

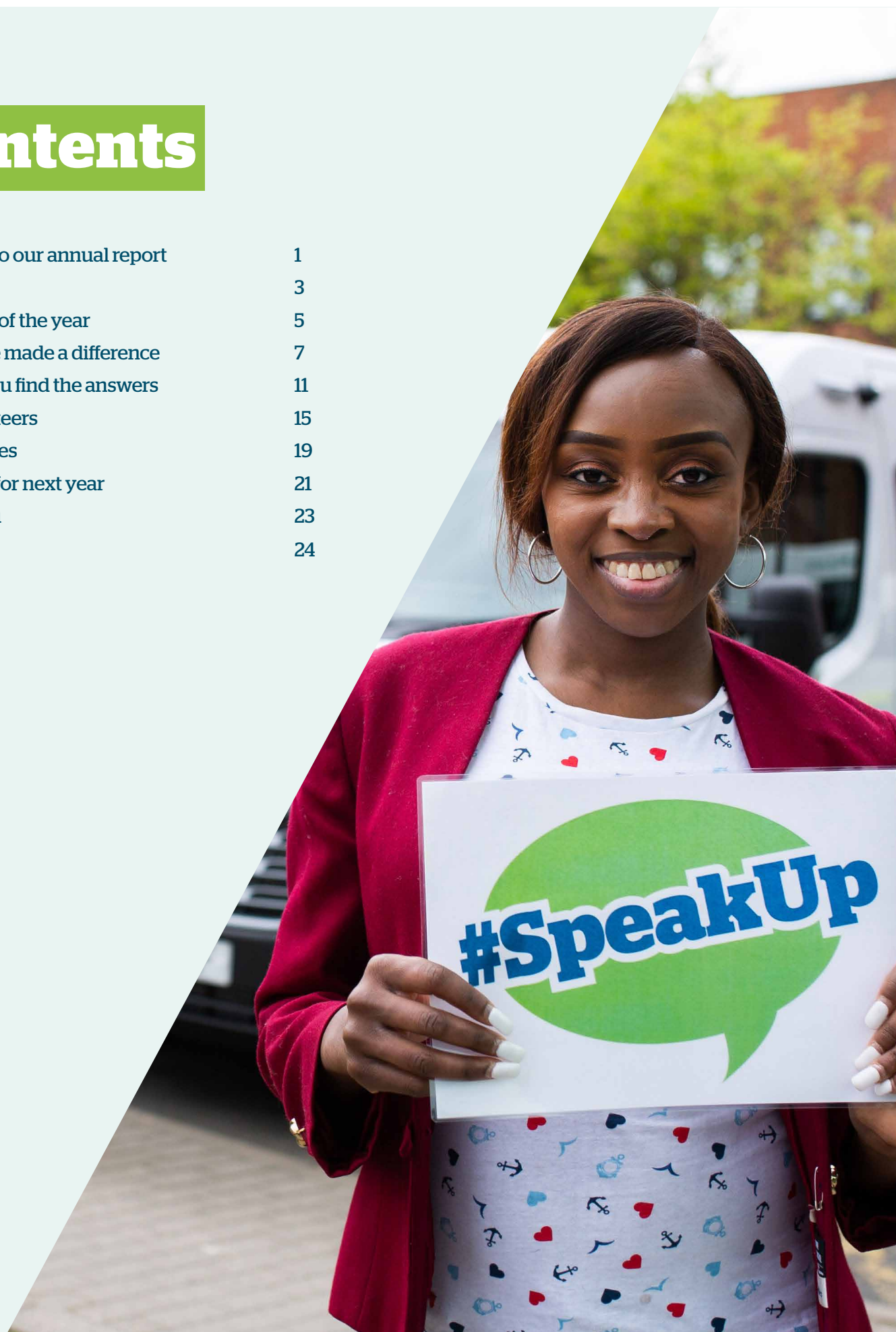


**Healthwatch Kent**

Annual Report 2018/19

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# Welcome to our annual report

## It's been another busy year in the world of Healthwatch Kent.

The health and social care system in which we work has undergone huge amounts of change this year and that will continue in the year to come as we move towards the new Integrated Care Partnership in Kent & Medway. We have been busy driving discussions about how the voice of the public will be central to this new world and we continue to ensure the feedback from the public is heard during changes to services.

