



Quarterly Impact Report
July to September 2023



Quarterly impact report

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“Helping shape health and social care services in Surrey”

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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Highlights

Summary

106 People supported through Helpdesk

99 People supported by Advocacy

413 Hours provided by our volunteers

Priority updates:

Accessing primary care:

Learning from our insight to develop more appropriate signposting (page 6)

Mental health:

Continuing to champion the voices of young people and families following our neurodiversity project (page 8)

Social care:

Revisiting what we heard during our Enter and View visits to care homes across Surrey (page 10)

Involvement of people:

We met with people at three hospital engagements to talk about how people give feedback about services (page 12)

Information and signposting

Helpdesk

Our Helpdesk is regularly contacted by people across Surrey who are looking for advice or support, who we then are able to signpost to the appropriate services. We do sometimes hear more concerning experiences that require immediate action. Our aim is to ensure that services are alerted and are able to communicate directly with the people involved and ensure they are being appropriately supported.

The following experience highlights how raising challenges through people's experiences also enables service providers to reflect on where they can improve the care they provide.

Stella's story

Stella* was experiencing the symptoms of an infection she has had previously, however due to her suppressed immune system, and the pain she was experiencing, this led her to contact NHS 111 for help. NHS 111 advised her that her nearest urgent treatment centre had reached capacity so she should need to drive for 25 minutes to the next available centre.

When she reached that centre, Stella was told this centre had also reached capacity. She took the tests and, when seen by a nurse, she was told they couldn't prescribe antibiotics because of her suppressed immune system. The urgent treatment centre advised her to go to accident and emergency instead.

Stella then went to accident and emergency, where she had a further 3 hour wait and a repeat of all the tests. The receptionist then told Stella that she could have just walked into hospital and did not need to contact 111 first.

Outcome:

Our Helpdesk advisor contacted the Practice Plus Group, who run the NHS 111 service in Surrey, to clarify the information Stella had been provided and the patient experience team requested Stella's details so they could investigate further.

The Practice Plus Group then contacted Stella, apologising for her poor experience and to inform they have started an investigation to understand

what improvements can be made. They also provided some advice to Stella regarding support she can get from her GP to continue her care.

"I just wanted to thank you for your help in ensuring my voice has been heard....I am completely blown away, not only by the swift action but the excellent resolution."

Email to Helpdesk, September 2023

* Names have been changed.

If you have an experience to share, contact our Helpdesk via:

Phone: 0303 303 0023

SMS: 07592 787533

Email: enquiries@healthwatchesurrey.co.uk

Website feedback form:

<https://www.healthwatchesurrey.co.uk/feedback-centre/>

Collaborative working in the community

Our job as Healthwatch is to seek out local people's experiences of health and care services, and we have a particular interest in reaching people who might not otherwise have their voices heard. One way we do this is to partner with local community groups and organisations so that we can chat to people using their services. This enables us to encourage more people to feed back to Healthwatch as their local health and care champion; it enables us to signpost people to much-needed local support services; and it also offers an opportunity for community organisations to escalate any concerns they might have and to be connected to other services.

We have visited libraries across Surrey this quarter and met with a wide range of people using their services. Working closely with libraries has enabled us to develop a greater understanding of the services they offer and their central role within communities, helping us to offer improved information and signposting to those we meet. The libraries have been supportive of our visits and our events have increased awareness of Healthwatch Surrey with residents and frontline staff, meaning more people are able to share feedback about health and care services.

We have also developed stronger relationships with communities across Surrey, learning about different needs in different areas and adjusting our signposting accordingly. Working with people and organisations working closely with communities ensures that people who are less well heard are able to access support and have the opportunity to have their voices heard.

In North West Surrey we learned, through our existing relationships with local community workers in Sheerwater, that there was a need for more support and advice for unpaid carers. This led to introducing our colleagues, Giving Carers a Voice, who were invited to a local group.

Our partnerships with both the community workers and other services such as Giving Carers a Voice enable us to connect communities we otherwise may not have heard from and provide them with the information and advice that they need. These connections also create further opportunities for people to learn about Healthwatch Surrey and inform them about further opportunities for help and support.

Our priority areas

Access to primary care (GP services, pharmacists; dentists and ophthalmology)

This quarter we have shared what we've heard about primary care services in senior decision-making meetings across Surrey. We presented experiences at [Surrey Heartlands Primary Care Commissioning Committee](#) and the [Frimley Primary Care Board and Surrey Heath Primary Care Operational Group](#). We shared the frustrations felt by many people regarding the barriers accessing a GP appointment as well as the increasing challenges in access to medications through community pharmacies.

