

Championing what matters to you

Healthwatch Kent
Annual Report 2021-22



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Message from Penny

Welcome to another year!

This year we enjoyed our first ever Healthwatch Recognition Awards. It was a chance to come together for the first time after the pandemic and celebrate the hard work that has taken place to involve and engage people from communities across Kent & Medway.

40 people and organisations were winners and it was a perfect moment to reflect on what has been achieved despite the pandemic. We heard how people have gone the extra mile to reach those of us who are traditionally more reluctant to speak out. We also recognised the work that’s taken place to make it easier for people who are Deaf to attend hospital appointments. That’s just two examples, but I would urge you to read more about the winners on our website.

Now that restrictions are easing, we are looking forward to getting back on the streets again and talking to you all face to face. We have missed the connections we form when we listen to your stories on street corners and in community groups. I hope I get the chance to meet you this year and hear your story of when you last visited your GP, went to a hospital appointment or interacted with social services.



This report outlines what we have achieved this year, and what we plan to do in the year ahead. We hope you find it useful. Do get in touch if you would like more information, or if you want to work with us.

We’d love to hear from you

Penny Graham
Volunteer & Chair of the Healthwatch Kent Steering Group



“The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown long-standing health inequalities into stark relief. With NHS and social care facing even longer backlogs, the unequal outcomes exposed by the pandemic are at risk of becoming worse. Local Healthwatch play an important role in helping to overcome these adversities and are uniquely placed to make a positive difference in their communities.”

Sir Robert Francis QC, Chair of Healthwatch England



About us

Your health and social care champion

Healthwatch Kent is your local health and social care champion. From Dover to Ramsgate and everywhere in between, we make sure NHS leaders and other 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.



Our vision

A world where we can all get the health and care we need.



Our mission

To make sure people's experiences help make health and care better.



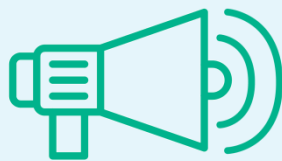
Our values

- Listening to people and making sure their voices are heard.
- Including everyone in the conversation – especially those who don't always have their voice heard.
- Analysing different people's experiences to learn how to improve care.
- Acting on feedback and driving change.
- Partnering with care providers, Government, and the voluntary sector – serving as the public's independent advocate.

Our year in review

Find out how we have engaged and supported people.

Reaching out



2,263 people

shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.

26,895 people

came to us for clear advice and information about topics such as mental health and COVID-19.

Making a difference to care



We published

27 reports

about the improvements people would like to see to health and social care services.

Our most popular report was about

the Trans and Non-Binary community

which highlighted the struggles people have accessing healthcare

Health and care that works for you



We're lucky to have had

27 volunteers

who gave up their time to make care better for our community this year.

We're funded by Kent County Council. In 2021-22 we received:

£511,000

which is **the same** as the previous year.









We currently employ

10.3 staff

who help us carry out this work.

How we've made a difference throughout the year

These are the biggest projects we worked on from April 2021 to March 2022.

Spring	 <p>Our volunteers have supported us virtually, helping us to engage with the public and raise your feedback.</p>	 <p>We improved accessibility for D/deaf patients trying to contact GP surgeries whilst their doors were closed.</p>
Summer	 <p>We alerted primary care commissioning that 80% of community pharmacies we spoke to told us they did not feel access to primary care had improved for them.</p>	 <p>We supported Public Health to work with the Head of the Traveller Community in Kent. Together they set up Covid vaccine sites that the traveller community could access.</p>
Autumn	 <p>We took your questions about eConsult to the Clinical Commissioning Group and got you the answers you need.</p>	 <p>We worked with Kent Community Health Foundation Trust to make sure vaccine sites felt friendly and accessible for people with disabilities.</p>
Winter	 <p>We scrutinised a public consultation which took place to gain public views on the relocation of a local mental health hospital ward (Ruby Ward), to ensure the public had been fully involved and it met our best practice guidelines.</p>	 <p>We interviewed unpaid carers across Kent to understand their experience of hospital discharge. We worked with decision makers to improve support for carers and help make discharge from hospital a little easier.</p>

