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# What we're hearing about Guildford and Waverley

April 2024

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“Long waiting times for [over the counter] medications and prescriptions and overworked pharmacists – so how on earth are they going to cope with people using them rather than the doctor?”



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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## Report overview

This report provides insights into local people's views on, and experiences with, health and social care services in Guildford and Waverley. It is based on what people have told us at a series of engagement events in the area, as well as enquiries to our [Helpdesk](#), between November 2023 and April 2024.

Our report focusses on 4 key areas:

- [Godalming: the 0-5 model of wellbeing](#)
- [Pharmacy: the value of pharmacy and the impact of local closures](#)
- [Experiences of general practice](#)
- [Royal Surrey County Hospital: clarity of communication with patients and meeting individual needs](#)

**Please note:** Any urgent or concerning experiences within this report have been escalated to the appropriate teams. All appropriate information and advice and signposting to complaints processes has already been given.

If you would like more information or examples of what people have shared, please get in touch.

Recommendations around pharmacy have not been included in this report as they will be shared as part of our involvement in the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment steering group in the coming months.

## Insight summary and recommendations

The following table shows evidence and recommendations for the 4 themes highlighted in this report.

Theme	Evidence	Recommendations We recommend that The Alliance considers the following:
Godalming: the 0-5 model of wellbeing	Peer-to-peer support is invaluable for new parents, but many don't know how to access this peer support.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Developing a comprehensive list of all peer to peer support groups and activities available in the Godalming area – including associated costs – which is shared with all new parents.</li> <li>2. Ensure all front line staff are aware of the support group list and signpost appropriately.</li> <li>3. Ensuring a consistent approach to informing new parents about the health visitor drop in clinics (times, locations, remit, contact details etc.) in the area, and the 0-19 advice line.</li> </ol>
Experiences of general practice	Members of the Cantonese community are still struggling to access the language support they need in the primary care setting.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Ensuring all patients entering general practice are aware of their rights and what they can expect in terms of language support / translation and interpreter services.</li> </ol>
Experiences of general practice	Self management of medications is being made difficult by repeat prescription delays and confusion around the system and process.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Supporting GP practices to develop a 'how to' guide which clarifies the process for obtaining repeat prescriptions in their surgery.</li> </ol>
Royal Surrey County Hospital: clarity of communication with patients and meeting individual needs	People are confused about the MyCare portal – how to use it and what it is.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Evaluating the communication which is shared with patients about the MyCare portal and how this could be made clearer.</li> </ol>
N/A	N/A	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Sharing any other actions related to the experiences presented within this report.</li> </ol>

## Insights

### Spotlight on Godalming: the 0-5 model of wellbeing

Godalming Central & Ockford is a key neighbourhood, with LSOA Waverley 010A experiencing particularly poor outcomes. There are a high percentage of unpaid carers in Godalming Binscombe and high rates of self-harm within both Godalming Binscombe and Godalming Central & Ockford.\*

Against this backdrop, Healthwatch Surrey were asked to explore the 0-5 model of wellbeing, with the aim to feed into the early years/family approach to prevention being considered. We visited community locations in and around Godalming to find out how well supported parents of pre-schoolers feel, as well as talking to a Clinical Service Manager and nursery school headteacher to ascertain the professional perspective.

### The professional perspective

Budget cuts in health visiting are thought to be really impacting new parents in Guildford and Waverley. The professionals we spoke to highlighted the reduction in the number of health visitor clinics and the lack of community touch points, such as SureStart centres, as particularly significant.

Specific issues identified included:

- Lack of practical support for new parents around important developmental milestones and issues such as toilet training, sleeping, feeding and behaviour control.
- The 2 year check now being via form (versus face to face) means it is not accessible for those with low literacy or English as a second language, and makes SEND (Special educational needs and disabilities) difficult to identify.
- Increasing anxiety amongst parents and a lack of confidence in both themselves, and the professionals around them.
- Post natal depression not being identified quickly.

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\*Godalming Insights, Guildford and Waverley Health and Care Alliance

## Parents relying on peer support

These issues were echoed by some of the mums we spoke to, who commented on the importance of their peers in light of the decline of professional family and health visitor support following the newborn stage.

