



Together

we're making health
and social care better

Annual Report 2022–23

healthwatch
West Sussex

Contents

Message from our Chair	3
About us	4
Highlights from our year	6
Listening to your experiences	9
Advice and information	15
Volunteers	17
Finances and future priorities	19
Statutory statements	20



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“In the last ten years, the health and social care landscape has changed dramatically, but the dedication of local Healthwatch hasn’t. Your local Healthwatch has worked tirelessly to make sure the views of local people are heard, and NHS and social care leaders use your feedback to make care better.”

Louise Ansari, Healthwatch National Director

Message from our Chair

Together we're making health and social care better.

It's been another challenging year in the health and social care sector, with the consequences of Covid-19 still being felt by many as well as the ongoing disruption in the NHS. During this time Healthwatch West Sussex has continued to ensure that your voice is heard by those who shape and run the local services in our communities.

Key themes have been access to GP services and NHS dentistry, where we have highlighted the particular issues of residents in West Sussex. All this work and more will continue as changes within the health services develop.

The annual report is an attempt to summarise the efforts of the team but in no way can it reflect the dedication and commitment I witness in my role as Chair. It also affords me an opportunity to thank everyone who has shared their views and experiences with us in the past year.

With the new Integrated Care System, there are lots of changes still to come and we want to make sure that local people help to shape services. Please do keep sharing your experiences so that we can amplify your voices locally, across Sussex and nationally.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Cooper". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Steve Cooper
Healthwatch West Sussex
Chair



"I am very proud of the work undertaken by the team and all of our willing volunteers, along with a variety of partners who have collaborated on projects across Sussex."

Steve Cooper, Healthwatch West Sussex Chair

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.

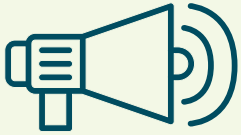


Our values are:

- **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



5,139 people

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

5,750 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

31 reports and spotlights

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

Our most popular report was

Exploring Low Uptake of Bowel Screening by Men in Rural West Sussex

which highlighted the struggles of **men's reluctance to seek medical support**.



Health and care that works for you



We're lucky to have

54

outstanding volunteers who gave up **231 days** to make care better for our community.

We're funded by our local authority. In 2022-23 we received

£332,919

which is **3.5% more** than the previous year.

We currently employ

6 staff

who help us carry out our work.

How we've made a difference this year

Spring

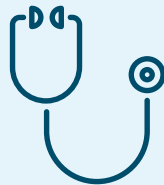


Supporting our local NHS in designing new personalised care, particularly the re-commissioning of Sussex Muscular-Skeletal Services (MSK)



Worked together to create content and information that is patient focused and informative for GP Practice's new website.

Summer

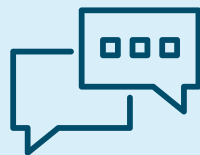


Looking at differences in access to GP-led Care. The difficulties in getting through to their GP practice and also in obtaining a consultation.



Supporting hospitals to get the clinical environment right so that people can easily get to where they need to be.

Autumn



We contributed to the discussions in the Assembly for the strategic direction for the Sussex integrated care system.

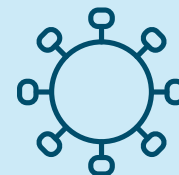


Supporting NHS Sussex to improve maternity outcomes by sharing expectant and new parents stories and experiences.

Winter



Using the information we received from patients in Sussex we were able to submit a joint response to a Parliamentary Inquiry into dentistry.



We contributed additional insight that will support Healthwatch as well as local decision-makers and providers in understanding and responding to Long COVID locally.

10 years of improving care

This year marks a special milestone for Healthwatch. Over the last ten years, people have shared their experiences, good and bad, to help improve health and social care. A big thank you to all our Healthwatch Heroes that have stepped up and inspired change. Here are a few of our highlights:

How have we made care better, together?

Transparency

Using IHCAS experiences, our case study improved openness and transparency for patients and their families when things go wrong.



Dignity in pharmacies

We created a campaign to make people aware that pharmacies have consulting rooms.

Access health support

We designed a toolkit to support healthcare professionals to protect vulnerable people.



Mental health beds

We spoke up for people who were inpatients at Langley Green Hospital to create a safe and comfortable space for them to recover to be able to return home.

NHS dentistry

We continued to voice public concerns that improvements to NHS dentistry are too slow, leaving thousands of people in pain.





Healthwatch Hero



Celebrating a hero in our local community.

