

# Local Healthwatch Quarterly Influence & Impact Report

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October – December 2021





Helping shape  
health and social care  
services in Surrey

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# Our Engagement



This quarter our staff and volunteers have been out and about across Surrey rolling out our agenda-free engagement strategy. Each month we focused on one area of the county, highlighting the variations in health and care experiences across the county and providing more focused insights to providers of health and care services to help them better understand the communities they serve.

We visited Guildford and Waverley in October, Surrey Downs in November and North-West Surrey in December, which was unfortunately curtailed by the rising Covid-19 cases.

We heard stories from those patients and their families attending Royal Surrey County Hospital, Epsom Hospital and St Peter's Hospital. We were also on the high streets of Banstead and Godalming, speaking with residents about their experiences.

We heard from service users of the Horizon mental health hub, listening to how the restrictions and changes of the past 18 months has affected services.

We visited The Grange in Epsom, an assisted living facility for people with learning disabilities, speaking to residents and their families regarding the challenges in accessing services and how the changes to health and care

access have both positively and negatively impacted them.

Our engagement staff and volunteers are out to listen, and they also offer advice and signposting where appropriate. They provide people with information about how to access health and care services, as well as making people aware of the advocacy and community support available.

Next quarter, we turn our attention to Surrey Heath and East Surrey, where we will continue to explore the experiences of health and care at a local level.

While our face-to-face engagement is now paused, we continue to hear from Surrey residents through our Helpdesk and our system partners in Citizens Advice and advocacy, and also through our volunteers who share stories from their communities. We hope to continue our face-to-face engagement as soon as it is safe to do so.

**If you would like Healthwatch Surrey to engage with your service, please contact:**

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# What we are hearing

**Every story matters.** We endeavour to find the right forum to share the experiences we receive to ensure that patient voices are heard. On some occasions, there are patterns in what we are hearing so we escalate these together as a matter of urgency.

## Wound Dressing

People have been telling us of problems accessing wound care in the community after hospital treatment. Some patients are being told by the hospital that their GP will provide wound care, only to discover this isn't the case. We shared these experiences to providers, making the following recommendations:

1. Hospitals ensure that information given to patients about wound management following discharge from hospital is reviewed.
2. Hospitals consider how to make patients aware of what arrangements will need to be made for post-operative care prior to surgery.
3. Hospitals ensure that their wound care policies are up to date.
4. GP Practices ensure that they are giving the correct signposting/referrals to patients.

### *What's next:*

We are continuing to engage with healthcare providers and decision-makers to bring this issue to their attention and strongly encourage the implementation of our recommendations.

## Dentists

We have been consistently hearing from the people of Surrey regarding [the challenges of accessing dentistry](#). In the past quarter, there has been a noticeable increase in dentistry experiences that have shown how delays in access to routine oral hygiene has had a negative impact on other parts of the health system. We published these stories in December 2021, to coincide with the [national campaign led by Healthwatch England](#) and we sent a copy of our report to each Surrey MP.

### *Impact:*

- We received a response from Jeremy Hunt, MP for South West Surrey and Chair of the Health and Social Care Select Committee thanking us for bringing this information to his attention.
- NHS England have issued new guidance based on the feedback for practices to offer appointments based on clinical need, especially for urgent care and priority groups such as children.

### *What's next:*

We will continue to monitor experiences to ensure that these guidelines are being met.

## Covid-19 Vaccinations

Many Surrey residents have shared their experiences of the Covid-19 vaccination programme, with the last quarter seeing people being offered their boosters. What we have heard suggests that this has predominantly been a huge success and a credit to the tireless vaccination centre staff and dedicated volunteers, along with GPs, Pharmacists and others, who have provided this vital service.



The pace of the programme has left some gaps in information and our Helpdesk has received requests for further support regarding obtaining medical exemption certificates, or those with allergies who require a certain dose of the vaccine.

We shared these stories with Surrey Heartlands who have subsequently updated their 'Frequently Asked Questions' section of their vaccination advice to incorporate this information, making it easier for people with similar problems to get the support they require.

## Pregnancy Loss

In May 2021, we published a report detailing [the treatment of pregnancy loss](#) in Surrey hospitals and in our Q2 report, we provided details of the initial impacts this report had made, with both Royal Surrey County Hospital and East Surrey Hospital ensuring they offer the required support. We have continued to share these experiences and providers have responded with their implementations:

### *Impact:*

- Ashford and St Peter's Hospitals will offer parents a Certificate of Remembrance.
- Surrey Heartlands have confirmed extra investment in perinatal and bereavement service across Guildford and Waverley

## GP Access

In Summer 2021, we published our summary of [Surrey residents' experiences of the changes to GP access](#).

We have continued to hear mixed experiences from residents across Surrey regarding this issue and share these themes with commissioners. The telephone triage process is often cited as a cause for complaint as are communication issues.

