

Healthwatch Volunteers

Volunteers are crucial to our work and last year we recruited 27 excellent new people bringing our total volunteer workforce to 34. Our volunteer representatives and board members attend a large number of meetings and forums across Brighton and Hove with the aim of championing the consumer voice, encouraging patient participation and influencing decision-making using our patient experience intelligence and data. We also recruited three volunteers to form a team of Hospital Complaints Peer Reviewers. This has ensured that members of the community have played a role in monitoring complaints about a local NHS Trust.

“I love being involved in something that I value and feel passionate about and knowing that my contribution is valid and appreciated.”

Volunteer feedback



Closure of Eaton Place Surgery

Following the closure of Eaton Place surgery earlier this year, we spoke to patients, chaired public meetings, and raised their concerns with Councilors, local MPs and the Health and Wellbeing Board. Our collated patient experience of the impact of the closure fed into the NHS England review.

Our plans for 2015/16

Full details of our plans are in the main report but here are some key highlights.

- Letting people know we exist, what we do and how to use our services remains our high priority.
- We will continue to extend our reach using the Healthwatch Magazine, website, public events and other activities.

- We will increase our profile and will be more proactive on the Health and Wellbeing Board, Overview and Scrutiny Committee and other strategic forums in order to influence their work so that people's voices are heard.
- We will undertake up to 36 Enter and View visits and a further ten PLACE visits. We will monitor the significant transformation of health and social care under way in the city to ensure that changes bring improvements for patients.
- We will make better use of our public and patient intelligence and governance roles on key groups in the city to influence changes and monitor their impact.
- We will actively work with voluntary and community partners who have similar areas of interest and concern so that we add value to each other's work and gather a wide range of views and experiences.
- We will develop an income generation plan that identifies new funding sources aligned to our priorities.
- We will use the new Healthwatch England quality standards to evaluate our practice through a peer review process by autumn 2015.

Get in touch

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Healthwatch Brighton and Hove
Listen, Champion, Challenge and Change

Who we are

The independent watchdog for health and social care services in your city

Healthwatch Brighton and Hove is the statutory champion enabling people to have a voice in relation to health and social care. We enable local children, young people, adults, and our wider community to be involved and influence the design, delivery and improvement of their local health and social care services now and for the future.

We focus on working with those people whose voice is traditionally less heard and/or those who experience the greatest health inequalities.

We enable people to make informed choices about their health and wellbeing by:

- providing information and signposting to local health and social care services; and
- assisting them when they have concerns or complaints about these services.

We listen to people and feed their concerns to the statutory bodies responsible. We can visit publicly funded services where we have concerns or want more detailed information about patient and user experience. We have a group of trained volunteers who assist us by attending meetings, being our eyes and ears and taking part in our Enter and View activities. We work with partners in the voluntary sector with whom we share aims and ethos, so that their knowledge and expertise can inform our priorities, work plans and intelligence. We act as a critical friend to key players in the statutory sector, building trust and credibility so that patient and public views are listened to. Where necessary we constructively challenge and hold service users to public account. We have a place on the Health and Wellbeing Board where we contribute to the policy and strategic direction of health, wellbeing and social care in the city. We became a Community Interest Company on 1st April 2015, enabling us to have a stronger, independent voice.

This year we undertook some simple evaluation with key stakeholders to assess how well we are doing. In summary, partners felt that our strategic work and role as a 'critical friend' was very valuable, and members of the public particularly valued our role in providing information and advice. A number of useful actions for the future were identified, including the need to be much more publicly visible.

What we did in 2014/15

Engagement activities

Engaging people and communities helps us to understand patient and public experience of services. This year we had about 40 stalls, many of them in areas where there are inequalities and where voices are less well heard. These included for example: Black and Ethnic Minority (BME) Wellbeing events; local festivals in Whitehawk, Moulsecoomb, Hangleton and Knoll; and 'Best of Health', an event for adults with learning disabilities, their families and paid carers. We also gave a number of talks and asked for feedback on local services, for instance from Sussex Voices (a group of college-age young people), people who use Sussex Interpreting Services, and residents of sheltered accommodation schemes such as Elizabeth Court Sheltered Housing Scheme.



Providing information

We produced 12 copies of our highly commended Healthwatch Magazine, with special editions on cancer screening and mental health, as well as one dedicated to children and young people. 1,445 copies went to subscribers and the total distribution was approximately 7,000. The Magazine lets people know what we do and encourages people to share their experiences and stories.

“Your Magazine is ace. It’s a great way to get a quick but regular understanding of what you do, and what else is going on in Health and Social Care in the City.”

Magazine Subscriber

We also regularly update our website, Facebook and Twitter accounts with useful information and disseminate it through our mailing lists.

“The webpage ‘Raising Concerns and Complaints: Useful Guides’ is awesome! Tells people what they need to know. Simple yet colourful, interactive, very interesting and informative, clearly written.”

Website User Feedback

Healthwatch Helpline

Our Helpline offered support to 329 people. A large number of enquiries were about GP practices. Others were about dentists, hospitals and adult social care. We have helped achieve better complaints handling by working directly with surgeries, signposting to other organisations and liaising between different services. We have referred about 50 people to our companion service, the Independent Complaints Advocacy Service (ICAS), when people needed more support to resolve formal complaints.

“Thanks so much for persevering with this. I am very grateful for you tenaciously sticking with this complaint.”

Helpline User

Enter and View

Enter and View is a statutory power. It involves trained Authorised Representatives entering and observing health and social care premises to assess standards of service and quality of care. This year we carried out 14 Enter and View visits in the Royal Sussex County Hospital, residential and nursing homes and GP surgeries. One example of this was a visit to the Discharge Lounge at the Royal Sussex County Hospital. Following our recommendations 'Discharge Hour' was reinstated meaning that medications are prepared 24 hours in advance, and early indications show that patient flow is improving as a result. We recommended the installation of hot water and better discharge booklets for patients and their carers.

Working in partnership with Healthwatch East Sussex we undertook Enter and View visits to four wards at the Royal Sussex County Hospital (three for older people and the Acute Medical Unit). As a result we escalated concerns about the Acute Medical Unit to the Care Quality Commission (CQC) which led to planned and unannounced visits from inspectors to assess patient safety and care.

Patient-Led Assessment of the Care Environment (PLACE)

A PLACE visit to the Sussex Eye Hospital identified serious problems impacting on the dignity of patients and staff using the services. As a result a £2.175 million investment programme is underway including new flooring, blinds and equipment.



Reports

Over the last year we wrote 11 reports about important issues in health and care services. Our 'Putting the Pieces Together: An overview of people's experiences of CAMHS services in Brighton and Hove' report highlighted service users' concerns that are directly feeding into the review and redesign of services as part of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Children's Wellbeing Strategy.

“A wonderful report which I have been raising at a range of meetings in the city to make sure everyone has seen it.”

Mailing list Subscriber

Requests for information

We raise questions and request information, and have statutory powers that mean we must receive formal responses. For example, we wrote to Sussex Community NHS Trust about their Phlebotomy service, as we were receiving reports that people were struggling to get through to them by phone. Since then the service has started to run a walk-in system at Hove Polyclinic for those who are able to visit. This means that for most people appointments do not need to be booked in advance, resulting in more rapid phone response times.