

The value of listening

Healthwatch West Sussex
Annual Report 2023 – 2024



healthwatch
West Sussex

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“Over the last year, local Healthwatch have shown what happens when people speak up about their care, and services listen. They are helping the NHS unlock the power of people’s views and experiences, especially those facing the most serious health inequalities.”

Louise Ansari, Chief Executive at Healthwatch England



Message from our Chair

Together we’re making health and social care better.

As we close another year, I want to take a moment to reflect on our journey and express my deepest gratitude for your unwavering commitment and dedication to the field of Health and Social Care.

In this past year, we have seen how providers have navigated through changes and new ways of working, such as with the new Integrated Care System and the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) following funding cuts. Whilst continuing to adapt with changing times, Healthwatch West Sussex remains steadfast in our mission to ensure local voices are heard in our health and social care system.

From local feedback, key subject areas (or themes) reported on 2023/24, include: Treatment and Care, Access and Choice, Communication and Waiting for Appointments and Treatment. Insight data and examples of local people’s experiences have been shared with local partners, providers and stakeholders, and with escalations helping to influence decision makers.

The outcomes and impact seen this year are a testament to local partners coming together collaboratively, local people providing insight, volunteers regularly giving their time to attend events and support with assessments of health and social care providers, and of course the Healthwatch and Advocacy Team for going the extra mile to help bring about positive change for West Sussex residents. Your contributions continue to make a significant impact in our communities.

Looking ahead, we will continue to focus on enhancing our services, fostering collaboration, and promoting a culture of continuous learning and improvement. Our commitment to local people remains unwavering, and I am confident that with your continued support, we will reach new heights, reflected in our local, regional and even potentially national work.



“Please do keep sharing your experiences so that we can amplify your voices locally, across Sussex and nationally.

Thank you for your efforts and for the difference you make. Here’s to another year of growth, success, and making a difference in the lives of those we serve.”

Steve Cooper, Healthwatch West Sussex



About us

Healthwatch West Sussex is your local health and social care champion.

We make sure NHS leaders and decision-makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care. We can also 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 are:

- **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.



Year in review

Reaching out:

8418 people

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



9330 people

came to us for clear advice and information about topics such as mental health and the cost-of-living crisis.

Making a difference to care:

We published

35 reports

about the improvements people would like to see in health and social care services.

Our most popular report was

Exploring Low Uptake for Breast Screening in West Sussex

which highlighted why breast screening invitations are not taken up in West Sussex.



Health and social care that works for you:

We're lucky to have

58

outstanding volunteers who gave up **1960 hours** to make care better for our community.

We're funded by our local authority.

In 2023 – 24 we received

£234,694

which was a **2%** increase from the previous year.








We currently employ

8 staff

who help us carry out our work.



How we've made a difference this year

Spring	 <p>We championed local people's voices, by hosting a workshop with our Integrated Care Board partners.</p> <p>Allowing people to contribute to a programme of work to improve engagement practices across Primary Care services.</p>	 <p>We took steps to support our local Maternity Voices Partnership team with their work, sharing our 'Enter & View' methodology and training with them to inform their service visits.</p>
Summer	 <p>We helped isolated communities have access to green places to improve their wellbeing, mental and physical health. Working in partnership with South Downs National Park and Community Transport Sussex, we collected insight from local people. South Downs National Park has now launched the Health and Wellbeing Travel Grant 2024/25.</p>	 <p>Through our partnership approach with the West Sussex County Council Health Protection and Screening Manager, NHS England, NHS Southeast Cancer Screening and West Sussex Breast Cancer Screening, we helped to highlight the reasons why local people are not attending routine breast screening appointments.</p>
Autumn	 <p>We collaborated with Adur and Worthing LCN, Pathfinder and West Sussex MIND to conduct a survey surrounding mental health.</p> <p>We learnt from local people what would help them and their families emotional, mental, and physical health.</p>	 <p>Working in partnership with NHS Sussex and Macmillan Cancer Support we learnt about people's experience of the Cancer Care Review by Primary Care.</p>
Winter	 <p>We reached out to our partnership network to find a meeting room for a local charity service to conduct in-person counselling sessions with young people.</p>	 <p>Our Healthwatch in Sussex report 'Living with Back Pain, understanding shared decision making (March 2022)' was published nationally in the biography for the Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Alliance 'Act now' Musculoskeletal Health Inequalities and Deprivation report.</p>

Your voice heard at a wider level

We collaborate with other Healthwatch to ensure the experiences of people in West Sussex influence decisions made about services at Sussex Integrated Care System (ICS) level.

