

Championing what matters to you

Healthwatch West Sussex
Annual Report 2021-22



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Message from our chair

This 12 months has seen us adapt and thrive, so we can make the best use of our resources, recognising the value of digital engagement and networking.

Delivering through collaboration:

- We are proud of the regional work undertaken to date to look at the important issue of access to GP-led services. Through an advisory group, we've been able to understand the challenges and views of NHS frontline workers and commissioners. Then, we gathered experiences from the public
- Our partnerships have again helped provide the community reach to hear first-hand accounts from people living with disabilities (sensory and autism), carers and young people
- We built on the knowledge of how ethnic minority men talk and view their health. This will enable us to look at the lower uptake of bowel screening in men living in rural West Sussex.

The pandemic brought many challenges in managing demand. However, we remain committed to, and clear about, championing health and social care issues for the people and communities of West Sussex.



Steve Cooper
Healthwatch West Sussex Chair



“The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown long-standing health inequalities into stark relief. With NHS and social care facing even longer backlogs, the unequal outcomes exposed by the pandemic are at risk of becoming worse. Local Healthwatch play an Important role in helping to overcome these adversities and are uniquely placed to make a positive difference In their communities.”

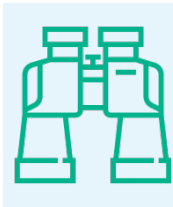
Sir Robert Francis QC, Chair of Healthwatch England



About us

Your health and social care champion

Healthwatch West Sussex is your local health and social care champion. From Crawley to Chichester and everywhere in between, we make sure NHS leaders and other decision makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care. Plus, we are here to help you to find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.



Our vision

A world where we can all get the health and care we need.



Our mission

To make sure people's experiences help make health and care better.



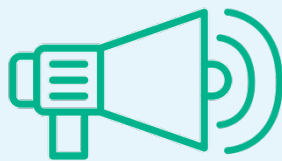
Our values

- Listening to people and making sure their voices are heard.
- Including everyone in the conversation – especially those who don't always have their voice heard.
- Analysing different people's experiences to learn how to improve care.
- Acting on feedback and driving change.
- Partnering with care providers, Government, and the voluntary sector – serving as the public's independent advocate.

Our year in review

How we have engaged and supported people.

Reaching out



Nearly 16,000 people

shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.

Over 5,726 people

came to us for clear advice and Information about topics such as mental health and COVID-19.

Making a difference to care



We published

71 reports and spotlights

covering the improvements people would like to see to health and social care services, and service updates.

Our most popular report was

Adult Autism Assessment

demonstrating the Impact on peoples' lives of unsupported autism because of assessment delays for **young and older adults**.

Health and care that works for you



We're lucky to have

60

volunteers, who gave up over **390 days** to make care better for our community.

We're funded by our local authority. In 2021-22 we received:

£321,417

This figure includes other services in addition to Healthwatch, which is **1.5% more** than the previous year.

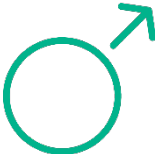
We currently have

8 staff

(FTE 6) who help us carry out this work.

How we've made a difference throughout the year

Our biggest projects between April 2021 to March 2022.

Spring			Focusing on information, from running advice lines, to supporting GP practices in communicating their new ways of working	We urged a practice to publicly update on the issues from moving to a different clinical system and how they could support patients
Summer			Teaming up with community partners we created new understanding for exploring men's attitudes to health and the inequalities this may lead to	We quickly alerted the Council to the growing concern over the affordability of existing adult social care support, and supported people to have their concerns looked at
Autumn			We urged the NHS 111 services to be clearer when booking people into A&E, that the time was for arrival and not when they would be seen and for A&E reception staff not to refer to 'appointments'	We made sure that people living with a loss of eye sight or hearing were heard and their needs understood. Plus, we are working to make sure that people are well supported by eye care services in Sussex
Winter			To understand why some people really struggle to access local GP-led services, we've worked collaboratively with regional colleagues and NHS teams to shape our conversations with staff and patients	Throughout the year we've been supporting the Sussex programme to improve children and young peoples' emotional and mental health by pushing to have young people involved strategically, as well as service development

Listening to your experiences

Services can't make improvements without hearing your views. That's why over the last year we have made listening to feedback from all areas of the community a priority. This allows us to understand the full picture, and feedback to services to help them improve.



Understanding the issues in accessing GP-led services

Going forward, one of the 2022-23 NHS Priorities is the improvement of people’s access to GP-led Services.

