



Together
we're making health
and social care better

Annual Report Summary 2022–23



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.



The Healthwatch vision

To bring closer the day when everyone gets the care they need.



The Healthwatch mission

To make sure that people's experiences help make health and care better.



Healthwatch 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 voices 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.

This Year...

45 Volunteers Contributed over



Including 12
Volunteer Board
Members

to help our community



We made 34
Recommendations



5 members of staff

£178,600

funded by our local authority
...but completely independent

This year was a special celebration for us as we marked our 10th anniversary.

At the heart of everything we've done have been our city's residents. None of this could have been possible without the efforts of all the people who have worked for us, our various Board members and our outstanding volunteers. [Read our report.](#)

We could also not have succeeded without the support of our various partners working across the voluntary and community sector, NHS services, the Council, our other Healthwatch colleagues, and those who commission and deliver services.

To everyone who has been involved in our success – thank you.

A potted history of key dates	
2012	Healthwatch is set up under the Health and Social Care Act 2012.
2013	Healthwatch Brighton and Hove is formally inaugurated in April 2013. We are hosted by Community Works and our first staff team join us. We also publish our first report.
2014	The Mayor of Brighton & Hove formally launches Healthwatch Brighton and Hove on 5th March. We are formally registered as a Community Interest Company on 14th October. Our first volunteers join us this year.
2014 / 2015	Our Board of Directors is formed. We begin our Enter and View Visits to local health and social care services, launch our newsletter and start our public helpline. More than 1000 people sign up to receive our newsletter.
2015	We become an independent Community Interest Company in April.
2016	We win two Highly Commended awards from Healthwatch England for our partnership working.
2017	We set up our monthly volunteer led visits to our local hospitals.
2017	We establish our Young Healthwatch.
2017 / 2018	Young Healthwatch publishes their first report looking at Accident & Emergency (A&E) experiences of mental health services.
2019	We launch our Homecare check service, still operating today.
2020	We start to issue our COVID bulletins and start our award-winning Hospital Discharge project. More than 70 volunteers support our work throughout the pandemic.
2021	We win our third Highly Commended award from Healthwatch England for our Hospital Discharge project. Our End-of-Life project is also shortlisted. Our volunteers speak to 1,700 people recently discharged from hospital.
2022	We win our fourth Highly Commended award for our work in helping patients to overturn a decision to reduce opening hours at a local GP practice. We are also awarded a 3-year direct contract renewal to continue running Healthwatch for the city.

What other organisations said about us this year

“Healthwatch continues to make a significant and positive difference to the lives of people who have a mental health problem, a learning disability or who are neurodivergent in Brighton and Hove. We are constantly striving to improve the quality of care we provide to the local communities we serve. Healthwatch is a valued partner in helping us achieve this.”

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

“We are delighted that Healthwatch Brighton and Hove is represented at Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust’s (SCFT) Patient Experience Group. They bring rich and valuable insight as well as a local health perspective to support SCFT deliver our ambitions within the Patient and Carer Experience and Involvement Strategy.”

**Howard Prescott, Associate Director of Quality and Safety,
Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust**

“It’s been 10 years now since Healthwatch was established. Over that time our relationships have matured and embedded. The Council welcomes the role that Healthwatch plays in putting the peoples’ voices at the heart of health and social care in the city and respecting their independence. I look forward to their continuing future critical challenge and observations / recommendations on how services are delivered to our local population.”

**Rob Persey, Executive Director
Health & Adult Social Care, Brighton and Hove City Council**

“We have worked closely with Healthwatch Brighton and Hove over the last year, and really value their support, thoughtful input and commitment to ensuring that the voices and experiences of the people and communities of Brighton and Hove are at the centre of our work and help to further improve health and care in the city. In partnership, we have focused together on the development of our system five-year health and care strategy and our Shared Delivery Plan, and a number of key areas including outpatient transformation and the redesign of non-emergency patient transport services. We have also worked collaboratively with Healthwatch to develop and use surveys effectively as a way to obtain views of local people on our priority areas of work.

I would also like to share our thanks to David Liley, who has been a key partner working with health organisations in the city for many years, and we look forward to our continued work with the new leadership and team to ensure that we focus on the needs of those living in Brighton and Hove, ensuring that the changes made can have a real impact on their health and their lives.”

