

**Healthwatch Kent Annual report 2019-20**

**Guided by you**

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# About the Healthwatch network

## Here to make care better

There are 152 Healthwatch's across England. We work together to make care better.

The network's collaborative effort around the NHS Long Term Plan shows the power of the Healthwatch network in giving people that find it hardest to be heard a chance to speak up. The #WhatWouldYouDo campaign saw national movement, engaging with people all over the country to see how the Long Term Plan should be implemented locally. Thanks to the thousands of views shared with Healthwatch we were also able to highlight the issue of patient transport not being included in the NHS Long Term Plan review – sparking a national review of patient transport from NHS England.

We simply could not do this without the dedicated work and efforts from our staff and volunteers and, of course, we couldn't have done it without you. Whether it's working with your local Healthwatch to raise awareness of local issues, or sharing your views and experiences, I'd like to thank you all. It's important that services continue to listen, so please do keep talking to your local Healthwatch. Let's strive to make the NHS and social care services the best that they can be.



"I've now been Chair of Healthwatch England for over a year and I'm extremely proud to see it go from strength to strength, highlighting the importance of listening to people's views to decision makers at a national and local level."

# Message from our Steering Group

As I sit down to write this we are in the middle of the Covid pandemic. The world has changed almost overnight as our work team has had to adjust to working at home, and the importance of our NHS and social care services has come to the forefront like never before.

At Healthwatch we have put the majority of our priorities on hold as we moved swiftly to react and support the public and I want to highlight in this introduction to let you know what we have been doing during these unusual times.

**Ensuring decision makers hear from real people** : we've proactively gathered stories from people all over Kent about how they are coping during Covid. Voluntary organisations have also been telling us how their clients are coping. We share everything we hear every week with decision makers as part of their strategic discussions to inform both their emergency and recovering planning.

**Supporting NHS volunteers across Kent** : to free up NHS staff, we have been supporting nearly 3,000 NHS volunteers who aren't able to volunteer due to Covid. We want these volunteers to feel valued and involved so that when the crisis is over, they are able to return to their much missed volunteer roles.

**Reaching Hidden Carers during a pandemic** : Thousands of people are looking after someone in Kent right now. Lockdown has meant that it's been harder than ever before. We have been working with Kent's Carer organisations to reach these people and ensure they know what support is available to them.

**Giving Care Homes a voice** : we've spoken to 50% of Kent's Care Homes to understand how they have coped and what lessons they have learnt. We've given them the opportunity to have a voice and be heard by Kent County Council who are using the feedback to inform how best to support Care Homes.

It's been a challenging time, but I am proud about how we have risen to the challenge. Our staff and volunteers have been working tirelessly to make a difference and I want to thank them all.

We hope you find this report useful. Do get in touch if you would like to know more about our work.

Penny Graham, Healthwatch Kent Volunteer and Chair of the Healthwatch Kent Steering Group

 Our staff and volunteers have been working tirelessly to make a difference and I want to thank them all



# Our priorities

Last year 501 people cast their vote for what they would like to see us focus on in this financial year 2020 - 21 during our roadshow across Kent. Since then we have been focusing on Covid. If life returns to some sort of normal we will revisit the priorities that people voted for which were:



- Wheelchair service for young people



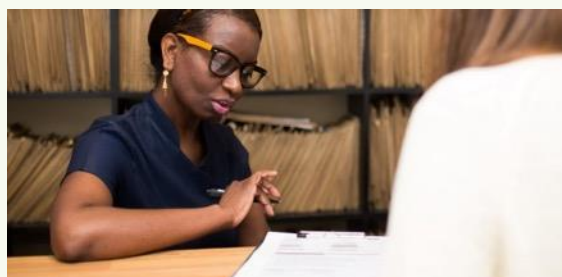
- Social isolation



- Maternity in East Kent



- Support for people with Learning Disabilities

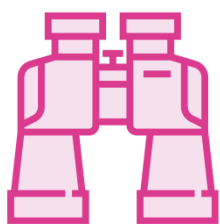


- Interpreters



Dentists

“We are already actively involved in the independent review into Maternity services in East Kent”  
Robbie Goatham, Healthwatch Kent Manager



## Our vision is simple

Health and care that works for you.  
People want health and social care support that works – helping them to stay well, get the best out of services and manage any conditions they face.



## Our purpose

To find out what matters to you. We then need to make sure decision makers hear your views in the right way at the right time so they can have maximum impact on how services are planned and delivered.



## Our approach

People's views come first – especially those who find it hardest to be heard.

We champion what matters to you and work with others to find solutions. We are independent and committed to making the biggest difference to you.



