

This update is split into the following sections:

- (1) Your Healthwatch: news about our work and that of Healthwatch England (page 1)
- (2) [Health and social care updates](#) (page 6)
- (3) [COVID news](#) (page 10)

(1) YOUR HEALTHWATCH

(A) Healthwatch welcomes a team member, Clary



We would like to warmly welcome our new team member, Clary.

Clary worked for over 20 years as a costume and personal stylist, working in TV, theatre, commercials, and as a personal stylist. During this time, Clary studied Psychology at the Open University and has recently started an MSc in Health Psychology.

In 2021, Clary joined Healthwatch as a volunteer and, in February 2022, came on board as a member of staff.

(B) Take our Mental Health & Accommodation Survey - Have your say about mental health services in Brighton & Hove



Have you ever had or are you currently experiencing mental health issues? or has your friend or family member ever had or are they currently experiencing mental health issues?

We would like to hear about any support your friend or family member have ever or are currently receiving from health and social care services (such as their GP, or a Mental Health nurse, social worker, or Counsellor, etc.) and their experience of support in their accommodation.

We would also like to hear about your experience of mental health services and support in accommodation if this applies to you.

[Click here to complete the survey](#)

This 10-minute [survey](#) closes on 11th April.

By taking part you will be given the chance to win one of four **£25 high-street vouchers!**

(C) Latest updates from the "Your Care, Your Way" campaign



Clear, understandable information is vital to help you make decisions about your health and care and get the most out of services. The latest research by Healthwatch shows that people who speak little or no English struggle at all points of their healthcare journey. These are often some of the most vulnerable in our society, for example, refugees and asylum seekers.

They find it difficult to register with a GP, access urgent care, navigate large healthcare premises, explain their problems, or understand what the doctor says. Lack of interpreting support further compounds their struggles. They may not know they can ask for professional interpreters, find it difficult to access one when needed, or even understand them if interpreters do not speak their dialect.

As a result, people who speak little or no English face significant barriers and delays in receiving care, putting them at a disadvantage and contributing to health inequalities.

Freedom of Information (FOI)

Despite the challenges faced by people who do not speak English and the clear need for better language interpretation, responses from 115 NHS trusts to Healthwatch's FOI requests show that spending on translation and interpreting services is falling. Annual spending on interpretation and translation services rose from £22.7 million to £26.5 million during the financial year 2019/2020 (compared to the previous year) but then plummeted to £17.8 million in 2020/2021. Overall, this marks a 22% decline in spending over three years.

Next steps

Healthwatch wants to support the NHS and health and care providers in ensuring everyone has equal access to health and care services, regardless of their communication and language needs. We will be engaging with organisations that support ethnic minority communities, refugees, and asylum seekers to gather further insight into people's experience of healthcare information.

Read Healthwatch's evidence on how language barriers contribute to health inequalities on our [website](#)



Please spare a few minutes to tell us about your experience of accessing or understanding healthcare information.

[Complete our Survey](#)

(D) Young Healthwatch: Neurodiversity & Mental Health



This month, young Healthwatch celebrated Neurodiversity Celebration Week. This was a chance to celebrate neurodivergent people, challenge misconceptions, and pledge to create an inclusive and fair world for all.

Here are some of the helpful resources they co-created with e-wellbeing's young people:

- A new module on [Neurodiversity and Mental Health](#) has been developed by e-wellbeing and [Young Healthwatch Brighton & Hove](#) for our youth website. The module provides helpful guidance for neurodivergent young people and can be found here: <https://bit.ly/3JwOWoz>
- A new [podcast](#) episode on Neurodiversity with Louisa, an amazing 17-year-old who shares her personal experiences of growing up as a neurodivergent, blind young person. Listen to the full episode here: <https://bit.ly/34ewLEN>
- An e-wellbeing's [School Resources](#) platform has materials for neurodivergent young people and the teachers, parents, and carers who help them. Click here: <https://bit.ly/3imK7SS>

(E) British public satisfaction with the NHS lowest in 25 years - our response



More people in England, Scotland, and Wales, are now dissatisfied (41%) with the NHS than are satisfied for the first time since 2002, according to a report from King's Fund and Nuffield Trust.

The [findings](#) show the lowest levels of satisfaction with GPs (38%), dentists (33%), A&E (39%) and both hospital inpatient (41%) and outpatient (49%) services since it began tracking public attitudes.