Listening to your experiences

Services can't make improvements without hearing your views. That's why over the last year we have made listening to feedback from all areas of the community a priority. This allows us to understand the full picture, and feedback to services to help them improve



Reducing digital exclusion and isolation

Nepalese elders now feel less affected by health inequalities, less lonely, have improved digital skills and increased mental wellbeing levels.

We worked with Kent Coast Volunteering to shape the way they planned to reduce digital exclusion within the Nepalese community in Folkestone. We helped them to ensure the project was meeting people's needs. We have seen some amazing outcomes as a result.



£209,086

worth of social value has been generated by the project in its first year

How do we know it made a difference?

We spoke to 20 learners from the project, who were Nepalese and over the age of 60, to hear their feedback. Here's Aasha's story.

When Aasha joined the digital inclusion programme, she didn't know how to turn a computer on, use a mouse, or open different windows on a screen. She couldn't access health and social care services, order food shopping, or connect with friends and family online. During the pandemic, this left her feeling isolated and unable to maintain any social engagement outside of her own home.

Now, Aasha uses GP eConsult services, is accessing social care support through the council's website, and stays connected with friends through Facebook. Aasha told us that not only have her digital skills improved, but that she has increased confidence to engage with her wider community, has seen an improvement in her social wellbeing and has experienced a positive impact on her mental health.

We spoke to 20 others who experienced similar outcomes to Aasha and can see how the digital inclusion programme is turning people's lives around. Providing digital skills to elders within the Nepalese community in Folkestone is improving access to health and social care services, removing the barrier of digital exclusion and reducing health inequalities.

*We have used an alias to protect *Aasha's identity.*



"I have learned how to book medical appointments online which is by far the most useful thing I've learned"

Aasha



Improving accessibility to hospital appointments

We've made it easier for people with learning difficulties and vision and hearing impairments to attend a hospital appointment.

People with hearing impairments told us they were returning home from hospital without having had their appointment, because a British Sign Language interpreter was unavailable, or because they couldn't hear their name being called in the waiting room.

Together with a volunteer, we visited East Kent Hospitals to review their accessibility standard and published recommendations to improve the experience for those with accessibility needs.

What difference did this make?

- We worked with the Deaf community to design cards which Deaf people can use to indicate that they need a British Sign Language interpreter. This removes the communication barrier between people using sign language, and hospital staff that do not use sign language. This directly reduces the impact of health inequalities.
- There is now a new British Sign Language interpreting service via video being used at East Kent Hospitals, which means people with hearing impairments can still attend their appointment without an interpreter present. This has increased people's sense of autonomy and independence.
- The trust has introduced mandatory training about accessibility for all staff. This means staff are more aware of and attentive to supporting people with accessibility needs.
- The hospitals now display new posters explaining the Accessible Information Standard. This was designed in partnership with people who have learning difficulties and ensures people know what to expect from services.



"The video interpreting service gives me independence and confidence, now I can contact hospitals without needing to ask a hearing person to help"

A deaf person attending a hospital appointment.



Three ways we have made a difference for the community

Throughout our work we gather information about health inequalities by speaking to people whose experiences aren't often heard.



Creating empathy by bringing experiences to life

It's important for the NHS service commissioners to see the bigger picture, through hearing personal experiences. This provides a deeper understanding than using data alone, can challenge assumptions and motivating people to think and work more creatively.

When engaging with the Trans & Non-binary community in Kent, we worked alongside a local advisory group to put together a report exploring the challenges this community faces when accessing healthcare. Around 30 individuals shared their experiences with us, and we raised this feedback directly with commissioners and service providers.



