

The value of listening

Healthwatch Brighton and Hove
Annual Report 2023–2024



healthwatch
Brighton and Hove

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"Over the last year, local Healthwatch has 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 consolidation following the changing of the guard at the top of the organisation last year.

Our workload steadily ramped up following the unique circumstances caused by the lockdown and we have delivered evidence-based work that has generated plaudits from across the health and social care landscape. This report highlights the broad range of our work over the last 12 months, although some of those projects are on-going and not scheduled for completion until later this year.

However, it is worth highlighting a couple. Our Homecare Check project, born out of the old Lay Assessors Scheme and our award-winning Hospital Discharge work first commissioned in 2020, is making a positive impact and is covered in more detail in this report.

The other is our involvement with the commissioning of non-emergency patient transport. Our critical friend assessment of the last commissioning process prompted an invitation to help design the specification for the new tender and an on-going role to assess service delivery.

None of this would have been possible without the dedicated hard work of our home team lead by our Chief Executive Alan Boyd and backed by the support of a highly knowledgeable network of around 40 volunteers. They really helped us punch above our weight and have ensured that our work on behalf of patients and service users really makes an impact.

During the year we said farewell to Karen Barford, who, sadly, had to step down from the board due to ill health and we are about to bid farewell to Christine D'Cruz who has brought a wealth of experience to the board's work. On behalf of the board and the team I thank them both.

Geoffrey Bowden



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"This report highlights the broad range of our work over the last 12 months. None of this would have been possible without the dedicated hard work of our home team, backed by the support of a highly knowledgeable network of volunteers.

"They really helped us punch above our weight and have ensured that our work on behalf of patients and service users really makes an impact"

**Geoffrey Bowden, Chair,
Healthwatch Brighton and Hove**



What our partners say about us

G "Healthwatch Brighton and Hove empowers communities, ensuring their voices are heard in healthcare. It is a valuable partner, bridging gaps, advocating for better services, driving meaningful change, enhancing health outcomes, and fostering trust in the health system."

Cllr Dr Bruno De Oliveira, Chair of the city's Health and Wellbeing Board

"I have worked closely with Healthwatch Brighton and Hove over the past year, and in particular worked with them on ongoing dental and other health issues. As ever, their expertise, experience and professionalism have been invaluable to me in my work scrutinising Ministers. I hope that there's continued cooperation ...to ensure your voice as an independent champion for those needing health and social care services in Brighton and Hove is properly heard."

Caroline Lucas, former MP for Brighton

"Thank you to Healthwatch Brighton and Hove for the work you've done in engaging with parents and carers of children, as part of CQC People's Profiles project. The report has given us further insight into ways they access care for babies and children, interact with healthcare professionals and use services depending on their baby's or child's needs."

"We were pleased to see a strong focus on people's voices and views throughout the report. The Healthwatch Brighton and Hove team understood and delivered the voice of people in this work, which will help us continue to apply people's experiences during regulatory work and in future research or engagement activity we undertake."

Latoya Tawodzera, Senior Public Engagement & Insight Officer, Care Quality Commission

"The work of Healthwatch Brighton and Hove hugely benefits both our patients and the Trust and we really appreciate their support and contribution as a critical friend, independent patient advocate, and supporter of our improvement programmes and projects. Thank you for all you have done throughout 2023/24."

Dr George Findlay, Chief Executive, University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust

"Thank you to Healthwatch Brighton and Hove for your important work on behalf of the local communities we serve. Your scrutiny, expertise and constructive challenge helps us work together to meet the needs of patients, carers and families".

Dr Jane Padmore (RMN), Chief Executive Officer, Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust

from our 2024 stakeholder survey

"On behalf of our hospital trust, a huge thank you to the Healthwatch teams who have, through engaging support and challenge to us, enabled the voice of patients to shape what we do and how we care for local people."

"Healthwatch provides a valuable role in holding statutory organisations to account and offering some objectivity to decision-making processes that are primarily otherwise led by these statutory organisations."

"Just to say thank you for the work you do to support us and ensure the patient voice is embedded into our programmes of work."

"Healthwatch shares views and difficulties dental patients face and current reality on the ground from a patient's perspective."

"Healthwatch has contributed to the design and development of services by bringing the patient voice to the commissioning process."

"Healthwatch provides an essential independent route for patient voice that supports constructive challenge and is a great partner for us to work with as a team focused on reducing health inequalities."

"I found the input from the Healthwatch team member we worked with fantastic, he was thoughtful, considered, and reasonable and found the time for a smile and kind word through a complex process. Thank you for your support."

"The service we receive from Healthwatch is excellent and they have been integral to our programme."

"I value the input of Healthwatch on the committee I chair."



About us

Healthwatch Brighton and Hove 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.





Our work this year

Services can't make improvements without hearing your views. That's why over the last year we have gathered your views on topics including hospital services, GP access, dentistry, maternity, dementia, the quality of home care services and many more.

This allowed us to understand the full picture and feed your views back to services to help them improve.

Acting on your concerns

We made sure that local people were listened to when they contacted our help and information line to raise concerns about health and social care.

In direct response to patient feedback about **Woodingdean Medical Practice** GP service, we have partnered with them to learn more about how local patients feel.

Between January to May, patients began telling us they were finding it hard to get an appointment with a doctor.

We were also contacted by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) who wanted to learn more about our local intelligence of this practice.



"I am just emailing to complain about the lack of appointments at Woodingdean Medical Centre. I phoned dead on 8.30 this morning for an appointment for my little boy and they were already at full capacity leaving an instant message saying there were no appointments."

Patient

What we did – and what's next

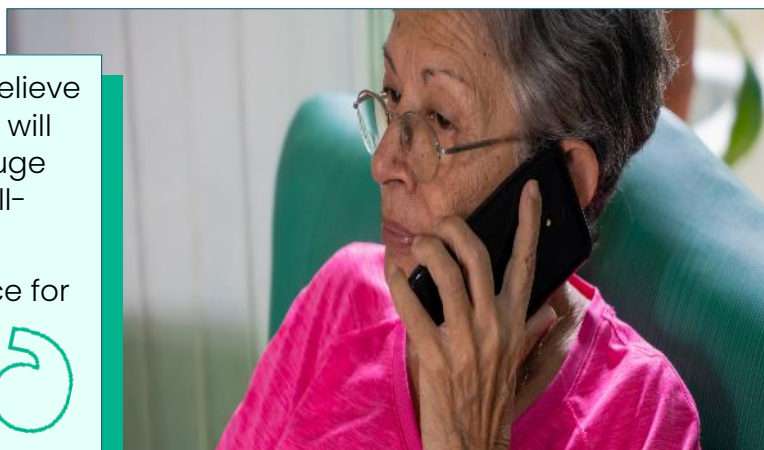
In February, we met with Commissioners for Primary Care services in Brighton and Hove to escalate patients' concerns and had further meetings with them and the CQC. This led to a productive meeting with the Practice Manager and Clinical Nurse Manager of Woodingdean Medical Practice, who were very open to listening to patient feedback. The practice has agreed to work with us to capture more details from their patients. We will run a survey this summer, with the support of the practice's Patient Participation Group (PPG), to capture patient views, including about accessibility.

In November, we heard from patients concerned about the possible closure of Brighton & Hove's **Overnight Nursing Service**. To ensure continuity of care to patients outside of normal operating hours, this service provides district nursing and night-sitting services to local people over the age of 18, seven days per week.

"I am contacting you with concern. I believe the IC24 Team and service in Brighton will end by end of March 2024. This is of huge concern to me, and I imagine other full-time carers across Brighton.

I rely heavily on this out of hours service for support and have used this service regularly as a consequence."

Service User



What we did

We escalated these concerns with NHS Sussex, seeking an immediate response and details of future plans. We received a response advising that whilst changes were being made to how the service would be delivered, the service itself would continue. We shared this information with the patients who had contacted us to reassure them.

Our work on improving hospital environments

This year, we visited several hospitals provided by two NHS Trusts, focussing on the environment in which care is delivered to patients.

These are called **Patient-Led Assessments of the Care Environment** (PLACE). Good environments matter and where standards fell short we drew these to the attention of local hospitals so that improvements could be made.

Universities Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust

In October, our volunteers visited the Royal Sussex County Hospital, the Royal Alexandra Children's Hospital, the Eye Hospital, the Cancer Centre, the Outpatients Department, the Maternity Unit, the Renal Ward (where they also conducted a food tasting) and the Emergency Department. The following is an example of what our volunteers identified during these visits:

Outpatients Department – a summary of our observations

- Dementia-friendly policies have been adopted where possible.
- Toilets were all clean, with good hand washing facilities and signage.
- Flooring was of mixed quality and types; it was old but clean as far as possible.
- The lighting was of mixed quality; some consulting rooms seemed a bit dark.

