
What we're hearing about Guildford and Waverley

November 2024



“To me, my daughter’s asthma is well if she can do everything including sport without [her chest] tightening up too much. At the moment I don’t think it’s controlled. She likes sport, particularly football, and currently gets out of breath easily, her throat tightens up. We manage this by stopping all outside sport...”



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Report overview

This report provides insights into local people's views on, and experiences of, 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 April 2024 and October 2024.

Our report focusses on 3 key areas:

- [Spotlight on respiratory](#)
- [Spotlight on key neighbourhoods](#)
- [Royal Surrey County Hospital](#)

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.

Insight summary and recommendations

The following table summarises some of the issues highlighted in this report and the outcomes which we would like to see for patients. Healthwatch Surrey would like to work with Guildford & Waverley to consider realistic ways in which these can be achieved.

Theme	What would be helpful?
Spotlight on respiratory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents are provided with sufficient information (including signposting to further sources of support) at the time of <u>initial diagnosis</u> in order to feel confident managing their condition. • Children diagnosed with asthma are provided with age appropriate educational materials to support them. <p>Healthwatch Surrey recommend that additional, more bespoke, engagement is undertaken to obtain further insights around this theme.</p>
Spotlight on key neighbourhoods (Primary care – perceived lack of appointments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents attending GP practices in the key neighbourhoods of Westborough and Stoke: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Feel confident that they are able to book GP appointments in a way which suits them. ○ Understand the triage process and how it works for them.
Royal Surrey County Hospital (administration errors adding to patient stress)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The process around telephone consultations is clearly communicated to patients and patients are kept informed regarding delays or changes. • Patients are clearly signposted to PALS and know how the team can support them.

What we've heard

Spotlight on respiratory

Background*

The Children and Young People (CYP) asthma project has highlighted that children and their families are often unaware of the signs that their asthma is not well controlled, or of the importance of taking preventative medication as prescribed.

As part of the My Care My Way programme in Central and North Guildford, practices are carrying out in-depth clinical reviews to reduce high-dose corticosteroids, minimise excessive use of short-acting beta-agonists and reevaluate triple therapy.

Guildford and Waverley Alliance were keen to understand the general public's views on whether people feel supported with their asthma management and if people are attending annual reviews.

What we did

Healthwatch Surrey sought the views of local people in the following ways during our 'Spotlight Month' of community engagement in October 2024:

- A call out for experiences via our website and posters in local GP surgeries and at Royal Surrey County Hospital (RSCH)
- An online survey, promoted as above
- Survey questions asked at all engagement events within the month, where appropriate
- Attended a paediatric respiratory clinic at RSCH
- Events focussed in and around Guildford key neighbourhoods (Westborough and Stoke) where possible.**

Please note: although this is representative of all the people who engaged with us, it is not representative of all people who have been diagnosed with asthma. We would recommend additional, bespoke engagement and activities for a greater understanding.

* Insights provided by the Guildford and Waverley Health and Care Alliance

** Questions also asked around CYP services

What did we hear?

Primary care management

The people who spoke to us told us that they do feel that their asthma is under control and managed well in primary care, via regular monitoring and annual reviews.

“My daughter [22 years old] has asthma. She has a blue inhaler, she takes it once in a blue moon. It is under control. She's had it since she was 15 years old. It is managed through the GP. She sees the nurse at the GP practice once per year to 'blow into the gadget.’”

223726, Guildford resident

“My [adult] son has asthma. It developed 16/17 years ago... He has episodes when it is worse but it is mainly under control. It was worse when he had covid... He was so breathless he couldn't get up the stairs. He has inhalers that he can use if he needs to, but he doesn't use them every day. It is under control and monitored by the GP.”

223631, Guildford resident

What does 'well controlled asthma' mean?

People told us what 'well controlled' asthma means to them. For some it is not needing to use preventative medication, whilst for others it is the feeling that the medications they do have keep them free from attacks.

“[It means] I do not need a brown inhaler anymore and that the use of my blue inhaler is minimal.”

“[It means] not having any asthma attacks that can't be stopped with an inhaler.”

Secondary care management

People gave a different perspective around what 'well controlled' asthma means once their asthma is severe enough to be managed in secondary care. For parents, this is often related to the ability of their children to take part in physical activity without limitations:

“To me well controlled asthma means my son doesn’t need additional puffs (of his inhaler) and has no wheezing after exercise...”