“Well supported in hospital. My mother came over from Mumbai and left when he was [a few] months old. But my wellbeing since the birth has been bad.”

**214121, Godalming resident**

“There was a big difference between the support and care I received with my first child to the third. The support available to me has gotten worse with each child.”

**214120, Godalming resident**

“I think there is a lot of anxiety when you first have a child and I think giving parents advice early or access to some kind of app early so people can look up concerns, as and when, would be helpful. I shared a leaflet with my NCT group I had found from a London children’s hospital, it was like a booklet with common concerns addressed. I thought that was excellent and they’ve all said they’ve referred to it too. NCT helped me with information and advice about birthing and my health, it’s also been a good way to meet people locally.”

**214098, Godalming resident**

“If I had a worry I would go to Mum first, call friends and would ring the [health visitor] advice line, but so far I haven’t needed to call.”

**214090, Godalming resident**

The effects of becoming a new parent during the pandemic are still being felt by some.

"I didn't get any support after the birth of my son due to him being born during lockdown. I felt trapped back then but things have improved. I really like chatting to other parents. It helps to know we are all going through the same things."

**214119, Godalming resident**

### **Parents unaware what support is available**

A lot of parents told us that they simply weren't aware of the sources of support which are open to them, in the first two cases below the health visitor drop in clinic, which people thought to be invaluable once found.

"I did not realise this clinic [health visitor drop in] was still running until today when my cousin suggested we came down. My 2 year old has a squint and so it's great I've been able to come and get some advice today, they've been really helpful and will be following up with me after this chat today."

**214088, Godalming resident**

"I didn't think to go the health visitors first. Now I've found this clinic it's really handy. I can drop in as and when which has helped me."

**214092, Godalming resident**

"Wellbeing for me is a mix of practical and emotional support. I have been ok and not had to access additional support. I don't actually know where I would go if I needed it."

**214117, Godalming resident**

"I've never really thought about what wellbeing means to me. It could be physical or mental. I don't know what is out there myself."

**214122, Godalming resident**

“I found out about this group by the poster outside. It’s not always easy to find information about these groups. I’d really like there to be a central list somewhere to make it easier, perhaps in the library.”

**214123, Godalming resident**

“I was happy with the hospital and the visits from the health visitor after. I feel well supported at the moment and not in need of any outside help. I have friends locally and I look to them for support. I wouldn’t know where to go officially.”

**214123, Godalming resident**

### **The impact of the cost of living crisis**

The cost of groups for parents to meet peers is a real concern, meaning that some will not be getting the peer support that others find so valuable:

“I need to go to groups that aren’t too expensive to attend. The cost of living has really hit us hard. I like the stay and play here, it has helped me make friends.”

**214123, Godalming resident**

“There aren’t enough places in Godalming to take young children. This playgroup is only an hour and there are only a few others around. It’s hard to make friends but I do try to go out for coffee with the people I know to help my mental health. But there is nowhere to go when the weather is poor.”

**214120, Godalming resident**



## Spotlight on Pharmacy: the value of pharmacy and the impact of local closures

In April 2024 Healthwatch England released their report "[Pharmacy: what people want](#)" exploring the current state of pharmacy services and offering recommendations for healthcare leaders and the wider sector. The report is based on a national poll as well as interviews undertaken by local Healthwatch, including Healthwatch Surrey.

In addition to contributing to this national report, we have also been working with 2 specific communities in Guildford and Waverley (Cranleigh and Burpham/Merrow) to explore how people have been affected by recent closures and what people want from their local pharmacy provision. We will be using this insight to inform our position as part of the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment steering group in the coming months.