We also have a statutory role to provide information and signposting to anyone who should need it. 2,478 people shared their story of a number of different areas of health and social care. We've also launched a new website this year to make it easier for people to share their stories directly with us whatever the time of day. If you get chance, check it out on [healthwatchkent.co.uk](http://healthwatchkent.co.uk)

Alongside our Helpline, we continue to visit a huge range of communities to hear directly from people about their experiences of health or social care. Reaching out to communities who wouldn't normally contact us is something we are very proud of and will continue to invest time and effort in for the year ahead. People often thank us for 'remembering them' or 'taking the time to listen to us'. We work hard to ensure the voice of every part of Kent is heard by decision makers and will continue to do so.

In this report you will read about some of our highlights over the past year. It's always a challenge to decide what to include in our annual report as every day we are doing something to improve a service, or influence a change. Sometimes these are small changes but they can have a big impact on an individual. For example, a better chair in a waiting room or improved information on a noticeboard or simply a professional being better informed about what their patients feel about their service. We are often involved behind the scenes in these little changes.

We hope you find this report useful. Do get in touch if you would like to know more about our work. Perhaps you have a few hours to volunteer with us and you too could be making a difference.



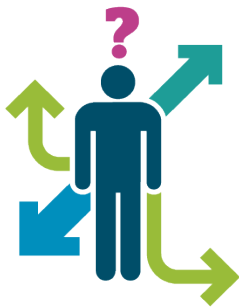
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Your Healthwatch Kent Team



## Changes you want to see

Last year we heard from 2,478 people who told us about their experience of a number of different areas of health and social care. Here are some examples of the changes that you want to see.



- + Make it easier to see the right person, at the right time



- + People should only have to tell their story once



- + Staff should take the time to speak to people about what to expect next



- + Services should provide information so that people can make informed decisions about their care



# About us

## Healthwatch is here to make care better

We are the independent champion for people using local health and social care services. We listen to what people like about services and what could be improved. We share their views with those with the power to make change happen. People can also speak to us to find information about health and social care services available locally.

Our sole purpose is to help make care better for people.

As Chair of Healthwatch England, it's my role to make sure your Healthwatch gets effective support and that national decisions are informed by what people are saying all over England.

If you were one of the 400,000 people who shared their experiences with us last year, I want to say a personal thank you. Without your views, Healthwatch wouldn't be able to make a difference to health and social care services, both in your area and at a national level. One example of this is how we shared 85,000 views with the NHS, to highlight what matters most, and help shape its plans for the next decade.

If you're part of an organisation that's worked with, supported or responded to Healthwatch Kent, thank you too. You've helped to make an even bigger difference.

None of this could have been possible without our dedicated staff and volunteers, who work in the community every day to understand what is working and what could be better when it comes to people's health and care.

If you've shared your views with us then please keep doing what you're doing. If you haven't, then this is your chance to step forward and help us make care better for your community. We all have a stake in our NHS and social care services: we can all really make a difference in this way.



**Sir Robert Francis QC**  
Healthwatch England Chair

## 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 and to help make sure your views shape the support you need.



## Our approach

People's views come first – especially those that 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.



## People at the heart of everything we do

We play an important role bringing communities and services together. Everything we do is shaped by what people tell us. 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

Our main job is to raise people's concerns with health and care decision-makers so that they can improve support across the county. The evidence we gather also helps us recommend how policy and practice can change for the better.





# Highlights from our year



## Find out about our resources and the way we have engaged and supported more people in 2018-19. **Our resources:**



2478 people shared their health and social care story with us.



We have 46 volunteers helping to carry out our work.



425 people accessed Healthwatch advice and information online or contacted us with questions about local support, 91% more than last year.



We visited 36 services and 50 community groups to understand people's experience of care. From these visits, we made 43 recommendations for improvement.



We've spoken to 95 people in depth about specific issues to make health and care better in our community.



40,378 people engaged with us through our website and social media.



We worked in partnership with Mental Health Forums and engaged with 6332 people



We worked in partnership with Kent Physical Disability Forum and reached 436 people living with a disability.



We worked in partnership with Older People's Forums in Kent to reach 3118 people.





## **How we've made a difference**

## Changes made to your community

Find out how sharing your views with your local Healthwatch has led to positive changes to health and social care services in Kent. We show when people speak up about what's important, and services listen, care is improved for all.

