



Annual Report 2024–2025

Unlocking the power of people-driven care

Healthwatch Medway

Contents

A message from our Chair	3
About us	4
Our year in numbers	5
A year of making a difference	6
Working together for change	7
Making a difference in the community	8
Listening to your experiences	10
Hearing from all communities	12
Information and signposting	13
Showcasing volunteer impact	15
Finance and future priorities	17
Statutory statements	19



69

"The impact that local Healthwatch have is vitally important. Healthwatch are empowering their communities to share their experiences. They're changing the health and care landscape and making sure that people's views are central to making care better and tackling health inequalities."

Louise Ansari, Chief Executive, Healthwatch England

A message from our Chair

This has been a year of continued improvements in how we listen, represent and advocate for the people of Medway in the shaping of local health and social care services.

Firstly, I would like to welcome our new volunteers, without whom it would not have been possible to achieve so much throughout the year. We have grown the team over the past 12 months, and I am delighted that our direct engagement doubled compared to prior years.

We have also issued 14 insight reports. We are particularly proud of the Spotlight Report on the Deaf Community in Medway. The report found that D/deaf people are still facing the same challenges in accessing healthcare that they were in 2020, and we have been working throughout 2024 to implement the recommendations highlighted in the report.

Looking ahead to 2025 and beyond, we know there is more to do. Health inequalities persist, services continue to evolve, and people's expectations are changing. The work we have undertaken over the past 12 months allows us to continue to build and deliver change for local people. We are particularly excited about supporting the development of Carer's strategy in 2026.

Finally, I would like to thank our dedicated employees who have worked tirelessly to deliver against the 2024/25 objectives. Their dedication to improving health and social care across Medway and working alongside our host organisation EK360, creates a supportive environment that makes volunteering with Healthwatch even more rewarding.



The strength of our impact lies in not just what we say, but in our independence, and the trust that our community places in us to tell the truth of their experiences.

Katharine Bishop, Chair of Healthwatch Medway

About us

Healthwatch **Medway** is your local health and social care champion.

We ensure that NHS leaders and decision-makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care. We can also help you find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.



Our vision

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



Our mission

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



Our values are:

Equity: We're compassionate and inclusive. We build strong connections and empower the communities we serve.

Collaboration: We build internal and external relationships. We communicate clearly and work with partners to amplify our influence.

Impact: We're ambitious about creating change for people and communities. We're accountable to those we serve and hold others to account.

Independence: Our agenda is driven by the public. We're a purposeful, critical friend to decision-makers.

Truth: We work with integrity and honesty, and we speak truth to power.

Our year in numbers

We've supported more than **2016** people to have their say and get information about their care. We currently employ **2** staff and, our work is supported by **18** volunteers.

Reaching out:



1245 people shared their experiences of health and social care services with us, helping to raise awareness of issues and improve care.

8026 people came to us for clear advice and information on topics such as **mental health support** and **accessing GP support**.

Championing your voice:



We published **14** reports about the improvements people would like to see in areas like **co-occurring conditions**, **mental health crisis** and **falls prevention**.

Our most popular report was the **Spotlight Report on Deaf people in Medway**, highlighting people's struggles in **accessing healthcare services**.

Statutory funding:



We're funded by **Medway Council**. In 2024/25 we received £138,441.00, which is **10.069% higher** than last year.

A year of making a difference

Over the year we've been out and about in the community listening to your stories, engaging with partners and working to improve care in **Medway**. Here are a few highlights.

Spring

We drew attention to the unmet language needs of d/Deaf community in Medway



We published a Spotlight Report on Substance Misuse and Access to Mental Health Services



Summer

As Part of our Placed Based engagement project, we engaged with residents in Walderslade, Rainham and Chatham.



We engaged with the LGBTQ+ community at Medway Pride event in Rochester



Autumn

Self-Harm project in 10–25-year-olds was launched with professionals engagements.



Self-Harm project in 10–25 year-olds was launched with community engagements.



Winter

What did people tell us about housing and homelessness? report was shared with strategic partners to bring lived experience into Kent and Medway Housing Strategy.



Steady Steps to a Solid Future – Falls Prevention report was published.



Working together for change

We've worked with neighbouring Healthwatch to ensure people's experiences of care in **Medway** are heard at the **Integrated Care System (ICS)** level, and they influence decisions made about services at **Kent and Medway level**.

