a clear wish for accessible gym, leisure and activity classes

- “A studio with a personal trainer and their own equipment would be ideal, a “pay on the door” deal. Maybe the studio could also do dance classes, like Zumba Gold or Salsa, none of the “chair exercises” that you see in old people’s homes”
- “I like the idea of classes, such as art classes, but I don’t want old people classes like Xmas card making. It’s very juvenile, all that sticking and pasting. Something more worthwhile like jewellery making would suit me”
- “Sporting facilities are important and open public spaces”
- “I am health conscious and I intend to go into my retirement fit and healthy. Perhaps a unit could be leased to a gym and have a reduced entry fee for the tenants. They could have a higher charge for external users to offset the cost”
- “I like outdoor sports so an “all weather” pitch might be good, it could be used for football, tennis, badminton”
- “I am a fitness instructor, so I take health and wellbeing seriously. I would like to see a lot of activities surrounding healthy eating, healthy living and healthy thinking as it is important for your psychological wellbeing to look after yourself”
- “It would be good to have a discounted gym within the building. I don’t think I could afford my usual inner-city gym prices if I am retired. I wouldn’t want it inundated with the public wanting cheap facilities, but I suppose that if I am retired then I can go when everyone is at work!”
- “I’m quite health conscious so a gym and healthy eating are important to me. Perhaps a salad or smoothie bar could be attracted to the gym/apartment block. It’s not to everyone’s taste, but it is important to me”
- “A “One You” advisor could do a drop-in clinic, giving weight loss ideas, stop smoking advice etc”
- “A unit could be leased for mindfulness or group therapy sessions, arty and creative groups. Maybe some gentle exercise classes, like Pilates. I like to learn, so maybe some adult education courses can be held in the units. There could be a discount for tenants”



Other desired communal facilities that had one or two mentions were:

- “It should have a shop with necessary amenities. I don’t want to have to get into my car or walk to shops further away just for milk or bread”
- “A pharmacist with a post office within it would be great, if it can’t be inside our “community village” then maybe just outside it, for the wider public to use too”
- “A prayer room, calm room or mindfulness room would be great. People these days are aware of relaxation and mindfulness and it would be nice to have a neutral space to utilise”
- Laundry
- “It would be great to have a mini-market once a week, with a fruit & veg stall, maybe a “meat-van man”, artisan bread stall... traditional market things”
- “A hairdresser would be good, with beauty treatments too (not just hairdressing)”

There were a few comments questioning the need for closed community resources, suggesting ‘Maybe a shuttle bus could do a journey every morning and afternoon to nearest town to help people out?’, ‘The town is also full of cafes and places to eat so I think that communal spaces are unnecessary in town centre flats’.

- “For a lot of people who live a quiet life, they will just want to continue that way, with little intervention or forced integrations”
- “I don’t know if we would use any of the shared facilities, like communal spaces. It seems like an old person’s thing. I don’t want to feel old before my time! I might feel differently if I moved in though”
- “I wouldn’t have a clue what kind of activities I would want to do or take part in”



What tenants would miss & what they particularly DON'T want to see

People identified that they were most concerned about, in order of mention:

Living in accommodation that felt more like a hotel than a home:

- "I wouldn't want the corridors to look like a hotel, but something more homely"
- "I don't want to have a red pullcord in my home. That would make me feel as if I am an invalid and, in a hospital"
- "I don't want my house looking like a hospital or a care home, with lots of equipment"
- "I would not like to see strip lighting in communal areas or corridors, that would make it feel like an office or a residential home"
- "I don't like signage similar to the ones seen in hospitals, especially ceiling suspended signs" "I would hate to have signs everywhere, "fire signs", "warning signs", "direction signs". It wouldn't feel like a home, more like a hotel"
- "I really DO NOT want it to look like a disability home or an old person's home"

Having restrictions over visitors

- "I would want my daughter to be able to visit me when she wants, no restrictions on visiting times or staying over. If she has her own family then I would want them to come over, there should not be a rule on having young children come over"
- "I look after my grandchildren often; I pick them up from school once a week and they stay overnight with me. I would want to keep doing that if I had to move house"





Not being able to have their pets live with them

- “I was thinking about getting a pet when I retire, something to keep me active and still go out walking. I would not be happy if this wasn't allowed in my future home”
- “I have 3 Great Danes so I wouldn't leave them behind, they have to come with me!”
- “I have a cat, but he doesn't go outside. I would want to bring my cat with me, it would really make me think twice about moving if I wasn't allowed to have my pet”

Having restrictions around their decision making or ability to go out as they please

- “I would still like to smoke in my home”
- “We have our own handyman that comes to us, so I still want him to come around to do odd jobs, not some “contracted to the building” man”
- “I still want to be able to do as much as possible, I don't like sitting around”
- “I don't want to be lonely, but I like to choose when I can be alone, I just want to live my life”
- “I go out at night a lot and I don't want someone checking to make sure I'm home at a decent time!”

Loss of a garden space

- “I would miss my vegetable garden if I had to live in flats”
- “Maybe a nice outdoor space for my grandkids to play in”
- “I would miss it if I could not have a potting shed or greenhouse”



We heard that most people we spoke to felt that care in someone's home is a more appealing concept than moving to a care home.