### Making your voice heard : Wheelchair services

Earlier this year, we started to hear a number of serious stories from patients and professionals about wheelchair services. We heard about long delays with patients being discharged from hospital in a 'normal' chair.

***"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."***

We also heard about people waiting weeks for repairs to their wheelchairs with no provision in the meantime.

***"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."***

We shared these stories with the commissioner and Millbrook Healthcare, the provider of the service, as we would always do.

We helped facilitate a meeting with the Kent Physical Disability Forum and the commissioner, then later escalated our collective concerns to the Kent Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) who acted immediately.

Thanks to your voice and our intervention wheelchair services are slowly improving. There is still much work to be done but so far:

- + Over £500,000 of additional funding has been invested to reduce the number of people waiting for assessments.
- + Waiting times have reduced.
- + Saturday clinics have been introduced to reduce waiting times and offer more flexibility for people.
- + Peoples' feedback is being actively gathered, listened to and acted upon.
- + Wheelchair users are now working directly with the service.
- + A new Service Improvement Board has been created to review progress and delivery of the Improvement Plan. This Board involves service users.
- + More clinical and support staff have been recruited.
- + Several public events have been hosted to meet service users face to face and gather feedback.
- + A new website dedicated to the Kent & Medway Wheelchair service has been created to make it easier for local people to see local information.
- + Commissioners and decision makers are now aware of all the issues and able to tackle them. The spotlight remains on the service to ensure progress continues.
- + Millbrook have developed their communication and engagement plan.

We continue to work with the Kent Physical Disability Forum to monitor the situation.



## The power of one person's story

Mrs Johnson got in touch with us to share her story of being a patient at Tunbridge Wells hospital. Mrs Johnson has Parkinson's and she felt strongly that she didn't get the support or understanding that she needed for her condition. As a result, she felt her dignity had been compromised. She also expressed her wish that she could manage her own time critical medicines whilst in hospital just as she does at home every day.

Mrs Johnson was upset by her experience and wanted to ensure her feedback was anonymous.

We shared her story directly with Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells Hospital Trust who fully recognised the need for change to improve Mrs Johnson's next visit, but also the hundreds of patients like her.

Since then we've seen:

- + Parkinson's nurse invited to train staff in the ward Mrs Johnson visited about the needs of Parkinson's patients.
- + Training rolled out to staff across the Trust including two hospitals.

Mrs Johnson sitting with Parkinson's Nurse, Sue Kerkin and Healthwatch Volunteer Pam Croucher.

- + Mrs Johnson decided to waive her anonymity and met with the Chief Nurse to discuss her experience.
- + Mrs Johnson grew in confidence and presented her story to the Hospital Board.
- + The hospital is looking to implement a system such as a secure box which will sit with the patient and contain any medicine from home to enable patients to self-administer just as they would at home. They are considering calling the boxes after Mrs Johnson in recognition of the contribution she has made.

Thanks to Mrs Johnson's personal story, Parkinson's patients now receive more personalised care when at Tunbridge Wells Hospital and Maidstone Hospital. Patients will be able to manage their own medicines when they stay in hospital if their treatment allows.

***"Thanks to Mrs Johnson, we are continuing to improve the way we support not just Parkinson's patients, but also hundreds of patients, to manage their own medicines with dignity and privacy."***

**Deputy Chief Nurse, Gemma Craig**





## Making it easier for people to get the support they need to attend a hospital appointment

Since August 2016, all NHS organisations (and local authorities) must make it possible for anybody and everybody to be able to communicate and to be understood. We know that for some people, attending a hospital appointment can be a very challenging and worrying experience.

We partnered with East Kent Mencap, Kent Association for the Blind and Alzheimer's & Dementia Support Services. Together we visited hospitals to understand what support is available for patients who have Dementia, are partially sighted or have learning difficulties.

We found a range of issues including:

- + Navigating around the hospital can be very confusing for many patients.
- + Leaflets and posters are not always designed to support people with additional communication needs.
- + Significant numbers of staff are not aware of the specialised information that the hospitals have created.
- + Deaf patients in East Kent could not contact the hospital. The only option for them was by phone.
- + The websites are not always accessible for all patients.