This year we've worked with Healthwatch across Sussex to achieve:

	<p>A blog and poll "Is society becoming noisier: is this affecting our health and wellbeing?" was published in December 2023 and widely promoted across West Sussex with 50 responses received.</p> <p>78% of responders stated that the levels of noise are affecting their health and wellbeing. These findings have been shared with partners.</p>
	<p>Healthwatch in Sussex report – Living with Back Pain understanding shared decision making (March 2022) has been included in the biography for the Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Alliance 'Act now' musculoskeletal Health Inequalities and Deprivation report.</p>
	<p>A discussion Toolkit, following our work with 'Brainkind', has been updated, re-branded and published. This work is part of NICE guidance resources and was requested by Surrey and Sussex Cancer Network Lead to circulate to GP's.</p>
	<p>Over the past year, the three Healthwatch teams have collaborated as 'Healthwatch in Sussex' to capture and share feedback on the transformation of outpatient services, and experiences of long COVID, dentistry, NHS complaints, Patient Advice and Liaison Services (PALS) and Memory Assessment Services. Partnership working has enhanced our ability to champion public and patient voices on these and other health and care themes at a Sussex-wide level.</p> <p>Our collaborative working has been recognised and acknowledged as good practice by our national body Healthwatch England and NHS Sussex, and we will continue to work together to ensure that people sit at the heart of health and care services over the next 12 months and beyond.</p>



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 feed this back to services and help them improve.

Understanding the barriers and improving the uptake of Breast Screening

We made a significant difference to healthcare by collecting and reporting insight surrounding the low uptake of routine breast screening appointments.

Working closely with the West Sussex County Council Health Protection and Screening Manager, NHS England, NHS Southeast Cancer Screening and West Sussex Breast Cancer Screening, a survey was co-designed and completed by local people, with 531 responses. From the insight recorded, we were able to identify the possible barriers and areas of focus to help increase the uptake of routine breast screening appointments in West Sussex.

Top reasons why breast screening invitations are not taken up

- Personal or work commitments (24%)
- Fear and embarrassment (17%)
- Lack of online booking (13%)



Reasons given for not attending when invited

- Experience of the service, administration and information issues.
- Staff.
- Not being invited for the screening if aged over 70 years, not being invited for screening as aged under 53 years.
- Transport and parking, dignity, pain and discomfort, disability and accessibility of the screening unit, working age and personal choice.



Summary

There are many reasons as to why invitees to the breast screening invitation do not take up the appointment, such as arranging the appointment, location, age range and access.

The top reasons stated for not attending included work commitments, fear, embarrassment and the booking process. The system does need to consider a more flexible appointment approach for those with care and responsibilities and disabilities. From the suggestions shared by responders, minor changes to the invitation letter is needed and more flexible appointments. Considerations for locations with better parking and transport access.

Suggestions to help increase the uptake of invites included the promotion of the service through social media and local communities, and a road show to promote screening to provide information and reassurance.

One area that came through very strongly was how much respondents appreciated the professionalism and efficiency of staff throughout the breast screening process.

What difference did this make?

The low uptake of breast screening appointments in West Sussex study has provided insight and allowed decision makers to make positive changes to increase attendance, and where cancer is detected, provide quicker diagnosis and more effective treatment at an earlier stage.

Raising and supporting Dementia Awareness

We helped to bring local people together, to gain information, advice and signposting, by co-hosting a number of large scale community events.

Dementia Awareness events were held during Dementia Awareness Week in May and Self-Care week in November, in partnership with the Alzheimer Society and Places Leisure – The Bridge, Horsham.

Sixteen statutory and community organisations attended. We collected insight at the Worthing Dementia Hub and learnt that people were finding it difficult to know who provides which services and how to claim benefits.

