

The value of listening

Healthwatch Medway
Annual Report 2023–2024



healthwatch
Medway

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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

This has been a year of change.

We were delighted to be awarded the contract to continue to deliver Healthwatch in Medway, but we have sadly said farewell to some of our long serving staff team and have welcomed new people to the team.

It has also been year that has seen a change in the Chair of Healthwatch Medway. After many years on the Steering Group, Reverend Graham Trice stepped back and we welcomed Katharine Bishop as Chair.

It has also been a year which has seen continued pressures on the NHS and Social Care. We have focused on doing what we have always done, talking to members of the public and finding out what matters to them.

This year we started a project of outreach engagement, visiting 12 areas across Medway, exploring contributing factors to Health Inequalities. This work will complete next year but is building an exciting databank to really examine local differences.

We held our third Healthwatch Recognition Awards in late March 2024. Over 200 people joined us including volunteers, community groups and professionals to recognise and praise those who had gone above and beyond in this year. It was a special evening for us all and was very much enjoyed by all who attended.

This report gives you a snapshot of our year. We hope you find it helpful and enjoy reading the rest of this report.

Do get in touch if you would like more information, or if you want to work with us this year. We would be delighted to hear from you.

Katharine Bishop, Chair of Medway Healthwatch

About us

Healthwatch Medway 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:

671 people

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



5526 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

7 reports

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

Our most popular report was:

Enhanced Health in Care Homes which highlighted how enhanced care in care homes working from multiple perspectives.



Health and social care that works for you:

We're funded by our local authority. In 2023 - 24 we received

£125,777

which is the slightly more than last year due to a new contract.

We're lucky to have

11

outstanding volunteers who gave up time to make care better for our community.



We currently employ

2.6 staff

who help us carry out our work.

How we've made a difference this year

Summer

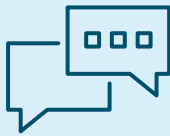


We published a thematic review of feedback about primary care dentistry.



We published a thematic review of feedback about experiences of general practice

Autumn

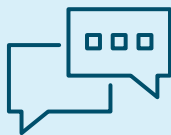


We spoke to care home residents, their families and staff about the Enhanced Health in Care Home programme and shared our findings with Aging Well.



We spoke to people about their use of Community Pharmacies and shared our findings with the Local Pharmacy Committee to inform the NHS Pharmacy First initiative.

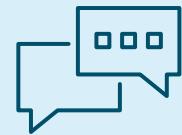
Winter



In February we spoke to people in Allhallows, and the Isle of Grain, looking at health Inequalities.



In February we worked with Healthwatch Kent to scrutinise a consultation process on Health Based Places of Safety.



In March we spoke to people in Chattenden, Hoo Wainscott and Upnor, looking at health Inequalities.

Your voice heard at a wider level

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



This year, working with Healthwatch Kent, we published a report looking at the effectiveness of our **information and signposting** service. 243 out of the 1167 people who contacted us shared how they had been impacted by the information we had given.

People felt less lonely, less anxious, more independent and better connected to services. We have used WELLBYs, a social value tool, to estimate that these outcomes have generated between £525,000 and £800,000 worth of social value.

We submitted 902 experiences to help inform the draft **Integrated Care Strategy**. These experiences came from a range of experiences and reports which included feedback from fishermen, LGBTQ+,

These helped influence and shape the priorities included in the strategy. You can read what Kent and Medway partners will be trying to achieve here:



Working with Healthwatch Kent we produced a thematic report on the experiences we heard about **dentistry**. As well as sharing this locally with the Integrated Care Board and feeding into Healthwatch England national findings we also submitted it to the Parliamentary Health and Social Care Select Committee on Dentistry where both Healthwatch were referenced 4 times for the evidence we submitted.

Alongside Healthwatch Kent we hosted the **Healthwatch Recognition Awards**. This celebrated the work of organisations and individuals contributing to positive change in . This year nominations came from colleagues and the people using these services rather than ourselves. We were able to give them the platform to get the recognition they deserved and share best practice across the system.





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.

Enhanced Health in Care Homes

In 2023, we published our findings about care and support in care homes after talking to residents, family members, care home managers and primary care professionals across 15 care homes. Thanks to this insight, the NHS, Kent County Council, and local Health and Care Partnerships have made positive changes.

In Medway and Swale 27 people living in four different care homes and nine relatives provided us with 204 question responses.

“Nothing is too much trouble for them. Fully satisfied with the care. I am respected with dignity.”