### Findings at a glance:

- Residents **value the service and clinical expertise** which their local pharmacy can provide – this supports the [Healthwatch England report](#) which found that pharmacies are often the most visible and accessible part of the health system.
  - 64% of people would consider going to their pharmacy instead of their GP practice for minor illnesses or health advice.
- The impact of the closure of one pharmacy on the alternative provision in the area is a huge concern for local residents – if alternatives don't meet their needs in terms of capacity, space or opening hours **the value of the service is hugely reduced.**
- **Travel distance from home** is the most important core indicator for people when visiting a pharmacy, but this is more complex than a crude mileage value – **people need to be able to walk or have reliable / accessible / affordable public transport options.**
  - The ease of getting to a pharmacy impacts how often 71% of people go
- Good customer service is also considered to be critically important, but people's **confidence in this is eroded if a pharmacy is seen to not have sufficient capacity.**

“Lloyds Sainsburys was within walking distance. Boots Merrow was across from my GP practice. I now have to drive to the only remaining pharmacy in the area for all prescriptions. Parking is a nightmare and when I finally get there, the queues are an hour long with 10-15 people waiting. It’s just impossible. The store is tiny and simply cannot accommodate so many customers. The staff are run off their feet. Just awful.”

**Guildford resident**

“Long waiting times for [over the counter] medications and prescriptions and overworked pharmacists - so how on earth are they going to cope with people using them rather than the doctor?”

**Guildford resident**

“I couldn’t get prescriptions anymore because the other local pharmacy had opening hours that were too short and always has an incredibly long wait. Had to sign up for an online pharmacy.”

**Guildford resident**

## Experiences of general practice

### Interpreter needs not being met

Following our spotlight on the Cantonese community in [our last Guildford and Waverley report](#), in February we attended an event at Guildford Cathedral to gather further feedback and assess any changes and improvements which had been made.\* Members of the community told us that, in the primary care setting, many are still struggling to access the language support they need.

“I have requested an interpreter several times, none are ever available. What do I do if I need to see the doctor, I can't wait to get better? The GP talks too fast, I cannot understand them. I've had to go to appointments without an interpreter. Medical terminology is so difficult as it is, I have to guess!”

**203812, Guildford resident**

“I walk in because when on the phone it is confusing because I can't make myself understood. I often do get seen the same day but have tried twice to get an appointment last time around. I don't speak good English. Recently I had a blood test and they ended up losing my sample so had to do it again. I think I am not allowed to get an appointment online.”

**203805, Guildford resident**

“I would worry that I would delay a diagnosis if I waited weeks for an interpreter. We would like to google prescriptions so we know what we are getting.”

**203819, Guildford resident**

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\* In November 2023 we recommended that information about local services is made available in Cantonese in order to help this community understand and access services more easily.

## Prescription confusion

People have told us that managing medications is being made more difficult by repeat prescription delays and confusion about the system and process.

"I usually get a brown and blue inhaler in February as my hayfever begins to set off my asthma. This year I thought I'd go on the NHS App to request repeat prescriptions. However, my inhalers didn't show up as available for request as a repeat. I couldn't find a way to request a repeat online so I phoned the surgery. They said I needed to talk to a GP and offered me a choice of telephone or face to face appointment the next working day. The GP called bang on time and explained that she needed to re-prescribe as I hadn't had the asthma medication for 2 years. She advised me to come in and see the nurse for an asthma check but was happy to add the inhalers to my repeat prescription list. I found the whole process very efficient and convenient, but I feel there is scope for more explanation to patients about why some medications may not show up on their repeat prescription list."

**210994, Guildford resident**

"I have forwarded to you the email I was forced to write to Merrow Park Surgery, Guildford, on Saturday. It is about how they hadn't processed a repeat prescription request (again) that I had emailed in. I have been doing my repeat requests this way since I joined the practice 6ish years ago. My daughter had gone to collect my prescription medication and was told at the pharmacy that they hadn't received anything from the practice about me since the previous request. My medication list includes life saving meds like statins and it also includes a capsule form of morphine sulfate called Zomorph, which I have been taking for a long time for a permanent chronic pain condition. The sudden withdrawal of morphine leads to unbearable levels of pain and also withdrawal symptoms that are worse and more excruciating than any illness I know of. I am currently

mitigating those symptoms by using out of date fentanyl patches, which is unreliable because I don't know the dose of any patch due to its age."

