

# Local Healthwatch Quarterly Influence & Impact Report

January – March 2022





Helping shape  
health and social care  
services in Surrey

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# Hearing local voices



This quarter, we have continued to engage with communities across Surrey to offer residents a voice in the shaping of health and care services. Our local focus has led us to engage with more community organisations, to better understand the diversity of experiences across the county and learn about how services are experienced at a local level.

While most face-to-face engagement in January was suspended due to Covid restrictions, we were still able to visit a GP practice safely and speak with patients outside.

February saw us focus on East Surrey, where we met with patients and staff at East Surrey Hospital and also service users of the Earnsdale clinic, hearing experiences of services. We spoke with residents on Redhill high street and at the Westway Community Centre to hear stories of how Covid has impacted life locally and the vital role played by community services.

March took us to Guildford and Waverley, where we heard stories from those being supported by community organisations such as a Food Bank in Cranleigh, The Hive at Park Barn and Farncombe Day Centre. We also visited the Royal Surrey Hospital offering patients the opportunity to provide feedback. Finally, we met with the people at Zero Carbon, a community space in Guildford promoting healthy, environmentally friendly lifestyles.

Our engagement team are always on hand to provide signposting and advice, helping people get the right care at the right time.

**“Thank you engagement team. We finally feel 100% listened to and already feel so much better and calmer after to talking to you. We feel empowered to go speak to PALS and find out the next steps for our Dad.”** (East Surrey Hospital Engagement)

Our engagement continues to evolve to ensure we hear as broad a range of voices as possible. We will speak with more people who are at risk of poor health outcomes, such as those living in areas of deprivation, those with mental health conditions or with additional support needs. Over the coming months we will be visiting Surrey Downs, North West Surrey and Surrey Heath with a focus on connecting with local community organisations, reaching the stories that are seldom heard by decision-makers to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to have a say in the health and care they receive.

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

✉ [enquiries@healthwatchsurrey.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@healthwatchsurrey.co.uk)

☎ 0303 303 0023

✉ Text/SMS: 07592 78753



# Concerning themes

## Wound Care

In November we challenged the health providers of Surrey over their provision of wound care services, based on stories shared with us, making four recommendations for decision-makers to address. We have received some welcome responses to date which show how providers have acted upon these:

- Surrey and Sussex Healthcare have pledged to review their wound care pathway, with a particular focus on refreshing the supporting information given to patients
- Frimley Park are improving written information for patients issued at discharge and their wound care policies will be re-examined and renewed. Frimley are in the process of a transition to electronic patient records with a specific section dedicated to wound care planning and communication
- Ashford and St Peter's surgical matrons are in the process of updating and putting together a patient information booklet on wound care. The review of the process had been delayed by Covid and our report has prompted this process to be brought forward.





# 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. We offer an agenda-free ear for the public to tell us about their health and care experiences. The most common themes this quarter are:

## GP/Primary Care

GP services continue to be what residents talk to us about the most. We have shared these voices at the Adults and Health Select Committee, the Health and Wellbeing Board and we also continue to work with decision makers in primary care to ensure concerns are heard.

Following our involvement in a similar discussion back in the last quarter, we were once again invited to participate in a discussion on BBC Radio Surrey regarding the continued challenges with GP access. We were able to ensure local voices remain central to the conversation, while also promoting our service, to encourage people to share their story with us and reassure them there is a place to go to have their voice heard.



## Hospital Care



We continue to hear from people who are experiencing challenges due to their treatments being delayed or having to wait months following a referral. We have launched a new research project (see page 6) to better understand patients' experiences of waiting for care, and whether they are getting the information and support they need while they wait.

We continue to meet regularly with each of the providers of hospital care across Surrey to share your experiences and provide challenge where necessary.

## Dentistry

In December we published our report on [Surrey residents' struggles to access dental care](#), adding to the national voices being escalated by Healthwatch England. Since then we've continued to hear a high level of issues around access every month.

This strong case for change was answered with an additional £50 million funding made available for dental practices across England, with £6,887,000 allocated to the South East. This fund aims to support dentists to offer more appointments, particularly to focus on urgent cases, vulnerable individuals and children.

While we have noted a slight decline in the number of dentist-related experiences, we continue to hear from those who are not able to get the care they need. We continue to work closely with decision-makers in the system to ensure local voices are heard.





# Our Thematic Priorities



## Waiting well

We have launched a new survey to better understand the challenges facing people waiting for hospital treatment.

Many people are experiencing delays in their treatment due to the pandemic, and we want to know if people are receiving the right information, advice and support while they wait.

