Luminus

healthwatch Surrey

Quarterly impact report

July - September 2026



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If you would like a paper copy of this document or require it in an alternative format, please get in touch with us.

NOTE: This report was finalised before the government announcement that Healthwatch will remain.

This quarter in numbers



1236 Visits to our Information and advice website pages



268 People helped, supported or spoken to within the community



220 People have shared their experiences with us*



83 People supported by our Helpdesk**



35 People provided with Independent Health Complaints Advocacy support



13 Events in the community attended



4 Reports published

* People contacting our Helpdesk for information, advice or to share an experience, via email, telephone, text or WhatsApp, or via our website. Plus sharing their experiences via Smart Survey, our Enter and View visits or some other means including projects and Healthwatch England.
** People contacting our Helpdesk for information, advice or to share an experience, via email, telephone, text or WhatsApp, or via our website.

Information and signposting

One of our statutory functions is to provide non-clinical information and advice to the public about accessing health and social care services and the options available to them. We help people to identify the services and support they need and provide advice about how to navigate them. We can also escalate concerns to partners within the NHS and social care; providing resolutions to some individuals and ensuring an improved experience for others.



Supporting residents through our Helpdesk

We helped **83** people navigate health and social care services after they contacted our Helpdesk. People often come to our Helpdesk with a variety of complex concerns and issues. Our knowledgeable Helpdesk team are adept, not only at answering direct questions, but also at identifying where additional help and support could be useful.

> "I've been passed from hospital to social care and back again so thought I'd try you. It's been so nice to know someone cares and is trying to help and not just saying it's not their problem! I'm so grateful this service exists."
> **Helpdesk user**

Case study: Gerry's* story

Gerry called us concerned about the decline in his wife's mental health following an autism diagnosis. She had spoken to two GPs, one of whom was the practice mental health specialist, but didn't feel that she was listened to, which was impacting her mental health further.

Our Helpdesk advisor listened to Gerry and created a list of appropriate, local and community-based services for both his wife and him as a carer. This included links to their local community connections providers for mental health support, advocacy support to enable his wife to interact with NHS services, targeted services for neurodivergent adults and other more specialised services to tackle specific issues that they were experiencing.

How did we make things better for Gerry?

Gerry is now able to get the support his wife needs and is aware of his own needs as a carer and how they can be supported too.

Supporting residents in the community

We visited **11** venues across Surrey (for **13** separate engagement events) and engaged with **268** people. Whilst out and about we have the opportunity to talk to people about the important issues we're currently exploring (read more information on our thematic priorities later in this report). But we're also able to listen, without prior agenda, to residents' thoughts, concerns and questions about any aspect of health and social care and to offer information and signposting wherever we can.

The map below shows the venues we visited this quarter.

A macular society meeting in **Woking**.

A community centre in **Spelthorne**.

3 x venues in **Epsom and Ewell**, including a hospital and a stroke support group.

2 x venues in **Surrey Heath**, including a hospital emergency department and health centre.



A GP practice in **Guildford**.

2 x venues in Mole Valley, including a care home.

NHS Advocacy & complaints

This quarter **157** people contacted our Independent Health Complaints Advocacy service (IHCA) and were provided with information on how to pursue a complaint. **35** people needed specialist help from an advocate and were fully supported to submit and pursue their complaint. Run in partnership with Surrey Independent Living Charity, IHCA provides free, confidential and independent support.

Case study: Mary's* story

Following the death of her husband, Mary had submitted a subject access request (SAR) which uncovered several issues - relating to lack of thorough investigation by her GP practice - which may have contributed to his death.

The IHCA worked with Mary to pull together a timeline from the SAR - picking out significant events about which questions could be posed to the practice regarding their handling of her husband's care and why certain decisions were made and certain actions not taken. These were used to draft a formal complaint letter to the practice.

Mary wasn't happy with the practice's formal response. Her advocate helped her to draft a further letter challenging inaccuracies, supported her to pursue a local resolution meeting- and accompanied her to it - and obtained the transcript afterwards.

Outcomes

In the meeting the GP practice outlined how, in light of the complaint, they had updated policies on patient communication and put in 'fail-safe' mechanisms to ensure that communications are received by patients and a more robust system to ensure regular contact with patients at risk is in place.

Mary feels that pursuing the complaint and seeing the practice change their policies and procedures had created a 'legacy' for her husband.