People strongly support the founding principles of the NHS: that it is funded by general taxation and is available free of charge. They also remain happy with the quality of care they receive and with the attitude and behaviour of staff they encounter when being treated.

Louise Ansari, National Director at Healthwatch England, said:

“ With the NHS facing pressures across the whole system, these findings are not a reflection on how hard the NHS is working but an important reality check about people’s current satisfaction with the service they are getting - something decision-makers just cannot afford to ignore.

Our findings show that people recognise the pressure health services are under as they seek to recover from the pandemic. However, people are increasingly concerned about the changes to how they access GP services, the backlog of elective care, the shortage of NHS dental appointments, and the impact the delays to care are having on their health and wellbeing.

For example, access to NHS dental care has been one of the most significant issues raised with us over the last two years, with four in five people telling us they had struggled to see an NHS dentist.

And it is often the most vulnerable people in our society, including children, disabled people and those living on low incomes, who are suffering the most.

As we recover from the pandemic, services need to work hand in hand with people to create a healthcare system that is sustainable and designed around patients’ needs.



The representative survey of 3,112 Britons was undertaken in September and October last year by National Centre for Social Research.

(F) Invitation to participate in developing a research study for blood thinning decisions in older people

Healthwatch Brighton and Hove and looking for participants to take part in a research study by Dr Khalid Ali, Professor C Rajkumar, Dr Ekow Mensah, and Dr Frances Kirkham from Brighton and Sussex Medical School (BSMS) and University Hospital Sussex (UHS) Trust.

Dr Khalid and the team are developing a decision support tool that will enable clinicians to make more balanced decisions in the use of blood thinning medication. They are keen to discuss the study methods with a group of people of any age and seek their views on work that has been developed to date.

The team are looking for volunteers who are:

- A resident in Kent, Surrey, or Sussex
- Agree to read the study documents- 8 pages
- Willing to give the team feedback on the study documents in a zoom meeting (one hour) or send feedback by email

There are two ways you can participate in this part of the study. You can either attend a facilitated workshop where you can have a discussion with Dr Khalid and the team, or you can send your thoughts back to the team via email. If you are happy to participate in this activity, please email uhsussex.da.elderlycare@nhs.net or telephone 01273-523360 to confirm your participation and indicate how you would like to engage with the project.

To register for one of the workshops, please click on the preferred link below.

- The first workshop will be held on **Tuesday 5th April 3-4:30 pm**. Register using this [Link](#)
- The second workshop will be held on **Wednesday 13th April 12-1:30 pm**. Register using this [Link](#)

As a thank you gesture, a **£30** voucher will be offered for your participation in the study.

Carry on reading for health and social care updates!

(2) HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE UPDATES

(A) FREE Personal Health Coaching for Brighton & Hove

The NHS Healthy Hearts Sussex 'Free Personal Health Coaching' programme is up and running. Free Personal Health Coaching is available to anyone aged over 18 and living or registered with a GP in Brighton & Hove.

- Starting from April
- Monthly or fortnightly personal coaching sessions
- Simple online self-health checks
- Help with goal setting
- Personal goal tracker



The poster features three photos of people: a man in a blue shirt, a woman in a white top, and a man in a brown shirt. The text on the poster includes: 'HOW ARE YOU?', 'Are you ready to take some easy steps to improve your health and wellbeing?', 'Maybe you have been thinking about walking more, joining a group, changing your diet or something else?', 'We can help... with Healthy Hearts Sussex you get: - monthly or fortnightly coaching sessions - simple online self-health checks - help with goal setting - a goal tracker', 'It's all for free and lasts up to 6 months. Coaching sessions can be online or face to face.', 'Try it. It works. We think you'll love it. But you can stop at any time if it's not for you.', 'Sign up here https://tinyurl.com/healthyheartssussex', 'FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT US AT HEALTHY HEARTS SUSSEX: 01273 642186 OR 07308 446947 healthyhearts.sussex@nhs.net', and a testimonial: 'My coaching sessions have been life changing. My coach was wonderfully empathetic, extremely professional and a very capable motivator.'

It is all for free, and there is no commitment as you can stop at any time.

To find out more, visit their [website](#), or [sign up now](#) to secure your place. Or you can email us at healthyhearts.sussex@nhs.net, call 01273 642186 or call/text 07308 446947 for details.

