



Quarterly impact report October to December 2023

Helping shape health and social care services in Surrey

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Quarter overview

Part of the Healthwatch Surrey vision is "to have the relationships and structure in place to enable us to be trusted by all of our stakeholders, allowing us to collect experiences from local people and feed it back to the relevant parts of the system. We will be persistent in seeking outcomes and measuring our impact." Our work this quarter particularly demonstrates how we are delivering on this part of our vision by building trust and relationships in the community, effectively feeding back, and achieving outcomes for local people.

We have built trust and respect in the community which allows us to really listen to experiences from local people and provide them with information and support that they need. This quarter this is evidenced in our work Connecting communities with support as well as through Supporting the use of the NHS App and Connecting with children and young people.

Through our work with local people and communities, we are able to feed back what really matters to them and their first-hand experiences to the relevant parts of the system, ensuring people's experiences are considered as part of improvements across health and social care in Surrey. We have shared some examples of how we have done this and what we have achieved this quarter; from championing the experiences of those struggling with access to their GP and ensuring that there is no one left behind, to a number of ways we are making sure that decision making about health and care services truly values the involvement of people all the while shaping a positive listening culture.

The quarter in numbers

105 People supported through our Helpdesk

100 People supported by our Independent Health Complaints Advocacy Service

463 Hours provided by our volunteers

612 Stakeholders signed up to receive our Insight bulletin



Information and signposting

Helpdesk

Our Helpdesk advisors have been hearing from people across Surrey about the challenges accessing the care that they require. We have heard from people experiencing barriers with accessing appointments and finding the information provided on GP practice websites to be inconsistent and sometimes misleading.

Healthwatch Surrey have escalated these challenges to service providers, such as the ones noted below, to help ensure that positive changes to improve services for others in future are built on the feedback local people share with us.

Dee's experience

Dee tried to book a GP appointment with their GP Practice.

The GP practice website instructed them that they should book appointments through the NHS App. However, when they tried to do this, the APP said that they cannot book appointments online.

They then rang the practice and were told that they can't book appointments on the App, but only by contacting the surgery direct. Dee shared this experience with Healthwatch and we asked the local primary care team to investigate.

Outcome:

The primary care team have liaised with the practice involved to help them ensure their website is up to date. The feedback will also be shared with NHS England to help in their continued development of the App to improve the use for future patients.

Jack's experience

Jack had requested an appointment with a GP through his GP practice's website. He finds it difficult to talk about personal issues so asked for a face-to-face appointment as he felt more comfortable speaking this way.. He was then offered a telephone appointment for a date and time that he couldn't make and had specified so in his online request. Jack went in person to his GP practice to clarify the situation. When he spoke to the receptionist, he



was told that they could not make a face-to-face appointment at the reception and that he would need to call. He later called the practice and was informed that it was practice policy not to book face-to-face appointments in the first instance. He contacted our Helpdesk to ask for advice.

Outcome:

Our advisor provided Jack with information about his rights to request a face-to-face appointment and suggested he could request to speak with a practice manager about his appointment. The following day he contacted the GP practice again and was able to book a face-to-face appointment.

We have shared this experience with the primary care team in the area, who have agreed that there were some errors and inconsistencies in the information that Jack was given. The Primary Care lead for the area is now in contact with the practice to ensure that all their staff are aware of their processes and to be clear what they can offer to patients.

* Names have been changed.

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

Phone: 0303 303 0023 **SMS:** 07592 787533

Email: enquiries@healthwatchsurrey.co.uk

Website feedback form:

https://www.healthwatchsurrey.co.uk/feedback-centre/

Connecting communities with support

Healthwatch Surrey visits community places across Surrey in order to meet with people, hear about experiences with health and care and also to provide advice and information on what services people can access and what support is available to them. We focus on visiting places where we can meet people whose voices are less well heard and who may be at risk of health inequalities.