* Names have been changed

Delivering on our thematic priorities

Along with our core priorities of agenda free listening, the provision of information and advice and amplifying the VCSE voice, we have 3 thematic priorities – access to primary care, public health and adult social care, and involvement of people – which have been designed based on what residents tell us matters to them.



Involvement of people: what's working (and what's not) in acute care

Last quarter we reported on our current programme of work exploring people's experiences of care delivered by Surrey's acute hospitals and our specific activity at Royal Surrey County Hospital.

This quarter we've been working closely with Surrey and Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust to look at 3 areas where they felt there was the greatest need to hear patient voice: the MySASH portal (specifically looking at accessibility issues); unpaid carers (with a particular focus on discharge and communication) and virtual wards.

Our engagement activity involved a visit to 2 different areas of the maternity department at East Surrey Hospital, a memory café to talk to people living with dementia and their carers, a Café Milk drop in for new breastfeeding mothers and two health visitor drop ins.

> "I am grateful to Healthwatch Surrey and Luminus for listening to people using our services and for sharing feedback from women and birthing people, families, carers and patients with additional communication or accessibility needs… We welcome continued partnership with Healthwatch Surrey and Luminus. Your report provides valuable insight that will support practical improvements for people using services at East Surrey Hospital."
> **Sarah Burton, Chief Nursing Officer, Surrey and Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust**

How have we made things better for Surrey residents?

The Trust are now making a number of changes to improve patient experience, these include:

- Reviewing postnatal workforce deployment to maximise direct support for women and families.
- Developing clearer discharge information for women and families and reducing avoidable delays.

- Purchasing additional, comfortable, seating for birthing partners to improve their experience and thus the support they can provide.
- Strengthening documentation of carer discussions, agreed plans and escalations where concerns are raised.

Learnings from our report are also being used to support work around reasonable adjustments and personalised care and the Urgent and Emergency Care transformation programme, helping to ensure that patient voice remains at the forefront of changes in these important areas.

Primary care: shining a light on digital access

People regularly talk to us about the issues they face accessing their GP practice as practices move increasingly towards digital models. We've recently published two separate reports, 'Digital Divide' and 'Bridging the digital divide', looking at their concerns. In September we were able to share our findings at a webinar for GP practices.

> "Just a quick note to say thank you for all your support with the webinar - presenting and facilitating. Really appreciated having you in the room and for keeping the patient view 'live' for the practices."
> **Hannah Yasuda, Director, Reframing Primary Care**

How are we helping residents?

By sharing our findings directly with providers in a decision-making forum, we helped ensure that patients' experiences and perspectives informed the decisions being made.

What other themes have we been exploring: additional publications

Alongside these projects we have also published two additional reports this quarter.

What we're hearing about weight management support

Our 'What we're hearing about weight management support in Surrey' report explores whether people know what options are available to them regarding weight management and identifies a number of barriers to access.

This report provided useful context when we were advising Surrey and Sussex Integrated Care Board on their 5 year Strategic Commissioning Implementation Plan and the need to support in the prevention space. We also challenged on incorporating patient experience from start to finish and stressed the importance of communication and consultation with populations who are likely to experience a different service. Thanks to our input there will now be better consideration of population needs when it comes to service commissioning.

Adult social care: a year in review

We've also published 'Adult social care: a year in review' highlighting what we have been hearing from people about adult social care over the last year. The report was discussed at the latest Leadership Team meeting, so senior leaders were aware of some of the current issues local people are experiencing.

Making a difference at a system level

We ensure that local decision makers hear about the insights and experiences residents have shared with us, both positive and negative. We sit on a number of boards and committees and proactively challenge system partners over issues identified to us by local residents and share when things have gone well to help to identify best practice.



Ensuring local voices aren't lost as local government reorganises

Local government in Surrey is changing; from April 2027 the existing county council and 11 district and borough councils will be replaced by two new unitary councils – East Surrey and West Surrey.

We've been working with a number of partners across East Surrey.

- In July we inputted into the design and facilitation of Community Voice, a workshop to review the role, function and membership of local Health & Wellbeing meetings. These meetings were designed for residents to attend but many reported feeling "intimidated" by them. We made a series of recommendations for how the meetings could better incorporate residents' voices.
- We have helped to guide the priorities of the Prevention and Communities Board by sharing common health and social care themes people talk to us about in East Surrey.
- In September we designed and facilitated a workshop to review the role, function and membership of the Community Forum - attended by community stakeholder groups - and have helped to bridge the gap between this and the Health & Wellbeing meetings to ensure a clearer route for residents to have their voices heard.