**Lola Banjoko, Executive Managing Director of Commissioning
for Brighton and Hove at NHS Sussex**

Our work on Dentistry

Availability of NHS dentists

People have continued to tell us about their difficulties in accessing NHS dentists and we have heard of people only being offered private treatment.

We have continued to raise the impact this is having with partners and decision makers including NHS England, the Local Dental Committee (which represents dental practices in the South-East) and city leaders for health and social care.

To support patients, we published:

- A [bulletin](#) on the dental crisis in June to give background to the current crisis, a compilation of people's concerns and actions we'd taken.
- We led the development of a **Healthwatch in Sussex** patient leaflet, working with local dentists to produce '[A Healthwatch guide to your rights and accessing the treatment you need - what you need to know](#)'. This is available on our website and was shared with every dentist across Brighton and Hove, as well as Councillors and MPs.

We continue to push for reform and better access to NHS dentistry:

- We led a joint response to a Parliamentary Inquiry on dentistry which was [published](#) on March 7th 2023.
- We have asked 16 questions in Parliament to the Minister for Health with the help of Caroline Lucas MP's office - read our [report](#).
- We have given media interviews to ensure the impact this is having on people is not forgotten.

*"I have been trying to get an appointment, but they have had no dentists for the last **6 months** and not likely to have in future.*

I am a pensioner, non-taxpayer so very limited income and cannot pay privately for treatment."

*"Neither my partner nor I have had a dentist **since the pandemic started.***

*We have called numerous dentists, constantly searched the NHS website (which never seems to get updated) and **really don't know what else we can do?"***



Dentistry

Access to NHS Dentistry is an issue that has affected many patients across Sussex, and the three Healthwatch teams, working as Healthwatch in Sussex:

Developed a Healthwatch in Sussex patient leaflet called 'A Healthwatch guide to your rights and accessing the treatment you need'. We produced this by working with local dentists.

[What are your rights?](#)

Submitted a joint response to a Parliamentary Inquiry on dentistry, which was published on March 7th 2023. We described the local impact and made suggestions for how the current crisis could be improved.

[Read the response](#)

Undertook further patient engagement from December 2022 to January 2023.

This followed a Government and NHS announcement of changes intended to support improvements in dentistry provision. We wanted to learn whether these changes had led to any improvements in the experiences of patients.

We met with the NHS Sussex lead for Pharmacy, Optometry and Dentistry in January 2023 to discuss what we'd heard from patients and what the ICS's plans were.

As part of this, we learnt that the ICS is creating a new dental working group and Healthwatch in Sussex will be involved. Healthwatch now also has quarterly meetings with the ICS lead.

Across Sussex, we found some alarming findings, and that people in Brighton and Hove were more dissatisfied:

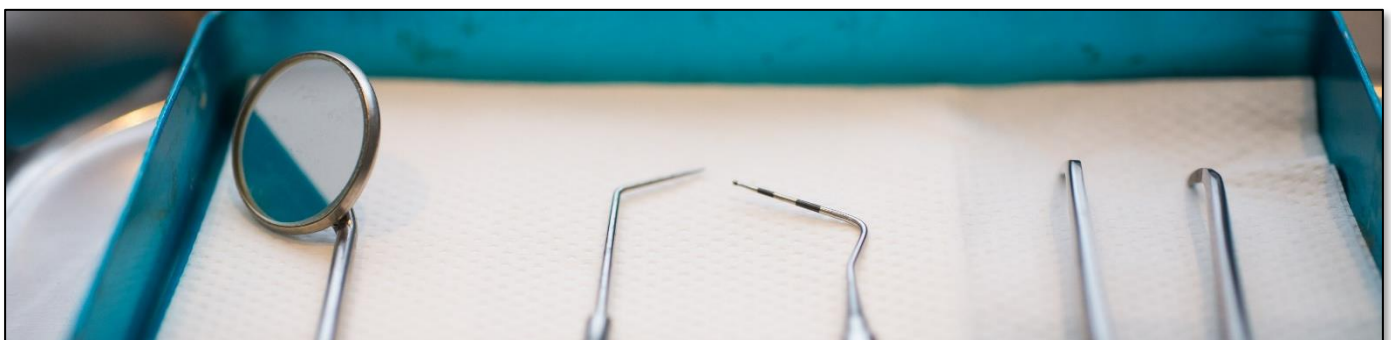
62% of people were not confident about their ability to access NHS dental services over the next 12 months, either for themselves or others. For Brighton and Hove residents, this was 70%.