***"I am always worried and anxious before my appointment in case I can't communicate with the staff."***

Since our visits, a number of our recommendations have been put in place:

- + Staff at both Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells Hospitals have been trained in how to support patients who may need additional help to attend appointments with particular emphasis on support for partially sighted patients.
- + An audit of all Hearing loops has been completed at both Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells Hospital including instructions of how to use them for staff.
- + Additional equipment to support patients with hearing loss is being purchased in Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells Hospitals .
- + Appointment letters have been improved in West Kent for patients who need different fonts.
- + Bushes have been cut down to ensure external signage is more visible at Maidstone Hospital.
- + A new system to provide patients with a British Sign Language Interpreter is being rolled out soon in East Kent Hospitals.
- + East Kent Hospitals are investing in new resource to tackle the issue.
- + East Kent Hospitals are working on an email address for people to use.
- + The patient administration system in East Kent Hospitals has been updated to include communication needs.
- + East Kent Hospitals' printed section on letters now inform patients that they have the facility to provide accessible information in braille, large print, coloured background, easy read and audio format.
- + Online staff training is available at East Kent Hospitals.

## Have your say

Share your ideas and experiences and help services hear what works, what doesn't, and what you want from care in the future.

w: [www.healthwatchkent.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchkent.co.uk)  
t: 0808 801 0102  
e: [info@healthwatchkent.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchkent.co.uk)