We attended Hilary's Hut, a social group for the over 45s in Staines in



October. While we were there, an older resident told us about the difficulties she was having with her first-floor accommodation, due to her mobility issues. We raised this with the group leader and put her in touch with the strategic lead for independent living at Spelthorne Borough Council (SBC). The group leader planned to invite the independent living lead to an information session being held at Hilary's Hut in February which means that more people will be connected to the vital support that they need to be able to live independently for longer which directly supports adult social care's Living Well in Later Life Older People's Commissioning Strategy 2021 to 2030.

Another example of working in partnership with other organisations to help support communities most at risk is our visit to Renewed Hope in Redhill, a charity who support people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. This visit was arranged in conjunction with Alliance for Better Care who provided free health checks and covid vaccinations. An engagement officer from our Combatting Drugs Public Involvement Service who was on hand to provide more dedicated support for people receiving support for substance use. We were able to have conversations with people about their health and wellbeing, and in doing so directly signpost them to either the health checks or to dedicated substance use support. The team from Alliance for Better Care were very pleased with our support in enabling more people to have a health check which plays a vital role in supporting people to live healthier lives in Surrey as well as supporting the Surrey Heartlands integrated care strategy.

"I found working with you very enlightening and you kept identifying people who wanted health or wellbeing checks. That young man was very appreciative of everything you had discussed with him and in the end he felt supported. Love the work being done by Healthwatch Surrey, would love to see you all in action more." Alliance for Better Care

We have also continued our campaign to raise awareness of the services Healthwatch Surrey provide at events across Surrey. The impact of greater awareness is that more people are able to receive the support, signposting and information that they need as well as getting their stories heard.



We were pleased to be invited to have a stall at the Ashford Hospital Community Day. Our presence not only helps raise awareness to members of the public about what we do, but also to front line members of hospital staff, where we can explain the importance of people having the option to provide feedback to an independent organisation.

Following on from previous attendances at various sixth form college and university fresher's fairs, we also spent an incredibly busy 3 hours at the University of Surrey part time work fair, speaking to 247 students about volunteering opportunities as well as raising awareness about our work. As a result of this day, we were contacted by several students interested in volunteering with us.

We have also been invited back to East Surrey College in Redhill, collaborating with their careers service and teaching staff to encourage students to volunteer with us. This work will continue into next quarter with workshops at the college planned to demonstrate the depth of volunteering opportunities that students can get involved in.

Making every contact count (MECC)

We are continually looking to evolve and improve how we can enable people to have a voice in health and care services. In Summer 2023, 2 of our staff attended "train the trainer" sessions on 'Making Every Contact Count' (MECC), to understand how the techniques and advice within this national programme could help support the work of Healthwatch Surrey. MECC is a national initiative which takes a behavioural approach to opening up everyday conversations to help people live well and manage their own health and wellbeing. The programme is specifically focused on preventative support, to empower people to make lifestyle changes to avoid the need for future health or care interventions in line with the Surrey Health and Well-Being Strategy's priority to support people to lead healthy lives by preventing physical ill health and promoting physical wellbeing.

In November we held our first MECC training course, providing insights into the barriers we might face in helping people make positive decisions about their health, and how we might be able to identify more opportunities within our work to help guide people to preventative support. The impact of this is that when we are talking to local people, we are more empowered to



encourage people to make healthy choices and access early support, preventing the need for more acute interventions later on. We will continue to empower our volunteers and, armed with this training, to further encourage them to have conversations within their own communities to help encourage more people to access early support.

Our priorities

We are currently working on a number of priority areas, where we are dedicating much of our work with local communities and the system. More information can be found on our website: <u>Our priorities</u>. <u>Our reports</u> section on our website is regularly updated with the latest insight and reports that we publish about each of these issues.

Access to primary care

Supporting the use of the NHS App

This year we have also been learning about the growing importance of the NHS App to improve access and overall experience of NHS services. Our community engagement team have encouraged more than 50 people to download and use the app this quarter which means that they are able to book appointments and order repeat prescriptions at a time that is convenient to them. It also means that they no longer have to arrange this via a telephone call to their practice, meaning that there is greater availability for those who are not able to or choose not to manage their care through the app. In addition to enabling people to use the app, we also share people's experiences of using the app with local decision makers to enable them to better understand how it is operating in reality.