We met with The Leatherhead Primary Care Network to support their GP practices to communicate more effectively with their patients. We are working to connect with further PCNs across Surrey to help them support their patients as services continue to evolve.



*In October, our CEO Kate Scribbins participated in a discussion on BBC Radio Surrey regarding the changes in accessing GP and primary care appointments. This offered a platform for both the stories that patients have shared with us, and to provide supportive advice for GP practices on how best to communicate their services changes to their patients and encourage them to work with their patients to create services that best serve their local communities.*





# Our Thematic Priorities

## Dementia

In November, we published our research on [lived experience of the early years after Dementia diagnosis](#). Our research was designed to coincide with Surrey Heartlands' refresh of their dementia strategy and our aim was to have the voices of service users and their families heard in the decision-making process.

We found that families felt unsupported, particularly in the immediate aftermath of a diagnosis, adding to the high emotional weight of supporting a loved one with dementia. We heard stories of good care, particularly positive praise for community support groups. However, there was little awareness of what support is available, such as tax rebates or dementia navigators. Not one of our interviewees was aware of a care plan or having had a care review by their GP.

### Our recommendations:

1. Build access to Dementia Navigators (or other professional navigator roles). Ensure there is adequate resource:
  - A) In every area: iron out postcode lotteries so people in all parts of Surrey have access to a Dementia Navigator when needed.
  - B) For Dementia Navigators to proactively contact everyone with a diagnosis of dementia on a regular schedule (frequency dictated by individual needs).
2. Undertake a strategic overview of support groups; provide signposting to groups and work with them to make them more resilient; Share higher quality information to groups and build provision in areas with weaker support.
3. Empower Primary Care to signpost effectively by ensuring primary care networks, GP surgeries and community care have a single local point of access to signpost patients to (e.g. local navigator or Dementia Navigator).

## Our impact so far:

Surrey Heartlands is in the process of drafting its dementia strategy and they have incorporated many of our findings to make improvements to future care pathways.

We have been offered the opportunity to feed back on this draft and will work closely with Heartlands, to ensure that the new approach to dementia care provides future care recipients with a high quality of care appropriate to their needs.

## Continuing the story - Carers' Experience of Hospital Discharge

Our report into [Carers' Experience of Hospital Discharge](#) was a joint project with Action for Carers, investigating experiences of discharge to assess from the perspective of carers of those admitted to hospital during the pandemic.

We presented our findings and recommendations to both Frimley Park Hospital and Royal Surrey County Hospital leading to the establishment of a cross-system workshop at the Surrey Carers and Providers Network event in February. We will continue to work with our system partners to implement our recommendations and maximise safe hospital discharges.





# Where we share your stories

Our team are committed to elevating the experiences of those who use health and care services and placing the patient and service user voice at the heart of the decision-making process. With this aim in mind, this quarter we shared stories of those with lived experience, with a wide range of health and care organisations and providers. Here are the highlights:

## Childrens Select Committee

We were invited to the Children, Families Lifelong Learning and Culture Select committee, to share what we've heard about children and young people's needs about their emotional well-being and mental health, the barriers to this, and any feedback on the new emotional well-being and mental health service. We reviewed our database of experiences, and reached out to partner organisations, who brought together a small focus group of parents for us.

As a result of this, we have developed our relationship with commissioners and providers of Children's Services and established new opportunities to share service users' experiences.



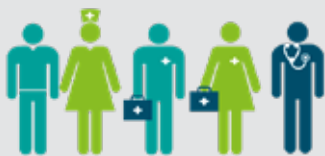
## Adults Select Committee

Sharing our carers report led to the Adults and Health Select Committee to work closely with residents and members to co-design standardised communications



for hospitals to provide. These would be made available for families and carers to clearly detail care needs and address issues that any carer would need to know as part of safe delivery of care.

## Guildford and Waverley Quality and Performance Assurance Committee



Our pharmacy experiences will be shared with new Head of Pharmacy for Guildford & Waverley who will incorporate these into their governance. We were also invited to work with the local Primary Care Networks to support and train their staff through the changes in primary care services.

## Hospital Providers





# Our Volunteers

We are indebted to the tireless efforts of our dedicated volunteers who have been the driving force behind so much good work this past quarter.

## Emergency Department Survey

In November, our volunteers supported East Surrey in conducting a survey of their Emergency Department. Over two days, they met and invited patients attending the department, supporting them to complete the survey.

We had been invited to do this survey on the strength of a similar project supporting Epsom hospital. Epsom were impressed with the tenacity of volunteers and praised their efforts noting that a much higher of surveys were completed while the volunteers were present.

Epsom also shared with us that the data they received led directly to positive changes in marketing NHS 111 as well as broadening their IT services offering more clinical teams the option to book slots in A&E.