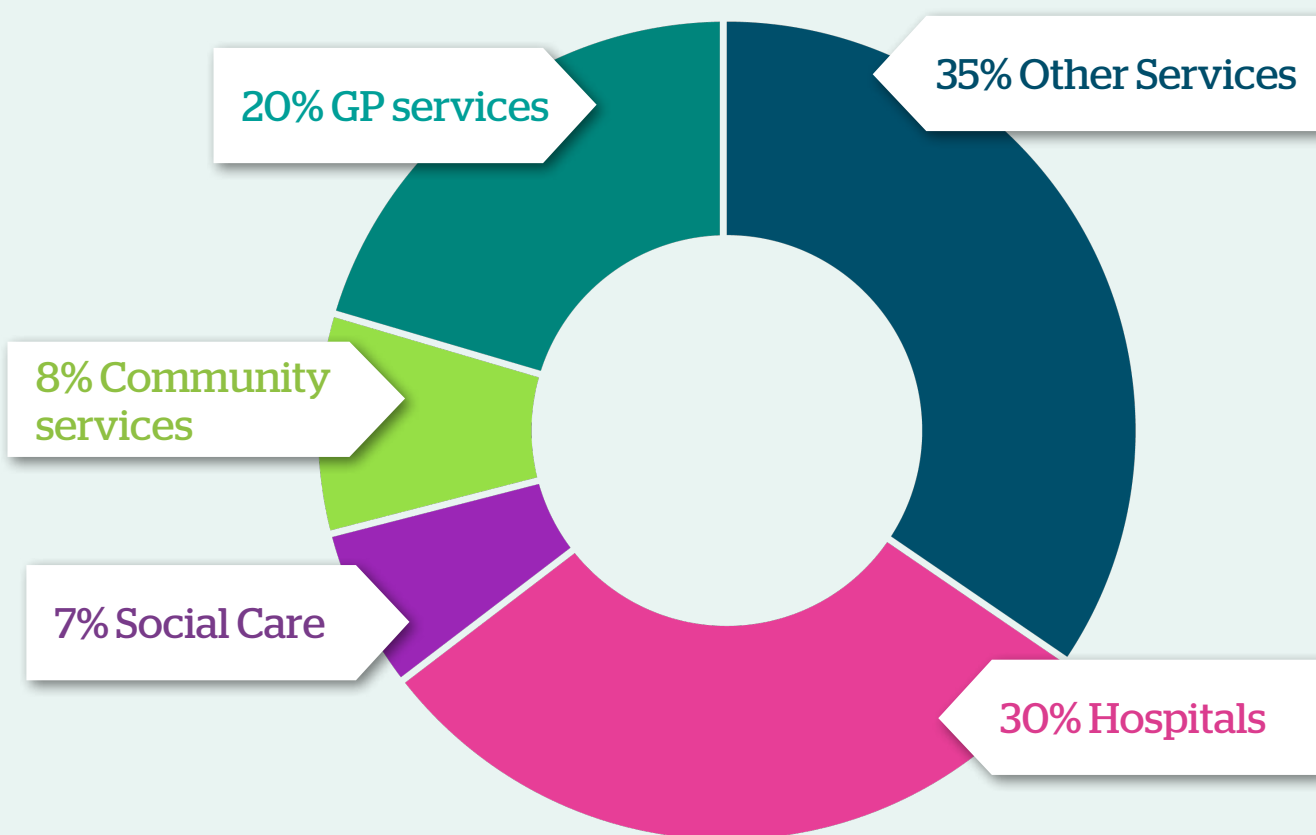


**Helping you find  
the answers**

## What services do people want to know about?

People don't always know how to get the information they need to make decisions about their own health and care. Healthwatch Kent plays an important role in providing advice and pointing people in the right direction for the support they need.

Here are the most common things that people ask us:





## How we provide people with advice and information

Finding the right care or support can be worrying and stressful. There are a number of organisations that can provide help, but people don't know where to look. Last year we helped 425 people access the advice and information they need.

You can come to us for advice and information in a number of ways including:

- + Specific advice and information blogs online
- + Our Your Comment Counts form
- + At community events
- + Promoting helpful services across our social media channels
- + Over the phone

### Denise: My GP is closing

Denise: 'My GP surgery had just announced it was going to close so I contacted Healthwatch to talk about what I should do. They were able to share with me their Checklist for GP closures and mergers which detailed all the stages the surgery needed to do before it could close and how they should be communicating with patients. I was able to share it with my surgery and it reassured me that we would be supported to find a new practice'.

\*Denise's name have been changed to protect their anonymity.





## Making sure people get care at the right place

We met Jane during our programme of visits to rural communities in Kent. We work with Rural Kent's Coffee Caravan which visits communities to reduce social isolation. We visited 24 rural communities this year to listen to people about their experience and offer Information & Signposting support to people.

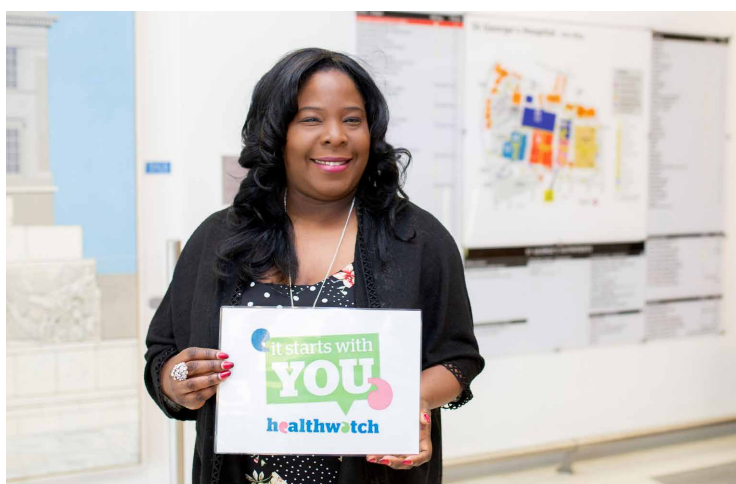
We met Jane during a visit with the Coffee Caravan to the village of Vigo near Gravesend. Jane's partner, David, has Multiple Sclerosis, and was travelling to Canterbury to use the hydrotherapy facilities. The hydrotherapy was proving to be a great help, but the two hour round trip to Canterbury was proving to be a challenge for both David and Jane.

Our Helpline team researched alternative hydrotherapy units and found that Darent Valley Hospital had the facilities which was much closer. We spoke to the hospital to understand how David could be referred to them and shared all the information with Jane. Since then, Jane has been able to get a referral and David is already benefiting from hydrotherapy at Darent Valley Hospital.

***"It was a really successful visit. The journey is so much easier, the facilities are lovely and we can park in the disabled car park. Thank you so much for your help."***

**Jane**

\*Jane & David's names have been changed to protect their anonymity



## Are you looking for help?

If you have a query about a health and 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.

w: [www.healthwatchkent.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchkent.co.uk)  
t: 0808 801 0102  
e: [info@healthwatchkent.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchkent.co.uk)





## Our volunteers



## How do our volunteers help us?

At Healthwatch Kent we couldn't make all of these improvements without the support of our 46 volunteers that work with us to help make care better for their communities.