Our Healthwatch Hero is Hannah, Youth Volunteer, who is part of our hospital Enter & View visiting team, supports our surveys and research activities and also supported our youth engagement programme.

Hannah helped to design and deliver the engagement activities. Students were encouraged to share their experiences by doodling and writing on our tablecloth. Students spoke about the college's LGBTQ and mental health support as well as sharing valuable lived experience from primary care services, community mental health support organisations and CAMHS.

Hannah contributed to writing up the responses from students and presented the findings to the Chair of the Integrated Care Board, Stephen Lightfoot at a stakeholder event. Hannah has been able to influence our local system to set actions which demonstrate signs of positive change for young people's support in future.



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.

Advocating for fairer NHS dentistry

NHS dentistry is in desperate need of reform and this year we have successfully moved NHS dentistry up the political agenda, making it easier for people to find a dentist taking on NHS patients.

Healthwatch in Sussex (Brighton & Hove, East Sussex and West Sussex) have been collaborating over the last two years to develop a Sussex-wide understanding of people's experiences of accessing or seeking to access dentistry, especially NHS services.

NHS Sussex responses to our findings

Our findings as a result NHS Sussex announced changes, including:



- NHS Sussex is developing a long and short-term dental plan to develop services which are accessible for local people and sustainable for dental providers.
- We will be engaging with dental professionals to identify problems and explore areas of improvement to help inform the plan.
- NHS dentists are to receive fairer payments for providing more complex dental care to those who need it most.
- We will be working with health and care partners across Sussex to address inequality of access to ensure all vulnerable groups have access to improved dental care.

What difference will this make?

We have shared our findings with local MPs so that they can use this evidence to raise patient concerns in Parliament, Healthwatch England, our local Health and Wellbeing Boards, Health and Overview Scrutiny Committees and with those responsible for ensuring NHS dental provision happens across Sussex. We will continue to challenge them to act upon it as they develop their plans.



"I have rung over 50 dentist practices and been sent away from each one. One in Horsham told myself and husband they would not accept my 2-year-old daughter as an NHS patient as there is no money in children..."

Quote from a patient

Low Uptake of Bowel Screening by Men in Rural West Sussex

Bowel cancer is a common type of cancer in both men and women. About 1 in 20 people will get it during their lifetime. It's the fourth most common type of cancer, with most people diagnosed being over the age of 60. Screening can help find it at an early stage, when it's easier to treat.

Our conversations with men provided a rounder view with the following themes being identified as barriers; not being aware of different screenings available, embarrassed, difficulty in completing the test or the age when different screening begins and ends.

Our recommendations:

It was suggested that communication needs to be considered carefully and needs to use the right language to engage with the population.

Suggested that the NHS needs to promote the test around male activities: sports, exercise gyms, and social – fishing, golf, football, the local pub as examples.

Recognising the role of women and partners and the important role they play in supporting and prompting the completion of screening testing.

Consider adding the website information to identify where the nearest post box is to the letters sent.

Is there a poo taboo?

It is well understood that discussing health, beyond the physical image and activities, with men can be challenging – as we have found with this project.

We spoke to local pubs, clubs, community and sports groups and were told we could not speak with their members, some citing GDPR issues and others declining due to the social nature of the group.

Although even with these factors, we were able to raise awareness of our participation opportunity during men's health awareness week. We reached 176 people. Conducted 14 follow up conversations.

In addition, we were able to have conversations with 67 people (n56 males and n11 females) at various engagement events, including four walking football groups in Arun.



“I did not do the first test I received as I thought it was unhygienic and didn't like the thought of sending a sample in the post!”

Male

Three 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.

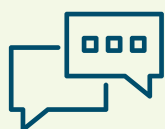


Adult social care priority

Proposals for transforming adult social care.

We have been involved in activities to support the co-design of a customer survey for residents affected by the financial assessment changes. We suggested to the Council that it considers how customers, carers and community partners can be involved in the review of the findings and we have offered our support with this.

From this the council are proposing improvements across 10 key areas in the next 10 years.



Learning from complaints

Independent Health Complaints Advocacy Service (IHCAS)

IHCAS worked on a sensitive case and wrote a case study on the communication during the referral process with Marie Stopes International (MSI) and UH Sussex, which involved two serious incident reports and highlighted an ineffective communication pathway allowing for the wishes of the individual patient to be heard. From this case Marie Stopes International (MSI) have been able to implement national changes to their processes.



Workshop to explore how people and communities can work together with primary care

Building on the successful relationships that already exist.