## How we find out what matters to you

People are at the heart of everything we do. Our staff and volunteers identify what matters most to people by:

- Visiting services to see how they work
- Running surveys and focus groups
- Going out in the community and working with other organisations
- Seeking communities and voices who aren't traditionally heard



Find out more about us and the work we do

**Website:** [www.healthwatchkent.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchkent.co.uk)

**Twitter:** @HealthwatchKent

**Facebook:** @HWKent

# Highlights from our year

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Find out about our resources and the way we have engaged and supported more people in 2019-20.



## Health and care that works for you



### 44 volunteers

helping to carry out our work.

We employed

**10.8 staff** (full time equivalent)

We received

**£511,000 in funding**

from Kent County Council in 2019-20

## Providing support

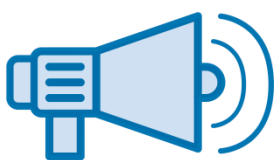


### 1,456 people

have been in touch with us this year to;

- share their health and social care story with us,
- access our information and signposting service,
- or ask us questions about local support

## Reaching out



### We've reached 57,498 people

through our website, by engaging with us on social media, working with us on our projects and talking to us at events and during our roadshow.

## Making a difference to care



We published

**8 reports**

about the improvements people would like to see with their health and social care, and from this, we made 51 recommendations for improvement.



# How we've made a difference

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**Speaking up about your experiences of health and social care services is the first step to change.**

**Take a look at how your views have helped make a difference to the 22,000 people who currently use a wheelchair from the Wheelchair service in Kent**

### Helping people to get a wheelchair quicker

Thanks to people speaking up, the average waiting time for a wheelchair has significantly reduced.

We worked with the Kent Physical Disability Forum to gather the experiences of people who were struggling to get a wheelchair.

We heard from people who were waiting a long time to be assessed for a wheelchair, delays for people waiting for a wheelchair and significant challenges for people who needed a repair to their wheelchair.

We shared the feedback we had heard with the organisations who provide and commission the Wheelchair service and escalated our concerns directly to the Kent Health Scrutiny Overview Committee who acted swiftly to explore the issues on our behalf.

Since our report and recommendations we have seen a number of changes including:

- Reduction in waiting times
- The number of people waiting more than 10 days for their wheelchair to be repaired has also reduced
- There have been significant investment in improving the service



- Millbrook are doing more to hear directly from service users about their experience of the service
- The number of complaints about the service has reduced and patient feedback is starting to be more positive

**The only way my wife can get to her appointments is on a stretcher as we are still waiting for her wheelchair to be repaired.**

**I waited 330 days since I was referred by my MS nurse for the wheelchair service to assess me. I then had to wait another 69 days for the actual wheelchair!**



## Ensuring stroke survivors are at the centre of decisions to change services

Stroke services in Kent & Medway have been under review for several years and we have been involved in the discussions to ensure the voice of all communities is heard and acted upon. Our role in a public consultation is to scrutinise the process to ensure people were involved and listened to. This year a decision was finally made to create three hyper acute stroke units.


During the subsequent Judicial Review, our scrutiny was reviewed by the Judicial process and mentioned in their overall findings which upheld the consultation decision.

Since then, we have worked with the

Stroke Association and Healthwatch Medway to create the Stroke Advisory Group.

The Group, which is made up of people who have had a stroke and their families has been travelling to the sites of the three new Hyper Acute Stroke Units to work with professionals to ensure the needs of patients, carers and families is incorporated into the design for the new service.

They have visited 2 sites before Covid hit, talking about the importance of emotional support to help patients and families deal with the impact of a stroke. They felt this support was vital to be available in the immediate days following a stroke as well as during the rehabilitation phase.

 **The stroke survivors and carers were able to help us understand what is important for people using stroke services.** Louise Ward, Stroke Clinical Project Manager





A partially sighted volunteer visited Maidstone Hospital alongside our volunteers to explore what it would be like to attend a hospital appointment

## Your story has made it easier for partially sighted patients to visit Maidstone Hospital

Together with the Kent Association for the Blind, we visited Maidstone Hospital in 2018.

A partially sighted patient identified a range of issues which made it harder for them to visit the hospital. Challenges included reading posters and signs, getting appointment letters in larger font and staff who had limited knowledge about how to support patients with additional needs.

We made a series of formal recommendations which we took to the Hospital's Board in December.

At the meeting, we asked all the Board members to wear eye masks and perform simple tasks such as pouring a glass of water. It was a mess! The Board were fully supportive of the recommendations and have been working with us to implement the changes ever since.