45% of people told us they were dissatisfied/very dissatisfied about their ability to find a dentist offering NHS treatments. For Brighton and Hove residents, this was 65%

42% of people were dissatisfied/very dissatisfied with the waiting times to see someone. For Brighton and Hove residents, this was 57%

[Read the report](#)

We have continued to share our insight with Healthwatch England to support their campaigning to improve dental access and provision. [Read more here.](#)



Our work on General Practice

Access to GP appointments across Sussex

The impacts of Covid-19 continue to affect access to primary care. People have shared with us their difficulties in getting appointments and repeat prescriptions.

We conducted a survey asking for people's opinions about GP access and their preferences for online and face-to-face appointments and 851 people across Sussex responded. We compared some findings with a June 2020 project to see how people's views and experiences had changed in the two years since the pandemic.

Key findings:

- More than half of people had delayed making appointments when in need.
- Hybrid appointments (remote and face-to-face) were preferred by over two-thirds of people.
- 1 in 6 people did not want any form of remote appointment.
- Most people want an appointment without delay, and a more precise time to get a phone or video call.

Compared to our 2020 survey:

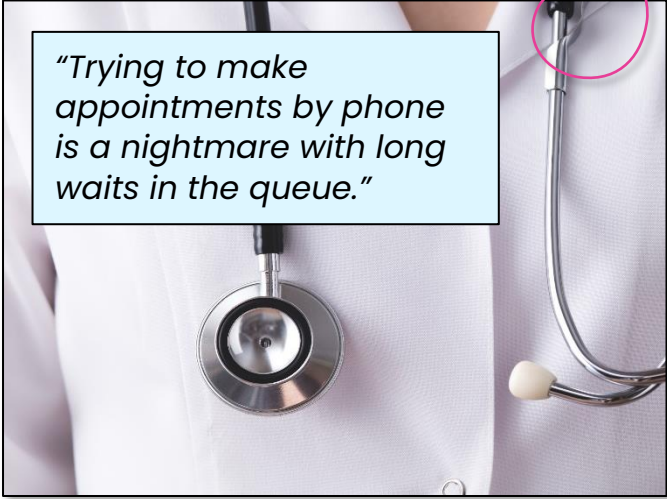
- A preference to see a GP without delay had increased significantly.
- A greater proportion of people showed some criticism towards remote GP appointments.
- More people agreed that 'only having phone or video appointments' would put them off getting support.
- Fewer people agreed that 'you could get just as much advice by phone or video compared to a face-to-face'.

Our impact

Our findings have been shared with the Chief Primary Care Officer at NHS Sussex. We also issued press release, resulting in an interview with BBC Sussex. Our data ties in with the ICS priorities where 'further increasing access to GP services' was announced as one of four top priorities for the NHS in Sussex this year.

What next

We plan to further analyse the comments made by those who participated in our survey and to hold conversations with people to learn more about their experiences and opinions.



"Trying to make appointments by phone is a nightmare with long waits in the queue."



"My current GP practice has excellent access to both appointments and information. I can book appointments online or use the app. They then phone but will get you in for a face-to-face very quickly if needed. The receptionists are also lovely and cannot do enough to help."

[Read the GP Access Report](#)

Our work on General Practice

New Larchwood Surgery Hours

In 2021, New Larchwood Surgery reduced its opening hours to the concern of local residents, who asked for our help. We surveyed 385 patients to find out about the impact of this change, with **59%** of people being dissatisfied with the new opening hours and **81%** wanting to see the surgery open for longer.

By escalating patient's voices, we helped them reverse the decision and additional funding helped secure further sessions at the surgery, opening four days a week. Our work supporting the patients of New Larchwood Surgery received a Highly Commended award from Healthwatch England.

"Many congratulations - your local Healthwatch has been shortlisted for one of these awards because your efforts and dedication have resulted in real impact, ensuring patients' voices are heard.

Our impact awards demonstrate the many ways Local Healthwatch represent their communities and act as a force for positive change both locally and nationally."