How have we made a difference?

Through our work with providers across East Surrey we have helped to ensure that patient voice remains meaningful and at the forefront when Local Government Reorganisation comes into effect.

Ensuring Surrey voices are listened to nationally

Through our Healthwatch network and our system contacts we are connected to changes, challenges and calls for insights at a national level; we often use what people tell us to ensure the Surrey story is told beyond the county boundaries.



Supporting the national drive to tackle loneliness

The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) is a cross-party forum in the UK Parliament where MPs and Peers work with sector experts, practitioners, researchers and people with lived experience to inform national action. They play a vital role in shaping understanding and influencing policy.

Our most recent project under our mental health priority explored what effect loneliness and isolation have on men's mental health specifically, as well as looking at the importance, availability and awareness of community ties and local groups to support them. Under our public health and adult social care priority we have undertaken a piece of work looking at the attitudes of people in their 50s and 60s to their own health and wellbeing, including the importance of social connection for mental health. Over 150 people contributed to this research, through community engagements, focus groups and a survey.

How have we helped?
We were pleased to submit both our 'Men in Mind' and our 'Living, coping, thriving' reports to the APPG on Tackling Loneliness and Connected Communities to ensure the perspectives of these specific cohorts were included.

Having our say on National complaints reform

The NHS 10 Year Health Plan for England emphasises the requirement for improvements in complaints handling, stating that the current system does not meet the needs of patients. Here in Surrey people often share their confusion about how complaints systems work, as well as their frustration at the lack of adequate, timely responses.

We were invited by NHS England's Strategic Complaints Team to attend an engagement session to explore potential options for reforming the NHS Complaints Regulations. Along with representatives from NHS trusts, primary care, integrated care boards (ICBs), the Public Service Ombudsman (previously the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman), regulators and other stakeholder organisations we discussed and challenged a number of possible changes. We were pleased to be able to speak up for the

more vulnerable members of our community, highlighting where barriers might exist in potential new models, and raising the need for ongoing communication with service users.

How have we helped?

Our thoughts and challenges will be shared with the new Director of Patient Experience to guide their strategy for complaints reform.

Translating Surrey voices to National Voices

We are now a member of National Voices, the leading coalition of health and social care charities in England. With more than 200 organisations making up its membership - representing a diverse range of health conditions and communities – the organisation has a prominent role in representing patients and service users with national policy makers.

This quarter we attended the first heads of policy meeting since joining the organisation to discuss their work on looking at national patient experience/feedback mechanisms. We were able to provide local context and to stress the importance of community outreach, building trust and relationships, feedback loops and reaching those not well heard.

We were also pleased to work with National Voices on their National Lottery Heritage Fund application. Their application outlines a project to capture and preserve patient voice as a vital part of health and care heritage.

Preserving the sanctity of public voice

A key challenge in any public service is ensuring that the voices of those who rely on them, particularly those least likely to be heard, are meaningfully embedded in decision making. We are committed to ensuring that this happens here and now, and that it continues to happen in the future.

We are continuing to advocate for preserving statutory functions of independent public voice services as the Health Bill (which proposed the abolition of Healthwatch England and 153 local Healthwatch) continues its passage through the House of Commons and House of Lords.

Involving local people in health and social care

Our dedicated team of volunteers help us to ensure that local people have their say, and that we hold decision makers to account. Our volunteers gifted us 108 hours of their valuable time this quarter!



Supporting system partners with their information provision

This time last year we reported on the support we provided to Frimley Park Hospital NHS Foundation Trust to review and obtain people's feedback on their patient information leaflets. We worked with them to develop a survey which guided face to face discussions with patients on site and was distributed, digitally, more widely with the help of our VCSE partners. Our volunteer Reading Panel also played a key role, reviewing the leaflets directly and offering constructive feedback and recommendations.

We were pleased to learn this quarter that the trust have now launched a new Patient Information Library, in part to address some of the issues identified around accessibility and ease of use. And our Reading Panel are now reviewing the library itself to confirm this has been achieved!

