

Examples of how our volunteers can make a difference

Improving Sexual Health Services in Surrey



Around the time Liz joined us as a Community Influencer volunteer, sexual health services in Surrey were undergoing significant changes. GUM clinics were closing, and professionals were raising concerns about patient care. Patients felt that their concerns were not being heard.

As a Healthwatch Surrey volunteer, Liz played a key role in reaching out to patients with HIV and sexual health conditions to find out how service changes were impacting them. She heard that patients were concerned about services being closed and relocated and patients being turned away from clinics, which was having a significant impact on access to appointments and access to treatment.

Liz began representing Healthwatch Surrey at contract review meetings with the sexual health service provider, where she spoke up on behalf of the patients and raised their concerns. She raised concerns about:

- Patients being turned away because of insufficient staffing levels and a lack of appropriately skilled/trained staff.
- Patients struggling to get support through the central booking office, and the phone lines to local clinics being expensive.

Liz's tenacity in speaking up on behalf of local people, amplifying their concerns in this forum and pushing for change has led to improvements to the service, including:

- The recruitment and training of appropriately skilled staff
- The introduction of a booked appointments system
- Appointments available for booking online
- The monitoring of call costs.

These changes will have a significant effect on the lives of people with HIV and other sexual health conditions in Surrey.

“My involvement with the sexual health services has shown how Healthwatch can amplify patients' needs and experiences in a way which truly influences commissioners and service providers. As I volunteer with Healthwatch I really can make a difference to services I care passionately about.”

- Liz.



Holding Clinical Commissioners (CCGs) to account and ensuring good public engagement happens

Registered at Woodbridge Hill Surgery or Guildowns Group Practice?
We want to hear from you to help shape the future of primary care.

- Exhibitions, drop-in sessions and engagement events are taking place this July.
- Come along to Stoughton, Park Barn or central Guildford.
- Go to the Health and Primary Care in Guildford page of this website for more information.

Two volunteers in our Guildford & Waverley volunteer group, Louise and Jill keep a close eye on Guildford & Waverley CCGs consultations and public engagement as part of their role as Community Influencers. They recently voiced their concerns about the quality of the CCGs public engagement with patients of Guildowns Group Practice and Woodbridge Hill Surgery in Guildford, which faced a potential relocation and closure. CCG hadn't provided sufficient notice that they were holding drop-in sessions and exhibitions to hear people's views, they hadn't approached students from the local Universities, who would be impacted by the proposed changes and had proposed new locations for the GP surgeries that were quite a distance from their patients, especially for those without cars.

Our volunteers helped us to gather evidence, which we put to the CCG in an email from our CEO. This email prompted a meeting with the CCG. Jill and Louise raised their concerns during the meeting, and the CCG consequently took the following action:

- Extended the period during which patients could share their views in a survey
- Held an additional drop-in engagement session to speak to patients
- Sent text messages out to patients to clearly

inform them of the time, location and purpose of the additional drop in engagement session

- Promoted the drop in event in a local University magazine so that students (who were not considered in the CCG's original engagement plans) were able to have their say.

- The CCG also agreed to look at alternatives to the new proposed locations that were closer to where patients live.

The additional drop-in session held in Stoughton was attended by 10 times as many local people as the CCG's initial drop in events, attracting over 120 participants. The

event was fully booked within a couple of days of being advertised. The CCG also published a report on the engagement where they acknowledged their oversight in not initially approaching students and the younger population. They stated that any future engagement exercise will be done within term-time for the University.

Our Care at Home Project

We recently undertook a project about Domiciliary Care, supported by our Community Influencer volunteers, that set out to answer the following questions: Do the systems in place give care users a voice? Do users feel safe to express themselves, and do they feel listened to?

As part of our research, we spoke to people receiving care at home in Surrey, Surrey Care Providers, and Care Agency Registered Managers. We asked care users whether they felt comfortable, safe and supported in expressing their needs and wishes and whether their care providers were responsive to their requests. We asked Care workers what their understanding and interpretation of person-centred care was, and whether they felt enabled to listen to their clients. We asked Care Agency Managers what their processes are when it comes to listening and the delivery of person-centred care.



After completing the project, we published a report and sent it to Surrey County Council, requesting that they respond to our recommendations. We received a formal response from Surrey County Council stating that they would like to work closely with us to ensure our recommendations

are implemented and are used as a baseline for developing the new home-based care service specification (i.e. what they require care agencies to deliver).

A few examples of what will be implemented:

We found that care folders were often missing important information such as how to contact Safeguarding or contact information for Surrey County Council. We recommended that Surrey County Council provide a template to agencies to ensure this information is always available and is up to date. The council were considering the development of a best practice care folder as part of the new contract, and our findings and recommendations confirm that this is necessary. We also recommended that care folders are routinely checked when a person's care needs are reviewed, and this recommendation has also been taken up. The council also stated that they will work with us to ensure the care user voice is heard throughout the recommissioning exercise for Home Based Care.

Reviewing Serious Incident Reports at Royal Surrey NHS Foundation Trust

Royal Surrey NHS Foundation Trust reached out to us to ask whether our volunteers would like to assist in reviewing and improving their serious incident reports. These reports are completed after

a 'serious incident' or 'near miss' has occurred and has been investigated, and are sent to the patient and their family, the clinical commissioners and to everyone involved at the hospital trust.

Three of our volunteers, Jenny, John and Gareth signed up to help, and met once a week at Royal Surrey County Hospital to read and review confidential serious incident reports and provide feedback before they were sent out to the patient and their family. They were asked to consider the clarity, tone and sensitivity of the reports, and whether any of the information contained could be misleading or distressing to patients and their families.

Some significant improvements have been made to the reports as a result of Healthwatch Surrey volunteer involvement. The report template has been completely reworked to make it reader friendly, and the standard risk matrix, which showed the likelihood of the event happening again has been removed. The risk matrix was particularly upsetting to the families of patients who had died as a result of the serious incident, especially if the risk of the event happening again was low, as it may have seemed to some that the death of their loved one was an insignificant matter. This major change to the reporting template has also now been shared with and implemented by other hospital trusts in Surrey. Royal Surrey NHS Foundation Trust's Head of Patient Safety and Quality described the work done by our volunteers as extremely valuable. We are now looking to undertake a similar exercise at other acute hospitals in Surrey.