We are proud to have been central to regional, collaborative engagement into issues with accessing GP-led services. As part of this work, we had over 1,500 responses to a public survey.

We have now carefully reviewed and reported on those responses to the NHS. In turn, they are now looking at developing support to help local people and practices. Our aim is to make sure that there is a positive impact on the way Sussex commissioners work on this priority.



43% of people

Had tried self-care before contacting their surgery. However, this is in the context that 3 In 4 respondents had tried accessing their surgery for follow-up or non-urgent care.

This work emerged because local Healthwatch around the country, including us, were receiving high levels of feedback from the public regarding GP-led services. It was decided that this was a sensitive issue that needed a measured and balanced response.

Such insight is just one of the ways people’s experiences and involvement has supported improvement to this key area for all our health. Thanks to local people we’ve:

- Identified that GP practice websites and answerphone messages need to be consistent and current sources of information. For example, explaining how access to consultations may have changed.
- Reported national issues with one of the pathways within the eConsult algorithm, so it can be addressed.
- Showcased an innovative idea for an app (they called Doc Tour), designed by young people to help others to better prepare and interact with doctors in primary care.

What difference did this make

This level of partnership and collaboration, on this scale, was a new approach for us but one that was necessary to deliver on this important agenda.



“Appreciate the doctor’s surgery will always be busy, but I use a pay as you go phone, and it can cost anything in excess of £2.50 per call ... most times they just ask you to ring back.”

Survey participant’s experience of accessing a Sussex surgery



Increasing support while waiting for an autism assessment or diagnosis

Thanks to people sharing their experiences of waiting for an adult autism assessment, we’ve demonstrated the negative impact of a long waiting time for an autism assessment/diagnosis. The neurodevelopmental service has worked on ways of supporting people whilst recognising that demand is increasing.

In our title report, we made recommendations and called for urgent action to improve the lives of those waiting for a neurodevelopmental assessment. This assessment is often vital in someone understanding their neurodiversity and is the key to getting much needed support.

However, the service has since told us the demand for an adult neurodevelopmental assessment has increased (up by 2% month on month).

We published a progress report in March 2022, giving people an update from Sussex NHS Commissioners and the Neurodevelopmental Service on developments over the last nine months.



“It’s an excellent report, and I’m so pleased to see the essential and practical recommendations. I wish you well in its positive impact and contribution to many urgent and crucial improvements.”

Adult participant



What difference did this make

A new letter is being sent to people waiting for an assessment. It can be used to show that they’re on the Autism Assessment pathway to help access support.

A paper was sent to the Sussex Executive Management Team, which detailed the gaps and priorities for improvement. The findings were supported.

Regional work is happening that supports the ambition to improve the outcomes for autistic people.

The Trust/Service has new staff to make the current situation safer. They have increased their triage capacity to prioritise referrals and people waiting for an assessment.

Three further ways we have made a difference for the community

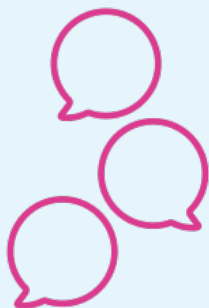
Throughout our work we gather information about health inequalities by speaking to people whose experiences aren't often heard.



Creating empathy by bringing experiences to life

People contact us about their experiences of health and social care services. They share the impact with us. In turn, we share their anonymised stories with NHS and Social Care services so they hear the patients' perspective and can consider what might be done differently.

As part of our access to GP-led care, we've showed Fiona's journey and challenges in getting a mole checked for cancer. Using the 'pathway' approach we've charted the steps she took in order to get a referral and how frustrating the processes were for both her and the clinicians.



Getting services to involve the public

Understanding the benefits of involving local people is essential to improving care for all.

We gave advice to a local GP practice by involving the public in reviewing their developing website and together with the practice staff, we worked on the tone and language used. This work has supported conversations with Sussex NHS Commissioners to help other practices make the most of their website as an important information platform.



Improving care over time

Change takes time. We often work behind the scenes with health and care services to consistently raise issues and push for change.

We have known about dental problems with dental services for a long time. Before the pandemic, we highlighted areas of our county where it was becoming impossible to access an NHS dentist. Since then, we have seen this get worse and have been involved in raising this as a national concern. Last year Healthwatch strengthened our local work by calling for reform of NHS dentistry, co-signing a letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer calling for NHS dentistry to be accessible and affordable for everyone.

Advice and information

If you feel lost and don't know where to turn, Healthwatch is here for you. In times of worry or stress, we can provide confidential support and free information to help you understand your options and get the help you need. Whether it's finding mental health support, answering questions about adult social care or knowing how to make a complaint – you can count on us.