With these experiences in mind, we're working improve the information and signposting given to people across Surrey, to enable them to get the best out of primary care. As part of this aim, we attended a training session on the NHS App in June 2023 and have since put this training into practice by demonstrating how to use it to local people. During our engagements at Guildford Veterans Hub and Holy Trinity Food Club, we were able to demonstrate the NHS App and encourage people to actively download the

app, there and then. These conversations supported people with access to the appropriate technology, to learn about new ways to communicate with health services and manage their care.

During these conversations, we also heard that some people experienced barriers in using online access routes. We continue to share these experiences with the Surrey Heartlands primary care team at their monthly access meetings. Part of the vision of this meeting is: 'For all citizens to receive equitable access into primary care regardless of the way they choose to access it, whether digitally, via phone or in person...'. At these meetings, we highlight when this is working and when it is not which enables the primary care team to take action. For example, the experiences we have shared have recently informed advice and support provided to GP practices through their regular primary care newsletter as well as dedicated visits to practices to discuss where improvements could be made.

We have continued to work closely with the Surrey Heartlands primary care team in other ways as well. In July we presented to the Heads of Primary Care about our work, and in September we began to further develop relationships with Primary Care Networks (PCNs) across Surrey, which will continue throughout the rest of the year. By engaging with the PCNs, we are then able to offer local level information and signposting, helping the people we meet to get the most out of using their GP practice. This is helping to promote Healthwatch Surrey in communities across the county and also to help us better understand what services are on offer in each community to improve the advice we provide.

Mental health

Working together to improve support for children and young people

Earlier this year, our Community Cash Fund awarded over £12,000 to community organisations supporting children and young people across Surrey. In August, we visited two of these organisations, Matrix Trust at the Hideaway Café in Guildford and Twister LGBT+ group in Woking to learn more about the support they offer and to hear from young people themselves about how these organisations help them.

We shared [what we heard](#) with a new Mindworks and User Voice Partnership

forum. This group allows people working for a range of services supporting children and young people such as YMCA, Family Voice, National Autistic Society and Surrey Youth Focus to discuss what challenges are facing young people in accessing mental health and emotional wellbeing services.

The messages we heard from children and young people helped develop some suggested actions that have been shared with the quality group within the Mindworks Alliance, which can hopefully lead to improvements in services. We will be looking to visit other Community Cash Fund winners in the near future, to continue to offer children and young people an opportunity to be heard.

Neurodiversity support for children

We published our report [Neurodiversity - the hidden value of diagnosis](#) in children and young people in March 2023, where we identified opportunities to help support families across Surrey. The report called on organisations to continue to listen to families waiting for referrals or diagnosis and work with them to develop support that meets their wider needs. We suggested that working closer with schools and empowering community groups would increase the support available.

In September, Healthwatch Surrey attended an event which involved a variety of organisations who support children and families, including schools, local authority and mental health services to respond to and discuss the challenges being experienced by families accessing diagnoses for neurodiversity.

This event has enabled us to continue to raise awareness of the experiences we shared in our report; to develop our relationships with decision-makers across a variety of organisations and learn about future opportunities to involve people in services.

Connecting people with services

In July and August, our Helpdesk heard from increasing numbers of people experiencing serious mental ill health, particularly from people who were left confused by the information being provided by community mental health recovery services.

We have shared what we've heard with the patient experience team at Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Trust and discussed what further support could be available. We were also offered the opportunity to connect the people we have heard from with the relevant service leads, providing them with a chance to discuss what they would like to improve about services and offer opportunities for services to learn and develop for future people accessing them.

Signposting for men's mental health

Throughout July and August, we have developed new relationships with organisations working across Surrey to learn about new services supporting men with mental health challenges.

We met with a wide range of services including Andy's Man Club in Woking, who have a face-to-face meeting on Monday evenings in Woking, Mentell who provide a virtual forum also on Monday evenings and with Men in Sheds and the variety of community sheds across Surrey which provide places for people to meet. We have strengthened our knowledge of the support each of these services offer and in turn shared details about our own services and how we can help people access the care they need.

We have supported the establishment of a new collaborative forum to bring together the above organisations, along with representatives from Surrey County Council and healthcare providers to explore opportunities to collaborate to better understand the challenges and start to offer solutions. This work will look to improve mental health outcomes for people identified as most at-risk following information from the suicide prevention strategy, namely men working in construction or from a Gypsy Roma Traveller background.