Other topics raised included:

- Dementia diagnosis.
- Dementia pathway.
- Signposting to other services.
- Cost of living advice and support.
- Emotional support.
- Learning about waste prevention.

What difference did this make?

Events are multifunctional and benefited local people by providing support, helped partnerships work collaboratively and allowed Healthwatch West Sussex to hear from local people about their needs, experiences and priorities. This provided perspective and helped to show a bigger picture of how dementia and loneliness is affecting people living in West Sussex.

Since these events, there has been a temporary pause of the local dementia service. The impact being the pausing of referral from GPs for 4 months and has increased the backlog for the service potentially making life more stressful for the person, living with possible dementia, their families and carers or supporters. During the pause, there was little information of who could support while they waited. Healthwatch escalated the issues raised and concern regarding the increased numbers of people on the waiting list with the West Sussex County Council Adult Health and Social Care Director and Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee in Quarter 4.

Following concerns being raised, the Health and Social Care Committee (HASC) Chair wrote to the Memory and Dementia Assessment Services at Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust to request an update and invite to the next HASC meeting. An update was provided, and reassurance given regarding the support available to local people.

In response to local feedback, Sussex Healthwatch worked with Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust to issue a **poll** to find out how the closure has affected people. We received a response from their Chief Executive thanking us for the report and promising to feed the results into their new strategy, which they were developing and which will set their priorities for the coming years. The results were also shared with MAS service Leads.

We were able to provide information to local people and share our insight report with partners. These events also provide useful networking opportunities for organisation's which attended.



“We are so much more informed than when we came in. Everyone was so lovely and friendly. So supportive and it’s great that we know we are not alone.”

Feedback from attendee

Three ways we have made a difference in 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

It’s important for services to see the bigger picture. Hearing personal experiences and the impact on people’s lives provides them with a better understanding of the problems.

Transport can be a challenge for people across the county, so we supported ‘Sussex Community Transport New Travel Buddies Scheme’ to help support people living with mental health issues or feeling isolated. The aim being to build confidence and resilience to join community and social activities, to better support their health and wellbeing.

Getting services to involve the public

Services need to understand the benefits of involving local people to help improve care for everyone.

In June 2023, we worked in partnership with Places Leisure in East Grinstead to co-host a 14 organisation event; attended by the Town Mayor Councillor Frazer Visser. Local people told us that the event was worth attending and there was a wide range of information and stand holders.

In May 2023, we co-hosted an event with Places Leisure, Bridge Centre Horsham and Alzheimer’s Society-Dementia Action Community. The event was actively supported by sixteen organisations. Around 30 local people, carers and supporters attended the event.

In November 2023, we came together again with Places Leisure, Bridge Centre Horsham, and Alzheimer’s Society-Self-Care Week Living Well to co-host a dementia event. Approximately 30 members of the public attended the event.

All events provided useful networking opportunities for organisations in attendance.

Improving care over time

We often work behind the scenes with services to consistently raise issues and bring about change.

We hear a lot from health professionals about holistic and personalised care, yet some people feel unsupported to make appropriate behavioural changes for their health. It is academically well known that most people make behavioral changes to support their health when they are ‘Willing, Able and Ready’, and unlike traffic lights, all three areas are needed to be switched on for change to happen. We support members of the public who are searching for information to improve their health, such as how to take medication or do an exercise. Therefore, we ensure that we update our website regularly with information, advice, guidance and signposting. Click [here](#) for further details.

From listening to local people, monthly ‘What we have heard’ insight reports are collated, reviewed, and shared with the wider system to help improve health and social care services.

The Healthwatch West Sussex Manager picks up on priorities and escalates key areas of focus with local decision makers.

There’s a summary of other outcomes we’ve achieved this year in the Statutory Statements section at the end of this report.

Improving the patient experience of using the Non-Emergency Patient Transport Service (NEPTS)

Since 2016, the three Sussex Healthwatch teams have collated nearly 600 patient experiences of NEPTS across four separate reviews, our latest in 2020. Since then, we have worked with NHS Sussex Commissioners to ensure that improvements patients wanted were acted on. We also wanted to make sure that the new provider could deliver the service and avoid past mistakes.