Getting services to involve the public

Services need to understand the benefits of involving local people to help improve care for everyone.

We used your feedback to help a local GP practice improve the service they provide. Some of the changes we have seen in response to the issues you raised include a new user-friendly phone system, training courses for new staff, closer working with the Clinical Commissioning Group, more open communication with patients through social media, and more.



Change over time

Change takes time. We often work behind the scenes with health and care services to consistently raise issues and push for changes.

We have supported a local practice to re-boot their Patient Participation Group since activity died down during the pandemic.

We have supported existing PPGs to strengthen their relationship with their GP's practice manager, and have also created a framework which can be used to build and develop a successful PPG from the ground up.

Advice and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch is here for you. In times of worry or stress, we can provide confidential support and free information to help you understand your options and get the help you need. Whether it's finding an NHS dentist, how to make a complaint or choosing a good care home for a loved one – you can count on us.

This year we helped people by:

- Providing up to date information on COVID-19
- Linking people to reliable information they could trust
- Linking people with urgent dental appointments
- Helping people to get registered with a GP



Helping people to get dental care

We produced £1,181 worth of social value and saved Jane a direct cost of £26.21 by getting her a dentist appointment.

We hear from more people who are struggling to get a dentist appointment than any other issue. In some cases, we have been able to link people with the appointment they needed.

Jane needed to see a dentist before she could continue treatment for a long-term health condition. We already work closely with Medway Community Health who run a community dental service, so we spoke to them and within a few hours, Jane had been booked in for a dental check-up the same week.

"Thank you so much for all your help, I was really starting to stress about this."



Answering your questions about eConsult

We took your queries about eConsult to the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and got your questions answered.

People across Kent were telling us they had trouble using the digital eConsult platform. People also talked to us about their concerns for people who are not online. Many others were confused about what to expect once the eConsult form has been submitted, with long waiting times for a response.

We shared your feedback directly with GPs and practice managers and asked for their thoughts. From your feedback it was clear that many people were confused about eConsult and more information was needed.

We created a document which answered your questions and offered information about some of the issues you had told us about.

People now feel better informed about what eConsult can do for them, and find it easier to navigate the primary care system.

Volunteers

We're supported by a team of amazing volunteers who are the heart of Healthwatch. Thanks to their efforts in the community, we're able to understand what is working and what needs improving in NHS and social care.

This year our volunteers:

- Helped people have their say from home, carrying out surveys over the telephone and online.
- Created digital content on our website and social media.
- Carried out website and telephone reviews for local services on the information they provide and assessing their accessibility.
- Supported us to organise and run our first ever local Healthwatch Impact Awards.
- Helped us to make decisions about what to prioritise.





Jan

"I support the team to embed Healthwatch England's best research practice and contribute to the involvement, or support, of under-represented parts of the community. It is important that our work addresses health inequalities and as a volunteer I am involved in this process."

Libby

"I have established links with the Kent and Medway Local Dental Committee and have made sure our community's concerns about NHS Dentistry, including not being able to get an appointment, continue to be shared and heard at local, regional and national levels."



Kelly

"I have an 18 month old daughter, who I want to make proud, and give her an understanding that she can do anything she sets her mind to, so to be able to manage volunteering, a full time job, and a full time toddler makes me think one day she'll be proud of me. I research and write articles for the Healthwatch website. It makes me feel good that I am helping people."



Do you feel inspired?

We are always on the lookout for new volunteers, so please get in touch today.



www.healthwatchkent.co.uk



0808 801 0102



Info@healthwatchkent.co.uk

Finance and future priorities

To help us carry out our work we receive funding from our local authority under the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

Income	
Funding received from local authority	£511,000
Additional funding	£6,150
Total income	£517,150

Expenditure	
Staff costs	£365,335
Operational costs	£97,831
Office costs	£22,554
Total expenditure	£485,720

Top three priorities for 2022–23

1. Hearing the experiences of women using Drug and Alcohol Services
2. People experiencing homelessness and what additional support they need
3. Understanding how Enhanced Health in Care homes is working

Next steps

The pandemic has shone a stark light on the impact of existing inequalities when using health and care services, highlighting the importance of championing the voices of those who all too often go unheard.