This year we helped people by:

- Providing up to date Information on NHS dentistry and how to improve your chances of getting dental care.
- Linking people to reliable information they could trust.
- Supporting the COVID-19 vaccination and booster programme.
- Helping people to access the services they need.

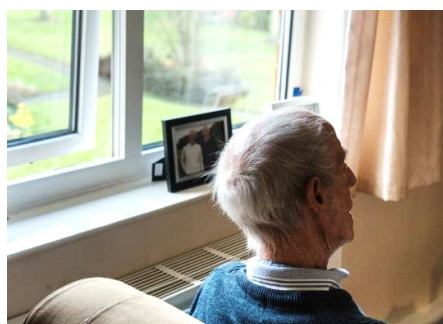


Guiding people on how to access dental care

The information on the NHS service directories is out of date. So, we've worked with dentists to provide practical information on accessing NHS dental care.

Our guides are used regularly to support people who continue to make enquiries about access an NHS dentist.

In our conversations with NHS England's dental commissioners, we showcased an alternative (Dentaid) to high street dental practices and were delighted to see this alternative is now available to Littlehampton residents.



Giving a voice to families when they couldn't visit their loved one

We value strong partnerships with care providers and community and voluntary partners, serving as the public's independent advocate. We were able to offer families of care home residents a platform for sharing concerns and learning from others, through a series of information and supportive webinars.

Alongside this, we regularly attended Care Provider Forums to hear their experiences and support them to look at how they communicate and involve families.

We were privileged to be able to speak about this and our learning partnership with an outstanding care home at [The Outstanding Society](#) event. This society welcomes all Outstanding providers to become members, and encourages all providers to utilise their free best practice resources.

Dying Matters Week May 2021 Healthwatch Sussex webinar

Thinking ahead to the end of life is a sensitive subject. However, a plan can help ensure a person's wishes are respected.

Healthwatch in Sussex invited people to join a conversation about end of life, their preferences, who they would like to have around them and all matters relating to end of life.

Supporting Community Development in Crawley

To support the community groups in their project work, we provided two webinars to show how we use a Logic Model and shared tools to support their work.

Complaints advocacy

Healthwatch West Sussex runs the West Sussex Independent Health Complaints Advocacy Service. NHS Complaints Advocacy is guaranteed under legislation, as a free, independent and confidential service to all people in England who need support to get their complaint resolved. It helps you know all your options, your rights and how to make sure your voice is heard.

Over the last 12 months, we helped over 500 local people understand their options and for many gave support to make or progress a formal concern to the NHS.



Advocacy – so much more than helping a partner write a letter

Getting your concerns across in a formal letter is important. Our advocates have the knowledge and skills to support people to do this in their own voice but in a clear way.

There is often a need for a sensitive approach from our advocates. It takes time to build a trusted relationship that provides the support and guidance to help people navigate the NHS processes, including serious incident reviews, root cause analysis and other investigative frameworks.

The impact of COVID-19 on staffing levels has effected the timeliness of complaint responses, and when local resolution meetings could happen. It has also created surges in advocacy demand and increased the complexity of concerns and support needs.



“Thank you so much for all your support. You have been such a great help in getting through this difficult time. You have worked tirelessly and made sure I got face-to-face contact with some high up managers. Regardless of what was written in various reports. I am quite sure they heard us, and hopefully something will come of that.”



An advocacy partner who complained to a Trust

What difference did this make

Many of advocacy partners experience communication barriers and we work hard to build a better understanding of these needs when working with healthcare professionals.

A practice now has risk mitigation to avoid medication errors and wastage in their dispensary.

Partners have gained the mental health support they needed and onward care.

A person found the confidence gained through the complaint and advocacy support, to have the surgery she much needed, which was successfully carried out in the Summer.

A Trust was able to admit to a number of failings linked to a suicide and to show the person's partner how changes in their service had been made to prevent this from happening again.

Improved post-operative and community nursing pain management processes have improved as a result of two people speaking out and raising their concerns.

Volunteers

We're supported by a team of amazing volunteers who are the heart of Healthwatch. Thanks to their efforts in the community, we're able to understand what is working and what needs improving in NHS and social care.

This year our volunteers:

- Helped people have their say from home, carrying out surveys over the telephone and online.
- Created digital content on our website and social media.
- Carried out website and telephone reviews for local services on the Information they provide and assessing their accessibility.
- Assisted as part of 'Readers' Panels' – checking local services' publications to make them more people focussed and easier to read.
- Continued to amplify local peoples' voices at committees, forums, networks and other meetings.