Engaging with communities

We were contacted by a community engagement officer at Runnymede Borough Council to highlight the challenges experienced by local residents in accessing appropriate mental health support. They raised that there were limited services available locally requiring people to travel to Woking or Epsom to get the care they require.

We visited a community group in Addlestone, which had been set up

through social prescribing to provide a social space for people who may be experiencing mental health needs to discuss the challenges that had been raised. We discussed the remit of Healthwatch Surrey and discussed the difficulties in getting support.

Following this meeting, we have connected the group with the HOMEFirst team, who are looking to work with residents to better understand complex mental illness and how services can provide better support to prevent hospital admissions. The HOMEFirst team are keen to engage with the group and look to learn from the insights they can provide.

Social care

Enter and View Programme

Healthwatch have a legal power to visit health and social care services and see them in action. This power to Enter and View services offers a way for Healthwatch Surrey to meet people within health and care settings and allows us to identify what is working well with services and where they could be improved.

We identified that Healthwatch Surrey have not heard from many care home residents or their families so we set out to visit care homes across Surrey and find out about what opportunities exist for people and families to provide feedback.

We recently published a [summary of our Enter and View Programme](#), which asked whether people, their families and carers felt they had a voice in their care. Between May 2022 and March 2023, our staff and volunteers made Enter and View visits to 7 care homes. We also ran an accompanying survey to hear from residents and carers about their experiences and how they share feedback.

During our Enter and View visits, we found that there were many different ways for people to provide feedback across the care homes, such as residents' meetings, suggestion boxes, surveys, and an iPad at reception. Many care homes told us that they had an 'open door' policy and residents and family member were welcome to talk to staff at any time. Our survey revealed that two thirds of respondents (families and carers) were very confident they would know how to raise a complaint and who to raise it with.

Self-funders survey

Our Enter and View visits have given us more insight into care home services in Surrey and enabled us to have more conversations with the social care team about how we can provide better support to people and their families. These conversations led to Surrey County Council (SCC) approaching Healthwatch Surrey to help improve their understanding of how people in Surrey plan financially for their care. This will help to understand the impact of a planned communications campaign aimed at people funding their own care in the care market. The objective of the campaign is to help self-funders make the right decision about their future care. We will initially carry out the survey in the next quarter followed up a year later to show whether any measures have changed.

This project will also enable us to continue to develop the work we started with our Enter and View visits. In addition to talking to people about how they plan for their care, we will also be able to discuss the quality of services they currently access, providing further opportunities for improvements.

Access to Care Act Advocacy

Last quarter we reported on the increase in the number of people contacting our information and signposting service looking for support in making complaints about their care arrangements. We heard that people were confused about the advocacy services available in Surrey and the information available about them was unclear. We also heard from our colleagues in other voluntary sector organisations that they were hearing similar experiences, with people with disabilities particularly at risk of falling between the gaps of available services as they may not have met the criteria to access support.

We have shared our concerns, and those of our voluntary sector colleagues, about the availability of suitable advocacy support and have met with a commissioner of the advocacy services. We have received a response to our concerns as well as gaining a better understanding of arrangements and some of the challenges associated with this. We aim to work more closely with providers and the commissioner of advocacy services in order to provide better support to residents of Surrey who need it. This will also help us to improve the support we offer to people, and that services can improve as a result of person-centred listening.

Carers experience of hospital discharge

In summer 2021, we published a report, in partnership with Action for Carers Surrey, addressing [Carers' experiences of hospital discharge](#). We made recommendations on how service providers could improve their support to carers and in doing so enable a safe discharge and avoid repeat admission to hospital. Two of the recommendations that we made were:

1. Proactively identify patients who rely on unpaid carers. Recognise carers may be unregistered/unacknowledged. Record a key contact for every patient and focus communication through that contact.
2. Review practices and processes that govern hospital-carer communications. Take the opportunity to develop new, post-Covid strategies that cover all touchpoints.

Recently we have heard from carers who have raised concerns around a lack of involvement and communication with them whilst those they care for are inpatients in hospital. We have shared these concerns with the provider along with a reminder of our other work in this area in order to ensure that carers' needs are being met. We will continue to work with the provider to identify how to provide better information and support to carers.

Getting carers fully involved in the discharge process is vital both to ensuring the carer is supported to play their role effectively and safely; and to ensure that the patient is well looked after, and won't need to go back into hospital. In order to reinforce the importance of carer involvement in the discharge process, we intend to remind other providers in Surrey of the importance of the recommendations that we have previously made. We will report on this next quarter.