Following Healthwatch's recommendations, several changes were made, including

- hearing loops are working and staff are trained to use them
- some signs are easier to read
- Staff are better trained and more aware of the challenges for partially sighted patients
- Improvements have been made to posters and patient letters

**"Hearing directly from patients who are partially sighted about the challenges they were facing when coming to our hospitals has enabled us to make some specific changes. We would like to thank Healthwatch Kent for our continued partnership working and the benefits this brings to our patients experience."**

Gemma Craig, Deputy Chief Nurse, Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust

# Long Term Plan

**#WhatWouldYouDo**



## Highlights



More than 290 people shared their experiences about children & young peoples' services with Healthwatch Kent & Healthwatch Medway.



We facilitated 8 focus groups reaching different groups of children and young people in Kent & Medway



117 people told us what they felt was important to them about children and young peoples' services

## NHS Long Term Plan

Following a commitment from the Government to increase investment in the NHS, the NHS published the 'Long Term Plan' in January 2019, setting out its key ambitions over the next 10 years. Healthwatch launched a countrywide campaign to give people a say in how the plan should be implemented in their communities.

Working with Healthwatch Medway we asked young people #WhatWouldYouDo to improve the NHS locally.

This is what they told us:

- They want their opinions and thoughts to be valued and respected
- They want to be involved in decisions about them
- They wanted gaps and inconsistencies in services to be addressed

We shared our findings with the Kent & Medway Clinical Commissioning Group who said "It will contribute towards building a robust children's strategy"

Our recommendations included :

- A Children & Young Peoples' strategy should be produced together with young people and parents
- Continuity of care should be addressed
- No jargon and easy to understand care pathways
- Reduce waiting times especially for SEN services

We remain involved in the discussions about improving services for young people



"I feel that I haven't been supported and listened to so far".

# Helping you find the answers

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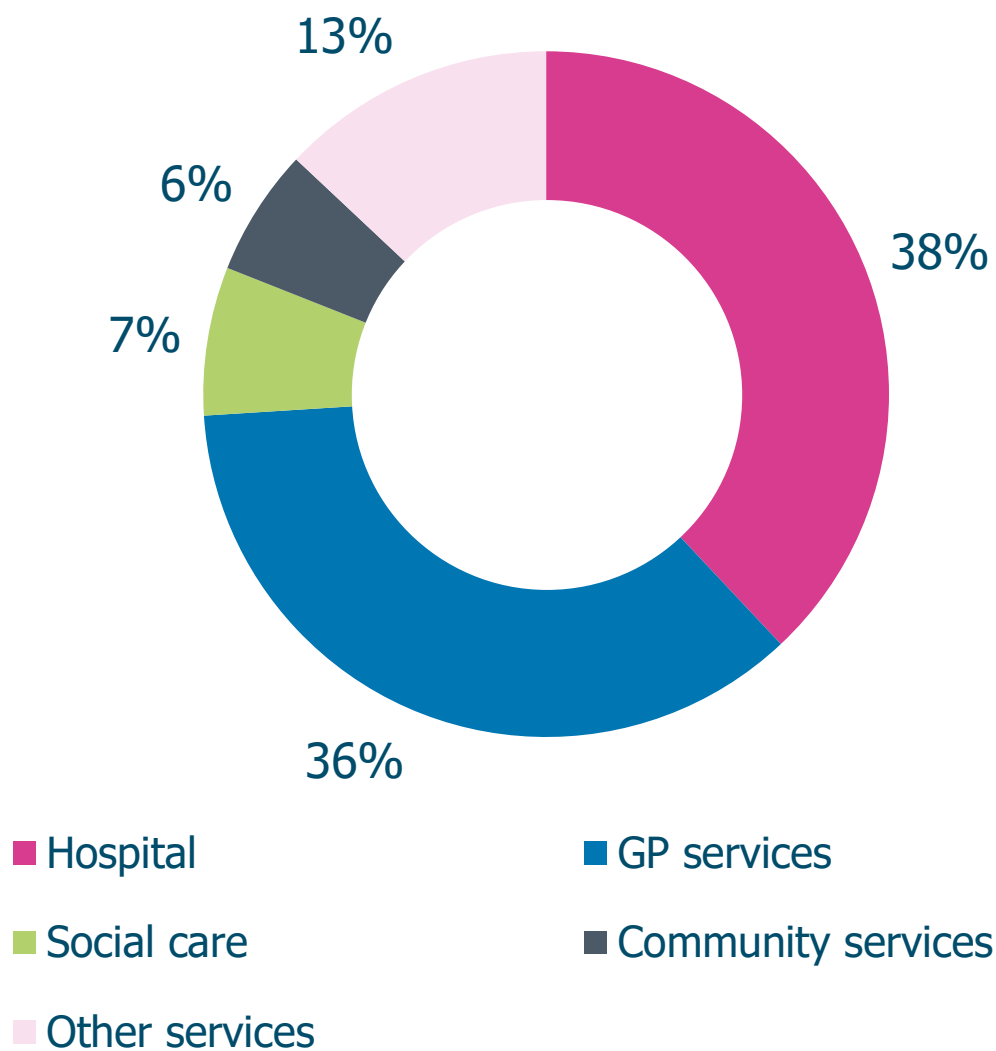