The big conversation:



Working with Healthwatch Kent and our sister project within our host organisation (EK360) we produced a thematic report on the experiences we heard about the community mental health framework. As well as sharing this locally with the **Integrated Care Board** and feeding into the **Care Quality Commission** we also submitted it to the **Parliamentary Health and Social Care Select Committee** review. Furthermore, our lived experience insights informed Kent and Medway Mental Health Joint Needs Assessment.

A collaborative network of local Healthwatch:

In March 2025, Healthwatch Kent and Healthwatch Medway proudly hosted the **Annual Healthwatch Recognition Awards**, celebrating outstanding contributions to health and social care across the region. A total of **40 individuals, services, and collaborations** were nominated for their **innovation, dedication, and commitment** to delivering world-class care for residents in Kent and Medway.

Building strong relationships to achieve more:



In 2024/2025, Healthwatch Kent and Healthwatch Medway collaborated with stakeholders across the system to strengthen relationships and expand the reach of Healthwatch reports and lived experiences. As an active and consistent member of the **Kent and Medway Safeguarding Board**, Healthwatch plays a vital role in ensuring that people's voices shape discussions and decisions. With a standing agenda item, we regularly present reports and insights to ensure community perspectives remain central to safeguarding strategies.

We've also summarised some of our other outcomes achieved this year in the Statutory Statements section at the end of this report.

Making a difference in the community

We bring people's experiences to healthcare professionals and decision-makers, using their feedback to shape services and improve care over time.

Here are some examples of our work in **Medway** this year:

Creating empathy by bringing experiences to life



Hearing personal experiences and their impact on people's lives helps services better understand the issues people face.

d/Deaf community outcomes – Healthwatch Medway report informed and influenced Medway Foundation Trust strategy, extra hearing loops purchased and fitted around Medway hospital, clear panel masks and visors made available in strategic areas. Furthermore, Medway local authority is now providing a BSL video interpreting service.

Getting services to involve the public



By involving local people, services help improve care for everyone.

Publication of Spotlight Report on Substance Misuse and Access to Mental Health Services led to social worker training in relation to mental capacity and executive functioning, including 'back to basic' training. Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust confirmed they signed up to the Co-occurrent Conditions protocol in Kent and Medway and ensured there are outreach workers in place to support homeless community, along with mobile GPs.

Improving care over time



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

We contributed to the increased knowledge and awareness of self harm and mental health crisis services by engaging with professionals and Children and Young people in Medway. We co-designed an online resource pack and a leaflet accessible to Medway residents and workforce. **A reduction in self Harm admissions since October 2024** has been noticed with longer term review measures in place.

Listening to your experiences

Services can't improve if they don't know what's wrong. Your experiences shine a light on issues that may otherwise go unnoticed.

This year, we've listened to feedback from all areas of our community. People's experiences of care help us know what's working and what isn't, so we can give feedback on services and help them improve.



Listening to your experiences

Championing community feedback through Place Based engagement

Over the last year we continued outreach engagement into communities across Medway as part of a year long Place Based engagement, to undertake a thematic review of peoples' experiences, to explore health inequalities and the wider determinants of health.

What did we do?

Throughout 2023/2024, we engaged with people from all areas of Medway. We spoke to 455 individuals who shared their experiences of what affects their health and wellbeing in a positive and negative way living in those areas. Monthly reports have been published on our website [News and reports | Healthwatch Medway](#).

Key things we heard:



37%

of residents mentioned crime and anti-social behaviour having a negative impact on their health and wellbeing (the survey itself did not ask any questions specific to crime and anti-social behaviour) – spotlight report will be published in 2025

**Positive
impact
themes**

Communities, convenience, local amenities, quietness of the area and green spaces

**Negative
impact
themes**

Crime and anti-social behaviour, not feeling safe, public transport, traffic, cleanliness and lack of activities

What difference did this make?

Our insights have been shared with system partners to inform **Medway Local Plan** and to influence decision making process when planning and procuring new services and when service re-design takes place. These insights are taken into **Medway Health and Wellbeing Board** meetings, and we are really excited about opportunities for lived experience to be at the center of **Medway Marmot Place** Initiative.

Listening to your experiences

Supporting the system to improve access to mental health crisis services in Medway

In August –November 2024 we saw an increase in negative feedback from people in mental health crisis.

We analysed **440 pieces** of feedback we received, of which **11% were relating to urgent or crisis mental health support**. We presented our findings to system partners and ICB mental health commissioners urging action to be taken to ensure effective support to people in mental health crisis.

Key things we heard:



85%

of feedback in October was negative

Key themes

waiting times for crisis support, ineffective crisis response and unsuccessful coordination or continuity of care between services



“I think health and wellbeing is important. If I didn’t come out, I wouldn’t have spoken to you, and you might be the only person that someone talks to.”