To learn more about all our visits, please read the [Full PLACE Report](#).

How the Trust responded to our findings

"The report offers fantastic, credible, balanced insights into the experience of our patients attending our sites for care in a highly readable and accessible format – thank you. The report will be taken to the Trust's Patient Experience and Engagement Group in March to be discussed and so that actions can be tracked. The report will also be shared with service leads".

"The Trust is already taking action in many of the areas identified. For example, we will be carrying out routine audits of corridors, the feedback about natural light in the cancer centre is reflective of that we have had from other patients and is shaping the designs for the new cancer centre and a new nutrition and hydration policy is under development to make clear expectations of staff with regarding to feeding."

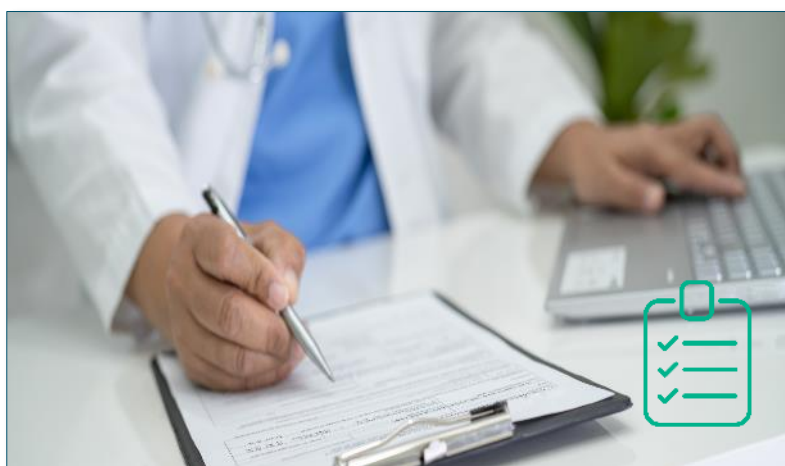
Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust

Our volunteers also visited Mill View Hospital and Rutland Gardens.

The sites were clean, tidy, well-presented and food was of good quality.

We made some minor suggestions to help improve the environment for patients.

Read the [PLACE Report](#)



Our Enter & View work

We used our legal power to Enter and View services, to carry out three visits at the Royal Sussex County Hospital. We published our reports and shared them with the CQC.

We discussed our findings with hospital staff who added these to an Impact Tracker, allowing us to monitor how our recommendations are being acted upon.

Maternity Wards – April 2023

This was an important follow-up visit after an earlier CQC report had identified that improvements were needed, and we were joined by the Strategic Chair of the Maternity Voices Partnership. We met friendly and welcoming staff, found there was a calm, clean environment and that patients were largely happy and content. Read our [Maternity Report](#).

We recommended clearer signage, emergency red cords to be available, and the installation of handrails in corridors so patients can safely move around.



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"The midwives have been really good and so has the communication with them. The midwives have been supportive, both emotionally and physically."

"The patient said that they had a mostly very good experience, however, she was desperate to tell me that she was not listened to by staff."

Patients

The Atrium at the Louisa Martindale Building – August 2023

We talked with outpatients and their relatives and asked for their views on the new Atrium building, which opened in June 2023.

The feedback was very positive.

"The whole space and atmosphere are different and so much better. I think the staff seem more relaxed as the building is calm."

"Very impressed with the café and seating. He commented that there was a wide choice of food, which surprised him."

Patients

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Read our [Atrium Enter & View Report](#)

Our Enter & View work

Emergency Department (ED) – March 2024

After a CQC inspection had rated the department as “Requires Improvement”, this was an important visit. We noted that dedicated staff were working extraordinarily hard to deliver care in an environment that is not fit for purpose.



"An elderly patient in a wheelchair with her two daughters had been triaged and has had an x-ray. They were waiting for painkillers and their x-ray result. They had been waiting for 2 hours and 45 minutes and one daughter told me that '*all staff were amazing; they do their best*'."

"I have been waiting in ED for 3 and a half hours. Nobody has offered me water or told me where I can go to buy some food to keep me going."

What patients told our volunteers



Our recommendations

- More staff presence needed in the receiving and waiting areas.
- Signage directing patients to where refreshments can be purchased needs improving.
- Patients need to be triaged sooner so they have access to painkillers whilst waiting.
- That reception staff would benefit from customer service training, which the Trust has already acted on – see the Impact section on the next page for details.



Read our [Emergency Department Enter and View Report](#)

What next?

We will continue to be involved in a focus group providing independent insight on the £50m redevelopment of the Emergency Department. We will also continue to involve other local voluntary groups to ensure that a broad range of people have their voices heard.

Our work with local NHS trusts

Three local hospital Trusts provide care for patients across Sussex. In this section, you can read about our partnership working over the past year.

University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust (UHSx)

With the Trust's full support, we carried out Enter & Views and PLACE visits. We also joined two focus groups exploring the redevelopment of the Emergency Department (A&E) and the new **Cancer Centre** plans. We are developing a new project with them to explore patients' and carers' experiences of dementia services, and to help co-design a new 5-year strategy.



 "It was encouraging to discuss and address patients' concerns re the ED redevelopment to the Architect and Director of Operations and other staff members."

Healthwatch Volunteer

 "This valuable joint-working is shaping key aspects of the project including accessibility and wayfinding for patients. The group ... is influential in shaping the improvements."

UHSx

We also:

- Shared patient experiences with the CQC to support their inspections, with our work being referenced.
- Had Trust CEO, Dr George Findlay, attend two of our public Board meetings to answer questions about CQC inspections and media stories on your behalf. We issued [press statements](#), gave [interviews](#) and reported on the ongoing [police investigation](#).
- With the help of our volunteers, **Nick, Barbara and Lynne**, we reviewed 25 patient leaflets produced by the Trust.
- Agreed to conduct mystery shopping the Trust's reception areas.

Our impact – reception mystery shops

In October 2021, we published our "[Putting Good Communications with patients at the heart of service change](#)" report, recommending the Trust create a Communication Charter.

The Trust has now incorporated our idea into their '**Welcome Standards**' so that patients, their families or carers will receive the best welcome possible. Our Mystery Shops will monitor how well staff are implementing these new standards.

Watch the [Welcome Standards Video Story](#).

"The extensive engagement work undertaken by [Healthwatch] staff and volunteers enabled improvements that put the patient first – including to our food policies, signage, the design of our emergency departments, care for cancer patients and supporting our inpatients better. We are hugely grateful and look forward to the useful insights and feedback to come in 2024/25".

Nicole Chavaudra, Director of Patient Experience, at UHSx

Our work with local NHS trusts

Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust (SPFT)

SPFT provides mental health, learning disability and neurodevelopmental services. This year, we met regularly with their CEO to discuss our patient insight and learn more about their work. We also attended key meetings where mental health care is discussed.

Thanks to your feedback, we were able to ask questions about the provision and accessibility of mental health services, notably for children who are waiting too long for Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Our volunteers also carried out PLACE visits across SPFT sites.

G "Thank you to Healthwatch Brighton and Hove for your important work on behalf of the local communities we serve. Your scrutiny, expertise and constructive challenge helps us work together to meet the needs of patients, carers and families."

**Dr Jane Padmore (RMN),
Chief Executive Officer,
Sussex Partnership NHS
Foundation Trust**



Sussex Community Foundation Trust (SCFT)

SCFT provides a wide range of community clinical services for adults and children. This year, our experienced volunteer, **Ian**, represented us at the Trust's Patient Experience Group (PEG), which contributes to the Trust's management processes for patient safety.

They are planning a programme of work looking at next steps in their Patient Engagement Strategy and have invited us to support them with this important work. We were also asked to support them in developing their new safeguarding strategy.



"Ian from Healthwatch is a valued member of our Patient Experience Group and shares insight and learning from other Healthwatch projects. He always provides appropriate challenge to ensure we focus on people and their experience."

SCFT, Patient Experience Group member

"We want to thank Healthwatch for helping us produce the Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust Safeguarding Strategy. Alan Boyd's input was incredibly valuable to ensure our strategy focusses on the voice of children and adults, and the importance of safeguarding support to reduce inequalities."

Howard Pescott, Associate Director of Quality and Safety, SCFT



Our work on GP services

Over the course of the year, concerns or issues raised by you about GPs became more common. We received more complaints about the quality of care being offered and heard stories about the difficulties people were facing getting a GP appointment. By sharing your stories with us we were able to escalate your concerns and secure answers.

As well as our work with **Woodingdean Medical Practice** which we mentioned earlier in this report, we responded to your feedback about other practices, for example, **WellBN**.

WellBN

Between April and June 2023, we received feedback from patients highlighting:

- Concerns that some people were waiting for up to 4 weeks to get a GP appointment.
- That the online triage system did not fully support patients.
- That some patients didn't have full access to their NHS 'My Health and Care Record', so were unable to access consultant letters.