Our survey is looking to reach:

- People waiting for a hospital appointment, diagnostic test at a hospital or hospital treatment
- People who have had a planned hospital appointment, diagnostic test or treatment at a hospital since January 2021

We aim to publish our findings next quarter.

## Continuing the story

Publishing our research is only the start of the journey. We continue to share the patient voices at the heart of these reports and champion change based on what we have heard.



## Carers' experiences of hospital discharge

We have continued to escalate the challenges faced by carers, particularly family members supporting their loved ones, following a hospital discharge. More details about the organisational responses to our report can be found [on our website](#).

We have heard from those organisations that have implemented changes following our recommendations with a particular focus on getting local people's input to future services:

### Surrey County Council

- New working groups have been established to identify gaps and opportunities for improvement and crucially many of these groups will involve carers as an integral part of the conversation.

### Ashford and St Peters

- Involving carers in the design of standard operating procedure for more effective handover on discharge

### Epsom and St Helier

- Working group to improve ward-to-carer communication and ensuring unpaid carers are registered on patient records

### Frimley

- Improving communication at discharge and ensuring staff are better equipped in

identifying carers and providing them with the guidance information

### Royal Surrey Hospital

- Developing a working group to ensure carers receive a full, professional handover when patients are discharged

### Surrey and Sussex Healthcare:

- Revised carers passport and conducting carers focus groups to involve carers in the decision-making process and gain a better understanding of the information they require.

We are pleased to announce that we have been awarded the independent Giving Carers a Voice contract by Surrey County Council. This contract will enable us to engage with more unpaid carers, encouraging them to share their stories and experiences of local services with us and to involve carers in designing, developing, shaping, evaluating, and monitoring services. The focus of this work will be with carers who provide support to relatives, friends and neighbours in their own homes or in the community. We will also be working more closely with community groups who support carers and hosting specific engagement events for carers in the future.

## Dementia

We have been sharing the findings from our research into support following a dementia diagnosis. This has led to productive conversations across the health and care system regarding the future of dementia care in Surrey.

Surrey consulted with us during the drafting of their new dementia strategy and were receptive to the feedback we received through our research.

We made three recommendations to improve services for those with dementia and their families and carers:

- 1) Build access to Dementia Navigators across Surrey
- 2) Ensure community support groups are available and suitably resourced and
- 3) Empower primary care to be a more central support.

All three of our recommendations have been incorporated within the strategy and integrated into the timed action plan.

People have been sharing experiences with us that show this is not always happening.

## Accessible Information

Healthwatch England have launched a national campaign to raise the issue of accessible information provided by health and care organisations. All publicly funded health and social care providers are required by law to meet the information and communication needs of people who have a learning disability, sensory impairment or loss.

We are ensuring that this message is reinforced across Surrey and are committed to supporting all residents to receive information about their health and care in a format most appropriate to them.

We are working closely with our partner organisations such as Surrey Coalition to engage with people with support needs to understand how the system can support them better. We spoke with people being supported by the Longmead Centre and we have also been invited to their Positive Choices meeting later in the year. We will continue to explore further opportunities to connect with those in our communities who don't feel that health and care is responsive to their needs and learn how we can better amplify their voices.





## Our Volunteers

This quarter, our diverse volunteer group have been contributing to people having their voices heard in a variety of different ways. Our volunteer network continue to be our eyes and ears in the community, supporting our community engagement and keeping us informed of health and care news within their local area.

Our Strategic Influencers have been hard at work, enabling residents' voices to be heard across more of the system. Our volunteers played a vital role in providing feedback to Surrey and Sussex Healthcare who asked for our support in evaluating their wound care support leaflet. Our volunteers provided a vital patients' perspective and their detailed responses have been incorporated into the new version, to provide clearer advice to patients. The new leaflet is due to be published in April.

All the Healthwatch Surrey team wish to convey their thanks and best wishes to Barbara Smithin who is leaving us as a volunteer. Barbara has volunteered with us since Healthwatch began. Her dedication to improving local health and care services has been evident in the time she has spent championing the views of the community both across our predecessor organisations such as the Community Health Council and the Local Involvement Network and more recently as a key member of Healthwatch Surrey's Surrey Heath volunteers. Thank you Barbara. We wish you all the best for the future.





# Signposting and advice

A core part of our work is to ensure that the people who engage with us are provided with the information they require to access the health and care services that best suits to their needs.

We are always delighted to hear from people who we have helped to get the care needed for themselves or their loved ones:

'Thank you so much for your email it is very much appreciated. As much as anything, it is very frustrating when it feels like no one is listening.