NEPTS is for people whose condition means they need support to and from hospital and other medical appointments. This year, Healthwatch contributed to the commissioning and delivery of NEPTS by:

- **Being part of a Sussex Communications and Engagement Group** where we influenced the final wording and requirements for the new NEPTS contract being delivered in Sussex from 2025.
- **Evaluated bids to deliver the new NEPTS contract**, focusing on what patients told us mattered most to them: focusing on patient communications, timeliness, assessment of eligibility, continuous service improvements and accessibility of the service.

Previously, local Healthwatch in Sussex have supported the current provider of NEPTS to deliver patient forums, so user voice is captured and used to inform service delivery. We also fed into a national review of NEPTS to ensure that the views of Sussex residents and patients were heard in the process.

What difference did we make to the Sussex NEPTS service?

Using your feedback and our independent review of the NEPTS service, we developed several recommendations. Those commissioning the new service acted on these, including:

We recommended that the new provider should invest in delivering improved communications including issuing clearer patient guidance around eligibility and how to apply. The service provider should also provide information about alternatives to the service. There is a new requirement for the provider to develop a Single Point of Coordination which will refer patients who meet the eligibility criteria to an expanded and more responsive patient transport service, and signpost ineligible patients to alternative transport options.

We recommended that the new provider should use innovative technological solutions such as mobile phone tracking apps and a patient online account facility to help patients track their vehicles. There is a new requirement for the NEPTS provider to embed modern technology such as apps and web-based portals to ensure patients, their carers, and hospital staff are kept informed of the location of their transport so that they are ready on time for its arrival.

We recommended that the provider should establish fully accessible patient forums for patients. The new transport provider is required to establish and support patient groups across Sussex to assist in the ongoing cycle of service monitoring and improvement, so it will always have patients working with it to plan for a better service.



“As someone whose role it is to make sure patient concerns are central to decision-making, I can honestly say that I have never seen a more meticulous, patient-centric contribution.”

Praise for Heathwatch staff’s contribution to the evaluation of bids





Hearing from all communities

Over the past year, we have worked hard to make sure we hear from everyone within our local area. We consider it important to reach out to the communities we hear from less frequently to gather their feedback and make sure their voice is heard, and services meet their needs.

Throughout the year we have supported the wider system by promoting various pieces of information and advice on our website:

- What mental health support is available for children and young people?
- What is measles and who can get the vaccine?
- Looking after your health during the cost of living crisis.
- What support can I get as a carer.

Making a difference in communities

We identified an inequality and a potential trend, which featured in Q3 and Q4 Healthwatch quarterly reports, which shows that Carers are struggling to attend routine healthcare appointments.

From our Team visits at Crawley Urgent Treatment Centre (UTC), based at Crawley Hospital, we spoke to 72 people about their experiences and heard that patients need flexible appointments due to working and caring responsibilities.

- In our recent 'Low uptake to Routine Breast Screening invitations' report: It is important to note that 20%, 98 responses are from carers and 4.5%, 22 responses stated that being a carer would affect their ability to attend an appointment due to time transport considerations.
- Location was noted as important for those with work and caring responsibilities. The location of the appointment needs to be provided locally and consider parking, transport and location.
- One person advised that to attend an appointment they would need to pay £70 for carers respite to travel from Crawley to Worthing, which would be difficult within the normal 2hr allocation.

Collaborating to influence improvements in maternity services across Sussex

We have helped to improve local maternity services by sharing our 'Enter & View' methodology and training with the local Maternity & Neonatal Voices Partnership (MNVP) team.

Following Enter & View visits we conducted to local maternity services in early 2023, we spoke to our MNVP team to discuss our report. As part of these discussions, we identified potential duplication as the MNVP have teams of volunteers who regularly visit maternity services and liaise with local trusts in order to feedback patient experiences and influence improvements.

Both organisations wanted to ensure collaboration and avoid duplication going forward, so we worked together to review our respective methodology and areas of focus.

We were able to see that there were many common areas but that if we joined together and merged our approaches, we could deliver a more rounded and comprehensive assessment of the environment and quality of services. We shared the Healthwatch Enter & View methodology and looked at this in collaboration with the NHS 15 Steps Challenge and PLACE assessment documentation.