**210182, Guildford resident**

"I have medication for epilepsy but I have found trying to manage my medication recently tricky. I order via the Superdrug App which is linked via the NHS. I then collect medication at the Superdrug pharmacy which is near to where I work. I have found this is a simple and good way to manage my medication until recently. Recently I ordered 2 weeks before needing my new medication. It's usually filled within a few days but I noticed the GP practice hadn't sent the script through. I called them and spoke to the receptionist, who told me it was too soon to order the medication and it's GP policy not to order too early. What they didn't realise was the dosage I was on which was 2 doses, so my medication was due to run out in half the time that they thought it would run out (I ordered with 2 weeks meds left and they thought I had 4 weeks). So then after I explained the receptionist said they would call me back. They didn't.

I waited a few days, the App wasn't saying anything. I knew it could take up to 2 days for Superdrug to get the medication in and was really worried about coming off my medication and so I went back to the pharmacy and got an emergency script. I received a text from the GP practice who said I needed to order a week before and then told again I ordered too soon. I think it's reasonable to want to order medication up to 2 weeks before, there are a number of reasons why you would - what if you are going on holiday or away for a period of time. I need to get back in touch to sort it out but I am put off by talking to the receptionist there about it."

**211445, Guildford resident**

## **Praise for GP services**

Despite issues for some, we have been pleased to hear from Guildford and Waverley residents who are really happy with the service their GP is providing. This is often related to the ease of getting appointments.

“Our GP services are very good – we at Farncombe / Binscombe will get a triage call for a GP to see if they can solve the matter on the phone or call you in for a direct contact.”

**203510, Godalming resident**

“I use Wonersh Surgery for GP appointments. It’s a good service. I walk in or phone to make appointments. I don’t mind walking, it’s about 20 minutes from my house and it gets me out.”

**204250, Guildford resident**

“Easy to get an appointment at Woodbridge.”

**210639, Guildford resident**

“I use Austen Road surgery. I walk in to make my appointments and find it easy. I wouldn’t improve anything.”

**204255, Guildford resident**

Praise in this case relates to the understanding and compassion shown by a GP practice at a difficult time.

“I have lived in the UK for a long time, I’m quite healthy so I didn’t have to visit the GP practice for myself very often. My GP practice is The Oaks Surgery in Guildford, I think they are fantastic there. My husband died in Dec 2022 and I had been caring for him for over 10 years. I felt that the staff at the GP practice really took their time with me to listen and sort out anything I needed which helped me to care for my husband.”

**211443, Guildford resident**

## Spotlight on Royal Surrey County Hospital: clarity of communication with patients and meeting individual needs

### Communication with patients

As part of our Guildford and Waverley spotlight month we held an engagement event at Royal Surrey County Hospital in April. Following the recommendation from our last report that the Alliance consider how they communicate with patients, we were particularly interested in hearing about people's thoughts on the clarity of communication, both on site and before scheduled in or outpatient appointments.

Feedback was generally positive, with people satisfied with the information provided to them.

"My dad had what he thought was a routine appointment at the Eye Clinic at Royal Surrey. Easy to find the clinic with details on the letter and clear signage."

**209438, Guildford resident**

"I'm here today for an outpatient appointment at the eye clinic. It's been a good experience. The letter I had about the appointment was very clear - it had all the information in it I needed. I didn't have any phone calls but didn't really need one. I think the hospital is well signposted, I haven't got lost! But they do need more car parking spaces."

**213333, Guildford resident**

"I first came in via diagnostics and after this appointment I had a call from a nurse who was brilliant - explained everything clearly and comprehensively. I then had a colonoscopy followed by another call, this time from the surgeon. He was also excellent and said that I'd be hearing from them. Sure enough I did only a few days later - the timelines have been amazing. I received a letter on Friday saying my appointment would be on Monday - I wonder if a follow up call might have been useful then, just to check I got the letter as the timelines were so tight - if I hadn't had the



letter I could have missed the appointment. I don't want to complain though. The letter was very clear and everything actually at the hospital has been the same. I'm very happy. Every time I come in to contact with a member of the medical team I feel at ease straight away."

**213336, Guildford resident**

Reassuringly, in instances when written information isn't as clear as it could be, patients are being appropriately helped once on site.

"I'm currently waiting for an x-ray in the musculoskeletal department. Overall my experience has been good - the letter I had wasn't clear about where to go so I ended up going to the fracture clinic which was wrong - the staff were very welcoming and helpful though, and told me where I actually had to go. The touch screen worked well."