"It used to be really easy to book my appointments via the NHS app but it kicked me out recently and I just ended up getting rid of the app I didn't re download it but I'll definitely re download it now after our chat."

In addition to having an impact locally, we also supported the Patients Association's national survey on people's experiences of using the NHS App. This aimed at encouraging more people to have their say and be involved in future developments of the app helping to ensure that those who will use and benefit from the service have a say in how it works.



No one left behind

Whilst we are supporting those who can and choose to access healthcare digitally through the NHS App and GP websites, we have also been ensuring that those who aren't able to easily access what they need are listened to. We continue to visit community settings specifically to listen to those who need support, to ensure that they are still able to get the healthcare that they need. One example of this is our visit to the Guildford Hongkongers group, and we would like to thank them and all of their members for sharing their stories with us. The Hongkongers are a peer support group aimed at supporting residents of Guildford and Waverley who are originally from Hong Kong. We were able to find a translator to accompany our visit, however, we heard that it can be difficult to get translation support and people often have to rely on family members. We made a recommendation to the Guildford and Waverley Alliance that information about local services is made available in Cantonese in order to help this community understand and access services more easily. The Alliance responded to tell us that they will continue to raise awareness of the translation support with practices in the area so that they can share that information with their patients, which in turn ensures that they have equitable access to the service.

At the Surrey Heartlands Access Board, we also raised three examples of people being denied temporary registration at a GP. We had helped signpost each of these people to get the registration needed but felt it was also important to share with Surrey Heartlands so that they can address the issue more broadly and ensure that other people do not experience the same problem. They committed to clarify the contractual obligations as well as confirming sensible working practice to then formulate a message to all practices about how they should respond to temporary registration requests, meaning that patients should now receive a consistent response across Surrey Heartlands and not be unfairly denied access.

Mental health

Shaping a positive listening culture

One of the key themes within mental health experiences across the past 12 months has been that people haven't felt listened to by services that support them. We have been working closely with Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust to improve this. The trust introduced a new



'learning from experience' forum to bring together service leads from across the organisation to discuss what they're hearing through feedback and complaints and how services are responding to this.

In October, we met with the Patient Experience Lead for Surrey and Borders to discuss how we could help shape the forum to better incorporate the voices of people who use the service, along with their families and carers. We proposed to place Healthwatch Surrey and our colleagues from the voluntary sector at the start of the agenda to ensure that the voices of people are a focus point for all conversations.

December saw the first meeting with the new format, proving a more positive and constructive conversation. Service leads for the learning disability and autism service were keen to work closer with Healthwatch Surrey and our voluntary sector colleagues to learn how they could increase the feedback they receive, so they can continue to improve services in line with people's needs. We have arranged to meet with the service leads in early January to discuss how Healthwatch Surrey can support this.

Improving preventative advice and signposting

Our past work with mental health has highlighted the importance of early intervention and prevention, with people telling us that they find it difficult to access the right information. Our report on Waiting for Hospital Care recommended that services provide better support to help people manage their conditions and ensure they remain as well as possible during their wait, with mental health being significantly impacted by long waiting lists.

We attended a Cancer Wellness event at the Macmillan centre at East Surrey Hospital to provide information and advice to people receiving cancer treatment, along with their carers and families, to help support their wellbeing. This event enabled Healthwatch Surrey to both promote the information and signposting we can offer to help people access support, but also to connect with a wide range of organisations working closely with communities such as the British Red Cross and Breast Cancer Now. We are then able to improve the signposting we provide by learning more about unique programmes of support specifically tailored to supporting the mental wellbeing of people being supported for cancer.