As a result of this review, we agreed

- MNVP will lead on all visits to maternity services and will liaise and involve Healthwatch in them.
- HW will share their E&V training with MNVP volunteers before service visits.

We both spoke to our local Trust and this approach was welcomed by them.



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 an NHS dentist, making a complaint or choosing a good care home for a loved one – you can count on us.

This year we've helped people by:

- Providing up-to-date information people can trust.
- Helping people access the services they need.
- Our Helpdesk has helped to provide information, advice and signposting to Healthwatch West Sussex Independent Health Advocacy Service.
- As part of our partnership work we support by promoting the organisation and this year we have developed 16 Spotlights.

Supporting and signposting

We provide a person-centred multifaceted support service by listening, informing, supporting and Signposting

A local person contacted our West Sussex Healthwatch Information Hub to seek help after struggling to access their full medical records. We listened to the person's experience.

Supported:

We helped to reflect on their experience and appreciated their feelings of frustration. We clarified what Healthwatch is and how we can assist.

Signposted:

We referred the person to the West Sussex Independent Health Complaints Advocacy service (IHCAS) Team. As well as signposted to ICO (Information Commissioner's Office) if they wish to proceed with a complaint. To assist with their self-management of various physical health issues, provided links to the Surrey and Sussex NHS Pain Management website, a local Fibromyalgia support group and Age UK.

Cancer misdiagnosis at Doctor's surgery

Our Information Team helped to provide some links to organisations that could offer further support and guidance.

A West Sussex 80-year-old woman contacted us feeling powerless about her recent cancer misdiagnosis at her Doctor's surgery. A&E referred the lady to her doctor and her doctor dismissed the symptoms and advised that the patient was "too anxious and paranoid." After taking an entire course of treatment, there was still no improvement.

The lady decided to have a second opinion with a private colorectal surgeon and paid £200. The colorectal surgeon examined her and diagnosed her with bowel cancer. The surgeon was baffled as to why this was not picked up initially and followed up as per the 2-week cancer referral rule. We were told that Worthing Hospital had written to the patient's GP saying she should have had a 2-week rule referral, and that further investigation was needed.

The lady explained that her daughter is handling her complaint and doesn't require our advocacy service. But will contact us within 12 months of her complaint if she needs further support.

Our Information Team helped to provide some links to organisations that could offer further support and guidance, including Care Quality Commission (CQC), Action against Medical Accidents (AvMA), Citizens Advice, Patient Association and West Sussex Independent Health Complaints Advocacy Service (IHCAS).

As well as providing information about several local cancer support groups including: The Olive Tree, Cancer United, Macmillan, Surrey and Sussex Cancer Alliance.



Volunteering

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

This year our volunteers:

- Supported the planning, delivery and evaluation of projects and work programmes, including a review and refresh of our Enter & View programme.
- Visited services to appraise the environment, safety and quality of services through the lens of a patient or carer, via Enter & View visits and PLACE assessments.
- Supported the planning, delivery and evaluation of engagement events, including 5 college Freshers Fairs.
- Collected and shared stories, experiences and views from local people – from events, social media and anecdotal interactions.
- Helped to collect insight and evidence through surveys and polls, both in-person and digitally.
- Represented Healthwatch and local people at NHS Trust and System meetings, including the Sussex Community Foundation Trust Patient Engagement Committee; Queen Victoria Hospital Trust Patient Engagement Committee; South East Coast Ambulance Patient Engagement Committee; Sussex Perinatal Equity Steering Group.



"When I retired from working in the NHS, I wanted to use my knowledge to support my local community.

Volunteering for Healthwatch has proved to be a rewarding and positive decision. In my 5 years as a volunteer, I have supported several projects and service reviews.

I was particularly drawn to the role of Liaison Representative for the Queen Victoria Hospital (QVH) because whilst, it is local to me, it offers a unique service that is highly valued by its patients and the local community. I also thought that my NHS experience offered a strong base from which to add value to both the local community and the hospital."



Patrick – Liaison Representative for the Queen Victoria Hospital NHS Trust



"I have dipped in and out of volunteering with Healthwatch during my school and college years.