Healthwatch West Sussex ran a workshop with representatives of GP Practices, Primary Care Networks (PCNs), Patient Participant Groups (PPGs), other local voluntary and community groups and patients to explore what best practice looks like and inform the development of a resources pack for patient engagement.



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.

This year we have reached different communities by:

- Organising a free event with many local community organisations and groups offering advice and support.
- Attended multi-agency events at a pop-up pantry in Midhurst that provided an opportunity to have conversations with residents.
- We support all of the Local Community Networks in West Sussex.
- Held a workshop to explore how people and communities can work together with primary care.

Your voices inform the need for community power

We submitted several reports as evidence to New Local – an independent think tank with a mission to unlock community power.

By listening to people and looking at their lives in a wider sense – “the wider determinants of health” – we were able to move closer towards the vision of a truly Integrated Care System.

We recommend that the opportunities to work with the health system be extended to smaller voluntary and community groups.



“Thank you again for submitting evidence to the report – it has proved informative and useful to shape ideas. We’d like to list your organisation in the report as having submitted evidence.”

Senior Policy Researcher, New Local



Supporting adult safeguarding practice and information

Martin has championed the need for more public information on what the safeguarding board does.

The Adult Safeguarding Board’s newsletters now include a ‘summary of what has been covered in Board meetings, as well as the usual headlines on new policies, procedural, and guidance produced by the Safeguarding Adults Board’.

Martin has been closely involved in developing the Safeguarding information pack (Pan Sussex Resources) through membership of the public engagement task and finish group. This work has been adopted by East Sussex and Brighton Safeguarding Adult Boards.

“I am delighted to see this being realised, with the announcement that the Adult Safeguarding Board’s newsletters will include a summary of what has been covered in Board meetings.”

Martin Phillips, Independent Director



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, how to make 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 a wide range of signposting to support our residents
- Helping a family to get urgent access to clinical advice when they were unable to get the urgency of their child's situation addressed
- Helping people access NHS dentistry
- Encouraging a family to explore advocacy support

Desire for GPs to take responsibility

Caller shared that she didn't want to make a complaint, but she felt that the GPs are refusing to take responsibility for not picking up that her symptoms were caused by medication side effects

She shared that she is 89 and for many months has been having various symptoms including blood in faeces, incontinence, instability, irregular blood pressure and severe constipation. She was treated and prescribed medication for all of these individually.

She was eventually referred to the hospital with potentially having colon cancer. After various tests it emerged that the cause of all of these symptoms were the side effects of her anti-depressant medication. She has since halved the dose and her symptoms have disappeared.

The caller shared that she didn't want to make a complaint, but she felt that the GPs are refusing to take responsibility for not picking up that her symptoms were caused by medication side effects, seeming to imply that the MH team were at fault. She shared how difficult it was, especially the wait she had to see if she had cancer.

Desired outcome would be "that they acknowledge and take responsibility".



"You are the first person to see this from my point of view. Thank you, you have given me first sign of positivity."

Healthwatch West Sussex Help Desk Caller

e-Consult at GP surgery

We explored with Sandra (name change) her main issue, which is getting through to her GP surgery.

She said it is not unusual to have to wait on hold for an hour and she shared that due to her ME, she is unable to do this and that the voice and the music whilst waiting leaves her feeling very agitated and worn out.

We discussed putting the phone down and doing something else, whilst waiting, but she said she couldn't do this as she is hard of hearing. She reported that a nurse is meant to call her weekly, but this stopped after she didn't manage to get to the phone in time. She is also meant to have three-monthly blood tests which doesn't happen. She had written to the Practice Manager but didn't receive a response.

She said she doesn't need anyone at the moment but wants to know that she is able to access the surgery should she need to. We advised trying e-Consult, which she was pleased to hear about, as she wasn't aware of it.



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 Youth Volunteers contributed to the development of the Youth Page on our website and helped to plan and deliver a programme of engagement events across the county for Freshers Fairs
- Our Authorised Representatives visited Southlands Hospital (University Hospitals Sussex NHS Trust) with the Community Diagnostic Hub Programme Lead (NHS Sussex) and a team of clinical staff and patient representatives as part of the Sussex-wide plan to establish a network of Community Diagnostic Hubs, making access to diagnostic tests more accessible and the patient pathways and experiences more positive for local people.
- Our Enter & View Team liaised with local NHS Trusts to plan and deliver the annual PLACE (Patient Led Assessments of the Care Environment) across 30+ inpatient hospital sites, contributing the action plans that each trust produced to address identified areas of concern.

