

“During this difficult and unsettling period of the COVID-19 pandemic, I would like to outline how Healthwatch Surrey will be working over the coming weeks to be as supportive as possible to system partners and minimise non-essential work, whilst still fulfilling our statutory responsibilities.

Over the coming weeks we will:

- Prioritise the safety and wellbeing of the public, staff and volunteers. This includes homeworking arrangements for all staff and volunteers. To ensure compliance with the latest Government advice, we will not hold public meetings, face-to-face events or carry out Enter & View activity for the time being.*
- Assess the impact of the above changes on our staff and volunteer capacity. We are redeploying resources to support the wider community effort and offering our help to CVSs who coordinate volunteer activity, and to support Surrey’s Community Helpline.*
- Focus on supporting the health and care system to get clear and accurate information and advice out to communities.*
- Continue to offer the support of our Helpdesk in signposting and talking to people about their concerns and experiences.*
- Continue supporting people via our Independent Health Complaints Advocacy service where possible and explain the impact of COVID-19 on complaints.*
- Keep our Workplan and priorities under review to see how our resources need to respond flexibly to the needs of the public and system partners.*

In line with requests for assistance from the Department of Health and Social Care and NHS England, we have been asked to:

- Gather people’s feedback and views about their needs and experiences in relation to COVID-19 and other services where it relates to patient safety.*
- Use our experience in engagement to ensure that seldom-heard groups are not overlooked locally.*

We will postpone our regular meetings to share what we’ve heard with system partners. However, we will continue to escalate any cases of concern regarding patient safety to our usual contacts, and share our general insight by email in place of these meetings.

We would like to thank all the amazing health, care and support staff who are working so hard to keep Surrey safe and supported during the Coronavirus outbreak. Healthwatch Surrey would like to hear your experience of that support. Share your views and feedback with us here; <https://www.healthwatchesurrey.co.uk/your-views/share-your-experiences/>”

Kate Scribbins.

Kate Scribbins CEO Healthwatch Surrey