What difference did this make?

We encouraged services to review their crisis support offers, stay informed about alternative community provisions, and clearly communicate available services and opening hours during the 2025 festive period.

To support this, we produced a Christmas Mental Health Support leaflet, which was distributed to all system partners and promoted via social media to reach residents across Medway.

We also developed a Christmas crisis infographic for use on social media and in newsletters across partner organisations. This resource helped save time and effort for partner teams by providing a trusted, up-to-date overview of services, referral criteria, and availability—boosting their confidence in signposting effectively.

Additionally, we presented our findings in a report and facilitated discussions on shared resources, planning, and system-wide responses ahead of the festive season. We called on system partners to host a joint learning session to identify pressure points and co-develop practical solutions.

Hearing from all communities

We're here for all residents of Medway. That's why, over the past year, we've worked hard to reach out to those communities whose voices may go unheard.

Every member of the community should have the chance to share their story and play a part in shaping services to meet their needs.

This year, we have reached different communities by:

- Engaging women from minority groups as part of our women's health project
- Made links with Medway Culture Club with ongoing discussions on longer term partnership working
- Through our year long place-based engagement, we reached out to Medway residents from rural communities to gain insights into their experiences
- Engaging professionals through our online survey as part of our self-harm project in children and young people project.



Information and signposting

Whether it's finding an NHS dentist, making a complaint, or choosing a good care home for a loved one – you can count on us. This year **8026** people have reached out to us for advice, support or help finding services.

This year, we've helped people by:

- Providing up-to-date information people can trust
- Helping people access the services they need
- Supporting people to look after their health
- Signposting people to additional support services



Continuity of care and business continuity planning within clinical service settings

An individual who had already waited 15 months for a rheumatology appointment experienced further delays to treatment after the assessing clinician left the organisation before signing their clinical outcome letter. Healthwatch Medway escalated the issue to the Associate Director of Patient Experience at Medway Maritime Hospital, seeking resolution for the patient and raising wider concerns about maintaining continuity of care when clinicians leave organisation.

Following the escalation, the individual received their outcome letter and was able to proceed with the proposed treatment through their GP.



"I have just received notification that the letter has finally been added to my Patient Knows Best account. Many thanks for all your help."

Supporting people from diverse backgrounds

A member of the travelling community reached out to Healthwatch Medway for support after being removed from her GP surgery during the Christmas period. She explained that she had no access to a computer, faced challenges with literacy, and didn't know how to register with a new GP practice. Her health was very poor, and she was especially concerned about losing access to her regular medication.

Healthwatch Medway assisted her by completing an online GP registration form for a new surgery and posting her a printed copy for her records. She later confirmed that the new practice had accepted her, and she expressed sincere gratitude for the support she received in regaining access to essential healthcare.



"Thank you very much for your help, I received the forms you sent me and can confirm I have already been registered with a GP and my medication has been continued".

Showcasing volunteer impact

Our fantastic volunteers have given **745.5 hours** to support our work. Thanks to their dedication to improving care, we can better understand what is working and what needs improving in our community.

This year, our volunteers:

- Engaged with people at U3A
- Collected experiences and supported their communities to share their views
- Supported us with project research and data processing



Showcasing volunteer impact

At the heart of what we do

From finding out what residents think to helping raise awareness, our volunteers have championed community concerns to improve care.

“Being a member of Healthwatch Medway and its steering group gives us the opportunity to engage with the population and relate their experiences to providers in an effort to improve services. We are a small but friendly group who are supportive of each other but looking forward to growing and making a bigger difference for the people of Medway in terms of their health and care”.

Lyn

“I would like to thank our dedicated employees who have worked tirelessly to deliver against the 2024/25 objectives. Their dedication to improving health and social care across Medway creates a supportive environment that makes volunteering with Healthwatch even more rewarding”.

Katharine

Be part of the change.

If you've felt inspired by these stories, contact us today and find out how you can be part of the change.



[Home | Healthwatch Medway](#)



0800 136 656



enquiries@healthwatchmedway.com

Finance and future priorities

We receive funding from **Medway Council** under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to help us do our work.

Our income and expenditure:

Income		Expenditure	
Annual grant from Government	£138,441.00	Expenditure on pay	£83,271.57
Additional income	£0	Non-pay expenditure	£4,258.81
		Office and management fee	£51,037.88
Total income	£138,441.00	Total Expenditure	£138,568.26

Finance and future priorities

Next steps:

Over the next year, we will keep reaching out to every part of society, especially people in the most deprived areas, so that those in power hear their views and experiences.