(B) 'Help Us, Help You' cancer campaign: Is a new campaign to combat the fear of cancer



NHS England and NHS Improvement have launched a radically new cancer phase of the 'Help Us, Help You' campaign. The aim of the campaign is to encourage people who are experiencing potential signs of cancer to come forward to their GP practice to help increase earlier diagnosis and improve outcomes.

The campaign is designed to address the key barriers to people seeking help, the fear around cancer diagnosis and increase awareness of the importance of body vigilance regarding bodily changes that could be a sign of cancer.

The NHS Long Term Plan committed to increasing the number of cancers detected at an early stage one or two from half to three quarters by 2028.

“ If something in your body does not feel right, the thought it could be cancer can play on your mind. But most people who go for tests find out it is not cancer. Finding out sooner is always better. Contact your GP practice [#HelpUsHelpYou](#)



(C) April is Bowel Cancer Awareness Month



Make a note in your diaries that next month is Bowel Cancer Awareness Month.

Bowel Cancer is the fourth most common cancer in the UK and is the second most common cause of cancer death.

Bowel cancer is very treatable, but the earlier it is diagnosed, the easier it is to treat. People whose cancer is diagnosed at an early stage have a much higher chance of successful treatment than those whose cancer has become more widespread. If you have any symptoms, do not be embarrassed and do not ignore them. Doctors are used to seeing lots of people with bowel problems.

The symptoms of bowel cancer can include:

- Bleeding from your bottom and/or blood in your poo
- A persistent and unexplained change in bowel habit
- Unexplained weight loss
- Extreme tiredness for no obvious reason
- A pain or lump in your tummy

Most people with these symptoms do not have bowel cancer. Other health problems can cause similar symptoms. But if you have one or more of these, or if things just don't feel right, [go to see your GP](#).

Sometimes, a tumour can block the bowel, causing sudden strong pains in the stomach area, bloating, and feeling or being sick. This is called a bowel obstruction. You may also be unable to empty your bowels or pass wind. If you think you have a blocked bowel, see your GP straight away or go to a hospital accident and emergency department.

Visit the national charity [Bowel Cancer UK](#) For more information on bowel cancer.

(D) 25 - 29 April 2022 - Stay Strong, Stay Steady, Stay Independent



Stay Strong, Stay Steady, Stay Independent is a local campaign running from 25 to 29 April. The campaign aims to raise awareness of the importance of strength and balance exercises to support healthy ageing.

Did you know that our muscle strength and balance reduce as we get older? In fact, it starts from about age 30. Then from about age 55, we lose about 1% of our muscle mass every year. This increases our risk of having a life-changing fall.

The good news is that there are lots of accessible, affordable ways to keep strong and steady. This includes exercises to do at home, via zoom, or at one of the activities across the city. Many of these activities are a short walk or bus ride away, such as strength and balance classes, racket sports, chair-based exercise classes, dance, Thai chi and more.

- To choose your own way to build strength, balance, and age well, visit the ageing well website at <https://ageingwellbh.org/or phone 01273 322 947>.
- For more information about how this campaign is supported locally, send an email to: publichealth@brighton-hove.gov.uk.

(E) Sussex Myalgic encephalopathy (ME) Society: Is running an “ME Enquiry Survey.”

The Sussex ME Society works for those in the county affected by the chronic fatigue syndrome known as ME is calling on sufferers to take part in a survey looking at the services and treatments that are available to them and how beneficial they have been. ME, which can sometimes follow a viral infection or trauma, is estimated to affect four thousand adults and children across Sussex to varying degrees, with some being housebound and in need of care.

The Sussex ME Society is interested to find out how helpful the NHS and other services have been over the last five years. Those wishing to take part in the survey can request a questionnaire through their website www.measussex.org.uk.

(F) Protecting the oral health of those living with dementia



Maintaining daily oral care is important to prevent people with dementia from experiencing problems like painful cavities and infections.