"From 2012 to circa April 2023, I had been a patient of WellBN.

"I have switched to Charter Medical Centre. What was once a good practice seems to have steadily declined."

Patient

What we did

- We raised your concerns with the Commissioner for Primary Care services in the city who shared this with Goldstone Primary Care Network (PCN), which includes WellBN. We were told that the PCN manager would discuss patients' feedback directly with the practice.
- We shared patients' concerns with the CQC, who inspected the practice in May 2023. We were pleased to see that the practice was rated as '**Good**' and that negative patient feedback about the practice now appears to have stopped, showing that the practice has acted on patient concerns.



"NHS Sussex work closely with Healthwatch Brighton and Hove to listen to patient concerns and compliments concerning their experiences with General Practice. This in turn helps us to make specific improvements where they have been identified to support patients. The ICB would like to thank Healthwatch for providing this valuable insight."

Head of Primary Care (Brighton & Hove), NHS Sussex

Our work on GP services

Supporting future GP contract changes

We have been supporting work to deliver the GP contract for the Whitehawk area, which is currently due to be renewed next year. We were able to use what patients have told us they expect from a 'good' GP practice to help inform the specification for the service.

We will join the panel responsible for determining who the next provider will be, ensuring that patients' views are represented throughout the process and that their needs are being met.

We have also been involved in similar work supporting the Brighton Station walk-in GP service.

Working with Patient Participation Groups

In May, we hosted an event with over 40 participants involving residents, GPs, NHS Sussex, and Voluntary and Community Groups.

This resulted in a new Sussex guide for Patient Participation Groups (PPGs) which are made up of patients who wish to be involved in their local practice, whilst taking an active role in developing local health services.

The guide will support PPGs to expand and diversify their membership and work more closely with other PPGs.

Take a look at the

[Guide for Patient Participation Groups.](#)



"It was good to be able to share details of the community work that East and Central Brighton PCN is starting to trial and I made some very useful contacts, talking to other participants."

East and Central PCN Manager

In September, we attended a St Peter's PPG meeting to hear more about their merger plans, raising queries on behalf of patients and listening to the practice respond to patient questions.

We published a **[St Peter's Patient Participation Group report](#)** detailing what we heard.

Following up on CQC reports

We publish CQC inspection reports on local GP services for people to read.

When local GP practice, the Broadway Surgery, was rated as "Requires improvement" in a CQC report, we obtained a response from NHS Commissioners to help patients understand what actions were being taken to support the practice to improve.

You can read the CQC report and response in the **[CQC Report: The Broadway Surgery.](#)**



Read about our wider **[Work on GPs.](#)**

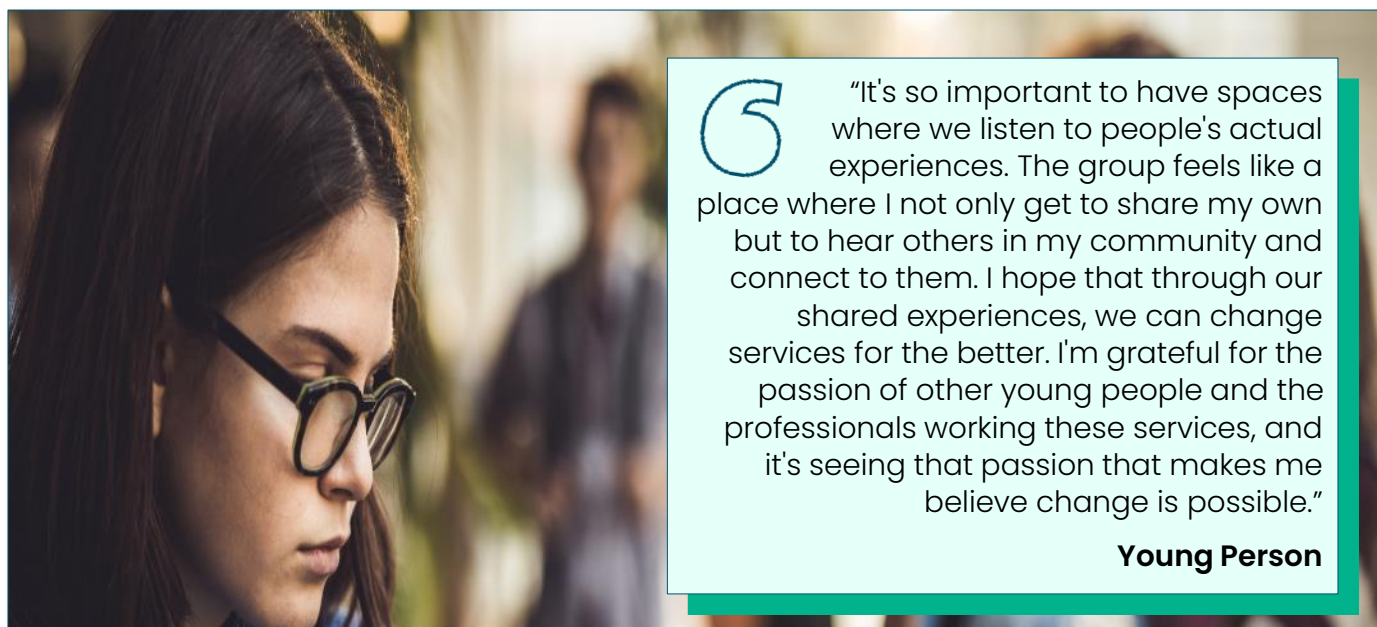
Our work with young people

We aim to understand what young people think about health and social care services and this year we commissioned the ru-ok? team to help us.

Ru-ok? is a Brighton and Hove Young Persons Drug and Alcohol Team in the council's Adolescent Service. They engaged with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (or sometimes questioning), intersex, asexual, and other young people (LGBTQIA+). We asked them to gather their views about how substance misuse services, sexual health services and therapeutic support services could better engage with this community.

Part of the reasoning for undertaking this work was that surveys of young people (under 18) within the city who identified as LGBTQIA+ highlighted that they often felt there were barriers to accessing support from support services, such as drug and alcohol services. ru-ok? ran sessions with young people who offered suggestions and ideas.

Along with the young participants, they created videos and a guide for people who work with children and young people to help best support them.



What has happened so far

The young people involved met with the Head of Adolescent Services and the Corporate Director for Families, Children & Learning Services at the Council to discuss their work and their hopes for how the outputs could be used. The outputs were also discussed at the city's adolescent board. We are aware the police have expressed an interest in using the outputs, and pending legal advice, we will explore how these materials might be shared and used to inform social work practice, education advisors and trainee medical staff; with plans to approach our local universities.

We are finalising the report, guide and videos and we hope to share them later this year.

"This has been a really valuable piece of work and the learning we have received from the young people will enable us to continue to develop services that better meet the needs of young LGBT people." **Tania Riedel, Head of Service, Adolescent Service**

Our work with parents & carers of young children

We spoke to parents and carers of children aged 5 years or younger to find out their experiences of accessing health and social care services on behalf of their children.

We also ran a survey with over 100 responses representing a range of people and interviewed 19 people about their experiences. The CQC – who asked us to do this – were particularly interested in parents with a child with special educational needs (SEN) and/or disability; LGBTQIA+ parents; parents from ethnic minorities; and fathers.

We worked with partners such as [Amaze](#) and [PaCC, Bridging Change, Sussex Interpreting Services, Mothers Uncovered, Maternity Voices Partnership Sussex](#) and [East Brighton Food Cooperative](#).

Themes – consistent across the survey and interviews were:

- Issues accessing appointments and waiting times for referrals.
- Levels of customer service of all staff, administrative and medical.
- Receiving good advice and information.
- Associated challenges in accessing support, such as costs.
- Availability of support for emotional wellbeing.
- Low awareness levels about the CQC.

Based on these findings, we made several recommendations to the CQC that will feed into their national review to be published later this year.



"Our experience of GP services has been very positive."

Father of four-year-old

"Trying to get past the reception to see the GP is very difficult."

Mother of two-year-old and five-year-old

"It really stood out to me how helpful they were."

Mother of four-year-old

"You always see a different doctor."

Mother of two-year-old and child under one-years-old

Our work on homecare services

Our volunteers regularly visit and interview local residents who have home care services provided by independent companies paid – fully or partly – by the council.

We report our findings to the council monthly so they can share them with the care providers and assess the quality and safety of services. This has been the first full year of the project since we restarted it in November 2022, following COVID-19.

We have seen an increase in positive responses about how people feel towards their carers, their care package and the help they get from their provider. Though the level of complaints has remained the same.