Sir Robert Francis KC

Then Chair of Healthwatch England



"I would like to thank you from the bottom of my heart for the sterling work you put in on our behalf. Now we have the final findings from you and consequently, the resulting actions from the CCG and GPs at the surgery."

Anna de Wit, Chair, Coldean Residents Association

[Read the Press Release](#)

Review of GP websites

Our volunteers conducted an independent review of the websites for all 34 GP practices in Brighton and Hove. We found a vast difference in the quality of, and ease of access, to information and identified websites that we felt needed support.

Read more about this pan-Sussex project in the **Healthwatch in Sussex** section.

5-year Review

This year, we looked back at our work on GP services over the last five years, summarising the key areas we have investigated since 2018. Our report highlights how much has changed, and what hasn't. We used your insights and escalated these with providers of GP services, those who commission primary care, the CQC and Healthwatch England.

[Read the report](#)

Our work on Social Care

Restarting our Homecare Check project

In November 2022, we restarted our project previously called 'Lay Assessors' and rebranded this as 'Homecare Check' to more accurately reflect the work we do. We had paused the project in February 2020 to deliver our award-winning Hospital Discharge service that we ran during the Covid pandemic.

Homecare Check is run in partnership with the local council. Our volunteers regularly visit and interview local residents who have home care services provided by independent companies, but paid for, either 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 provided.

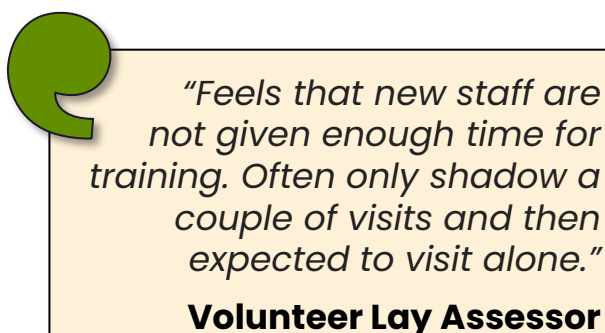
Key findings since November 2022

Out of 95 people interviewed:

- **93%** thought it was very/extremely useful that feedback was used to assess the performance of their home care provider.
- **89%** agreed or strongly agreed they were happy with how their carers treated them.
- **88%** were extremely or very satisfied with the help they got from their providers.
- **80%** felt their care package met their needs.
- **28%** had made a complaint and though most were satisfied with how the complaint was handled, several were not satisfied
- **11** Service users were referred for a care package review.
- **11** were signposted to other services, including their GP, Together Co, and given information and encouraged to speak to their homecare providers about additional support needs.
- **3** were referred for safeguarding concerns.



Though individual concerns were raised around issues of communication and being informed of changes, the majority of those we spoke to were pleased with how their carers treated them, thought they did a great job and were satisfied with the help they received from their care provider.



Our work on Mental Health

We were commissioned by Brighton and Hove City Council (BHCC) and NHS Sussex to explore the experiences of those who use mental health services and of using accommodation that provide mental health support.

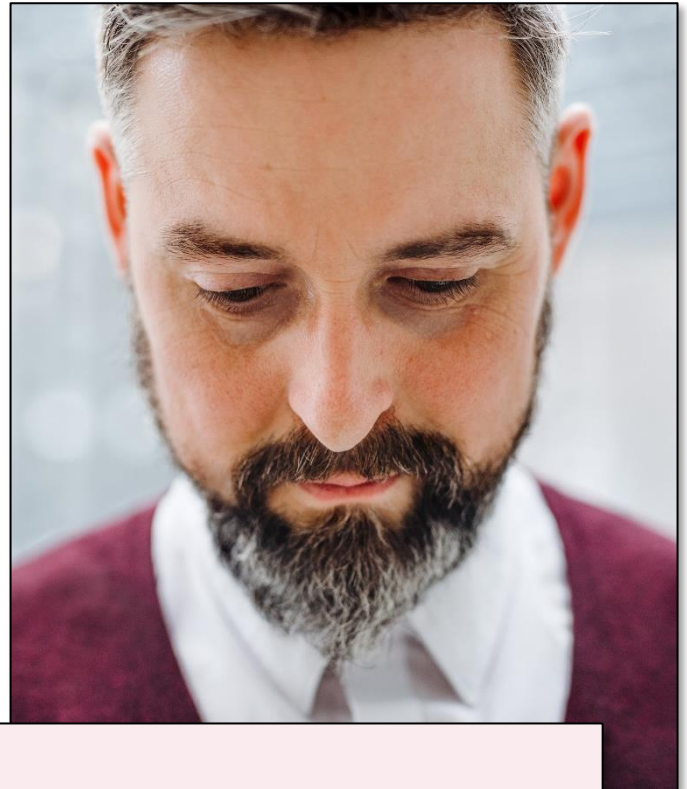
The purpose was to help inform two important documents both of which will have long-term impacts for service provision. The first was the Brighton and Hove Mental Health and Housing Plan and the second was the Mental Health Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) 2023.