- + Raise awareness of the work we do in the community
- + Visit services to make sure they're meeting people's needs
- + Support our day to day running e.g. governance
- + Collect people's views and experiences which we use in our reports



## Come and join our family!

We are looking for like minded people to join our team and help us to make a difference to services across Kent.

We are particularly looking for people who would like to work with us in the following areas:

- + Leading on our work to improve access to GPs
- + Getting involved with scrutinising public consultations
- + Attending strategic meetings on our behalf

- + Talking and listening to young people about their experiences
- + Working with us to analyse and theme the feedback we hear
- + Meeting and listening to BME communities about their experiences

These are just a few specific examples of the help that we currently need. Do get in touch as we probably have something to suit you no matter how much time you have to spare.

## Meet our volunteers

We caught up with a couple of our fantastic volunteers to show you how their work truly makes a difference to the lives of people in our area.



### Pat, based in North Kent

I actually found out about Healthwatch through my volunteering buddy, Jill. We went along to the public meeting 5 years ago and it all started from there. I've learnt so much about the NHS with Healthwatch, especially coming from a social care background. It's really brought up my confidence too. Now I help develop relationships with hospitals and make a difference locally.

### Colin, based in Ashford

After adjusting to a long term physical condition, I wanted to get back to work. Volunteering seemed a very useful first step to do this. My aim as a volunteer for Healthwatch is to support people to share their experience, both positive and negative, and help services improve.

Once a month I represent Healthwatch at a patient experience meeting for community health services in Kent. I am proud to say that from this meeting I am able to help Healthwatch Kent ensure that the voice of patients gets heard.



## Volunteer with us

Are you feeling inspired? We are always on the lookout for more volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering get in touch with Matt.

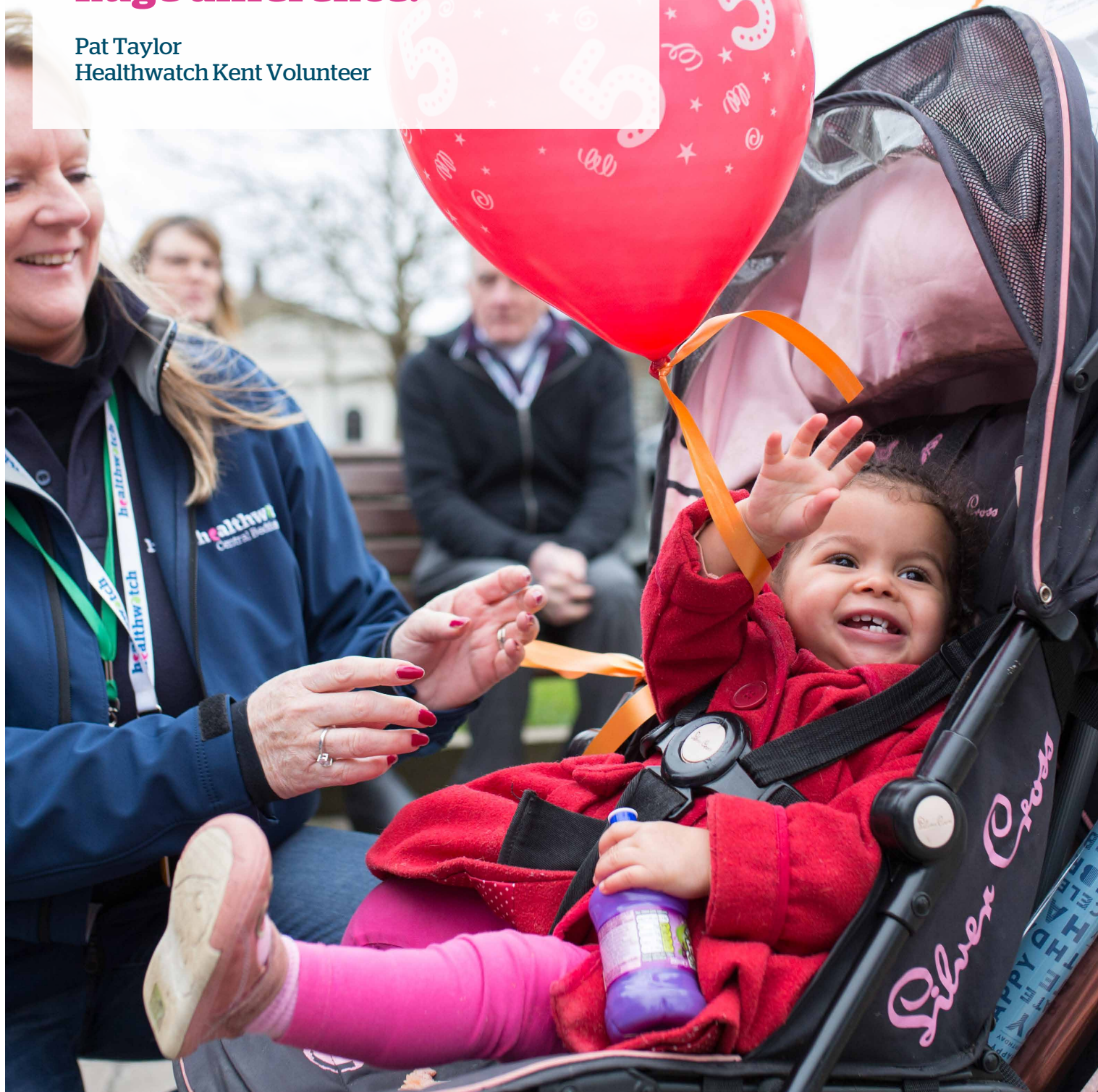
e: [matt@healthwatchkent.co.uk](mailto:matt@healthwatchkent.co.uk)