I find the variety of projects and topics/activities really interesting and because I am able to volunteer very flexibly, it is easy to dip in and out when I can fit it in around my studies and part-time work.

I was first aware of Healthwatch because they did some work around young people and mental health, which is a topic close to my heart. I liked that the team were interested in my personal experience and that by sharing my experiences, we could influence system leaders to make changes and do things differently."



Eve – Youth Volunteer / College Student

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.

Our income and expenditure

Income		Expenditure	
Healthwatch Annual Grant from Government	£234,694	Expenditure on pay	£233,518
Advocacy Grant from Local Government	£86,731	Operational costs	£ 44,636
Additional income	£18,160	Support and administration	£40,000
Total income	£339,585	Total expenditure	£318,154

Additional income is broken down by:

- £8,160.00 received by NHS England for a project.
- £10,000.00 received by NHS Sussex for a project.

ICS funding

Healthwatch across West Sussex also receives funding from our Integrated Care System (ICS) to support new areas of collaborative work at this level, including:

Purpose of ICS funding	Amount
Sussex ICS Evaluation Framework and 360 review	£10,000

Next steps

Over the next year, we will keep reaching out to every part of society, especially people in the most deprived areas, so that those in power hear their views and experiences.

We will also work together with partners and our local Integrated Care System to help develop an NHS culture where, at every level, staff strive to listen and learn from patients to make care better.

The following are our key areas of focus for 2023–2025:

- Mental Health.
- Dentistry / General Practices.
- Adult Social Care.
- Women’s Health.
- Information, Advice and Signposting.
- Independent Health Complaints Advocacy (IHCAS) funding.



Statutory statements

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 lay people in our governance and decision-making

Our Healthwatch Board consists of 9 members who work on a voluntary basis to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny of our activities. Our Board ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community.

Throughout 2023/24, the Board met 4 times and made decisions on matters such as approval of the recruitment and job description for the new Children & Young People engagement lead role.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities.

How we work across the system

As a team, we work across the health and care system engaging directly with NHS and local authority partners. We are also part of the County Local Community Networks (LCN's). These are multi agency partnerships covering each district and borough area in West Sussex and focus on tackling local health inequalities. These include priorities such as access to primary care, cancer screening, young people's mental health, cost of living crisis and focused joint work on more deprived housing estates, including encouragement into wellbeing services.

Through our involvement across the system we share insight themes and work collaboratively with local and national partners, influencing decisions across the planning sector and championing the use of health impact assessments for planning projects, new housing developments, and transport.

Methods and systems used across the year to obtain people's experiences

We use a wide range of approaches to ensure that as many people as possible can provide us with insight into their experience of using services. During 2023/24, we have been available by phone, and email, provided a web form on our website and through social media, as well as attending meetings of community groups and forums.

We ensure that 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 newsletter that goes to individuals, community partners, NHS and social care stakeholders.

Responses to recommendations

All providers responded to requests for information or recommendations. There were no issues or recommendations escalated by us to Healthwatch England Committee, so no resulting reviews or investigations.

Taking people's experiences to decision-makers

We ensure that people who can make decisions about services hear about the insights and experiences that have been shared with us.

In our local authority area, for example, we take information to Health and Social Care Committee (HASC) and Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB).

We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in West Sussex County Council and NHS Sussex, SPFT, NHS University. As well at a Sussex level at the Health and Care Assembly. We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

Enter and view

In 2023/24, we reviewed and refreshed our Enter & View Programme having suspended our Enter & View activity due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent fragility of local system providers, in the recovery period following the pandemic.

In the summer and autumn of 2023, we spent time re-establishing our networks and relationships with providers. We also looked at insight and evidence across the county to prioritise who and where we should focus our resource in relation to Enter & View (E&V) activities going forward.

This year, we made 28 services as part of the national PLACE (Patient Let Assessment of the Care Environment) audit – led by NHSE/NHS Digital.

We made 3 E&V visits with a number of recommendations and actions made as part of our post-visit reporting.