Supporting the drive for improvements in the care environment: PLACE assessments

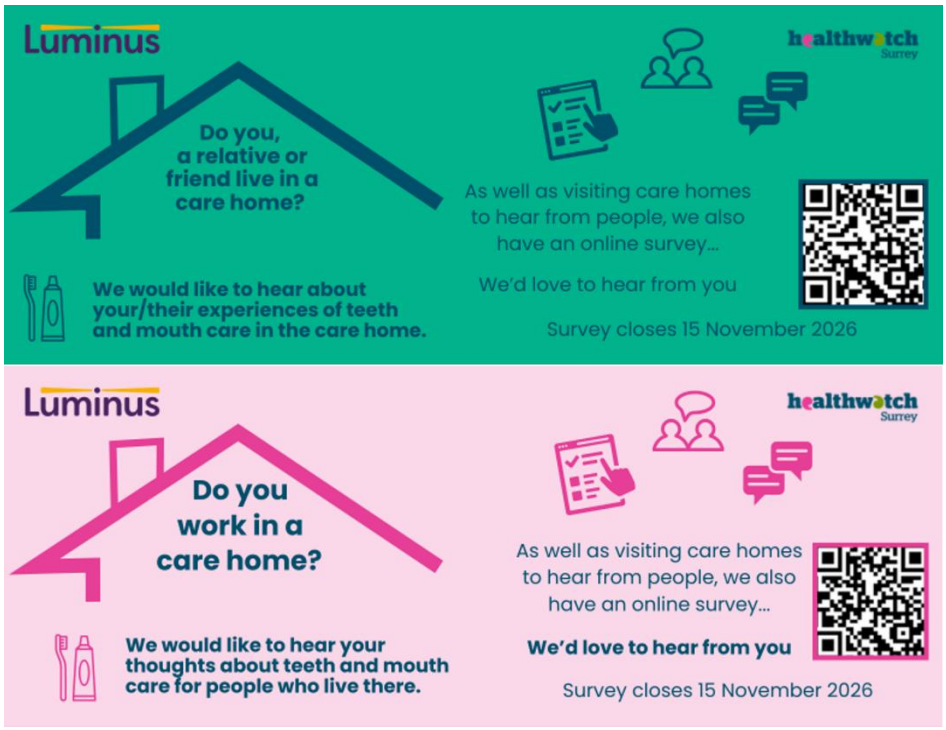
Patient-Led Assessments of the Care Environment (PLACE) involve local people (known as patient assessors) going into hospitals as part of teams to assess how the environment supports the provision of clinical care, assessing such things as privacy and dignity, food, cleanliness and general building maintenance and, more recently, the extent to which the environment is able to support the care of those with dementia or with a disability. The assessments take place every year and results - published annually - show how hospitals are performing both nationally and in relation to other hospitals providing similar services.

How have our volunteers supported us?

This quarter 4 volunteers undertook these PLACE visits at Royal Surrey County Hospital, Haslemere Hospital and Horton Rehabilitation.

Further support: oral care

We are currently undertaking a project looking at oral health in Surrey's care homes. We're grateful to our volunteers who have so far given us 12 hours of their time as we conducted our first Enter & View visits at our first 2 care homes this quarter. We have 5 more visits planned and we'll be reporting on this project over the coming months!



We would like to thank everyone who gave their time and shared their experiences with us this quarter.

Have your say! Ongoing and upcoming projects

We're keen to hear from all Surrey residents about all aspects of health and social care, but we also have some specific subjects we're interested in hearing about.

Involvement of People – we are looking at residents' experiences of care delivered by Surrey acute hospitals, both in the hospital and the community.
https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/t/HwSyHospitalFeedback2026

Public health and adult social care - We are wanting to hear from people about oral health (teeth and mouth care) in care homes.
https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/t/OralHealthCareHomesResidentFamilyHwsy2026-27/

The more people we hear from, the more impactful our research will be, and the more likely we are to be able to bring about positive change.



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The Healthwatch Surrey service is run by Luminus Insight CIC, known as Luminus. Luminus is a Surrey based, independent, community interest company which exists to empower people to have their voices heard. We help organisations provide equity of access and the best services possible, through the inclusive involvement of local people.

#EndPovertySurrey

We are proud to have signed up to the End Poverty Pledge.

Luminus Insight CIC trading as Luminus and Healthwatch Surrey
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