Over the coming years, our goal is to help reduce these inequalities by making sure your voice is heard, and decision makers reduce the barriers you face, regardless of whether that’s because of where you live, income or race.

Statutory statements

About us

Healthwatch Kent, Seabrooke House, Church Rd, Ashford TN3 1RD. EK360 uses the Healthwatch Trademark when undertaking our statutory activities as covered by the licence agreement.



The way we work

Involvement of volunteers and lay people in our governance and decision-making.

Our Healthwatch Steering Group consists of six members who work on a voluntary basis to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny to our activities. Our Steering Group met nine times this year to ensure that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community. They checked that our insights and feedback influence our priorities for the year and held us accountable to our 'priority scoring tool'. This tool also ensures we maintain our independence and highlights whether we can make a difference before we decide to move forward with work

There are also volunteers on our Intelligence Gathering Group who help review individual cases, themes and trends to decide what action we should take. Our Project Advisory Group, also includes volunteers, who help shape our projects to ensure they meet the standards that we set ourselves.

Methods and systems used across the year's work to obtain people's views and experience.

We use a wide range of approaches to ensure that as many people as possible can provide us with insight about their experience of health and care services. During 2020/21 we have been available by phone, by email, through an online webform, attended virtual meetings of community groups and forums, provided our own virtual activities and engaged with the public through social media. We have also carried out face-to-face engagement where possible, to build our relationship with, and reach out to underserved parts of the community.

This year we did our first poll. We asked people how they felt about covid restrictions within hospitals which over 700 people contributed to. We shared these findings with the Kent and Medway System Quality Group.

We are committed to taking additional steps to ensure we obtain the views of people from diverse backgrounds who are often not heard by health and care decision makers. This year we have done this by reaching out to local and national advisory groups and forums to produce collaborative project work.

We ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. We publish it on our website and share it through our newsletters.

This year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we did not make use of our Enter and View powers. Consequently, no recommendations or other actions resulted from this area of activity. There were no issues or recommendations escalated by our Healthwatch to Healthwatch England Committee and so no resulting special reviews or investigations.

Responses to recommendations and requests

We had zero providers who did not respond to requests for information or recommendations.

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Health and Wellbeing Board

Healthwatch Kent is represented on the Kent & Medway Health and Wellbeing Board by our volunteer Penny Graham. During 2020/21 Penny has effectively carried out this role by being proactive in meetings and consistently reminding attendees of the importance of hearing the voices of people, patients, carers and families especially those with the quietest voices.

2021-2022 Outcomes

Project / Activity Area	Changes made to services
Vaccination sites	On-demand video BSL interpreting is now available at all vaccine sites.
Accessibility Information Standard at GPs	People with hearing difficulties able to book appointments via email rather than via telephone.
Care Homes	Care Home Managers can now arrange training for their staff.
Helping migrants settle in	Families who have recently moved to the UK are registered with a GP that is right for them
GP registration	Staff at a local GP have been re-trained in registration policy
Carers	Kent County Council's support offer to carers is influenced by carers voices and experiences
Discharge	Leaders of local NHS Trusts have attended a forum group to share ideas on tackling common themes.
Making a complaint	Local hospitals have updated and improved their websites to make it easier for people to make a complaint.

Contact Us:



Online:

www.healthwatchkent.co.uk



By Telephone:

Healthwatch Kent Freephone
0808 801 01 02



By Email:

info@healthwatchkent.co.uk



By Text:

Text us on 07525 861 639. By
texting 'NEED BSL', Healthwatch's
British Sign Language interpreter
will make contact.



@HealthwatchKent



@healthwatch_kent



@hwkent