Social care

A sound understanding of social care services means our support to service users improves

One of our aims under our social care priority is to continually improve our knowledge of the sector and in turn the support, information and advice that we provide to Surrey residents who need to know about adult social care services. In October, the Quality Assurance Lead for Adult social care (ASC) helped us towards achieving this goal by leading our whole team lunch and learn session. He gave us a whistle stop tour of how the ASC team at Surrey County Council is organised, what the Quality Assurance team look for in older people's services, and the issues around supported and independent living accommodation, many of which are not registered. The impact of this is that we as an organisation have a better collective understanding of the expectations of the quality of services and are therefore, providing those who we speak to about services with the best information and advice.

<u>Giving Carers a Voice</u> were also part of the session and often hear from carers about supported living settings. They told us:

"It was useful to be able to report these issues directly and the Quality Assurance Lead was able to explain how the council would go about tackling these issues and how we could raise any concerns with him directly.

I find meeting face to face so very useful and positive. It's easier to bring up difficult issues when the person is in the room with you".

Social Care's service user listening is strengthened

Over the past 18 months we have met with the team overseeing the older people's care homes closure at Surrey County Council to discuss ways of involving people in the process. We were asked to contribute early on in the project which meant we had an opportunity to really make a difference. We said that it was important for people to have a range of options on how to share both positive and negative experiences relating to the closures and that regular communication would be very important. We met again this quarter at the end of the project and heard that our contribution had ensured that people were given plenty of opportunities to raise any



concerns or share any feedback and results from their own survey work reflected that people overall felt well informed during the process.

Involvement of people

Supporting equity of listening- ensuring people are heard in ways that work for them

Championing public and user involvement in decision making and design of services, is a core part of the Healthwatch Surrey remit. We have been visiting hospitals across Surrey to advise people about the opportunities that are available for them to have their voices heard. We were also keen to learn how services could help provide better advice and guidance about the methods available for people to share feedback, the support available for concerns they have about their care or provide clearer information about making a complaint.

Last quarter we visited Royal Surrey County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, Ashford and St. Peter's Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and Epsom and St Helier and each of our reports for these are available on <u>our website</u>. In October and November, our staff and volunteers visited Frimley Park Hospital and East Surrey Hospital to continue to raise awareness of opportunities to feed back and to hear about what improvements could be made.

What we heard was similar in theme to what we heard at previous hospitals. We found that people were generally happy to give feedback but weren't fully aware of how they could do this. Few people had heard of Patient Advisory Liaison Services and what they can support with. Few people had heard of Healthwatch Surrey, so we were also able to promote our service and provide details of our Helpdesk should people require any future advice or information.

We shared our findings and made recommendations to each of the hospital trusts. Individual reports and responses from the trusts can be found on our Involvement of people reports section of our website. Each hospital trust identified areas where they can improve to better enable their patients to share feedback on services which will in turn be used to make improvements to local services for the people of Surrey:



"We have identified the need to improve patient feedback, and this is a Quality Initiative that is reviewed at the bi-monthly Quality of Care Committee... Patients and visitors are being surveyed about feedback via a questionnaire, which is being conducted face-to-face by Trust volunteers. The topic of feedback and Viewpoint will be covered in the patient experience themes workshop scheduled for 21 February 2024. This event will be facilitated by a senior member of staff from the Trust's Quality team. We are committed to improving the number of patients who have the opportunity to feedback, and this will remain a priority going forward."

Ashford and St. Peter's Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

"We acknowledge there is currently a gap in provision of promoting the Friends and Family Test and Your Care Matters around the hospital for patients, carers and visitors. Our patient experience team are currently working on developing a new poster campaign across the hospital which will be fully implemented by the end of [January]."

East Surrey Hospital (Surrey and Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust)

"...We will review the location of posters with QR codes and staff will be reminded to signpost patients....Patient leaflets for PALS ...will be reviewed and in the interim current leaflets to the out-patients area will be provided in outpatients. We have recently improved our Friends and Family Test posters to include QR codes to try and encourage ease of access for patients to provide feedback about their care and there has been focused training for the inpatient areas to support staff and there are plans to move onto to out-patient areas to replicate this.