## Enter and View

December saw the return of our Enter and View activity when we visited Shrewsbury Court Independent Hospital. The learning disability and autism service within the hospital was visited by the Quality Care Commission (CQC) in November. The hospital was given an inadequate rating in relation to its learning disability and autism services, prompting Surrey's Joint Strategic Commissioning Convener to engage with Healthwatch Surrey.

While the decision was made to close the hospital at the end of December, consultation with our system partners concluded that an independent review of patient experiences at the hospital would be helpful.

Our team of staff and volunteers spoke with patients and staff, feeding back our findings and safeguarding concerns to the provider and Convener.

We welcome the opportunity to conduct Enter and Views once again - a vital process to better understand health and care services in action. We hope to conduct more visits in the near future, where appropriate and when it is safe to do so.



## What is an 'Enter and View'?

Healthwatch have a legal power to visit health and social care services and see them in action. The purpose of an Enter and View visit is to collect evidence of what works well and what could be improved to make people's experiences better. Healthwatch can use this evidence to make recommendations and inform changes both for individual services as well as system-wide.



# Helpdesk and Advocacy Services



This quarter **502** people have received information and advice through our Helpdesk and Citizens Advice Partners.

Helpdesk  
**154**

Citizens  
Advice  
**348**

Each quarter, our Helpdesk and advocacy services support people who are experiencing challenges in accessing health and care services. They may be in need of advice of where to go or perhaps have experienced a poor standard of care and wish to raise concerns. Here are some of their stories and how we were able to help them:

## Help getting round barriers

Sasha\* was in need of a Covid-19 vaccination certificate. However, her GP was putting up barriers. Her situation was becoming increasingly problematic as this certificate was required as a condition of her employment. The delays in receiving the certificate put her at risk of losing her job. She contacted our Helpdesk, who signposted Sasha to contact the Covid-19 Vaccination Support Line.

### Outcome:

Sasha has now received her certificate, and this has been passed on to her employer.

## Empowering voices

Sharon's\* teenage daughter, Jessica, had an ultrasound appointment for a concerning lump on her breast. When Sharon took her for the appointment, she was frightened, but insisted on going in by herself. Her daughter returned after her appointment visibly upset. Jessica told her mum that the radiologist was dismissive of her and that she was wasting her time. Sharon was angry and frustrated that someone could be so dismissive of a young person who had been referred by their GP.



### Outcome:

Sharon contacted our Helpdesk and was advised to contact Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) and details on how to complain. Sharon felt empowered to contact the hospital directly to share her concerns.

## Challenging staff attitudes

Kaleed\* was admitted to hospital during the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, after attending A&E requiring emergency dental treatment. He is a young adult with learning disabilities and was very scared, and nervous about hospitals with a fear of needles and other forms of treatment. While on the ward, Kaleed experienced numerous examples of poor staff behaviour. He experienced staff showing a lack of sensitivity towards him not being able to engage or communicate with him. Another patient on the ward was also abusive towards Kaleed and the staff did little about this. Staff were abrasive about his carer being allowed to be present with him on the ward.

The whole experience was traumatic and damaging for Kaleed, both physically and emotionally, leading him to believe that staff didn't care about him.

### Outcome:

Following the support of our advocacy service, the hospital apologised and has taken steps internally to speak to the staff involved and to arrange for additional training for them relating to patients with learning disabilities. Policies are also being reviewed to ensure other patients with learning disabilities that are admitted through A&E do not experience similar insensitivities or problems in the future.

\* Names have been changed to protect identities.

## Ensuring patients are heard

Sandra\* suffers from Irritable Bowel Syndrome which affects her daily quality of life. She has been having difficulty getting an appointment with her GP and she feels that she has not been treated with respect by staff at the practice. When she saw a GP, Sandra did not believe her concerns were taken seriously.

### *Outcome:*

Advocacy supported Sandra in drafting a letter on her behalf. As she didn't have access to email, the advocate sent the draft letter by post and called Sandra to talk it through. The letter has now been forwarded to the GP practice and an investigation is ongoing.



## Supporting better communication

Norman\* had been recently discharged from hospital following a fall. As he was elderly with very limited mobility, he was discharged with an at home reablement care package provided by Surrey County Council's Adult Social Services. However, he was not aware that this would only be free for the first six weeks. Some weeks later he received a statement of charges for care provided after the initial period. He was surprised as he did not recall being advised of such charges.

### *Outcome:*

He was supported by Citizen's Advice who contacted Surrey County Council's Adult Social Care department on his behalf, establishing that he had not completed the Financial Assessment Form. Citizen's Advice completed and submitted the form on Norman's behalf as he did not have internet access. Norman was then offered a significant reduction on the costs for his care at home.



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about NHS care our free, independent  
advocacy service is provided by Surrey  
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