
What we're hearing from residents of Surrey Heath and Farnham

March 2025



Nothing went well with trying to get a routine appointment. Waiting for a face to face with a named GP is anything from 5-7 weeks. Getting a telephone appointment is 3-5 weeks.



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

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Report overview

This report provides insights into local people's views on, and experiences of health and social care services in Surrey Heath and Farnham. It is based on what people have told us at a series of engagement events in the area, as well as enquiries to our [Helpdesk](#), between October 2024 and March 2025.

Our report focusses on 3 key areas:

- **Experience of general practice**
- **Experience of secondary care**
- **Experience of mental health services**

Please note: Any urgent or concerning experiences within this report have been escalated to the appropriate teams. All appropriate information and advice and signposting to complaints processes has already been given.

If you would like more information or examples of what people have shared, please get in touch.

Insight summary

The following table summarises the issues highlighted in this report and the outcomes which we would like to see for patients. Healthwatch Surrey would like to work with Frimley Integrated Care Board to consider realistic ways in which these can be achieved.

Theme / issue	What would be a better outcome for patients
General Practice	
Making an appointment	All patients are clear about appointment booking processes, patient choice and the role and appropriateness of different appointment types.
Patients not feeling listened to	All patients understand how to share any concerns they may have and how they can provide feedback on services.
Secondary care	
Capacity issues in acute care	Potential waiting times in acute care are made clear to patients, as well as triage processes and the impact this might have on their care.
Mental health	
Falling between services	People accessing mental health support feel confident about who they should talk to about their care journey.

What we are hearing

Experience of primary care

Thanks and praise

We've had some really good feedback on GP practices in the area over the last few months, with people citing the speed of referrals as one really positive element of their primary care experience.

"[the GP] has been 10/10. If I see a GP here that says they'll refer me on, then I believe them."

222681, Surrey Heath resident

"The GP is excellent. I rang them when I had leg pain and they sent me to hospital and it was sorted quickly."

225161, Surrey Heath resident

"I saw the doctor here yesterday, my appointment for blood tests today was made straight away. It is brilliant."

222684, Surrey Heath resident

In this case a resident was pleased with the ongoing, proactive care provided by their GP.

"The GP does ring [my husband] up once a month as he is on a lot of [anxiety and depression] medication. The GP speaks to my husband and then to me each time."

225163, Surrey Heath resident

Making an appointment – mixed feedback

In our last [What we're hearing about Surrey Heath report](#) we discussed the importance of equity of access and how people told us that they continue to experience difficulties in accessing appointments. We've had mixed feedback on this since our last report, with some people complementing the process.

"Making an appointment here is really quick. I call and always get through. I don't use the internet so wouldn't go online."

222682, Surrey Heath resident

“The systems here are easy to navigate. Sometimes I even just pop in, they will always make an appointment for you however you want to make it.”

222683, Surrey Heath resident

However, we do continue to hear that accessing face to face appointments is a challenge, as are waiting times, and that some level of confusion around appointments remains.

“I’d like to be able to get an advance appointment. I don’t always need to be seen straight away, and feel like I am wasting time if I get a same day appointment for a non-urgent issue.”

222684, Surrey Heath resident

“Rarely do you ever go straight in to appointments yet if you are even 5 minutes late you miss your appointment and have to go back on the triage list. I got the time wrong for my appointment and I was told someone was already in with the doctor yet I was still in my slot. The triage list is a joke and you can’t choose when you have got an appointment so usually end up having to phone to make changes. In the long run it’s not an efficient way of organising appointments.”

225323, Surrey Heath resident

“Nothing went well with trying to get a routine appointment. Waiting for a face to face with a named GP is anything from 5-7 weeks. Getting a telephone appointment is 3-5 weeks. Test results are put through to a Nursing sister and again it can be 3 weeks until she rings you.”

225530, Waverley resident

“Got an appointment. 3 week wait for a face to face appointment and then it will be with a paramedic, not even a doctor.”

229543, Surrey resident

Patients not feeling listened to

Although clinical care is often praised, people do share concerns around not feeling properly listened to, which they feel means they don't receive the most appropriate care and treatment.

"I saw the GP and it was a very odd appointment, she didn't seem interested and just said to me "what do you want, a referral, drugs, what" and was just flicking round her computer screen and clicking down a drop down menu over and over. I explained I didn't know what I needed and explained my symptoms.... I hoped they would advise me on a plan as I really didn't know what was best."

222957, Surrey resident

"I am utterly exhausted. I did go and see my GP and told them how tired and exhausted I was because of my caring responsibilities and they offered me Prozac. I don't want to go on anti-depressants. There must be some form of counselling for me as a carer."

225542, Surrey Heath resident

"My wife has always suffered from anxiety and has been undergoing radiotherapy. After this finished in March, her anxiety seemed to increase and she was also getting very agitated and generally behaving very odd. I knew that something was wrong with her but when I took her to the GP, they prescribed her anti-depressants. I kept telling them that it wasn't her anxiety, this was totally different to how she was behaving before but they wouldn't listen to me."

225245, Waverley resident

In some cases the issue can relate to individual needs not being adequately addressed.

"The GP diagnosed her two years ago and left us to it... We were given a dementia booklet, but I can't read it – the print is too small."

222685, Surrey Heath resident

Experience of secondary care

Capacity issues in acute care impacting patients

People continue to talk to us about capacity issues and the impact this can have on their physical and mental health.