Involvement of people

Providing feedback to hospitals

The role of Healthwatch is to ensure that people can have their voices heard by health and social care services. There are many ways in which people can share feedback about services, however our insights told us that people have not heard of common feedback options such as the Friends and Family Test or that they can feedback through Healthwatch. In order to better

understand why, we are visiting each of the hospitals in Surrey to find out what people understand about how to give feedback on their care and if there are ways that current options for providing feedback can be improved.

We visited Royal Surrey County Hospital in July, St Peter's Hospital and Ashford Hospital in August and Epsom Hospital in September. We have also heard experiences about feedback during our other engagements in community settings.

After each hospital visit, we will share a report with details of what we heard and provide recommendations on how to improve feedback. The [Royal Surrey County Hospital Report](#) is the first to be published where we made the following recommendation:

'We recommend that Royal Surrey Hospital review how they communicate with patients, their families and carers about the available means to provide feedback and complaints. We suggest that the importance of feedback is highlighted to encourage more people to share their view whether positive or negative, and people are provided with clearer information about the range of opportunities to provide feedback including PALS, the Friends and Family Test and independent options such as Healthwatch Surrey.'

We shared the report with the recommendation with Royal Surrey and received the following response:

"May I also take this opportunity to thank you and the team for the exceptionally comprehensive report on St Luke's OPD and Radiotherapy. It is giving the team lots of ideas for improvement and as supported wider patient experience work around Friend and Family Test.

Honestly the partnership working on this is a breath of fresh air and so hugely helpful."

We will continue this project into the next quarter with visits to Frimley Park Hospital in October and East Surrey Hospital in November. We will discuss our

individual visits with each of the respective organisations and, once we have done this, we aim to produce a summary of our overall findings and recommendations.

Involving local people in patient safety incident investigations

NHS England have made changes to their guidance for reporting of serious incidents to ensure that people are listened to during investigations regarding their care. This new model is known as the Patient Safety Incident Response Framework (PSIRF).

Healthwatch Surrey were asked to comment on First Community Health and Care's proposal for their PSIRF plan. Our volunteers, Sarah Ghotra and Jane Owens, read the draft and provided some constructive feedback.

The follow up meeting with quality leads was productive. They were grateful for our feedback and addressed each of the points we made. They have said they'll look to redraft sections of the plan to make the involvement of people more explicit as well as addressing where training for staff will help to support people to be included regardless of their access needs. We also discussed including working with other organisations to help connect with communities that would otherwise not have their voices heard and their communications team are looking into how they might publish the document in Easy Read.

Involving local people in the ambulance service

Three of our volunteers attended a South East Coast Ambulance NHS Foundation Trust (SECAMB) focus group in July. This session involved a discussion around how SECAMB should communicate with patients when they are experiencing delays due to service pressure and was facilitated by their Deputy Director for Quality Improvement.

Following this focus group, SECAMB have asked for further volunteer support from Healthwatch Surrey for other patient focussed groups they are holding in the future.

Tackling health inequalities

Reaching new audiences

Healthwatch Surrey staff and volunteers have been engaged in a variety of events over the past quarter to raise awareness of our services and find new opportunities to engage with communities across Surrey. We were invited to talk about the work of Healthwatch Surrey to various groups such as the St John Ambulance service, the Macular Society and the Reigate and Banstead Older People's Forum.

Our staff and volunteers supported a variety of community events across Surrey where we were able to engage with over 500 people. We invited people to provide their feedback on our priorities and vote on which area was most important to them.

These events included a day at Burpham Wellfest, an event designed to promote a wide range of health and wellbeing organisations, and which enabled us to make some new connections.

We have continued to build on our good relationships with hospital providers, supporting community open days at both St Peter's Hospital and Royal Surrey County Hospital, meeting over 200 people. We attended freshers' events taking place at East Surrey College and Royal Holloway University, promoting our service but also talking about opportunities to volunteer with us.

We will continue our awareness raising next quarter beginning with events at Ashford Hospital and Surrey University.

Working closely with communities

Healthwatch Surrey are committed to working closer with communities across Surrey to provide as many opportunities as possible for voices to be heard. We have also sought to build relationships with community leaders and identify opportunities to work together to both promote Healthwatch Surrey and identify new places to engage and hear voices less well heard by health and care services.