– A resident

What did residents and family members tell us about their experiences in care homes?

- People shared their views on care and support provision, personalised care, wellbeing, activity offers, and integrated and joined-up care.
- 60% were positive, 25% mixed or neutral and 14% was negative or had suggestions for improvement

What did staff tell us about their experiences working in care homes?

- We heard from three care home professionals across three care homes and two PCN professionals who were linked to other care homes.
- These provided a total of 53 responses to the survey questions, of which 36% were positive, 51% mixed or neutral and 13% negative or suggestions for improvement.

The PCN professionals felt that the EHCH model was a “big improvement” and had improved access to and communication with care homes. On the whole, however, there were mixed views about the joined-up working between care homes and health and social care.

“Our named allocated PCN is very good and knows patients. Our local district nurses allocated to the home are fantastic.”

– A Care Home staff member

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.

We work closely with Mental Health Voice and take feedback about mental health services directly to Primary Care and the local Mental Health Trust.

This feedback has been central in shaping a transformation of community mental health services across Medway and Kent and created a new model of care. This includes creating a range of lived experience roles, placing people's experiences at the heart of service design and delivery.



Getting services to involve the public

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

We've been working with the Kent and Medway Adult Safeguarding Board to help ensure that people's experiences inform their reviews and gives factual context to support the work being done by the board members. We initially shared a report about hospital discharge, details of which were included in their annual report. We meet with the Independent Chair of the Board and the Board manager to provide feedback in relation to emerging issues and specific themes identified in the Safeguarding Adult Reviews.



Improving Care over time

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

In 2021 we published a report featuring the experiences of homeless women. We recommended psychological support for this group of women.

We were pleased this year to see the Local Authority commission a counselling service for homeless women and men as well as an outreach service.





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:

- Undertaking a series of outreach engagement visits to communities from across urban and rural areas of Medway.
- Working with community groups, such as a d/Deaf Café and Women's groups to reach people struggling with socio-economic deprivation
- Supported the Health and Care Partnership in gathering Insights from community organisations and PPGs.



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
- Helping people access NHS dentistry
- Supporting people to access pre-paid prescription certificates and raise awareness of community pharmacy based services

Ensuring access to Patient Transport Services

It's essential that services apply the correct eligibility criteria to enable people to access their services.

Thanks to the efforts of our Information and Signposting Team we were able to help someone access Patient Transport and identify that eligibility criteria were not being correctly applied by call handlers.

We heard from an individual who, after using patient transport for many years, had been told that they were no longer eligible. As a result of this they had cancelled their appointments because they had no other way of getting there.

We spoke to the Patient Transport Service and it was discovered that following a change in criteria by the ICB the call handlers had not been applying the new criteria properly and had been missing some questions.

This was rectified and the individual was able to arrange a new appointment with access to the transport they needed in place.

Call handlers were informed and the individual along with many others who had been missed by the incorrectly applied criteria, were then able to access transport going forward and receive the treatment they needed.





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:

- Visited communities to promote their local Healthwatch and what we have to offer
- Collected experiences and supported their communities to share their views

This year we have been proud of how we have given some of our volunteer the skills and a pathway to paid employment with Healthwatch.