"It was carnage. The corridors were lined with people. The treatment in resus was fantastic, but it took a whole day to get my urine tested. The staff were rushed off their feet."

223754, Surrey Heath resident

"I rang 111 for info, after 11 hours they sent an ambulance, who decided I should be in hospital as my pain level and not being able to walk was so bad. I was left for 5 hours and then when they were about to do some tests an urgent case was on their way - I heard them say get rid of her as there's only one doctor and they don't have time to do tests."

227668, Surrey resident

"I was there recently with my partner and we had to wait 12 hours before we were seen. I suffer from anxiety and don't deal well with sick people around me. I was also there myself with a rippled ankle and had to wait 6/8 hours before I was seen."

228095, Surrey Heath resident

"[the hospital] is a nightmare. They seem to have difficulty recruiting. Blood test results take far far longer than they should. Their helpline is permanently engaged. They refuse to talk to anyone but a GP if you try to ask where your results have gone. They seem to have very low morale and a lot of their staff are from overseas."

229456, Surrey resident

Dissatisfaction can be exasperated by confusing processes and a lack of signposting, as in this case.

"A few days ago I went to A&E and was told to go to an urgent care centre. I want to know why A&E are doing this."

227423, Surrey Heath resident

However, staff were praised for their compassion and concern.

“Four weeks ago I had a breakdown, I was suffering with my mental health whilst visiting mum in the ward as it was all getting too much for me being here 12 hours a day, seven days a week without a break, it feels relentless. That time staff in A&E were brilliant – they understood what I was going through, very empathetic, and said that I could go back up to the ward and they would call me when there was a doctor ready to see me to discuss my condition. This was really helpful and made me feel that they understood.”

216944, Surrey resident

Confusion and lack of signposting

People have told us that in-hospital signage can be confusing for patients, and that patient experience could be improved if this was improved.

“I think there is a need to better direct visitors to wards. Firstly, the receptionists saying 'Acute Medical Unit ward, Blue area Bay' – not 'AMU Blue'. Secondly, improvements to the signage boards are needed. Finally, someone who knows where the wards are, could go to the signage boards and look critically at what is missing, confusing, misleading to visitors.”

226117, Surrey resident

Admin errors

In Autumn last year the Kings Fund [reported](#) on the importance of efficient administration in the health service, noting that “Poor admin can restrict people’s access to care, negatively affect their wellbeing, and undermine trust in the NHS. It can also have a negative impact on staff.” People often tell us about the impact that administration errors can have on them.

“I received a text cancelling the [hospital] appointment and then given a date for a new one. We turned up and they knew nothing about it. They had made the appointment for podiatry and not physiotherapy.”

228068, Waverley resident

“My partner has ongoing cardiac problems. There was a delay to be seen by the GP so I messaged the cardiology secretary as we did not have a follow up appointment. She messaged back to say that he had been discharged from the team and had to be re-referred. The GP sent an urgent referral as his blood test for heart failure was 6 times higher than it should have been and the NHS app was recommending an echocardiogram and cardiology review within 2 weeks. I contacted the cardiology team to chase the referral and was told the wait for triage was 6 weeks and that, if it was urgent, the GP needed to send an expedite letter. I ended up going to the GP and emailing them as well as PALS to try and get him seen. This doesn't seem to be a good use of NHS resources to make repeated contact to different services.”

228413, Waverley resident

Mental health

Falling between services

In our previous [What we're hearing about Surrey Heath report](#) we looked at how extended waits for care are leading to the need for mental health crisis support. Falling between services is also something we hear about regularly, particularly in relation to mental health services. People tell us that they don't feel confident that any one service is taking responsibility for their care or their treatment journey.

"I was also visited that day by two representatives from Psychiatric Liaison, but they said that they could not help as 'I did not have a mental health issue', that I was feeling suicidal because of the neurological problem but that the neurologist wasn't going to help because they said it was psychological. This was after them asking me whether I was still suicidal, which I confirmed I was. So, I have been left with no neurological input and no psychiatric help: a major failure of care."

216944, Surrey resident

"I was under the CMHRS team for 10 years for my Bipolar disorder but was discharged during Covid as I was also diagnosed as autistic. I have been feeling really low for the last 3 weeks so I went to A&E and was seen by the Psychiatric Liaison Team. They referred me to CMHRS who refused the referral. I have been to the Safe Haven as I was suicidal and went to Frimley last week as I had taken an overdose. I was seen again by the Psychiatric Liaison Team and they referred me to the Home Treatment Team."

228095, Surrey resident

About Healthwatch Surrey

Healthwatch Surrey champions the voice of local people to shape, improve and get the best from NHS, health and social care services. We are independent and have statutory powers to make sure decision makers listen to the experiences of local people.

We passionately believe that listening and responding to local people's experiences is vital to create health and social care services that meet the needs of people in Surrey. We seek out people's experiences of health and care services, particularly from people whose voices are seldom heard, who might be at risk of health inequalities and whose needs are not met by current services. We share our findings publicly and with service providers and commissioners to influence and challenge current provision and future plans.

We also provide reliable and trustworthy information and signposting about local health and social care services to help people get the support they need.

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We are proud to be commended in the National Healthwatch Impact Awards, recognising our work helping to improve local NHS and social care. You can view [our video](#) highlighting how feedback has enabled us to make positive changes to health and social care services.



We are committed to the quality of our information. Every three years we perform an audit so that we can be certain of this.

Luminus

The Healthwatch Surrey service is run by Luminus Insight CIC, known as Luminus.

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