We have been working with Surrey's Community Link Officers (CLO) who are based in each borough. In Surrey Downs, we invited the local CLO to join us

at a listening event:

"I was invited to attend Healthwatch Surrey's engagement session at Roots Café, in Epsom Methodist Church, last week, as an opportunity to engage with Epsom residents in my new role as a Community Link Officer (CLO) for Surrey County Council. I would firstly like to commend the Healthwatch Surrey team for their warm welcome and help throughout the session. Accompanying Healthwatch Surrey was a valuable opportunity for myself as a CLO. CLO's are tasked with deepening conversations with residents, in order to identify strengths and areas for improvement in the community. Healthwatch Surrey's engagement consequently offered an insightful springboard to discuss people's experiences with health/social care in Epsom and Ewell and open up new dialogue that I may not have branched into otherwise. This engagement, in turn, has led to building on new ideas to better the community. As well as speaking with residents, it was also a valuable experience talking with the staff and volunteers about their experiences. They were evidently passionate about their work, which is always inspiring to see, and offered an informative perspective of the health and social care landscape in Surrey. Overall, I am grateful to Healthwatch Surrey for allowing me to attend their session and would jump at the chance to support them again."

Epsom and Ewell, Community Link Officer.

VCSE Voice Group

We host a monthly meeting with our colleagues from other voluntary sector organisations to provide opportunities to work together and create more opportunities for the voices of all Surrey residents to be heard.

Healthwatch Surrey have facilitated opportunities for decision makers from Surrey County Council and Surrey Heartlands Integrated Care Board to discuss some of the ways in which Surrey residents can be involved in developing services.

In July, we invited Liz Patroe, Associate Director of Patient Experience and Partnerships for Surrey Heartlands to the Voice Group to discuss the supporting of the Accessible Information Standard (AIS). This was to discuss the Integrated Care System's responsibilities and to hear the experiences of people who require additional support to access health and care services

and to discuss the importance of having accessible information available for all people.

We have now been invited to attend a meeting in November with Liz Patroe, along with other VCSE organisations and NHS partners to discuss implementing the Accessible Information Standard across Surrey Heartlands.

For our August Voice Group meeting we met with Louis Hall, from Surrey County Council who is leading the development of Surrey's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), a document which provides detail of the population of Surrey and provides the starting point for future commissioning decisions about health and care services. This discussion focussed on how we can champion more people's voices in future additions to the JSNA to ensure that commissioning of services is responsive to people needs.

The meeting regarding the JSNA sparked further discussions with some of the voice group going on to have further conversations with the public health team. Marie Curie challenged why there isn't currently a chapter for end-of-life care which is now leading to further discussions on how to include this important information.

Independent Health Complaints Advocacy

In circumstances where people wish to complain about a health service, we provide free advocacy support in partnership with Surrey Independent Living Charity to ensure people are supported to navigate the NHS complaints process.

We continue to champion the importance of people being able to access their right to complain if they chose to and our advocates provide vital support to enable people to raise concerns about their care and provide opportunities for organisations to change their practice.

Amelia's experience

Amelia* was taken to her GP practice by the police after being found in a suicidal state. She then found comments made by her GP highly inappropriate and uncaring. Despite having been with the surgery for many

years, her GP had no knowledge of her and her mental health issues. Amelia attempted to resolve the situation with her GP informally and her contact with the practice manager left her feeling very distressed.

She contacted our advocate for help who explained the complaints process and talked about her preferred methods of communication, and at a pace that Amelia was happy with. Amelia worked together with the advocate to produce a complaint letter that was submitted to the practice to investigate.

The practice provided their response following their investigation and offered a local resolution meeting.

Outcome

Amelia was supported by our advocate to form an agenda for the meeting and the advocate also supported her during the meeting. Amelia was able to convey her feelings about how the incident had affected her, and the GP made a sincere apology for his comments.

Amelia was satisfied the meeting had resolved her complaint and very appreciative of the support that was provided to her. She expressed that she would never have been able to go through the process without the support the advocacy service had given her.

* Names have been changed to protect identities.

Need help to make a complaint?

If you live in Surrey and are unhappy with the NHS treatment you have received, our Independent Health Complaints Advocacy service can provide free, confidential and independent support to help you to make a complaint. This is provided in partnership with SILC (Surrey Independent Living Charity).

Contact the team via:

Phone: 01483 310 500

Text (SMS): 07704 265 377

Email: nhsadvocacy@surreyilc.org.uk

Website: www.surreyilc.org.uk

Healthwatch Surrey – Contact us

Website: www.healthwatchsurrey.co.uk

Phone: 0303 303 0023

Text/SMS: 07592 787533

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