Martin

"I got involved with Healthwatch West Sussex as I felt this would complement other volunteering I do and it has. I'm a member of the Safeguarding Adults Board, championing the need to better understand peoples' experiences and concerns.

We've been successful in getting a pilot system in place, for getting feedback directly from people about the safeguarding process."



Lizzie (Student)

"I needed work experience on my CV to get a job after my studies. Healthwatch West Sussex has been so accommodating, providing me with skills that I know will be useful in the workplace. This has included shadowing experienced volunteers on service visits. They have also asked to speak to more young people about their experiences and I have been able to input into their new engagement resources."



Our local volunteer

"I enjoy being a volunteer as I feel I am contributing and making a difference to a good cause which can help lots of other people, not just in our own county, but also nationally. Contributing to the wider aims of Healthwatch West Sussex is also very rewarding."



Do you feel inspired?

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

 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	
Annual grant from Government	£309,000	Staff costs	£242,243
Additional income	£23,919	Operational costs	£33,474
		Support and administration	£42,000
Total income	£332,919	Total expenditure	£317,718

Next steps

In the ten years since Healthwatch was launched, we've demonstrated the power of public feedback in helping the health and care system understand what is working, spot issues and think about how things can be better in the future.

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.

Top three priorities for 2023-24

Primary Care (Access to GPs and Community Services) - Continue our partnership with the Local Community Networks (LCN's) to make sure communication and engagement with communities and individuals is at the heart of their priorities.

Young People's Voices - To improve emotional and mental health, we will use resources to provide an independent voice to the Foundation for Our Future Programme and ensure that West Sussex's children and young people are heard and understood.

Dentistry - We'll collaborate with Healthwatch England or Help & Care on activities to engage people.



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 11 members who work on a voluntary basis. Our Board ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community. Throughout 2022/23 the Board met 4 times to make decisions on matters such as signing off the operational team's workplan, approving the priority themes, topics and projects for the year.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities by working with local stakeholders in both the public sector and the local community, voluntary and social enterprise sector, as well as involving local people through our community engagement activities.

Methods and systems used across the year to obtain peoples experiences

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 using services. During 2022/23 we have been available by phone, email, provided a webform 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

We had zero providers who did not respond 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 insight and experiences that have been shared with us.

In our local authority area for example, we take information to The Health and Wellbeing Board, The HASC Committee, The Safeguarding Adults Board and our Local Community Network groups hosted by the District and Borough Councils.

We also take insight and experiences to decision makers in the Sussex Integrated Care System. We have representatives who attend the following meetings and committees; The Local West Sussex Assembly, The Care Quality Commission Inspection Teams, alongside our colleagues in the 3 Sussex LHW and our local NHS Trust Patient Experience Committees (x5). We also have a Healthwatch Liaison Lead Role for our ICB who sits on all the Delivery Boards as a link for the 3 LHW in our ICB area.

Enter and view

This year, we made 8 Enter and View visits. We made 32 recommendations or actions as a result of this activity.

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result
SPFT	Concerns over the responsiveness and quality of complaints handling.	Being discussed by Exec Team and will be setting up quarterly meetings with Healthwatch.
CAMHS	Feedback given at Self Harm Network Conference.	Lead for CAMHS that outlined the measure now in place.
Ship Street Surgery, East Grinstead.	569 people had signed a petition.	NHS Sussex made aware from emails and MP letter.

Health and Wellbeing Board

Healthwatch West Sussex has been represented on the West Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board by Healthwatch Manager. During 2022/2023 our representative has effectively carried out this role by participating in workshops and meetings to review priorities and improve partnership working in order that the HWB influences local strategic aims which feed into Sussex wide strategic plans.

Healthwatch West Sussex has been represented on the Sussex Integrated Care Partnerships by Healthwatch Manager and Sussex Integrated Care Boards by Healthwatch Manager.

Healthwatch West Sussex has been represented on the West Sussex Safeguarding Adults Board by Martin Phillips and the West Sussex Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee by Healthwatch Manager.

2022 – 2023 Outcomes

Project / activity	Changes made to services
New resources for general practice	We aided Emma Woodcock, GP, gain funding for a new Mental Health Social Prescriber during our collaborative community services work in Horsham, which identified the need for befriending support.
Youth mental health	Our youth volunteers worked directly with our integrated care system to offer lived experience support to digital initiatives. NHS England has now public Core 20 plus 5 .



healthwatch
West Sussex

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