Some of the actions that people living with dementia, or their carers, can take to support the maintenance of good oral health include:

- **Avoiding sugary foods** - People living with dementia should try to avoid eating too many sugary foods as this can cause tooth decay. Tooth friendly foods and snacks, such as vegetables, rice cakes, and plain yoghurt should be eaten instead. This may not always be possible if a high sugar intake is due to liquid medications containing sugar or food supplements. In these cases, good oral hygiene is even more important.
- **Good oral hygiene** - Everyone should have their teeth/mouth cleaned twice daily. A carer may need to support a person living with dementia to brush their teeth twice a day by making it an activity they do together. It is also important to schedule routine dentist appointments to help catch issues as early as possible and discuss suitable oral health products.
- **Making oral care a positive experience** - Where someone becomes confused or uncomfortable with performing the actions required to keep up good oral hygiene, steps can be taken to help make the experience more positive, such as using short and clear instructions and gently guiding the person to take care of their mouth and teeth in stages.

Dementia UK has created a [leaflet](#) advising how to help care for someone's teeth when living with dementia. Additionally, Alzheimer's Society has [advised](#) that people can be pointed to the types of dental treatments available for people in the early, middle and late stages of dementia.

Some Useful contacts and resources:

- [Dementia UK](#), 'Mouth care for people with dementia'
- [Alzheimer's Society](#), 'Dental care and oral health'
- [NICE guideline](#), 'Oral health for adults in care homes'
- [British Dental Association](#), 'Oral healthcare for older people: 2020 vision'
- [British Society of Gerodontology](#), 'Oral health of people with dementia'
- [Dementia Friends](#)
- [Dementia Services Development Centre, Stirling University](#)
- [UK Network of Dementia Voices](#)

Carry on reading for COVID updates!

(3) COVID NEWS

(A) Brighton and Hove Spring Booster COVID 19 update



Thousands of people will be invited to book a Spring COVID booster this week as the NHS vaccination programme enters a new phase. Eligible groups for Spring boosters include care home residents, people who are 75 and over and those who are immunosuppressed aged 12 and over.

In line with new advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation, the NHS COVID-19 vaccination programme will contact people when it is their turn to be vaccinated.

In Brighton and Hove, Spring booster vaccinations will be taking place at the city's main vaccination sites, including Churchill Square Vaccination Centre and Brighton Racecourse and pop-ups across the city. Roving vaccination teams will be visiting care homes to deliver boosters to the most vulnerable people from this week.

Those eligible are being contacted directly and will be able to arrange an appointment at their local service. Once invited by the NHS, people will be able to book their appointments through the National Booking System either online or by calling NHS 119. Eligible people will also be able to get their spring booster by attending a walk-in session - check the [Grab a Jab](#) website to find your local walk-in centre.

Currently, in Brighton and Hove, 80% of people have had a booster vaccination, and thousands of the city's most vulnerable people are now eligible for a second booster as part of the next phase.

In total, more than 3.8 million doses of COVID-19 vaccination have been delivered in Sussex since the programme began in January 2021.

Full details on the COVID-19 vaccination programme in Sussex can be found on the [Sussex Health and Care Partnership website](#).

(B) Simple steps to reduce the risk of catching and spreading COVID-19



The Government has removed all remaining domestic restrictions in England, but COVID-19 has not gone away.

There are still simple steps you can take to reduce the risk of catching and spreading COVID-19:

- Get vaccinated against COVID-19 - everyone aged 12 and over can book [vaccination appointments](#) now.
- Meet people outside if possible.
- Open doors and windows to let in fresh air if meeting people inside.
- Limit the number of people you meet and avoid crowded places.
- Wear a face covering when it is hard to stay away from other people - particularly indoors or in crowded places.
- Wash your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitiser regularly throughout the day.

While there are cases of COVID-19 in the UK, there is a risk you can catch it or pass it on. You could still catch or spread it even if you are fully vaccinated or have had the virus before. [Find out more](#).

(C) Free transport to help you get to your vaccination



Sussex residents who have no means to get to their COVID-19 vaccination appointment are now able to book a free return journey to help them attend.

To book free travel please book your vaccination appointment or have confirmed plans to attend a walk-in session first, then call 01444 275 008 to speak to a travel coordinator.

Once you are through to a travel coordinator you will be asked the following questions:

- Do you have access to transport to attend your vaccine appointment?
- Do you have a family member, friend or carer who can help with transport? They do not have to be in your bubble as per government guidelines.

If both options are unavailable, the travel coordinator will arrange transport for you, including any additional needs such as wheelchair-friendly vehicles.

All transport providers have signed up for a COVID-19 safety policy to ensure that all precautions are in place for a safe journey.



You can sign up to receive regular bulletins and information from Healthwatch.

Please email office@healthwatchbrightonandhove.co.uk

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