224496, Guildford resident

“To me, my daughter’s asthma is well if she can do everything including sport without [her chest] tightening up too much. At the moment I don’t think it’s controlled. She likes sport, particularly football, and currently gets out of breath easily, her throat tightens up. We manage this by stopping all outside sport...”

224497, Guildford resident WHOTE BRITISH FEMALE

People also told us that a ‘crisis’ situation led them into secondary care.

“I think his asthma is controlled now with the preventative [medication] , but it hasn’t been – he had around 20 hospital admissions when he was 5. We were referred to the hospital from the GP and now only see the consultant for annual reviews.”

224496, Guildford resident

“At the moment my daughter’s asthma is controlled. It wasn’t a few years ago though – she was diagnosed at about 3 or 4 and ended up in resus when she was 4 after her first major attack. I feel like she might have had more hospital admissions but I’m [mother] a nurse and manage the situation. We don’t see the GP anymore – we’re seen by 2 hospitals, Royal Surrey once a year and Royal Brompton every 3 months.”

224494, Waverley resident

There were mixed feelings about the value of a peer support group, with some noting that it would have most value at the time of initial diagnosis.

“We feel well supported now but I think a support group would have been really useful at first because we were learning about the condition.”

224496, Guildford resident

"I don't think a peer group would be useful but I'd like more support when we're admitted to hospital."

224497, Guildford resident

"I don't think I need any kind of peer support group, but maybe I would if I wasn't a medical professional."

224494, Waverley resident

Interestingly, one respondent to our survey felt that education around the condition for children would be useful.

"I personally feel that children would benefit from the education on the condition - to be honest I feel that about some other conditions too. I feel that it should be introduced into the PHSE curriculum so that any child is educated on the condition. So that everyone knows what to do to help anyone they may come across with the condition. I feel this may also work for diabetes and epilepsy."

Spotlight on key neighbourhoods

At a number of engagement events, in or around the key neighbourhoods of Westborough and Stoke, people shared their concerns and priorities for health and care services.

Lack of clear communication

People told us that issues with communication across both primary and secondary care are their main concern.

“In January our 3 year old had febrile convulsions from covid and flu and she was admitted to paediatric A&E by blue light late at night. The paramedics were great. In A&E they were caring but I would say that the main problem was communication between us and the clinician. When all the tests had been done and treatment given we were unsure whether we could go home. It improved when the day shift came in. We wouldn't mind the wait if we were told what was happening but we always had to ask. It felt like there was no proper discharge.”

223797, Surrey resident

“My husband found a lump and went to the GP to get it checked. They referred him to RSCH [Royal Surrey County Hospital] for an ultrasound. We've all been worried about what it could be and if it is potentially cancerous. He heard nothing from the hospital for just over a week and has been checking on the NHS App but nothing is visible. We were then contacted by the people who live at our previous address (we moved 6 years ago) to say an important looking letter had arrived addressed to my husband. My husband tried to contact the hospital as we assumed this had the details of the appointment, we didn't want strangers opening the letter. It's really hard when you have no information to go on, just verbal confirmation from the GP about the referral—nothing provided to say here's who to contact if you have any questions etc.”

225580, Waverley resident

He did get in touch with the right department who said he had an appointment in Haslemere- this confused him as he doesn't have any routine appointments, he wasn't aware that RSCH operate in more than 1 site. They confirmed that he should have changed his address with them as well despite not having any ongoing health conditions or appointments. Surely the referral from the GP has all the information such as NHS number, and contact details for someone?"

[awaiting ID] Surrey resident

In this case, a lack of clear explanation around roles and responsibilities within the GP practice led to frustration.

"I am asthmatic. I get frustrated that a nurse will call rather than a GP."

223715, Guildford resident

Primary care - perceived lack of appointments

A perceived inability to get GP appointments is the issue we continue to hear the most about in these neighbourhoods.

"My GP is not brilliant. I had a chest infection but I couldn't get antibiotics for 2 weeks, I knew I needed them, but I couldn't get an appointment. No allowances are made for being a carer. I just have to keep going for my son. He is non-verbal, a 30 year old baby. I have to bathe him."

223726, Guildford resident

"I am disappointed in [my] GP practice, it is really difficult to get an appointment. They have a long message on the phone, you can spend ages waiting on the phone. If you do get through, you do get a call back from the GP eventually."