We will also work together with partners and our local Integrated Care System to help develop an NHS culture where, at every level, staff strive to listen and learn from patients to make care better.

Our top three priorities for the next year are:

1. To increase feedback from learning disability and neurodiverse communities
2. To increase social care feedback through generic engagement and sleep and carers' projects
3. To implement monthly Medway Maritime Hospital engagement

Statutory statements

Healthwatch Medway, Old Court House, 8 Tufton Street,
Ashford, Kent, TN23 1QN
EK360 is our host organisation.

Healthwatch **Medway** uses the Healthwatch Trademark when undertaking our statutory activities as covered by the licence agreement.

The way we work

Involvement of volunteers and lay people in our governance and decision-making.

Our Healthwatch Steering Group consists of **4** members who work voluntarily to provide direction, oversight, and scrutiny of our activities.

Our Steering Group ensures that decisions about priority areas of work reflect the concerns and interests of our diverse local community.

Throughout 2024/25, the Steering Group met **6** times and made decisions on matters such as progress review of our 2024–2025 workplan and agreement of workplan for 2025–2026. 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 can provide us with insight into their experience of using services.

During 2024/25, we have been available by phone, text and email, provided a web form on our website and through social media, and attended meetings of community groups and forums. Most of our feedback has been captured through High Street engagement.

We ensure that this annual report is made available to as many members of the public and partner organisations as possible. We will publish it on our website [Home | Healthwatch Medway](#).

Statutory statements

Responses to recommendations

We had no providers who did not respond to requests for information or recommendations. There were no issues or recommendations escalated by us to the Healthwatch England Committee, so there were no resulting reviews or investigations.

Taking people's experiences to decision-makers

We ensure that people who can make decisions about services hear about the insights and experiences shared with us.

For example, we take information to Medway Health and Wellbeing Board, Patient Experience Groups across community and acute settings, Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Steering Groups, Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee and our regular catch ups and meetings with key stakeholders in the system. In 2024/2025 we worked collaboratively with Healthwatch Kent and our sister organisation projects (EK360) to inform Kent and Medway Mental Health Needs assessment and submitted evidence to Parliamentary Health and Social Care Select Committee for a review. Furthermore, we are strengthening our connections with the CQC to ensure lived experience feedback is used as part of service inspections.

We also take insight and experiences to decision-makers in **Kent and Medway**. For example, we work closely with Healthwatch Kent to share the experiences we've heard ensuring feedback triangulation on a Kent and Medway level and in turn supporting Kent and Medway Integrated Care Partnership with strategic priorities. We also share our data with Healthwatch England to help address health and care issues at a national level.

Healthwatch representatives

Healthwatch Medway is represented on the **Medway Health and Wellbeing Board** by **Tass Alder**. During 2024/25, our representative has effectively carried out this role by consistently attending Board meetings and bringing lived experience to be part of discussions and decision making.

Healthwatch Medway is represented on Kent and Medway Integrated Care Partnerships by **Svajune Ulinskiene** and Kent and Medway Integrated Care Boards by **Svajune Ulinskiene**. **Healthwatch Medway** is also represented by **Svajune Ulinskiene** at Kent and Medway Safeguarding Adults Board, Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Statutory statements

Enter and view

Location	Reason for visit	What you did as a result

Project/activity	Outcomes achieved
Feedback was received from a member of the public complaining to Healthwatch volunteers at a RISE event which took place pre-COVID about no disabled toilet facilities available to cater for a larger child and an adult.	Medway Maritime Hospital has had a disabled toilet facility installed to cater for the larger child and adult.
A Spotlight Report on the Deaf Community in Medway	Healthwatch Medway report informed and influenced MFT strategy, extra hearing loops purchased and fitted around Medway hospital, clear panel masks and visors made available in strategic areas. Furthermore, Medway Local Authority Social Care are now providing video BSL interpreters.
Spotlight Report on Substance Misuse and Access to Mental Health Services	Healthwatch Medway now has a place on Safeguarding Adult Board meeting with dedicated agenda item where potential or actual safeguarding concerns identified through community engagements will be highlighted to Board members.
Member resident unable to access mental health support provided due to a physical disability and patient transport not available	Mental Health provider in Medway confirmed they will ensure all individuals with mobility issues are provided with patient transport or alternative support is provided.
Young Minds, Hidden Struggles – Self Harm in 10–25-Year-olds project	50% reduction in A&E attendance since October 2024.

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