We received 137 responses to a survey aimed at those who use services and 96 from professionals. We conducted 4 in-depth interviews with service users. We also ran an online poll requesting suggested improvements to mental health services in the city.

We used the findings to make 12 recommendations, aimed at making more effective use of existing resources.

Our recommendations have been shared at the city's Mental Health Oversight Board. They have been welcomed by the Executive Managing Director at NHS Sussex and at the Mental Health JSNA Board.

BHCC and NHS Sussex also welcomed our recommendations saying they would be "used to inform" both the Housing Plan, JSNA and "other areas of mental health transformation including the transformation of community mental health services and crisis care."



People told us

"My support was excellent. I can't really criticise it."

"I did not feel like my views were listened to until I was properly in crisis, and even then, the options I was offered were incredibly limited which didn't meet what I needed."

"The NHS gave me a list of charities when they refused to help me, but they weren't available, or the wait list was too long or too expensive. I have struggled terribly for months with my mental health but there is no help."

[Read the full report](#)

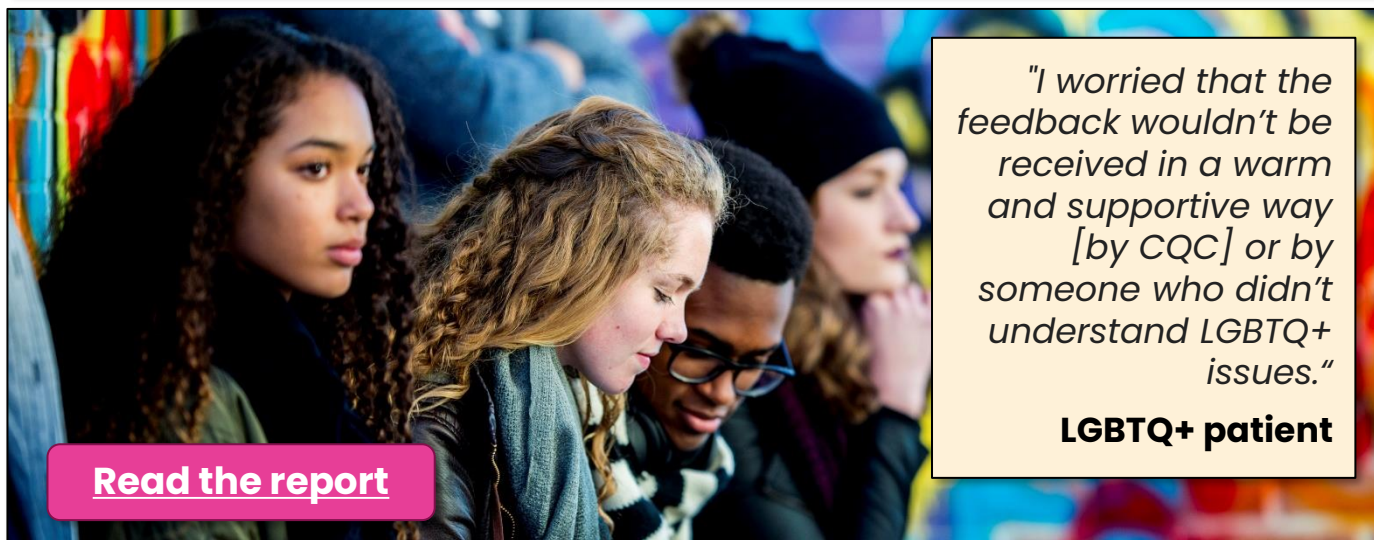
Our work supporting LGBTQ+ communities

We joined forces with Brighton and Hove Switchboard, a local charity that provides a range of support to the local LGBTQ+ population of our city.