Out of 192 people interviewed:

- **95%** were happy with how their carers treated them – previously 89%.
- **92%** thought it was useful that feedback was used to assess the performance of their home care provider – no change.
- **90%** were very/extremely satisfied with the help they got from providers – previously 88%.
- **87%** felt their care package met their needs – previously 80%.
- **28%** had made a complaint and most were satisfied with how the complaint was handled.
- **13%** needed additional support to talk to the patient because of communication issues such as dementia, sensory, learning disabilities, etc.
- **18** Service users were referred for a care package review.
- **39** were signposted to other services and given information and encouraged to speak to their homecare providers about their additional support needs.
- **1** person was referred for safeguarding concerns – which is lower than in previous periods.

Impact

Earlier this year the council recommissioned homecare provider services in Brighton & Hove and our work directly shaped the service specification and helped the Council to understand what people want. The council has praised our work and the skills of our volunteers.

Watch a **Homecare Check Video** on why and how the service was designed and put in place by **Jessica Harper, Business & Development Manager (HASC) at B&H City Council**.



Service Users on their carers

- "Said his carers were wonderful".
- "Have a laugh and joke."
- "Main carers are good – one of the younger carers has little experience or empathy."
- "So lovely, so caring"



Our work with ethnic elders

We spoke to 22 people over 65 from minority ethnic communities in the city about using digital services. We wanted to explore how they use the internet, manage emails, send texts, access online shopping/banking, and book events or GP appointments online.

We partnered with Bridging Change, Sussex Interpreting Services and a local community group of minority ethnic elders. The project was funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research – Clinical Research Network Kent, Surrey and Sussex ([NIHR, CRN-KSS](#)).

"I don't like it or trust it, the fear of hacking; sometimes people get conned, intelligent people."

G

"When I want to make an appointment online – that's the one that's a nightmare."

"I went to Barclays and a woman there helped me. She explained step-by-step and if someone teaches me like that then I can do it. When people explain it properly it is helpful, my brain cannot do it all at once."

"Because she does not know what it means...she had two obstacles, the language number one and technology number two."

Responses about using digital technology

We found

- The main issue was around a lack of trust in digital technology, like suspicious emails. The most common way to build trust was to get help from friends or family, usually children.
- Most people preferred not to use an online GP booking system or had tried with great difficulty. Several shared experiences of people being greatly disadvantaged by this.
- For further support, people preferred a step-by-step approach that was not too fast-paced and that focussed on what people '*need to know rather than what they don't need to know*'.
- Language was considered a significant obstacle to using digital technology.

The impact our report had

This study is helping to increase the representation of minority ethnic communities in research studies. Participants were clear about what would encourage them to take part.

"Working with Healthwatch has been an informative and rewarding research experience. Following the interview phase I was able to identify and work with 3 champions who agreed to act as future advisors in 'research studies related to ageing'. These research champions helped me identify key qualities they valued; the importance of establishing trust and confidence in the research team, and the benefits of engaging with younger generations."

Dr Khalid Ali, Reader in Geriatrics- Brighton and Sussex Medical School (BSMS)

The findings have also been shared with the Sussex Insight Bank, a library of information and data on projects conducted across Sussex.

Read the [Digital Use Among Ethnic Minority Elders Report](#).

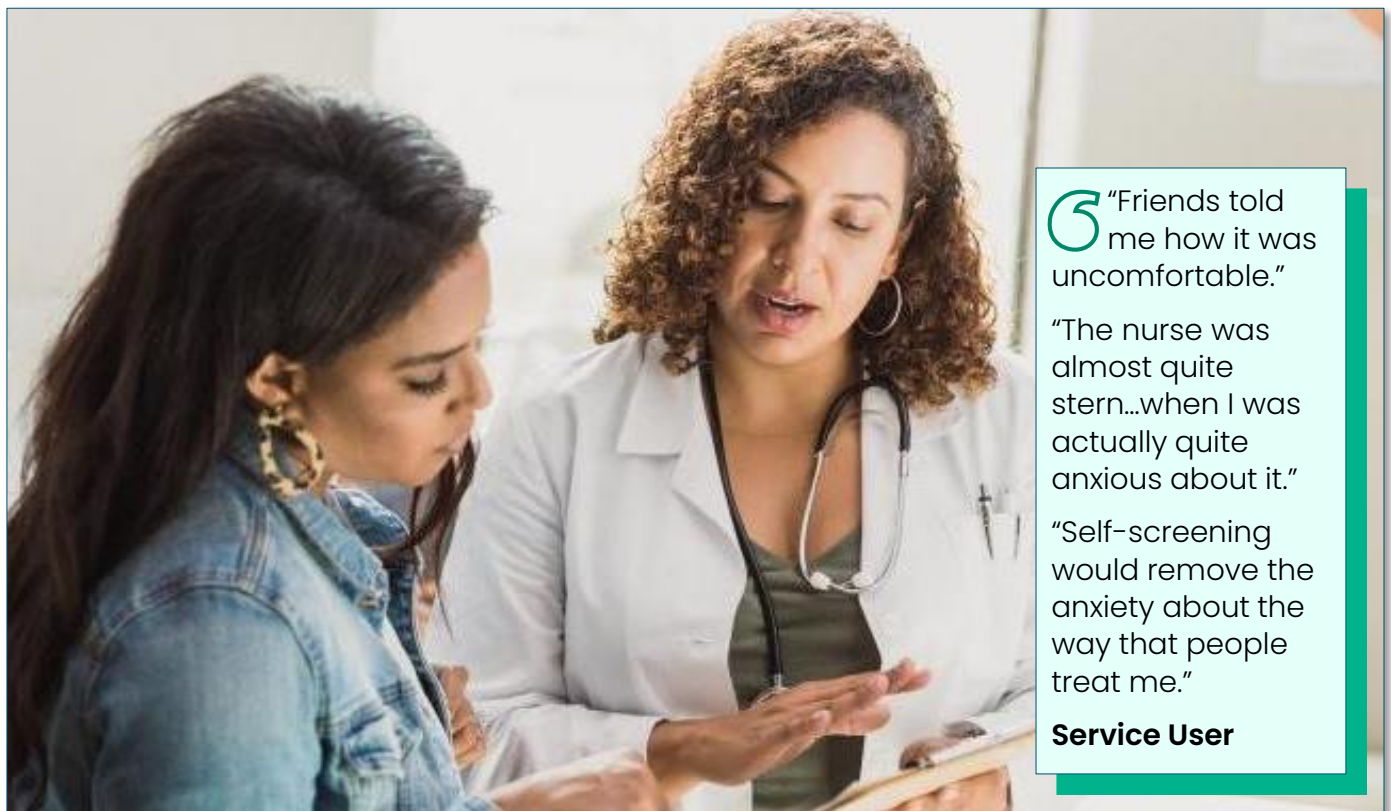


Our work on cervical screening

Last winter, we supported Healthwatch England in speaking to women aged between 24 – 29 years old about their experiences of cervical cancer screening. We wanted to find out what barriers existed and what further support women need, to take up the invite for a screening.

Improving women's health and access to services is a national priority since the government published their Women's Health Strategy in 2022. It has a commitment to encourage more women to take up cervical screening tests. Women between the ages of 24.5 and 64 years old are invited – every three to five years – to have a test, but the uptake has been declining.

Our earlier work in 2022, conducted with residents in [East and Central Brighton](#), found that only two-thirds of women were using the screening service for cervical cancer from age 25 (68%).



“Friends told me how it was uncomfortable.”

“The nurse was almost quite stern...when I was actually quite anxious about it.”

“Self-screening would remove the anxiety about the way that people treat me.”

Service User

What we found

- There is not enough consistent or factual information about screening; women relied on friends and family who may have had their own positive or negative experiences.
- The experience of going to a screening was reliant on the member of staff – usually a nurse – carrying out the screening. If they were empathetic and put the patient at ease, the experience was much more positive.
- Previous challenges such as a history of anxiety, sexual abuse, or poor experiences at the surgery, could be barriers to women taking up the offer for screening.

Our findings will feed into the national report by Healthwatch England due to be published later this year. Read Healthwatch England's [Barriers & inequalities in cervical screening](#) blog.

Our work on pharmacy services

Changes to pharmacy services mean they can now provide care for seven common conditions, an initiative called 'Pharmacy First'.

Last autumn, we were one of 12 local Healthwatch to speak with patients and staff about local pharmacy services, supporting national research by Healthwatch England.

We found:

- Opening hours were unpredictable, so some patients went without or had to travel further to get essential medications. Delivery services were only offered at some pharmacies.
- Patients experienced delays getting medication, including there being 'a lack of stock'. National shortages of stock are affecting many local pharmacies.
- Some patients would not use the pharmacy in place of a GP. Others would only use the pharmacy for "*non-sensitive issues*".
- Pharmacies would like a better public perception of their services and the training involved to qualify as a pharmacist.
- Communication between GPs and pharmacies was sometimes unclear and reliant on patients acting as "*go-betweens*".
- Patients were very wary of using an online pharmacy.
- While online pharmacies give patients a choice, face-to-face interaction has a bigger benefit watching out for any anomalies or changes in the patient after being prescribed new medication.