**Finding the right service can be worrying and stressful. Healthwatch plays an important role in helping people to get the information they need to take control of their health and care and find services that will provide them with the right support.**

This year we helped 811 people get the advice and information they need by:

- Answering people’s queries about services over the phone, by email, or online.
- Talking to people at community events.

**Here are some of the areas that people talked to us about.**



## Supporting the whole person

Many people contact us with just one question, but in talking to them we are often able to help people in many other ways.

David rang us because he wanted someone to attend his PIP assessment with him. We contacted lots of organisations but none offered the service. Instead we found some advice for him. Thankfully in the meantime, the assessment was done online.

Chatting to David he told us that he gets confused, his vision isn't as good as it used to be and he finds it difficult to complete

paperwork. He also told us he wasn't able to leave his house without help to get down the stairs which was tricky as he lives alone with no family nearby.

With David's permission we contacted Social Services and he now has the support that he needs to manage at home.

“So many people over the years that I've rung say 'I've looked into it and sorry there is nothing I can do for you, good luck'. It's such a comfort you haven't done that. People usually say they can't help, and they don't know what to suggest. Knowing you're looking into it has made a difference. Thank you.”







## Finding a resolution

Sheila called us because she had trouble getting her prescription delivered for many months. Her deliveries were often late or had missing items which meant she frequently didn't have the right medicines. Neither her GP or pharmacist would help her to resolve the issue.

We supported Sheila to understand the complaints process, what her rights were and what she should expect. With our support, she submitted a complaint to the GP surgery & the pharmacy.



## Helping people to find the right service

Over a 2 month period, we heard from people who were struggling to find an NHS dentist in Dover, Deal & Folkestone. Working with the Kent Dental Helpline, we found the nearest dentist to them who was accepting NHS patients and shared the practice details.



## Supporting people to get the care that they need

Geoff had been waiting 5 years for an assessment for a new wheelchair.

Following a call to our Helpline, we contacted Millbrook who provide Kent's wheelchair services and after 6 weeks he received a new backrest to better support his spine and posture.



### Contact us to get the information you need

If you have a query about a health or social care service, or need help with where you can go to access further support, get in touch. Don't struggle alone. Healthwatch is here for you.

**Website:** [www.healthwatchkent.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchkent.co.uk)

**Telephone:** 0808 801 0102

**Email:** [info@healthwatchkent.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchkent.co.uk)



# Volunteers

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**At Healthwatch Kent we are supported by 44 volunteers to help us find out what people think is working, and what people would like to improve, to services in their communities.**

This year our volunteers have:

- Raised awareness of the work we do at events, in the community and with health and care services.
- Visited services to make sure they are providing people with the right support.
- Helped support our day-to-day running.
- Listened to people's experiences to help us know which areas we need to focus on.

### **Lyn & John helped to improve the NHS 111 service**

Thanks to the hard work of our wonderful volunteers Lyn & John, instrumental changes have been made to the NHS 111 service across Kent, Sussex & Surrey.

Lyn & John have been part of the procurement process for a new NHS 111 service for well over a year. Once the contract was awarded to both the Ambulance service and Integrated Care 24 they invested a huge amount of time to help design and plan what the new service could look like and worked with professionals to ensure the voice of patients was heard.

"It's been so valuable to have the input of Healthwatch volunteers to the NHS 111 group. Their contributions are always valuable, relevant and constructive and they have helped us to co-design a meaningful action plan. Thank you"

### **Colin has been helping people on our Helpline**

Colin joined Healthwatch as a volunteer after hearing about our work to improve mental health services.

His initial role was to represent us at meetings and ensure the voice of real people was heard by decision makers. Colin soon offered more time to Healthwatch and started helping out in the office before being trained to answer calls on our Helpline. On the Helpline, Colin chats to people about their experiences of health and social care services but also helps people to find solutions to their questions and concerns.