Your speed and quality of response has been first class....And it has restored some of my confidence that I may be able to resolve the issue for my mum.

I am sure I will come back to you again in the future as I need more health-related information and know where to direct anyone else who needs this sort of information.'

March 2022

'Thank you so much, this information is really helpful and so very appreciated!

The service and [your advisor's] help was excellent. Thank you again. We are now better armed for any future conversations!'

January 2022.

'Thank you for your speedy reply with the information about [the local support group].

I am very impressed with the service I have received this afternoon, which is the first time I made contact after seeing the details about Healthwatch in [a local] newsletter.'

January 2022

If you need support or guidance regarding health and care services, please contact our Helpdesk:

✉ email: [enquiries@healthwatchesurrey.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@healthwatchesurrey.co.uk)

☎ Phone: 0303 303 0023

✉ SMS: 07592 787 533



# Helpdesk and Advocacy Services



This quarter **447** people have received information and advice through our Helpdesk, Citizens Advice Partners and our advocacy service.

Advocacy  
**95**

Helpdesk  
**145**

Citizens Advice  
**207**

Each quarter, our Helpdesk and NHS Complaints 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:

Fred is in his late 80s, was an inpatient at St Peter's Hospital, during which time his dentures went missing. He was discharged without them, and as a result he struggled to eat properly, losing two and half stone in the process. He had contacted a dentist for costings for replacement dentures and he was worried about the financial implications. Our Helpdesk advised Fred to contact the hospital PALS team, and gave him details regarding options for advocacy if he should choose to take the case further and complain.

### *Outcome:*

Following this advice, Fred was now liaising with PALS and given paperwork to complete once he receives the invoice from his dentist. He is now optimistic he can get his dentures replaced.

Alice discovered a lump on her breast days after turning 18. She contacted her GP who referred her on to her local hospital for an ultrasound scan. Alice went with her mum to the appointment, however on arrival she was told that she would have to go to her appointment alone and that her mum was not even permitted to sit in the waiting room. Alice was assured that the staff working that day were female and that even if male consultant was involved there would be always a chaperone present.

The consultant for Alice's appointment was male and, although there was a female nurse present during some of the time, she was left alone with the consultant whilst in a state of undress for around 5 minutes. Alice suffers from

depression and anxiety and this experience was very distressing for her. She emerged from this appointment in tears. Alice's mum complained to the staff at reception who confirmed Alice's view of events and provided details of the complaints process.

### *Outcome:*

Our Helpdesk provided Alice and her mum with details for the feedback process, recommended to speak with PALS and advised of advocacy options. They felt reassured that their voice was heard, and they were empowered as to how they could escalate their experience further.

## Advocacy

Eileen has physical and mental disabilities which mean she lacks capacity and relies on her daughter Amy to support her. Amy realised there were a number of inaccuracies on her mother's health records. In particular, there was no note of a major stroke back in 2018 and how this has impacted Eileen's quality of life. The meant that clinicians and care givers were making decisions about Eileen's care based on incorrect information.

Amy was extremely distraught at times, exhausted by everything she has been through, when all she wanted was to ensure the best and most appropriate care for her mum. Our advocate contacted Eileen's GP to highlight the concern over the medical notes. Our advocate was able to help Eileen's daughter through the whole experience.

*Outcome:*

Eileen's GP records are all now up to date and correct, so moving forward other healthcare bodies and Adult Social Care will have the full picture to ensure Eileen's needs are met. Amy was extremely grateful to our advocate for the time and effort put in to help get the medical records amended and corrected and for the emotional support throughout the whole process.

Sandra has a hearing impairment and her appointment with a GP had to be cancelled as the prearranged interpreter failed to arrive, with no prior notice of being unable to attend. This caused distress to Sandra and delays to the treatment she required. Sandra found support with the Surrey Disabled Peoples' Partnership (SDPP), who directed her to our advocacy team for advice.

Our advocate worked with Sandra and the supporting advocate from the SDPP to draft a letter to the GP to address each of the concerns.

*Outcome:*

The GP practice apologised for the inconvenience suffered by Sandra, answered her questions and offered a solution. The GP practice proposed implementing new software accessible through an app that provides real time access to an appropriate sign interpreter with GPs to receive training in the use of the new system.


*\* Names have been changed to protect identities.*




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If you need support to make a complaint about NHS care our free, independent advocacy service is provided by Surrey Independent Living Council (SILC)

**Tel:** 01483 310500

**SMS:** 07704 265377

**Email:** [nhsadvocacy@surreyilc.org.uk](mailto:nhsadvocacy@surreyilc.org.uk)