- "I don't want to be in a home, so "extra-care" sounds like a good compromise. At least I will be close to carers in case I need someone immediately"
- "I work full-time but my husband has a disability so stays at home whilst I go to work. It would be great if we were eligible for extra care"
- "My partner and I haven't discussed our retirement, but I guess it's a decision we would need to make together. If one of us needed help that the other couldn't give and we needed carers, then I think we would want it in our own homes"
- "Knowing that other people are in the building, and carers, would be a huge relief for me. I love that my husband could come downstairs to socialise if he wanted to or stay in our flat. I worry that he gets lonely so it would be nice to know that he can choose to see people if they're not too far away"
- "I don't want to ever be forced into a situation where I had to move house just to enable care"
- "This kind of housing is not for me. I don't like that people might be persuaded to leave their home, they might have lived there for 20 years or so, and move into a block of flats, just because the carers are based in the building. It cuts the expense of travelling to people's homes down and it means that they might spend more time with them, but you would be taking people away from their neighbourhood, their familiar surroundings"
- "I like this idea; it would be nice to be a part of a community"
- "I can see that one day I will probably need help. I wouldn't want my husband to do any personal care so I would be glad to have carers. Even better that they are on site"
- "Essentially, I want to live a better quality of life, I want to live in a "community within a community". Really, you make it what it is"
- "I like the idea of homes around a central hub, a community hub, like Centre Parcs"



We heard that people would reconsider their position should there be a change in their support needs

- “I’ve seen new developments spring up recently and I’ve thought about moving somewhere for the over 55s but I didn’t know that they might have carers based there. My partner would be happy to move with me, as long as she doesn’t feel like we’re in a home”
- “We have no family nearby so we would have to depend on carers to help us if we decline further. Now that we have bought our own home, we wouldn’t want to move again. However, if one of us was no longer here then I would have to consider”
- I’m quite a loner so I would be happy with my own company but if I declined so much that I needed carers then I think it would be useful to be in a more “looked after” environment”
- “I wouldn’t choose to move to “extra care”, I would only do it if my husband was no longer around and I was alone in the house”
- “We wouldn’t move to “extra care” if we were still living together, we will always be together in our bungalow. If our circumstances changed and my wife was no longer here then I would consider moving, the bungalow is too big to maintain myself, especially if I was not mobile enough to do it”
- “I wouldn’t mind if I had to move to “extra-care” but I would have to be quite unable to take care of myself to have to move somewhere with good access to carers. I would really like to stay in my own home as long as possible”



What Next?

We've shared the detailed findings from our conversations directly with Kent County Council who will use the responses to help inform their plans for Extra Care Housing across Kent.

If you live in Extra Care Housing currently or receive care at home in another way, either through carers coming into your own home or staying in a nursing/residential home, then we'd love to hear your story. Tell us about your experience so we can help others.

You get in touch via a number of routes:



Email us at:
info@healthwatchkent.co.uk



Complete our online feedback form:
www.healthwatchkent.co.uk/have-your-say



Call us for free on:
0808 801 0102



Text us at:
07525 861 639





Comment from Kent County Council

“Whilst there were some expected themes from the engagement there was also some unexpected ones. It was very helpful to understand the things that people would miss and why they particularly did not want. This information will be used to inform the requirements for Housing with Care. It was encouraging to read that people's expectations with regards to technology are changing and the key messages relating to accommodation facilities that they want to see this built into the design.

Kent Accommodation Strategy sets out the ambition to deliver more housing with care and forecasts that an additional 2500 units, across all tenure types, will be required by 2031. The information in this report will support the development of the market position statements and delivery plans moving forward. We will share these insights with housing providers to inform their development plans as well”



Appendix 1

Questions which helped inform the semi structured conversation:

- Which style of accommodation do you think you would like to be living in, considering any needs you may have?
- What kind of location would you like to be living in (town based or rural)?
- Within your own home (house or flat) what kind of features would you like to have (number of bedrooms, outdoor space, kitchen or bathroom features)?
- Is there anything that you would particularly miss about your home or your current way of living if you had to move?
- What features would you NOT like to see in your future house?



Appendix 2

Demographic information

Gender:

Male	6
Female	19
Did not disclose	1
TOTAL	26

Age:

35-49	12
50-64	14
TOTAL	26

Disabilities/long term health conditions:

No disabilities	14
Disability or long-term health condition	12
TOTAL	26

Ethnic Background:

Black British	1
White British	22
White/Other European	1
Black African	2
TOTAL	26

District:

Ashford	3
Folkestone & Hythe	8
Canterbury	4
Dartford	0
Dover	3
Gravesham	1
Maidstone	3

Sevenoaks	0
Swale	0
Thanet	2
Tonbridge	0
Tunbridge Wells	1
Medway	1
TOTAL	26



Healthwatch Kent

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

We gather and represent people's views about any health and social care service in Kent.

Our role is to understand what matters most to people and to use that information to influence providers and commissioners to change the way services are designed and developed.

Our **FREE** Information and Signposting service can help you navigate Kent's complicated health and social care system to ensure you can find and access the services that are available for you. Call us on 0808 801 0102 or email info@healthwatchkent.co.uk



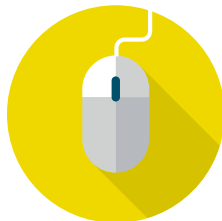
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Healthwatch Kent
Freephone 0808 801 01 02



By Email:

Info@healthwatchkent.co.uk



Online:

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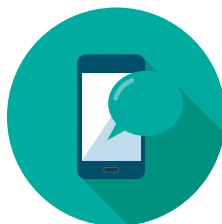
By Post:

Write to us or fill in and send a Speak out form. **Freepost RTLG-UBZB-JUZA**
Healthwatch Kent, Seabrooke House,
Church Rd, Ashford TN23 1RD



Face to Face:

Call 0808 801 01 02 to arrange a visit



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.