Our work is reflected in Healthwatch England's [Pharmacy: what people want](#) report published in April, ensuring the voices of Brighton and Hove residents are recognised at a national level.

Learn more about [Pharmacy First](#).

Our work on dentistry

This year we heard from you about continuing problems accessing NHS dental services.

Responding to this feedback we:

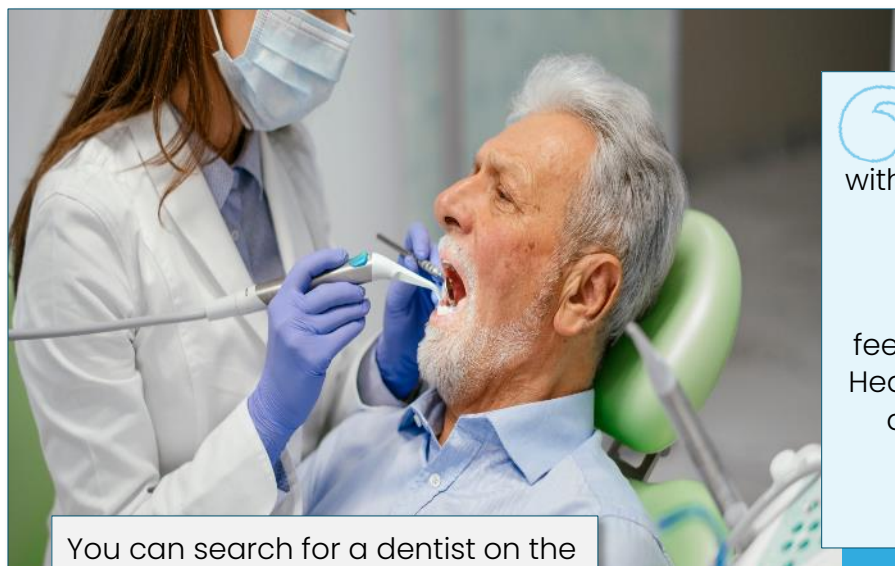
- Shared your experiences in the Healthwatch in Sussex **Patients in Sussex: Experiences of Dentistry Report** and shared this with NHS Sussex Commissioners responsible for dental provision.
- Updated our **Healthwatch Dentistry guide to your rights and accessing treatment**.
- Worked with a local Brighton MP, getting questions asked in Parliament and receiving answers from the Minister responsible for dentistry provision.
- Shared details of the above with our city's Councillors to help them answer your queries, receiving a thank you from the Leader of Council.
- **Briefed the Health & Overview Scrutiny Committee (HOSC)**, sharing your stories to aid their understanding of the real impacts that poor NHS dental access is having on local people.

Our Impact

We learnt about our health system's plans to transform local dental provision and we challenged them to make this information publicly available to help people understand the changes. They responded and for details read **NHS Sussex: plans to transform dentistry**.

Our Sussex work on dentistry was included in the **Healthwatch England Annual Report** which reflected a commitment made by our NHS system following our April report.

A paper delivered by our Integrated Care System on dentistry at the city's HOSC meeting in January also recognised our Sussex-wide work and confirmed how it will be used:



“We will ensure this feedback is central to our work as we work with dental providers this year to set out immediate and longer-term areas of improvement.”

“NHS Sussex has used patient feedback collected in the April 2023 Healthwatch survey, ... to inform and develop our Dental Recovery and Transformation Plan.”

NHS Commissioners

You can search for a dentist on the **NHS Find a Dentist website**.

If you require urgent care, you can contact the Sussex Dental Helpline on 0300 123 1663 or **kcht.dentalhelpdesk@nhs.net**.

The helpline is open 8am to 4pm – Monday to Friday.

**Sussex
Dental
Helpline**

0300 123 1663



Our work on direct payments

Direct Payments help people, or an adult/child that is cared for, to receive financial support for their care needs. This might be employing a care worker or personal assistant.

Brighton and Hove City Council wanted to hear views and experiences from people who receive Direct Payments (DP). They wanted people to identify ways in which the service could be improved. 127 people completed a postal survey.

We found

- Almost three-quarters of respondents reported that the DP service was working well ('very well' 44%, 'quite well' 30%).
- Most people were not aware of the Council's Assessment Service which enables them to request changes to their DP.
- Several had problems recruiting and managing Personal Assistants (PAs).
- People wanted higher payment levels, more help with the recruitment of PAs, a single point of contact for support, and regular reviews.



S "I highly value and appreciate the hours provided each week to have a PA to help me live my life and perform my job. Without someone, I would struggle.

"However, it's difficult to retain good PAs due to the pay and hours, which results in having to spend time and energy on recruiting and retaining someone new."

Service User

Our Impact

"Thank you so much for this really useful information and an excellent mandate to take forward some of the development work we are already committed to.

"We clearly must also dedicate some work regarding raising awareness of the support available to DP users...we will aim also to discuss how best to provide the findings to those who completed the survey, and contacting those who are happy to have an ongoing role.

"We are aiming to set up a 'DP Advisory Group' to enable consultation with DP users regarding the development work."

**Gemma Scambler, Commissioning Manager, Health and Adult Social Care
Brighton and Hove City Council,**

Read the [Direct Payments report](#).

Our work on safeguarding

Safeguarding means protecting people's health, wellbeing and human rights; enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect. This runs throughout our work and practice.

This year we:

- Chaired the city's Safeguarding Adult Review group (SAR).
- Played a key role in supporting the work of the city's Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB), which is a statutory function of the Care Act 2014.
- Reviewed and updated our safeguarding policies for adults and children and identified opportunities for further training.
- Identified and reported safeguarding concerns through our work.

Safeguarding Adults Reviews

The SAR group is part of Brighton & Hove's Safeguarding Adults Board. It is responsible for organising reviews where there is concern that a person has died following serious abuse or neglect, or is alive but has experienced serious abuse or neglect.

Our experienced Healthwatch volunteer and representative, **Brigid**, chairs the SAR subgroup, bringing independent scrutiny to the group's work.

The group has published [**Adult Safeguarding Reviews**](#) and recommendations which aim to improve professional practice and the experiences of people who use services and people with safeguarding needs. Recommendations from previous reviews are also in development.

The SAR has also supported the creation of a pan-Sussex [**SAB podcast on Shared Learning**](#).

Our work is recognised in the city's SAB Annual Report – this year's report has yet to be published, however, you can read the [**2023 SAB Annual Report**](#).



“...it is great to know how in touch Healthwatch is with local people. Safeguarding is core to all that they do, whether this is contributing to the Safeguarding Adults Board Meeting's, and subgroups, or hearing the views of the people in the city.

“This helps to inform organisations about the experiences of how professionals work together to prevent risk and harm to adults.”

Seona Douglas,
Chair of Brighton and Hove Adults SAB

“We have been working in partnership with Healthwatch who deliver the Homecare Checks service.

“This activity provides an additional level of assurance within the adult social care governance processes, to ensure people are safe and receiving the appropriate level of support and care.”

Jess Harper, Health & Adult Social Care,
Brighton & Hove City Council



Healthwatch in Sussex

A local Healthwatch partnership.

Over the past year, the three Healthwatch teams in Sussex 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 enhances our ability to champion public and patient voice on these and other health and care themes at a Sussex-wide level.

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 commissioning and delivery, by:

- **Being part of a Sussex Communications and Engagement Group**, influencing 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: patient communications, timeliness, assessment of eligibility, continuous service improvements and accessibility of the service.

Previously, local Healthwatch in Sussex supported the current NEPTS provider to deliver patient forums, capturing user voice 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.



"The [new] contract .. reflects ... feedback from ... patient groups, including Healthwatch, playing a significant role in service design, development and evaluation of the bids received."

Praise from NHS Sussex Commissioners at Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

"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 our contribution to the evaluation of bids

Our work on dementia services

We were funded by NHS Sussex to find out people's experiences of using the different services available for people with dementia across Sussex.

We interviewed 45 people affected by dementia, including carers and service users.

We found:

- People experienced a range of support with no clear pattern according to where they lived – there were different types of assessment and levels of support following a diagnosis.
- Care plans were inconsistently provided.
- Some people were unaware of support groups, which were found to be a great source of comfort for those who had used them.
- People benefited from having a named individual or support worker to contact and having regular 'check-ins'.
- People were often unsure how to get a review of their medication.
- Centralised services, which provide assessments, diagnosis, advice and support all in one location, were generally preferred by the people we spoke to.



5

"If you have a broken leg, for example, you get lots of support. If you have a broken mind, no one wants to know...unless you are on the ball, it is easy to get lost in the system."

Carer, partner age at diagnosis: 72

"We felt cast away with such little support."