Gemma (name changed)

“It’s a passion I never knew I had.”

This year, young people have been advising us on our digital plans and have attended and facilitated meetings to keep youth voices loud and clear in West Sussex.

“It felt good... I have so many ideas and I’m so passionate about it”.



Patrick

“Cheryl (Partnerships Lead) and I came together to host two successful webinars in self-care week. We were able to raise awareness of Parkinson’s from the lived experience viewpoint – looking at hospital stays, medications and caring for someone who has Parkinson’s. Also, to help contextualise what it is like living with a long term condition and to promote a more personalised approach.”



Jane

“I enjoyed working with Jo (Volunteering Lead) to support a local GP practice following a merger. We helped the practice to re-engage former Patient Participation Group members (PPG) and to explore how they could work together to establish a new patient group. As I have a background in Practice Management, I felt that my experience and knowledge really supported this work.



Do you feel inspired?

We are always on the lookout for new volunteers, so please get in touch today.



www.healthwatchwestsussex.co.uk



0300 012 0122



Jo.tuck@healthwatchwestsussex.co.uk

Finance and future priorities

To help us carry out our work we receive funding from our local authority under the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

Income		Expenditure	
Funding received from local authority	£321,417	Staff costs	£25,100
Additional funding	£28,072	Operational costs	£313,858
		Support and administration	£3,101
Total income	£349,489	Total expenditure	£342,059

Top three priorities for 2022–23

1. **Adult Social Care** – supporting the understanding of health inequalities when implementing the new [the life you want to lead](#) strategy
2. **Community Services** – continuing our partnership with community networks to look at local needs and how they involve people
3. **Mental Health** – continuing to provide an independent voice to the Sussex children and young peoples’ emotional wellbeing and mental health programme (known as Foundations for Our Future) and to champion their involvement.

Next steps

The pandemic has shone a stark light on the impact of existing inequalities in health and care services, highlighting the importance of championing the voices of those who all too often go unheard.

Over the coming year, our goal is to help reduce these inequalities by making sure your voice is heard, and decision makers reduce the barriers you face, regardless of whether that’s because of where you live, income or race.

We will challenge and support where insight already exists, so services can build on and utilise that knowledge.

Statutory statements

About us

Healthwatch West Sussex CIC, is a community interest company limited by guarantee. Registered Company Number 08557470.

Healthwatch West Sussex works with Help & Care to provide its statutory activities – A49 Aerodrome Studios, Christchurch, Dorset. BH23 3TS.

Healthwatch West Sussex uses the Healthwatch Trademark when undertaking our statutory activities as covered by the licence agreement.



The way we work

Involvement of volunteers and local people in our governance/decision-making.

Our Healthwatch board consists of 9 members, who reside in West Sussex, and work on a voluntary basis to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny to our activities. Our board ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community. Through 2021/22 the board met 6 times. Sitting under the board is a sub-group that meets in private to review the operational performance and finances.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities. We use insight from direct enquiries, our community work and influencing opportunities to decide how resources are used. We involve stakeholders in these discussions and test out ideas with local people through our volunteer network.

Methods and systems used across the year's work to obtain people's views and experience.

We use a wide range of approaches to ensure that as many people as possible have the opportunity to provide us with insight about their experience of health and care services. During 2021/22 we have been available by phone, by email, provided a webform on our website, provided feedback at virtual events/webinars and attended virtual meetings of community groups and forums. We have also provided our own virtual activities and engaged with the public through social media.

We are committed to taking additional steps to ensure we obtain the views of people from diverse backgrounds who are often not heard by health and care decision makers. This year we have done this by, for example, working with others to support conversations with their community members, in return creating a *Spotlight* on their organisation's activities. This has included a Zimbabwe community and people living with autism.

We ensure this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. We publish it on our website and in a monthly *Heads Up* that goes to individuals, community partners and NHS and social care stakeholders. Many then feature it in their newsletters.

Responses to recommendations and requests

We had 1 provider who did not respond to requests for information or recommendations.

This year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic we were unable to make use of our Enter and View powers. Consequently, no recommendations or other actions resulted from this area of activity.

There were no Issues or recommendations escalated by our Healthwatch to Healthwatch England Committee and so no resulting special reviews or Investigations. However, we did ask for one risk to be registered about a local concern.



healthwatch

West Sussex

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Please note our staff and volunteers work from home and in the community, as this offers us the flexibility to cover such a large County.

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