223631, Guildford resident

People are still confused about how the triage system operates and there is frustration about the perceived lack of flexibility in appointment booking processes:

“[The GP is] awful. You can't get an appointment. This triage business is a joke. The online system is dreadful. It is a joke. I live 200 yards away from the surgery but I am not allowed to walk in to book an appointment. You try phoning at 8am, and you are 28th in the queue, by the time you get through all the appointments are gone.”

223727, Guildford resident

Praise for primary care

Conversely, we heard a lot of praise for the care provided by GP practices, particularly when people felt that their individual communications needs were being met.

“Our GP is fantastic. Over the years they have always been so brilliant. You can ring up any time of day to get an appointment. If it's serious we've never had to wait more than 2 days. It is incredibly well run.”

223570, Waverley resident

“I have trouble using the online system to make appointments at the GP surgery. I usually have to make contact by phone. The GP surgery are very good about calling me in for vaccinations etc. I can usually make an appointment (phone consultation or face to face with nurse/GP) by phone.”

223710, Guildford resident

Royal Surrey County Hospital

Administration errors adding to patient stress

A number of people shared their concerns around missed and/or delayed telephone calls and consultations, both of which can cause undue stress for patients at an already difficult time.

"I find it strange that a follow up phone appointment was not kept. I was told that the Doctor tried to contact me and yet I did not get any notification of missed calls. The hospital has my correct number. For me health is paramount and after my operation to remove my gall bladder I was looking forward to speaking to [the doctor] to give him an update regarding my operation and issues. Now I cannot do that. Is this acceptable for the hospital which is supposed to be best in the area?"

214166, Guildford resident

"I was given a Cardio Angiogram pre-assessment appointment at 11:00 ahead of a medical procedure. As we were away with a patchy mobile signal we drove to a car park with a good signal for 10:00. We had heard nothing by just after noon so I emailed the Cardiology department. A short time later we called the department and were told sorry but they were running behind. So, we waited over another hour then re-emailed & again telephoned cardio reception to eventually be told that the nurse scheduled to call me was not in that day!"

218054, Waverley resident

"When I had telephone appointments they called me, repeatedly, hours later than my appointment time - I had taken time out of work to take the call in private but they hadn't called."

220666, Surrey resident

People also told us about administration errors relating to in person and online appointments and communication between primary and secondary care.

“On more than 6 occasions he has received incorrect information about hospital appointments which resulted in turning up for an appointment to find it was online.”

216241, Guildford resident

“I am under the eye clinic at Royal Surrey County Hospital. They didn’t verbally tell me about my macular traction. So, I wasn’t looking out for it and didn’t know what to do if it got worse. I have been told that I also have it in my other eye, but the clinic has not been monitoring the issue at all. They lost the letter that outlined that I had macular traction, so even my GP didn’t know that this was happening. I was not told about my diagnosis; I was not told what to do if it became worse. I had to chase the letter and when I did chase, they said that they outsource their letters.”

220743, Waverley resident

Praise

Similarly to what we hear in primary care, people were keen to praise the clinical care provided at the hospital, with people particularly grateful for the compassion and respect shown to them.

“Very supportive. I was referred with seizures by my GP. The appointment took a long time to come through but once through I had an appointment with a specialist within 2 weeks. He confirmed it wasn’t epilepsy but took lots of time to explain everything to me.”

218178, Surrey resident

“I’d like to place on record my grateful thanks to the whole endoscopy team who were so helpful and kind to me today. Everyone I encountered was friendly, pleasant and most of all very efficient! My particular thanks to [the doctor] and his team who treated me with the utmost respect and kindness. Believe me I am not the easiest of patients, but they really went above and beyond for me. Please pass on my grateful thanks to the whole unit. You are all a credit to the NHS!”

218596, Guildford resident

“The staff that I have interacted with prior, during and after [my procedure] were fantastic and knowledgeable and supportive to my wife. The lady who gave us the advice after the surgery was excellent. When you are a patient you don't know what is a big problem and a little problem, but they were always happy to help. They also helped liaise with the correct teams to get the issue resolved. They were kind and considerate in the way that they talked to us as well. ”

222567, Surrey resident

“I would like to congratulate them [RSCH] not only on the efficiency of the organisation, but the pleasant and effective staff, very well done!”

222849, Surrey resident

Of particular note, a number of people have suggested that more could be done to ensure people know about the PALS team and what they can offer.

“I had an issue a while back at the Royal Surrey and I didn't know about the hospital advisors and what they offer. No one at the hospital mentioned them and it would have been so useful to know about them.”

222441, 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.

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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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