Service User, age at diagnosis: 73

"Memory Assessment Service was supportive and called a few times [beforehand] and gave information. We were kept informed, and it was a positive experience."

Carer, partner age at diagnosis: 81

The impact our report had

- Our report was shared with the Chief Operating Officer at the Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, providers of mental health support.
- It will help inform the recommissioning of Memory Assessment Services (MAS) and post-diagnostic support across Sussex.
- The report has been sent to all MAS across Sussex, with recommendations including making environments less clinical and more 'dementia-friendly'.
- The 27 recommendations from the report are being monitored by the Sussex-wide Dementia Programme Steering Group.

Read the full [**Dementia Services Across Sussex Report**](#).

On work on outpatients' services

To ensure patients were at the heart of the changes being made, we worked with 31 Sussex outpatients to review new initiatives being introduced into the outpatient system.

Funded by [NHS Sussex](#), we ran four workshops between May and June 2023 using a new deliberative engagement methodology. This focused on increasing people's knowledge of the outpatient system, helping them to make an informed judgement of the changes being proposed.

Participants were provided with scenarios and encouraged to listen to other viewpoints.

“Patients should not be passive recipients of healthcare. But rather active users who are prepared to give their opinion and ensure they influence the service they receive.”

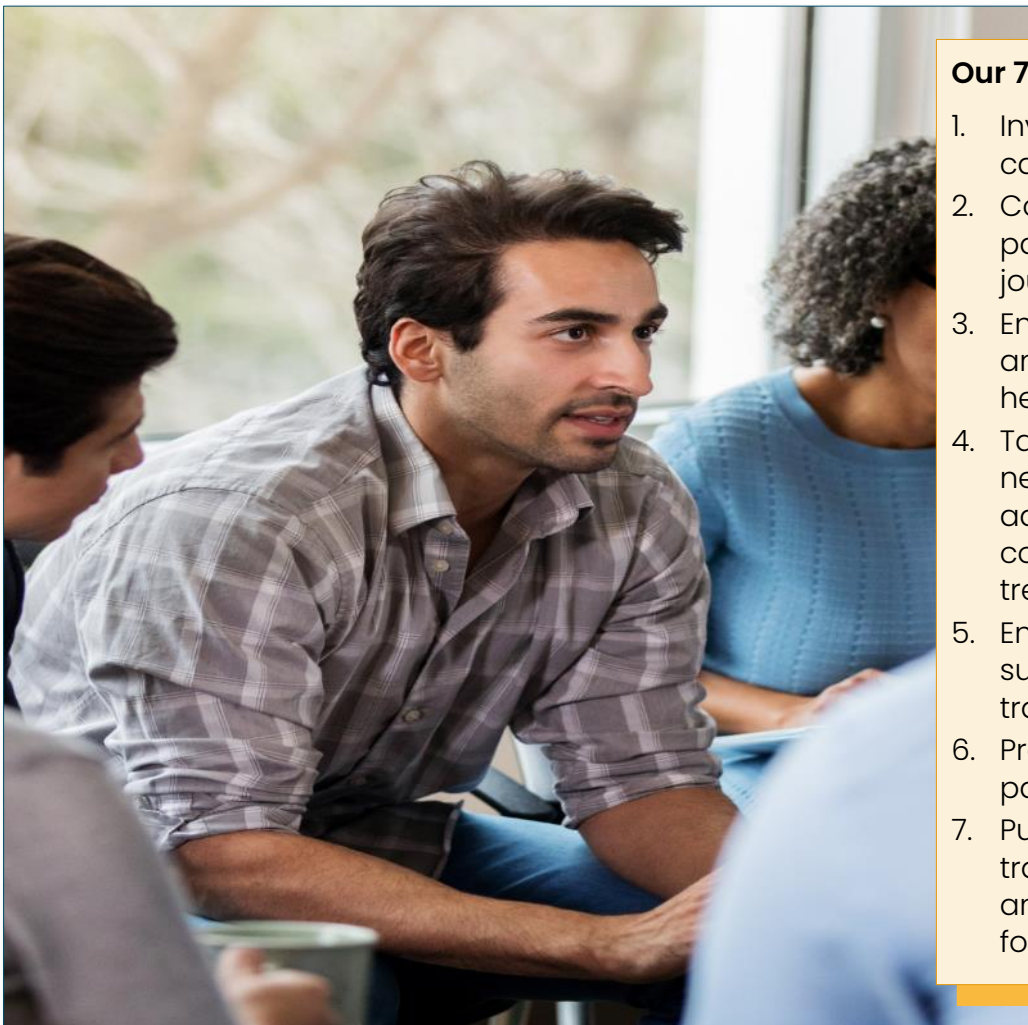
“This process demonstrated willingness to learn from participants. The time for more active discussions and listening gave people the space to learn from each other.”

“I'd like to think I now have a better insight into the workings, and the challenges, of the outpatients' system.”

“I did enjoy the deliberative engagement process. It is always better if ordinary service users can have some influence on how services are designed.”

Participant comments

We shared our findings with NHS Sussex and made seven recommendations.



Our 7 recommendations

1. Involve patients in their care.
2. Communicate with the patient throughout their journey.
3. Ensure GPs are aware and trained in all new healthcare initiatives.
4. Take patients' individual needs into account and adapt care, communication, and treatment accordingly.
5. Ensure the infrastructure supports the transformation.
6. Provide clear, concise patient information.
7. Publicise the transformation widely and in accessible formats.

Our work on outpatients' services

In December, NHS Sussex responded with the impact that had been made to date.

Workshop participants called for:	NHS Sussex responded:
Better patient communication about appointments and the ability to respond to and request an appointment change.	NHS Sussex is one of three systems in the UK piloting an expanded version of the NHS App to provide appointment notifications & reminders and enable patients to respond and request changes.
Patient notes to be available wherever they receive care – patients need to know there will be consistency of care.	Patient notes are being shared across all providers within Sussex, so that patients receive consistent care wherever this takes place.
Patient records should include notes on a patient's availability for last-minute appointments and willingness to travel outside the local area.	The expanded NHS App will also store information on a patient's willingness to travel and availability for last-minute appointments.
Patient written information should be clear and visual aids should be used where possible.	National communication in the form of a patient-focused video has been shared with all hospitals in Sussex. Maps and links to hospital websites are included in patient letters to provide visual aids.
Identifying and supporting patient groups who find it particularly challenging to attend appointments.	Voluntary and community sector organisations across Sussex are helping to identify and support patient groups who find it particularly challenging to access outpatient appointments, and work is taking place with NHS Sussex to find solutions to issues where possible.
Communication publicising changes to the outpatient system should be available in a range of formats.	NHS Sussex is working with hospitals across Sussex to ensure information is available in a range of formats. NHS Sussex and Healthwatch will work together to ensure that feedback about communication is reviewed and that it shapes the information provided.



"We wanted to understand what matters to patients and how we need to adapt our programme accordingly. The discussions and points raised by all participants were of huge value to our plan going forward. The workshops and deliberative engagement process exceeded our expectations, and we are incredibly grateful to everyone involved."

Outpatient Transformation Team

Read the [Improving the Outpatient Experience Report](#) for findings and recommendations.

Your voice heard at a wider level

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

This year we've worked with [Healthwatch East Sussex](#) and [Healthwatch West Sussex](#) to deliver:

Achievement one:



We delivered four workshops with diverse participants to support the transformation of local outpatient services. This helped the NHS to understand how best to deliver Advice and Guidance, Patient Choice, Patient Initiated Follow-Up (PIFU) and reduce Did Not Attends (DNA) whilst improving the patient experience. NHS Sussex is now progressing these changes using the feedback from local people. Read more about this work earlier in this report

Achievement two:

We regularly shared people's experiences of dentistry with NHS decision-makers and dentists to ensure barriers to access and impacts were understood. NHS Sussex has improved advice on its website, clarifying how and where emergency and routine services can be accessed. Pilots are being launched to explore the expansion of local NHS dental capacity and enhance oral health in care homes.



Achievement three:



We supported the Sussex Integrated Care Board (NHS Sussex) in surveying Sussex resident's views on the priorities of our Shared Delivery Plan, the use of patient data within the NHS, and their satisfaction with local NHS services. Healthwatch used its reach and links with local networks to maximise contributions from diverse communities, helping to amplify people's experiences and views.

Achievement four:

We gathered qualitative experiences of long COVID from across Sussex, using people's stories to highlight the wide range and often significant scale of impacts on their lives. We shared our insight with the NHS, including the Post-COVID Assessment and Support Service (PCASS), to help them adapt and diversify their activities to best meet the needs of those experiencing ongoing symptoms.



Reports Published 2023–24

We published **30** reports this year describing our work and your experiences of health and social care services. They are all available on our website – click the links below to view.