We are very proud of our Investors in Volunteers Award so get in touch with Matt and he can explain how you could get involved and what we do to support our volunteers.



**‘They may not always seem like big changes but it’s often the little things that can make a huge difference.’**

Pat Taylor  
Healthwatch Kent Volunteer



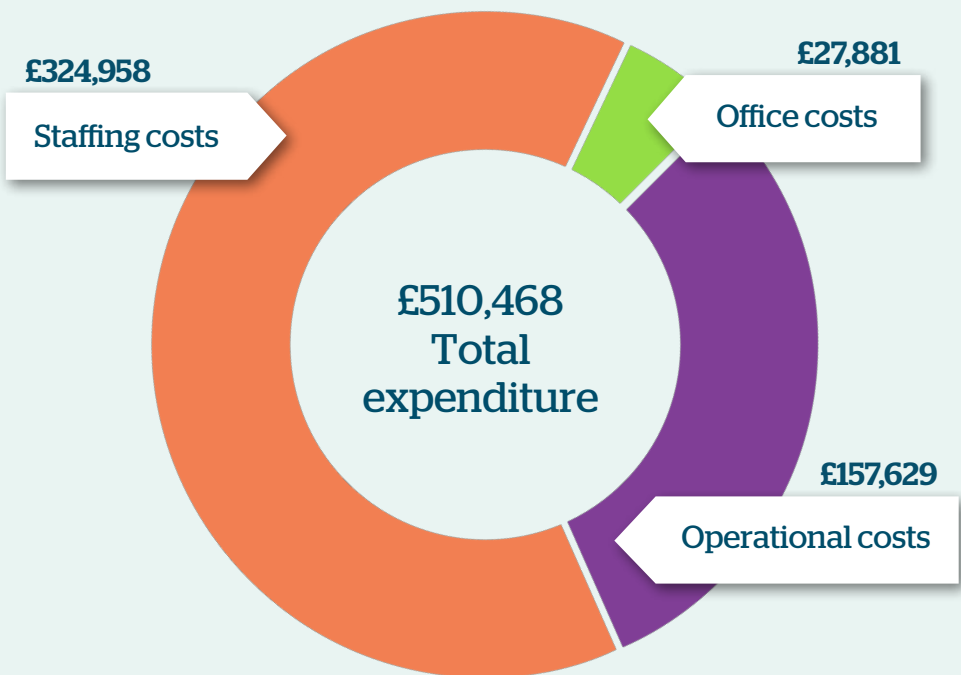




## **Our finances**

How we use our money

To help us carry out our work, we are funded by our local authority. In 2018-19 we spent £510,468.





# **Our plans for next year**



# Message from our CEO

It's been another busy year in the world of Healthwatch. We continue to hear from more and more people about their experiences of services and many of these are positive stories.

However we also hear lots of not so good stories and it can be hard for us to prioritise some issues over others. We want to improve all our services.

We recently asked the public to help us choose our priorities for the year ahead. We shared a short list of options and invited people to vote. Over 200 people voted and here are the 7 priorities that they chose for us to focus on from April 2019 onwards.