A programme of poster campaigns is planned to avoid poster fatigue and they will review how the impact of feedback can be displayed outside of inpatient areas to encourage patients to let us know about their experience."

Epsom Hospital (Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust)

"The event provided a useful insight into the understanding of our service users in providing feedback to our organisation. We have recently reinstated the voicemail facility in the PALS office for when the phone lines are busy so that a message can be left



for a member of the team to respond when they're available.

The Friends and Family Test is used widely throughout the hospital and we are currently working with our digital colleagues to reinstate the delivery of this by text message which is popular with service users. It was pleasing to hear that our patients are preferring digital technology to manage their interactions with the hospital, and the MyFrimleyHealth Record App is a huge step in advancing our digital capability.

We continue to proactively seek feedback from patients through local patient experience surveys as well as participating in several national annual surveys. To hear that people felt their experience could be improved with better communication and appointment systems, is consistent with the themes from other sources of feedback and we have already started work to improve these areas.

We want to make it as easy as possible for patients, carers and visitors to give us feedback about their experience, so we are making sure there is information available around the hospital signposting people how to give feedback. We are also reviewing our website so that people can easily navigate their way to a feedback page to share their experiences with us and learn about how we're listening to and acting on feedback. There is also an updated announcement going on Frimley Radio to encourage people to give feedback and know how they can do this."

Frimley Park Hospital (Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust)

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

St. Luke's Cancer Centre (Royal Surrey County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust)



Learning and improving by involving people

Healthwatch Surrey recognise that all feedback, whether it be concerns, compliments or complaints, is valuable in helping services and organisations to learn and improve. This quarter, we were invited to review the Surrey Heartlands complaints satisfaction survey:

"We found your input to our complaints policy extremely helpful and wonder if you would be willing to review our new complaints satisfaction survey?"

We were informed by what local people had told us about their experiences of the complaints process as well as previous research that we had conducted on cases supported by the IHCA service to provide comment on the survey. This has helped develop a survey that puts people's feedback at the heart of it so that the complaints team can really learn from people's experiences and improve their responses to complaints. We were pleased to hear that our work on this area has had a lasting impact meaning that advocacy serviced are now being better promoted, enabling those who need to find out information to find it more easily:

"We were also fortunate enough to hear from colleagues at Healthwatch Surrey earlier this year and because of their talk, an action was carried out across the system to ensure greater visibility of advocacy services on our websites."

We also contributed to the development of a patient information leaflet produced by the Community Respiratory Service, Surrey Downs Health and Care. Using evidence that people share with us about how they want to receive information and what they need to know, we were able to provide feedback to be incorporated into the new leaflets which means that patients are now armed with accessible and clear information about the community respiratory service in Surrey Downs so they can know and access the service better.

There are also increasingly opportunities for people to be more directly involved in shaping services, through co-design, attending meetings and steering groups. Healthwatch Surrey are committed to ensuring that lived



experience is properly recognised and valued, alongside professional expertise. Last month, we were invited to promote a new opportunity for a person with lived experience to co-chair the newly formed Carers Partnership Group. We noted that that there was no remuneration offered for a role that demands a significant time investment along with a high level of knowledge. We challenged the joint carers team, reminding them of their commitment to remuneration for co-production and that this role should be considered equitably alongside paid staff supporting this group. We were pleased that the team agreed that this role falls within the bounds of their commitment to remunerate and have changed the advert to reflect this which in turn may allow a wider pool of candidates to be able to undertake this role and increase the potential diversity of applicants.

As providers have been developing their Patient Safety Incident Response Plans, we have also been sharing <u>our guidance</u> on how to ensure people are involved in the process. We received feedback on our contributions from First Community Health and Care detailing the impact our influence has had:

"First community received valuable feedback from Healthwatch on our Patient Safety Improvement Plan. The feedback has helped First Community consider how to elevate the public voice throughout the plan and extend the work around health inequalities and patient safety. We are grateful to Healthwatch for their curiosity and challenge to help us move forward."