Only this week a caller said about Colin "thank you for listening, you may not appreciate how nice it was to talk to someone that understands"

Colin has recently joined the team as a fulltime member of staff!



#### **Volunteer with us**

Are you feeling inspired? We are always on the lookout for new volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering, we'd love to hear from you

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**Telephone:** 0808 801 0102

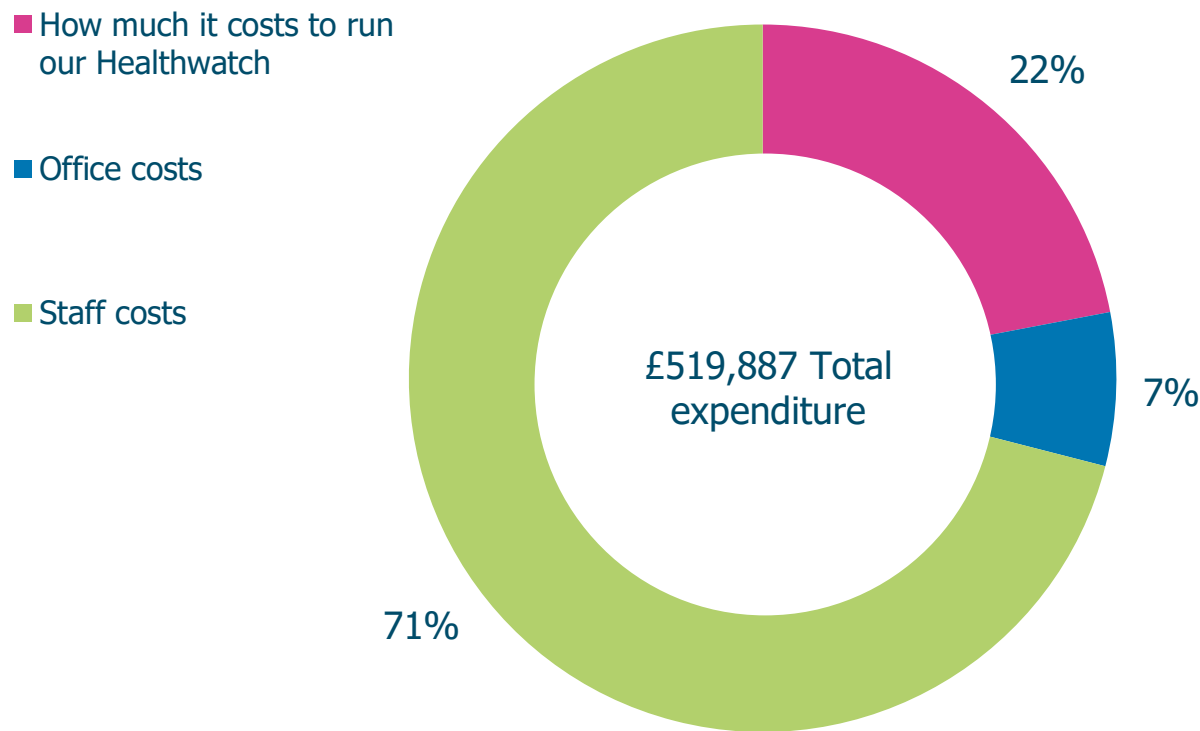
**Email:** [info@healthwatchkent.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchkent.co.uk)

# Finances

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We are funded by our local authority under the Health and Social Care Act (2012). In 2019-20 we spent X.





# Our plans for next year

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## What does the future hold?

### We don't have a crystal ball...

Back in February we visited every District in Kent to ask people what they wanted us to focus on this year. 501 people voted and that gave us a lovely list of priorities for the year. And then Covid happened!

We still hope we can complete these priorities but we also know that the whole world has shifted and we need to respond to that.

For the time being we will continue with our Covid priorities which are:

- Understanding how people are affected by the virus and ensuring decision makers hear their voice
- Supporting NHS volunteers to free up NHS staff
- Giving Care Homes a voice
- Working to reach Hidden Carers to ensure they know about the support available

If the world gets back to some sort of normal, we will revisit the issues that the public voted for in February which include:

- Social isolation
- Maternity services in East Kent
- Wheelchairs for young people
- Interpreters
- Support/services for people with a learning disability
- Dental Services
- Primary Care Networks

### Thank you to everyone that is helping us put people at the heart of health and social care, including:

- Members of the public who shared their views and experience with us.
- All of our amazing staff and volunteers.
- The voluntary organisations that have supported us and contributed to our work.



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Engaging Kent CiC is the legal entity which holds the Healthwatch Kent Contract.

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