**213347, Guildford resident**

There was particular praise for the maternity department.

"I'm in today for a physio outpatients appointment and a pre-op for a planned caesarean happening on Thursday. I've had a really positive experience with the hospital and can't fault it. Everyone has been brilliant and made me feel comfortable and at ease when I've been very worried about the birth. They've been particularly positive about my decision to have an elective C section which I wasn't expecting. I feel happy at the prospect of staying in after the birth, and that's because they've made me feel so positive.

All communication has been by text - predominantly - and some letters. I've had clear explanations about where to go and what to do - if anything I've had more information than I need. Badger Notes has been brilliant as it's linked to my NHS app."

**212408, patient living outside Surrey**

"I have had 2 other children at different hospitals but this time round with my third and a huge gap between kids, I



was told by my midwife that saw me at the doctors, that I had the right to choose.

I've read so much negativity about St Peter's Hospital and heard stuff through friends. I know that they are in special measures so I chose Royal Surrey. I did this knowing that with A3 closures and work going on, that it could take me over 1.5 hours to get home from there, but I still felt better about it. It was annoying having to do my peri natal check ups there but had to stick with it. The care was brilliant. The birth was straight forward and I've been signed off now she is 3 weeks old."

**213925, Spelthorne resident**

### **Responding to individual needs**

We also heard from people who wanted to praise the individualised care and attention they received.

"My daughter is 16 and she has an uncommon neurodiverse condition. In November 2023 she was due to go into Royal Surrey for some dental work. I completed the pre surgery form and entered a lot of detail under the special requirements section. It was a small box and I added lots of detail. I shared my daughters trigger points and anxieties and things that would help i.e. her favourite music. The team at Royal Surrey read what I had written. They put in a side room as there were babies crying and put my daughters favourite band on when she anaesthetised and when she was waking up. The team were fantastic and I wrote to PALS to thank them."

**209496, Reigate resident**

"My dad has a stoma and although he orders replacement bags online, he sometimes runs out. He can ring the hospital and the stoma nurses agree to leave him some bags at reception. This is a very helpful service as dad obviously cannot be without them. In addition, when I go to collect them, as I am just picking them up, I can go to the parking office and explain what I am doing, and they will take down

my number plate so I don't have to pay for parking, which is helpful as it is so expensive.”

**209442, Waverley resident**

### **NHS MyCare**

Feedback on the MyCare portal has been less positive, with people feeling confused about how to use it, and even what it is.

“I received a text about joining NHS MyCare. I tried to join but I am 84 years old and I have dyscalculia. I am unable to register as the Patient Portal validation code appears on the screen for only a few seconds. I have tried several times but this is insufficient time for me to remember the numbers and to add them to the appropriate box. I received a text which started - “as a patient of Ashford & St Peter’s Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust or Royal Surrey NHS Foundation Trust... ” and then it invited me to “register for MyCare our joint patient portal.” When I started to plough my way through the complicated “registration” bit I did wonder if it was a scam. However, I found a website which seemed to indicate it was genuine. What should I do?”

**211732, Waverley resident**

“I am becoming more frustrated that I keep being sent text messages inviting me to register with ‘MyCare, a joint patient portal”.

**212408, Guildford resident**

## About Healthwatch Surrey

Healthwatch Surrey champions the voice of local people to shape, improve and get the best from NHS, health and social care services. As an independent statutory body, we have the power to make sure decision makers listen to the experiences of local people.

We passionately believe that listening and responding to local people's experiences is vital to create health and social care services that meet the needs of people in Surrey. We seek out people's experiences of health and care services, particularly from people whose voices are seldom heard, who might be at risk of health inequalities and whose needs are not met by current services. We share our findings publicly and with service providers and commissioners to influence and challenge current provision and future plans.

We also provide reliable and trustworthy information and signposting about local health and social care services to help people get the support they need.

## Contact us

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We are proud to be commended in the National Healthwatch Impact Awards, recognising our work helping to improve local NHS and social care. You can view [our video](#) highlighting how feedback has enabled us to make positive changes to health and social care services.



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

## Luminus

The Healthwatch Surrey service is run by Luminus Insight CIC, known as Luminus.

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