Tackling health inequalities

Healthwatch Surrey are committed to ensuring that everyone in Surrey has equitable opportunity to access health and care services. We shape our approach, through our engagements and through building partnerships with other organisations, to seek out people who are less well-heard by decision-makers.

Connecting with children and young people

Our review of experiences from previous years highlighted some gaps in our insight regarding hearing directly from children and young people. Following this, our report in March 2023 exploring the hidden value of diagnosis for neurodiversity for children and their families highlighted some significant challenges for some children across Surrey and raised questions about gaps



in services. Throughout the last year, we are looking to address these concerns and have made new connections with services supporting young people across Surrey to provide more opportunities for them to have a voice in health and care services.

Healthwatch Surrey, along with Giving Young Carers a Voice, visited a local youth centre to engage with 16 to 18-year-olds about their health experiences. Our engagement focussed on how young people find out information and advice about health. After speaking with young people and youth workers and sharing our signposting resources with the youth team, the youth workers emailed us to thank us and tell us the impact that our visit had on the young people:

"We had an amazing visit from Healthwatch Surrey! Healthwatch was fantastic at engaging with our young stars at the youth centre, and they're doing the same for Young Carers, too! They strive to give Young Carers a voice in healthcare, making sure no one's concerns go unheard. Thank you, Healthwatch Surrey, for empowering our youth to speak up and for working towards a healthier and happier Surrey!"

We then shared what we had heard with Guildford and Waverley Alliance and recommended that they consider how to encourage young people to use reliable sources for information about their health. The Alliance confirmed that they would:

"...work with our Children and Young People Commissioning Team to identify a list of reliable resources and will share this information actively with our local population, targeting those areas where children and young people are more present."

This means that young people in Guildford and Waverley will now be equipped with better resources to support them to live a healthy life.



Advocacy & complaints

In circumstances where people wish to complain about a health service, we also provide free advocacy support, in partnership with Surrey Independent Living Charity, to ensure complaints are handled appropriately.

We continue to champion the importance of people being able to access their right to complain if they chose to and to share our learning from complaints' report to ensure that services are reminded of the importance of enabling people to complain, and how each complaint provides a vital opportunity for services to provide better services to the people they support. The following example demonstrates the importance of our advocacy service, particularly for people with difficulties in communicating, to have an opportunity to make challenges about their care and lead to improvements for other people with similar challenges.

Gabby's experience

Gabby was concerned about some symptoms she was experiencing and wanted to speak with a GP. She visited her local GP practice first thing in the morning, however was told at reception that there were no appointments available that day. Gabby is autistic and has difficulties communicating, so requires the use of an assistive communication app. She was also wearing a lanyard which says that she has a hidden disability and that she needs additional time to process information. The receptionist repeated that there were no appointments and told Gabby that she would have to go to A&E. Gabby was distressed by the idea of having to go to hospital but was unable to express this to the receptionist at the time. The receptionist then told her that her mother could take her to the hospital. Gabby left the surgery in tears and was upset as she felt the receptionist had not given her suitable time to express herself and that she might have to go to hospital. She was also upset by someone suggested that she would need someone else's help to get to hospital as she lives independently and has no family nearby. Our advocate was able to support Gabby to have her complaint heard, providing clear guidance on the process and working with her to develop a



letter of complaint to forward to the GP practice.

Outcome

Following a review, the GP practice offered an apology to Gabby and made a number of changes to their practice following her complaint. Staff were now required to take people's details first, so they can access patient records and note any accessibility requirements before beginning a conversation. Signage was also added to the reception area to highlight how people can make staff know about hidden disabilities and accessibility needs.

Gabby was happy with the outcome of her complaint and the improvements that were put in place as a result.

* 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

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We are committed to the quality of our information. Every three years we perform an audit so that we can be certain of this.