We worked together to collect LGBTQ+ patients' experiences of using health and social care services. We also asked them how existing feedback systems could be improved to encourage them to share their experiences. A total of 120 people completed our two surveys, including 59 young people. People shared their views through focus groups, and we interviewed leads of local LGBTQ+ groups and conducted one-to-one interviews with local people.

Healthwatch and Switchboard shared our findings with the CQC, who had asked us to run this project as they wanted to increase their levels of engagement with different communities. Since our report, we have met Switchboard and the CQC several times to discuss the progress being made against our 17 recommendations, and we have been heartened by the response.

We said	CQC response
Feedback forms should be more inclusive and shorter	CQC is working with its LGBTQ staff network and Switchboard shared guidance on using inclusive language and CQC is reviewing the number of questions they ask
CQC should use online and social media to attract feedback from younger LGBTQ+ people	CQC has recruited 11 young people to act as online and media advisers to support their work
CQC should use QR codes to make it easier to access feedback forms	CQC tested this approach which was successful so more QR codes will be used in the future
CQC need to tell people how their feedback is used to make improvements to services	CQC are exploring different options to tell the public how their feedback is processed and used in their work



[Read the report](#)

Non-Emergency Patient Transport Service

The Non-Emergency Patient Transport Service (NEPTS) is a Sussex-wide service, transporting patients to and from their appointments, seven days a week, providing around 300,000 journeys a year. Healthwatch in Sussex has carried out four separate patient reviews of the service since 2016, with our latest report published in 2020.

This year, we have been working closely with those responsible for commissioning a new transport service, from 2025. Through this regular collaboration, we have ensured that your views and ideas about how the service can be improved are reflected in the revised service specification – this is the document that sets out what the provider of the service must deliver. This means that your views lie at the heart of this service’s redesign. We have been asked to join the panel which will assess the bids to run the service. We will ensure that any provider has a clear focus on delivering the best service for patients.

The service must now include:

- a requirement to deliver better communications with patients so that they are advised when their transport will be arriving.
- a dedicated focus on renal patients.
- a requirement to establish and host fully accessible patient forums so that your views are regularly collected.
- a requirement to better promote alternatives to NEPTS for those who are not eligible for the service.



“Frustration with waiting, without knowing when they will arrive.”

Service User

“We have worked closely with Healthwatch over the last year and have received wonderful support and thoughtful input into our redesign of non-emergency patient transport services. They have encouraged us to consider from the outset how this service impacts and supports patients and in so doing have co-designed a service which puts quality and patient experience at the heart of the service.”

Sarah Mackmin-Wood, Associate Director of Urgent and Emergency Care South Central Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SCAS)



Volunteers

We're supported by an amazing team of volunteers, who are at the heart of what we do. Thanks to their efforts in the community, we're able to understand what is working on health and social care, and what needs improving.

This year our volunteers:

- Carried out Enter & View visits to local services to help them improve.
- Visited people in their homes to ask about their home care.
- Reviewed patient leaflets produced by our local hospital.
- Attended community events on our behalf.
- Reviewed GP and dentist websites to review accessibility.
- Answered people's questions and queries on our Helpline and signposted them to support.
- And much more.

Elaine Foster – Homecare / Helpline

"I've been a volunteer with Healthwatch Brighton and Hove since 2020. I first worked on the hospital discharge project and now, with a fellow volunteer, I answer queries via the website and Helpline. I deal with a wide range of requests from health service complaints to community engagement. It's a very valuable resource for patients and the public and an interesting project to be involved in."



Read more about our volunteers in our [Full Annual Report](#)



Finnur Bjarnason – Homecare Check

“Being part of the Homecare project has been very rewarding. Not only have I felt like I was able to make a difference and contribute to the community, but the home visits have also been very memorable. The opportunity to have conversations with people of such varying backgrounds and with such different stories. The whole team at Healthwatch is also very supportive and friendly, as are the other volunteers – a great way to engage and volunteer.”

Dr Khalid Ali – Director

“Working as a Director over the last two years has been a rewarding experience on several fronts. Sharing people’s lived experience with their care providers has challenged the ‘status quo’ and resulted in improvements in access to primary and secondary healthcare. I work alongside an inspiring team of volunteers and staff who always go the extra mile to support their clients and each other. My work here has been educational, impactful and fun.”