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
Lime Tree Surgery – Findon Valley	<p>A responsive visit due to concerns raised by members of the public through our helpdesk.</p> <p>A portacabin had been installed in the car park, reducing the capacity of the car park and there were electric cables causing a trip hazard.</p>	<p>We did a spot check E&V visit, took photos and wrote a summary report for the practice management team.</p> <p>We recommended that the situation was made safer in respect of the electric cables.</p> <p>We revisited a week later and the situation was much improved.</p>
Southlands Hospital, Shoreham – University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust	Part of our routine E&V Programme / A Healthwatch England Project to review and report on the new Community Diagnostic Centres across the country.	<p>We produced a report for the provider trust with recommendations for improvements to signage, wayfinding and maintenance.</p> <p>We also returned 16 patient surveys to HWE as part of the national CDC Project.</p>
Princess Royal Hospital, Haywards Heath – University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust	Part of our routine Enter & View (E&V)Programme.	We provided a summary report to the provider trust with recommendations for improvements to signage, cleanliness, dementia / disability accessibility and patient experience.

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch West Sussex is represented on the West Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board, Health and Social Care Committee and Sussex Health and Care Assembly by Zoey Harries, Healthwatch West Sussex Manager, from August 2023 (with Katrina Broadhill April/May 2023). During 2023/24 our representative has effectively carried out this role by overseeing activities, sharing key updates with the Team and escalating Concerns.

2023 – 2024 Outcomes

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
Working with our Integrated Care Board partners, we hosted a workshop reviewing West Sussex Primary Care Services.	Ensured local people’s voices contributed to a programme of work to improve engagement practices across Primary Care services.
Being part of the NHS Sussex MSK Review, we fed back insight and evidence from our ‘Living with pain and understanding shared decision making’ report.	Healthwatch in Sussex report – Living with Back Pain understanding shared decision making (March 2022) was included in the biography for the Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Alliance ‘Act now’ musculoskeletal Health Inequalities and Deprivation report.
Supported our local Maternity Voices Partnership team with their work and shared our Enter & View methodology training.	Informed service visits.
Contributed to the University Hospitals Sussex NHS Trust Discharge Pathway review.	Ensured that patient experiences and local voices influenced planned changes.
Took part in the national VIVALDI Social Care Project around infection prevention control and outbreaks in residential care settings.	Reviewed the research materials to ensure they were accessible and appropriate for residents, relatives and family carers.
Carried out a study in partnership with South Downs National Park and Community Transport Sussex highlighting the mental health, wellbeing and physical benefits of having access to green places and how isolated communities due to transportation limitations, struggled to access and enjoy the National Park.	Raised awareness of the importance of green spaces and the benefits to mental/physical health. The study was shared, and we are delighted to see the launch of the South Down’s Health and Wellbeing Travel Grant in May 2024.




2023 – 2024 Outcomes continued

Conducted a breast cancer screening survey with local women to identify reasons for a declined uptake of routine appointments.	The low uptake of breast screening appointments in the West Sussex project results provided insight and allowed decision makers to make positive changes to increase attendance, and where cancer is detected, provide quicker diagnosis and more effective treatment at an earlier stage.
Collated and published findings from the Bersted and Chilgrove Community Hubs survey.	Captured views, current needs, issues, concerns, and barriers local residents and their families experience in accessing the Chilgrove Community Hubs and living in Arun District.
Supported with the Adur and Worthing LCN Mental Health survey in collaboration with Pathfinder and West Sussex MIND.	Learned from local people what would help to support local people and their families emotional, mental, and physical health.
Held a partnership event with Places Leisure and Alzheimer’s Society at The Bridge in Horsham as part of Self-Care week.	19 organisations provided information and advice to enable people to Live Well with Dementia. The event provided useful networking opportunities for organisations which attended.
Attended the Urgent Treatment Centre (UTC) in Crawley to talk with people waiting to be seen.	Identified gaps in the system and a trend affecting carers that was escalated by the Healthwatch Manager.
Attended local Fresher Fairs.	<p>Attending the events hosted by Chichester College Group enabled us to network and develop relationships with existing and new partners.</p> <p>We have been able to collaborate with the NHS Sexual Health Teams on public engagement and involvement activities following the introductions and conversations we have had at fresher fairs.</p>



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