1	Patients in Sussex share their latest experiences of dentistry – April 2023
2	Celebrating 10 years of Healthwatch – April 2023
3	Healthwatch Brighton and Hove Annual Performance Report 2022–23 – May 2023
4	Enter & View Report: Maternity wards at Royal Sussex County Hospital – May 2023
5	Direct Payments survey for Brighton and Hove City Council – June 2023
6	Healthwatch Brighton and Hove – Annual Report 2023 – June 2023
7	Healthwatch Brighton and Hove – Helpline enquiries (Jan – Mar 2023) – July 2023
8	Dementia pathways across Sussex – Patient & carer experience – July 2023
9	Supporting the development of our local Emergency Department – July 2023
10	People, Communities and PCN Partnership Project: Brighton workshop – Aug 2023
11	Public Engagement – St Peter’s Patient Participation Group – Sept 2023
12	Public Engagement – Brunswick Square Festival (Aug 2023) – Sept 2023
13	Supporting the development of our local Hospital – New Cancer Centre – Sept 2023
14	Supporting the improvement of patient’s stay at our local hospitals – Sept 2023
15	People’s experiences of Long COVID in Sussex – Oct 2023
16	Healthwatch 6-month Performance Report (April to Sept 2023) – Oct 2023
17	Improving the outpatient experience – participant workshops – Nov 2023
18	Enter & View Report: The Atrium at the Louisa Martindale Building – Nov 2023
19	Homecare Check summary report – Nov 2022 to Oct 2023 – Nov 2023
20	Emotional support during the perinatal period – collective findings – Nov 2023
21	Improving the outpatient experience – final report and impact – Dec 2023
22	What we heard across Sussex: experiences & stories making a difference – Dec 2023
23	Commentary on the ICS’s Shared Delivery Plan & its development – Jan 2024
24	Healthwatch Brighton and Hove workplan of projects (Dec 2023) – Jan 2024
25	How your stories helped to improve services – Jan 2024
26	Briefing the city’s Health & Overview Scrutiny Committee – Jan 2024
27	PLACE visits to University Hospitals Sussex NHS Trust – March 2024
28	Your experiences of ‘Patients Know Best’ – March 2024
29	PLACE visits to Mill View Hospital and Rutland Gardens – March 2024
30	Your experiences of Hospital PALS services in Sussex – March 2024



Volunteering

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

This year our volunteers:

- Collected experiences and supported communities to share their views
- Carried out enter and view visits to local services to help them improve
- Visited communities to promote Healthwatch and what we have to offer

Volunteers

Vanessa Hollingworth – PLACE, Homecare Check, & Project Support since 2022

G “I have been truly welcomed to the Healthwatch team, and by fellow volunteers, they are friendly and supportive, and I have been able to bring skills and experience from my previous role that have really been valued by the team. Volunteering can be challenging but it is also fun. It is also definitely one of the most rewarding things I have ever done.

“Most recently I have been involved in PLACE (Patient-Led Assessments of the Care Environment). This was a highly rewarding experience and gave me the opportunity to meet patients and staff and hear firsthand their experiences. This allowed me to feedback on their behalf on any environmental issues raised.”



Mike Holdgate – Meeting Representative since 2023



G “Having been the Lead Member for Patient and Public Engagement, for 6 years, with Brighton and Hove Clinical Commissioning Group, I was keen to use my knowledge to support Healthwatch and its activities across the city. I have also been a carer for my mother who lived at home but also spent many periods of time in various care homes across the city. She also needed to utilise Adult Social Care services therefore it made sense for me to take on the role of a Meeting Representative with the Care Governance Board (CGB).

“This has been a very rewarding experience and I certainly feel that the voice of patients and carers across the city have really been heard and this has helped to influence the decisions made by this Board. All members of the CGB have been very accepting of the insight I have brought to the debate and reacted in a very positive way taking account of any challenges I raise. I have also appreciated the support I have been given by the Healthwatch staff in such endeavours and as such would recommend this volunteering opportunity to others.”

Adaeze Ezeugwa – Health Promotion Student Placement, 2024

G “I have been at Healthwatch as a student placement volunteer and it’s such a privilege to be immersed in the vital work of advocating for the public’s voice in healthcare. As a Health Promoter, my time at Healthwatch is very enriching from engaging with diverse communities to gathering valuable feedback about their experiences.

“The supportive environment fostered my personal growth and allowed me to develop skills in effective communication. The projects have reaffirmed my passion for serving others and ignited a commitment to promoting equity and inclusivity within the healthcare system. I am grateful for the opportunity to be such a part of this dedicated and impactful team.”



Volunteers

Paul Koczerzat – Homecare Check, PLACE, & Project Support since 2020

"I believe that Healthwatch plays an essential role in our community by providing independent oversight of local health and social care services. As a volunteer, I feel that I can play an important role in helping Healthwatch meet its objectives as well as helping individuals in our community through programmes such as PLACE and the Homecare Checks.

"Volunteering with Healthwatch is a great opportunity to work with and meet lots of really interesting people from all backgrounds and I enjoy the challenges and opportunities we meet through this work."



Mazzie Sharp – Enter & View, Homecare Check, & Project Support volunteer since 2019



"Since 2019, I have been part of Homecare Check. As someone with a background in the NHS, it was a good opportunity for me to utilise that knowledge and understanding. It is also very rewarding to give something back and particularly rewarding to spend time with clients who frequently entertained and surprised me.

"As Covid arrived, I was very happy to join the Hospital Discharge initiative, set up with the local hospital, to provide a check in service for people who had recently arrived home from a hospital stay, and ask them how they were and if anything needed to be followed up. Needless to say, this phone call was generally very warmly welcomed. I was able to signpost people to appropriate services, or forward queries for action: such a valuable contact at a difficult time.

"I continue to be a Lay Assessor and am happy to attend events as a representative or undertake a support role in any new or one-off project. Volunteering with Healthwatch is both very positive and fulfilling for me."

Conor Sheehan – Homecare Check, Enter & View, & Project Support since 2020

"My involvement on all these projects has been very rewarding as it has brought me into direct contact with people who are either experiencing or delivering health services and really wish to share their views on how things are and how they believe services could be developed.

"Talking to service users in their homes has been particularly rewarding and has challenged some of my preconceptions as to which aspects of support are really important to them.

"Working with other volunteers on some projects has also been interesting and fun. Staying involved and connected with other people are just some of the significant rewards of being a Healthwatch volunteer."



Authorised Representatives

During this year we had **47** Authorised Representatives able to review services, attend decision-making forums and speak up for patients and care service users. This was made up of **40** volunteers – including directors – and **7** members of staff.

Adaeze Ezeugwa	Fran O'Neill	Mike Holdgate
Alan Boyd	Geoffrey Bowden	Neil McIntosh
Alistair Hignell	Gillian Connor	Nicholas Gorvett
Angelika Wydra	Hasan Christou	Nick Goslett
Barbara Myers	Dixon	Paul Koczerzat
Bob Deschene	Hilary Martin	Peter Burton
Brigid Day	Howard Lewis	Richard Williams
Chris Jennings	Ian Bretman	Roger Squier
Christine D'Cruz	John Gough	Sophie Crowton
Christopher Morey	Judi Holly	Sue Seymour
Clare Funnell	Katy Francis	Sylvia New
Clary Collicutt	Khalid Ali	Vanessa
Conor Sheehan	Leah Ashley	Hollingworth
Elaine Crush	Lester Coleman	Vanessa
Elaine Foster Page	Lynne Shields	Greenaway
Finnur Bjarnason	Mazzie Sharp	Will Anjos
	Michelle Kay	Yasmine Kamel



THANK YOU

This Year...

40 Volunteers

Including 9 Volunteer Board Members

Volunteers and staff...

Attended
719
Decision
making
meetings

Attended
92
Board
meetings

Handled
365
helpline
enquiries

Engaged
with
1,528
people

to help our community

 30 Reports
Published

 37 Bulletins
& Newsletters

 24 press
interviews given

 131 posts on
Facebook

 174
Tweets

**We made 60
Recommendations**


4,200
hrs


263
days


23,000
Website
Hits


23,000
Web
site
Hits


7 members of staff

£178,600
funded by our local authority
...but completely independent

Chair & Directors

Our board of directors are all volunteers



Geoffrey Bowden
Chair



Christine D'Cruz
Director



Howard Lewis
Director



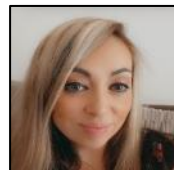
Angelika Wydra
Director



Dr Khalid Ali
Director



Alastair Hignell
Director



Sophie Crowton
Director



Gillian Connor
Director



Christopher Morey
Director

For more information about our directors visit [**Our Board.**](#)

Goodbyes

Christine D'Cruz will be standing down as a director in August. Christine has been an invaluable member of the board, and over the years made a great contribution to our work.