Reemanne Baghdadi – Student

“My time spent volunteering with Healthwatch has been very enjoyable! As a public health student, I have been given the opportunity to explore health and social care through a lens that I would not have through studies alone. The Outpatient Transformation workshops were so eye-opening, to hear peoples lived experience and their invaluable feedback on how to improve the services they use. The Healthwatch team have always made me feel appreciated and supported and I hope to continue to support the team. ”

Chris Jennings – Meeting Representative / Support

I have been representing Healthwatch on the Local Dental Committee for East Sussex and Brighton & Hove and at meetings of the Routine Dentistry Managed Care Network for Kent, Surrey and Sussex. I can relay information to dentists on the problems patients and the public raise with us, and also feedback the dentists’ perspectives on their problems, concerns and initiatives. Recently I acted as a note-taker for the Deliberative Engagement Workshops run by Healthwatch in Sussex and the NHS to test and obtain feedback on plans for Outpatient Transformation.



**To learn more about volunteering with us,
call 01273 234 040 or email interested@hwbh.co.uk**

Reports Published 2022-23

We published 16 reports this year describing our work and your experiences of health and social care services.

1. [Feedback on the A&E Department, Royal Sussex County Hospital](#)
- April 2022
2. [Healthwatch continues to support our city's COVID-19 Vaccination Enquiry Service](#)
- May 2022
3. [NHS dentistry - a Healthwatch bulletin](#)
- June 2022
4. [Supporting LGBTQ+ people in Brighton and Hove to share their experiences of health and social care services](#) - June 2022.
5. [Healthwatch Brighton and Hove - Annual Report 2022](#)
- June 2022
6. [Typologies of digital exclusion - A Healthwatch report](#)
- July 2022
7. [Mental Health Services in Brighton and Hove - experiences of service users and professionals](#) - July 2022
8. [Healthwatch, NHS and local people in collaboration: Southeast Regional Conference, 28th June 2022](#) - July 2022.
9. [Healthwatch Brighton and Hove helpline enquiries April to June 2022](#)
- July 2022
10. [Enter & View Report: Royal Sussex County Hospital July 2022](#)
- August 2022
11. [Healthwatch Brighton and Hove helpline enquiries July to September 2022.](#)
- October 2022
12. [Healthwatch Brighton and Hove six-month Performance Report](#)
- October 2022
13. [Our enter and view report on Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust sites](#)
- November 2022.
14. [Access to GP appointments across Sussex – public opinion.](#)
- January 2023
15. [Healthwatch Helpline service - Public enquiries report during Oct - Dec 2022 - January 2023.](#)
16. [Healthwatch - Our focussed work on GP services in Brighton and Hove](#) - March 2023.

Read the reports at
[HealthwatchBrightonandHove.co.uk/news-and-reports](https://www.healthwatchbrightonandhove.co.uk/news-and-reports)

Future Priorities

Our areas of priority for 2023–24

1. Hearing from more people via partnership working

We will continue to form strong relationships and deliver more projects in partnership with local Voluntary and Community groups. This will mean that we hear from more people and more communities in the city, including those whose voices are less prominently heard at the moment. By working with community partners, we will support the overarching ambition to reduce health inequalities across the city.

As part of this, we will focus on hearing from more Children and Young People.

2. Escalating your concerns

We will continue to capture your views, experiences and opinions. We will do this through our projects and helpline, but also by attending more public events and through partnerships with other local organisations. We will support them to get their service user's views heard in forums that Healthwatch has privileged access to such as the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Sussex Integrated Care Assembly and others.

Key areas of focus for us will be to help improve access to services, notably primary care services such as GPs, dentists and others.

3. Continuing to act as a 'critical friend'

We will continue to work in partnership with system leaders and providers and challenge them to demonstrate how they have used feedback from patients to deliver improvements. We will offer our continued support to help them achieve this.

At the same time, we will monitor and challenge the progress made by our Integrated Care System against their published priorities to deliver better joined-up care for everyone.

We will use our independence from the NHS and Council to help achieve this.

In addition to these priorities, we will also work harder to raise public awareness of what we do and the impact that our work has.





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