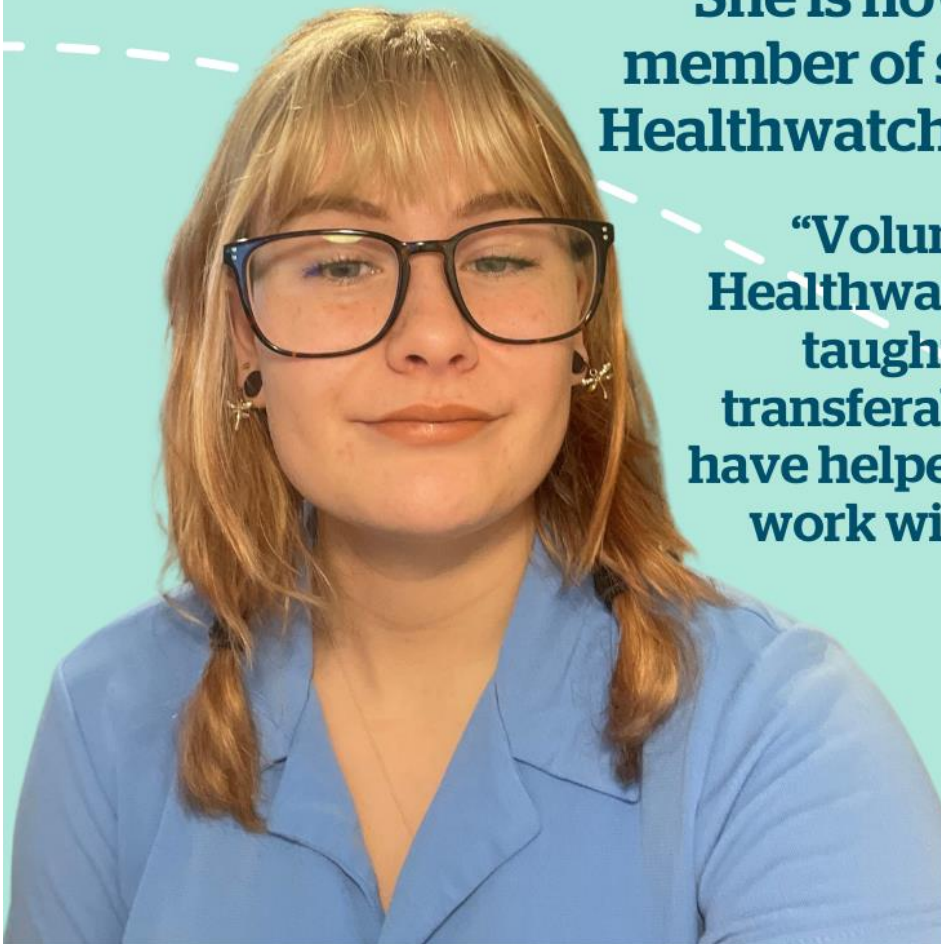


Meet Tass.

Tass started volunteering for Healthwatch Medway in December 2022.

She is now a full-time member of staff within the Healthwatch Medway team.

“Volunteering with Healthwatch Medway has taught me real-life transferable skills, which have helped me to find paid work within the team.”



Meet Jade.

Jade started volunteering for Healthwatch Medway in September 2023.



Through connections that Jade made by volunteering with Healthwatch Medway, she has now found a paid role working in health and social care.

“I gained a deeper insight into how people’s experiences can drive drastic change in their communities. Now I work with those communities and am part of the change.”

Do you feel inspired?



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



www.healthwatchmedway.com



0800 136 656 or text 07525 861 639



enquiries@healthwatchmedway.com



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 Local Authority	£125,777.00	Expenditure on pay	£95,183.00
Additional income	£0.00	Non-pay expenditure	£7,393.00
		Office and management fees	£24,320.00
Total income	£125,777.00	Total expenditure	£126,896.00

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 complete our outreach engagement to communities across Medway and undertake a thematic review of experience health inequalities and the wider determinants of health as experienced within communities across Medway.

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.

Our top priorities for the next year are:

1. Spotlight on Accessible Information Standard, working in partnership with the d/Deaf Community
2. Falls prevention. How can communities be empowered to reduce risk of falls.
3. Young people and Social Isolation. Figures suggest that social isolation is increasing in young people, we want to understand more behind the issue.



Statutory statements

**Healthwatch Medway, The Old Court House, 8 Tufton Street,
Ashford, TN23 1QN**

**Contract held by EK360 (Engaging Kent cic), The Stables, Little
Coldharbour Farm, Tong Lane, Lamberhurst, Tunbridge Wells,
Kent, TN3 8AD.**

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

Throughout 2023/24, the Steering Group met 6 times and made decisions on matters such as determining the scope of projects and reviewing public feedback.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities by analysing the themes and trends of what people have told us.

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 will publish it on our website,

www.healthwatchmedway.com

Responses to recommendations

We had 0 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 insights and experiences that have been shared with us.

In our local authority area, for example, we take information to the Medway Health Oversight and Scrutiny Board, The Health and Care Partnership Board, the Integrated Care Partnership, NHS Trusts, and other regular meetings with key Stakeholders in the system.

We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in Kent and Medway. For example, we work with Healthwatch Kent to share the experiences we've heard at the Kent and Medway Quality Group as well as the Integrated Care Partnership. We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

Enter and view

This year, we made 0 Enter and View visits.

Healthwatch representatives




Healthwatch Medway is represented on the Medway Health and Wellbeing Board by Tacita Alder, Engagement and Projects Officer.

Healthwatch Medway is represented on Kent and Medway Health Overview and Scrutiny Board, Integrated Care Partnership and local Health and Care Partnership Board by Svajune Ulinskiene, Healthwatch Medway Manager.

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Healthwatch Medway

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