She also plays an active role in Brighton as a Chair of arts charity **SameSky**, who deliver The Children's Parade and Burning the Clocks in Brighton, and as a trustee at **South East Dance**.

Christine recently retired as a trustee at Martlets Hospice after 10 years.

Christine D'Cruz – August 2018 to August 2024

Staff Team

Alan Boyd
Chief Executive

Dr Lester Coleman
Head of Research

Will Anjos
Project Coordinator

Katy Francis
Project Coordinator

Kate Jones
Project Coordinator

Vacancy (being recruited)
Project Support Officer

Learn more about our staff team at [Our Staff](#)



Left to right: Will, Lester, Katy, Alan and Kate.

Staff Goodbyes & Hello

G "In June this year, after seven years with Healthwatch, I will be moving on. During these years, I have been lucky enough to have worked on a variety of services, primary, secondary and social care.

"Healthwatch has supported service users through the COVID lockdown as well as the aftermath, and I have been part of this transition. We provided space where local people, providers and commissioners can find common ground to share and exchange views, positively influencing services in a co-productive way.

"I will be leaving Healthwatch to work with one of our partners, Friends, Families & Travellers, continuing to support and represent service users who experience inequalities. While I look forward to new challenges, I will miss the friendly, passionate and motivated Healthwatch family."

Michelle Kay – Project Coordinator, July 2017 to June 2024



G "I loved my time working at Healthwatch with such a supportive team and fantastic volunteers. I felt like the work that I was doing was actively helping to improve the patient's and service user's experiences of health and social care."

Clary Collicut – Project Coordinator, February 2022 to May 2024



G "I'm so grateful to NHS Sussex and Healthwatch for the opportunity to be part of the dedicated Sussex Health and Care Partnership. Working strategically to deliver the first year of the Sussex Health and Care Strategy has been an incredible experience. It's been inspiring to witness the depth and volume of activity and the growth in collaboration throughout the year. Strengthening these partnerships will be crucial in the coming years, which will undoubtedly be challenging due to the financial constraints facing the NHS and social care.

"I am confident that my Healthwatch colleagues will continue to add value by supporting Sussex in engaging with people and communities. In my new role as Charity Manager for the Brighton Permaculture Trust, I look forward to discovering new and innovative ways to collaborate with Sussex communities.

Katrina Broadhill – Sussex Liaison Lead, working across the three Sussex Healthwatch teams May 2023 to May 2024



G "I am delighted to have joined Healthwatch and am looking forward to working to help improve health and social care services in Brighton and Hove. I have come to Healthwatch with a background in research and community development and in past roles, I have worked on evaluations of government funded projects and have led community action research projects all around the country. I am passionate about the views of services users being included in the design and delivery of health and social care services".

Kate Jones – Project Coordinator, started June 2024



Message from our Chief Executive

Last year, I reflected that a lot of change was happening across the health and care system but that this was also an opportunity for Healthwatch to take stock, try new ways of working and strengthen relationships – and I believe our report demonstrates how we have risen to meet those challenges.

None of this would have been possible without my dedicated and expert staff team and wonderful volunteers, and I would like to extend a personal thanks to them all for their hard work.

This year, the team said a fond farewell to Michelle, Clary and Clare who have helped us to achieve so much, and we shall miss them.

We've also welcomed some amazing new volunteers and Kate Jones to our staff team and I'm very pleased to congratulate Katy, who was recently promoted.



G

"I want to thank all partners who have supported and collaborated with us; you have helped us reach diverse and vulnerable communities in the city and you have responded to patient feedback."

The coming year will continue to be challenging for health and social care services due to the constrained financial environment set against a backdrop of increasing demand and public scrutiny. It has never been more important for services and providers to listen to patients and act on their feedback.

I'll end by sharing what one of our volunteers said to me about our work on non-emergency transport, which serves as a timely reminder of Healthwatch's important role:

'It is good to know that our work does have an impact and it can really lead to changes and improvements. At the end of the day, we are the patient's voice as their views need to be heard on so many issues. Success comes when those views are heard and acted upon.'

Thank you, Sue."

Alan Boyd

A handwritten signature of Alan Boyd in black ink, written in a cursive style.

Future focus

Over the next year, we will keep reaching out to people from diverse backgrounds, especially people in the most deprived areas of Brighton and Hove, or those who are experiencing health inequalities, so that those in power hear their views and experiences.

We will also continue to work together with a wide range of partners to widen our intelligence of people's experiences of using health and social care services.

We will use people's stories to challenge our Integrated Care System to embed a culture where, at every level, patients' views are heard and acted upon to make care better for everyone.

We will also:

- Continue our collaborative approach with Healthwatch in Sussex, whilst maintaining our focus on supporting the residents of Brighton and Hove.
- Prioritise hearing from children and young people to ensure they have a voice.
- Continue to support our local NHS Trusts and act as a critical friend.
- Ensure a focus on social care.



Equalities data

We routinely review whom we hear from, or engage, through our work. This shows where we have strong connections with different communities in Brighton and Hove and where we can do more to reach certain groups.

In 2023, a review of seven of our projects where equalities data from 1,023 people was available, showed that we are effective in hearing the views from:

- The proportion of people with disabilities – 55.6%, which exceeds the national census figure of 19.5%.
- Those providing care – 23.8%, which again exceeds the census figure of 7.9%.
- The LGBTQIA+ community – 10.1%, which compares favourably with the census figure of 10.6% for the city.
- People whose gender did not match their sex assigned at birth – 7.3%, which again exceeds the census 2021 figure of 1.1%.

Our review also showed that we would like to hear from more men, younger people and ethnic minority groups. We are developing our engagement plans for the coming years to help us reach more people and capture their experiences of health and social care.



Finance

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	£178,600	Expenditure on pay	£191,813
Additional income from project work	£90,813	Non-pay expenditure	£29,126
Other income	£2,356	Office and management fees	£23,128
Total income	£271,769	Total expenditure	£244,067

Additional Income Breakdown

Additional income is broken down by:

- **£18,850** from the **Clinical Research Network** for Kent, Surrey and Sussex (CRN-KSS) to deliver a project exploring the use and attitudes of digital technology among ethnic minority elders in Brighton and Hove.
- **£13,000** received from **Brighton and Hove City Council** to deliver our Homecare check project (social care).
- **£9,995** from the **Care Quality Commission** for a project which explored the experiences of parents and carers of children aged 5 years or younger when accessing health and social care services on behalf of their children.
- **£5,500** from the **University of Brighton** for our support in delivering the city's Health Counts Survey.
- **£3,600** received from **Healthwatch England** for work on projects exploring cervical cancer, pharmacy and for training on deliberative engagement techniques to the Healthwatch network.
- **£2,500** from the **University Hospitals Sussex Charity** for developing a series of Mystery Shops.

ICS funding

Healthwatch across 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
To undertake surveys exploring public confidence with the NHS	£6,850
Production of a report exploring digital and data use across health services	£4,500
To arrange an event involving PPGs, PCNs, VCSEs and members of the public	£1,000
To deliver a project examining dementia pathways and patient experience	£9,982
To undertake research as part of a project examining health inequalities	£6,000
To deliver a project with patients exploring outpatients' services	£9,037

Separately, we received funding from the ICS to create a one-year Sussex-wide Strategic staffing role, operating across the three Sussex Healthwatch teams, £53,953.16. The role ended in May 2024.



Statutory statements

**Healthwatch Brighton and Hove
Community Base
113 Queens Road
Brighton BN1 3XG**

**Healthwatch Brighton and Hove 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

This year, our Healthwatch Board consisted of nine members who worked voluntarily to provide direction, oversight and scrutiny of our activities. Our Board ensured that decisions about our priority areas of work reflected the concerns and interests of our diverse local community.

Throughout 2023/24, the Board met four times in public and made decisions on matters such as the signing off our financial accounts, staffing salaries and approving our workplan of activities.

We ensure wider public involvement in deciding our work priorities.

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 have the opportunity to provide us with insights about their experience of using health and social care services. During 2023/24 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 online, to our local Healthwatch Community, share it with Healthwatch England, promote it to the local media and present the report formally to the Brighton and Hove Health and Wellbeing Board and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

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 city's Health and Wellbeing Board and Health Overview Scrutiny Committee. We routinely meet with senior representatives at our local hospital Trusts and Care Quality Commission. We also sit on the city's Adult Safeguarding Board.


We also take insights and experiences to decision-makers across the Sussex Health and Care Partnership (our Integrated Care System). We hold a privileged seat at our city's Health and Care Assembly and Patient Experience Committee.

We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.



Healthwatch Brighton and Hove
113 Queens Road
Brighton
East Sussex
BN1 3XG

 healthwatchbrightonandhove.co.uk

 01273 234 040

 office@healthwatchbrightonandhove.co.uk

 [HealthwatchBrightonandHove](https://www.facebook.com/HealthwatchBrightonandHove)

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