- + Obesity in school children
- + Suicide prevention
- + GP appointments
- + End of Life
- + Effective contracts
- + Care at home (nursing and social care)
- + Children & Adolescent Mental Health
- + Extra Care Housing

As the year progresses we'll be sharing more details about these topics and asking for your feedback. We still want to hear all your stories about any health or social care service and we will still get involved and escalate feedback on your behalf.

This year we know that the health and social care system around us will continue to change; it simply can't carry on as it is. We have already

been heavily involved in conversations about how the voice of people is going to be central to the new Integrated Care System and ensuring we continue to have a voice at all the right places.

We'll also continue our programme of visiting services and communities to hear directly from people who may otherwise not think to contact Healthwatch, particularly children and young people and Black and Minority Ethnicity communities.

For the first time ever, NHS England has asked the Healthwatch network across the country to gather feedback from the public to inform the NHS Long Term Plan. In Kent, we are using that opportunity to ensure they are hearing from children, young people and their parents about Kent's children's services. Through this work we've already been able to reach children in care, disadvantaged teenagers, young carers, school leavers and Mums with young children. Their feedback will be heard directly by senior decision makers and used to inform the plans for children's services going forwards.

As we finish another annual report and reflect on the year that we've had, we couldn't have achieved any of it without the dedication and enthusiasm of our staff and volunteers. As I write this week we are hosting a thank you party for our volunteers and I am looking forward to congratulating them individually on all that we have achieved once again. We are a small organisation covering a large geographical area and a huge range of services and organisations. Without their commitment, we wouldn't have been able to change anything.

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Steve Inett,  
Healthwatch Kent

# Thank you

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 contributed to our work
- + We particularly wanted to thank Kent Association for the Blind and Alzheimer's & Dementia Support Services who worked in partnership with us on our visits to hospitals to explore what support was available for people with Dementia and patients who are partially sighted.

We're always interested to hear from organisations who may want to work with us on a common aim. Get in touch!

*"We have been particularly impressed with the work of Healthwatch Kent since moving home and work to east Kent. If you can spare a few hours of your time as a volunteer there are many rewarding and interesting opportunities on offer."*

**Eric Barratt, Head of Quality at East Kent Clinical Commissioning Groups**





# Contact us

Healthwatch Kent is the independent champion for people who use health and social care services in Kent.

- + 0808 801 0102
- + [info@healthwatchkent.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchkent.co.uk)
- + Facebook @hwkent
- + Twitter @HealthwatchKent
- + Instagram @Healthwatch\_Kent
- + [www.healthwatchkent.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchkent.co.uk)
- + Seabrook House, Church Road, Ashford, Kent.  
TN23 1RD

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

- + [sue@engagingkent.co.uk](mailto:sue@engagingkent.co.uk)
- + [www.engagingkent.co.uk](http://www.engagingkent.co.uk)
- + The Stables Little Coldharbour Farm, Tong Lane Lamberhurst, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, TN3 8AD

We confirm that we are using the Healthwatch Trademark (which covers the logo and Healthwatch brand) when undertaking work on our statutory activities as covered by the licence agreement.

If you need this in an alternative format please contact us.

# Your comment counts

## We want to hear from you

Tell us your  
experiences of  
health & social care  
services in Kent



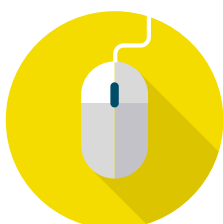
### By Telephone:

Healthwatch Kent  
Freephone 0808 801 0102



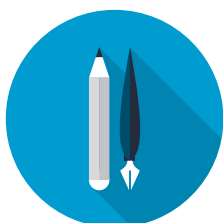
### By Email:

[Info@healthwatchkent.co.uk](mailto:Info@healthwatchkent.co.uk)



### Online:

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

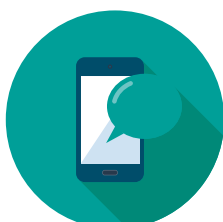


**By Post:** Write to us or fill in and send a Your Comment Counts form. **Freepost RTLG-UBZB-JUZA** Healthwatch Kent, Seabrooke House, Church Rd, Ashford TN23 1RD



### 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.





Heathwatch Kent  
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ig: @healthwatch\_kent